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# A World Beyond the Nation-State

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**A World Beyond the Nation-State**

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SIT Geneva: International Studies & Multilateral Diplomacy

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## **Abstract**

The once monolithic nation-state is in danger. Forces of modernity like globalization are causing the nation-state to recede. While the nation-state is not likely to vanish, a decline in the nation-states power is mightily consequential to the world order that is built around this central political unit. A decline in the nation-state will lead to chaos and uncertainty in the near future. In theory, this decline could be good because the nation-state is a flawed political unit. Thorough research on a world beyond the nation-state is necessary in order to adequately prepare and sculpt our future world. Ultimately, an analysis of possible futures where the nation-state is less prominent reveals that the most likely future consists of the mass privatization and the rise of corporate governance that could be worse for freedom and democracy.

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## Introduction

### Research Questions and Framework

The modern international system is constructed of nation-states. These nation-states are powerful political units that have emerged in the past few centuries (Berger 2001, pg. 896). These nation-states completely changed the way our world works. While industrialization and capitalism ushered in the rise of the nation-state, a new force threatens to erode the nation-state (Berger 2001, pg. 893). This new force is globalization. There is potential that we are headed to a world where the nation-state is far less important and central. This potentially profound change in our international order requires thorough research and analysis.

Much scholarly literature focuses on the condition of the nation-state. The early portion of this paper looks to first contextualize the nation-state by providing history and discussion of definitions. Additionally, the early portion of this paper will look at the fundamental question frequently raised by scholars: is the nation-state in decline?

While this paper will first address the condition of the nation-state, this paper looks to go further. Many authors have offered thorough analyses of the condition of the nation-state. However, a careful analysis of what comes next is more rare. Thus, this paper will go beyond answering the question of whether the nation-state is in decline and will also look to consider the questions of if the power of the nation-state is waning, what comes next? Is the nation-state inherently good or could a deteriorating nation-state system actually lead to something better? As Julia Eckert, a political anthropologist notes, “the nation-state is dominant and hegemonic in our discourse, but it is not the only way of organizing

politically”(J. Eckert, personal communication, November 16, 2018). This compels the final question this paper looks to answer which is: can we imagine other futures beyond a international order dependent on nation-states?

## **Literature Review**

A strong body of literature has been developed around the subjects of this paper. The nation-state, nationalism, and globalization are frequently researched by international relation scholars, political theorists, and anthropologist. While there is a vast trove of literature on this subject, there is less literature in certain areas. Additionally, it is important to look at different traditions. The American consideration of the nation-state tends to differ from the European tradition or traditions from other part of the world.

As Julia Eckert noted in an interview, the American tradition of political anthropology is different than the European tradition when it comes to the nation-state (J. Eckert, personal communication, November 16, 2018). While Eckert said this was the American perspective it seems it is more the difference between the work of political anthropologists and the work of international relations scholars. The political anthropological tradition draws from many European sources like Ernest Gellner’s “Nations and Nationalism”, Ernest Renan’s “What is a Nations” and Eric Hobsbawn’s “Nations and Nationalism Since 1780” . The American teachings in political anthropology tend to paint the nation-state as a negative feature. This tradition tends to draw from critical leftist thinkers like Marx, Lenin, and Engel to draw criticism of the nation-state and its powerful. Additionally, there are other contemporary scholars in this tradition like Comaroff & Comaroff, and Kapferer who’s work tends to focus around the negative qualities of the state.

The European perspective, represented more by international relations experts tends to focus on the more positive aspects of the nation-state. This makes sense in many ways because the nation-state is the birthplace of the modern nation-state (Berger 2001, pg. 893). The European tradition is represented by scholars like Julia Eckert and Jonas Hagmann who were interviewed for this paper. Other notable works include James Scott's "Seen like a State" and John Hutchinson's "The Past, Present, and Future of the Nation-State". Additionally, works like "Dynamics of the State" and "Fate at Work" are important to this perspective. Additionally, articles written for journals like Foreign Policy or Georgetown Journal of International Affairs (in which the Hutchinson article was published) provide an important body of work that tend to consider the positive side of the nation-state.

While my education in this subject began in the American and Political Anthropology tradition, the other perspective has been very important to this research. The body of research collected by international relations scholars in favor of the nation-state is critically important to this research. This body of literature was an important moderating force in considering the argument and analysis in this paper.

## **Research Methodology**

The research conducted in this project is highly theoretical so the methods focus on academics both in written word and in person. The research took place throughout the fall of 2018 but the majority of the research was conducted in the November of 2018. This paper uses many scholarly articles as sources. These articles are mostly drawn from the international relations realm of academics. However, some works of political anthropology and political theory are also used in order to add diversity of thought and depth to the research. Additionally, this paper is careful to consider a diversity of thoughts and



perspectives in the selection of academic secondary sources in order to strive for a thorough review of the topic and research questions.

Included in this paper are four interviews with experts in this field. The people interviewed were selected are all professors or researchers and were selected for their knowledge on the field of research. In the group of academics interviewed for this project their is also a diversity of expertise. These professors specialize in nationalism, sovereignty, political anthropology, the nation-state, European integration, and state security. This breadth of knowledge is critical to the quality of this research.

