Peasantry and national integration

Agüero Doná, Celma

Published by El Colegio de México


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This text is a summary of the most important parts of the final debate and conclusions of the seminar. These were put forward during the last session by the participants, whose contributions included admirable points and suggestions. At the same time, they also posed questions or proposed plans for the future. The points considered as fundamental and deserving greater study were, a) peasants and national integration from the point of view of the integrator or the integrated, b) the role of peasant intellectuals in the integration process, and c) the problems in the analysis of the relationship between classes and ethnic groups. The dynamic spontaneity of the debate has been limited for reasons of space, but an attempt has been made, nevertheless, to preserve its colloquial form and liveliness in this summary.

The arguments are gathered together and consider points of view from different standpoints, examining the debate and suggesting hypotheses to be studied in the next stages, such as the peasant-state relationship in countries with an agrarian economy. The common area of discussion was opened with the points that tended to clarify concepts and establish their relationships.

On nation, integration and peasants

H. Yamasaki: National integration has become an urgent and serious matter and the current problem of many developing countries.

The peasantry has appeared as a serious case of political and social tensions because of its very nature in developing countries and has tended to be a serious obstacle to national integration.

Prof. Zghal pointed out that the problem of national integration of the peasantry is not a problem which exists in every historical stage but appears only in particular periods. I completely agree with this, except that he identifies this limited period with the transitional period from
precapitalistic to capitalistic societies. I think the problem of the national integration of the peasantry also emerged with vital importance in the socialist countries such as the Soviet Union and China, which still have huge peasant masses. The peasant, in the sense defined by Wolf or Shanin, exists throughout the various stages of the history of human society, but a program of national integration of peasants only exists in particular situations.

There is a need for rapid nation building, which in a sense is enforced by the structure of world politics and world economics.

After the Second World War many countries of Asia and Africa acquired their political independence from colonial status; they then had to face a program of nation building to survive as viable units in the world arena. The leaders of the ruling classes of the new states have to achieve a more firm national integration. But, to achieve any success with national integration there are several prerequisites.

In short, interaction between state power as an integrator and the peasant as the subject of integration, must be analyzed: both poles of the integration process, their goals, choices of strategy, etc.

For instance the response of the peasantry towards any immersion of national control and response, or flexibility of state power towards various forms of peasant resistance, and so on, constitute topics to be studied. The paper of a study group of El Colegio de Mexico pointed out two types of national integration, vertical and horizontal. It is interesting to me but I cannot understand clearly the implication of horizontal integration. Until now the theory has been put forward that the integration process has appeared as vertical, and horizontal integration still remains an idea to be held up against vertical integration. And, lastly, I would like to distinguish several aspects of national integration such as political, economical, social and cultural.

Integration between these aspects must be analyzed and synthesized. It is my impression that speakers in these seminars did not clearly distinguish these aspects and deal with interrelations between them. The first thing to do is to break down the problem of national integration into some aspects and then to integrate these. Such a methodology may be very useful.

What is the defining factor of such various forms of national integration? The interrelation between the integrator and the integrated must be the most important problem.

P. Worsley: The very word nation is a new phenomenon, a novel innovation in history. It arises certainly in Western Europe as a concept
in the era of the growth of capitalism. Before that people didn’t talk about nationality. The aristocracy of France had more in common with the aristocracy of England than they had with their own people. There was no suggestion that the population need speak the same language or have the same culture. For example, the domination of English dialects spoken around London over those in the rest of the country accompanied the emergence of the national market. So, it seems to me that the phenomenon which you call nation building is the phenomenon of mobilization and is what we are referring to when we speak about the growth of a national identity. It is usually the ruling class which is interested in developing, mobilizing the population to follow the path of development that they set as targets. I think that there is a very great danger for sociologists, anthropologists and social scientists in assuming that the predicament of the ruling classes is analytical or one that raises ethical problems.

You say that the self-expression of the autonomy of the peasants is an obstacle to national integration. But from the point of view of the peasants it is the defense of their interests. Why should the peasants not defend their own interests against those who wish to mobilize them, exploit them, extract surplus from them, use them as hired troops in the army, etc.? It seems to be utterly rational, not irrational, traditionalistic or pre-modern, for the peasants to defend their own interests collectively.

