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Johan Galtung: JOHAN GALTUNG

ON THE MEANING OF "NATION" AS A VARIABLE

1. Introduction

For several reasons the word "nation has attained two, even three, very different meanings, all of them relevant for the general subject of comparative studies (meaning studies comparing nations). The three meanings are:

(1) "Nation" in the sense of country, a political entity in territorial space, autonomous in the sense that ultimate, legitimate control over internal power relations is inside the country (eg with the particular organization referred to as the "state"). A country is also often called a state, although this, sensu strictu, is an organization inside the country.

(2) "Nation" in the sense of ethnic group, a socio-cultural entity in non-territorial space (as it may be scattered anywhere), characterized by some kind of shared culture, for instance carried by language, religion, way of life, shared history and/or racial (anatomical) characteristics.

(3) "Nation" in the sense of a nation-state, meaning a state (country) populated (almost) only by members of the same nation (ethnic group); an ambitious program combining (1) and (2)!

To give some rough orders of magnitude: there are about 150 nations in the first sense of the term in the world today (although the autonomy of many of them is a matter of dispute), about 1500 nations in the second sense of the word, whereas the number of nation-states could be more in the order of magnitude of 15 (even that might be too high).

today multi-ethnic, and the "minorities" may even, singly or combined, be majorities - "minority" being a power term (meaning powerless), not a statistical, numerical expression. To define them as minorities is exactly a way of depriving them of nationhood. Obviously, if the program of organizing the world as a set of nation states is to be implemented (the Herder program) the result would be a world divided into 1500 nation-states, after an average of nine independence struggles within each of today's countries has been accompanied by unification processes for divided nations. Hopefully some other program, or some other process, will be invented in the meantime: humankind can hardly afford this program with the present level of weapons technology.

In the following we shall pick up the first two meanings of the term "nation", in the sense of "country" or "state", and in the sense of "ethnic group". They are both important, among other reasons because of the implicit nation-state program guiding the political process many places in the world. No doubt the world is to a large extent an inter-state system, ambiguously referred to as the "international" system. But it is also an international system in the other sense, an inter-ethnic system, with dialogues and confrontations between civilizations, linguistic and religious groups ways of life, racial groupings. (And in addition it is a system divided by class, age and ~~gender~~ a function of the state being to mediate not only ethnic divisions, but also these three). As a matter of fact, it may be argued that the salience of nation in the sense of ethnic group has become

increasingly evident in recent years with all the intra-state conflicts for "minority" autonomy (meaning protection against the majority), and the rise of fundamentalist religious groupings (eg. Islam, but also Christianity in the US) across state borders: at the same time as Western civilization in general is challenged everywhere, including in the West.

Thus, to interpret "nation" only in the sense of a territorial polity is to give too much prominence to one way of dividing and organizing humankind, (the Westfalia system after the 1648 peace)) at the expense of the other way, the ethnic division (not to mention the additional three, class, age and sex). Comparative analysis in this limited sense is indispensable, and one basic conclusion from the Images of the World in the Year 2000 study was precisely how salient this division is, meaning that inter-state differences tend to prevail over intra-state differences. But if the task of social science is to make the world more transparent, then transparency in one direction may make us less sensitive to other directions or cuts - like in a crystal. Hence, discussing "nation" as a variable, we should at least pick up both, not only one, of the major meanings of that term.

## 2. The problem of levels.

However, regardless of how "nation" is interpreted there is a Chinese boxes, or matrushka, aspect to it. Within the nation as a state, a political actor at the international level, there

are districts/provinces/departements/municipalities, organizations and associations and so on; political actors at the local level. [2] Inside that there is the primary group of families, friends, peers surrounding individuals, and inside that again the individual level. Let us refer to them as macro (national), meso, micro and inner levels respectively. The same can now be said about nation in the cultural sense: there are sub-cultures, sub-sub cultures and individual cultures - the latter perhaps best referred to as personality (deeply rooted attitudes and beliefs and behavior patterns). And there are also other things, non-human things, man-made or not, inside nations.

Hence, a comparative study is not merely a problem of choosing nations. It is in general a multi-stage operation where the first stage is the selection of a set of nations, then from each nation a set at the meso level, then at the micro level, then at the individual level. Some of these levels may be dropped, and one may reduce the operation to the single stage of selecting nations only, studying them as if they were billiard balls, homogeneous on the inside. some types of international studies this macro approach would be satisfactory. But for social scientists, for whom operating at the meso, micro or inner levels constitutes the raison d'être of a study, the macro level is introduced to provide variations in contexts that would make it possible better to understand and interpret the findings at the other level.

Thus, the typical "comparative study" arising out of the social science methodology and concerns of the 1950s would involve

a two-stage operation: first a selection of nations, then a selection of individuals for interviewing, survey style, is undertaken. The first stage is usually non-random, eg. based on pre-existing networks of research institutes with whom research cooperation of this type is possible; the second stage usually random (simple or stratified). But this is only one example of what could be done. Thus, a random selection of individuals from a random selection of micro units (eg. families) from a random selection of meso units (eg. municipalities of a certain type) from a random selection of macro units (eg. countries) would be entirely sensible. And there is no reason why one should end up with individuals; one could end up with municipalities, with museums, with written sources of law, with road networks, with anything. And the sampling does not have to be random all the way: we may also select some units in which we are particularly interested, at one or more levels. What remains as common elements would be the twin ideas of Chinese boxes of units, starting with the nation, with multi-stage sampling from these levels, or layers, starting with a sample of nations.