Due to the nature of this research, ethical concerns were not too cumbersome. The theoretical nature of the research meant that human subjects were far removed from the topic of research. However, careful consideration for the privacy, representation and consent of the individuals interviewed was a critical element of the project. In considerations of the interviews, a conversation about privacy and sharing of information were had with each individual interviewed. The nature of the project and the extent to which the interviews would be used were discussed and noted. Additionally, precautions were taken to accurately represent the points of views of the individuals interviewed. Finally, this work has been carefully cited in order to accurately credit any authors who's ideas contributed to this body of research.

## **Context and Definitions**

Before engaging in an analysis of the current and future condition of the nation-state, it is important to contextualize and look back at the history this analysis is rooted in. This

first section of the paper will look to define the nation-state as well as track the nation-state historically. Additionally, this section looks to briefly overview the phenomena of globalization as it is of great important to this subject. This context is critical in framing the rest of the analysis.

A precise definition of the nation-state is often hard to pin down. Many scholars offering a vast array of differing views. At the heart of the definitional challenges surrounding the nation-state is the complex nature between the nation and the state. In working towards a comprehensive definition of the nation-state we will consider the nation separately from the state to begin.

The nation can be considered to be “a moral community that binds individuals into a ‘timeless’ society evoked by ‘unique’ myths, memories and culture” (Hutchinson 2003, pg. 7). Nations are thus, usually historically rooted groups of people. However, this is not exclusively true. Often nation group identity is promulgated by the state for political purposes (Hutchinson 2003, pg. 7). As Catherine de Wenden also notes, the nation is rooted in identity and “identities are fiction” (C. de Wenden, personal communication, October 5, 2018). However, it more simple to put these complex intricacies of the nation aside and consider “the ‘nation’ in the context of the nation-state is really the majority group” (Ben-Israel 2011, pg. 66).

No matter what, the nation generally refers to the majority group governed by the state. There are some key elements to this nation-state combination. First, there are definitional pieces that would apply to any state. This includes having defined borders and controlled territory. A state must have solid control over territory and defined borders (Symes 2011, published interview). The state must also have established political institutions like a parliament or judiciary (Symes 2011, published interview). Additionally, the state must be able to claim sovereignty, which generally means that other states respect its autonomy and

authority over its territory. Finally, the nation-state must also have the loyalty of its citizens or its nation. This is a central element of where the nation and the state meet. The majority of the citizenry - the nation - must have some allegiance to the state itself (Symes 2011, published interview).

Historically, there is some debate over when these elements began to arise in political units. However, most experts argue the nation-state began with the Treaty of Westphalia. The Treaty of Westphalia established an ideal of territorial sovereignty. However, nation-states did not truly begin to proliferate until the 19th century (Berger 2001, pg. 896). It is only with the rise of industrialization that we see the true rise of the nation-state and capitalism together. With the rise of capitalism, the world began to transition from a world of empires and colonies to a world of nation-states (Berger 2001, pg. 892). And ultimately this led to a transition of governance from the “dynastic to the nationalistic” (Berger 2001, pg. 892).

Early on this mainly occurred in the west and created the nation-states that would later model what would become a western ideal promoted across the world. Dasgupta (2018) writes of this early 19th century nation-states:

“By the end of 19th century, European nations had acquired uniform attributes still familiar today – in particular, a set of fiercely enforced state monopolies (defense, taxation and law, among others), which gave governments substantial mastery of the national destiny. In return, a moral promise was made to all: the development, spiritual and material, of citizen and nation alike. Spectacular state-run projects in the fields of education, healthcare, welfare and culture arose to substantiate this promises.” (pg. 1)

After the World Wars the nation-states began to universalize around the world. It was through decolonization and the fall of Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union that we saw the rapid proliferation of the nation-state as a political unit.

Additionally important to this analysis is the phenomena of globalization. Globalization is the powerful way in which the world has become more and more

interconnected. In an intriguing quote Hutchinson (2003) explains globalization by using the spread of the nation-state as an example:

"These discussions tend to be Western Europe-centered (and I would argue are of limited validity even for the prosperous "West") . The problem in Eastern Europe and the Balkans is to contain the resurgence of nationalism in post-communist states; in Africa to sustain collapsing state - nation structures; and in many parts of Asia, including Afghanistan, to establish a common national identity as well as a stable political order. In fact, globalization, defined as an intensification of interconnectedness of the world's populations, is not necessarily inimical to the nation- state. The diffusion of the national model from its European origins is itself another form of globalization." (pg. 6)

This quote illustrates both the way in which the nation-state spread through the 20th century while also explaining the phenomena of globalization which may ultimately be causing the downfall of the nation-state. Taken as a whole, the concepts in this section are complex. However this information on the nation-state and globalization should help inform the rest of the research presented.

## **Analysis**

### **I. What is happening to the nation-state?**

The nation-state has become the dominant political unit in our international system. However, many scholars now posit that the nation-state is in decline. This section of the paper will explore the current status of the nation-state. Is the nation-state actually in decline

or is it just changing or even perhaps seeing a resurgence? What, if anything, would be leading to the decline in power of these political entities? Ultimately, it appears the once monolithic nation-state is losing power and relevance in a modernizing world; however, that nation-state remains powerful and we are not on the brink of a stateless world. The nation-state is receding, but not vanishing.

