

## **‘As a matter of fact there are very few nation-states’**

In gesprek met Charles Tilly

*Peer Vries en Birgit van den Hoven*

**We will focus this interview on your most recent book *Coercion, capital and European states, AD 990-1990* (Cambridge Mass. en Oxford 1990). The central subject of this book is the relationship between on the one hand capital - the bourgeoisie - and on the other hand coercion - the coercive power of the state apparatus - in the process of state formation. I think everybody will agree that in any case during the early modern period this relationship can be described as you do as a ‘dangerous liaison’. But even dangerous liaisons are liaisons. What exactly is the trade-off between capital and coercion? Why do they co-operate?**

Well, each one has an advantage to gain. The warmakers often want to buy the means of war and the bourgeoisie are the people who organize the markets, not only for soldiers, but also for arms, supplies and the transport of military goods. And because they are the professionals in that kind of organizing, they can complement the efforts of the people who run the armies. The trade-off for the bourgeoisie is often a good deal of profit. After all some of the great mercantile families of Europe made their money either by lending to the crown or by engaging in the supply of armies.

**And many of them lost their money in doing so. In the pre-industrial period states always were rather voracious and therefore always also a possible threat to capitalists.<sup>1</sup> But is it not true that after the Industrial Revolution the relationship between coercion and capital changed fundamentally and became more of a ‘companionate marriage’?**

Let us first clarify one little confusion here. I regard the state as a *synthesis* of coercion and capital, not just as the locus of coercion. The question I wanted to answer in this book and in the work I am still doing, is how the environment in which the state grows up affects the kind of state that appears. You have some environments that are, for a very long period, very heavy with capital. Places such as Genoa, Venice and the Low Countries. There are other places that are very heavy with coercion, not only state-coercion. One should also think of landlords with their private armies, or bandits. It is true that kings grew up to a larger degree out of the ranks of great landlords than they did out of the ranks of the merchants. There are relatively few ‘merchant-kings’. So I agree that there is an affinity between the state and coercion. But *all* states from a long

time ago - I have been looking at the last 1,000 years - to some degree combined coercion and capital in their operation. And to that extent they fused the two from a thousand years ago. It is true however that in the nineteenth century things changed dramatically throughout most of Europe.

**In my opinion ‘capital’ then became something completely different.**

Yes. It is very important to recognize, as Marx pointed out, the great increase in fixed capital. We go from a period in which circulating capital is a very large part of the holdings of the bourgeoisie to a period in which fixed capital in the form of factories, tools and so forth, becomes much more important. The state then becomes a kind of protector and regulator of fixed capital in a way that very few states were before 1800.

**That is the very reason for my question. I think there is a kind of ‘elective affinity’ between the national state and fixed capital - i.e. industrial capitalism -, but a rather tense relationship between circulating capital - i.e. commercial capitalism - and the state of the pre-industrial world. Could not critics say that by using one word ‘capital’ for both the industrial and the pre-industrial period, you are mixing things up and not really looking at relations between identical variables and that the relationship between capital, however defined, and the state changed fundamentally during the process of industrialization?**

What can one say except that this is the case *and* that there is some kind of historical continuity from one form of capital to the other. I agree that there is a break in the history of capital at the point when one starts to invest a great deal in fixed industrial plant. Because at that point the interests of other parties in the state become quite different. Many capitalists who are primarily oriented to fixed capital, now become much more concerned to have protectors of fixed locations. It is also true that organized workers then acquire an interest in balancing the power of capitalists who control fixed capital, and appeal to the state for protection.

**Do you think modern capitalism would have been impossible in a world of city-states - and empires - and that as economic ‘world-centres’ Venice, Antwerp, Genoa, Amsterdam and London had to be succeeded by national states?**

As I understand it, it would have been extremely difficult to organize the kind of employment, production and distribution that grew up in the nineteenth century, with the kind of fragmented sovereignty as existed in the city-states.