### 3. Variables for nations as countries/states.

A nation exists at the same time in and by itself, as a part of a supersystem of nations; and has an inside with subsystems. It is like an atom which can be understood in its own right, in terms of how it relates to other atoms, and in terms of its composition. But systems can be described in many ways. The following classification of variables for countries/states, in five types seems to be useful:

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <u>Nation by itself</u>                 | 1. <u>Absolute variables</u> , such as size, population, continental belongingness, or belongingness to other groups                              |
| <u>Nation as part of a super-system</u> | 2. <u>Relative variables</u> , such as "big" (which makes no sense except by comparison', or any kind of variable on which nations may be ranked. |
| <u>Nation as part of a super-system</u> | 3. <u>Relational variables</u> , based on interaction of nations in pairs, dyads, bilaterally.  |
| <u>Nation as part of a super-system</u> | 4. <u>Structural variables</u> , based on interaction of nations in n-tuples, n-ads, multilaterally.  |
| <u>Nation as having sub-systems</u>     | 5. <u>Inside variables</u> , with the same four types, referring to provinces, cities, etc.   |

The absolute variables are relatively unproblematic but also relatively uninteresting. They are classificatory only, and hence difficult to build on for more complex theory formation! All nominal scale variables, such as grouping nations according to continents, or the alphabet, which is analytically about equally useful as using "Asia" as a category, belong here. But this also applies to variables at higher levels of measurement. Categories of size (are, population, GNP, whatever) can be used as absolute properties, their capacity for ordering the units (meaning the countries/states) may simply not be made use of. The only aspect used is whether two nations belong to the same or different categories, and the only type of statement one can arrive at is the rather uninteresting "Nations of category I show pattern A whereas nations of category II show pattern B". There is no sense of co-variation, whether in the causal nor even in the

correlational sense. But this means that the nation-variable is not really made use of, for the basic point in using the nation as a variable, so that some idea of how the nation as context affects the "lower levels" (or better using the Chinese boxes/matrushka metaphor and not hierarchy/pyramid metaphor: the "inside layers") can be arrived at. One should be able to formulate statements of the type "the higher the nation is on variable X, the higher the tendency to show pattern A and the lower the tendency to show pattern B".

The relative variables do this job for us. They are, by definition, at least ordinal level variables. They are variables on which nations can be ranked in terms of more or less. If in addition they can be rated (interval or ratio scales) that is useful for those who believe in "measurement", among other reasons because they believe in interval scale statistics. As rating implies ranking (but not vice versa) there is no problem from the point of view of arriving at statements of the type indicated - the additional refinement brought in by interval scale properties are probably much more useful in the physical than in the social sciences. Another point, however, is that in order to explore hypotheses of the "the more X, the more Y" type there must be at least three values of the variable X represented in the sample of nations so as to know whether the relation is roughly linear or more curvilinear (simply meaning that the nations that are in-between have the highest, or lowest, values on Y). Example: is "agressiveness" highest among countries that are low,

medium or high on "level of development" - a rather important problem almost regardless of how the two highly ambiguous variables are defined, not to mention operationalized. [6]

Thus, rank variables will be crucial in the use of nation as a variable, and one should have at least three rank levels (for instance capitalist, socialist and in-between; not merely the classificatory "capitalist" vs. "socialist"). Preferably these should include variables that are important politically in the sense that it matters much to countries whether they are high, low or medium; topdog, middledog or underdog to use that terminology (T, M or U). [5] Such variables relate directly to power. If nations want to be high on them then because there is power at that point: resources, big population, economic potential, military destructive capability, etc.

From knowledge of where a nation stands on a set of such variables composite variables or indices of various kinds can be constructed. On the one hand there are the equilibrated profiles, upwards (TTT...T) and downwards (UUU...U) - on the other hand the disequilibrated profiles, high on some, low on others of these rank dimensions (eg high on GNP/capita, low on schooling/capita). Often such composite variables may give much more information of analytical value than the sum of the insights derived from the simple variables: there is an interaction effect, in other words. [5]



Then, there are the (bilateral) relational variables. They are variables characterizing relations between nations rather than the nations themselves. In other words, they characterize interaction, concrete relations with something passing back and forth, not abstract relations like "bigger than", "better than" (they belong to the relative variables). How, then, does one characterize interaction? Just to give two examples: in terms of level of symbiosis, and level of exploitation. A symbiotic interaction is one so important to both of them that by hurting the other party they also hurt themselves. An exploitative interaction is one where the net benefits from the interaction relation is much higher to one than the other. If the exploitative interaction is not symbiotic, then it may simply be broken by the party that benefits least if it has opportunity costs (eg. could benefit more by entering other deals and/or deals with other parties). But if it is both one of dependency, and is very difficult to get away from. The party at the top is also dependent but benefits much from it; the party at the bottom benefits little, not at all or loses, but may lose even more by breaking the relation. And so on, and so forth. The point is that dyads may be characterized and nations may be characterized in terms of how they enter such dyads, or what types of dyads they are in.

Then, the (multilateral) structural variables, actually including the bilateral variables as a limiting case. They are ways of summarizing how a nation is located in multilateral interaction patterns, like a commercial network, airline network, or the web of international organizations, governmental or non-govern-

mental. Interaction networks can be represented by graphs, and as such they can be parameterized in many ways known in the theory of graphs. [9] Each nation can, for instance, be given an "associated number", which would be the length of the longest path to any other nation (well known to airline passengers: how many times do you have to change planes in order to reach the nation furthest removed from your own). The nations with the highest associated number constitute the periphery of the system, those with the lowest number the center. And correspondingly for organizations: the simple number of inter-governmental (and also inter-non-governmental) organizations of which a nation is a member is not a bad indicator of what the situation is, for that nation. In the same vein, the number of embassies in the capital of a country also says something about the importance accorded to that country by the rest of the international system.

combining the information given by the relative, relational [a profile, gives us rich information. The profile of the rank] and structural variables, not in a composite index but in situation is already a rich picture, with its equilibrated topdogs, disequilibrated in-betweens and equilibrated underdogs. [00] That the former also tend to be the exploiters in more or less symbiotic relations, and at the same time in central positions of the structure of multilateral patterns, the latter the exploited the periphery, and the in-betweens those that struggle to change their own position (and sometimes also to change the whole structure) belongs to the picture - grosso modo. [01] In this all kinds of power relations come into play - economic, political,

military, cultural, social, communicational -- the international system is a relatively brutal place.

Let us then move to the fifth category of variables, the inside variables. We are now looking inside the country/state. It is no longer a billiard-ball in the international system; it is a universe in its own right. To characterize that inside, however, we would, of course, prefer to have variables that facilitate comparison between and among nations, not changing the inside variables when we move from one country to the other. We often hear the expression "you cannot compare nation I and nation II" - a not very fortunate expression. One can compare anything with anything, an apple with a camel for that matter (the latter weighs more, for instance). Whether the comparison is fruitful, and how to explain the outcome, is another matter, and that depends on the choice of variables.

