

## TRANSNATIONALISM

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As increasingly used, the term *transnationalism* refers either to an activity that takes place across international political boundaries or to a wholly new state of world society that is rendering the hitherto politically organized world of nation-states more or less obsolete. In this respect, *transnationalism* is a slippery term that has come to be defined in distinct disciplinary ways, much like the similar definitional slippage entailed in the term *globalization*. For example, in economics, transnationalism usually refers either to businesses that operate in more than one country or to goods, like automobiles, the parts of which are made in different countries and assembled in others or, finally, to services, like finances, that now circulate rapidly and easily across international boundaries (Kaldor, 2004).

In sociology, those concerned with transnationalism point to the growing diversity of societies as a result of the increased movement of people across international boundaries, rendering the notion of a singular coherent "society" problematic. Anthropologists, for their part, underscore how this growing social diversity involves different forms of cultural identity, as groups and individuals increasingly have more cultural affinity with others across such boundaries than with those within. In the United States, this shows up particularly well in the growing debate over whether the recent waves of immigrants from Latin America, documented or not, have more cultural affinity

and allegiance to their original home countries than to the United States or, in fact, have even lost a coherent cultural affiliation altogether in some sort of hybrid cultural in-between-ness (Khagram & Levitt, 2008).

Finally, political scientists consider transnationalism to be the transformation of the traditional relationship between nations and states as a result of all these processes tied to increasing international movements of goods, services, ideas, and people. Nations seem to be losing their authority in the face of the emergence of international governance structures like the World Trade Organization, the International Monetary Fund, the institutions of the European Union, and the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). In turn, growing interethnic rivalry and conflict within nation-state boundaries, as witnessed in places like the former Yugoslavia and contemporary Belgium and quite dramatically in Afghanistan, Iraq, and the Sudan, seem to be disintegrating nation-states from below (Orenstein & Schmitz, 2006).

Not surprisingly, within geography, those who focus on transnationalism consider it within the subdisciplines of economic, social, cultural, and political geography, for the most part, from these very disciplinary angles (Dicken, 2010; Duncan & Ley, 1993; Ó Tuathail, 1998; Penrose & Mole, 2008). The crucial difference in the approach of geographers, however, besides the fact that they aspire to a more holistic understanding (Archer, 1995), is that geographers

pay much more attention to the specifically spatial aspect of transnationalism, including changing formal boundaries, and the overall relationship of territory to economic, social, cultural, and political relationships. Indeed, in other disciplines, there has been much recent, rather hyperbolic, discussion about the actual deterritorialization of social relationships as a result of global processes. Geographers, however, emphasize that what is really going on is not deterritorialization but, rather, a more or less profound transformation in territorialization as human spatial relations increasingly take place across traditional international boundaries.

This latter point may provide the key to how geographers can treat transnationalism in a wholly transdisciplinary way. The focus on human spatial relations provides a solid foundation by which the economic, social, cultural, and political changes taking place in this time of globalization can be understood as intimately interconnected. What is happening in the world today is that all such human relations are currently being transformed, both in reality and in the minds of many, from hitherto nation-state-centric spatial connections to increasingly cross-nation-state connections. Particularly because of innovations in communication and transportation technology, the spaces of human relations are in the midst of profound transformation.

### From International to Transnational Relations

More concretely, those who believe that transnationalism is a growing phenomenon can be understood to suggest that there has been a dramatic change in the way that business firms, commodities and services, ideas, and peoples are attached or affiliated with the nations in which they operate or are located. There used to be a commonly expressed belief, for example, that what was good for General Motors was good for America. Now, however, what is good for General Motors may be to outsource and off-shore its parts production and assembly, followed by jobs and raw material linkages, to other countries where the costs of production are less expensive than in the United States. Similarly, what is good for General Motors now may be to get heavily involved in financial services, in addition to automobile production, the major profits of which depend on investments made in other countries' financial markets given the globalization of access to such markets.

At the same time, cultural phenomena like standardized fast food, for example, McDonald's and Kentucky Fried Chicken, now can be found in most every country of the world, modifying not only dietary content but also the social processes that are attached to food, both productive and consumptive. This also works the other way; for example, salsa now is apparently a more favored condiment in the United States than the once-ubiquitous ketchup in a bottle at every meal. In turn, African American-derived rap and hip-hop are now worldwide music forms with all the rather standardized clothing and behavioral

fashions that these forms have generated. At the same time, Japanese anime and manga have infiltrated the American youth market similarly affecting their own fashion sense and even changing the hitherto traditional mode of reading a book, cartoon, or comic from back page to front page, manga-style.