The world has become increasingly interconnected through the process of globalization. This process has occurred through liberal trade policies, the development of economies in Asia, Africa and Latin America, and new technologies (Pelinka 2011, pg. 23). Together these elements have linked the world's economies and made national economies "increasingly less national" (Carnoy 2001, pg. 69). Globalization has made it more challenging for states to control their own economies, effectively limiting the idea of the national economy (Pelinka 2011, pg. 22). It is not just economic. As a element of globalization, mass migration has made the idea of citizenship and nationality less important (Pelinka 2011, pg. 22). This is critically important to nation-state. The nation-state is fundamentally connected to the idea of a loyal citizen who cares about their nationality. These two elements of globalization point to the crux of why the nation-state is in retreat.

Going further, other authors argue that the nation-state is completely losing control. Globalization has caused the erosion of the state's authority and relevance. Dasgupta (2013) writes that in prior generations:

"[n]ational governments possessed actual powers to manage modern economic and ideological energies, and to turn them towards human – sometimes almost utopian – ends. But that era is over. After so many decades of globalisation, economics and information have successfully grown beyond the authority of national governments"(pg. 1)

This connects to what Khanna describes as devolution. State power is being outsourced to cities that the nation-state critically depends on. Special economic zones like

Shenzhen in China or the many different ones in Dubai are governed by a mixture of public and private, foreign and domestic rules (Khanna 2013, pg. 1). Pieces of nation-states like Scotland, Basque, or Catalonia seek increased autonomy. As Dasgupta (2013) claims, “nation states everywhere are in an advanced state of political and moral decay from which they cannot individually extricate themselves” (pg. 1).

However, there are some who think the state hasn't waned in the face of globalism. In an interview, Michael Goebel notes that globalism has actually increased the power of the state in certain places. Take South America as an example, Goebel notes that globalization has allowed “the penetration of the state” into places that the nation-state was never able to reach before (M. Goebel, personal communication, November 2, 2018). Goebel provided the example of Brazil which has been able to control remote areas of the Amazon it never truly was able to exert its power over before (M. Goebel, personal communication, November 2, 2018).

Additionally, in an interview, Jonas Hagmann said “ I don't see a decline. I see emergence of new inter-governmental arrangements – and in recent years, especially inter-scalar governance schemes which bring national governments, IOs, regional governments and municipalities together” (J. Hagmann, personal communication, November 19, 2018).

The recent spat of populist movements shown that a state can refocus on the nationalist project despite the age of globalism. Some are trying to paint the resurgence of populism and authoritarian leaders as a push back against the decline of nation-states and stability in the international order. In 2016, Marine Le Pen, the leader of the far right Front National Party in France, proclaimed that “[t]he time of the nation is back” (Christafis 2016). This lends itself to the idea that Bruce Kapferer argues, that “mass populism a critical element in the formation of most modern nation-states both dictatorships and democracies” (Kapferer 2005, pg. 166).

In response to that one can again look towards the to the writing of Dasgupta.

Dasgupta (2013) notes that in prior generations:

“Empires were not democratic, but were built to be inclusive of all those who came under their rule. It is not the same with nations, which are founded on the fundamental distinction between who is in and who is out – and therefore harbour a tendency toward ethnic purification. This makes them much more unstable than empires, for that tendency can always be stoked by nativist demagogues”(pg. 1).

While economic instability may remain, nationalist groups are able to offer people a sense of identity security. Similarly, Catarina Kinnvall (2004) argues that:

“The globalization of economics, politics, and human affairs has made individuals and groups more ontologically insecure and existentially uncertain. One main response to such insecurity is to seek reaffirmation of one's self identity by drawing closer to any collective that is perceived as being able to reduce insecurity and existential anxiety. The combination of religion and nationalism is a particularly powerful” (pg. 74)

Populists movements and the rise of authoritarian leaders is really a symptom of the disorder and insecurity created by globalization and modernity. As Catherine Withol de Wintol notes, rapid changes in our society are creating insecurities that nationalist groups, and demagogic leaders like Rodrigo Duterte of the Philippines or Jair Bolsonaro of Brazil are able to exploit it. However, this is a reaction. These leaders can not stop the tide of integration and advancement. Like Dasgupta notes, they are using a fundamental piece of the nation-state: division. However, this division is also what Dasgupta notes makes nation-states unstable and not durable. As Dasgupta writes “Trump’s office can never have the level of mastery over American life that Kennedy’s did, so he is obliged to fake it” (pg.1). These leaders are simply faking control while really the forces of globalization are already fully in force.