Take as examples two rather important inside variables: capitalist/socialist and democratic/non-democratic. It is hardly possible to reduce these rich dichotomies to one dimension that can be operationalized. But if one should try then "the proportion of the economic surplus controlled by those who produce the surplus" might not be the worst approach to understanding socialism (clearly ruling out state capitalism) and "the degree of control over decision-making concerning oneself" not the worst approach to understanding democracy (clearly ruling out much of parliamentarism and the bland and highly abused term "participation" - control is the point, not merely participation).

In both examples we are, incidentally, clearly dealing with structural variables, with patterns of interaction involving power relations - economic and political power respectively.

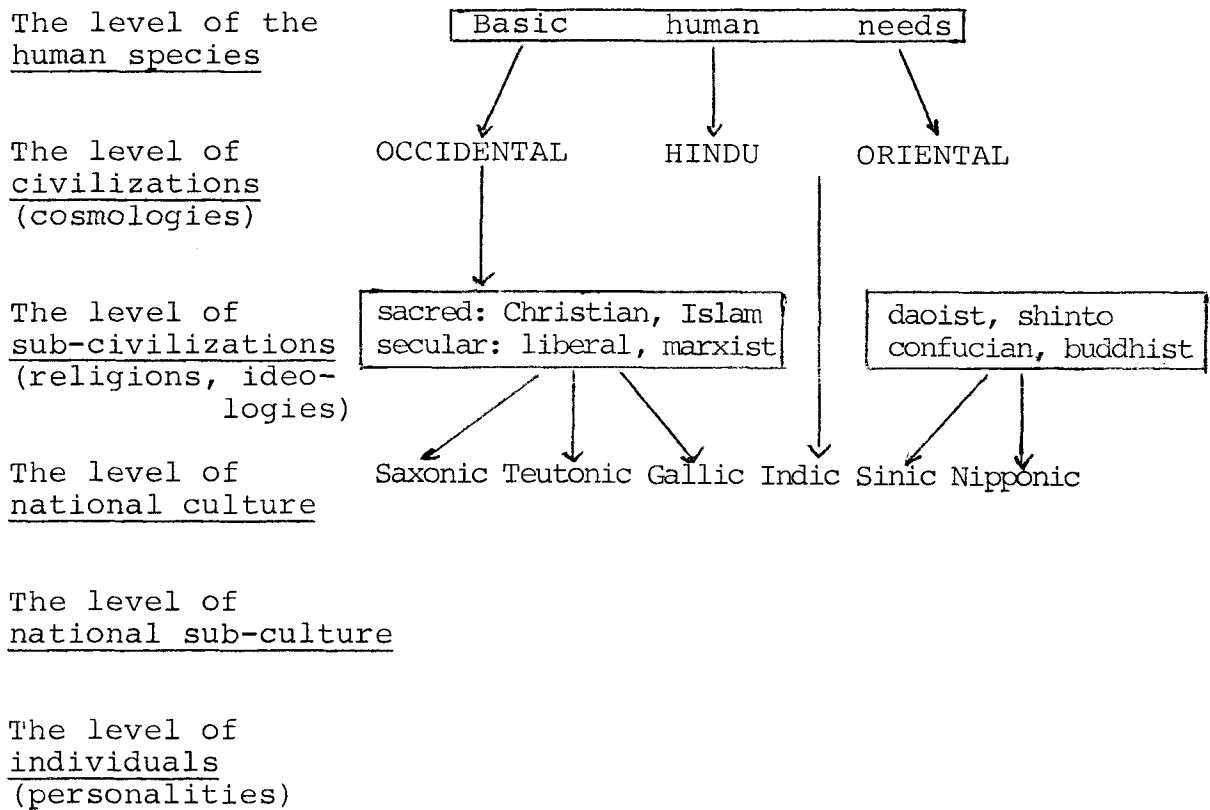
To take another examples: countries can be characterized in terms of how centralized they are, starting with such important trivialities as communication and transportation networks (just look at the road map of France, or airline map of Denmark, for instance), working one way towards administrative networks and other types of power networks. They can be characterized in terms of what proportion of the total, or the urban, population lives in the biggest city and so on. In short, the possibilities are numerous.

Conclusion: comparative research is not merely a question of having a set of nations in which to do the inside level study. The set has to be well drawn and one has to know which dimension(s) one wants to use in making comparisons, using nations as contexts. For this inside level expertise (psychology, social psychology, sociology) is insufficient; political science and international relations knowledge is also indispensable.

#### 4. Variables for nations as ethnic groups.

In the preceding section nations were seen as actors, and their subsystems also, essentially as actors, down to the level of the individual. The key word for conceiving of nations was

structure, and underlying structure: power. The key word for understanding ethnic groups would be culture, and underlying culture: meaning. Again, there is the levels problem, touched upon in section 2 above:



No effort will be made here to go into the intricate problems offered by the chart. It should only be emphasized that the terms given are for illustration only, there is certainly no pretense at completeness. Cosmologies, religions/ideologies, cultures and sub-cultures are seen as programs, usually only partly known to those holding them, calling for implementation. Moreover, all personalities in a given national culture have specificities. But they also have something in common: the national culture - although it may come out very differently in its

interaction with more individual personality traits. And correspondingly for nations: all nations in a given civilization have specificities but they also have something in common: the cosmology of that civilization, although it may come out very differently in its interaction with more specific national traits. Needless to say, a concrete nation in the sense of a country/state may be located at the cross-beam between the cultural radiations from several centers. If it is multi-ethnic it may itself be a very complex amalgam, if not at the personal then at least at the national level.

How does one characterize a nation in this sense of the word? Which are the variables that can be used to characterize cultures? One approach would be in terms of what meaning that culture gives to categories, such as SPACE, TIME, KNOWLEDGE, PERSON-NATURE, PERSON-PERSON and PERSON-TRANSPERSONAL relations. Other categories at the same level of importance are certainly conceivable, but we let this do just as an indication. In the chart on the next page are given some indications of how five civilizations (in other word, not nations but "macro-nations" or "macro-cultures" since "nation" here refers to culture) can be characterized, as one set of hypotheses, on these six categories. It should be noted that "occidental" is here divided into "expansion" and "contraction" - roughly corresponding to Antiquity/Modern Age on the one hand and the Middle Ages on the other - assuming that Christianity, Islam, liberalism and marxism all come in both expansionist, and more modern, contracting, versions.

