

Resketching the Scope and Strength of Nation-State

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Abstract

The wave of globalization and the impossibility to maintain uniformity within the nation-state, which in itself is characterized by diversities, has reframed the past status of nation-state in the contemporary globe. In this article, the author considers the scopes and strengths of nation-state are diminishing in the contemporary global order, arguing that the pervasive implications of globalization and the emergence of dissident voices within the specific geo-political territories have posed pragmatic problems in the traditional notion and stand strand of nation-state. As globalization has opened newer avenues with wider spaces of opportunities to the people all across the globe, the culture, tradition, religion, language, emotional affinity within the specified communal people, which are considered to be binding aspects of nation-state, don't sustain the same values as that used to hold in the past. The digital media and communication, advancement of transportation and the flow of knowledge and goods in the postmodern world have been key instruments to the people to transcend national boundary and promote the cross country affinity. Besides, this paper also explores and analyses how an effort to maintain uniformity in structure within particular political geography fails due to its undeniable reality of socio-cultural and economic variations among people within the same territory. If the uniformity and harmony, as assumed, are synonymous to nation-state, why are many countries suffering with civil wars? Hence, this paper attempts to record the practical problems which have created questions on traditionally elated space and scope of nation-state. Moreover, to examine and analyze this situation, the author uses qualitative method.

Key words: Nation-state, globalization, pragmatic, digital media, postmodern, socio-cultural

Introduction

Meriam-Webster (n.d) explicates a word nation-state as "a form of political organization under which a relatively homogenous people inhibits a sovereign state". Hence, nation-state is a project to validate the identities of all minorities, ethnicities, and other groups of people residing within the specified geo-physical location in a framed institution with privileges to exercise political authority in full swing. Nevertheless, there lies a fundamental error with this cultural construction of nation-state as it makes a false claim to create uniformity within, in fact, the non-uniform circumstances. In another word,

nation-state pragmatically fails to address the uniqueness, peculiarities and specialties of the group of people residing within the territories in an effort to associate the political existence of a state to the cultural existence of a nation. Evidently, an inability to address these differences, in course of justifying the political legitimacy, has been found to have created internal clashes and riot in many of the nation-states today.

Albeit, nation-state claims to have united its subjects by language or some other common characters, practically it could not create a complete psychological and emotional bond among people. Besides these domestic issues in the contemporary globe, the people are living in beyond nation-state integration due to rapid impact of globalization all across the planet.

This has, in fact, happened to occur along with the advent of newer digital technologies, and immigration provisions fostered by an advancement of transportation, and building up of consensus by nations to work together. But since the World Trade Organization was established on 1 January 1995 (Members and Accessions, para 7), the collective benefits in trade, commerce and business have found to diminish the significance of 'the 17th century treaty of Westphalia' (Treaty of Westphalia, (n.d)), which advocates for the nation-state as strongest institution within particular geo-political boundary.

Methods

This paper focuses on the specific circumstances of nation-state and attempts to study the nature, origin and limits of the concept of nation-state through inductive reasoning. To fulfill the goal of proposed study, proper sequencing and logical arrangements of the ideas have been made. This research study attempts to achieve new insights into a notion of nation-state in the changed context of time through assessing the related phenomena in a new light. It exerts to redraw the confirmed set of ideology in regard to the very concept of nation-state, which itself claims to be an institution under which all the phenomena have unified identity, through systematic collection and objective evaluation of causes, effects and trends of past events with present time implication.

In addition, this paper adopts analytic research design in terms of evaluating the scope and strengths of nation-state in globalized context and in the context of its struggle to maintain uniformity within the diversity of its own geo-political boundary. To substantiate study, to solidify the reasoning and to validate the claim, the secondary sources of information are used as tools and techniques. Theory of New Historicisms and Globalization are the perspective guidelines to examine, review and analyze the contexts, contents and patterns of nation-state and its relevance in the changed scenarios of today's globe. Besides, intensive review of authentic literatures, references of relevant journal articles and library, and dictionary consultation are done to justify the claims made here in this article. In nutshell, the epistemological inquiry on concept of nation-state, relevance of the concept and practice on ontological ground, and the logical reasoning with pertinent sources are the fundamental stand strands of this paper which have been validated employing the qualitative research design and content analysis methods.

Literature Review

A nation, in our general understanding, consists of an ethnic or cultural community and state is a political authority that has the capacity to exercise authority. This very concept implies, nation-state as political institution where the majority of its populace share the same culture within a particular political boundary and show their consent to be ruled by particular authority. Making a judgement onto these parameters, now comes a question. Does the concept of nation-state actuate to be an essential reality? In fact, the concept is ambiguous because there are many states, especially in Africa, which still exist in the world but they do not possess the prerequisite political authority over their internal and external affairs.

