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Nonstate Nations in International Politics: Comparative System Analyses

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BOOK REVIEW

NONSTATE NATIONS IN INTERNATIONAL POLITICS: COMPARATIVE SYSTEM ANALYSES. Edited by Judy S. Bertelsen. Praeger Publishers, Inc. New York, N.Y. 1977. Pp. 257. \$25.00.

The field of international political studies has been devoted primarily to an analysis of the nature and interrelationship of the world's independent nation-states. While nonsovereign national groups have engaged the interest of sociologists and anthropologists, they have seldom been subject to the meticulous scrutiny and taxonomic efforts which political scientists expend upon legally sanctioned entities.¹ The relative neglect of nonstate nations—those nationalist entities which are not generally recognized as independent states but which claim rights to national sovereignty—is most obviously regrettable. To that extent, *Nonstate Nations in International Politics: Comparative System Analyses*,² edited by Judy S. Bertelsen, is, despite substantial limitations, a welcome addition to the literature of international politics.

Focusing successively upon the Palestinian Arabs, the Zionist movement (as one model for achievement of statehood), the Kurds, the Spanish Basques, the Welsh, the Croatians, and the Navajo, the individually authored case studies survey the history of each of these national groups, applying a novel systems framework formulated in general and flexible terms. Bertelsen has developed this approach by adapting the systems analysis initially set forth by C. West Churchman.³ As in an earlier effort,⁴ Bertelsen, using and “distorting” Churchman’s ideas “somewhat,”⁵ seeks to provide a

1. See, e.g., L. SNYDER, VARIETIES OF NATIONALISM 286-309. The rather extensive bibliography refers almost exclusively to books and articles pertaining to general political theory on nationalism and to the development of the various nation-states.

2. NONSTATE NATIONS IN INTERNATIONAL POLITICS: COMPARATIVE SYSTEM ANALYSES (J. Bertelsen ed. 1977) [hereinafter cited as NONSTATE NATIONS]. Dr. Bertelsen, at the time of publication a Visiting Assistant Professor of Political Science at California State University, Chico, is a Research Associate at the Institute for Scientific Analysis, San Francisco. She is a member of the Council of the Comparative Interdisciplinary Studies Association of the International Studies Association.

3. This systems analysis was first introduced in a scientific, rather than political, setting in C. CHURCHMAN, THE SYSTEMS APPROACH (1968) and further developed by him in a paper requested by the United Nations Economic and Social Council Advisory Committee on the Application of Science and Technology to Development, 13 U.N. ESCOR, (Agenda Item 15(a)), U.N. Doc. E/AC.52/L.92 (1970).

4. J. BERTELSEN, THE PALESTINIAN ARABS (4 International Studies Series No. 02-043, 1976).

5. *Id.* at 7.

structured framework for the study of nonstate nations [hereinafter NSN].⁶

In her introduction, Bertelsen sets forth five categories into which data is to be classified according to her systems analysis: (1) decision makers; (2) their goals; (3) available resources, defined as "those things which affect outcomes and are controlled by the decision maker"; (4) environment, defined as "those things which affect outcomes but are not controlled by the decision maker"; and (5) components or missions, defined as "the projects undertaken by the decision makers to achieve [their] goals." Two other key concepts used to characterize NSN goals are "durability," defined as continuing existence, and "audibility," defined as the ability of a NSN to pursue its political objectives so as to be perceived by the community of nations and international organizations as being something other than simply a domestic problem of the NSN's "host nation."⁸ The categories are defined no further, because Bertelsen alleges that "high specificity of terms can be premature."⁹ Even if the categories were more illustrative, the pseudoscientific terminology which Bertelsen adopts does not flow naturally from the subject matter and seems artificially inflicted upon the realm of political science.

During the past decade, the Palestinian Arabs have been the most audible of NSNs, and Bertelsen first tried out her systems analysis on that group in a study published in 1976.¹⁰ Because of its enduring topicality and since editor Bertelsen, its author, can be expected to use her systems approach to best advantage, the Palestinian Arab case study is of particular interest.

Although Bertelsen notes in her concluding chapter that "[a]ll the nonstate nations described in this book have deep historical roots,"¹¹ this statement appears a bit broad. In fact, one of the most striking characteristics of the Palestinian Arab NSN is that while it is widely perceived to have achieved a high level of durability, the sense of a nationalistic Palestinian identity is generally considered

6. It is regrettable that Bertelsen provides no information on the origin of this term although it appears preferable to such expressions as "mini-nationalists." See, e.g., L. SNYDER, *supra* note 1, at 137-61.

7. Bertelsen, *An Introduction to the Study of Nonstate Nations in International Politics*, in NONSTATE NATIONS, *supra* note 2, 1, 4.