The nation-state is in decline. Populist movements and the rise of authoritarianism and nationalism are simply symptomatic of the imminent chaos and insecurity facing our political system. And as Dasgupta notes, “[t]he most momentous development of our era, precisely, is the waning of the nation state: its inability to withstand countervailing 21st-century forces, and its calamitous loss of influence over human circumstance” (2013, pg. 1). The nation-states inability to withstand these forces of modernity is one of the momentous events of this century but it is important to look forward. While the evidence points that the nation-state has receded from parts of the society they once controlled, the nation-state still exists. As Julia Eckert argues, “we are far away from a future without a state” (J. Eckert, personal communication, November 16, 2018). This is important distinction . The nation-state is declining, but still powerful. However, the recession of the state calls for the following analysis of what is beyond the state. The rest of this paper will consider the merits of the nation-states and possible alternatives to the nation-state system.

## **II. Evaluating the Merits of the Nation-State**

In the previous section, it is concluded that the nation-state is in fact in decline but not in danger of vanishing. However, it is critical to analyze what a decline in the nation-state would actually mean. Scholars frequently paint the demise of the nation-state as a sort fo dire threat. Arguing that the end of the nation-state would mean chaos and disorder and the catastrophic undoing of our international system. This portion of the paper will analyze whether the nation-state is truly good? Could as receding state be good for the people of the world? Perhaps the true answer is somewhere in the middle of these two options.

First, we will consider the bad things that could come of a collapse of the nation-state. Some predictions of the demise of the nation-state paint truly catastrophic pictures of what



the world would become. Already, authors note that this rise of populist movements, the violence in many parts of the world, the threats democracies are facing, and the rise of authoritarianism are ominously warnings of the chaos that could come if the nation-state continues to erode at the hands of globalization (Dasgupta 2013, Khanna 2018).

Dasgupta paints a dire picture of the disjuncture occurring in our world where economics and information have outgrown nation government. He notes that globalization is currently unfinished, while many parts of our world have globalized, our political units remain highly national(Dasgupta 2013, pg. 1). This mismatch could lead to destructive power imbalances. Julie Eckert argues similarly that there may be trouble as we transition into a world where the nation-state is less powerful (J. Eckert, personal communication, November 16, 2018). Eckert notes that we are seeing the rise of new authorities like mega-cities, multinational corporations, and transnational organization that could start to take over some areas of life the state controlled (J. Eckert, personal communication, November 16, 2018). Eckert notes that while modern states are by no means perfectly democratic, we could see a significant and problematic lapse in democratic practice during this transition (J. Eckert, personal communication, November 16, 2018). She notes that the “the fragmentation of society and the rise of new authorities will be speedy” and the real question is “how well can this new authorities be regulated but the people they control?” (J. Eckert, personal communication, November 16, 2018). Meaning that it may be hard for democratic institutions and processes to arise fast enough during the coming period where the state is in transition. Similarly, Jonas Hagmann notes that “I see a re-configuration of state power, not a loss of it, with a ‘power vacuum’ looming in the near future” (J. Hagmann, personal communication, November 19, 2018).

In summary, the decline of the nation-state is destabilizing in the near term because it represents a fundamental and consequential change in our world order. This transition period

may see increased chaos and problems as we see backlash to change (i.e. populist movements). This period may also be marked by a complex transition of authority that create power-vacuums and issues with democratic regulation of new authorities.

However, the nation-state is not inherently good. Could there be good effects if the nation-state recedes? At the core of the nation-state, is the nation. The nation is the citizenry that the state governs over. However, who the state includes in the nation and more importantly, who they exclude, has repercussions when we are evaluating the merits of the nation-state. Anthony Marx (2002) points out that “states have often codified or encouraged nationalism selectively, demarcating by specified categories who is included and who is excluded” (pg. 103). This can be seen across the globe and throughout history as leaders and governments have worked to build a nation. For instance, Turkey presents a very specific version of Turkish history that excludes the Kurdish people in the nation.

The modern state has actively cultivated homogeneity through control of populations and mass public education in an attempt to create a homogenous nation (Hutchinson 2003, pg. 7). This desire for ethnic homogeneity and national purity has caused problem across the world. But, as Catherine de Wenden argues, “the idea of homogeneity is a fantasy”(C. de Wenden, personal communication, October 5, 2018). The Middle East in particular is a reminder that the decline of the nation-state may ultimately be good. The nation-states established by the British and French like Syria and Iraq are in shambles. As Khanna argues we have “[f]ail[ed] to grasp that no state has a divine right to exist” (Khanna 2013, pg. 1). The issues in the region have often been seen as intractable. However, perhaps, the woes in Middle East could only be remedied through non-nation-state solutions. These Middle Eastern nation-states fail to take into account the religious and ethnic complexity of the region. In fact, it is hard for anyone to image constructing nation-states in the Middle East that would effectively and ethically cease the chaos and violence in the region.

Ultimately, it appears that the devolution of the nation-state is causing much unrest, uncertainty, chaos right now; however, there is *potential* that a receding state could be good because the practice of the nation-state is itself flawed.

### **III. Alternatives to the Nation-State**

In the previous sections of this analysis a few premises have been outlined. First, the nation-state is waning but not vanishing. Second, the decline of the nation-state is leading to at least a temporary increase in chaos and uncertainty. Finally, the nation-state is not inherently good. Now, taking these previous points as a whole, it is important to look to the future. As Schnurer (2013) notes, “[t]he modern nation-state is one manifestation of “government,” and its dominance has conditioned us to think of the two as synonymous” (pg.1). While it is easy to see the nation-state as the only option, it is time to look forward and push to envision alternatives to the nation-state.

