

Fractures in the Nation State

Over the past 300 years or so, we have seen the rise of nation states, where countries and empires have grown larger and larger. From our history lessons, we know that countries grew through the consolidation or acquisition of smaller neighboring countries or lands. Examples of this include the Soviet Union, the United States, Germany, Yugoslavia, Italy and the British Empire.

Shortly after the end of World War II, we have seen the beginning of the end of several European empires as they began to withdraw from their colonies around the world. Fractures in the nation state have accelerate in recent years. The Soviet Union and Yugoslavia have both dissolved into many smaller countries, each seeking its own national identity and destiny. Many of the conflicts around the world are attempts by local ethnic groups to carve out territories from existing countries that they can call their own. Some of the conflicts in recent years include Ethiopia, Somalia, Sudan, Georgia, Philippines, Indonesia, and India.

Pressures on the nation state are coming not only from below as indigenous groups fight for self-rule, but also front the top with the emergence of the super nation states in recent years. These super nation states, for lack of a better word, are not nation states formed based on ethnicity or defense, but on common economic interests and agendas. These super nation states are the consolidation of several countries into one economic unit to compete globally against other super nation states or regions. Generally, the consolidation is along geographic lines. The European Union was formed to compete with the United State's growing economic power. United States, in turn ,created NAFTA as a direct response to this challenge. To remain competitive, countries in other regions of the world are laying the foundations to form their own versions of NAFTA in Asia, South America and Africa.

Both forces will fracture the current nation states. With these two opposing

forces pulling at the nation state, which one will eventually prevail? The breaking up of the nation states into smaller nation states, or the aggregation of the nation states into larger super economic powers?

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