

CONCEPTS OF UNION: POLITICS BEYOND THE NATION?

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Overview

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Abstract:

Human beings organize themselves into communities with a common identity that is not given but constructed. These communities may or may not agree to join into larger constructs.

This presentation offers an outline of some theories of the state and some examples of (con)federation preceding the EU.

Contents:

1. The Nation
2. The State
3. Uniting States

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1. The Nation

Human beings construct a sense of belonging.

1. The Nation

- What makes a Nation?
 - ▣ ζῶον πολιτικόν (Aristotle, Politics, 1253a)

 - ▣ individual
 - ▣ nuclear family – extended family
 - ▣ kinship systems
 - ▣ band, tribe
 - ▣ city state
 - ▣ nomadic – stationary – mixed

1. The Nation

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- Organizing a nation:
 - ▣ city state with hinterland
 - ▣ union of city states
 - ▣ extended city state (Roman Republic)
 - ▣ state with a concrete area
 - ▣ state with dependent subdivisions (provinces)
 - ▣ union of semi-independent states
 - ▣ union of independent states

1. The Nation

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□ National Identity

- ▣ Do we understand culture as monolithic and genuine?
- ▣ i.e., are there essential components of culture?
- ▣ i.e., who can define a specific culture?
(Can only Germans define what is German, Americans what is American, Sioux what is Sioux, Muslims what is Islam, Christians what is Christian?)
- ▣ If so, how can multiple cultures exist in the same space?
- ▣ Or is culture per definition pluralist and diverse?
- ▣ Who owns definitions? What is authenticity?
- ▣ What are the foundations of “civilizations” (Huntington) or “cultural blocks” like “West” / “East” / ...?

1. The Nation

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- national identity is more complex than usually assumed
- it is constructed
- this construction fulfills a certain purpose

1. The Nation

□ imagi-nation:

- “ The idea of a sociological organism moving calendrically through homogeneous, empty time is a precise analogue of the idea of the nation, which also is conceived as a solid community moving steadily down (or up) history. An American will never meet, or even know the names of more than a handful of his 240,000-odd fellow Americans. He has no idea of what they are up to at any one time. But he has complete confidence in their steady, anonymous, simultaneous activity.
(Benedict Anderson. *Imagined Communities*. 26)

- national community as imagined
- print culture accelerating this process in Europe

1. The Nation

□ ethnic identity as constant or pure?

“ Despite Roman categorizations, the barbarian peoples whose entry into the Roman world transformed it so profoundly were, like the Romans, constitutional rather than ethnic polities, uniting groups of diverse cultural, linguistic, and geographical origins under the leadership of aristocratic warrior families. The Alamanni, the Goths, the Alans, the Huns, the Franks, and others were composed of groups speaking a variety of languages, following various customs, and identifying themselves with varying traditions.

(Patrick J. Geary. *The Myth of Nations*. 58)

- „ethnic identity“ is continually constructed and imagined, „purity“ is a romantic illusion

1. The Nation

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- what, then, makes a nation?
 - culture and traditions
 - language
 - writing systems
 - shared symbols
 - religion
 - continuity of political rule
 - continuity of the existence of social groups

1. The Nation

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- nations can be made and unmade (continuities and discontinuities)
 - ▣ 13 Colonies – United States – Union/Confederacy
 - ▣ Yugoslavia
 - ▣ Czechoslovakia

- if new nations that are based on confederations can fail and break up into old national patterns, does this nevertheless speak to a „naturalness“ of national identity?

1. The Nation

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- „nation“ becoming important after Napoleon
- national sovereignty & self-determination, cf. Wilson
- construction of importance of nation

- empires always multi-national
- also: confederations or alliances

- relation: nation / state

2. The State

Human beings organize themselves into communities.

2. The State

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- functions of the state?
 - ▣ defense/offense
 - ▣ administration
 - ▣ tutelary: support system / patron-client systems
 - ▣ creating commonality
 - ▣ ...?

2. The State

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- how is rule organized?
- how many rule?
- is it seen as beneficial or not?

- (cf. Alexander Demandt, *Der Idealstaat*)

2. The State

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- monarchy: (good) rule of one
- tyrannis: bad rule of one