However, perhaps what is meant by transnationalism according to most commentators best shows up in the perceived changes in the self-identity of increasingly mobile people across the planet. It is true that there has always been human migration across political borders. In fact, some argue that the world was more globalized in this way at the end of the 19th century than it is today, given that that time period marked the height of European imperial power over the world. Without entering this debate, the point being made is that this early mass movement of peoples produced, in nearly every country, the enclaves still referred to as Chinatowns, Greektowns, Koreantowns, or the little Italies, little Havanas, little Haitis, or historic Spanish Harlem, where foreign-born immigrants still tend to congregate for mutual aid or because of discriminatory housing policies, particularly in major cities. Indeed, urban ethnic enclaves were the focus of much research in early 20th-century urban geography and sociology (Bridge & Watson, 2003). Such research also provides the key to understanding what scholars are calling transnationalism today. Until the end of the 20th century, most scholars who did research on ethnic enclaves were trying to determine the manner by which people in such enclaves eventually assimilated into the wider national culture in which they were immersed. That is, scholars were attempting to determine why some ethnic groups assimilated faster than others and how such cultural assimilation might be facilitated by better social policies, but eventual assimilation to the dominant culture was expected. Learning English, for example, was considered absolutely necessary in order to participate in the public culture of the United States.

So the assumption was prevalent that such cultural assimilation was essential for the good of the nation. And this brings us to the crux of the matter that is most identified by the term *transnationalism*. In the 21st century, with rapid transportation and communication across the planet, people are not only more mobile in general, but their spaces of immediate contact with others have been greatly extended. Political borders have become porous with regard to the human community, in this respect, as those residing in San Francisco's Chinatown or in New Yorkican neighborhoods can now maintain close economic, social, cultural, and even political ties and communication with those in China and Puerto Rico, respectively. Put differently, spatial proximity appears less a factor in the creation of human community relations in the 21st century than it has been in the past.

This extension of the geographic spaces of human community renders the notion of cultural assimilation on the basis of spatial proximity all the more problematic. It may be that one's nearby neighbor identifies, and ultimately has

social relationships more regularly, with people in foreign countries than with people in the immediate locale. And, to some people, such transnational identities and relations, as they continue to grow and intensify, are deeply troubling (Huntington, 2004; Schlesinger, 1992). Transnationalism, in this regard, is viewed as tearing apart, sometimes violently, nations as they traditionally have existed. If nothing else, such transnationalism is leading to a crisis of national community and allegiance, something that some believe bodes a problematic future for human relations within and among nations.

Other people, however, celebrate what they consider to be an advance in such relations. These commentators point to the increasing ability of people to relate on a global scale as a means to reduce mutual ignorance and antipathy. Such optimists point to what they call the increasing cosmopolitan nature of human existence emerging from the mutual recognition and performance of cultural difference (Harvey, 2009; Hedetoft, 2003; Nederveen Pieterse, 2004). They celebrate the increasing ethnic diversity of our cities and the hybrid city cultures that this diversity creates. Transnationalism, by this view, is to be promoted and extended as a means of recognizing our common human condition by way of cultural interlacing and mutual learning.

### Transcending the Nation

Transnationalism is not only a complex term to define precisely, but its various connotations are also wrought with controversy. To determine why this is the case necessitates some historical context. Although it was maintained earlier in this chapter that the notion of transnationalism has been considered in several distinct disciplinary ways, it is also clear that the term literally derives from a particular way of describing political relations. A first approach to understanding what it means politically thus requires a parsing of the connotation of the term itself. The prefix *trans-* is fairly straightforward and already has been noted. *Transnationalism* means something literally beyond or transcending the nation and the national. The suffix *-ism* suggests in its turn an ongoing process, a movement, more than a finished state or product. So *transnationalism* connotes a continuing process toward transcending the current nation or national state of affairs.