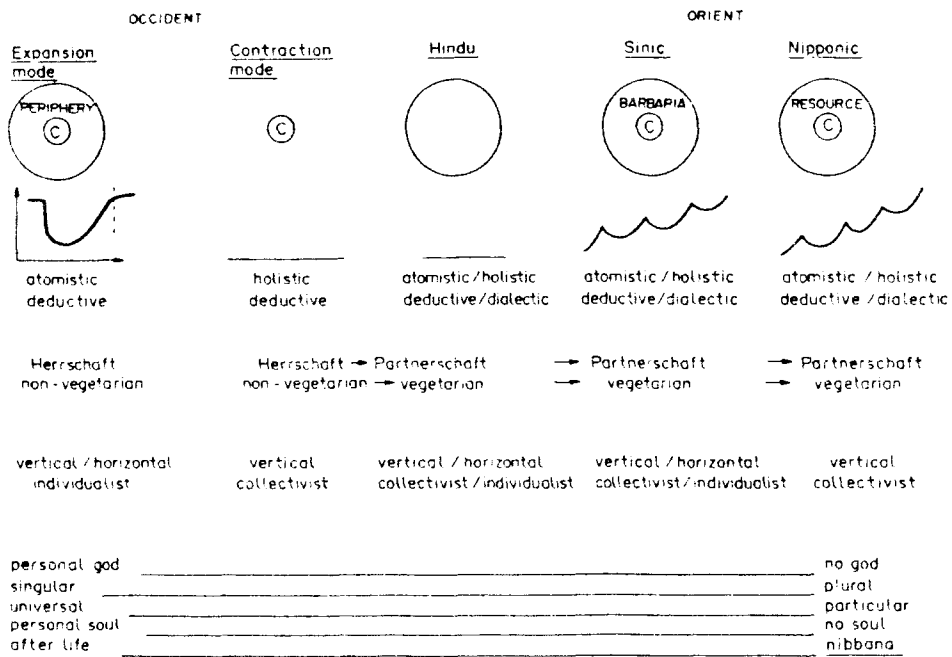


Figure 1. Five cosmologies: some positions

Carriers of meaning, of culture, and particularly of deep culture (such as the deep ideology shared by liberalism and marxism and the deep religion shared by Christianity and Islam) are religions, myths, languages, cultural artefacts, material (man-made) and social structures - only very superficially and partially by attitudes and beliefs. Methodologies would be different from the methodologies used to study actors and structures: more aimed at meaning and Verstehen, perhaps using content analysis in the search for patterns of themes but in general intensive, deep rather than extensive, superficial.

5. A note on intellectual styles.

In the preceding section something was said, in very general terms, about cosmologies as ways of characterizing macro-mations or macro-cultures. Let us spell out a little more one particular aspect of cosmology, the characterization of Knowledge - also known as epistemology: the basic assumptions about the nature of knowledge. In the chart on the preceding page something is already said about (expansionist) occidental, sinic and nipponic epistemology. For those who live in the occident, like the present author, "occident" is a somewhat too gross category: it calls for some specifications. Three national cultures are indicated: the Saxonic, the Teutonic and the Gallic, and the one or several cultures of the Japanese. They are used here to refer to intellectual styles. Why these strange words, why not simply say Anglo-American, German and French? and Japanese? Because these are words referring to nations in the sense of countries, and it is very obvious that inside a country like,



say, Germany, may intellectual styles may be found, even inside the same person. Hence, what we are after may be seen as ideal types in the Weberian sense, and for that we need other terms.

We shall assume that intellectuals anywhere are engaged, roughly speaking, in four tasks: (1) exploring paradigms (what kinds of things are there), (2) a descriptive or empirical task (how are these things the way they are, covering not only empirical task (how are these things), (3) an explanatory or theoretical task (why are these things the way they are, covering not only empirical but also potential reality) and, finally, (4) commentary - on how other intellectuals perform (1), (2) and (3) . The latter has as its subject of inquiry not reality in general, but reality as reflected by intellectuals, usually books and articles - and it is perfectly possible to become a professor/academician on the basis of that kind of exploration alone, never touching "real" reality.

Intellectual styles would then differ in their relative emphasis on these four fields, roughly speaking as follows:

Table 2. A survey of intellectual styles.

	<u>Saxonic</u>	<u>Teutonic</u>	<u>Gallic</u>	<u>Nipponic</u>
<u>Paradigm</u> exploration	weak	strong	strong	weak
<u>Description</u> empirical, data	very strong	weak	weak	strong
<u>Explanation</u> theoretical	weak	very strong	very strong	weak
<u>Commentary</u>	strong	strong	strong	very strong

The common element among intellectuals of all kinds is the tendency to engage in commentary, of each other - although the nature of that commentary may be highly different. Beyond this common element there are two types in the table, at this level of gross characterization: the Saxon-Nipponic, strong on data and facts, weaker on philosophical basis and theory-formation; and the Teutonic-Gallic, with the opposite profile, strong on the philosophical basis and theory-formation, weaker on the data.

Within the Saxon there is, of course, the more American tendency in the direction of extensive data-collection (statistical, many units but not so much information on each) as opposed to the more British intensive data-collection (the case study, ideographic history and social anthropology as opposed to the more nomothetic social sciences of the US tradition). In other words what passes for a fact differs from one place to the other, but they share a conviction that knowledge rests on documentation, one way or the other. The Nipponic style also has this, but the commentary aspect is so strongly developed, especially taking the form of characterizing researchers by classifying them into schools, that the descriptive task looms less high.