8. *Id.* at 3.

9. *Id.* at 5.

10. J. BERTELSEN, *supra* note 4.

11. Bertelsen, *The Nonstate Nation in International Politics: Some Observations*, in NONSTATE NATIONS, *supra* note 2, 245 [hereinafter cited as *Some Observations*].

to be of comparatively recent vintage. According to one historian of the Arab nations, prior to the 1967 Six Day War most Palestinians "had been content to merge their identity into a broad Arab, as opposed to Palestinian, nationalism. Even the use of the name Palestine declined."¹² Bertelsen, herself, noted in her original analysis of the Palestinian Arabs that "little evidence appears of a distinctly 'Palestinian' Arab nationalism (as opposed to general Arab nationalism or 'greater Syrian' Arab nationalism)" until some time after the establishment of the British Mandate in 1918.¹³

Before proceeding to chronicle and "systems-analyze" the development of Palestinian nationalism, Bertelsen notes in a cursory manner that "Palestinian Arabs have lived for centuries in an environment dominated politically by other national groups."¹⁴ There have indeed long been Arab inhabitants in the whole region; Bertelsen apparently considers this sufficient justification for referring to the "deep historical roots" that the Palestinian NSN is supposed to have. However, the defining of identities in this manner should require a more exacting analysis. Inhabitants of a residential area who receive eviction notices may well, as a result of their situation, come to develop a sense of group neighborhood identity. However, this sense of identity cannot be predated merely because the families involved have lived in that area for generations. The Palestinian NSN, similarly, is not rooted in centuries of common culture, religion, language and experience distinct from those of the neighboring populations.¹⁵ Instead, it is largely the result of the rise of Zionism during this century and the creation of the state of Israel.¹⁶

The point here is not simply to challenge Bertelsen's rather loose vocabulary, but to question her lack of interest in the sudden nature of the emergence of Palestinian nationalism and especially her implicit dismissal of national self-perception as a major factor in the assessment of NSN durability. A strong or developing sense of national identity should at least be listed among an NSN's impor-

12. P. MANSFIELD, *THE ARAB WORLD* 343 (1976).

13. J. BERTELSEN, *supra* note 4, at 16.

14. Bertelsen, *The Palestinian Arabs*, in *NONSTATE NATIONS*, *supra* note 2, 7 [hereinafter cited as *Palestinian Arabs*].

15. See, e.g., Lewis, *The Palestinians and the PLO*, 59 *COMMENTARY* 32, 33 (Jan. 1975) [hereinafter cited as *Lewis*].

What the League of Nations included in 1917 in the British Mandate Territory known as Palestine had been a cluster of provincial subdivisions within a larger political entity which in Ottoman times had been considered culturally as well as geographically part of Greater Syria. *Id.*

16. See generally Lewis, *supra* note 15.

tant resources.¹⁷ In the case of the Palestinians, the omission seems particularly glaring given the fact that this resource has not always existed and that marked changes in Palestinian psychological attitudes have occurred in the last few decades, most notably within the last ten years. Moreover, the inherent limitations of the systems categories are suggested by the notion that this national self-perception factor¹⁸ could plausibly be considered as straddling both resources and environment, rather than as fitting neatly into one category or the other.

Although Bertelsen ignores the issue, the creation of a permanent Palestinian refugee population, in the Gaza Strip, on the West Bank of the Jordan river, and in refugee camps in neighboring Arab nations must be viewed as the second important phase in the development of the Palestinian NSN. Touching upon the Palestinian refugee status, Bertelsen merely observes that it "did not suggest the durability of statehood, but rather threatened extinction as a group, through resettlement in new lands."¹⁹ Since apparently there was no strong Palestinian Arab identity prior to the 1948 War, reference to the "extinction" of that identity by assimilation of the people into the broader Arab population (sharing the same language, religion and culture) seems exaggerated, however emotionally wrenching the exile from home must be, particularly to the first generation of exiles. More importantly, Bertelsen's presentation of the threat of resettlement in new lands, compromising the possibility of statehood, has by hindsight proven misleading and fails to contribute to an understanding of the development of Palestinian nationalism.

Unlike other refugees displaced by war, the Palestinians were not, as it turned out, allowed to assimilate into the neighboring populations; the objective of the Arab governments being to make the existence of the Jewish state a short-lived one. With the exception of Jordan, which annexed the West Bank in 1950, the Arab countries denied Palestinians citizenship and opposed their resettlement.²⁰ In other words, Bertelsen curiously emphasizes what could have been considered to be a possible threat at the time, although that threat was not to be substantially implemented.

17. Bertelsen, however, fails to do so. In contrast, contributor Milton da Silva recognizes the importance of this factor and lists it as an important resource. See da Silva, *The Basques as a Nonstate Nation*, in *NONSTATE NATIONS*, *supra* note 2, 98, 112 [hereinafter cited as da Silva].