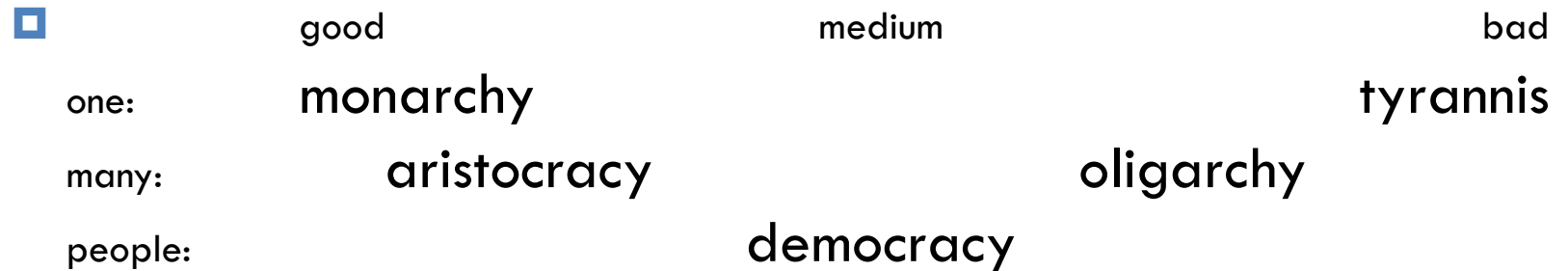
- aristocracy: rule of the „best“
- oligarchy: rule of „some“

- democracy: rule of the „people“
- ochlocracy: rule of the crowd
- isonomy (term for Athens): equal rights

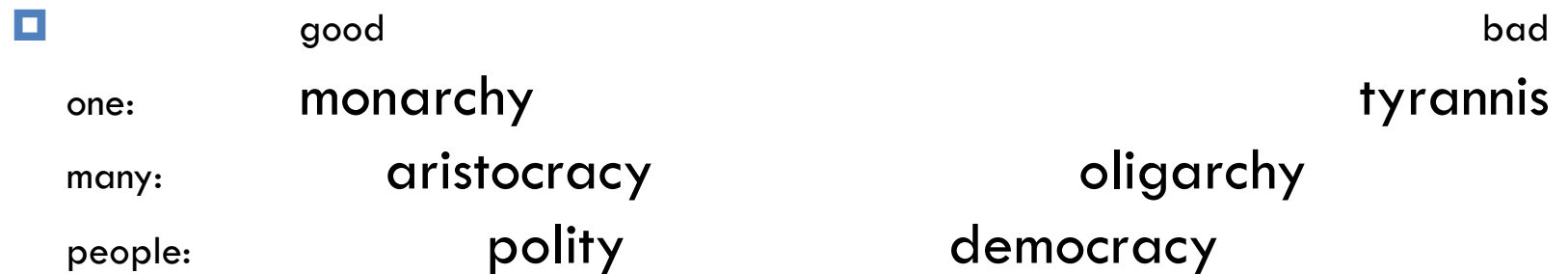
- plutocracy: rule of the rich
- meritocracy: rule of the meritorious

2. The State

□ Plato (Demandt 91):



□ Aristotle (Demandt 124):



2. The State

- Hegel: ruler's authority also derived from an agreement by the ruled
 - ▣ example: Magna Carta

- Locke: good Monarchy: best system, yet: you cannot guarantee it --- therefore: democracy as best of all alternatives

- basing rule on the demos: sharing responsibility

2. The State

- rule is oftentimes based upon a specific group of people
- „citizen“ till the 20th century meant:
males of a specific ethnicity
- „We the People“ originally meant: we the Anglo-Saxon-protestant males --- but universalist phrasing allowed for abolition of slavery, citizenship for Indians, suffrage for women, etc.

2. The State

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- states perform certain function
- in an interconnected world, states need to oftentimes act beyond their borders

- need for international coordination:
 - ▣ defense, preventing war (Kant: Perpetual Peace)
 - ▣ conflicts over territory
 - ▣ economic cooperation: flow of capital, labor, innovations
 - ▣ population mobility

3. Unifying States

States alone are oftentimes not enough.

3. Unifying States

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- models to create supranational institutions can be diverse
- frequent motives: defense against a common enemy, economic cooperation

