

# FROM GEO-STATES TO NEO-STATES



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On civil identity and forming states

The world order in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

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## Inhoud

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## FROM GEO-STATES TO NEO-STATES

**Our world order finds itself in the middle of a crisis. This crisis has many faces: the unequal distribution of wealth causes massive flows of refugees, climate threats are not being adequately addressed, new wars are breaking out because of emerging national, political and religious fundamentalism and the balance of power is shifting on account of the economic growth of China. These are however not the crises I want to focus on. The world order is an order of nation states. I am aiming at the crisis of the nation state. The nation state is the sacred cow of our world order. But the problems that I mentioned above are all directly or indirectly the result of a malfunctioning nation state, which in turn is the result of globalisation, individualisation and regionalisation (developments that are breaking away from the nation state). The nation state is no longer part of the solution, but instead has become a source of problems. However, putting up the nation state for discussion is somewhat of a taboo.**

The underlying cause of the crisis is the fact that mankind is changing. Developments mentioned before are creating new identities for citizens that fit better with the nation state of today. The modern human, on the one hand firmly rooted in the global economy and a global information network, and on the other hand very uncertain about the erosion of all kinds of familiar values, is looking for a new identity. Some fall back on traditional values, others are looking for meaning, a multicultural form of relativism or world citizenship. The nation state however does not have an adequate administrative answer to the changing landscape of identities. She does not consider the clashing of cultures that is the result of migration on account of economic globalisation.

The results are dramatic. States fail, multicultural states are torn apart. There is no managerial instrument to reorganise states, to change the scale of states and/or reassign tasks. The state has no answer to the ever increasing number of different identities. Politics have come to a grinding halt. There are no politico-administrative reforms. Politicians act like the world hasn't changed and are playing the age-old geopolitical power game that inhabits any kind of structural change. Such is the crisis of the world order. Citizens and their governments have grown apart.

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## The geopolitical state

First let's further analyse the mechanisms of the current nation state, the geopolitical states or simply called geo-states, before I will present my reform proposal. In an ideal world, the geo-state consist of one people (citizens), one territory (with national boundaries) and one government (the political governance). In a democratic geo-state, citizens choose the government that has the task of protecting them and to defend the country and to improve the means to do this in times of peace and prosperity. But reality is different. First of all, states are no natural entities, but have often come to existence in a relatively random fashion, through wars and colonial realms. The result is that populations of geo-states often consist of many different ethnical groups, which are often called 'minorities'. Globalisation, individualisation and regionalisation (and the new search for an identity) makes everything even more complicated. Worldwide migration continuously makes it harder to call a nation 'homogenous'. Millions of workers leave their nation-states to find employment elsewhere: millions of people are fleeing war, violence, poverty and famine and seek refuge in better states. Millions of elderly people from the North spend the winter in the South. Millions of tourists are visiting other countries. The truly rich of this world are cosmopolitans and don't bother about national borders. Everywhere multicultural states come to existence. Simply put: nations change drastically.

The territories of nation states seem to have changed hardly at all. But that's logical, taking into account both territorial world wars that took place in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In the colonial age of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, geopolitics was still an ordinary game in which countries took any other country they could lay their hands upon. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century this turned into a cold (geo) war. These days changes in national borders are very rare. Russia's annexation of Crimea and the establishment of the state of South Sudan are as special as they are because they are exceptions and next to that very problematic. But the geopolitical game has not vanished, it just focuses on a 'virtual' expansion of a country's territory these days, which involves expanding the own sphere of influence by means of very legitimate instruments like treaties, trade and other relations.

Governments still predominantly act in the best interest of the people (although in many 'failed states' self-interest is the sole motivation), but mainly focuses on the protection of the country's own geopolitical power: the domestic economy, land and natural resources. The people have become more fictional. The non-physical, cultural relationship with the people is shrivelling into a purely economic relationship derived from the virtual

territory. The fact that all too often citizens are the first casualties of this geopolitical power game is often considered a necessary evil.

The rise of populist nationalism is the result of a desperate longing for the restoration of a geo-state that is assumed ideal but lost. This development is understandable, but it is not the solution to the global problems we are facing in our time. Tightening the bond between citizens and the government is desirable in itself, but not if this is paired with the exclusion of large sections of the population. The rise of new identities, both the European and the Scottish identity, are legitimate but they are not being supported politically and even actively thwarted. The sovereignty of the geo-state forces us to close our eyes for major injustices. In all our indecision, we allow states to turn into 'failed states'. We need a fresh view on things.

### The neo-state

If we witness a process in which different groups within society are growing apart and new identities are being formed, we could of course start doing everything we can in order to defend the unity of the state by trying to integrate certain groups, but in theory we could also opt to spilt up the country: every group within society gets their own state. In this case, we would have to divide the land, which almost invariably leads to large conflicts and a lot of violence. I would opt for a third possibility, one that assumes a different relationship between government, land and people.

The solution that I propose is ... new states. I call them 'neo states', states with a different relationship between government, land and people, within which it will be easier to translate changes in identities to the new (neo-) states. In our globalising world, identities are becoming more and more mobile and subject to change. Existing national, religious and cultural identities and socio-economic preferences will be blended together, or will contrastingly be positioned more prominently. Every new identity will start looking for a new balance between familiarity, - restricted, isolated, certain and closed -, and the global world with all its unknown identities and its accompanying clashes between values and norms. This process is not being administratively supported and subsequently leads to massive problems. That's what we need neo-states for. These neo-states are the institutions within which new identities are being developed and worked out. Within these neo states, the territorial attitudes of geo-logic can be abandoned. An explosion of new identities is irreconcilable with an exclusive right on a specific geological area. The neo-state no longer has an exclusive claim on land and natural

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resources. But if land no longer serves as a ‘provider of identity’, the unique bond between citizens and the government will have to be reinforced.