Both the Teutonic and the Gallic are more cerebral. But in so being they differ: the Teutonic is more based on the search for the axiomatic pyramid that facilitates the much honored pursuits of Zurückführung and Ableitung; the Gallic is more complex with pyramidal exercises couched in highly embroidered, artistic forms of expression where elegance plays a key role as

a carrier of conviction power (including jeux de mots, double-entendres, euphony, alliterations, etc.). Data serve the purpose of illustration rather than confirmation. Just as there is a Saxon sense of vertigo once the intellectual activity starts constructing theories more than a couple of centimeters above the empirical base, there is a shared Teutonic/Gallic fatigue with unstructured empirical dust on level ground, however solidly one's feet are planted, or precisely because the feet are so solidly planted that one is not permitted to fly, or at least to float above the ground.

Let us now try to introduce one explanatory variable into this effort to describe the ideal types - in other words, applying more aspects of intellectual activity to this meta-commentary on intellectual activity. Only two assumptions will be used:

- (1) Data unite whereas theories divide: data facilitate a dialogue whereas theories become a question of believe or not.
- (2) The Saxon and Nipponic are consensus, even harmony seeking cultures, whereas the Teutonic/Gallic relish dissent/disharmony.

The British researchers cherish impassioned discussions of data "as gentlemen"; for the Japanese social harmony must be retained; for the Germans as also for the French to have strong stands and to be attacked is considered perfectly normal, a sign of maturity. Hence, the profiles for intellectual activity hinted at in the table above, are seen as underlying patterns defining the epistemologies of these intellectual styles, directing their research activity in ways usually unknown to themselves. They themselves,

with the possible exception of the Japanese, will tend to see what they do as natural and normal, even as universal as the way of doing science.

The reason why I have mentioned all of this in this connection is because of a particular feature of comparative research. Nations are not only "variables" in the sense of being contexts in analysis of data, more or less well understood, more or less well integrated into the study itself. They also enter very concretely as research teams because of the unwritten rules

- (1) if a nation is represented as an object of study, it should also be present in the research team as a subject of the study
- (2) the ultimate expert on a nation as an object is that nation, as a subject.

Clearly, these are the social science counterparts of such important principles in international politics as "no taxation without representation" (translation: data-collection instead of money-collection = taxation), and "non-intervention in internal affairs" (intellectually instead of politically). But this means that a comparative study might involve researchers coming from highly different, even discrepant, intellectual styles. This is, of course, also possible for research teams from the same nation even for a "team" consisting of one (complex) person. - But if comparative research is to span an inter-national spectrum of any scope then diversity in intellectual style is likely, and a challenge!

Imagine now that the spectrum spanned is a conflict spectrum, eg. an East-West or a North-South spectrum - not merely a comparison of countries in North-Western Europe. Imagine further that the research cooperation is seen as a goal in itself. The predictable outcome is obvious: there will be a focus on the descriptive, on data-collection and data-processing and low level data-analysis; not on theory-formation. The technicalities, including the trivia, of the first three will unite, at the expense of the boredom among the more Teutonically or Gallically inclined; there will be an instinctive, collectively shared, tendency to shun theory-formation. This will play the comparative game into the hands of those who in advance are the carriers of this type of intellectual style: the Saxons on either side of the Atlantic; some of them, of course, also found in such places as France and Germany. In short, what we are saying is simply this: the very nature of comparative research, where it is so important to keep the teams together, will tend to favour a Saxon approach because it favours a least common denominator on which one can agree: data-collection, and the lower levels of data analysis. This is a well-known phenomenon in the United Nations system but there, also for the simple reason that there is a division of labour between the staff assembling data, on a comparative basis and the policy-making bodies making decisions more or less on the basis of the data etc. collected by the staff, a Saxon approach maintains this division.

6. On the theoretical implications of comparative studies

Imagine now that we have obtained a good sample of nations and of inner layers, what next? For simplicity, let the nations be of the first type, countries, and with only one inner layer, individuals whose opinions on the development of their own country and the relations among countries are explored - like in the Images of the World in the Year 2000. In other words, a completely conventional design, but for that reason not necessarily to be put only to conventional uses.

The thing to be avoided, in a sense the saddest possible outcome of this type of study (but a rather frequent one) is a set of uninterpreted "marginals" tabulating all responses by country, but never using the nation-variable analytically. As (bad) social science prose, it reads something like this: "As we see, in Country A there were X% with an optimistic view whereas in country B there were Y%." (19) Full stop. The word "whereas" substitutes for analysis. When pressed, for instance, by their own inner urges to go one step further, such authors will often escape through the apparent wisdom of invoking non-comparability: "It might be tempting to draw some conclusions from these differences but as we do not really know whether the words mean the same in A and B it would be hazardous to enter into such speculations." The next sentence is sometimes a call for a follow-up study, which then will end pretty much in the same way.

Against this line of thinking there are some important arguments:

(1) Semantic differences: of course there are. But they should be taken into consideration during the construction of the questionnaire and not only be the usual translation back into the language in which the questionnaire was first drafted, but the translation both ways for all pairs of languages to be used in the study.<sup>(20)</sup> Then, semantic differences of insight, usually among several. But this presupposes some idea of the direction of the difference, not merely the idea that there are differences.

(2) National differences: of course there are. It would be extremely strange if the averages (and percentages are averages on a C-1 scale) in two different nations should not differ, given how differently nations treat their citizens. Some people are afraid of elaborating such differences beyond the purely numerical, lest this should lead to racist or nationalist sentiments/prejudices. But to this the objections would be that

- nations are not races, they are often cross-cut by races;
- even if they were there is no basis for inferring that differences would have a biological basis, as all human beings seem capable of being socialised into any power-system of meaning-system;

- it is not the role of a social scientist to shun away from differences but to explore them and also give to them another sense than the prejudicial and the destructive.

3. Differences in intellectual style: of course there are. There are those who can have the data in front of them for years with huge percentage differences in the same direction screaming for an interpretation, without ever going beyond stating the finding. And there are those who with no intersubjective data basis at all arrive at the most startling insight, sometimes tenable, sometimes not - the Gallic and Teutonic being more in the direction, the Saxon and Nipponic more in the other. The task of good social science would seem to be to bridge this gap, well knowing that the data dug up by empiricists and the interpretations by the theoreticians constitute basic parts of this edifice. Why do only partial social science when one might do the whole thing?

Of course he who shuns away from analysis in a multi-nation study might also do so in a single-nation study, but we are concerned with the multi-nation study. And the first condition to get out of the non-interpretation predicament is, of course, to make use of variables for nations, and preferably variables with at least three values and at least one nation for each value. The task, then, is to relate variables characterising nations to variables characterising individuals, and this can be done at several levels of complexity.