Many scholars paint such an apocalyptic picture of the world without the nation-state because they can't bring themselves to think of positive examples of nation-states world. To avoid a potentially impending crisis of a receding nation-state, as Dasgupta (2018) argues, “[t]he first step will be ceasing to pretend that there is no alternative” (pg.1). In fact, as mentioned in the last section, the demise of the nation-state could potentially be ultimately good. While the nation-state has its accomplishments, the organization of the world into

nation-states also has some serious problems. The following three subsections investigate three plausible futures of worlds with much weaker nation-states. The first option focuses on the privatization of government and the blurring between public and private sectors. The second option focuses more on European Union style transnational federations. The third focuses on a reemergence of leftist ideologies and the potential resurgence of marxism. In each section, the future world is outlined and then evaluated.

### **The Privatized and the Oligarchic Model**

Others are already considering a stateless future, or at least a future where the nation-state is not as critical to world order as it is today. In fact, the United States National Intelligence Council published a report in in 2013 titled “Alternative Worlds”. This report offered different scenarios the world may face in future generations. The “Nonstate World” was one of the scenarios outlined in the report. These predictions were made for the year 2030 - only a decade in the future. This scenario envisions a global society where governments have subcontracted much of their governing duties due to urbanization, technology, and expansive wealth accumulation (United States National Intelligence Council 2013, pg. 22).

This version of the world may be already be emerging, so it is one of the easiest alternatives to imagine. Beginning with the increasing role of technology companies, it is not hard to see that this privatizing world is very possible future. As Khanna (2013) points out, “[b]ig data companies (Google, Facebook etc) have already assumed many functions previously associated with the state, from cartography to surveillance” (pg. 1). Technology companies are already taking over many functions that the government once held. The state

has ceded control over many aspects of data and surveillance in a way that allows these massive global tech companies to have tremendous control over people across the global.

The rise of private technology companies is not the only way in which the lines between private and public are being blurred in a way that challenging the relevance of the nation-state. The increased privatization of many aspects of the nation-state government is another way in which this vision of the future comes in to view. Governments across the world have increasing privatized responsibilities that once belonged to the state (J. Eckert, personal communication, November 16, 2018). This increases the power of the private, while decreasing the role of the public.

Finally, the vast accumulation of wealth in the upper echelons of society is already well underway. Global inequality is symptomatic of the declining state and the rise of a new world order. The plague of tax evasion by the worlds wealthiest reveals the lack of allegiance once felt towards states and shows the way in which a globalized world has allowed for the creation of a class of global oligarchical figures who may not be leaders of nation-states but still have vast influence over the citizens of the world (Khanna 2013, pg.1). For instance, Jeff Bezos has far more influence over the lives of many people than many world leaders.

This combination of wealth, privatization, and the rise of technology is summarized by Kapferer (2005) as the “oligarchic-corporate state” which is “both the cause and effect of globalization” (pg. 164).

While this privatized and inequitable world may be a bleak picture of the future, it also may already be underway. In this scenario, the nation-state is still absolutely present, yet not as central as it once was. Even still, concerns over this new world are strong and can be summarized in this powerful quote:

“If the nation-state frequently abused the rights of its citizens, this is now a strong potential of the corporate state, which both privatizes the means for violence

and turns      the greater violent power of economically dominant groups against the general citizenry”(Kapferer 2005, pg. 172)

Additionally, the United States Intelligence Council Notes in its 2013 report that both major democratic countries as well as authoritarian regimes would struggle in this new world because they would remain tethered to the idea of sovereignty (United States National Intelligence Council 2013, pg. 22). While the report notes that there would be challenges with this new world, it would be relatively stable and socially cohesive compared to other future options (United States National Intelligence Council 2013, pg. 22).

### **The European Union & Federations Model**

The European Union already appears to be mapping the way into a world without nation-states. John Hutchinson ponders if the nation-state system could be replaced by a federal system - similar to the European Union - which would allow minority groups to live with more autonomy and avoid the forced assimilation that often accompanies the creation of the state (Hutchinson 2003, pg. 8). Perhaps the European Union is getting closer to an example of this future federal model.

At the moment, the European Union is in a complicated spot. Given its structure, and constitution, which both include supranational principles that reduce the sovereignty of its member state, the European Union is more than just an international organization (Pelinka 2011, pg. 21). However, other elements of the European Union show that the nation-states are still very central. Nationality and the state are still very important. Despite this, the European Union and European integration offer a lot when it comes to thinking about a future where regional networks may become more powerful than nation-states.