18. Bertelsen might have called it the "identity quotient."

19. *Palestinian Arabs*, *supra* note 14, at 13.

20. Lewis, *supra* note 15, at 35.

In indicating that refugee status "did not suggest the durability of statehood," Bertelsen again ignores the psychological components of nationalism. Arguably, the absence of any prior sense of Palestinian selfhood rendered the decades spent as unassimilated refugees crucial to the development of Palestinian national identity. Such identity, characterized by strong, even frequently violent assertions, has become an important factor in current Middle East politics.²¹ According to Professor Bernard Lewis, "[t]he emergence of a distinctive Palestinian entity . . . may be seen as the joint creation of Israel and the Arab states — the one by extruding the Arabs of Palestine, the others by refusing to accept them."²²

The presence of clearly perceptible criteria fails to compensate for Bertelsen's imprecise definitions of her systems categories. Her choice of decision makers, for instance, appears rather arbitrary; she apparently makes determinations for one historical period based on subsequent developments. Thus, for the 1956 to 1967 period, Decision Makers "A", "B" and "C" are listed, respectively, as the Arab governments, the Palestine Liberation Organization, and the Fatah guerilla organization. Outlining Fatah's environment, Bertelsen relies primarily upon a quotation to the effect that Fatah — which only garnered public attention in 1965 — was throughout the period working against "almost insurmountable odds: popular cynicism; inter-Arab governmental conflict; limited resources; a defeatist apathy on the part of Palestinians; and a concerted campaign of innuendo and criticism in the Arab press to discredit Fatah as a group of foreign-supported adventurers."²³ Given the reality of the situation, it is unclear for whom Fatah made decisions. It is also unlikely that Bertelsen would have identified this initially small group of revolutionaries as a decision making force at that time had the organization not subsequently grown in credibility and "audibility."²⁴ Were the relative importance of the various decision makers clearer, it would also have been apparent that the PLO assumed a major leadership role among the Palestinians only after

21. P. JUREIDINI & W. HAZEN, *THE PALESTINIAN MOVEMENT IN POLITICS* (1976). This work includes a list of seventy-eight Palestinian terrorist operations occurring between July 1968 and June 1974. *Id.* at 77-82.

22. See Lewis, *supra* note 15, at 33.

23. *Palestinian Arabs*, *supra* note 14, at 17-18, citing *The Anatomy of Violence: Theoretical Reflections on Palestinian Resistance*, 25 *MIDDLE EAST J.* 180, 192 (Spring 1971).

24. Much of this audibility resulted from the Six Day War and the efforts of Yasir Arafat who acquired a dominant position in the Executive Committee of the PLO during 1969. W. QUANDT, F. JABBER & A. LESCH, *THE POLITICS OF PALESTINIAN NATIONALISM* 71 (1973). See also P. JUREIDINI & W. HAZEN, *supra* note 21, at 19.

the dramatic Arab defeat in the 1967 War. During the War, the Arab governments, previously considered dominant decision makers, were gradually perceived as being incapable of securing the dissolution of the Jewish state.²⁵

Bertelsen's analysis, which dates from early 1976, cannot be expected to predict the sudden turn of events which has seen Egypt assume a startlingly bold decision maker stature; pan-Arabism take a position subordinate to obvious affirmations of national self-interest; and the PLO confronted with the possibility of a reduced role in the implementation of an autonomous Palestinian entity. It is notable, however, that in referring to moderate local Palestinian leaders as decision makers in the 1967 to 1973 period, Bertelsen singles out the mayor of Hebron, who opposed commando operations, and states "[i]t seems plausible that other such Palestinians existed and might have become audible if appropriate environmental and resource changes had occurred."²⁶ Important changes, occurring since publication of this book, may well result in the rapid rise of a Palestinian entity led by such local Palestinian authorities.

Since the Palestinians constitute one of today's most prominent NSNs, Bertelsen's analysis, even had it been more enlightening, would not have filled the current scholarship gap as much as the contributions made by the political scientists, historian, and social anthropologist whom she has brought together for this book. There is far less comprehensive material available in English on the other NSNs covered, all of which, unlike the Palestinians, seem to have a large degree of autonomy within a federal framework as their primary goal rather than independence.

While the material presented on the Kurds, the Basques, the Welsh and the Croatians is of particular interest, the authors of the respective chapters appear to have varying degrees of difficulty respecting and implementing Bertelsen's systems-analysis format. In a cogent presentation of the Croatians, Robin Remington uses the requisite terminology, but displays a distinct awareness of its ambiguity and limitations. "One of the more difficult problems in applying the NSN conceptualization to Croatia is distinguishing between resources and environment," she notes, emphasizing that the decision makers in question "were operating in circumstances where the line between real and perceived resources was badly blurred."²⁷

25. Lewis, *supra* note 15, at 36.

26. *Palestinian Arabs*, *supra* note 14, at 24.