What does this relationship look like? That depends. A neo-state may not have any geological territory at all, or it may share its territory with other neo-states. The commonality is a result of the fact that neo-states can have different sizes. There are local, regional, national, continental and global neo-states. At the highest level, the global level, there is only one state: that state covers all of the world. It is not possible to have two global neo-states, if there would be two of these states, they would ultimately have to merge. On the second-highest level, there are the continental neo-states. By definition, these states share their territory with the global state. The neo-states will have to determine together how their shared territory is governed. Continental states may contain national states within their territory. Once again, these continental and national states have to agree on some kind of common land tenure. Etc. etc. This structure of neo-states does much more justice to global unity than the current division of the world into geo-states. At present we have divided all land into 200 mutually exclusive nation-states. This division is counterproductive however. With its 7 billion inhabitants, everything on earth turns out to be connected: atmosphere, oceans, land masses, ocean currents and climate, earthquakes and volcanoes, natural resources and sunlight, the weather: our living environment does not respect geological national boundaries. Mankind is changing the living climate on Earth. This climate does not restrict itself to our own states and countries. The climate is global. It is inevitable that we have to start organising the relationship between state and territory differently. It is important to mention: neo-states aren’t parallel states, but they differ in scale. Neo-states are new states that operate on a higher or a lower level than current national states. If parallel states exists, then these will ultimately have to merge into one neo-state.

### The neo-citizen

The layered structure of neo-states matches the layered identity of the modern individual. When asked about their identity, many of us will come up with a list of (territorially based) identities such as: I am Dutch, I am a European, I am from Amsterdam, I am a world citizen. But when it really comes down to it, there is only one identity that counts: your national identity. The identity mentioned in your passport. If a war is about to break out, only one state counts: the national state that mobilises the army in order to defend national borders. The identity of a neo-citizen, as I will demonstrate, is much more complex than that of a geo-citizen. This is because two basics, the passport and the state

monopoly on violence, are being organised totally differently in a neo-state with neo-citizens.

The passport is a formalisation of the relationship between the state and a citizen. A citizen of the Dutch state is defined as somebody who owns a Dutch passport. You could formulate a thousand different definitions of the Dutch identity but in the end there is only one real criterion, and that is having Dutch identity documents. This document comes with rights and obligations: first of all, it offers the right to – at least in democratic states – directly or indirectly elect the governing power. The second characteristic, the state monopoly on violence, serves the safety of the people as well as the defence of the country, both of which are key tasks of the state. Police and army have to protect the people against domestic and foreign threats. Both concepts, passport and defence, are connected to the birth of the modern (geo-) state in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The national passport is a result of the introduction of the civil registry by Napoleon in 1813. Next to an obligation to register every new birth, marriage and death at the registry office, another duty was also introduced: conscription. Identity papers and an obligation for men to serve in the national army have put 19<sup>th</sup> century nation states on the map. The passport unified members of that nation state. The army increased the country's ability to intervene in the outside world. Both inheritances from the French revolution, the passport and a national army, have heavily contributed to the nation-building of nation states and have given these countries a strong national identity. They are the foundations of our current world order.

But the passport and defence have become more and more problematic within the current order of states. The debate about double nationalities, initiated a few years ago by the Dutch right-wing party PVV, is symptomatic of this problem. Multiple citizenship is becoming ever more prevalent. The fact that some countries, like Morocco, do not allow their citizens to exchange their nationality for another one facilitates dual citizenship. The PVV argued that dual citizenship should be prohibited. This way they want to keep foreigners out of the country on the one hand and on the other hand they want to reinforce national pride and honour. Somehow it is an understandable reaction to worldwide migration, which seems to slowly 'water down' the geopolitical order. But on the other hand, it is a striking example of an ostrich policy.

Another example, which is not often regarded a real problem, is the European passport. The European Constitution (which was rejected in 2005) states that you have both a Dutch and a European passport. But which rights and obligations come with both

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passports? How does the EU relate to its citizens? Much is unclear. The boundaries are not set very clearly. From a semantic point of view, a passport of any European country is also a European passport. They include rather than exclude each other. They supplement each other. First of all there is a national passport and on top of that, a citizen (automatically) receives a European passport. However, this construction has one major flaw: the relationship between the EU and its citizens is very weak on account of the very fact that there is no such thing as an exclusive European passport. European citizens in the first place are always national citizens. Currently, European citizenship is not unlike a bonus, you just get it for free. If Europe wants to be a state, then it will have to come up with a way to build up an exclusive, rather than an inclusive, relationship with its citizens.

Not just multiple citizenship is increasing, but so is statelessness. Migrants fleeing from poverty, war and famine destroy their identity documents, hoping to get access to another country. Most of them fall between two stools. They aren't welcome anywhere and are being passed on from state to state. In the process, they lose their passports and their citizenship. Even though the UN has been battling statelessness for over 50 years, it is currently more prevalent than ever.

The problems with passports can be considered of minor concern compared with the problems associated with geopolitical defence. Government expenses for defence are enormous and have been increasing for decades all over the world. Globally, nation states spend over 100 times more on defence than on development aid. The importance attached to citizen development is dwarfed by the defence of the state and its possessions. The arms race during the cold war has yielded an arsenal of nuclear weapons capable of destroying the whole world 50 times. Enormous amounts of money are being invested in order to extract the 'own' natural resources. Almost all wars are, directly or indirectly, about natural resources. Not only do governments measure their authority by the value of their territory and the size of its army, many a corrupted government allocate the revenues from raw materials to themselves. Civilians are of secondary importance in this global geopolitical power game. Indeed, they are often the first victims of the pursued political course.