On one end of the spectrum, are supporters of European integration who favor the diminishment of the nation-state to the greatest extent possible. Laughland (2009) explains this point of view where:

“For supporters of European integration, it is nation-states which, as the essential embodiment of the political, must themselves be subsumed into a higher unit, the European Community or Union, and thereby depoliticized, in order for there to be peace.” (pg. 226)

This more extreme perspective is probably unlikely at the moment. The rise of populist and nationalist movements and votes like Brexit certainly undermine this sort of extreme integration. On the other hand, if this moment of backlash passes, Laughland (2009) notes that the nation-state system could be:

“Replaced by a new system based on supposedly unpolitical administration. The overcoming of the nation-state, a programme which is central to the European ideology, in fact turns out to be the overcoming of the state tout court and its replacement by a European - and perhaps, one day, a world-*statelessness*” (pg. 227)

While this more extreme, futurist version of the European Union may be far in the future, there are still current elements of the European Union that provide clues as to what a stateless future could look like. The European Union is the only international organization that can compel a sovereign nation-state to implement a decision it opposes (Kahn 2014, pg. 221). This supranational element would be critical in regional federation that come to not replace, but supersede the state.

It is not just the European Union that is embarking on ambitious new integration projects. In East Africa, the countries of Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania, and Uganda have created the East African Community in order to coordinate economic and peacekeeping measures. This community presents itself as a young European Union within Africa (Khanna

2013, pg.1). This could suggest that the world could continue to see the integration of states in European Union style federation. More and more regional pieces of the world are uniting under common economic or security goals. These regional alliances could lead to a future of federations where the state is far less important.

### **The Marxist Utopia Model**

The final alternative to the nation-state considered in this paper is the world envisioned by far left thinkers like Lenin, Engel and Marx. This world, where the state fades away, is the Marxist dream.

Some predict, or hope, that the decline of the nation-state will pave a way for a world governed by leftist, Marxist ideologies. As Laughland (2009) writes, “[f]or Marxists [] the state is by definition a mechanism of oppression and freedom therefore cannot be achieved until the state withers away” (pg. 226). Laughland is in fact saying that the decline of the nation-state is critical to a true Marxist freedom. Similarly, Lenin (1965) writes that “[s]o long as the state exists, there is no freedom. When there will be freedom, there will be no state” (pg. 335). Finally, Engels (1975), takes it further and writes:

“The disintegration of mankind into a mass of isolated, mutually repelling atoms in particular itself means the destruction of all corporate, national and indeed of any spontaneous interests and is the last necessary step towards the free and association of men” (pg. 24).

All of these leftist authors argue that the state is impeding the Marxist project. This is where speculation of a Marxist post-nation-state future arises. In fact, the United States National Intelligence Council’s *Alternative Worlds* Report, displays a resurgence of Marxism as a



possibility fueled by growing economic inequality in our contemporary world (United States National Intelligence Council 2013, pg. 22).

Despite this potential, little is written about exactly what this future world would precisely look like. Additionally, the National Intelligence Council's report saw this as an unlikely outcome. Furthermore, Julia Eckert believed that this future is unlikely because the nation-state will remain strong enough to avoid this future. Additionally, corporate and capitalist projects can remain strong in spite of a weakening state in a way that counteracts any movement towards left ideology. (J. Eckert, personal communication, November 16, 2018).

### **Conclusion**

It appears that the chaos and unrest the world is facing right now is symptomatic of the transition the world is going through. Globalization has weakened the state which has created anxiety and insecurity. Even though the power of the nation-state is conclusively declining, the nation-state is incredibly powerful. It does not appear that states themselves will completely erode in the near future. Instead it is likely that we see the continued blurring of lining between nations and between the private and the public. Even still, the transition to this world with a weaker state is messy. After all, in period of uncertainty the world tends to see the rise of authoritarianism, demagoguery and disorder (C. de Wenden, personal communication, October 5, 2018). Nevertheless, once through this period there is a possibility of the world without nation-states that is more positive. While there is certainly a chance the world is more chaotic, violent, and inequitable, there is also a chance of a positive future. As outlined above, the nation-state has its flaws. The nation-state is fundamentally connected to the idea of the nation which many authors reveal to be exclusionary. Nation-

state's tend to be built with a majority nation in mind and minority nations repressed. Additionally, the state can abuse its power in anti-democratic ways.

Based on the evaluation of the condition and merit of the nation-state, this paper moved into an analysis of possible alternatives to the nation-states. While each of these model is possible, it appears that the privatized and oligarchical model is mostly likely to be the future. A future where the corporate world (including massive technology companies), oligarchs, and the nation-states may be the world we are seeing quickly emerging. This ultimately could be as dire and bad for the world as some authors predict the decline of the nation-state could be. The privatization of government, the rise of invasive technology, and increasing inequality threaten democratic gains made under that nation-state.

This bleak future is not set in stone. A more positive future where regional federations arise is not out of reach. This paper finds that nation-state is declining but not vanishing. However, the most important element of this paper is the impetus to explore the future. In order to prepare and sculpt the future of the internal order, international relations scholars, political theorists, and political anthropologists must continue to work to explore alternatives. The world is always changing, we must make sure we are continuing to research ways that governance can improve and keep up with the changing world.

Finally, it is important to address the biases that have shaded this paper's research. I have been educated in the American tradition of political anthropology. As I have discovered through my research and interviews, the American tradition of anthropology tends to view that nation-state very critically. This tradition tends to be heavily influenced by critics of the state. Certainly, my most influential courses were taught by professors who were highly critical of the state, especially the capitalist state. The questions in this paper certainly was rooted in this education. However, careful consideration of other traditions in the international relations and European field of research were given.