The phenomenon of nationalism, the construction of national identity and the mobilization of people, the attempt to make them feel that they are Mexican or French or English or Japanese and that they have common interests, is part of a process of persuasion, of legitimization, and, therefore, it is manipulation to persuade them that the interests that they have in common are greater than the interests that divide them.

We must resist any temptation to assume that nation building is, per se, some inherent and necessarily morally correct settlement. The nation is not a natural phenomenon. It is a process, it emerges, it appears quite easily. We need to distinguish, therefore, between ethnicity and nationality, because multi-ethnic societies are very frequently incompatible with the national identity. In Mexico, the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, Austria and Hungary, innumerable societies are formally multinational, but the problems that create tension, friction, are those of unequal development. They refer basically to the economic differentiation of the different sectors of the economy, as for example, between underdeveloped, the back woods of Yugoslavia, the case of Montene-
gro, rural, mountainous, backward, underdeveloped, and the highly developed, semi-industrialized parts of Slovenia. Nationalism or multinational identity persists when there is some material interest, such as differentiation of occupations, functions or economic activity, as between agriculture and industry, or when people feel threatened. When there is a dynamic expanding economy which sucks in masses of labor, it does not matter what nationality or ethnic identity they have, as in the American melting-pot situation in the late 19th century and early 20th century, it is really not important what national language they speak for the purposes of the economy. But there are not dynamic expanding economies with expanding industrial sectors in most of the third world countries. There is a highly unequal development or to put it into more theoretical sociological terms, rather than in economic terms, there is a sense of relative deprivation.

People know that they are living at lower standards than the people in the city.

There is no need of a direct experience to have an idea of unequal consumption, one can know it indirectly through mass media or communication. This is a revolutionary force in itself, a radical force. So, in order to explain the persistence, the emergence, the disappearance, and sometimes reemergence of ethnic identities and especially national identities, it has to be related to inequalities of a material kind, in terms of political economy. For example, the emergence of Scottish nationalism in the last few years is very directly a result of the discovery of oil and the potentiality of vast wealth in Scotland that the people do not want to see go to England.

B. Chandra: No doubt nations and nation building appear in particular historical contexts and in a process, but it is not a conclusion of only this. We need to examine to what extent the process of national integration is really attached to it. To what extent does it affect the objective process, and to what extent it does not and instead represents a certain type of manipulation.

The European experience of how nations came into being and how national integration came to exist has a lot in common with how national integration came to existence in the colonial countries and post-colonial societies. But, also it is true that the bourgeois national leadership mobilized the peasantry and suppressed sections in the name of nation and national integration, and they promoted national integration so that then societies might be unified against colonialism. But it is not just manipulation, it also represents a certain objective phenomenon.
Colonialism does have a contradiction with the society of the colony. Not only with the bourgeoisie, but also with the peasant class and with the working class. Consequently, this provided the objective basis for national integration during the course of their anti-colonialist struggle. The second important aspect of this is that unless the society of the colony gets integrated, it will not be able to defeat colonialism, because colonialism has massive forces behind it and, consequently, to defeat it there is a real need for a nationally integrated society.

This is the really important historical question, and the same should be applied to post-colonial society, but there the difference becomes sharper because the post-colonial society finds that if social development is to occur then the society, all the people, must help together. They should not get split up. Of course, the split will not occur only along class lines. If it were that simple then one might say that national integration has no role in post-colonial society. But the tendency is not only to spread along class lines, but also to spread regionally, linguistically, tribally and so on. Then, again, not only is there the danger of a new colonialism, of colonialism reasserting itself continually, but also the problem that the forces and the planning process, whether capitalist or socialist, cannot take place properly unless it takes place in a unified, coherent society.

The danger becomes greater. Let me give an example of manipulation. To me an example of a manipulative government would be what happened at the end of the 19th century around the slogan of independence from the British Empire, or, “we want our place in the sun of a civilizing nation”.