**But then how do you explain the paradox, if a paradox it is, that during the nineteenth century the liberal ideology became very popular among the economic elites, an ideology which asserts that state-power should be as small as possible, while at the same time state-power, at least infrastructural state-power, was growing faster than ever before in history?<sup>2</sup>**

It is a paradox to the extent that the bourgeoisie, that was the primary vehicle of liberal philosophy, always had an ambivalent attitude toward the state. They were perfectly willing to accept state protection for their own industry, just as long as the state did what it could to protect their free access to the markets that they preferred. Hobsbawm points out the narrowness of actual free trade. They were also perfectly willing to invoke state power to suppress workers. They were not that liberal. What they wanted, was freedom to deploy their capital and to sell their products. States indeed expanded enormously during the nineteenth century. And the pressure to expand the state came just as much from the European bourgeoisie as it did from the working classes. The working-class pressure for state expansion appeared late during that century and yet states were expanding their range of regulations, services and infrastructures from not long after the French Revolution. In fact that revolution and the Napoleonic régime provided some of the models for the construction of just that kind of a strong infrastructural state.

**If the Industrial Revolution and the French Revolution were such fundamental turning points, can one still see some continuity between the pre-industrial varieties of the state - the coercion-intensive, the capital-intensive and the capitalized-coercive state - and the industrial ones, or do you think that during the nineteenth century all European states took basically the same capitalized-coercion 'route' in which the old differences disappeared?**

No, there are still important differences. I see the nineteenth century as a time of narrowing of differences as compared with the period from the fourteenth to the eighteenth century. That period I regard as one in which there is a broadening of differences among the states that are viable in Europe. Because of the demands of nineteenth-century war only some kinds of states were viable in anything but very marginal positions. Andorra, Luxemburg, Liechtenstein and the Papal States, for example, survived by making special arrangements with their neighbours and essentially by declining all claims to international power. They simply attached themselves in one way or another to other states. But with exceptions of that kind, the creation of standing armies on a large scale, with artillery and a very heavy infrastructure, gave a considerable advantage to any state that could conscript its own population and could draw on a substantial number of young men. The sheer number of men aged between

18 to 25 or so in a country made a significant difference in the nineteenth century to the viability of the state, because that viability depended to an important degree on its ability to create a standing army. If you think of this coercion-intensive - capital-intensive range, what happens is that the extremes of that range stop being viable except under such specific circumstances as prevailed in Andorra etcetera. The other side of this is that of the effect of the French conquests themselves, for example here in the Netherlands. A significant part of its relatively centralized state-structure was already clearly visible by the 1820s. It came out of the French occupation.

**Do you think the changing character of war and warfare was also the reason that in some countries the role of the bourgeoisie was taken over by the state and that these countries went through an ‘industrialization from above’? Could one for example say that in Russia the state had to step in because there was no bourgeoisie?**

Russia had some bourgeoisie. Poland, or maybe Hungary, would be a better example.

**And Germany?**

Yes, as referring to Germany, I think that broadly speaking Gerschenkron was right in saying that in those later states, that had a large agrarian base, the state did to an important degree substitute for the bourgeoisie that had played a part further west.<sup>3</sup>

**And in your opinion the reason for that was international military competition?**

I am suggesting a more indirect connection. What I am suggesting is, that the act of creating a standing army, and a state built around it, provided control over pools of labour and capital that some states then began to direct toward reinvestment and that to that extent what Gerschenkron is talking about, could only happen because a new form of state had arisen in Europe. I do not claim that this new form of state arose because somebody saw it would have advantages to capitalism.

**Let us return to coercion. One of the basic theses of your book is that states make wars and wars make states. On every page you emphasize the importance of coercion. But would it not be true to say that from the nineteenth century onwards the role of coercion, at least of brute coercion, diminished and something else took its place, or at least supplemented it?**

It may be that because I was looking at a thousand years of history I did two things that

make the book slightly misleading. One of them is that I speak very little about the nineteenth century. But this is the kind of book that is either 10,000 pages or 200 pages. I wanted the whole period to appear in the book. The consequence is that I pass over the nineteenth century very quickly. The second thing is that I do not provide a very full analysis of a process I think I understand and which by the way is the subject I am lecturing on just now. It is clear to me now that from 1750 onwards we are dealing with a two-phase process. First one in which building coercive means - that is the creation of national standing armies - is very important. But once such an army exists, all parties to the state's creation have acquired claims to the state, which to some degree they all pursue; peasants, workers, capitalists, petty merchants and so on. To conscript a national army agents of the state found themselves making deals over and over again. This process of bargaining, which I would describe as 'the creation of citizenship', gave people a range of claims on the state that no one had ever had in European history and these then turned the state to non-military activities in a way that had not been previously known.

