Quebec, Wales, and Scotland: Three Nations in Search of a State*

EDWARD A. TIRYAKIAN
Duke University, Durham, U.S.A.

Introduction

A SCANT GENERATION AGO, the question of "development" was one which social scientists wondered about in terms of the impact of the West on the non-Western areas, an impact due to the combined forces of Western technology and Western ideologies. The non-Western world, particularly since an increasing segment of it gained political independence and therefore joined the world community as a visible presence, was seen as facing manifold (but not insoluble) problems in making the jump from "tradition" to "modernity." Since the manifold changes entailed in "modernization" were condensed in one or two generations at the most, change was seen as rupture (Gras, 1979), as discontinuous, qualitative. On the other hand, and perhaps reflecting an underlying ideology of liberalism, development in Western societies and of Western societies was taken-for-granted, notwithstanding short-term political aberrations (e.g., Poujadism in France or McCarthyism in the United States).

The late 1960s greatly changed the social landscape and its horizon. It brought to an end, I would suggest, a civilization of progress, including its major temporal orientation (Tiryakian, 1978). The ruptures have not been so much those in the non-Western areas as they have been in Western societies. I mean ruptures not only in the economic sector (where development has come to a standstill and replaced by "stagflation," marked by high unemployment, reduced productivity, high rates of inflation, and the like), but also in the cultural sector (the counter revolution, religious renewal movements), and in the societal sector (the complex sexual revolution). Amidst these ruptures and unanticipated changes has been the emergence in the 1970s of a new wave of political movements in Western societies that are not based on class affiliation, and that cannot conveniently be located as "left-wing" or "right-wing"

movements. They are nationalist movements, seeking the cultural and political autonomy of the nation. What is rather startling, in view of the liberal image that Western regimes are, par excellence, the seats of democracy, is that these movements view their respective nation in varying degrees of captivity at the hands of an alien State; moreover, their nation is a geographical enclave, having recognizable territorial demarcations, within the established borders of the nation-state. That Spain is the focus of at least two such movements, and that one, the Basque movement, seems as much of a stalemate as that in Northern Ireland, may not be all that disconcerting or surprising for social scientists who might dismiss this as temporary dislocations in a period of transition following the authoritarian regime of Franco. But that nationalist movements have sprouted in two cradles of modern democracy, France and Great Britain, is cause for puzzlement. The more so since France and Great Britain are two of the early modernizers, whose political boundaries were established (with very minor additions in the case of France) before 1800. In brief, the outbreak of nationalist movements in the West, and in established democratic regimes at that, constitutes an anomaly in our assumptive frame of reference regarding modernity. That frame of reference, I would suggest, is geared to accepting a widening aggregation of sociopolitical units whose coming together is a function of a developing, integrated world economy. The European Community, which recently had its first parliamentary elections, would be one manifestation of trans-national aggregation. I should add that this frame of reference, or at least this aspect of it, is shared by both “modernization” and “dependency”/“world systems” schools of thought, an instance of their convergence (Portes, 1979).

On the other hand, nationalist movements within established nation-states, seeking to bring about the autonomy of those who constitute the nation, including its territorial autonomy, are anomalous since they represent tendencies for disaggregation. This goes against basic notions of the course of modernity. The fact that these movements cannot be reduced to economic factors (a case can be made for the fact that, by and large, they take place in regions which are lagging or falling behind in economic growth; yet, both the Basque and Catalan areas have higher rates of economic activity than the rest of Spain. Also, other regions have had worse or as bad economic experiences in the 1970s—for example, the North of England—and have not had new forms of political discontent), nor to political factors, for that matter, make them sociologically interesting as “total social phenomena.”

They are interesting at two levels: first, in themselves since they have clustered at about the same time and therefore become an apt subject of comparative analysis, one which would seek to establish essential similarities and differences between movements. Second, they are an ingress to some fundamental sociological notions and questions: the nature of self-identity, the meaning of national consciousness as a form of social consciousness, the relationships between “nation” as a sociological category and “state” as a