3. Unifying States

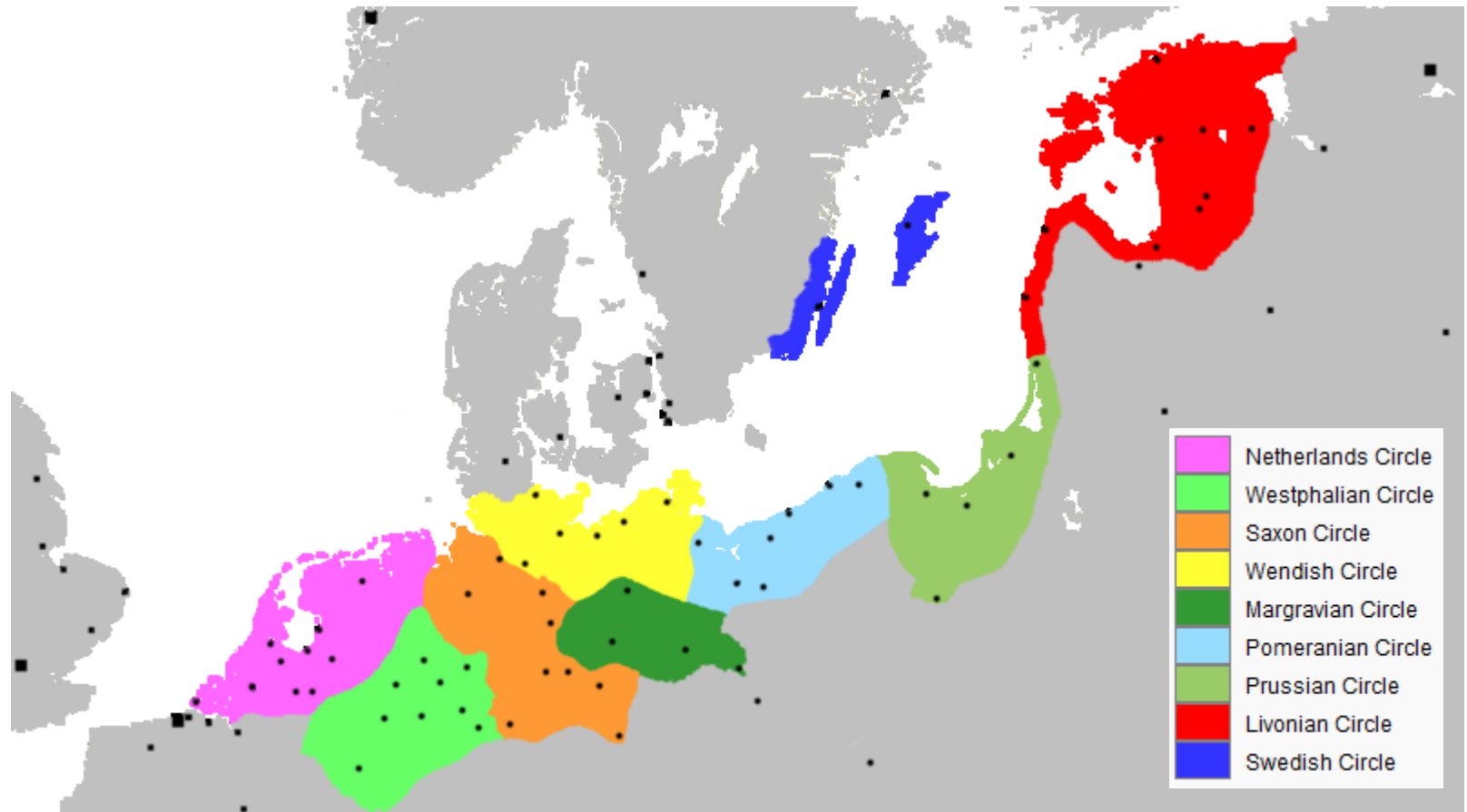
□ Delian League (478-447)

- Athens +x against Sparta+Persia
- Athens in charge of treasury since 454
- Athens loses Peloponnesian War in 404
- league disintegrates 338 after defeat of Athens by Philipp II