**That must imply that the relative weight of the armed forces in the pre-industrial period was bigger than it is during the industrial period.**

Yes, there is no question about that.

**But if that is the case, why then should rulers start bargaining in the nineteenth century in order to acquire relatively less military means than they acquired before by means of force?**

Because *in total* states then started demanding much more of their citizens than they did before. Think about it in terms which are not terribly satisfactory but at least give you a metric, that is the proportion of the Gross National Product that the state is taking. Partly because capitalism advanced and freed resources that had not previously been available, states started drawing 10%, 15% or even more of GNP.

**A bigger proportion than in the pre-industrial period?**

No question about that, redistributing it of course. It was not all spent on the military. Let us not get confused. There is an other number here that sometimes confuses this discussion, that is the proportion of the state-budget that goes to military expenditure. That proportion diminishes. Already by the end of the nineteenth century social services broadly defined are taking more of the budget than the military. That happens because of claimants, not because some wise statesman as of 1815 said: 'What we need

is a huge state that will build highways, turnpikes, canals, schools and so on and so forth'. There were a lot of interests that would now have claims on the states.

**Is there a certain moment in time at which one can pin-point this change, this 'demilitarization' of the state?**

If we needed dates that you could quote on an examination, we could say that in Germany for example it happened from Unification on. In this aspect Germany is a wonderful case because, particularly under Bismarck, the state anticipated some of the claims, it co-opted and pre-empted them by creating social services *and* controls, that made it more difficult for workers to organize. But surely, in general it would be sometime around the middle of the nineteenth century for many European states.

**Do you think nationalism fits into all those developments you just described as an autonomous and independent element, or can it simply be 'deduced' from the process of state formation?**

I think some of both. I do not think you can strictly deduce the character of nationalism, its claims, qualities and myths, from the process of state formation. However, part of what we have just been talking about, produced incentives for national claims that had not previously existed. The basic question is: 'How did the formation of national consolidated states produce a kind of circumscription of a wide variety of resources?'. It is really stunning to see how unusual the European state of after 1750 until the recent past is in comparison to all the states that have ever existed. Within the same boundaries it contained capital, labour, an educational system, a language, a single bureaucracy, a fiscal system and a military organization. I think it is important to realize that particularly after 1789 to control a state was to control much more than was true before 1789. The advantages of those who controlled the state, and the disadvantages of those who did not, became much greater.

**But then it is something of a miracle that some people *wanted* to have a state. How do you explain that people in parts of Europe, for example Germany, where there was no modern national state, wanted such a state so badly. Were they masochists?**

It is not a miracle at all. It became much clearer then that if you had claims, but no state, there was a great danger that you would lose those claims. Let us go back another step. Until the eighteenth century most states were ruled indirectly. They were ruled via great magnates, power holders of one kind or another, who had great power in their own territory, the Junkers for example. Under this indirect rule many different nationalities

*'As a matter of fact there are very few nation-states'*

could survive, even as ill-defined units. Many languages for example could exist side by side. As long as rule occurred through the mediation of regional power holders and the state did not for example extend its administration to the individual villages, people continued to live their lives.