National integration is thought to cover up the class situation; instead society is thought to be unified and the promise of independence with which everybody was enamored, including Karl Marx in the middle of the 19th century, is falsified by efforts of integration. Therefore, once given the objective basis for national integration, a question to be asked is the one that has been asked in the paper of the group from El Colegio de México. Using their language, one should ask about vertical and horizontal integration. The main question is: society has to be integrated, under whose hegemony? Which class is to dominate in it? Society must be united against colonialism. If this is not done the struggle will not be successful. But if a unified movement emerges, should it be under the domination of the bourgeoisie? In China there was also national integration but under the hegemony of one type of political force. There are different cases, like Indonesia and India.
The more the peasantry or the working class tries to model the city coalition, the more it hands over the unified and imperialist struggle to the bourgeoisie. The way out is to struggle for hegemony and the same process must continue afterwards. You have a much deeper experience of Africa, P. Worsley, and your example is very interesting in regard to the struggle against colonialism. Tribal people have struggled together and, they have also fought for a certain national integration and against those tendencies which are divisive. But, as soon as the colonial struggle is over, the problem remains.

One must consider also the danger of the historian, economist, sociologist, falling prey to ruling class ideologies. The entire society starts taking on the colors that divide the society. It is in the best interests to locate those sectors which somehow divide the society.

Sometimes, it may be take the form of the struggle of the pure black people against half black people, as in the Portuguese case. Sometimes, it may be even the question of pure Indians, as in Mexico or in some other Latin American country; their interests must be looked after as against the interests of those who are no longer pure Indians. It is a fact that there is real need for national integration in these societies.

Capitalist societies require national integration because division will not serve the purpose of their social change or social revolution. Therefore, the real question is that national integration does become of value, but the real struggle occurs over the question: National integration means under whose hegemony? In this one must not avoid the class question under any circumstances.

Under what kind of hegemony has national integration to be achieved?. The problem of nation building is totally connected with the problem of class struggle within the country. Nationalism and the overlapping of the problem of nationalism and class struggle is one very important characteristic of the developing countries. Then, we must at first analyze the problem objectively.

In dealing with this problem we must separate the ideological or variable point of view by analyzing the objective process of national integration.

On integration, ethnicity and classes

S. Varese: We should be clear about the major difference between national integration and change. If we look at the origin of the so-called modern states, it is connected with the expansion and growth of capitalism.
The question is: Supposing that national integration is a necessity, what does national integration really mean? Does it mean homogenization under one ruling class which can be the bourgeoisie or the proletariat?

It is possible to carry on, to construct a national project which includes pluralism and self-management on the base of the people. But let us think about a multi-ethnic society. A multi-ethnic society like Mexico does not have a multiethnic state. This has to be made clear.

The people that belong to, work and exist in the state and in the government do not belong to an ethnic group. They only belong to the other bourgeoisie: speaking Spanish, coming out of a class, a very clear class, the upper bourgeoisie, the bourgeoisie itself or the petit bourgeoisie.

In a limited number of cases, few members of the ethnic groups reach a very low position in the state organization, which is not the government.

We should differentiate between government and state. In Mexico, for example, it is clear that what changes is the government, every six years. The state itself, at a certain level, remains the same. This state organization is homogenous, highly integrated.

In the case of Mexico there is the party, the PRI, which is extremely integrated. But society itself is not integrated. The question is, how can a multiethnic national project be organized which, is multiple because it happens to be in a multiethnic society; it needs a multiethnic state organization. There are few badly carried out examples in the cases of Yugoslavia, the Soviet Union, and the example of Switzerland.

The question is whether integration really means the destruction of all possibilities for the minority groups. Minorities in terms of ethnic groups. Minorities having every right to decide together in a solidarious political system with the rest of the nation. The other observation I had in mind concerns the Scottish case cited by Prof. Worsley: the fact that when sometimes the bourgeoisie of an ethnic group discovers that their interests are in contradiction to the bourgeois interest of the dominant ethnic group, at that point there is a real reemergence of the ethnic identity which has to be differentiated from the emergence of an ethnic and class interest and conscience of the peasant and workers of the ethnic group. Ethnicity can be so for reactionary or revolutionary reasons; ethnicity does not guarantee that there is always revolution. Ethnicity can be used by the local bourgeoisie in order to acquire more independence from the dominating ethnic group which has different interests.
The case of the United States, the melting-pot, mentioned by Prof. Worsley, it is true as long as the economy is expanding, but as soon as the economy is stabilized the chicanos say we have rights, and the Indians and the Blacks do too. As soon as the economy is not expanding any more, this will happen in multiethnic societies whenever the interests of the dominant group start to be in conflict with interests of the local bourgeoisie. This is why it is important to investigate whether there is really a bourgeoisie in the local ethnic group. In Mexico, there are some local indigenous groups that already have a bourgeoisie, a bourgeoisie which is already starting to understand that maybe their interests are not the same as those of the dominating bourgeoisie. This may originate a reemergence of ethnic identity.