But at this point, even more definitional and, in fact, conceptual slippage becomes evident. This occurs on deciphering the meaning of nation to then determine the meaning of *nationalism* as the process by which such "nations" are brought into being. And here things get complicated. There are two main definitions for *nation* in the scholarly literature, including that of geography. From an earlier account, the two traditional definitions will be referred to as Nation 1 and Nation 2 (Archer, Bosman, Amen, & Schmidt, 2008). Some scholars have argued, for example, that humans have always organized themselves into nations. This is known as the primordial view of nations,

represented as Nation 1, which essentially considers nation as the political equivalent of an ethnic group. In this context, a nation is an ethnic group that has evolved state structures to govern itself. Nations are inherently ethnically homogeneous and, if they have indeed established self-government, so are their territorial subdivisions.

The second definition of a nation is quite different, even opposed to this view. The Nation 2 definition unites two or more ethnic groups in a civic process that transcends ethnic blood ties on the basis of rational thought. In this context, nationhood is derived directly from the Enlightenment faith in human reason and is considered to have been materially established, in particular by the American and French revolutions. Indeed, a consideration of what it takes to become an American citizen, and thus part of the American "nation," renders this definition of nation quite clear. The ethnic group that represents a person's heritage is not important, because anyone can become part of the American nation by swearing allegiance to the reasoned ideals of the nation as set forth in its founding documents, at least in principle. The United States, in this respect, has been a multiethnic nation since its founding.

Clearly, then, there is real confusion when one speaks of the nation. This confusion has led to sometimes tragic consequences, as witnessed most dramatically in the mid-20th century by the Nazi Party's political, economic, social, and police state policies to cleanse the German nation of "inferior" ethnic groups. Similarly, the ethnic cleansings in the post-Yugoslavia Balkan region and in the African state of Rwanda in the final decades of the 20th century were further evidence of Nation 1-type decisions concerning who has the legitimate right to reside in a national territory. Conversely, and importantly, the Nation 2 definition implies a basic acceptance of ethnic and cultural diversity. If a nation is defined as inherently multiethnic, there is nothing to cleanse away or any logical basis even to attempt such.

But there is an even more profound confusion in our current geopolitical understanding of nation. Even within the apparently more reasonable Nation 2 definition there lurks a problem, at least in how attempts to construct such a nation have been undertaken historically. To understand this problem and its very real implications, one should consider both the motto of the French Revolution and the practical connotation of cultural assimilation to a common civic model. In terms of the French revolutionary motto, "Liberty, Equality, Brotherhood," it is important to note that the first two terms differ in connotation from the last one. Liberty and equality are social states to be achieved by focused human activity and, in this particular historical instantiation, they were to be socially derived goals for a new revolutionary French nation. Brotherhood, however, is something else. Brotherhood is not a reasoned, socially derived ideal. Instead, it is a natural phenomenon implying blood relations.

It could be argued that Brotherhood, in this context, is used in the sense of community, but not blood relations.

However, there remains something different connoted that is distinct from the first two terms of the motto. After all, one could equally argue that the term *community* is less a reasoned state of achievement than a feeling or an emotion of not fully rational human attachment in the same way as blood relation. The point is that even this rendering of the post-French Revolution national ideal has remnants of a Nation 1 ethnic definition of nation. As actually practiced, the Nation 2 reason-based ideal of multiethnicity has never really succeeded in completely transcending the ethnic ideals of the Nation 1 definition. It simply has rendered these latter ideals more cultural and less genetic. Specifically, the new French nation was actively constructed to the benefit of the cultural traditions of one ethnic group at the expense of other ethnic groups. Put differently, the French nation was not constructed on the basis of the violent physical destruction or territorial cleansing of certain ethnic groups by some more powerful group but, rather, on the basis of what can be called the cultural destruction of these groups by the more powerful one (Weber, 1976).

Such cultural destruction was enforced in all such modernizing states by the creation of official national languages, histories, school attendance policies and curricula, legal procedures, and monetary currencies. The dominant practices were based on the cultural behaviors and traditions of whatever ethnic group dominated within the territorial borders. All other cultural behaviors and traditions in spatial proximity thus became effectively privatized, only practiced in the household, and not allowed in the official public life of the greater nation. As a result, those cultural behaviors were set on the path to destruction as languages became dialects and diverse cultural histories came to be lost with the deaths of the elderly. The language, history, myths, and symbols, such as flags, sacred or historical ethnic sites, in such imagined, multiethnic national communities thus were constructed on the essential basis of those in the dominant, or founding, ethnic group (Anderson, 1991). All other groups in the new nationalizing territory, as well as all new immigrants, thus had to "assimilate" to these new national-cultural norms to take part in the public life of the nation.