**But still the question remains: 'Why do some people actually want to live in *their* state, with people of *their* nation and only with them?'. Whence came nationalism, which is defined by Ernest Gellner as the wish to have a congruency between state and nation?'**

I think Ernest Gellner is actually on a very good track on this. It is crucial that there be a set of urban people, typically a coalition of bourgeois and intellectuals who already have a considerable investment in a network of social relations that they have identified as a defined common identity. Let us not worry whether it is *in fact* a common identity. All they have to do, is to agree that they have a common origin and that in some broad sense they are kinfolk and have a common culture. To the extent that the people running a state do not bother with local affairs, people can continue to hold an important position within a network that is defined by kinship, language, religion and so forth over a very long period of time. And they do not experience any great threat to that. They can live in more than one culture, speak more than one language and so on. But to the extent that there is a competitor for control, particularly of education, and to some extent religion, administrative language or the lines of communication, then the choice becomes very clear. There are two ways in which local culture can be threatened. One is when those who run the state themselves start imposing a single administrative structure on the whole country. They have some incentives for doing that, it simplifies administration, it establishes their hegemony. That is one form of serious threat. It is external in the sense that it is 'from above'. The other is that when there are adjacent nationalities and one of them allies with the state-builders, while the others do not. Then there is a great threat that those who ally with the state-builders will use their relations for regional control. That is also an external threat, but it is much closer at hand. You can see that repeatedly in the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

**When your neighbour has a state or allies with a state, you have to have one too?**

It is even worse than that. When your neighbour has a state, you may be in it!

**Does this imply that, at least at this stage of history, state formation and nation-building have become 'necessary'?**

We can think about this question of necessity in two different ways. One of them is to ask: 'Could what now exists, have existed without those previous developments?'. My answer would be: There are features of what we now see, and of what we will see in 1993, that it is almost impossible to imagine happening, if it had not been for the existence of heavily capitalized states, of certain kinds of nationalism, and so on. If you ask the other type of question, if for example we go back to 1750 and say: 'As things were in 1750, was it inevitable that a kind of capitalized-coercive state would become the dominant form of state?', I would say: 'No, not at all'. We can make ourselves a hypothesis of a revival of mercenary armies. After all, there were plenty of peripheral people the Europeans could have drawn on at that point in the nineteenth century.

**Why did this possibility not become reality? Why did one not choose this option?**

Well actually some states did.

**The English had a kind of mercenary army, their Indian Army.**

That is right. I made my book very schematic, as if there were no mercenary armies after 1815 at all. But even the Napoleonic armies had their mercenaries, next to the national units. We are talking about something that did indeed happen, but the process we described squeezed out the mercenaries. First of all the effort of each state individually to create its locally recruited army undermines the international recruitment of soldiers.

**People were no longer allowed to serve in foreign armies.**

Yes, so the supply ran out. The other point is that the economic advantages of having an army you do not have to pay very well and that you recruit on the basis of patriotic commitment or something of that kind became obvious. They were, however, not so overwhelming that you could not build an army by paying for it. But relatively speaking that became a much less attractive alternative. We could re-analyze the situation by asking what it would have taken for mercenary armies to have become more important. I think we can perform such a thought-experiment. We can change some of the characteristics of Europe in the early nineteenth century. For example we can think of employment moving so rapidly that it becomes extremely costly for a country to use its own citizens for military purposes.

**You have written a lot about state formation in Europe, especially in the early modern period. Is this because in your opinion there were no states in the rest of the world at that time?**



There was a Chinese state.

**But I do not think one could call 'China' a national state.**

Well, at times you could call it a national state. China is a fascinating case because periodically, even before European states tried it, on a scale of Europe - there were 100 million people living in China in 1500 - the Chinese were trying to build an administrative structure that reached into the individual village. We do not yet understand the history of China well enough. The fact is that by the criteria we talked about, the Chinese had, at a continental scale, something that looked like a national state. However, it kept collapsing.

**And why is that? Because there was no fragmented sovereignty in China? In reading your book *The formation of national states in western Europe* I get the impression that a very important precondition for state formation in Europe was the existence of fragmented sovereignty or feudalism.**

Yes, fragmented sovereignty is a starting point. But I know the people who are working on China and I do not think anybody has the answers. One piece of the answer is probably that, except for their peculiar relation with the Mongols, the Chinese did not face, for 700 years or so, an external military threat. They simply filled the space they occupied and worked out a symbiotic, predatory relation with the Mongols on the northern border.

