



SCIREA Journal of Geosciences

<http://www.scirea.org/journal/Geosciences>

December 11, 2022

Volume 6, Issue 4, August 2022

<https://doi.org/10.54647/geosciences17223>

DID UKRAINIAN WAR SPELLED THE END OF UNIVERSALISM?

Guermond

CNRS Unit IDEES. University of ROUEN, France

Email: yves.guermond@orange.fr

ABSTRACT:

Beyond the military, economic and political consequences on the whole of Europe, the brutal arrival in 2022 of the Ukrainian conflict has profoundly modified Western social thinking on a level that risks being prolonged in time. The 19th and 20th centuries had been a period of development of nationalism conceived as synonymous with citizenship. This period ended with the two world wars and the Cold War. The fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 seemed to open a window of freedom of thought, which was translated by an evolution of the conceptions of citizenship through numerous works impregnated with the thought of Jürgen Habermas. In these conceptions, citizenship was then defined as an attachment to a democratic society and a will to maintain it. This period is now in danger of being forgotten in favor of a return of nationalisms and the abandonment of a reflection on the organization of a world space where different forms of citizenship could coexist. Under what forms can new spatial organizations be imagined amid nationalisms?

KEYWORDS: Citizenship, Habermas, Imperialism, Berlin Wall, Nationalism, Universalism

INTRODUCTION

The brutal outbreak of the war in Ukraine in 2022 has shaken up Western thinking, and particularly thinking about the organization of terrestrial space. Universalist ideologies, which had regained a certain vigor at the end of the 20th century in the discourse of social sciences, suddenly appeared obsolete. Since the establishment of national structures in Europe in the 19th century, relations between peoples had been based on nationalism, which was the marker of citizenship. Geographers of the time often contributed to this link. For Friedrich Ratzel (1898), "the soil and the people are one". Halford Mackinder (1902) believed that his country (Great Britain) "has two complementary, not antagonistic, qualities, insularity and universality. Vidal de La Blache (1917) believed that in the event of a conflict "regardless of language or religious belief, all parts of the population will stand together against the foreigner. This nationalism in domestic politics was accompanied everywhere by external imperialism: Nazi Germany's claim to a "living space" in Central Europe and Japan's in Southeast Asia. There was also US imperialism in Latin America, Russian imperialism (under the guise of communism) in Eastern Europe, and British and French colonialism in Africa, the Middle East and the Far East. After 1945, the division of the world by the "Cold War" froze the developments, and the nationalist model persisted.

It was the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 that transformed this vision of the world and liberated speech and reflection. The years that followed saw an extraordinary explosion of publications, notably those of Jurgen Habermas (1994), questioning nationalism and envisaging a reformulation of citizenship in many forms. With the Ukrainian crisis in 2022, these publications immediately seemed to be from another age, from another civilization, a bit like the Greek philosophers. It must be recognized that, in a context of liberation of thought, an unbridled imagination was able to develop, which in 2022 seems surprising. Can we still rely on some of the ideas of the period of the fall of the Wall to think about the future, or must we resolve to experience a new historical phase of abandonment of dreams of a common political vision for the whole planet?

THE FALL OF THE WALL AND THE CRISIS OF NATIONALISMS

The fall of the Berlin Wall had two opposite effects on nationalism. In the Balkans, it led to the dissolution of Yugoslavia and to the national demands of the small countries that made up the federation: Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and northern Macedonia gained independence in 1992. Elsewhere, the nationalist citizenship was abandoned. Thus, in France Yves Lacoste (1997), in his plea *Vive la Nation*, observes in the jet society as well as with the caviar left, "the national feeling is really *franchouillard*". However, it will reappear in the 2010s in reaction to the jihadist attacks.

However, the general perception on the European continent is that of a relative climate of international peace, which, in the context of the construction and progressive enlargement of the European Union, has made national citizenships lose their aggressive character. Pauline Kleingeld (2000) distinguishes between patriotism and nationalism: the nationalist version of citizenship is "based on a shared history, common ancestry, culture or language... and patriotism justifies attachment to a country because of its way of life and its democratic political system".

