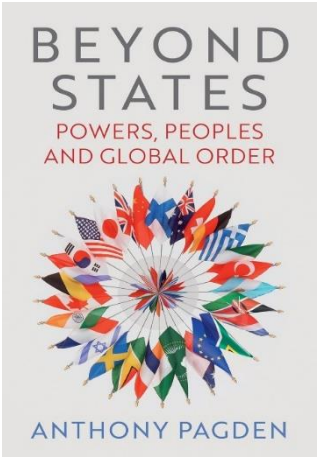


Anthony Pagden-. *Beyond States: Powers, Peoples and Global Order* (London: Polity Press, 2024), 224p.

Anthony Pagden's *Beyond States: Powers, Peoples and Global Order* brings into sharper focus the idea of state and how this latter affects the tribe's identity formation. He accentuates that people nowadays across the globe, who are residing in nation-states, are founded on the notion of a unified populace, a common culture, a singular legal system, and one source of sovereign power. This problem of state will push us to raise the question of whether this will remain authentic in the future or not. No matter how powerful a nation-state is, it cannot effectively handle any of the major problems that humanity is currently facing, from infectious illnesses to climate change, from terrorism to mass migration.

Nation-states no longer constitute the sole framework of global governance; there is a growing presence of transnational networks and organizations. We are starting to recognize the tangible possibilities of a new global civic society. Nevertheless, this book endeavors to delineate the form that this political structure ought to take. By examining the historical evolution of human civilization, from the earliest empires to the contemporary dynamics of international relations, Pagden's study argues that there exists a viable opportunity for the establishment of a novel political entity, a global "federation of federations," which could guide humanity towards a future characterized by greater harmony, equity, and security.

In comparison to the empires they succeeded, nation-states represent a decline in political endeavors. For instance, Islamic dynasties were notably inclusive, embracing a diverse array of languages, religions, and ethnicities within their expansive realms. The Romans had previously established the concept of "the law of nations" or "the law of peoples" to acknowledge the diversity in their known world. The European colonial empires of the late 19th century and beyond, which emerged from the maritime empires of the 15th century, were predominantly land-based and exhibited significant differences from their predecessors. Pre-modern empires were characterized as "the most extensive and enduring political societies in history," and they also established extensive trading networks that were vital to the development of international trade.

The extensive adaptability was restricted by the nation-state to narrower political concepts rooted in geography. Nevertheless, although the European nation-state initiative was repressive towards others, Adam Smith

remained optimistic that those adversely affected by international trade would ultimately gain strength through the forces of commerce to resist the injustices perpetrated by Europeans. Individuals were displaced from their tribal affiliations and drawn into what Montesquieu describes as “beneficial commerce” due to the dynamics of global trade.

In a manner akin to John Maynard Keynes in later centuries, thinkers such as Adam Smith, Montesquieu, Henri de Saint-Simon, Émile Durkheim, Karl Marx, and many others posited that the “avaricious, uninformed, and unscrupulous individual focused exclusively on personal profit” paradoxically served as the catalyst for a more cohesive global society, which, for better or worse, united humanity. The return to tribal existence was no longer feasible.

Although the nation-state continues to exist, it is also afflicted with uncontrollable transnational issues that must be handled by international treaties. According to this perspective, a more effective political structure would be a federation, such as the European Union, which is now the only one in existence, followed by what Pagden himself call “a federation of federations” in the far future, rather than superstates. Even if it may be difficult to envision a world apart of the nation-state, Pagden remains optimistic, writing that “what we have made, we may yet be able to un-make” (15).

Even though it sounds good, the Roman “law of nations,” or what Jeremy Bentham would dub “international law” in the 19th century, is still predicated on assumptions that may be foreign to other people's cultural traditions. As Cicero correctly wondered, “How do you know the opinions of all nations?”(5). Pagden is aware that what passes for "international" or "universal" in the era of Euro-American hegemony is the projection of Western secular values, but he optimistically insists that “genesis” need not always determine “validity.” In this way, he sounds a lot like Smith on trade and Keynes on the future of his grandchildren.

Despite the ambitious forecasts of Smith, Keynes, and Marx remaining unrealized, the grand aspirations of Immanuel Kant’s concept of a “world republic” and Philip Pettit’s notion of “globalized sovereignty” fail to transcend their culturally biased origins and constitutional limitations in accommodating diverse social imaginaries. Furthermore, they neglect to acknowledge the inherent adaptability of capitalism, which continuously evolves to avert its own demise.

The president of Tanzania, Julius Nyerere, along with the concept of a United States of Africa, has proven incapable of reconciling divergent administrative philosophies that are often rooted in profound cultural

differences. The realist French philosopher Alexandre Kojève posited that the federation of nations is feasible only when their cultures are either similar or mutually shared. This is exemplified in the contemporary United States, where the composition of the supreme courts tasked with adjudicating conflicts among federated states is highly politicized, thereby complicating the situation further.

The persistent ideology of the empire, referred to as the civilizing mission, sought to eliminate distinctions by rendering colonized populations suitable for self-rule in alignment with the standards of what was commonly termed the civilized world. Consequently, while empires may now exist as a distant recollection, revered by a few and condemned by the majority, they significantly shaped the political landscape of contemporary society.

Pagden posits that the feudal structures such as estates, baronies, duchies, counties, earls, marchionesses, free cities, aristocratic republics, and ecclesiastical principalities—referred to as "petits patriotes" by the French and Castilians—were remnants of the Western Roman Empire, essential for the coherent and independent existence of Europe. However, nation-states, despite their assertions of sovereign power, have never truly existed in isolation from one another. Even the British philosopher Thomas Hobbes, who interpreted the interactions between states as a fundamental strategy among individuals or groups in a "state of nature," acknowledged a higher order, a regulatory force that unites all humans as members of a single species.

Despite the strong emphasis on the distinctiveness and particularity of "national characteristics," it is increasingly difficult for even the most fervent nationalists to overlook the commonalities shared by all states, regardless of their insularity. Each state must acknowledge the claims made by others, and individuals are now required to coexist within the global environments they inhabit. The necessity to share the planet's limited resources is becoming more pressing, as isolation is no longer a viable option for survival. This underscores the critical role of the state in safeguarding individual rights and lives.

In a world that is becoming more interconnected by shared and growing risks, Pagden's appeal for a "federation of federations" (163) is a pertinent and urgent cry to reconsider our identities and ideas of sovereignty. Pagden's suggestion seems realistically grounded, if only as a precursor to such a cosmic destiny, given that Elon Musk, the most fascinating technologist in the world, casually envisions a multi-planetary human civilisation in the not-too-distant future. Even if this future sounds utopian, I wouldn't pick it for myself. Who am I, however, to doubt a future free of the fictitious identities and borders that have recently led to unending suffering? Future generations might be freed thanks to Pagden's brave vision.

Pagden narrates the extensive narrative of the prolonged evolution from empires to a worldwide framework of sovereign states. He identifies a significant conflict faced by the contemporary nation-state: while it has established the essential political and legal structure necessary for safeguarding individual rights, it currently finds itself challenged in its ability to shield its citizens from the adverse effects of climate change and technological advancements.

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