At the most elementary level this is rather simple, for what we are dealing with is usually not individuals but aggregates, samples of individuals, from a nation. An average of those aggregates is also a variable characterising a nation, in a



sense , only "from below" ; a variable characterising the nation as such (e.g. in terms of political or economic system) or relative to the international system "from above" is not that different. A nation may be characterized, using the system in Section 3 above, as technically-economically developed and its population as "development-sceptical/pessimist" (variables of types 1 and 5 respectively). Of course, these two variables can be related to each other, and the finding, "the more developed the country, the more sceptical the population" may emerge. To do this, however, it is indispensable that the countries really distribute well on a sufficient range of technical-economic development. And one should also be able to test the importance of some third variable, such as capitalist/socialist: could it be that all the developed countries are capitalist (and for that reason) pessimist? The finding should hold also within a set of capitalist countries and within a set of socialist countries, as in fact, it does.<sup>(21)</sup>

Still another way of linking the individual and the national levels would be by testing an individual level finding to see whether it holds in nations which are so different that it looks like a relatively "universal" finding (we put it in quotation marks for it is a little ludicrous of us humans to refer to our little planet as the universe). Of course, it does not have to hold in all, there could be a marked tendency as when in the Images of the World in the Year 2000 study we found that "the periphery (inside the countries) hopes for change, but does

not think there will be much of it".<sup>(22)</sup> In other words, the periphery is in a more evaluative, the centre in a more predictive mood. In a sense obvious: the centre is satisfied with the status quo, the periphery is not, so the centre controls through prediction, the periphery hopes to translate evaluation into facts that the centre may be able to predict but not to control.

Still another, and in an analytical sense "higher" level of analysis would look for more complex relations between national and individual levels. More precisely, the hypothesis would be of the form "if the absolute/relational/structural variables characterizing a nation are at level A, then the inside variables are at level a, but if they are at level B then the inside variables are at level b". All of this could in addition be made issue-specific, as in the statement "when it comes to problems of development and science the ... centers are closer together than the nations. When it comes to problems of peace philosophy the centers are even further apart."<sup>[23]</sup>

There is also another type of proposition that could be explored tying nation level variables not only to individual level variables but to individuals as such: could it be that the more an individual has the same characteristics, the same profile on a set of variables, as the nation the more will he/she tend to identify, even act on behalf on that nation? Imagine a nation high on education and low on income, slated to be "aggres-

sive" in the sense of being self-assertive, wanting changes in the total system. Imagine an individual within this nation with the same profile: would he not tend to recognise himself in the nation and vice versa?<sup>(24)</sup> Or in a nation slated for status quo behaviour, high on all possible rank dimensions, would not an individual inside that nation with the same status-set be the ideal carrier of such inclinations? In short, the possibilities are numerous, mildly speaking. In a sense one may even say that only through comparative studies do we really start doing social science in the sense of attempts to link together levels of analysis, from the psychological individual level via micro level (social psychology), meso level (sociology), to macro level (political science, international relations). But there are two branches in this level/layer list: one that picks up structure and power and appeals more to sociologists and political scientists, and one that picks up culture and meaning and would appeal more to anthropologists, humanists, perhaps also to many historians although they are certainly also pursuing the first branch. In a class for and by themselves are the economists who certainly will have to tie better together theories of micro- and macro-economics, but have a tendency to do so without considering individual psychology, small group phenomena, structure, power, culture, meaning, history and international politics in their belief that economics is sui generis, a phenomenon closed to other fields, sufficiently described by economic parameters.

Thus the comparative study is not only inter-national in the composition of the research team, it also has to be inter-disciplinary if the study really is to make use of a multi-nation design. One reason why so few studies do so, independent of intellectual style, is hinted at above: simply because inner/micro/meso level specialists know too little about the macro / regional/global levels of analysis. And a simple reason why culture/meaning aspects usually do not enter is that the specialists in these fields are not very strong on the more entrepreneurial aspects of comparative research. The entrepreneurs, for obvious reasons, come here out of the statistical or nomothetically oriented sciences, and these people, in turn, are not very conversant with culture and meaning. But sooner or later the way in which comparative research, using nation as a variable (but also lower territorial levels like districts and municipalities, and also higher units like regions) is done, corresponds to the way in which so much else in our world is organised (like international scientific associations and transnational corporations, for instance). This structure of research itself will prevail, forcing changes in the way of doing social science. Thus, it is only logical that the United Nations also has a United Nations University with a Human and Social Development Programme pursuing the development "problématique" around the world, of course using its structure to build networks that are cooperative and in some cases can do comparative research. (25)

One may, however, safely say that the whole story of comparative research is not one of social scientists filled with interesting ideas to be tested or at least explored, forcing a new

international and interdisciplinary research structure into action, or at least into existence. It is rather the other way around: the structure is there, for instance, in the form of the Vienna Centre ("for research and documentation in social sciences") but far from being fully utilised for its scientific potential.<sup>(26)</sup>

A typical example of this is the underutilisation of the second interpretation given to "nation", in terms of culture. Why should the social scientists leave so much to the specialists in the humanities to explore such important aspects of culture as the different meanings of time, in different cultures, even in macro-cultures = civilizations? Of course, those specialists have their own approach which leads them to attribute great importance to culture expressed in cultural products, of art and literature, and little significance to the attitudes and beliefs and the patterns of behaviour of people in general. This is where anthropologists enter, and increasingly so as they no longer limit their approach to non-industrial cultures. To study the deep ideology underlying attitudes and beliefs, and the deep structure underlying patterns of behaviour using nations in the second sense as the unit of study, open to internal variations particularly along class, gender and age lines, should be entirely feasible, using survey designs of the types indicated above.

This way one might also open for a more fruitful study of the old topic of national character, of Völkerpsychologie, much maligned and for good reasons, but a phenomenon that hardly disappears by not being studied. And one might get away from some

of the "elitism" in culture studies, e.g. defining philosophy as the products of philosophers, not of people.