A. Zghal; The nation must be thought not as a natural phenomenon, unchanging, but as a historically specific phenomenon, emerging under particular conditions in times of history. A nation can thus appear and disappear. The nation is either inherently progressive or reactionary.

It can be used for different ends and for different functions. It is generally associated with the emergence of capitalism and the construction of a national market. This market which therefore means that the cultural integration is desirable, that is necessary to integrate the population served by this market.

In what we might call a sort of late capitalism contemporary Europe, with the phenomenon of the trascendence of national markets, above the level of the limits of the nation-state, like multinational he who manages, manipulates the symbols of nationalism. But in his own interests or in those of other people?

This is a very inadequate way of formulating the question because no bourgeoisie ever rules on its own. It always has to have alliances with other social stata and build up a system of alliances. The urban, industrial, mercantile, commercial, bourgeoisie, for example, based in cities, always needs to ally with some faction of the rural classes, even the peasantry.

The way in which these alliances are made differs from country to country.

This leads to different national developments in terms of nation-building considering the case of the Japanese miracle, the high degree of cultural integration achieved in Japan depended on the elimination of resistance, or on the passivity of the Japanese peasantry. The Japanese peasantry was incorporated successfully, and the nation was built, but the consequence was fascism. So, different types of systems of al-
liances lead in different directions. Some to bourgeois democracy, others to fascism, and yet others to various other types of political formations. There is no general phenomenon of national integration, there is a variety of forms of national integration.

D. Wurfel: We need to come back to a point made earlier, that national integration has certain similarities with mobilization and that it is a process.

It is a process of both; on some occasions under the control of the leading elite and on other occasions an uncontrolled socio-economic process. The colonial situation is a rather interesting case where the ruling elite certainly did not intend national integration and nationalism to be consequences of the socioeconomic processes the colonial powers introduced in the colonial areas. This is a clear example of a socioeconomic process that was not a deliberate plan of the part of the ruling elite.

It is not correct to say that national integration took place before independence, that it was a necessary basis for the success of the independence movement. That is true in some countries, but the very fact that there is a question of national integration problems of peasantry, and of national integration today, in a postindependence era, is precisely because it did not take place before independence in a number of countries. Perhaps Malaysia is the most glaring example of this.

We should recognize that certain types of integration are a threat to the peasant's status and other types of integration may actually be desired by the peasantry. We should try to look at the question of integration and the types of policies that are called integration from the peasant viewpoint. In the Philippines in the 1930's under Kazan there was a declared policy of national integration in Mindanao, a deliberate international government policy of putting Christian settlers into Moslem land and taking the land away from Moslems.

This is a clear case of the ruling elite directing a policy of national integration which was a very serious threat to a particular element within the peasantry, the Moslem group, which is the cause of the difficulties in Mindanao today.

When integration is a result of the expansion of a market economy, we cannot deny the fact that the peasants, on the edge of the market economy, in most cases want to become part of that market economy.

These are two very different kinds of processes that are lumped together under the term of national integration.

P. Burns: We seem to be flowing from peasants to national integration, as if they are going to be integrated in some way. I wonder if we
could put it this way: peasants and the peasantry and national integration relate to the appropriation of peasant surplus and getting it into urban areas.

The whole discussion is, in the end, economic determinist in character. This impinges on the way in which we look at ethnicity, on the way in which we look at peasant resistance and on a whole range of problems which anthropologists and sociologists have been looking at over the past year or two. In fact, we ended up in some sort of anthropological cul-de-sac in the last few days. Partly because of the way that we conceive the peasantry, partly in the way that we have focussed on ethnicity. Very real problems, most important in terms of understanding the variety of social and political response, have been aired, but all about the question of the appropriation of peasant surpluses. If we continue along this line one can see how this is critical both to communist and non-communist countries. In the cases of China and Vietnam, there is a stage in which peasants are given access to land to increase agricultural production. In these two cases the surpluses removed from those areas flow back into the countryside in a critical way which enables the peasantry—peasantry that has been transformed—to take yet another step in its own transformation, because it is integrated in the state.