There was a shift from citizenship associated with common ancestry and nationalism to active citizenship corresponding (Habermas 1994) "to an attachment to a political culture based on democracy and civil rights. Society felt that it was entering an era of unprecedented global migration in which territorial boundaries and national societies would be radically transformed. A French deputy (Nathalie Panot (2022)) thus rejects the idea of an *organic nation*: "a nation is not a body, which would not support foreign bodies, a nation is a political pact, a pact, for our country, of liberty, equality and fraternity. In other words, we should, like Nancy Frazer (2014), seek to "trans nationalize" the public sphere described by Habermas. No single border and no single state can protect its citizens from processes that originate outside its borders. It is also questionable whether "beyond national states, it will be possible to control at a supranational and global level the explosive force of capitalism that ecologically, socially, and culturally is developing on a planetary scale" (Munch, quoted by Habermas(2000), who adds "we should not expect government elites to make such a shift in perspective from 'international relations' to the development of a planetary domestic policy."

The long-term goal, Habermas proposed, "should be to gradually overcome the division and social stratification of global society, without undermining cultural singularities. This would require, according to him, examining the conditions for a democratic politics beyond the

national state, starting with the European Union, whose federal structure would allow for a cosmopolitan perspective, since it sets an example of a democratic community that is transcending all national borders. Ulrich Beck (2003), for his part, believes that we should "rethink our conception of democracy, whose form was initially that of the city, and which today seems to know its ultimate avatar under the national features of parliamentary democracy organized in States... to reinvent it in the transnational constellation".

In these years, the nation-state is the object of a profound political contestation. French philosopher Gilles Deleuze asserts that "spaces are not given but are constructed in various ways by political practices and discourses." Pierre Bourdieu (1993) also rejects the idea of "implicitly adopting the state as the natural container of social dynamics." The "state mind", which he rejects, is a diffusion by public policies of categories of thought and mental structures that reflect the structures of the state. Anthony Giddens (1987) sees the nation-state as "a stock of power for the expression of capitalist social relations." For him, the nation-state serves to organize the oversight and discipline of the transition from the old absolutist systems to bourgeois democracy and the market economy, and he seeks to identify the different scales of the interweaving of the nation-state and the world system in conflicts and wars. In a reflection on the teaching of geography, Michel Riou (1988) wishes for his part "to leave the geographical postulate of the States, as we left the political postulate in history". The world could then be thought of and constructed not according to the needs of States, but according to the projects of human beings: "the teaching of geography would find here a disappeared legitimacy, it would pass from the presentation of results to the presentation of problems, which are all today world problems. It is urgent to make our students citizens of the world. And to hell with states, as soon as possible". Transnational belonging "appears to be the only tenable system in the era of globalization" (Nagel 2004).

Ehud Shapiro (2018) goes further and imagines a global cloud community, with a single country, Earth, and global citizens, which of course presupposes a global court, a global constitution, and a global currency. Yussef Al Tamini, in the same book, draws inspiration from the American and French revolutions, which established the separation of church and state: "A historical parallel can be quickly drawn. If these revolutions led to a separation of church and state, could the digital revolution lead to the separation of territory and state that results from cloud states?" In a book by Bauböck, Liav Orgad (2018) reminds us that 71% of the world's 15–24-year-olds use the internet and one-third of the world's population uses smartphones.

In a 2016 BBC global survey, 56% of respondents consider themselves primarily global citizens, more than national citizens. A multitude of activities transcend national frameworks without the intervention of states. However, the influence of individuals on the creation of international law is practically nil, since international meetings are held between representatives of states according to the Westphalian principle (one state, one vote). There is a virtual community like Bit nation (<https://bitnation.co/>), founded in 2014, which opens the possibility of creating new DBVNs (Decentralized Borderless Voluntary Nation) within it, which anyone can join or leave whenever they want.

CAN WE STILL THINK ABOUT UNIVERSALISM?

The socio-political literature that developed at the junction of the 20th and 21st centuries may now seem not only unrealistic but almost unreal, so strong is the disconnection from the new reality. The crisis of 2022 has absolutely highlighted the two facets of citizenship. For the Russian ruling class, the essential question is the valorization of the national ideology around the strength of a historical tradition, and the assertion of a solidarity between the Great Russia and the countries which were affiliated to it. In this framework the ideology developed during the Ukrainian revolution of 2014 has absolutely no meaning. It can only be interpreted as an absence of patriotism and subjection to Western ideology.

