

Arjun Appadurai 2000 The grounds of the nation-state. Identity, violence and territory.

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Nationalism and internationalism in the Post-Cold War era,
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Love of the nation, it is evident, is no mere figure of speech. Parades bring people to their feet. National anthems produce lumps in the throat and flags induce tears in the eye. Insults to national honor can greatly assist internal mobilization and violations of national sovereignty can create irate mobs. Sacrifice, passion, anger, hate are all part of the symphony of affects in which love - here love of the nation - is the orchestrating force. So regularly has love of the nation been invoked by nationalists through every medium of communication that we have ceased to pay attention to its peculiarities.

The history of patriotism (and matriatism) as a sentiment is yet to be written, but when it is written it will solve some part of the puzzle of what may be described as *full attachment*. By full attachment I mean that *surplus of affect* which exceeds civic commitment, attribution of legitimacy to a state, or even what Habermas has called 'constitutional patriotism'.

The question of why large groups of individuals united by some sort of republican commitment to a modern legal-political order should experience an order of attachment to each other and to the state-defined territory with which they identify which allows them to kill and die in its name is an unsolved puzzle. It is even more puzzling when we consider that these individuals often have prior local or sub-national attachments that have to be explicitly erased by national propaganda in order for nationalism in its strong form to exist. No theory of folk identity, however plausible, can account for the affective side of nationalism, since it is only through the vehicle of the nation-state that such theories come to be at all successful. Likewise, as I observed earlier, it will not do to assume or imply that the nation-state simply continues to exploit the transcendent, religious, sacral mystique of just those orders which it has, in other respects, served violently to repudiate.

What I will do is to explore the puzzle of full attachment by looking more closely at the issue of territoriality. There is much to be said for the vital role of territory - more specifically of territorial sovereignty - in distinguishing the modern nation-state from prior and parallel forms of collective social life and

governance. Everything else that is invoked as vital to the nation-state - both by its theorists and by its ideologues - is a principle of attachment that the nation-state shares with other socio-political forms. Blood, race, language, history, 'culture' - all have pre-national expressions and non-national applications. They can be used to justify, extend or inculcate love of the nation but they are not distinctive of the national form. Without some idea of territorial sovereignty the modern nation-state loses all coherence.

Bombay, a city with a population in 1998 over 10 million and clearly likely to become of the mega-cities of the twenty-first century, is characterized by the following: the gap between rich and poor; the spatial fortifications that divide the residences of the rich from the living spaces of the poor; the high incidence of 'informal' sources of livelihood for the poor; the dramatic intercutting of civic, sacred and commercial spaces; the dramatic force of transnational currency, images and arms; the growth of private militias. In these circumstances the line between international and civil wars tends to become blurred as does the line between the territorial boundaries of the nation-state and the demand for 'pure' spaces of day-to-day ethnic habitation.

Bombay has had a well-deserved reputation for ethnic tolerance, commercial drive and openness to immigrants from the rest of India. Yet the growth of the Shiva Sena (a Bombay based right-wing ethnochauvinist party) to a mayor power in the city, the state and the country have been part of a growing politics of intolerance to non-speakers of Marathi, the majority language of the state of which Bombay is the capital. In the latter part of the 1980s, there was a convergence between the growth of Hindu nationalist parties at the level of national politics and the ethnic chauvinist politics of 'regional' parties such as the Shiva Sena. The heating up of anti-Muslim politics throughout this period culminated in the planned destruction of a major place of Muslim worship, the Babri Masjid in the provincial town of Ayodhya in Uttar Pradesh, in December 1992. In the wake of this major act of violence against India's Muslims, preceded and followed by a steady effort to marginalize and terrorize Muslims throughout India, there were massive outbreaks of violence against Muslims in Bombay, as well as a major bomb explosion, widely attributed to international Islamic terrorism (much as with the New York World Trade Building bombing). All this took place in the period from December 1992 to March 1993.