Together with the introduction of the neo-state I want to introduce a new type of passport: the scalable passport or neo-passport which gives a new meaning to the concept of 'defence'. Geo-passports can be doubled because they are 'from the country'. Two countries can give a passport to the same person. A neo-passport is 'from the citizen' and



therefore cannot be doubled. A neo-passport requires the ‘owner’ to make an individual choice regarding the state he wants to be a citizen of. The citizen chooses his own (scale of) state, the state with which he wants to form an exclusive bond of identity, the state that is his primary basis for individual and political participation, the state that will play a dominant role in the development of the individual’s development. This choice will be ‘registered’ in the neo-passport and the registry office. For instance, in Europe, a citizen would have to be able to upscale his passport to the neo-state of Europe, or to scale it down to a regional state. The same choice is available for businesses. Businesses too can register at the chamber of commerce which state they belong to. I will leave this aspect out and concentrate on the situation of the individual citizens.

Which consequences does this choice have for individual citizens? What is he actually choosing for? What exactly does a neo-state constitute? Which tasks does the neo-state have? What are the citizen’s rights and obligations? First of all, a neo-state will share some characteristics with the geo-state: the authorities will need unity, independence, self-determination and freedom of choice. The government will have to be chosen by the citizens. This government also needs to have a sufficiently complete set of duties, so that it can make integral political decisions and it needs to have sufficient funds (taxes and fees) to be able to perform these duties using its own governmental organisation. The policy of the government determines the ‘face’, the identity of the state.

An important shift in emphasis is the fact that (the government of) a neo-state needs to have the possibility to assume a more prominent role than we’re traditionally used to, because the participative relationship between citizens and governments has gained much more importance. At the same time, a neo-state needs to develop new methods to make sure that all citizens who live within its geographical borders, also those of other neo-states, are somehow being represented in its government. This places additional demands on the electoral system. This system needs to take into account the stronger bond between citizens and the authorities as well as the principle of a common territory. I propose that the active suffrage of citizens will in the future consist of two separate votes: one vote for the power (the government) and one for a supervisory institution (parliament, which also acts as the legislative power) and that the passive suffrage, the right to run for office within the government, will be limited to the state one has chosen for. Moreover, a part of the parliament needs to be elected through a district system, such that the lower-level neo-states contained within the neo-state in question, are also given a voice.

I will illustrate this with an example: Assume there is a European (neo) state and half of the Dutch decide to have themselves registered as Europeans, then these Europeans living

on Dutch soil will have to be able to directly elect the authority, in this case the president of the European union, who will in turn assemble the administrative board of the European union. The Europeans also directly elect the representatives within the European Parliament. These representatives have to be Europeans themselves. The remaining Dutch elect the prime minister of the Netherlands (who assembles a cabinet) and also elect representatives for the Tweede Kamer (Dutch House of representatives), who in turn have to be Dutch citizens (citizens of the Dutch neo-state). However, because the European neo-state shares its territory with the Dutch state, a part of the European parliament has to consist of district seats for which Dutch citizens will elect district representatives. This is the way that the European Parliament is currently being elected. The Dutch parliament doesn't need any district representatives because there is no lower-level neo state within its territory. However, should one of the Dutch provinces turn into a neo-state, or if city-states would emerge, for instance Amsterdam or Rotterdam, then the Dutch state would also have to institute a district representation for these neo-states. The current Eerste Kamer (Dutch senate) already is an indirectly elected district representation but it serves a different purpose, at least in theory. If the Netherlands would become a neo-state with district representation, then the Eerste and Tweede Kamer would fulfil the same roles and it would make sense for them to merge. The parliaments of the neo-state of Europe and the Dutch neo-state are the legislative powers. They have to pass bills filed by the European Commission and the Dutch cabinet by majority vote.

Someone who has a Dutch scaled passport can run for office within the Dutch government or one of its subordinate administrative layers (such as a province or a municipality), but not for a position within another neo-state, such as the European board. This is an implicit confirmation of the identity connected to the scalable passport. With regard to the 'power' aspect, the active suffrage of neo-citizens is limited to the government of the neo-state in question, but with regard to the supervisory power, it extends to all neo-states that share the territory that individual lives within. Direct legitimation of the government by her citizens strengthens the bond between citizens and the authorities as well as the identity of the neo-state. But at the same time, the 'countervailing power' of the parliament is also strengthened, which not only consists of representatives chosen by its own citizens, but also of representatives chosen by citizens of neo-states included within the state. This makes for a new kind of politics, neo-politics, which takes place within an arena of meetings of the parliament, in which the board will have to introduce bills that will have to pass parliament. I will elaborate on this later. The political debate between the board and the parliament contributes to the identity

of the board and will shape its 'face'. Gradually, a characteristic, cohesive image will appear that determines the relationship between citizens and the authorities.

The principle of 'sharing a territory' will also change the government task of national security and defence. What will defence look like if a territory is shared with other states? Will there be multiple police forces protecting citizens? No, in practice, neo-states will arrange agreements on the way public order is maintained or the country is defended. With regard to this, the main principle will have to be that if somebody switches nationalities, protection by the original state will cease and the new state will have to take over these duties. However, if the original state has a defence force and the new state does not (yet), then it makes sense to assume that the task of defending the territory is 'outsourced' to the original state. In order to prevent any disputes with regard to this, a simple but effective rule may be useful: the individual neo-passport is 'stamped' with the financial equivalent of safety and security. For instance, we could attach an annual cost of security per capita ("Military expenditure" per country), as SIPRI determines each year, to the national neo-passport. When a citizen 'switches' to a lower-level or a higher-level neo-state, this budget will 'legally' flow from the original state to the new state. If the original state will continue executing the 'defence task', then the new state will use the budget to 'buy' those services from the original state.