Cosmopolitan thinking as a by-product of Western ideology

The human sciences should not propose as universal truths social or political options specific to the Western world. The crisis has highlighted the Russian dilemma in its contact with Europe. Russia is a part of the old European cultural ensemble of Christian origin, but it remains attached to its imperial status as a nation-state. In the hope of refocusing on Siberia, it is attempting an analogy with China, which has been able to maintain a solid cultural area around itself. The war illustrated the difficulty of defining supposed "cultural" boundaries. It also showed the insecurity created by the intellectual and strategic uncertainties of a country torn between a citizenship based on nationalism and a citizenship based on an attachment to a certain political and moral culture. This difference of perception is not the reflection of the national cultures, because, as Jean Brunhes and Camille Vallaux (1921) note it, "in all the modern countries, one can say that it was established a rhythm which makes alternate the periods of overexcitation of the national cohesions turned against the foreigner and the periods of social internal fights which tend more or less confusedly to the civil war". Ukraine

of the 21st century is no exception to this rule, since it began with a civil conflict over freedom and democracy, and after the victories obtained in 2022 thanks to American support, it quickly turned, like Russia, towards a nationalist claim to recover the borders that it had obtained administratively during the USSR.

Under the guise of cosmopolitanism, we are entering an era of intense political upheaval that takes us away from the dreams of a world citizenship which, for Kant (1795), would have been a state of nations (*civitas gentium*), which would always grow and embrace all the peoples of the earth in the end. The idea of a citizenship attached to the concept of social project is not without ambiguity. "Is it possible to manage, or even solve, global problems within the framework of the market economy?" asks Michel Damian (2015), who adds that "the universal today has only one status, that of the capitalist world market." A Franco-Serbian author, Nicola Mirkovic (2022), thus compares what he calls "*the American Empire*" to what the Roman Empire had been. America, he writes, by taking advantage of the weakening of nationalism, governs nations that are not directly subject to it according to its own interests. It thus establishes "a world government by consent, as opposed to colonization by territorial conquest. The Empire develops in this way monetarily, diplomatically, and economically according to its standards. The historian Fustel de Coulanges (1864) does not give a different picture of the way in which Rome had obtained the Empire "without making very great efforts. It supported the aristocracy everywhere, he wrote, and everywhere also the aristocrats were its ally, "they turned their eyes to Rome, counted on it, adopted it as their protector, and chained themselves to its fortune... Almost no one then thought that there was a choice between independence and subjection; for most men the question was only between aristocracy and popular party.

Cosmopolitan thinking challenged by the link to the soil

Without wanting to make the Nation a superior objective to any other spiritual conception, it seems difficult not to link a brotherhood of human groups to territorial limits within which they are gathered. The conception of a nationalist citizenship has however evolved since antiquity. "One no longer loved the fatherland for its religion and its gods" deplores Fustel de Coulanges, "one loved it only for its laws and its institutions". As these changed frequently, he adds, in the state of instability in which all the cities found themselves then, "this new patriotism did not have exactly the same effects as that of the old ages". His conclusion is that this "modern" patriotism, one might say, "became a variable and inconsistent sentiment, which depended on circumstances, and which was subject to the same fluctuations as the

government itself. One loved one's country only as much as one loved the political regime that prevailed there at the time; he who found its laws bad had nothing more to attach him to it. The geographers Brunhes and Vallaux (1921) have a similar concern about what could be called intellectual fantasies: "the specialized scientific work of each one of us in his modest field, of necessarily international character, the international congresses, which often put in contact during the years of peace men of all languages and all countries, the increasing internationalization of the capital, of the trade even, all that had led us little by little to dream of a world which does not exist yet". One comes, according to them, to neglect the powerful realities of human geography, one wants to say by that this distribution of the men in groups whose affinities are made either by the blood, or by the religion, or by the language, and to believe even more vain, or at least secondary, this major distribution of the men in national groups ". These authors reaffirm further this basic idea: "without land, without territory, there can be families, hordes or even tribes, it cannot be conceived that there is a State". In a reflection on the end of the Nation-State, Jean-Marie Guéhenno (1993) also wonders: "since the Greek City, politics has been the art of governing a community defined by its rooting in a place, city or nation. If solidarity can no longer be linked to geography, if there is no longer a city, if there is no longer a nation, can there still be a politics?"