27. Remington, *Ideology as a Resource: A Communist Case Study*, in *NONSTATE NATIONS*, *supra* note 2, 193, 207 [hereinafter cited as Remington].

That "blur," not peculiar to the Croatians, may well exist in any passionately committed people. An optimistic appraisal of one's position may be an effective device in cementing national purpose and in rallying the support of other nations. The pretense of control may lead to effective control; however, channeling all factors into Bertelsen's either/or headings of resources and environment may dissect a situation at the expense of understanding its subtle evolution.

Suggesting an emphasis significantly different from Bertelsen's, Remington begins her text by affirming that "[i]n our terms it is the self-perception of a people of their 'nationhood' and the impact of that awareness on their behavior that counts."²⁸ That continuing, vigorous self-perception is fundamental in explaining the persistence of long oppressed Basque and Kurdish aspirations, even in the absence of support such as that received by the Palestinian cause from both the influential Arab world and such international bodies as the United Nations.

An elevated and principled sense of morality does not appear to dominate international consideration of the political aspirations of nonstate nations. As Charles Benjamin's report makes clear,²⁹ the Kurds have no nation-state supporting their claims to national sovereignty. Iranian financial and military support was abruptly terminated in 1975 when an agreement with Iraq was perceived by the Shah to be in his nation's self-interest. Benjamin notes that the recent sixteen-year phase of the Kurdish struggle for autonomy within Iraq has ended.³⁰ No country has ever sought to present the Kurdish matter to the United Nations; the Kurds today have lost virtually all audibility.

The audibility and durability of the Croatians and the Welsh, on the other hand, appear to have increased significantly in recent years. The effective *Plaid Cymru* nationalist party has developed in Wales, and contributor Ray Corrado notes that "[f]or the first time since the thirteenth century there are Welsh decision makers who are attempting to organize and institutionalize the representation of Wales in the international environment."³¹ Yugoslavia's complex policies with regard to its "nations" and national minorities have not discouraged the rise of nationalistic feelings in the ancient Croa-

28. *Id.* at 194.

29. Benjamin, *The Kurdish Nonstate Nation*, in *NONSTATE NATIONS*, *supra* note 2, 69.

30. *Id.* at 94.

31. Corrado, *The Welsh as a Nonstate Nation*, in *NONSTATE NATIONS*, *supra* note 2, 131, 187.

tian people.³² Remington predicts that upon Marshal Tito's death, it is "almost a sure thing" that an extremist Croatian emigre faction will "forcefully" achieve international audibility.³³

The Basques, as well as the Welsh, have a political party constituting their dominant decision maker. Efforts of the Basque political party, the *Partido Nacionalista Vasco*, have failed to garner significant international support for Basque grievances. The Basques, another ancient and fiercely individualistic people, speak Euskera, a language which does not appear to belong to the Indo-European family of languages. Unlike the Croatians, the Spanish Basques live in one of their country's richest areas.³⁴ Similarly, however, the presence or absence of a strong national leader is of great consequence to their political evolution.³⁵

Bertelsen evidently fails to perceive or adequately deal with even the sketchy, obvious analogies that can be drawn between the various nonstate nations covered in the book. Although Bertelsen labels the case studies "comparative" system analyses and, in fact, attempts some generalizations in a closing chapter, the reader is forced to make independent analytical comparisons. While the uniform framework is intended to simplify that task, the contributors fail to apply the systems analysis in a sufficiently consistent fashion to achieve that result. The system, moreover, fails in the most fundamental of all tasks: it provides no significant assistance in formulating even the broadest criteria by which to evaluate an NSN's proximity to its goals.

Bertelsen concludes her study by noting that "[t]he purpose of the NSN system analyses has been simply to increase understanding and knowledge."³⁶ It is unfortunate, however, that decision maker Bertelsen chose such fragile components in attempting to achieve such a worthy goal and that she did not marshal greater resources. However, her book has provided accessible data on some of our nonstate nation brethren.

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32. See Remington, *supra* note 27, at 213-17.

33. *Id.* at 218.

34. See generally da Silva, *supra* note 17.

35. Support for this can be found from the fact that Franco's death has resulted in increased flexibility on the part of the Spanish government, and a new Spanish Constitution is expected to grant the Basques at least a certain measure of autonomy. *LE MONDE*, Dec. 29, 1977 - Jan. 4, 1978, at 1, col. 5.

36. *Some Observations*, *supra* note 11, at 256.

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