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## Primary Sources

(C. de Wenden, personal communication, October 5, 2018)

(M. Goebel, personal communication, November 2, 2018)

(J. Eckert, personal communication, November 16, 2018)

(J. Hagmann, personal communication, November 19, 2018)

Catherine Wihtol de Wenden  
October 5, 2018  
CERI Science Po, Paris

1. Why do think there is this feeling of competition even if it is not actually present?

2. Where do these anti-migrant feeling and nationalist tendencies arise, is it mostly connected to economics? Do nationalist parties do the best in economically insecure areas?
3. Going back to the idea of exploitation. Can you go further into how nationalist groups rile up a sense of competition and exploit people?
4. Can you explore the idea of mobility more?
5. I am really interested by this idea of identity and how it is constructed. Can we go back and look more at the idea of identity in context of our migration conversation?
6. Where do you think the future of nationalism and migration is headed? Do you think we will continue to see increased support for nationalist parties?
7. Yesterday the US unemployment rate came out and it was one of the lowest in a long time. Unemployment is going down, the economy has improved a lot since 2008. Do you think that this means we will see less nationalism?

\* This interview was conducted originally as part of the Paris RME project. However, the research related closely to my current topic.

\*" The economic crisis of 2008 lead to soaring middle/lower class unemployment across the world. Within Europe and the US, this lead to a feeling of competition where middle and lower class people felt competitive with immigrants. This is what lead to the rise of hate. You see this all over in Europe. In the UK with the Poles, in Austria, in Hungary. But the main point here is the *feeling* of competition with immigrants - a feeling of competition not actually competition."

\* "Politically, these people have been exploited and made to believe that there is competition. In reality, migration does not hurt the economy."

\* Identities are fabricated a "lie" that is cultivated by nationalist groups.

\* Believes that globalization has led to a feeling of insecurity amongst working class people.

\* Points out that certain areas where there are the most migrants tend to be more tolerate to migrants than places with fewer. ie. Finland has pretty popular anti-immigrant politics but has few migrants.

Julia Eckert  
 November 16, 2018  
 University of Bern, Bern

1. I am interested in this idea of the hybrid public-private state. Are we already living in this world? Will this hybridization continue?
2. Do you think trends towards privatization are good?
3. Can you imagine a stateless world? Or a world much weaker states?
4. What would this world look like?
5. Can we still have a strong state if borders continue to be blurred and the citizen alligence to the nation decline?
6. Can you explore any ideas you have about alternatives to the nation-state?

\*A more informal conversation, this interview was still guided by the questions above but these questions were really just created on the spot as we were talking and weren't carefully planned beforehand like the other interviews. This was probably my favorite interview. I found Professor Eckert really engaging and thoughtful.

\*"Nation-state is very dominant and hegemonic in our discourse, but is only one way of organizing politically"

\*There are other ways to organize, consider cities. The increasing role of cities, and the development of new governance within cities.

\*Literature of interest: Seen like a State (James Scott), Art of not being governed (James Scott), Fate at Work, Dynamics of the State

\*The European scholars tend to approach the idea of the nation-state from a different perspective than the American tradition. The American political anthropology tradition tends to be more skeptical and critical of the state.

\*"Alternatives to the nation-state are absolutely pertinent and relevant"

\*We must be really careful when we evaluate the state. Can we parse the state away from the nation. The nation and nationalism tend to be where criticisms of the state stem from.

\*What will replace states in some of their function, new authorities will replace certain parts. Cities will take on some role. Networks. Similar elements of the transnational organizations.

Michael Goebel  
November 2nd, 2018  
Graduate Institute, Geneva

1. Can you talk about the way nationalists create history?
2. How is the nation-state different than the multi-ethnic state?
3. What are your thoughts on the relationship between the nation-state and the media?
4. Is the nation-state in decline?
5. Are there positive alternatives to the nation-state?

\*Professor Goebel and I first met for the local case study. We met a second time to discuss new topics related to my nation-state project.

\*Brexit is a “taking back of the nation-state”. People believe they have ceded too much power to Brussels. While Brexit may decrease quality of life for people who voted for it, there is something strange and undemocratic feeling about a group of unelected elites governing the lives of British people in Brussels.

\*The nation-state is not necessarily in decline. The state has been able to penetrate really far into areas it never was able to before because of globalization.

\*There is no consensus on how to use history

\*Social media during the Arab Spring was a democratizing force. Now, social media would not be considered that way. This is a fascinating and rapid transition.

\*



Jonas Hagmann  
 November 19, 2018  
 ETH, Zurich

1. I see the rise of technology like drones and facial recognition as new ways in which the state can become pervasive in the lives of the citizenry. I am struggling to reconcile how technology can threaten the nation-state (via globalization) while also creating tools like facial recognition and drones which seem to me as potentially incredibly powerful mechanisms of state power. I would love to hear your thoughts on this tension that I am seeing.
2. Is the nation-state really in decline?
3. Can states use increasingly strong methods of state power while also becoming less powerful?
4. In my research, I also see many scholars talk of the decline of the nation-state as a sort of dire threat. Can you envision a positive alternatives to the nation-state?