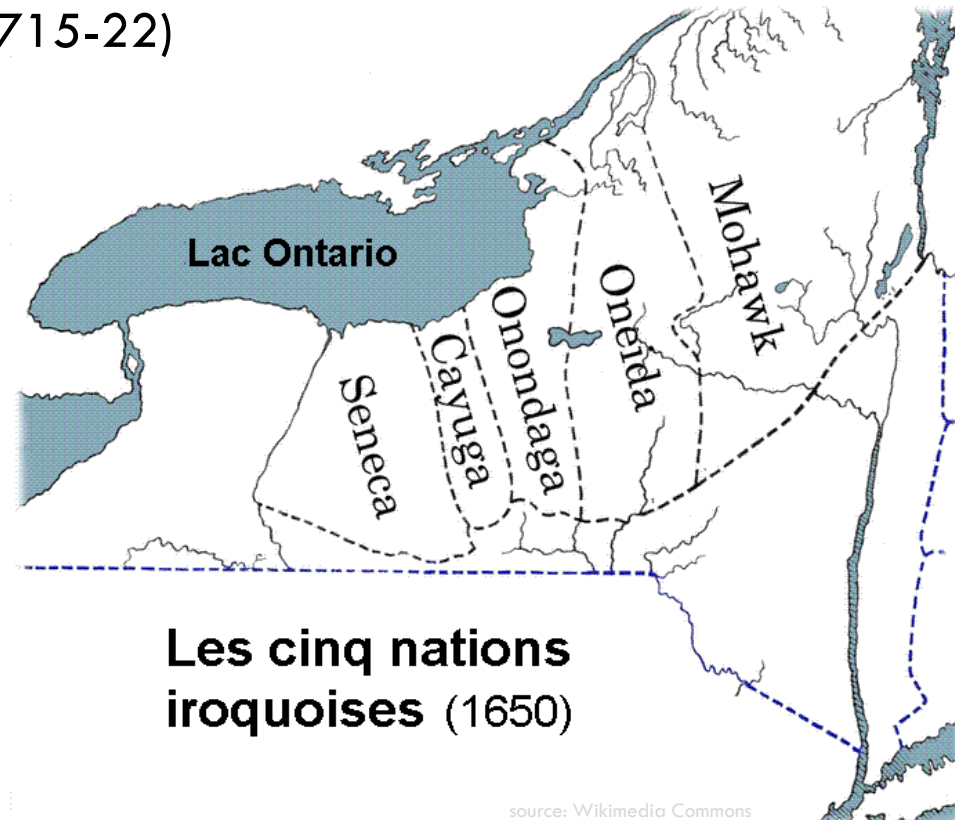
3. Unifying States

- Hanseatic League (13th century-1669): economic alliance, but also shared culture



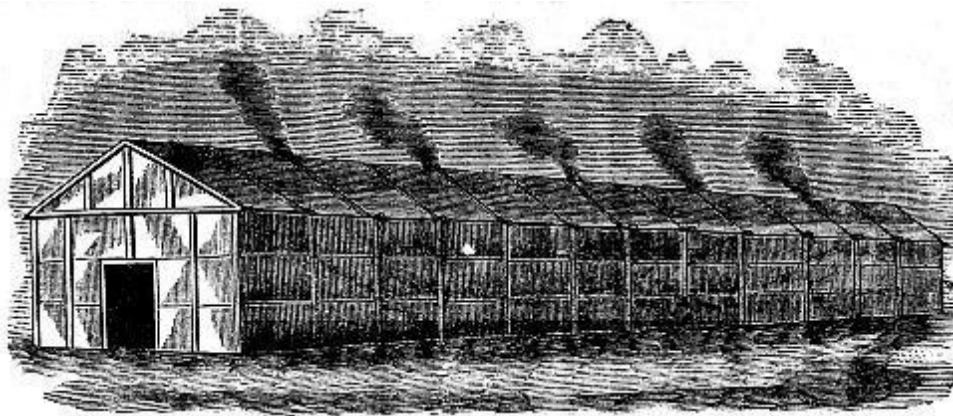
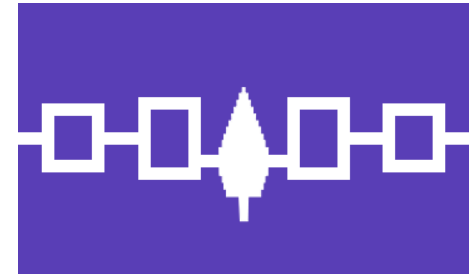
3. Unifying States

- League of the Haudenosaunee / Iroquois (People of the Longhouse), 16th century (?) till now
 - Five/Six Nations: Cayuga, Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Seneca, Tuscarora (admitted between 1715-22)
 - “Great Law of Peace”

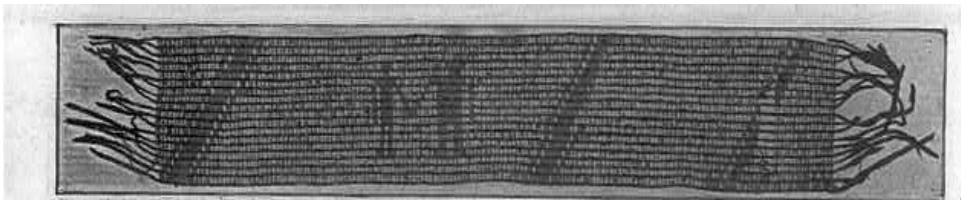


3. Unifying States

- ▣ inspired Articles of Confederation
- ▣ symbol: tree



Stockaded Onondaga Village.



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THE BELT OF WAMPUM DELIVERED BY THE INDIANS TO WILLIAM PENN AT THE "GREAT TREATY" UNDER THE ELM TREE AT SHACKAMAXON, IN 1682

3. Unifying States

- 13 Colonies / United States
 - ▣ political union against England
 - ▣ trade
 - ▣ unhindered expansion into Indian territories

 - ▣ Declaration of Independence, July 4, 1776
 - ▣ Articles of Confederation, November 15, 1777
 - ▣ Federalist Papers, October 1787 and August 1788
 - ▣ U.S. Constitution, June 21, 1788

 - ▣ Civil War (1861-65) „solves“ issue of Federalism for the time being
 - ▣ issue of state rights continues to be relevant

3. Unifying States

□ Europe 2009:



source: europa.eu

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