There is a considerable body of material which has been published on the Bombay riots. This material contains enough descriptions and testimony to

provide a detailed picture of specific incidents, actors and locations. What emerges is a complex picture of organized crime, police collusion, political bungling, lumpen involvement and economic and spatial stress. Also, what emerges clearly is the direct effort of the Shiva Sena (in speeches and editorials in its party newspaper) to link the ethnic geography of Bombay to the national geography of Muslims and to Pakistan as the enemy.

A crucial link between micro-episodes of extreme violence and national politics was a ritual innovation by the Shiva Sena -the *mara-arati* (rough gloss: great offering) - a type of public religious performance with no prior mandate, which was specifically and widely deployed to monopolize, sacralize and aggressively colonize streets in key neighbourhoods, with an eye to intimidating Muslims in the public sphere. It is through such performances - amongst a host of other organizational and discursive practices - that the Shiva Sena succeeded in turning Bombay into a living simulacrum of a sacred 'Hindu' public space rather than a poly-ethnic commercial, secular urban world. Predatory identities thrive (especially in their capacity to draw the energies of street thugs, neighbourhood bosses, local mafia and petty criminals) when issues of endangered ethnonational identity are successfully 'downloaded' into the crowded, necessarily mixed spaces of everyday work and life.

It is in part such 'downloading' that accounts for the success with which nations subordinate, erase or eradicate prior attachments. It is not difficult to see that the politics of national (and transnational) space has imploded into specific localities and in particular into certain major cities, such as Los Angeles, Beirut, Sarajevo, Bombay and into smaller satellite cities. The sense of sacredness, integrity, sovereignty and security previously associated with national spaces, sites and monuments has in some cases imploded (or folded, or became scaled down) into cities, neighbourhoods, buildings and sometimes even specific streets and houses. It is in the intersection between heavily fraught urban ecologies and national and transnational battles over religious identities and claims that the worst episodes of inter-ethnic violence can break out. The link between large numbers, urban fragilities and state-sponsored categories of identification and affiliation creates a special climate of uncertainty in which extreme bodily violence can thrive.

Where are we to find some sort of moral counterpoint to the unfettered play of global capital and some form of large-scale attachment to ground the building of morally and socially meaningful lifeworlds in which politics, of some positive sort,

can continue ? Can we find peaceful forms of supranational politics which might provide the sort of glue that nationalism provided for the nation-state in an earlier era, but minus its built-in violence and artifice ?

The current crisis of sovereignty besets not just individual nation-states but the very system of nation-states, yet the vast majority of solutions to this crisis assumes the eternal and self-evident logic of the nation-state as the central form of articulation for modern politics. But the world in which we live is formed of forms of consociation, identification, interaction and aspiration which regularly cross national boundaries. Refugees, global labourers, scientists, technicians, soldiers, entrepreneurs, and many other social categories of persons constitute large blocks of meaningful association that do not depend on the isomorphism of citizenship with cultural identity, of work with kinship, of territory with soil, or of residence with national identification. In these delinkages which might best capture what is distinctive about *this* era of globalization.

Put another way, can we think of a global politics which admits of a heterogeneity of *overlapping* forms of governance and attachment (some national, some statist, and others neither) rather than one which requires a homogeneous set of interacting units? This sort of heterogeneity, which might involve negotiations between many kinds of large-scale political organizations, raises a host of practical problems about rights, wrongs and peaceful large-scale governmentality. But the prior problem is conceptual and normative: are we prepared to think of a world in which the procedural virtues of the modern legal-bureaucratic state and the moral and cultural needs of human groups for all sorts of attachments, including what I have called full attachment, are not played out in isomorphic, mutually exclusive, spatial-political envelopes ?

Without some such fundamental architectural revision, love of the nation must become an obsolete sentiment, or worse, a mere alibi for deadlier kinds of affect. Of course, it might be argued that the new forms of consociation and attachment that emerge are not really nations at all.