\*Professor Hagmann gave really detailed answers for each question. I didn't get to ask many questions but the answers I got were highly informative. Professor Hagmann also had a really interesting take on this issue because his view of the nation-state comes from a security perspective.

\*"I don't see a decline. I see emergence of new inter-governmental arrangements – and in recent years, especially inter-scalar governance schemes which bring national governments, IOs, regional governments and municipalities together."

\*I have to be careful when I use words like 'methods', 'state power', and 'strength' in order to be precise.

\* "I see a re-configuration of state power, not a loss of it, with a 'power vacuum' looming in the near future – I see rearrangements of public power across scales, but not a loss of public power tout court."

\* International deals that support the nation-state are stronger than we believe.

\* Power is institutionalized and "fluid"

\* "The transparency of governing arrangements suffers greatly when they multiply."

Interactive Log:

Organization	Contact Name	Email	Telephone	Dates & Times	Formal or Informal
CERI Science Po	Catherine Wihtol de Wenden	<a href="mailto:Catherine.Wihtoldewenden@Sciencepo.FR">Catherine.Wihtoldewenden@Sciencepo.FR</a>	33158717057	16:00, October 5, 2018	Formal
Graduate Institute of Geneva	Michael Goebel	<a href="mailto:michael.goebel@graduateinstitute.ch">michael.goebel@graduateinstitute.ch</a>	Communicated via email or in person and no phone number was available online.	9:15, November 2, 2018	Formal
University of Bern	Julia Eckert	<a href="mailto:julia.eckert@ant.hro.unibe.ch">julia.eckert@ant.hro.unibe.ch</a>	031 631 8962	13:15, November 16, 2018	Informal/Formal (professor office hours)
ITH Zurich	Jonas Hagmann	<a href="mailto:jonas.hagmann@istp.ethz.ch">jonas.hagmann@istp.ethz.ch</a>	44 632 0703	14:00, November 19, 2018	Formal

**September 6, 2018** - Home, Nyon

Finished and passed in my initial ISP proposal. A lot changed from this original proposal.

**September 10, 2018** - SIT Office, Geneva

Met with Dr. Mattila for initial ISP

**October 5, 2018** - CERI Science Po, Paris

Interviewed Catherine Wihtol de Wenden at CERI Science Po in Paris.

**October 17, 2018** - Home, Nyon

Finished ISP final proposal and passed it in.

**October 19, 2018** - SIT Office, Geneva

Met with Dr. Csurgai to discuss ISP during advising session. Dr. Csurgai recommend some helpful changes like focusing less on my initial research question. HE also recommend a couple authors I should read.

**October 29, 2018** - SIT Office, Geneva

Attended ISP introductory session with SIT professors at SIT office.

**November 1, 2018** - Home, Nyon

Prepared questions and ideas for interview with Michael Goebel. Read two scholarly articles and took notes of topic.

**November 2, 2018** - Graduate Institute, Geneva

Interviewed Michael Goebel at University of Geneva Graduate.

**November 2, 2018** - UN Library, Geneva

Worked on reaching out to professors and scholars across Switzerland for interviews. Prioritized professors in Geneva and Lausanne at first.

**November 4, 2018** - Home, Nyon

Read 2 scholarly articles, took notes. Searched for additional articles and works of literature that may be helpful.

**November 5, 2018** - UN Library, Geneva

Began writing context section of ISP. I also reached out to numerous more people for interviews. Extended my search beyond Geneva and Lausanne, this was the set of communication that ultimately lead to my final two interviews.

**November 7, 2018** - UN Library Geneva

Worked on section 1 of my analysis and started to put together my research methods.

**November 8, 2018** - Home, Nyon

Worked on introduction, and pieces of my analysis. Read some more and took notes mostly.

November 12, 2018 - UN Library, Geneva

Continued to work on analysis and collect sources.

**November 14, 2018** - SIT Office, Geneva

Met with Professor Mattila at SIT Office to discuss ISP at mid-November meeting.

**November 15, 2018** - Home, Nyon

Continued to work on analysis and collect sources. Finishing up introduction sections, analysis well under way.

**November 16, 2018** - University of Bern, Bern

Interviewed Professor Julia Eckert. Professor Eckert is the head of the political anthropology department at University of Bern.

**November 17, 2018** - Home, Nyon

Mostly just read some new articles for my analysis. Also read some new articles and took notes on a way to hike on a train.

**November 19, 2018** - ETH Zurich

Interview with researcher, Jonas Hagmann in Zurich at ETH where he is a researcher. He had a fascinating take on the security and technology aspect connected to my research.

**November 20, 2018** - Home, Nyon

Put in a big push at home to finish a draft of my analysis and finish up my introduction. Basically wanted to have a draft of the paper finished sans conclusion at this point.

**November 21, 2018** - Home, Nyon

Worked on conclusion and began editing. Feeling pretty good about this state of the paper with almost a week to go.

**November 24, 2018** - Cobham, England

Finishing up citations and final edits on ISP

**November 26, 2018** - Home, Nyon

Putting finishing touches on paper, including final edits.