**So they did not live in a state system and did not need to build a big army?**

Well, they had an enormous army, but that concentrated on internal control. It showed very little external military activity, except on the northern border. That facilitated the use of the military force for internal control.

\*\* \* \*\*

**I suppose that reading your book many historians will say: 'This is going against history. The new way of writing history is narrative. The new approach is historical anthropology'. What you are doing is completely unmodern. It is modern in a post-modern way, but it is unmodern in that is not 'fashionable' nowadays for historians to try and write this kind of book. You never really analyze 'mentality', you do not discuss intentions and actions. There seems to be no room in your work for 'agency'.<sup>5</sup> Of course nobody planned the modern state, but people were doing things and had intentions by which they brought about**

**something, a state, which maybe they did not plan, but nevertheless produced.**

I think people are planning things all the time. The misunderstanding is that we accomplish the things that we plan. We engage in intentional action all the time and we engage in routine action all the time. The point is that we have but little capacity to foresee the consequences of our actions, to predict them, as they articulate with the actions of a great many other people. It then becomes a fallacy to think that, because I had intentions at point A, they must have been, whatever my action, what produced the situation at point B. That does not follow at all. The problem of the relationship between structure and agency became more salient as postmodern and literary theorizing became more important in historical, sociological and anthropological writing and so on. Because, even though part of the impulse of postmodern thinking was to unmask agency, its consequences have often been to explode agency. That is a discourse exercises power, but the agent of that power disappears. A number of people have actually been drawn in by the idea of social life as discourse, as nothing but discourse. And in that sense the problem of structure and agency has become important. That is not the only way, there is the classic way, which is simply saying: 'To what extent can we think of the present as an inevitable outgrowth of the recent past and to what extent must we invoke some choice, some agency in order to get from the previous arrangement of social life to the present one?'. That classic problem became more salient at the same time, simply because the challenge of post-modern thought - about which I am not very enthusiastic - nevertheless came back on those of us, who have not been very careful in specifying how we saw the relation between structure and agency.

**Many people will say: 'Culture is not a separate phenomenon, culture is everything'. Take for example Clifford Geertz...<sup>6</sup>**

Actually, Geertz is changing his mind about that very rapidly. I think he now feels very - guilty to some extent - worried about the next generation of people who are working in this line. In an extreme version postmodern thought leads to straightforward idealism. I do not hold that position and I think that - as it is practised over the last ten years - it is a self-destructive position. But to return to my book, I think it is drenched in culture. I deny that it denies culture. But what it does deny, is that culture or mentality, whichever of these you choose, is a separate phenomenon from concrete social relations. All these social relations that I describe in the book, between great lords and sovereigns, are drenched in culture. But culture is not a separate phenomenon that somehow comes like a beam of light in an Italian Renaissance painting. It does not come from God.

*'As a matter of fact there are very few nation-states'*

**But then what is your intellectual 'milieu' at the moment. When I read your work and compare it for example to what is happening now in the French Annales, I think you do not really affiliate with them.**

Not with what happens now, but you have to remember that as the post-war Annales came into being, it was quite a materialist programme. It was only later on that people like Furet and Le Roy Ladurie started moving in a much more idealistic direction than the 'old' Le Roy Ladurie, Vilar or Braudel. Those people in a very important way were materialists. And so was the programme of the Annales for a while.

**Then you refer to the first and second generation. But you do not believe in an idea that was basic to their approach: total history.**

I not only do not believe in it, I have a section in one of my recent books that is called: 'Will total history save us?'. And the answer is: 'No, total history will not save us'.<sup>7</sup>

**But when I ask you: 'Will anthropology save us?' the answer will also be: 'No!'. Then what will save us? Or is there no salvation?**