To begin with the historical facts, the first known use of this term is found to have been in 1895 A.D. (Merriam-Webster (n.d)). The concept of nation-state and boundary making, evidently, is the gift of 'Europeans' (Brennan, 1996) and it was elevated strongly in the early 19th century during an era of colonization. Brennan (1996) argues, "Nation-state is an outcome of the European romantic concept of 'folk character' and 'national language'". That means, creation of the nation state is an attempt to create a uniform society. It is, in fact, an imagined political community (Anderson, 2006), which got momentum with an intended process to institutionalize the European concept of authority as in Brennan's claim. However, the strive to array uniform identity through exertion of power is experienced to have converted the concept of nation-state into a problem. As claimed, the nation-state could not address the actual need of the variants of race, geography, tradition, language, size within a nation that were and are part of progression. The efforts to combine these differences within a row of systematicity are insufficient. So, the totalistic ideologies of the nation-state always lead to insinuate conflict and violence within its geo-physical surroundings.

The concept fundamentally emerged as it was necessary for 'Europeans' (Brennan, 1996) then to cherish their history in one hand and in another to administer and exercise power upon the colonized to distinguish them as more civilized and well versed to the rest. So, this concept was valorized and aggressively brought into existence. Nevertheless, in effort to architect nation- state a unified institution and an essential unit, they problematized the concept in itself. In this regard, Lewis and Wigen, (1997) argue, "Features of the natural world seldom conform to political terrains, and even patterns of human culture more often than not crosscut country boundaries". The statement clarifies that the attempt to impose a stature position of nation-state is almost a fiasco within a certain territory as there lies no essential conformation between natural world and political cartography. Politico-cultural variations obscure the internal differences and it leads a state in the state of confrontation. If we examine it from the lens of New historicisms, the intangible aspects responsible to lead such confrontation is due to the imposition of power to maintain order. Failing to address the socio-cultural, ethnic, religious, economic, lingual and geographical differences is the core aspect that destabilizes the space of nation-state.

The genocide of Rwanda is a pertinent example as it vivifies how the imposed political regulations generate conflict and clashes within a particular setting. More than one million Tutsi were killed by their compatriots on behalf of the Hutu (Nikuze, 2014). This is an outcome of deliberately inflicted racial confrontation. The only reason consequent to this massacre was the artificial construction of political cartography between Hutu and Tutsi which, ultimately, failed to comprise the differences and variations within these racial groups.

So, it makes clear that the concept of the nation-state neither maintains the uniformity within the variations nor can comprise all the complexities found within. Hence, the concept is obscuring in itself. Eagleton et al. (1990) argues nationalism as an impossible irony and claims, "It is sometimes forgotten that social class, for Karl Marx at least, is itself a form of alienation, cancelling the particularity of an individual life into collective anonymity". This concept clearly alludes a political crevice on nation-state that tries to solidify the system embodying multicultural society in a unified socio-cultural pattern. Nevertheless, it ultimately becomes a source of dissident voice in real ground that ultimately turns the voices of unsung people against this whole system. So, connecting Eagleton's idea on the principle of nation-state, the sustainability of the nationality, thus, can be possible only in the state of amnesia; one has to forget his/her self or archetypal identity for the system and its institution.

Likewise, the concept of the nation-state is tendency of ignoring the peculiarities of the mass and making an attempt to establish single uniform identity and terminologies like choosing one to be an official recognition among many: one national song among many, one single bird among many, one single animal among many, one language shadowing the rest others etc. This specific nature of nation-state accords the core ideology of new historicists that affirms, the truth is created through power imposition. And, it is because of the same reason; the conflict is arising within the nation-state. For example, if the country gives official recognition to the Nepali language, then obviously the people speaking Maithili or Newari will seek out for their recognition. And, in course, it may lead to suppression which would finally sow a seed of dispute and germinate conflict among the people in a nation. If we analyze closely, every civil war in the world is the off-shoot of ignoring the specific characteristics of the diversified communities and people to form a collective identity: Nationhood.

Evidently, in many parts of the globe, the surge for nationalism has brought ambivalent sentiment that has invited several of the inhuman consequences including the cleansing of non-nationals and minorities, all the way to an organized mass murder. The permanent elimination of 'six million' lives of Jews by Nazi in Germany (Doren, 1992) is the best example that explicitly indicates how a unifying tendency of nation state sometimes leads to havoc. This particular instance is enough to justify that the culturally imposed system fails to address the differences of people living within the same community in an apposite way. Despite building up the psychological bond and emotional affinity, such practices instigate for distancing, suppression and regression which, in many instances, have been

the causes of the self annihilation on the significance of traditionally imbibed spirit of nation-state.