Suffice to say here that there is, then, a third way in which *nation* can be understood, which is the source of much of the anxiety felt by those who consider today's transnationalism to be essentially a destructive cultural force. This Nation 3 conception is a hybrid of Nation 1 and Nation 2 definitions. Its emergence remains largely unremarked on in most scholarly accounts, save for those who speak similarly of the ethnic core of the modern imagined nation (Hutchinson, 2004). But even these latter commentators do not make enough of the real implications of this ethnic remainder within Nation 2 practices. Although mostly unarticulated, it is precisely the fear of losing the ethnic remainder within modern nations that drives many to criticize the transnational trends that are under way in the 21st century.

### The Nation as a Fully Modern Creation

These ideas concerning the nation need to be examined from a historical and territorial point of view to better yield the essential conceptual underpinnings. The most prevalent argument in the literature identifies the problem with nations and nationalism as being a modern one. That is, even those who argue that nations have always existed make it clear that their arguments are concerned with the modern implications of the concept of nation. The reason for this is that the nation, in modern times, became the basis for something called political sovereignty, or the right to cultural self-determination without the interference from other cultures. So, in fact, the nation came to be considered a bordered phenomenon of inward cultural homogeneity and outward cultural difference. In other words, the nation became a territorial phenomenon that displayed political, legal borders. Because of this, the term *nation* became hyphenated with the word *state* to become *nation-state*, the institution that politically represents the nation and maintains the borders of its sovereign territory (Agnew, 2009). The modernity of the Nation 1 definition rests in its argument for the territorial sovereignty of ethnic groups as opposed to the Nation 2 ideal of territorial sovereignty for multiethnic communities. The reason for beginning the present account of transnationalism with the cultural definition of nations was, in fact, to get to this point. What one considers a legitimate, sovereign, "nation-state" today depends very much on what one considers a nation to be.

If one accepts the Nation 1 definition, then the most appropriate criterion for sovereignty, and thus national self-determination, is the homogeneity of ethnic groups seeking their own independent state. From this perspective, the more than 10,000 ethnic groups in the world have legitimate right to sovereign state status. Though this assumption is hardly ever elaborated or interrogated to the extent that it should be, it surely follows from the modern hyphenated linkage between nation and state. Indeed, the real implications of this assumption became manifest in the tragic occurrences in the former Yugoslavia and the African state of Rwanda, as alluded to earlier. The ethnic cleansing of Balkan territory, where scores of people were killed not for what they were thinking or doing but solely for who they *were* and *where* they happened to live, was legitimized on the basis of the Nation 1 definition. The same brutal response occurred in Rwanda between the ethnic Hutus and Tutsis, although without the actual establishment of separate sovereign states within the original territory as occurred in the former Yugoslavia.

The fact that the citizens of the now-independent sovereign states of Serbia, Slovenia, and Croatia are overwhelmingly ethnic Serbs, Slovenes, and Croats, respectively, merely corroborates these assertions about the Nation 1 ideal in general. Indeed, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo remain disputed political territories of the former Yugoslavia precisely because of their multiethnic communities. This

recent disintegration of the multiethnic, sovereign state of Yugoslavia thus marks the manifestation of the theoretical confusion about what a legitimate nation and, then, sovereign nation-state should be. It is a brutal and tragic reminder that seemingly abstract theories can have very real consequences.

That this theoretical confusion has been fully institutionalized in international law in the form of sovereign state status for countries in the Balkans region simply reinforces the stark reality of the global geopolitical situation. Considering again that there are more than 10,000 ethnic groups in the world, such success of the Slovenes and Croats may not bode well for the future where similar geopolitical aspirations prevail. Again, in this confused geopolitical context, there really is no legitimate reason to deny any ethnic group—such as the Basques, Welsh, Flemish, or Québécois in the Global North or the Fulani, Tamils, or Kurds in the Global South—from attaining full sovereign state status. And, if this is to be the case, it lays a solid foundation for ethnic cleansings of territory as well as, more benignly, a much larger cacophony of international diplomatic voices negotiating over global issues as opposed to the approximately 247 officially sovereign nation-states that exist now in the second decade of the 21st century.