There is no final salvation, of course, but I do think that, what I would call 'analytic historicism', will save us. What I mean by that, is the idea of thinking of the present as a product of a past whose elements we can actually detect, but as embodying a series of possible futures. Not one future, but a series of possible futures. And the process of analysis consists both of seeing how the previous history of a social process constrains what possibilities are open at the present and of analyzing how people make the choices that produce the next phase in that social process. What it requires, is laying out the other possibilities at any given point in time and then doing an analysis of what it is that produced the choices that were made. That is the first thing. The second thing it requires, is actually taking cases and showing how the previous histories of the actors and social relations involved in those cases, constrained them at each point in time. Think of the history of a state as a whole set of social relations that exist at a given point in time which constrain what can happen. What I do in that last book, is to greatly simplify that with this coercion-capital scheme. In a sense I try to systematize some insights that were already in Barrington Moore's book.<sup>8</sup> To be tied to great landlords, is to be tied to much more than the fact that they had military force at their disposal. There is a way of life involved. This is a historicist way of thinking, in that it says that *when* and in *what order* something happens, significantly affects *how* it happens.

**That is a much more analytical point of view than for example Hobsbawm has in his last book. Would you ever write a book like that one?**<sup>9</sup>

Well, first of all, I guess I have to say something that many of the reviewers say. Eric is so hostile to every national movement, that he has great difficulty ever portraying how it is that anybody could ever have had such a foolish idea. I am seriously worried about the Soviet Union. Nonetheless, it seems to me that you can easily place yourself in the position of the Estonians and see what it is about being an Estonian that makes independence from the Soviet Union attractive. But Eric finds that, not only in his book, very difficult. That does not mean he is not good at it. Part of the book on nationalism goes back to the book he did with Terence Ranger and *Nationalism* is wonderful in that regard.<sup>10</sup> There are wonderful ironies in it. The Rumanians, inventing their Roman origin for themselves and a single language, a literature and so on. And then others do the same sort of thing. There is a wonderful invention of tradition.

There is one element, let us call it empathy. To be the historian of a phenomenon, you do not have to like that phenomenon, you can hate it. But at some point you will do a better job if you can think yourself into the position of the people who did something and sort of reconstruct the circumstances that make this a plausible outcome. And I do not think Eric ever does that. If you knew nothing about the topic and read the book, you are bound to say: 'This is a book about human folly. People keep doing the same foolish thing over and over again'. What is it in this book that explains why they ever did it? The book is perfectly consistent with his, what he calls, paleo-marxism. He sometimes says he is the only paleo-marxist left. He actually does a reasonable job at the beginning of the book laying out different positions on the national question within Marxist thought and he takes one of the positions, that says, this is a political aberration, based on misunderstandings. There is no justification for it.

### **Would you write a book like this about such a subject?**

I enormously admire Eric Hobsbawm. He is one of my intellectual heroes. I love the talent that he put into that book. If I could find the exact story the way he does each time, I would be absolutely delighted. But he has not constructed the book the way I would write it. It is surprising, that for example having read Gellner, he does not provide a clear discussion of how the changes in the character of the state affected the viability of different forms of nationalism.

**I think the biggest part of the book is rather idealistic. There is not much discussion of social-economic change in it. It is kind of traditional.**

It is. It may be the most traditional book that he has ever written. That is probably a product of the way the book came into being, as a series of public lectures. But it is quite

*'As a matter of fact there are very few nation-states'*

true that there is no economic frame in the book. You do not understand how the changing forms of capitalism and then of socialism affect the viability of different forms of nationalism. It is not a very analytical book. Both sides, the economic and the political side, are surprising. The economic side is surprising, because it is Hobsbawm and he has written brilliantly on related topics in his books on the nineteenth century. The political side is surprising, because there are a number of efforts - think of Anthony Smith<sup>11</sup> - which have a political analysis which you might have thought Hobsbawm would disagree with in one way or another, but at least attend to. His book becomes something more of an exhibit of the crazy ideas people have had about nationalism. But it is a beautiful exhibit. It is a much less theoretical book, implicitly, than Hobsbawm's other books. He has always hated being very explicit about his theories.