Connecting to the same argument, we can conclude that the approach of the construction of a holistic image of nation state is merely politics. It is the forceful construction of the power holders against which under privileged reproach and keep on trying to replace. And, this is the central aspect that weakens its strengths and scope.

In the same respect, the postcolonial intellectuals are now questioning on the real and scientific base of the construction of a holistic discourse of nation state. Lazarus (1999) asserts, "The postcolonial perspective resists attempt to provide a holistic social explanation, forcing recognition of the more complex cultural and political boundaries that exist on the cusp of the ...often opposed political spheres of "First" and "Third" Worlds..." It clearly illustrates that there lies a more potent resistance against the celebration of nation-state as its complexity is beyond the power of central system of control and address. So, whatever one's final view is, the fact is that the internally diversified issues like that of religion, economy, tradition, culture, language, geo-physical situation etc., within the nation-state have been some of the significant sites of critical debate in the spectrum of humanities and political science today.

Besides these intra-national issues, the massive impact of globalization has dramatically brought changes in the strength of nation-state in the presently changed political scenario of the globe. The advancement in communication and transportation, and the transformation of knowledge and accessibility of global products and goods in this century has converted the whole world into a small village. To an individual, passport has been more significant to national citizenship. This particular instance articulates the fact that 'global citizenship' (Jotia, 2011, p. 249) is getting momentum to national citizenship in the present time. The wider scopes and opportunities to individuals, in this concern, is a key to weakening the traditional space of nation-state in the postmodern world. In this respect, Putri et al. (2018) vivify, "The technological changes, such as an Internet have created time-space compression, which changing the concept of nation-state and national citizenship in the context of globalization. And, in the end, the maps...". Their argument here is convincing in regards to substantiating the very concept that the priority of people is shifting from the parochial territorial boundaries to a wider scope of global market. Global citizenship, denials or acceptance, is the priority to national citizenship in the present world.

Besides, the encroachment of globalization, through multinational corporations and inter-state organizations etc. have influenced noticeably in the internal policy making and decision making processes of the nation-state. Principally, United Nations charter endorses the 'sovereign equality of all its members' (Article 2(1), 2020) however, in practice, the influence of developed countries and supranational agencies are obvious in internal and external affairs of the poorly developed and developing countries. In this regard, Goksel (n.d.) asserts, "Economic globalization is considered to put an end to the system of independent sovereign states and thus lead to the erosion, loss and diminution

of the state". Thus, it clearly enunciates that whatever the contradictory arguments are made to reinforce the significance of nation-state, the intrusion of international issues into a national sphere discussed above have brought the traditional notion of nation-state into diminishing state.

Results and Discussion

New Historicism

New Historicism is a mode of literary study that is equally significant to understand the power play in politics. Hickling (2018) argues, "New historicists emphasize the notion that historical values change over time". Hence, the fundamental focus of New Historicism is on historical and cultural conditioning of the production and implication of meaning. So, to view the fact from this lens, the facts of today is all created and those do not have any phenomenal reality. New historicism believes, fact is created with an exertion of power by the one who holds it on. Moreover, in change with the dynamism of power, the facts even get changed. In this respect, Foucault states, "Power is never monolithic; and power relations always imply multiple sites not only of power but also of resistance" (Montrose, 1992). The very statement of Foucault is self-evident to justify a fact that the change brought through resistance is possible to bring change in the set conceptual framework of nation-state. And, it is because of the same, there emerges a regular contest of powers in politics. Montrose realizes this need and articulates its tenets as, "Sociocultural analysis has shifted from unity, reciprocity, and consent to difference, domination, and resistance". This clearly implicates that in a changed context, the aspects and scope of the relevancy of nation-states have also altered. Montrose continues, "so many cultural codes converge and interact that ideological coherence and stability are scarcely possible". Hence, on scrutinizing the very concept of nation-state relying on the above mentioned statements, the set paradigm of nation-state and its existence can be questioned from multiple angles. So, New Historicisms is taken as one of the key theoretical frameworks to solidify the hypothesis made in this paper.

It is believed that this theory viciously supports the possibility of the redrawing of all the boundaries those have been set on by the mythic claim of uniformity within religious-cultural, ethnic and economic the diversity.

Globalization

Globalization is a worldwide phenomenon resulted with advancement in communication and transportation system. Theoretically it believes in the interdependence among people in terms of socio-economic and political affinity beyond a particular geo-physical boundary. Robertson (1990) theorizes globalization as "the concrete structuration of the world as a whole". As globalization highlights on homogenizing world into a single community, it, unarguably, brings a question on the strand of nation-state. Many of the theorists believe in the diminishing of the influence of nation-state in the changed global context especially in the post-world war era.