### Starting a neo-state?

I believe neo-citizenship should at least come with suffrage and an individual security budget, all connected to a scalable passport. It creates the virtual space in which neo-states can develop. Without a scalable passport neo-states cannot exist. I therefore call it the 'formative power' for the emergence of neo-states. Indeed, this is the principal tangible political strongpoint for future neo-citizens. Assuming this strongpoint will indeed become reality (I will get back to this later) and that existing states offer the possibility of requesting a scalable passport, how then will the development of neo-states continue? There are many possible ways, varying from quick to very slow. In the Scottish referendum, with a turnout of 86 %, 2 million people voted against an independent Scotland and 1.6 million voted in favour. The scalable passport would give these 1.6 million Brits the possibility to 'downscale' their passports to the level of the Scottish neo-state. Taking into account the fact that most Scottish institutions are already in place, the Scottish neo-state could emerge very quickly. But the 'transition' can also take place very slowly. You could start with a political movement or club that aims to establish a new neo-state. People who are sympathetic to this cause could join the movement. Within this organisation, people could make preparations for the establishment of this new neo-state

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(social security, taxes, employment etc. etc.). The political ‘deed’ to have your passport ‘downscaled’ at the registry office from British to Scottish, is an individual initiative that takes place citizen by citizen, possibly stretched out over many years. As the number of neo-citizens grows, more and more tasks could be transferred. A benefit of this slow process is that we avoid people falling into a legal void. At this point it is possible to lay out proper general conditions for the transition process. The rights and obligations of the original state will stay applicable to the citizens of the to-be-neo-state until the new state functions properly, with the exception of suffrage and the individual defence budget. This regulation prevents citizens from being cast out as ‘fremdkorpers’ to lawless states, with no title to any of the rights they had in their original state (work, social security, education, etc. etc.).

A neo-state that has enough citizens, and a legitimated government with a sufficient mandate, will have to negotiate with the original state about the transfer of ‘duties’, rights and obligations from the original state to the new state. These negotiations will eventually have to yield an agreement between the original state and the new state regarding mutual rights and obligations. Because the neo-state is situated within an existing state, there are many choices to be made that will partly determine whether the transfer process is going to be ‘a smooth ride’ or ‘revolutionary’ one. Are you going to build a totally new government or are you going to join in with the existing administrative infrastructure? (For example: using EU institutions for the neo-state of Europe or using the Flemish province for the Flemish neo-state). Are you going to establish a simple system based on contributions or are you going to set up a totally new tax system that requires a complex process of dismantling existing regulations and a restructuring of cash flows? Are you going to collect taxes yourself or are you going to outsource this to the tax system of a higher-level state? How will social security, educational facilities, healthcare and housing be given shape within this new neo-state? Because the territory is being shared, taking care of the physical world (spatial planning, infrastructure, housing) will require close cooperation. It’s not possible to maintain two infrastructure networks in the same physical place, to maintain different traffic rules or have different zoning plans. Therefore, agreements will have to be made. The same applies for law enforcement. If two neighbours (for instance a Scottish neo-citizen and a British neo-citizen) have a quarrel that escalates, then we won’t call either the Scottish or the British police, but just ‘the police’, just like you would now.

For the rest, the political reality of the neo-state is comparable with that of the current geo-states. This means that a neo-state will, just like current geo-states, consist of many

different social, cultural and religious subgroups who all have their own identity (which in turn contributes to the identity of the neo-state). These groups will have a voice in the political governance through a parliament, just as is the case in current geo-states. I will get back at the question whether multicultural societies will fall apart in parallel neo-states later.

### Applications of the neo-state

The idea of the neo-state is an innovation with far-reaching consequences for the identity of citizens and thus is not an easy thing to establish. A successful introduction strongly depends on existing (cultural) ideas on what citizenship is. In the individualistic United States of America, the government is highly mistrusted, indeed, collective facilities with regard to healthcare and income are practically politically infeasible. The ultra-conservative right wing movement would more readily argue in favour of complete abolishment of the state and getting the personalised defence budget (defence expenses per capita in the USA were 3000 dollars in 2014) paid out in the form of 'weapons' so that one can personally defend his or her family, property and values. On the other side of the spectrum there is the collectivist China, which often considers personal expression as a threat to the state and the communist party. Criticism we regard 'normal' will readily be regarded as a treat to the state. It is hard to imagine that both will embrace neo-citizenship. Things are different in Europe. Many European states have united both extremes in their own way, by combining moderate capitalism with elaborate welfare states. However, the developments since 2008 are very worrisome. Europe faces the impossible challenge of uniting nationalism with the concept of the EU. The EU now focuses on establishing a political union, but the Greek question and the Brexit seem to be the first nails in the coffin of this endeavour. Europe is under treat of being trampled under the feet of globalisation in the decades to come. Therefore she not only is ready for the idea of neo-states, but it would also benefit her enormously. For this reason, I will concentrate on Europe from now on.

Regional neo-states may arise from the well-known regional 'movements' that already exist in many places in Europe. How quickly would there be a Flemish neo-state, if Wever of the Vlaamse Nationalisten (NVA) would no longer aim at a complete separation from Belgium, but instead aim at a shared use of the land? The administrative infrastructure in the shape of provinces is already there. Scotland and Catalonia have both held referenda (both legally valid and invalid ones) for separation and more autonomy. But referenda are very crude tools and they are not especially suitable to bring about administrative reforms. Referenda have to meet a lot of requirements, need to be

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formulated very clearly and need to have an unambiguous outcome. The outcomes often lead to polarisation. If there is a large minority of ‘no’ voters, then this can lead to social upheaval. Referenda are top-down processes and they do not initiate reforms bottom-up. If regions would choose for the path of neo-states, in which Scottish and Catalonian neo-citizens unite in a Scottish and a Catalonian neo-state, then the process of change could take place much faster and in more controlled way, avoiding these large disadvantages.

In Europe local neo-states might also arise. Large cities like London and Paris will probably become city-states before Amsterdam will. But it also strongly depends on how strong the ‘local identity’ is.

The bonds between city states, regional states and national states will be tight, but they do assume independence. A comparison: The Netherlands is a unitary state with three different administrative layers: the national government, provinces, and municipalities. The provinces and municipalities do have their own set of tasks and there is integral policy planning, they have their own taxes, but are strongly dependent on the policies of the national government. This is being ‘symbolised’ by a direct financial connection between the national government and the provinces/municipalities through province funds, municipality funds and the small sizes of the tax areas. This is completely in line with the idea of a unitary state. Provinces and municipalities are subject to national laws. There is not much left of this clear theory first laid down by Thorbecke. The administrative organisation of the Netherlands is an enormous chaos, an endless patchwork of crosslinks, extended governance and all kinds of unclear legitimations. In the meantime, provinces are granted increasingly more independence and responsibility. However, these are effectively not neo-states. It will strongly depend on the power of local identities whether neo-states will arise at this small scale (for instance the city state of Rotterdam).