In the non-communist countries the appropriation of surpluses from the countryside into an economy which is still one in which a capitalist mode of production dominates, surpluses either go into the development of industry or perhaps go outside the country. This happens in the case of Southeast Asian countries, where it goes streaming out of the country, it does not come back into the countryside, it does not return to the peasantry. In other words, all the contradictions created by that situation are reflected in a variety of social, political and religious responses that happen at the base in peasant society.

The role of peasants in national integration is linked to the appropriation of services. National integration means producing a nice roundness with no differentiation.

On peasant intellectuals

B. Chandra: The question of the peasantry's own intellectuals cannot be separated from the prior question of differentiation in the peasantry. Just as the previous discussion has shown that the concept of nation and national integration can be used, and is quite often used, to reinforce the particular hegemony of the bourgeoisie, and in some cases
even of the landlords. Similarly, one aspect of nation and national integration is the concept of peasantry itself. In modern times it cannot be used without it becoming a way of imposing class domination on the agricultural laborers and poor peasants by the rich peasants. These rich peasants should not be described any more as peasants but part of the bourgeoisie.

The bourgeoisie plays the role of villain as a whole. This is repeated at the level of the village with the rural bourgeoisie playing this role.

From this point of view, how can the question of the peasantry in modern times producing its own intelligentsia be answered. In modern times the peasantry is depreciated in every part of the world.

In such situation what does it mean that the peasants have their own intellectuals? Does it mean the peasant’s sons? And what is a peasant’s son? A peasant’s son when he gets educated either tries to become an urban bourgeois intellectual, a part of the state apparatus or an urban petit-bourgeois intellectual.

Even if he stays in the village he is bound to represent an interest; he is a rich peasant’s son or a poor peasant’s son; he is bound to represent the interests of the rich peasants or the village leaders and poor peasants. And if the rich peasant’s son can play the role of representing the interests of the poor peasants and the village leaders, so can an urban petit bourgeois intellectual’s son play that same role -vis-à-vis- the peasantry equally well.

The emphasis should be on what his outlook and his political are, what his ideology is, what they represent.

He will no longer be just representing the peasantry, he will have to be either the rich peasantry, or perhaps the transitory class of the rural petit bourgeoisie, the middle peasant.

Mokhsani: About the manipulation of the peasantry by their leaders, by the national leaders or other outside intellectuals, I think there is also counter-manipulation. For example, the Malaysian population is 55°/o indigenous Malay, 35°/o Chinese immigrant and 10°/o Indian. The peasantry is basically Malay with a strong Chinese group as well. The political system is lead by a Malay middle class with bourgeois orientation. But to get votes they have to enlist the Chinese rural peasantry.

These people are asking for industrialization, which means the Malay elite will get jobs at the top, but every five years they have to refer back to the peasantry. This means that they must reassert Malayness, that is being Muslim and different from Indians. This is the time when the
peasantry at the local level begins to assert itself asking, for example, for more irrigation projects.

There is something that the peasantry can get every five years although not very much. But, at the same time, they still can get something because the elite needs their support and therefore must put something down the line for the peasantry. I would like to give an example of peasants in action as a way of peasant manipulation of the elite. Within the last three years in the Philippines, nearly three billion pesos have been poured into the agricultural credit scheme by the government. Nearly one billion has not been repaid on time. That is a rather massive case of the peasantry in action manipulating the government for its own interests.

A. Zghal: There is a point of distinction between two different situations, one in which you get countries composed of a plurality of orientations in religious terms: Firstly, the ulama of the cities, the traditional intellectuals, and on the other hand, the marabout sectarian movements which were essentially peasant-based. These two different religious orientations or sectarian movements were reflected in competition for popular support, that took a religious form. Lying behind is a crucial problem of who would control the peasantry. Would it be the city-based owning classes or, on the other hand, would the interests of the peasants be asserted? In the 19th. and 20th centuries the urban intelligentsia won and succeeded in surprising the autonomous petit ulama dominating the marabout movement. After independence a second polarization took place with the emergence of a state technocratic bourgeoisie, controlling access to the national resources by means of its control of the state. This older nationalist elite, city-based, succeeded in becoming victorious over the peasant community, itself in turn displaced by the new technocrats. The debate takes on terms: who controls the state and the supply of the state access to control of the resources available to the state, which in the case of Algeria is petroleum and other basis resources?