### **He does not like sociology.**

In a way. He does not like people to lay out hypotheses and so forth and say, here is my evidence. He prefers another form. All of his books in that sense are more narrative than anything I would ever write. I think that is simply a difference in training and temperament. I prefer to have a book whose argument you could write on a single page. It might take you a book to make that argument plausible, but I would regard any book of mine as a failure if I could not write its argument on a single page.

**Again, that is completely against the new developments in history, I think. At least in the Netherlands, in France, England, Germany, as far as I can see in Spain, history is developing into a kind of un-analytical, anti-analytical literature.**

I can not help thinking that, to the extent that this is tied to a relativist or completely negative epistemology, it is a self-defeating enterprise. What worries me, is that there is a generation of people who will have committed themselves to that enterprise. And those people will have systematically unfitted themselves to do anything else.

\*\*\* \*\*

**An inevitable final question on the eve of 1992. Do you think the state will disappear? You say that the state has not only a basis in discourse, but also and especially an objective, material basis. So you could imagine it disappearing?**

As a matter of fact I think the national state is on its way out right now. The European Community is going to be the first to destroy it. If the charter of labour actually is implemented and a comparable free movement of capital occurs, it will be impossible

for any single state after the year 2000 to maintain a separate army, a distinct social policy or a fiscal system which is autonomous. We already recognize that there can not be a separate monetary system. There will be no way to maintain a welfare system at a national level, unless it is a replica of the welfare systems in all of the European countries. That is my sense of it. I may well be wrong, but if I am wrong, then that last book is wrong. It is probably wrong in most ways, but we hope it is right in a few useful ways. I did not get into it this way, but I realized that, as I started thinking through the consequences of the European Community, I have very little choice but to conclude that the economic arrangements that the twelve have chosen to concentrate on, actually undermine the political arrangements that they think that they have avoided. As compared with the vision that a Monnet had of the European Community, which actually had a great deal of political unification into it, the state representatives to the European Community have been very, very hesitant to anything about dissolving political sovereignty.

**You think material forces will prevail and decide the fate of the sovereign national state?**

All I am saying is, that if the kind of argument that I offer in the coercion-capital book is correct, then it also ought to be true that free movement of labour from one part of Europe to another, even assuming that the Community can actually seal the eastern and southern border - which I think is very unlikely - is going to mean that the high productivity points in Europe are going to attract labour from the low productivity points in all of a circumscribed area. They are going to send remittances in small packets, but great remittances. As cyclical unemployment strikes any of these high intensity centres, the costs of maintaining unemployed labour are going to become enormous. No single state, as they now exist, will be able to carry those costs. Or if they do this, they will start negotiating in a way that will almost certainly tend to equalize policies and costs among states. Which means you have either enormously complex transfer systems or restrictions on the movement of labour. If the free movement of labour continues, I do not think military conscription will be possible on a national scale anymore. So national conscripted armies disappear, at least become extremely difficult to manage. The welfare budgets are going to be a very large part of state budgets. I think a confederal system of some kind could come out of it. But almost certainly a number of these activities that now provide the organizational basis of state-existence, including that circumscription I was talking about earlier, are under a tremendous threat. And that is just talking about what the European Community is doing itself. At the same time the international mobility of capital is accelerating to a degree that already greatly diminishes the power of any particular state to regulate the investment or reinvestment of capital during some time.

*'As a matter of fact there are very few nation-states'*

**You are referring to the situation in Western Europe. But how about the eastern parts of Europe? There we see not only the disintegration of existing states, but also the wish to create many new ones instead. Is not that a development in the opposite direction?**

Think first about the entry costs for fully equipping your own state in the European world of today. At most four of the Soviet republics are in the position to supply those entry costs. I think with the assistance of Sweden, Finland and western European countries you could probably maintain a separate Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. I do not think Georgia, Azerbaidzjan, Armenia, have an independent future. There are a lot of candidates. One of the problems with the Soviet Union is the same kind of spiraling process we were talking about earlier. The linguistic maps have about two thousand units on them. And each unit that acquires autonomy threatens the next unit in some way. So, there is a limit. You could chip off a few, possibly the Ukraine. And apart from these 'internal' problems there are very strong international resistances to the changing of boundaries. It is really surprising how strongly the collective state-system has come to resist shifts of boundaries.