Together with these new regional states it might also be possible that a European neo-state would arise<sup>1</sup>. The EU in its current form is unable to develop enough identity, uniqueness and political vigour. She will keep on having a weak relationship with the European citizens, because she doesn’t really have her ‘own’ citizens. The neo-state could change this. If you combine the European shared values, the European tradition of idealism, enlightenment, reason, belief in progress, innovation and improvement with a neo-passport, a unique European citizenship will be born and with it the European neo-state. This idea fits Europe very well. It will provide unity in differences. A possible

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<sup>1</sup> For instance, see: Ulrike Guérot “Warum Europa eine Republik werden muss” (2016)

‘chain of events’ might be that the European Neo-state initially mainly ‘draws’ citizens from the Northern member states of the EU. Under the lead of Germany, many European idealists, left wing intellectuals and cosmopolitans would trade their ‘national identity’ for a European identity. Citizens from the Southern European member states seem to primarily feel attracted to the growing regional identities (Catalonia, the Basque Country, Lombardy), which are all developing their own strategies to battle the economic crisis and unemployment. If the number of citizens of the neo-state of Europe is large enough, the European Parliament will have to be transformed into a system with two houses. One house is being elected by the member states (a district representation) and the other house gets elected directly by the citizens. These citizens will choose the European Commissioner directly in the future, which further strengthens the bond between the European citizens and their government and the power of the European government. The European Council (currently still the dominant department within the EU) will have to gradually be transformed into an advisory board. The growth of the neo-state of Europe and the region-states will assign the national states a ‘mediating’ role in the decision-making process. It is to be expected that the differences between the regional neo-states are large. Some are large enough to have their own representation in the first European district parliament. Others will use forms of political representation and cooperation.

The neo-state of Europe explicitly is no United States of Europe. It is not a powerful super state with federal states. The neo-state of Europe does not have a ‘masterplan’ or a ‘blueprint’, but it is a system state originates from a complicated and dynamic process of growth. The neo-states that are part of it will turn the principle of ‘sharing territory’ into an administrative structure of ‘checks and balances’ within which financial relationships and administrative participations are being developed cooperatively. The emergence of new neo-states or the transfer of tasks has a direct effect on that administrative structure. For example: suppose that the neo-state of Europe comes with an own social security system for its citizens, then new city states could come into existence that separate themselves from the regional and national state and that combine a strong economic policy with a social security system that they ‘outsource’ to Europe.

Especially in the beginning, the neo-state of Europe will be characterised by much variation and change. There will be a flexible network of states at various levels (city states, region-states, national states, federal states), perfectly reflecting Europe’s unique diversity. Because of this, the European neo-state has a large adaptive capacity. Despite, but mainly thanks to, the large diversity within Europe, it will develop into an agile and powerful unity of states with a very explicit identity and a large population.

Even though I think that Europe in its current form has the best starting position to turn into a neo-state, the idea can also be applied outside of Europe. Continental partnerships like the African Union (AU) or the Union of South-American countries (UZAN) could potentially form a *continental neo-state*.

Even further into the future is the *world state*. It is logical to assume that at some point a global neo state will emerge from the UN. But what is true for the EU, is true for the UN tenfold. The UN mainly serves as a 'platform for discussion' for sovereign nations. It is a collection of nations rather than a unity of nations. Policies in the realm of environment, peace and security are slow and ineffective. A lack of funds effectively renders the UN powerless. In theory, the UN should be able to develop following the same model as the EU. People become World Citizens as they upscale their neo-passports to a global level. Once the number of citizens of the Global State is large enough, the United Nations General Assembly will have to be turned into a system with two houses, one of these houses will be elected by the member states (a direct representation) and a second house will be elected directly by the citizens of the World State. These citizens will elect a Secretary-General of the World State in the future, which strengthens a direct relationship between the citizens and their government and strengthens the administrative power of the Secretariat. The Security Council (the current dominant department of the UN) will have to be gradually turned into an advisory board (with a corresponding continental representation).

Neo-states can suggest possible new political solutions for large international conflicts like the one in Ukraine, Kosovo, the Syrian civil war or the Palestinian conflict. The general trend will be the same each time: turn the conflict back into a choice for the individual citizens and, based on that choice, build new neo-states and acknowledge each other as neo-states that share the same territory.

The Ukrainian conflict is a classical geopolitical conflict about in whose sphere of influence Ukraine lies (Europe's or Russia's). It has led to a violent polarisation that has completely deregulated the lives of most citizens. I remember a picture of a woman in Donetsk with a sign that reads "just kill me, because I want to stay Ukrainian". If the referendum held in Eastern Ukraine provides a correct image (but many doubt that), then there would be enough citizens in favour of establishing an East-Ukrainian neo-state. This neo-state would share its territory with a new Ukrainian neo-state, so citizens who want to remain Ukrainian will not become citizens of the new neo-state.



People often expect to find a solution to the Palestinian question in the establishing of two separate geo-states. That is: two states that both have their own separate territory. Here, a system of three neo-states would be the better solution. Palestinians and Israelis could choose from three options: a purely regional Palestinian or Israeli state or a federal neo-state that covers the whole territory. The choices that the civilians make implicitly dictate the power relations between the three states.

