

## The Global Village

---

The 'global village' is a term in current usage that is acquiring the quality of a cliché. Indeed, in many ways, national boundaries have become irrelevant. Money markets and multinational corporations, satellite television, internet and intercontinental missiles, all seem to mock at boundaries that are no longer sacred. In the circumstances, people may be justified in wondering if the nation-state has outlived its utility and is in the process of disintegration; or is to evolve into something bigger and stronger with the ability to face and overcome the challenges of modern technology.

The 180 odd nation-states that are listed with the UN (and some outside it) each has a separate territory of its own, and each has a government whose right to be its representative voice is recognized by other governments (at least most of them). No doubt, technological developments have eroded the independence, power and rigid boundaries. In the field of economics, transnational are growing easier and cheaper, and the belief in national self-sufficiency is being steadily destroyed. A false move by any major government finds repercussions on markets worldwide. The discipline of present day international financial markets induces national governments to manage their economies more efficiently.

In the matter of defense, too, a radical change has come about. A little more than half-a-century ago, land and sea were the arena of warfare. With the development of aircraft, a third aspect of warfare developed. Now the rapid changes brought about by space technology and the development of missiles have created a situation by which literally the press of a button can vanquish a country half way across the globe.

The information revolution is another factor that has significantly changed the world picture, piercing the protective cloak of the most insular of nation-states. Interaction among the peoples of the world has increased by leaps and bounds, and amidst the growing knowledge about each part of the globe and its occupants, the distinctiveness of the nation-state has got blurred.

The nation-state, however, is not quite dead; nor is it likely to die soon. It was believed soon after the end of the Cold War that with the end of Communism would come a uniform world system and peace would reign, and a global government would evolve around the UN as a pivot. All rather wishful thinking! Quarrels between countries have not ceased, neither has divisiveness vanished. Communism after all, is not the only factor in an ideological conflict.

Globalization in the economic field –witness the setting up to the WTO with its global set of rules and the establishment of a free-trade system- is accepted by many a country because of the benefits that may be reaped from such a situation. However, beyond a certain limit, every country still wants to keep certain decision-making powers to itself. Even in the matter of free trade, countries would like to preserve the power to decide how much of the free-trade rules suit them in particular. No country wants to give up its political or military power.

Ideology and culture, again, are not enough for nation-states to dissolve their identities into a large entity. Each individual government does not want to give up power to be subsumed into a super state of global scope.

A nation-state has outlived its attraction as yet-after all, it is not a very old political development. It still gives people a sense of shared identity-form a common language, a common religion, or some other strong binding force. And unless this binding force exists, no government can govern its people (except by brute force). In other words, government and people should have a sense of being part of the shared identity.