

One World or Back to Tribalism?
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The past few centuries have seen the rise of the nation-state, countries defined by a common language, often a common religious identity, and a strong central rule. Out of that process came Spain, France, Great Britain, and the United States of America. Other nation-states emerged in the 19th century: Germany, and very late, Italy.

Before nation states, the western world was divided into kingdoms---some fairly large, and others (such as Spain and France) divided into multiple small kingdoms or dukedoms with their own dialects, customs, and sometimes religions. France, for example, was always a recognizable kingdom after the fall of Rome, but the French king was only the first among peers, his lands held by very powerful minor kings (dukes), such as Burgundy, Brittany, Normandy, and others. The French king only had as much power as the others agreed to give him.

No nation-state emerged without a challenge and often bloodshed. The French King, Louis IV, destroyed the fortified castles of the French dukes and brought their children to Paris as part of his court. From the 16th century on, French overtook all the regional dialects as the language of the nation.

England followed the same pattern. The King of England (in this case, Edward I) had to subdue the Welsh; later, Queen Elizabeth I, subdued Ireland, and absorbed Scotland by naming as her heir the child of the last Scottish queen.

By the end of the 19th century, the Nation-State became the model everywhere: Japan, China, Mexico, Canada, Australia, New Zealand. Nationalism (love of country) was born, for good and for ill. Poisonous nationalism can lead to greed: expansion and conquest of neighbors or (after Columbus) creating empires abroad. England, France, Holland, Belgium, Russia, Spain, and Portugal all created empires through conquest. The Ottoman Turks beat them all to it with a Muslim empire that included some Christian lands as well (eastern Europe). The benefit of empire is that peace is maintained, trade encouraged, and multiple cultures tolerated as long as they do not challenge the central government.

The disadvantage of empire is corruption: the conquered people are at the mercy of bad central governments and local imperial governors. Furthermore, belonging to an empire if you are one of the lesser people gives rise to bitterness and movements to free these lesser people to create their own nation state.

Nation states and their rampant lust for power gave rise to two world wars in the 20th century in which people not very different from each other (except for primary language) went into two wars that caused the death and destruction of millions of people. At the end of World War II, another model came to life: a super-nation called the European Union, which was designed to enable all member nations to travel internally without passport, move around for jobs, and start identifying as citizens of Europe, rather than French, German, Italian, or Spanish.

Alas, this is not working as hoped. National identity is not dead. Just attend a World Cup soccer game between countries and see the passion. Ask a French farmer how he likes new agricultural rules devised by the EU government in Brussels, a governing body that was appointed by the host governments, not by election. Now, add to that a vicious Muslim cult living in European countries yet not loyal to their host cultures, which is in an almost unstoppable urban guerilla war.

Europe's desire for a cosmopolitan population did not consider immigrants not wanting it. Making matters worse, even if the first generation of Muslim migrants wanted to integrate, too many of their children or grandchildren do not. Modern technology has been a vehicle for propaganda by dark-age-cultists to enflame young Muslims to war against modernity.

Almost every modern nation-state in the world is facing problems with sectors wanting to go their own way. Even the United States is facing a large revolt from people who feel that their government is not addressing their needs or cultures. The Nation-State is in big trouble everywhere. Can they address the problems and save their unions?

678 Words

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