The return of the nation state... 
... and the decline of Europe?

Vincent Stuer
ESO Seminar, 8 December 2014
The slippery slide of populism:
*Pluche: on the banalisation of the extreme right*

The dangerous charms of nationalism
*Kleinstaterij! The return of the nation state and the decline of Europe*
"I never knew a man who had better motives for all the trouble he caused"
Graham Greene, *The Quiet American*
The return of the nation-state?

In practice:
• traditional patriotism
• aggressive nationalism
• active separatist movements

In theory:
democracy and rule of law
↔ common public space, national sovereignty and a national culture
Basic concepts:
• sovereignty
• nationalism
• democracy
• European integration

⇒ how relevant are they?
⇒ how compatible are they?

⇒ does the return of the nation state mean the end of Europe?
PART I
Why do we need a state? [and how do we get one?]
Nationalism as a positive/pro-European force:

Scotland is different from UK, open to the world, wants to join the “Brotherhood of Nations”

Idem for: Catalonia, Flanders, Basque country…
But:
• Who else?
• And how do you perceive EU through same perspective?
**Kosovo* in search of recognition**

*This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.*

- international opposition
- EU unwillingness
  \[
  \implies \text{domino theory}
  \]

Unless:
- **segmental institutions** theory
- right of **remedial secession**
  \[
  \implies \text{self-determination is not what it used to be}
  \]
How independent/European would a new Member State be?

• Art 48 TFEU v Art 49 TFEU
• 'continuity of effect' v 'absorption capacity'.

⇒ 28 + 6 or 7 + ?
⇒ EU remains a union of [existing] states

⇒ independence is one thing ≠ European membership another.

Because!
- consistency
- legitimacy
PART II

What is a nation?
[and what is it for?]
The 'universal' idea of self-determination

Nationalism as peace project:
- Giuseppe Mazzini
- Woodrow Wilson

⇒ how many dominoes are there?
⇒ who gets a [member] state [and who doesn't?]?

Woodrow Wilson (1919):
“When I spoke those words ... I did so without being aware of the existence of all the nationalities who now come to us each and every day.”
Identity politics and the individual

Nation state as a prerequisite for social fabric?

'The nation':
• Max Weber
• Ernest Renan

The state:
• Bertrand de Jouvenel: 'us' v 'them'

The logical combination?
• Robert Cooper

⇒ trying to recapture the nation within the state × modern complexity
PART III
The EU is not what it used to be [and neither is sovereignty]
The EU is not what it used to be:
• Fiscal Treaty
• economic governance
• Blueprint for a deep and genuine EMU

& made more effective and democratic:
• size Commission
• power European Parliament
• politics in European Council
• one size fits [almost] all

⇒ will nationalism still be 'pro'?

Enlargement drives integration forward
Meaning smaller states lose out!
CONCLUSION

New nation states risk falling between two stools:
• the EU as network of existing MS is not able or willing to soak up a new wave of members
• the EU as developing federation is threat to new-found sovereignty
⇒ 'old' and 'new' nationalism are more similar than you would think.
Populism - nationalism:

**Attractions:**
- Legitimacy
- Democracy
- Recognition
- 'Festina lente'

E.g. Rene Cuperus' "populist correction":
"a fundamental reset of the immobilised socio-economic system
by a less self-centered and alienated elite".

**Dangers:**
- Offer more thorough & structural 'solution' to political problems.
- From critical to negative
- All things to all people: left & right, more for less
- Unable to live up to its promises.

=> **Vicious cycle of discontent / antagonism**
Remedies?

• Realism and responsibility: sovereignty? identity?
• Politicisation: *agonism* vs *antagonism*. Democracy!
• Orwell’s “Common decency”
• ...