In terms of the topic for this chapter, *transnationalism* is clearly a threat to this ethnic understanding of the nation. In fact, it is precisely *transnationalism* that must be avoided if sovereignty is to be achieved, hence the necessity of cleansing territory of other ethnicities. Yet there are still many who continue to believe in the Nation 2 ideal of multiethnicity as the more legitimate basis for state sovereignty. After all, this ideal derives directly from the Western Enlightenment belief in progress as a result of the use of reason in the conduct of human affairs, as opposed to that of tradition, faith, or bloodline. From this perspective, then, *transnationalism* should be understood as the basis for nation-state sovereignty. Indeed, it is more reasonable to assume that the fewer sovereign nation-states that are allowed to exist, the easier global geopolitical negotiation will be. More precisely, because the uniting of ethnic groups is the basis of mutual recognition and even respect, the more ethnic groups that can be brought together in a single nation, the more people will come to recognize their common humanity instead of their differences. Indeed, this is one reason that was traditionally given for preferring sovereignty only for large territorial nation-states as opposed to small ones. It is also an essential ideological basis for those who actually are optimistic about the creation of new transnational political spaces like the European Union, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and NAFTA economic zones, and even the World Trade Organization. As more and more currently sovereign nations are forced to negotiate within more expansive and institutionalized transnational political spaces, it just may be that global political negotiations

concerning global problems will be less a dialogue among more than 200 sovereign states than one involving only 4 or 5 fully transnational *regional* states.

From the full Nation 2 perspective, then, there is nothing to fear in the increasingly rapid transnational movement of goods, services, ideas, and people. Yet the practical, on-the-ground reality of this so-called Enlightened nationalism has been far from encouraging in this regard. Even those who express themselves essentially in such reasonable Nation 2 terms are feeling apprehensive about the threat of globalization and the transnationalist social processes that have come in its wake. To substantiate this claim, an example is offered here of recent debates within the United States concerning the social implications of increasing immigration, both legal and illegal, of people from regions south of the country's border. In this discussion, the full, equally confusing nature and geopolitical implications of the Nation 3 conception will be more fully elaborated. It is on the basis of this largely unconscious and uninterrogated conception, the argument will be, that anxieties have arisen about the disintegration of the hitherto assumed fully Enlightened American nation as a result of such transnational processes (Huntington, 2004).

### Modern Political States Actually Constructed Nations

Exploring these cultural and political aspects of the concept of transnationalism constitutes an important first cut at what the term connotes. Such an exploration into definition, however, does not get to the issue of what trends seem to be pushing the concept to the forefront of many a commentator's mind these days. After all, transnational processes have been the case on a global scale since at least 1492 CE. And here is where the perspective of geographers and geography-minded scholars becomes of utmost importance. Whereas what a "nation" is considered to be in cultural and political theory may be important in determining the basis of the sovereignty of peoples, it is really this last concept that needs now to be interrogated, most particularly in its modern *territorial* form. Indeed, the geographic focus on the role of space and territory, as noted earlier, allows for a more holistic understanding of all of the economic, social, cultural, and political aspects of what is today known as transnationalism.

To begin to understand this necessitates coming to terms with what seems to be a completely opposing argument to that presented earlier in the chapter; that is, it was, in fact, the creation of territorially bounded political states that led to the emergence of modern nations and not the other way around. Modern nations did not organize themselves into political states, but political states organized themselves as nations on the basis of ongoing nationalist processes within fixed territorial boundaries. Here then, the emphasis will be on nationalism as a fully modern

movement that was intended to create a singular nation, or quasi-ethnic group, out of many ethnic groups within the fixed territorial borders of newly sovereign states. In short, on the basis of this conception, *transnationalism* in the 21st century is involving wholly new processes that are transcending these hitherto spatially fixed territorial containers of human interaction.

As political geographers have described so well, this story begins with the new conception of "sovereignty" that emerged with the Peace of Westphalia of 1648, which marked the end of the Thirty Years' War between Catholics and Protestants on the European subcontinent (Agnew, 2009). This war was fought to force the conversion of heretics either to the Catholic or to the Protestant side or, if that failed, to annihilate them altogether. It was a particularly devastating war as God was on each side and this made defeat in any battle an intolerable thing to contemplate for either. Because of this, arguably, neither side actually won the war as much as they fought themselves to exhaustion, with much human and material destruction as a result.