**The map is fixed, except for the German re-unification.**

There have been very few partitions. I think India is the most notable example. As a matter of fact there are very few nation-states. Actually, Hobsbawm in his book is very good on the question: 'Are there really any nation-states?'

**Anthony Smith says that only some ten percent of all national states in the world actually are nation-states.<sup>12</sup>**

It is extremely difficult for any state to maintain itself without a minimum investment in infrastructure. That really is a serious problem for 'new states', particularly in Europe where the pressures from other states to provide state services, state benefits etcetera are pretty substantial, much greater than they are in Africa.

**So if new national-states will arise, they will probably not be really 'sovereign' national-states? You have to be involved in an international system from the beginning. You can see it in Spain where many people in Catalonia want to be autonomous, but only when they are more or less incorporated in an international system as the EC. They feel that they are too small for complete sovereignty.**

To come back to the example of the Soviet Union, I do not think for example that in

general the Soviet republics are viable states. Obviously the Russian Republic is huge, populous, relatively rich on a world scale. But the other republics by and large are not viable. Particularly if they are going to create the full apparatus of a national state. On the other hand, I think it is quite possible, when some of the same things are going to happen in eastern Europe that have happened in the European Community: attempts to create economic blocs of one kind or another, large markets and so on. And those in some ways will make political autonomies that do not have all these other powers, more viable. But I could well imagine a return to the normal state of the world, which is to have thousands and thousands of small entities.

## Noten

1. Voor de gespannen verhouding tussen 'staat' en 'kapitaal' in pre-industrieel Europa zie bijvoorbeeld: W.P. Blockmans, 'Voracious states and obstructing cities: an aspect of state formation in pre-industrial Europe', *Theory and Society* 18 (1989) 733-755.
2. Voor een nadere toelichting op het begrip 'infrastructural state power' zie: M. Mann, 'The autonomous power of the state: its origins, mechanisms and results' in: J.A. Hall, ed., *States in history* (Oxford en Cambridge, Mass. 1986) 109-136.
3. Voor een eerste introductie in de ideeën van Gerschenkron met betrekking tot de industrialisatie van landen waar het industrialisatieproces laat op gang kwam en die niet beschikten over een eigen sterke bourgeoisie, zie: I. Schöffer, 'Gerschenkrons theorie van "the great spurt"', *Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis* 82 (1969) 282-288.
4. E. Gellner, *Nations and nationalism* (Oxford 1983) 1.
5. Voor een nadere toelichting op de verhouding tussen 'structure' en 'agency' bij het verklaren van historische structuren en processen zie: Ph. Abrams, *Historical sociology* (New Shepton Mallet 1982) 'Preface' en 'Introduction'.
6. Voor de binnen de menswetenschappen zeer invloedrijke opvattingen van Geertz over het 'culturele karakter' van de samenleving zie met name diens *The interpretation of cultures* (New York 1973) en *Local knowledge; further essays in interpretive anthropology* (New York 1983).
7. Tilly verwijst hier naar zijn boek *Big structures, large processes, huge comparisons* (New York 1984) 65-74.
8. Tilly doelt hier op B. Moore Jr., *Social origins of dictatorship and democracy. Lord and peasant in the making of the modern world* (Boston 1966).
9. Bedoeld wordt hier uiteraard E.J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and nationalism since 1780. Programme, myth, reality* (Cambridge 1990).
10. Het boek van Hobsbawm en Ranger waar Tilly hier naar verwijst, is E.J. Hobsbawm en T. Ranger, ed., *The invention of tradition* (Cambridge 1983).
11. De meest recente uiteenzetting van Smiths ideeën is te vinden in: A.D. Smith, *National identity* (Harmondsworth 1991).



*'As a matter of fact there are very few nation-states'*

12. Zie voor deze bewering bijvoorbeeld A.D. Smith, 'State-making and nation-building', in: Hall, *States in history*, 228-263. Hier komt ook het verschil tussen 'national state' en 'nation-state' aan de orde.