The Kosovo question is an ongoing conflict. Serbia has filed a lawsuit with the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in which she rejects the self-determination of Kosovo. Serbia refers to its territorial integrity (the own territory). State boundaries cannot be changed without approval of the state itself. On the other side there is the right of self-determination of the citizens of Kosovo: people are free to choose which government they are subject to. What is of greater importance? The International Court of Justice will have to decide. A scalable passport removes the contradiction between the territory and the people. The citizens of Kosovo get the chance to 'downgrade' their passport to the 'federal state' of Kosovo en masse. This will grant the Kosovan government an own identity through an own election, own tax possibilities and an own policy. Serbian citizens in Kosovo naturally keep their Serbian passport and don't have to take part in all these modern Kosovan matters. It is without question that these things might solve the juridical problems but that the problems regarding the social organisation of the Serbian and Kosovan societies still require a lot of work.

Also in the case of failing states, the neo-state can be the solution. States in Africa seem to fail more often on account of a less profound democratic tradition, more problems with corruption and the often arbitrary national borders which are the result of its colonial past. In Middle-American states, the failing is mostly connected to an increasing interweaving of drug-related crime and politics. A solution to these failing states is very urgent because they cause massive migration streams, which threaten to turn the US and Europe into fortresses under siege. Also in this case the bottom-up formation of new (ethnic) states in combination with a new continental neo-state comes to mind. The new government will have to reform by using the scalability of the neo-passport. If not, citizens will leave their corrupt states by the numbers and look for new alternatives.

The instrument of the neo-state offers the possibility of a dialogue. If Islamic State had had the possibility of starting a new neo-state, which comes down to giving citizens in that region the possibility of changing their citizenship, would they have chosen to create their state in a non-violent way? I'm not sure. It is a fact however that IS is not a neo-state, but a geo-state with an exclusive right on a territory that is being conquered using

violence, that forces inhabitants of the region to become citizens, that murders all opposed or forces them to flee. Common territory is no option. IS wants to be a traditional geo-state. The international community (of geo-states) reacts the same way as it always does in case of violent occupation of land: with bombardments and by supporting the forces that fight to restore the original geopolitical order. A neo-political solution, for instance, hermetically closing down the warzone, evacuating citizens using airlifts, a strict arms embargo and simply 'sitting it out' is not a solution we can hope for, but it would probably be much more effective.

### Neo-state, economy and culture

The concept of neo-states will have a large impact on the economic and cultural relationships between the various population groups within a state. It is important to consider this, because it may lead to extensive social upheaval. In the first place the role of money. The neo-state is closely related to identity and changes in identity. But in reality, it is not only important who you *are*, but also what you *have*. In short, money. De Wever, from the Flemish nationalists, does not hide the fact that he thinks that Flanders is paying for the costs of Wallonia. In case of independence, so he believes, these costs would disappear. If Belgium were to be divided into two separate federal states, this might be true, but in the case of two neo-states this is unrealistic and myopic. Because neo-states share territories and have to make agreements, it is not very likely that a split of cash flows and dependencies will lead to large net financial shifts from one party to the other. Nevertheless, money often is the driving force behind these processes. Scottish politicians believe they can claim incomes from natural gas from their own soil once they are an independent geo-state. But if this soil is shared with Great Britain, things are looking way different. And let's not forget that most citizens have become very calculating. It's quite likely that a poor Bulgarian will chose to join the neo-state of Europe if this state ensures a better social security system. In general the differences between rich and poor will not be solved by establishing neo-states. Only substantive policies by the state, the neo- or geo-state, aimed at equalisation of income and wealth and the distribution of employment, can have this effect. I wrote about this elsewhere. This does not take away the fact that neo-states with a good social policy can attract citizens from other neo-states it shares its territory with. Once they have a scalable passport, it is unavoidable that some citizens will engage in 'state-shopping'. Still I expect that their numbers will be small. The upscaling or downscaling of a passport is not a frivolous choice or one free of obligations. An identity is not something you wear like a coat that you can easily put on or take off. It has far-reaching consequences and citizens

will have to be very sure when they make such a choice. The motivation is also important for the neo-state itself. Only if the transfer is a matter of conscience rather than money can it be a sustainable one.

One of the main political challenges of the multicultural Western society of today is creating new social cohesion within the large diversity of cultural identities. The integration policies are often not very well thought out however, they are unilateral and often haven't yielded a great many shared values. Indeed, the economic crisis and migration streams have turned mere indifference into a crushing polarisation between cultural groups. We're on the brink of a downward spiral of dissolution and segregation. The democracy (of a weighing of interests) is being jeopardised. This danger should be a trigger for every politician to develop new policies and new ideas, but until now, politicians have underestimated the necessity of this task. I consider it very unlikely that the multicultural society will survive if there is not going to be any new legislation to have everybody participate in work (and therefore income). Labour is the 'great unifier'. But this will not come about automatically. Businesses mainly recruit their employees on the basis of their own cultural background, thus slowly turning cultural minorities into economical underclasses. We need stricter legislation within this area. Should politicians fail to achieve this, then this economic underclass will, triggered by the right political wordings, solve these injustices using violence. This is a social law. War and civil war are what we're in for in that case.

To what degree will the concept of neo-states further increase tensions within a polarised, multicultural society? How large is the risk that a political party will call its voters to establish a 'parallel' neo-state within a state? It is not unthinkable that the gap between the nationalist right wing and the multicultural left wing in Europe will not only result in a European neo-state but also in a multitude of (parallel) national neo-states. If this process is soundly administratively embedded, this does not necessarily have to pose a threat to peace and security. A 'practical' approach is to view the parallel neo-state as a temporary solution to a (cultural or administrative) problem, but eventually neo-states sharing the same territory will always have to merge at some point. The democratic decision-making process within a unitary state is many times more effective than a system of parallel neo-states that requires an endless amount of negotiation and treaties.