Of greatest importance was the accord to which the exhausted combatants finally agreed in the Germanic town of Westphalia to ensure a more lasting peace. This Peace of Westphalia included the kernel of the modern concept of state sovereignty and sovereign reciprocity to ensure it. Briefly, the Peace of Westphalia stipulated that all the princely signatories would respect each other's right to determine the religion of their respective subjects without outside interference from other princely authorities. Here, then, is the beginning of the modern conception of sovereignty, or the right of peoples, at this time, princes, to self-determination. In turn, the signatories pledged to uphold this right by agreeing that, if any prince was transgressed in this agreement by any other prince, all other princes must come to the aid of the prince so transgressed. This, indeed, was the main justification by the United States when it came to the military assistance of Kuwait in the 1990 Gulf War following the invasion by Iraq.

What is important about these provisions of the 17th-century Peace of Westphalia for the 21st century is that they introduced a new and significant importance to princely territory and identifiable borders. If a 17th-century prince were able to determine the religion of his subject people, then it became imperative to know precisely where these people were located vis-à-vis the peoples of neighboring, similarly sovereign, principalities. Until this time, territorial borders among principalities were actually frontiers, ever under dispute and ever approximate as a result. Determining the precise territorial extent of one's people now became imperative.

The significant aspect of this new territorial conception of state sovereignty, however, was that it would come to involve much more than just politics, domestic and international. Before and immediately after Westphalia, the subject people of most principalities were ethnic groups who had been conquered and subjected to power by force.

There was little attempt to culturally homogenize subject peoples. As long as they continued to pay homage and taxes to the prince, these peoples could carry on in their diverse cultural ways. With the territorialization of sovereign politics, however, it became increasingly an issue that some of the conquered peoples were culturally different from the prince's own people and possibly even culturally similar to peoples subject to a neighboring prince. Thus, the territorialization of political power not only rendered it important to know the precise extent of a prince's territory, but it also rendered the extent of control over territory and peoples an essential source of a prince's power relative to other principalities. In short, the cultural diversity of a prince's subject people became, from this historical point onward, a potentially divisive and thus weakening force within his new territorially fixed and bordered realm of political control.

The formation of territorial politics, beginning with the Peace of Westphalia, thus brought in its wake the assumed necessity of the additional territorialization of economic, social, and cultural relations in the attempt to consolidate the prince's realm as a source of power. This can be understood as the beginnings of the *nationalization* of such relations in terms of standardization of political processes and the homogenization of the subject peoples. In this respect, *nationalism*, as a consciously initiated process, can be considered to have emerged prior to its usually recognized 19th-century manifestation. Within these newly fixed territorial borders, currencies, trade laws, taxes, weights and measures, and transportation modes and networks became standardized and uniformly regulated as national economies were constructed. Similarly, as noted earlier, the languages, traditional historical mythologies, symbols and sacred sites, religions, and even sometimes the fashions and folk art of a particular prince's ethnic group became the basis for the new nationalizing cultures as other cultures were forcibly privatized within the newly fixed political boundaries. Thus, over time, even the imaginations of subject peoples became nationalized, more and more extending to, but not beyond, the territorial borders of the sovereign state. In this way, the idea of a national "society" was born, which became materially manifest via the distinction between official citizens of the state as opposed to noncitizens.

It was this territorialization of human relations that has resulted in what are now referred to as economies, societies, cultures, and, of course, nations and nation-states. The overwhelming assumption is that these phenomena all really exist, in their differences, within the specific territorial containers of existing nation-states. That is, after all these centuries of *nationalization*, these phenomena are considered to reflect basically the same bundle of territorially bounded human relations simply viewed from different angles. However, this never has been fully the case, or really accurate, because civil wars and ethnic conflicts within sovereign states have continued to occur.

Nevertheless, the theoretical assumptions that resulted in the attempted development of such nations and nation-states

have continued to prevail, and this explains the increased attention by scholars to the implications of contemporary transnational processes. Transnationalism appears to be a significant, indeed, earth-shattering transition from a world of such bounded territorial human relations in international relations to one of territorially unbounded ones of an entirely hybrid kind of interrelationship. What needs emphasizing is that, whatever one makes of this transnationalism-in-the-making, merely focusing on it represents a consciously critical perspective on the still largely unconscious yet hegemonic territorial assumptions about human relations on the part of Western and Western-trained commentators. Those assumptions have been simmering since the Peace of Westphalia in 1648 and have since been spread around the world, in theory and in practice, on the coattails of Western imperialism.