Is it necessary or advisable to have a complete theoretical framework made up in advance, before a comparative study is launched? The answer is probably to avoid the two extremes of having no theory at all, and of having a very complete, deductive theory. With no theory at all the comparative study becomes a fishing expedition for data in search of theory and there is the risk of not getting much in return for the considerable costs incurred simply because questions asked of the empirical world have not been sufficiently precise to elicit precise answers. But if these questions are very precise there is the opposite risk: that only answers already contained in the questions, in the trite form "confirmed/disconfirmed" (the question being whether a set of hypotheses can be confirmed) will emerge. In other words, the danger is that the theory freezes the paradigm, the set of variables and set of units of analysis and the basic relations among them so that the researcher will not be sufficiently open to new signals, to new questions and, even more basically, to new paradigms because he is only looking for new answers (and sometimes not even for that, he is only looking for old answers, for confirmation of old hypotheses).

To steer a middle course between the Scylla of too little and the Charybdis of too much theory is not easy. There is no clear middle position where a cluster of methodological rules can emerge.

it is rather a question of intuition and perhaps also experience, and fatigue or at least dissatisfaction with the two extremes. What matters is to have a good grasp of the general direction of a study and some view of the total span of units from the various levels/layers and variables from the various disciplines that enter into the study. There have to be theory-elements, theory-islands, so to speak, but not a well-knitted theory-continent leaving no blank spots of the map - for only maps with blank spots on them are the really useful ones in research.

7. On the practical implications of comparative studies

Let us look for a moment at three conclusions that came out of the Images of the World in the Year 2000 study:<sup>(27)</sup>

"1. When it comes to domestic perspectives the organizing axis is the level of technical-economic development. Nations high on this dimension are pessimistic, bewildered and uncertain, probably a) because they see the negative effects of this type of development, b) because they feel they have exhausted the program of their societies and that the future is without challenging and clear goals. Nations low on that dimensions do not have this vision and may even reject it. They follow in the same footpaths but with the optimism stemming partly from the ignorance of the adverse effects, partly from the feeling of having a program, And this seems to be the program defined and developed by countries that are already disillusioned by it.

2. When it comes to international perspectives the organizing axis is the international role behaviour: East-West as opposed to the North-South axis that seemed to prevail for the domestic perspectives. The distinction between socialist and capitalist nations is activated: The population samples seem to have internalized, even to a remarkable extent, the ethos for the policies pursued by their governments on the international scene. To belong to a pact, or at least to live in the field of forces defined by the East-West conflict, seems somehow to give people a sense of identity. The overwhelming impression however, is not one of a humanity divided by national borders, but of a humanity united in a desire for peace and in an almost surprising consensus when it comes to how it could be obtained. And at this point, one may even talk about a people-government contradiction, cutting across the East-West and North-South axes.

3. Finally and basically, the two preceding points notwithstanding, these are not data reflecting an innovating humanity exploring and facing a fascinating open-ended future. These seem rather to be data reflecting a humanity with its back to the future looking at the past, and the present - and projecting from that experience into the future. In a sense these are the data one would expect at the end of a phase in human history, not at the beginning of a new one."

Obviously, this has something to do with politics, with highly practical matters for individuals and nations and groups of individuals and groups of nations. Is there any reason why social scientists should abstain from drawing implications of a more prac-



tical nature, as opposed to theoretical implications, for theory-building only?

It is obvious that there are implications. Thus, in the field of development one would explore whether the pessimistic views held in the most developed countries are realistic, and in case they are, it might serve as a warning for people in the less developed countries. And in the field of peace, if attitudes are so entrenched, maybe the best would be to get around the East-West issue and focus on something else, in a cooperative endeavour, in discussing joint problems of development and future, running enterprises (from joint ventures to transnational universities) together, and so on.<sup>(28)</sup> Of course, these are broad policy implications, very general guidelines, not precise political implications for concrete action, here and now. For that, such studies might be inadequate, but for policy implications, they may yield quite a lot. As a matter of fact, the whole IM 2000 study shows, in my view, relatively convincingly that public opinion may be a very good indicator simply because people may see problems and report on them before the elites do.

But how much and what such studies yield also depends on how the social scientists conceive of their own role. In a nation, in the first sense of that word, there are people and there is also the Obrigkeit, the state/corporate/intelligentsia elites. Let us refer to it all as the state, for simplicity. Obviously, the social scientists are somewhere in between, studying the "people", being paid by the state, usually reporting to those who pay more than to those who are studied. It should be noted that there is

also another organisation in society that does this: the police. The danger always exists that what social science essentially amounts to is to spy on the population on behalf of the state, sensing the mood of the populace better than a state organ such as the police can really do it.

This kind of reflection is particularly important in studies using nation as a variable for the simple reason that states are also basing themselves on comparisons. Statesmen want to know how they stand relative to other nations; social scientists engaged in comparative studies can answer many of their questions and give rise to even more. Through this process, and through the simple mechanism of "who pays", governments and inter-governmental organizations may gain too much influence over comparative studies.

To this, there are at least two simple answers: that social scientists see themselves more as the spokesmen/women of the people; or else that social scientists join other social scientists, in universities and in international social science organizations, and - in the name of academic freedom - study what can be studied for its more pure social science interest without practical implications drawn, or even approached, in any meaningful sense. This latter possibility is the more frequently found; the former is the position, more or less, of the social scientists referred to as "critical" or "engagé", and working for elite interests is in a sense compatible with both of these positions.<sup>(29)</sup> The latter ones tend to be surprise-free social scientists, producing within the paradigm of thinking used by the elites themselves predictable findings with

acceptable recommendations - thereby reinforcing the tendency for elites to be badly informed.

As international politics become more intense, among other reasons due to the way in which economic conflicts of interests will blend with cultural differences and even with incompatibilities (for instance in the religious sphere), comparative studies will become even more important, not only as policy but also as political instruments - as witnessed by the tendency of countries like the US and Japan to make use of such studies. This means that there will be more pressure on social scientists to deliver the kind of goods that can be used for governmental decision-making. Some will do this, others will go in the other two directions - the polarisation of the social science community will continue. And all of this because of the tremendous salience of the nation as a unit in the international system, along all kinds of axes and cleavages, and hence the salience of the nation as a variable in comparative studies. And yet we social scientists are only at the very beginning of trying to come to grips with all these problems - some of which have been indicated in this paper. Maybe it is better that social scientists themselves come to a clear recognition of their duties and responsibilities, to science and to the world, than having others dictate the conditions after the problems emerge as confrontation. (30)

## NOTES

(1) IM 2000, pp. 574-78 are about this. Two formations, very much backed up by the data: "When it comes to the great issues of space, peace and war, our data indicate that the nation will probably continue to be the salient actor for a long time to come." "When it comes to the great issue of time, development and national goal-setting, the nation will probably also be a salient actor for a long time to come.