Bhikhu Parekh, a political theorist, spoke to Amrith Lal on the impact of globalization in European societies, "The nation state is being eroded from within by devolution of power to regions and increasing cultural diversity, and from outside by global market and cultural forces" (Lal, 2007). It clearly is a sign that under the auspices of globalization the tying facets of nation-states are weakening with an embark in a new surge of identity: a globalized citizenship. As it is almost impossible to restrain any of the countries from the influence of multinational company i.e., global economy, trade recognition, migration etc. knowingly or unknowingly the countries are losing their capability to act on their internal economy independently. The theory of global competition, surprisingly, is not accountable for democratic process and national government in the present day globe. To this context, Shareia (2015) claims, "Nation state unit loses its importance and value in the present global conditions". Shareia (ibid) adds, "an increasing connection among social case of economic transactions as well and the unification of social and international group". Hence, the intangible apparatuses of globalization interplaying intensely into the modern world have posed a big question in actual strength on retaining the same space within a particular political territory. Commonality of things like language and traditions does not sustain the value in today's world as it used to 'by 1500 political institution' those were 'capable of dealing with their challenges' century (Doren, 1992). Thus, the theory of globalization is intensively used to reframe the conceptual framework of nation-state into a change context in this paper.

Need to Resketch the Boundaries

The concept of nation-state is an illusionary term in the sense that it is just devised to rule over majorities through an affirmation of compulsive authority. Westphalian system is questioned on ground, as it has prepared a framework of governance with the principles of statehood and sovereignty only. Nevertheless, the reality is that the citizens within a particular political boundary differ from each other in their activities, attitudes, motives, believes, and values which is why, it is not farmable within a one particular set. The extremely complex nature of society and its formation, naturally, contradicts with the culturally framed concept of nation-state. As nation-state provokes national unity, contrary to the very nature, it can not perfectly weave all the diversities within one garland. So, unfulfilled wills finally lead to internal conflict. As Montevideo convention (1933) on rights and duties of the states presents four fundamental components as minimal criteria for the statehood: territory, a permanent population with a feeling of belongingness to the nation, effective government and sovereign capacity to enter into relations with other states, these practices by nation-state, in fact, fail to ensure in totality. The feeling of belongingness of its subject to the nation is merely an utopia since the larger number of populace in a particular territory feel to have been ignored and are systematically ignored. For example, the larger number of people sacrificed their lives voluntarily engaging in Maoist insurgency in Nepal in between 2051 to 2062 B.S. They risked their lives to bring change in power dynamism so that their space would be secured and all the injustices that were in practice through the old ruling system would come to an end in the nation. The feeling of dislocation and ignorance from the mainstream political

system within the set political boundary was the cause to give tandem to this movement. And, those who fought against state mechanism had a feeling of being deprived of the ownership of the nation. Hence, exercising absolute authority over population or cultural community may rarely accord to the political entity.

Besides internal socio-cultural variations, the concept of nation-state is converting into "a myth" (Lewis & Wigen, 1997) that has got momentum in the present day's globe due to globalization and internationalization. The challenge to retain its past stamina is stalked not only by internal socio-cultural issues but also by the encroachment of globalization. "The nation-states have limited powers to challenge the hegemonic, unjust and platonic economic injustices pursued by institution such as IMF, WB (World Bank) as well as the WTO" (Jotia, 2011). The claim that Jotia makes here is that due to globalization and its tangible apparatuses, the 'sovereignty' of nation-state remains in 'limbo' (Jotia, 2011).

In addition, the rise of fundamentalism and extremism within the nation, in response to globalization, has been boomerang on the strength and scope of nation - state instead. Abdulstar (2013) says, "We see how globalization has been a direct cause of the direct rise of fundamentalism through forcing different nationalities and cultures to integrate together and adapt them to the new structure". It is because of the same profound impact of globalization in national culture; we are consistently witnessing the diminishing of the strength and scope of nation-state.

Conclusion

The internal clashes, intrusion of multiple international forces due to the emerging implication of globalization and the transcending of socio-economic, political and intellectual properties and services beyond the specific territorial boundaries have finally posed a challenge in strength of nation-state today.

In addition, the wavelength of nation-state and its prominence, founded in background of uniformity and accurate geographical boundary, have been questioned to its actual ground in the changed scenario of global context. The parochial influence of nation-state both, inside and outside the specific territorial boundary, has reduced into its effective performance. And, this has been further reinforced by the intra-national socio-cultural, religious, economic and political conflict in one hand and in another, the influences of globalization. The interplay and intersection of the intra and international aspects within the nation-state have almost paralyzed on its overall performance.

So, in a nutshell, this complex reality of nation-state has resulted it into a grave risk on influential identity of existence. Nation-state, in the present time, struggles against the double burden of power hit at a time: a hit from the dissident voices from inside and the globalization from out.

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