### Transnationalism and the American Nation

The focus by geographers on the territorialization of human affairs after Westphalia thus provides the key to understanding why the topic of transnationalism has become important in disciplines like economics, sociology, anthropology, and political science. Their perceived objects of study indeed are in the process of deterritorializing, at least from the traditional nation-state ideal, no matter how little this ideal actually was fulfilled, especially in the Global South among the former imperialized countries. The geographic focus on the emergence and evolution of this modern territorial ideal of human relations, in other words, allows for a more holistic understanding of the transdisciplinary essence of transnationalism.

The following sections of the chapter illustrate more concretely the prior points by way of discussing recent effects of transnational trends in the United States. The reason is that the American nation can be considered the best example of the multiethnic Nation 2 ideal. In this respect, it would seem, transnational trends really should not be considered a problem; rather, such trends should simply be considered a deepening of the ideal of the multiethnic community, if at a more cosmopolitan level. But as anyone who has followed contemporary trends in the United States knows, transnationalism *is* considered by many to be a problem, from the global outsourcing of “American” jobs, to the infiltration of violent, foreign-sourced, video games, to the problem of undocumented (and even documented) immigrants, particularly from Latin America. The focus here is on this last issue, particularly with regard to arguments related to the perceived cultural implications of such immigration.

Even though modern America has been an immigrant nation from its founding by Europeans, today’s immigrants from Latin America have come to be considered differently from previous waves of immigration, even those like the Irish, Jews, and Italians, who also did not fit in very well initially with the white Anglo-Saxon Protestant (WASP)

founding immigrants. As one well-known scholar and critic of the new immigration has put it, the waves of people coming across the southern border of the United States simply are not culturally assimilating like earlier immigrants as they continue to maintain their language in particular. In addition, they tend to follow a less modernized Catholicism and continue to maintain strong family, financial, political, and migratory ties to their original Latin American homelands. Indeed, this eminent scholar even has gone so far as to suggest that currently we are witnessing a Hispanization of the American nation as a result of this most recent wave of immigration (Huntington, 2004). Given all the ongoing media attention concerning the need to build an actual fence on the southern border of the United States, the appraisal by Huntington has a good degree of evidence to support his suggestion.

But this is a rather curious point of view given the multiethnic Nation 2 ideal that America has traditionally come to represent. After all, a major interpretation of the official motto of *E pluribus unum* has always been the inclusion of ethnic groups mixed together in the greater cultural melting pot of the American nation. And here is precisely where, according to critics like Huntington, today’s American transnationalism differs from earlier transnational waves of immigration. In short, people from Latin America and the Caribbean increasingly find it unnecessary to melt into this common, territorially bounded pot that is the American nation. Because of innovations in transportation and communication, these people are simply residing within the borders of the United States without fully joining the American nation.

Others, however, argue that this wave of immigration is not much different from earlier waves and, further, that the new immigrants in fact will come to share cultural commonality with other Americans over time (Portes, 2001). The Cuban American population of greater Miami, for example, is hardly going to proceed in mass exodus back to Cuba after political differences between the United States and Cuba have been resolved. Particularly, the second and third generations of this Miami-based population have more in common with other Americans than they do with those who remain on the island. Those who share this point of view consider arguments like Huntington’s to be more racist than rational or, at least, historically myopic given that similar views were expressed, wrongly it turns out, about the Irish and Italian immigrants more than a century ago.

These points are raised to underscore that divergent opinions represent an explicit manifestation of the main scholarly research on the effects, bad or good, of contemporary transnationalism, similar to that described. The fact that this debate is taking place in the United States reinforces the notion that the Nation 2 ideal has never been entirely attained even in the full-birthed, enlightened American nation. To substantiate this assertion, it is necessary to propose what is really at the bottom of this current debate over recent immigration and the American nation—that is, whether these recent immigrants ever will melt into

the American national pot or, put differently, whether they ever will culturally assimilate. Indeed, worries about cultural assimilation, in essence, are what pessimists about contemporary transnationalism the world over share.