Distinguishing the Nation from the State

In a research on texts of the philosopher Proudhon, F.Ferretti and E. Castleton (2016) analyze the links between geography and libertarian thought, and particularly the confiscation by large political units of diverse cultural identities. For Proudhon "the state is an artificial historical invention". He gives the proof of it by the drawing of the international borders, which often follow the river valleys, whereas they are precisely places where the people are living harmoniously together. The territorial claims of states based on this or that diplomatic treaty or battle of the past are not geography, but messianism. Certainly, he writes, the geographer is the master, "if it pleases him, to give to a land surface circumscribed by rivers, mountain ranges, or seas, such a name as he pleases, but this name is no less arbitrary. The federations, which for him are the basis for the formation of a new Europe, are to be realized according to the will of independent peoples. His model is Switzerland, where what constitutes nationality is not race or language, but cantonal independence..."

Cosmopolitan thinking in the face of Nation States

Universalism is obviously not likely to be realized based on relations between nation-states. It could only be achieved "from below", outside the will of the nation-states. The development

of mobility, which the world has experienced since the 20th century, has affected all categories of population and all geographical environments, under extremely diverse social conditions. The territorial contexts, both national and regional, are often partly outdated, without a clear global context of substitution. "The State should always be the superior political organism that makes several nationalities or nations live together," write Brunhes and Vallaux, but "the State-Territory sooner or later leads to the incorporation of all the beings that live there. The territory involves the living beings". This makes R. Nejadmerh (2022) say that "nationalisms, by reducing national histories to a single story, told from a single perspective, bring in themselves racism and hierarchies".

ANOTHER VISION OF AN "AFTER WORLD "

Far from being the illusion of a universal peace, universalist thinking is simply the observation that the development of communications makes it possible to envisage in the long term an organization of human society at the earth level, which will obviously never put an end to conflicts, but will regulate them. Derrida (2010), in a philosophical seminar, reminds us, like Kant, that the greatest evils from which humanity suffers are due to war, or, more precisely, "to the incessant preparations for a war to come". War is therefore "the condition, the element, the essential horizon of the State and of organized society. Without the horizon of war, the State has no reason to exist. The end of war is the end of the State. And Kant adds: it is only after the completion of this culture, God knows when (*Gott weiß wann*), that an eternal peace would become possible "...

It is precisely from Derrida that Thomas Dekeyser (2022) is inspired in taking up the questioning of the same seminar: nothing is as uncertain as the world itself. In this recent text, Dekeyser defines geography as "a discipline of the world under construction". This world under construction by geographic thinking is normally meant to be attractive and presents itself with a promise of meaning, stability, and community. For Dekeyser, however, following Derrida and Heidegger, the possibility of worldlessness cannot be excluded. This was the case of the loss of identity and coherence, in the 16th-18th centuries, of the Black African populations caught in the violence of slavery. A new worldlessness is not impossible. Can we not imagine now, for example, a century of division between a Siberian-Asian terrestrial space and an oceanic space?

The war in Ukraine, by the trauma it has created in the Northern hemisphere, could be a factor of change in the world atmosphere. This is how the Second World War brought about the end of the colonial system. After a new period of exacerbation of the nationalism of the nation-states, the 21st century could lead to a further rethinking of the world organization. "Modern humanity forms a whole" wrote Brunhes and Vallaux, "but a whole does not mean unity, harmony, fraternity or peace. There is not, there cannot be, a static peace, there can only be principles of organization of the world, which are just enough, fruitful enough and powerful enough to allow for the daily imbalances revealed by the geography of history to be corrected without respite, and to re-establish the compromised equilibrium from day to day.

The territorial recompositing of terrestrial space, which will be the inevitable consequence of the shrinking of distances, could only be achieved through the distinction, evoked by Michel Ben Arrous (2009) for the African continent, between fixed borders delimiting continuous state sovereignties and a "geography from below" designating social processes that resist territorial division, and can in many cases be organized in networks. The non-coincidence of these two spaces will modify, no doubt for the better, the possible opportunities for conflict. It is obvious that technical progress (worldwide computer identification, facial recognition, DNA) will make it no longer necessary to locate national individuals within the physical borders of States (which is already the case for the upper layers of society). So-called "regalian" activities (education, health, justice) will thus be able to continue, and federations of states will be able to pursue joint research and development projects in "geography from above", which the present fixation on nation-states does not allow.

Boundary delineation is an important part of the mapping of the earth and has permeated too much of the geographic literature. The great period for this exercise was the First World War, starting with the disastrous Sykes-Picot agreements in the Middle East, and continuing with the various European border agreements that accompanied the Treaty of Versailles. This would now be an opportunity for geography to finally stop specializing in borders, to help conceive of the Earth as a whole, and perhaps to bring about a world without borders...

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