J. Gerling: Prof. Bipan’s contention is that the existence of sociocultural factors runs parallel or even at cross current to economic factors. Indonesia is very much a case in point where these sociocultural groupings are more important in many ways than the economic ones.

In the Java countryside there are two major conditions of the village: one which is based on Javanese cultural tradition, which would be associated clearly with the old Javanese empires. The empires had difficulties when a new ideology appeared in the form of Islam. The village was in turn divided along two lines: one a Javanese tradition, a cultural
tradition, and the other a Islamic tradition. Islam was a kind of subversive ideology for a period of time, and it continued to be through the colonial period. It is still seen by the state today as a subversive ideology. But, Islam was greatly strengthened during the colonial period. In a way, the pressures that operate within the village through the demands made on the peasantry tend to reinforce the two cultural traditions that divided the village ideologically. One could go on looking particularly at the period of the 1960’s, with the coup. It seems that some interesting things developed, particularly on the Islamic side, where the traditional ulama or shi’a, the religious school, took up the leadership in the village to deal with a crisis created through the Community Party’s efforts to distribute land, land frequently held by the Islamic group.

If that is the intellectual, the religious, the teacher, perhaps that is the closest you can get to the peasant intellectual.

B. Chandra. In India, the village was being drained of its surplus by the city. A situation emerged in the 60’s and 70’s when the village surplus was going neither outside the country nor to the city. Rather, the capitalist development of the country is hampered by the fact that the amount of surplus created in the village for industrial development is less in India than in China. But this is not, to appraise what is happening in India. Of course, social development is total and is impossible to have, as Mr. Bipan pointed out, a spiralling development unless some such process goes on.

But here is an example with the capitalist class itself, precisely in a situation where it depended upon the village political support that is controlled by the rich peasant. Now we come to the question of the peasant intellectual. By intellectual we mean the political leadership of the peasant. Most of the leadership of the peasant at a moment like this in India comes from the village. The state level leaders are from the village, the district level, the level on which people are all active, especially peasants who were cultivating land. In fact a large number of them in the legislature at the central level are functioning peasants, as the phrase goes.

This then brings us to the third point. The bourgeoisie finds that if it continues the politically competitive process, then the rich peasant who manages to control the peasantry refuses to part with any surpluses, instead he wants surplus from the city. And so one finds banking capital being shifted from the city to the village: investment in irrigation, in roads, in employment, everything goes from the city to the countryside. Obviously, there can be no development. There is only the perpetua-
tion of process of very low capital investment, and of underdevelopment. The rich peasant, on the other hand, finds that as the process of political competition is there, he is not the only one to take advantage of the situation. There is now an emergent organization of the rural poor, who also come into this stage of history quite often with the help of the urban-based intelligentsia, whether they are sometimes manipulated by the ruling party or sometimes by the opposition left wing groups. The rich peasant also dislikes this complicated political process because all the surplus that now stays in the village is being held by this handful, and then takes the opposite form: the price of agricultural products keep rising for twelve years, while the prices of industrial products go on being lowered. But it is not the peasant, the poor peasant, that is the beneficiary, it is rich peasant. The poorer peasant consequently tries to mobilize and under certain circumstances, even the urban bourgeoisies are capable of mobilizing the poor peasant because it finds itself at a certain point of alliance. So the question is clear: What do we mean by peasant intellectual? Here it is the rich peasant intellectual who is mobilizing, and the political force of the open competition system or otherwise to gain other advantages from whatever political development is taking place. There can be no question, and it is not enough to say as you have said that at least some section of the class of peasantry left. There is a very different process going on and it is not a question of the peasant intellectual, it is a competition between distinct political forces, urban bourgeoisie, urban proletariat, the rural bourgeoisie and the rural proletarian elements.

When the point where the rural poor are more effectively involved in the political organization process is reached national competition is stopped. National competition stops in two places. The bourgeoisie would like to stop it against the rich peasant. The rich peasant would like to stop it against the poor peasant.