### A Truly Transnational America in the 21st Century

The United States in the 21st century, in part, has developed with Nation 1 and Nation 2 ideals functioning at different levels in different regions. While the scale of the examples vary, they can be observed as gated communities, places with a dominant religious affiliation, economically segregated, ethnic enclaves, non-English-language neighborhoods, and rural or urban populations. However, the prediction is that the United States will evolve toward a more fully enlightened Nation 2 ideal based on evolving geographic and ethnic patterns. The patterns are spatial and temporal, changing by region and differing through time. However, there are several consistencies that social scientists can conclude from the American experiment.

Although the American nation may have been founded on the basis of Enlightenment principles, it was a particular ethnic group that provided the initial and continuing cultural foundation. Huntington (2004) expresses explicitly that the cultural basis for the American nation was that of its founding WASP heritage. The American melting pot, in his view, was represented as a WASPish fire boiling all other ethnic groups into a more assimilated national fondue. Put differently, the idea that all other ethnic groups must "assimilate *to*" the WASPish cultural norm was the standard fare. Those who do not assimilate, such as substantial numbers of the present immigrants from countries to the south, were and are considered to be a threat to the American nation and national cause.

Those in the United States who are more optimistic about a transnational, multicultural future, however, continue to underscore the Enlightenment ideal of a more reasonable, cosmopolitan world. This would be a world where ethnic groups "assimilate *with*" each other, and this necessarily includes the Latin American immigrants arriving in large numbers at the end of the 20th century and the first decades of the 21st. From this point of view, the American melting pot has never provided the conditions for an ideal national fondue precisely because of the ever-dominant, oppressive heat of the WASPish flame.

In pursuing the food analogy, many would conclude that the WASPish flame has succeeded only really in cooking an unevenly melded French onion soup. Seen from above, this kind of soup looks almost like fondue but, in fact, its fondue-like façade is actually only a thin veneer of relatively opaque topping that unevenly covers the rest of the dish, which consists of cloudy broth with diverse bits

of braised and boiled onion and spices. Once pierced by the spoon of the multicultural, fully transnationalism ideal, this fondue-like, WASPish topping is immediately exposed to what is essentially the main substance of the soup, hitherto hidden beneath the topping, undcrappreciated and even unrecognized. For those people represented by the main substance of the soup, it can only be misleading and insulting to continue to believe with undue certainty that the national ideal was, and would always remain, a truly melded American fondue.

Perhaps, then, the melting pot may not be the best metaphor for the American nation, particularly in these increasingly transnational times. A more optimistic food metaphor for a truly cosmopolitan, truly established America following the Nation 2 ideal may require revisiting several decades into the 21st century. The future for the American nation may, indeed should, become more like a fruit salad called ambrosia, instead of French onion soup. This salad, so ubiquitous at traditional American picnics, is one in which all the different kinds of fruit that make it up are easily identified but, importantly, it is not just a bowl of independent fruit. It is made into a salad by a particular ingredient, a marshmallow mush, usually of extremely bright color, that holds the fruit together, sometimes in full aerial suspension. The key is that each fruit is recognizable in its full difference, but they all are held together as a salad by the mush that unites them.

In the end, it is this salad metaphor that suggests a fully rational, transnational Nation 2 ideal that will only be attained when cultural differences are fully recognized and even celebrated. Ethnic groups will assimilate *with* each other into a greater national community as a means to achieving community cohesiveness and shared cultural recognition. From this perspective, forcing that requires assimilation *to* a specific ethnic-derived WASPish cultural norm entails irrational cultural disruption similar to a cultural cleansing that can never be entirely successful, perhaps especially in these transnational times of the 21st century. In short, this more optimistic transnational ideal focuses on the provision of the marshmallow mush that, to the extent that it is allowed to spread, can leave a Chinese American, an Arab American, or a Cuban American ethnically unique but also sharing essential commonalities that are unique to being an American. Nations with transnational people in the 21st century will demonstrate different ethnic linkages to the past and present and envision a future that is more diverse culturally. They will demonstrate spatial linkages elsewhere in the world that provide a sense for, and attachment to, places that emanate from their personal and collective ethnic experiences. This increasingly transnational present and future offer nothing to fear. Instead, they may actually help to complete the Enlightenment project of increasingly rational human relations now fully global in extent and increasingly transnational in substance in the early decades of the 21st century.



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