HAS THE BREAKUP OF THE NATION STATE ARRIVED?

The breakup of the nation-state is late, but it seems to have arrived. After Kurdistan and Catalonia (and Brexit is part of the pattern), can California be far behind?

On the other hand, the Kurds, Catalans, and Brits don't want the end of "the nation-state." They want their own. So it's more accurate to say that the old global structure is showing signs of decay.

Think of the division of Czechoslovakia into two separate countries, or the breakup of old Yugoslavia into five (Slovenia, Croatia, Montenegro, Macedonia, Serbia, Bosnia & Herzegovina , six if you count Srpska).

What did you expect when the Soviet Union imploded? The structure of the geopolitical universe was firmly based on the dominance of the two superpowers -- us and the Soviets -- and the structure couldn't survive the collapse of one of the two. Especially since we weren't inclined to assert our newfound role as a "hyperpower."

That put the world into uncharted waters, floating between the old bipolar system and something-we-knew-not-what. We still do not know what, but after the predictable shattering of the Warsaw Pact countries, the desire to be free of long-standing arrangements involving the likes of Kurds and Catalans, is gathering strength.

Other countries are, as Bismarck used to say, mere geographical expressions. Syria is one of these, and perhaps North Korea is a candidate.

Oddly, the map most deserving of redrafting is Africa, where national boundaries -- often drawn where competing colonial powers stopped fighting one another -- are totally illogical, running through tribal populations.

I used to spend a lot of time in Congo, sometimes known as Congo-Brazzaville, a former French colony. If you cross the Congo River into the other (Belgian) Congo, you quickly see that the tribes on opposite sides (and hence in separate countries) are the same.

But there isn't much talk about redrawing the map of the dark continent, although it makes good sense in many cases. Let's hope it won't be done by a future caliph.

Perhaps we'll get there peacefully and even democratically. It's certain that many nations will fission, even if the Kurds and Catalans are forced to step back from their current intentions to declare independence. I think this is a major turning point in world affairs, and I doubt any region will float through it without convulsion.

Remember 25 years ago when Clinton became president, and announced that, henceforth, conflicts would be economic rather than military? That was, in fact, the consensus of the global intelligentsia. The consensus was quite mistaken, wasn't it?

The intellectuals forgot that human history is the history of war, preparation for war, and the consequences of war.

In retrospect, the post-World War II era was quite unusual. The current unpleasantness is more normal. Remember your Machiavelli: man is more inclined to do evil than to do good.

So here we are. Especially in California.

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