But the concept of the neo-state also makes way for a much more fundamental discussion about what a state is and what it is not, and how state and identity relate to each other. Is it actually possible to unite all cultures within one state? Isn't the Islamic culture one of religious collectivism in which state and religion are tightly connected and in which

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living according to social order and supervision is the cultural norm. How can this be combined with our Western individualistic society that focuses on self-development and that invented democracy to do exactly the opposite: restrain the power of the government and realising changes and growth quickly. Shouldn't we accept that some citizens from different cultures cannot, or don't want to, live together in one state? Imagine that the Dutch parliament decides to force every Dutch citizen to work, also the (female) veiled Islamic Dutch citizen, who currently lives in seclusion from Dutch society. I expect that Islamists will reject this new rule from a cultural perspective. To them, the neo-state (with its own laws) could act as a 'way out' of this state policy. But more generally, why wouldn't it be possible for a European neo-state, a Christian-Dutch neo-state and an Islamic-Dutch neo-state to coexist? Might there be enough Islamic fundamentalists living in Europe to found an Islamic neo-state right in the middle of Europe that takes up the sharia in its constitution, abolishes democracy and connects religion and state, effectively founding an Islamic state? In other words: shouldn't we be afraid that the introduction of the neo-state might bring with it a degenerated neo-state, a scary, dictatorial state with large inequalities between citizens? And, from that perspective, wouldn't it be wise to lay down some strict preconditions with regard to the establishment of a neo-state, (for instance, democratic values and obligatory taking up of the universal rights of man in the constitution of the new neo-state)?

I believe these fears are unfounded. This kind of fear has crept into our Western societies the past few years on account of a strongly polarised kind of black-and-white thinking that has narrowed down our perception. Firstly, views on the Jewish, Christian and Islamic cultures are very diverse. There is not just one, but there are a great many cultural identities. The 'clash' of this multitude of cultures actually is the source of new ideas and social innovation. The multicultural society is a very rich society, we just don't use its full potential because our thinking is obscured. When we put the choice of citizenship with the citizen himself, and he or she can determine his or her identity him or herself, the reality of large contrasts will cease to exist. Secondly, with a scalable passport, every citizen can determine for him or herself which state he or she wants to be a part of. A neo-state that suppresses its citizens will 'automatically' lose its citizens. The scalable passport is a 'natural' safety measure to prevent excesses. If we can take up as a *strict condition* that citizenship is always connected to a scalable passport that ensures that a neo-state can also lose its citizens, I believe additional conditions are both unnecessary and undesirable. The fact that citizens choose their own state, and the fact that the land is shared, will be a sufficient means to ensure that states do not go wrong.

The concept of neo-states could also play a role in solving the problem of migration that Europe is currently facing on account of the war in Iraq, Syria and Libya. The problem still does not look very containable. It is realistic to assume that migration streams will grow larger in the years to come taking into account the growing number of climate refugees. However, even a rich European country is not able to take up refugees endlessly. Despite all the beautiful words in the “Universal Declaration of Human Rights”, a state will still have to come up with practical solutions to these problems and the concept of the neo-state could be one of them. A few suggestions: The “Refugee status” should no longer entail the unrestricted right of a Dutch (geo or neo) passport. If the Syrian passport is turned into a neo-passport at the ‘world level’, then the territory (Dutch and World) is shared. The facilities that the (adjusted form of the) UN will offer its citizens will be limited for now. That’s why the UN and the Dutch neo-state will have to negotiate about the rights of its citizens (such as the right of work, income etc. etc.). Countries can vary in their generosity with regard to this. But a return to the home country should always be the ultimate goal, though only once the international community as a whole (the world) has solved the conflicts in the home country. This structure puts the question at the level where it belongs (world level) and improves the power of the UN, which is urgently needed to come to a new, stable and sustainable world order.

### Neo-politics and the world order

These examples provide an indication of what this general concept of ‘neo-politics’ might constitute in reality. Neo-politics is the process of restructuring that will ‘reorganise’ the world order into a multi-scale system of neo-states. Neo-politics is characterised by a different view on sovereignty, governmental flexibility, mobility and the balance of power between states, both in the horizontal and vertical sense. Within the current political world order, it is a grave sin to intervene in national sovereignty and that’s why sovereignty is an important instrument in the maintaining of the status quo of the current geo-states. At present, states first have to practically fully disintegrate before the international community will consider putting aside a country’s sovereignty for humanitarian reasons. In most cases, it’s already too late then. Neo-states that share their territories are however forced to work together, they have more practical mind-sets and no longer equate sovereignty with a kind of ‘splendid isolation’. An example. It is virtually impossible for a future Scottish neo-state to install a new traffic law that orders ‘continental’ right-lane driving because Scotland shares its territory with the British neo-

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state that wishes to remain left-driving. Any changes thus can only take place in consultation between different states.

Neo-politics is the great 'transformer' of administrative relations. She makes the organisation of global governance more flexible. In the current world order, administrative reforms are often unachievable because each elected politician will confirm the (national) identity and would never jeopardise their own position. In the current world order, every democracy is being held hostile by itself. All that will change once the neo-passport is the citizen's property. Because citizens can freely choose the level of their state, they indirectly determine the dynamics of the various levels of governance and the mutual power balance and therefore they indirectly determine administrative reforms. The scalable passport gives the citizen a velvet crowbar to break open locked down administrative politics. This way, scalable passports can repair the broken fabric of the functioning of democracies.

It should be noted that flexibility cuts both ways: it can also negatively affect a neo-state. For instance, if a European governor steps way out of line, then Europeans (citizens with a European-level passport) can decide to turn from the neo-state of Europe en masse by downscaling the passport, directly reducing the power base of Europe itself. But that's the inevitable downside to any kind of dynamics. The introduction of the scalable passport enables a vertical movement of power, a new mobility of scale. In case of maximal mobility, the current 'vertical' power balance (the proportions between the various scales of state) will perfectly reflect the relationships between citizens and the various scales of state and will clearly show the state of affairs with regard to humanity's (global) awareness.