It may be objected that if a study is designed to compare nations, the nations will show up as important. This objection is discussed and rejected, among other reasons because other cleavages, such as age, sex and class, were also explored.

2) See Johan Galtung, "A Structural Theory of Integration", Essays in Peace Research, Vol. IV, Ejlers, Copenhagen 1980, Ch.11.

(3) See Johan Galtung, Theory and Methods of Social Research, Columbia University Press, Allen & Unwin 1967, pp. 40-41 (below referred to as TMSR).

(4) Asia is simply too diverse, comprising Islamic, Hindu, Buddhist, and Japanese civilizations (see Section 4 in the text); very many languages, different in political/economic systems, and so on. Europe has at least a certain Christian common cultural heritage and languages with certain similarities, not to mention histories with many points of intersection, given that much expansionism in so little space. There is something "European" in general about Europe, but there is hardly anything "Asian", except in the broad sense of human in general.

(5) See TMSR, II 4.4, pp. 358-89 for a warning against this faith.

(6) After the Second World War most wars have been fought in the Third World, on the territory of poor countries; the major belligerents over time, however, being (former) colonial powers defending their control over those territories, That control was challenged, a challenge that can well be referred to as "aggressive" in the broad sense of the word, But is it highest for the poorest, or for the richest, or for the in-betweens? Important question, as much of the motivation behind "technical assistance" was based on the first of these three hypothesis - and hence on the idea that with decreasing poverty there will be decreasing aggressiveness. Actually, the third hypothesis may come closest to empirical reality: the poorest are too apathetic, the richest too easily coopted, it is the in-between that has both capability and motivation to rebel. All this just to indicate the importance of trichotomies rather than dichotomies for analysis of social science data, also at the level of the nation - with dichotomies so much of this gets lost.

- (7) For a number of studies using this terminology and approach, see Johan Galtung, Essays in Peace Research, Vol. III, Ejlers, Copenhagen 1978, parts I, II and III - Social position Theory, Rank Disequilibrium Theory and and Social Structure Theory, pp. 29-314. Chapter I develops the idea of "Center-Periphery" in some detail.
- (8) See TMSR, pp. 414 ff for some ideas about the type of analysis.
- (9) The theory of graphs bridges the world of geometry and the world of arithmetics in attributing numbers to certain geometrical configurations and , consequently, is rather ideal for making indices put of geometrical configurations that represent structures. For one exercise in this see Johan Galtung, The True Worlds, The Free Press/Mac Millan, New York 1980, sections on "Operationalisation of Structure-oriented Goals", pp. 455-58.
- (10) See Chapters 4,5, and 6, footnote 7 above.
- (11) See Ch. 4, "A Structural Theory of Aggression", and Ch. 8, "A Structural Theory of Revolution", footnote 7 above.
- (12) See the whole Appendix, "World Social Indicators", pp. 431-465 of The True Worlds for a number of efforts at operationalisation of concepts not always considered operationalisable.
- (13) For details, see "Five Cosmologies: An Impressionistic Presentation.
- (14) For details, see "Structure, Culture and Intellectual Styles".
- (15) For details, see "In Defense of Epistemological Eclecticism", Galtung, Methodology and Development, Oslo, Copenhagen 1976
- (16) Footnote 14 above; later efforts will include attempts at characterising the Indic (India) and the Sinic (China).
- (17) See TMSR, 1.2, particularly p. 15 for an elaboration of this distinction.
- (18) See Process in the UN System: An Issues Paper, Volker Rittberger and Johan Galtung, Tübingen 1980
- (19) It also belongs to the picture that the percentages are often given with two digits behind the decimal point, a spurious precision indeed when sampling and other render even the second digit before the decimal point dubious!

(20) In a ten-language study this means a total of 90 translation jobs to be carried out, from each one to each one. But this should be doubled, for not only should Dutch be translated into Hindi; the Hindi translation into Dutch should also be (back)translated into Hindi. Taken seriously, this would be an incentive to limit the number of languages included in a study.

(21) Thus, for the findings about "science scepticism", "development pessimism" and "development fatigue", "the dividing line was generally in terms of level of development, not in terms of capitalist vs. socialist" (IM 2000, p.116).

(22) IM 2000, p.392.

(23) IM 2000, p.397.

(24) "A Structural Theory of Revolution", (footnote 7 above), p. 302.

(25) For some views on how this is working in practice, see Johan Galtung, "The United Nations University as a Research Organization", and "Towards Synergy in Networks of Problems", Geneva 1979.

(26) And even for the Vienna Centre, a pioneer in the field of bridging East-West gaps in social sciences, the theoretical results tend to be meager, and the comparison of their many comparative studies looking for similarities and differences

(27) IM 2000, p. 118.

(28) One may say that the "spirit of Helsinki" was an exercise in this direction. However, for that effort to be peace-building it should not add too many new bones of contention to the already existing ones. And one may say that the New International Economic Order, in its UN version also dating from the mid-1970s, was and is an exercise in how to "follow in the same footpaths but with the optimism stemming partly from the ignorance of the adverse effects, partly from the feeling of having a program" (this was actually written in July 1970)

(29) For more on this see Johan Galtung, "Dialogue as Development",

(30) The present author has a number of experiences with policy-related comparative studies, from the utterly unpleasant such as the Camelot story (see "After Camelot" in Papers on Methodology, Editors, Copenhagen 1979, pp. 161-179) to the quite pleasant such as the efforts of the European peace research community in the 1960s to promote a spirit of cooperation rather than deterrence and confrontation as a basis for security (Co-operation in Europe, Universitetsforlaget, Oslo 1970, particularly pp. 9-20).