The larger administrative flexibility and mobility, the quicker the world order will come into balance. This balance is always based on the social possibilities of the world population (level of education, cultural identity, etc. etc.) and the physical condition of the land. It is likely that a harmonisation of scale order and scale differentiation will emerge. I'll give an example. I just proposed that the EU should be turned into a European neo-state. Within the EU, the size of the various member countries vary a great deal, which causes a lot of hidden problems. It causes inequalities in power and irritations among the smaller and the larger countries. The introduction of neo-states will in general mean that larger geo-states will fall apart in smaller regional neo-states and that smaller geo-states will possibly become larger neo-states (for instance the neo-state Netherlands/Flanders). Moreover, a certain proportion of citizens from every neo-state

will transfer to the European neo-state. The ultimate result is that the administrative units will become more representative in terms of the population they represent. This makes cooperation in larger administrative units more effective. The equality in sizes is also a good basis for comparability, equality, communication and a healthy form of competition when it comes to culture and identity. The politics of power turn into politics of participation.

It is hard to predict how the administrative relationships will be between the various levels of states, but it is reasonable to expect that it will eventually turn into a system with shared responsibilities through a multi-layer, mixed district-system based on the electoral system I described above. In this system, the government of the state is elected directly by the citizens themselves and the parliament consists partly of representatives elected by the citizens of that state and partly of representatives from lower-level states situated in the territory of the state in question, which can be considered independent districts here. The financial relationships will also partly depend on this. Each state has its own tax area in which its own population pays taxes and there is a tax system and/or reallocation system of general funds intended for higher and/or lower level states, partly depending on the division of tasks and tax revenues per level. The defence budget connected to the scalable passport is also included in this.

There will have to be criteria regarding the participation of neo-states and geo-states in this global multi-level district system. It seems logical that the global state, the successor of the UN, will set a minimum to the number of inhabitants a neo-state needs to have to be able to acquire a seat in its General Assembly (the district representation). The adage '1 state = 1 seat' is untenable. China cannot be compared with, for instance, Luxembourg in terms of size. States that are too small will have to realise a voice through other forms of stepped representation. For example, if the European neo-state were to set a minimum population of 3 million people in order to have a seat in the district representation in the European Parliament, then Luxembourg would lose its seats, the neo-state of Flanders would only be able to realise seats through Belgium and Catalonia and Scotland would have to do their utmost best to 'retain' enough inhabitants to be able to be represented as a neo-state at a European level.

The end-stadium of the new world order that will result is a global society with 4 or 5 levels of state. I have discussed these above: city states, regional states, national states, continental states and the world state. They are all neo-states that share the land, but they have a unique bond with their citizens. How the growth process will proceed cannot be predicted, but if citizens are given 'control' over their own identity-development and the

option of switching states, the law of social action and reaction will eventually spread identity development over all levels. Each level of state will eventually be 'filled' with citizens.

Whether there will still be geo-states, with an exclusive right over their territory, left in this final situation is hard to predict. A lot will depend on the way neo-states and geo-states will get intertwined with each other. In particular is important what attitudes in the future will arise towards ownership of nation-states on territory and resources when other scales of state are present. One example: currently several countries claim territory in the Arctic and the right to exploit resources (gas and oil) in the ground. It is a bizarre discussion, especially in light of the global threat of climate change. If the outlines of a world state arise, would it not be logical to make this one authority owner of all the resources of the world, so the world will handle the limited resources our Earth offers us, with responsibility and deliberation?

### **The scalable passport: A threat or a Solution?**

The big question of course is whether the first condition, the 'enforcing power' of the scalable passport will ever be realised. You don't have to be clairvoyant to appreciate the prediction that there will be a lot of resistance from geo-states, because the formation of geo-states may encompass a shift in the power balance. Geo-states will fear that once the door of the 'prison cell' called nationality is opened, people will leave the state en masse and that these geo-states will therefore lose power. This will especially be a major fear for the larger states. Of course they will disguise their objections in other arguments. The risks that neo-states pose will be magnified and the old system of geo-states will be brought up as the only safeguard against lawlessness and social chaos. But if the state really offers that much protection as people argue, then it should be safe to assume that no sane person will adopt such a utopian idea, right? In that case, geo-states don't have anything to fear from the introduction of a scalable passport. But we should not be driven by fear in this situation. In reality, the condition of the modern geo-state is very poor. There is a lot of 'internal tension'. Just to 'keep things together', geo-states are forced to promote an even increasing form of nationalism, cultivated in sports, culture and education. The door of the prison cell is kept tightly shut under the pretext of national safety. This nationalist rhetoric harbours a deep general mistrust and a sickened relationship between citizens and the government. Should we not conclude that the old nation-states are no longer able to solve the problems of our time? And isn't it time to give other states like the neo-state of Europe or regional neo-states a chance to solve



these problems? Let's give neo-states a chance to tighten the bond with citizens, to create a new sense of community and to raise endorsement for reforms in order to more efficiently solve global problems.

If the geo-state does not voluntarily offer the neo-state space, and that is very unlikely, then the following strategy could be applied: start a new European movement (like DIEM25), which aims to democratically bring about a new European State. Make membership of this movement the equivalent of 'accession to the European State'. Develop a vision and policy for Europe. Have members actively endorse this policy in all administrative units of the geo-states of Europe. Exercise influence on all policies of the EU. Let the movement elect a democratic board. Elect a representative parliament. Let new political parties arise from the movement. Develop campaigns to have national citizens sign up with the movement. In short, build a parallel European neo-state. At first this will only be a virtual state. Citizens remain national citizens, regardless whether they are members of the 'Neo-state of Europe', but as the movement grows, its power will also increase. Nobody will give it any mind when it only has 10,000 members. At 1 million members, people will start to listen to the movement and demands for 'acknowledgement of the concept of neo-states' and 'introduction of a scalable passport' can be put forward. A real discussion will arise within the EU. At 100 million members, the movement will be larger than the largest member state of the EU and therefore will be able to exert a lot of power. The present EU is a semi-federal united geo-state without citizens. The movement of the 'neo-state of Europe' will be European people without a country. They must join together. The EU will have to transform into a new democratic European neo-state with European people.