

New World Order: Conflicting Views Nation-State Down But Not Out

Dr Vinay Prakash Singh
Associate Professor
Dept. of Political Science
Janta Degree College, Patla, Ghaziabad
Email: vinay6819@gmail.com

Abstract

The idea of nationhood, however mocked or questioned, has proven remarkably resistant to erosion. It has developed a momentum of its own, taking hold even in societies where its emergence was least expected. The concept of self-determination, with which nationalism is so closely intertwined, possesses a mobilising power capable of galvanising entire populations. In the contemporary world, nationalist movements enjoy greater flexibility than at any previous historical moment, partly because the bases of national identity have multiplied: ethnicity, race region, religion, shared culture, language, and collective memory can each serve as the organising principle of a nationalist project (Bloom, 1990). Given this plasticity, it was premature to announce the death of the nation-state, even as it appeared besieged by globalising pressures from above and secessionist forces from below.

Reference to this paper should be made as follows:

Received: 25.05.26
Approved: 13.06.26

Dr Vinay Prakash Singh

*New World Order: Conflicting
Views Nation-State Down But
Not Out*

Vol. XVII, No.1
Article No. 02,
Pg. 008-013

Similarity Check: 05%

Online available at
[https://anubooks.com/journal-
volume/jgv-vol-xvii-no1-jan-
june-2026](https://anubooks.com/journal-volume/jgv-vol-xvii-no1-jan-june-2026)

DOI: [https://doi.org/10.31995/
jgv.2026.v17i01.002](https://doi.org/10.31995/jgv.2026.v17i01.002)

**This article has been peer-reviewed by the Review Committee of JGV.*

A few decades constitute a brief interval in the long arc of international politics, and any apparent decline in the nation-state could yet prove a temporary deviation rather than a structural transformation. The overwhelming majority of the world's political communities still continue to organise themselves as nation-states or aspire to do so. The fragmentation of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia into smaller, ethnically coherent units illustrates not a retreat from the nation-state ideal but rather a preference for the uni-national state over the multinational one (Giddens, 1987). The often-cited example of European integration, the transformation of the European common market into a quasi-federal polity, does not, on close inspection, refute this argument. It is my firm view that if the European Union represents the political template of the future, it suggests the emergence of a larger nation-state rather than the dissolution of the concept altogether.

To a citizen of a vast, culturally diverse country like India, a united Europe may indeed resemble a functioning state. Yet it is crucial not to generalise the European trajectory as a universal model. In other parts of the world, big historical differences in developmental timing have prevented many societies from achieving even the minimum threshold of a stable, functional nation-state (Feld & Boyd, 1980). The thesis of nation-state decline therefore carries little persuasive weight for political communities still engaged in the foundational work of state-building and national consolidation.

Scholarly attention to the relationship between globalisation and the nation-state has grown considerably. While cross-border economic flows have expanded at an unprecedented pace, this expansion has not straightforwardly diminished governmental authority (Held et al., 1999). Transborder transactions and communications operate in spaces that may appear to bypass national borders, and to that extent they render territoriality less significant. However, states have retained substantial regulatory capacity over these flows, adapting their instruments rather than abandoning their functions.

The explosion of digital communications and internet connectivity has driven a convergence of cultural and political norms across societies (Scholte, 2005). During the 1990s, particularly in the first half of the decade, the dominant intellectual mood was one of alarm at the apparent irresistibility of globalisation. The fall of the Berlin Wall, the implosion of Soviet socialism, and the subsequent disintegration of the USSR had produced a sense that all established structures were in flux (Held & McGrew, 2000).

The broad shift toward market economies and liberal democratic governance fed premature proclamations: the 'decline of the nation-state', the 'end of history', the 'end of geography'. Globalisation reached a symbolic peak with the formation of the World Trade Organisation in the mid-1990s. Thereafter, a series of developments

began to complicate this narrative — the collapse of the dot-com bubble, the rise of an organised anti-globalisation movement, and the repeated breakdown of multilateral trade negotiations (Hirst & Thompson, 1996). Most decisively, the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 fundamentally redirected international attention. Security concerns moved back to the centre of statecraft, and the immediate effect was a reassertion of state prerogative over market logic, a rehabilitation of political and military calculations over purely economic ones, and a reinforcement rather than relaxation of border controls (Morgenthau & Thompson, 1985).

Much of the globalisation literature of the 1990s anticipated that the state would be reduced to a condition of chronic crisis and institutional irrelevance. The shocks of 9/11 and the succession of global economic crises that followed proved this prophecy wrong. States demonstrated their indispensability on both national security and economic stabilisation fronts, and by many measures appeared stronger than ever (Krasner, 1999). The global financial crisis that unfolded from 2008 onward reinforced the centrality of the industrialised state, as governments across the world intervened on a massive scale to prevent systemic collapse. This context invited a reassessment of state power under the impact of globalisation: Is sovereignty becoming obsolete, or is it being renegotiated? The world was witnessing a kind of political catharsis never seen before.

Every state continues to pursue the classical attributes of sovereignty, internal legitimacy, recognised authority, and equality with other states in the international system (James, 1999). Yet this pursuit coexists with a widespread and growing practice of delegating sovereign functions to transnational and supranational institutions. In some cases, sovereignty has been treated almost as a tradable commodity: a number of small states, facing acute resource constraints and vulnerability to economic and environmental shocks, have licensed their country-code top-level internet domains to multinational corporations for revenue, effectively monetising an attribute of statehood (Wallace & Singer, 1970). While financially expedient, such arrangements represent an erosion of the symbolic and practical content of sovereignty.

State sovereignty has conventionally signified the right to govern a territory free from external interference, grounded in the legitimate authority of the state over its population (Krasner, 1999). However, sovereignty has never been a fixed or self-evident concept, it is historically contingent, socially constructed, and subject to continuous reinterpretation. Contemporary globalisation has complicated sovereignty further by extending not only the circulation of goods, capital, and culture across borders, but also of crime, terrorism, and other threats requiring coordinated international responses (Scholte, 2005). As states increasingly turn to multilateral

institutions to address problems that no single government can manage alone, the practical meaning of sovereignty shifts accordingly.

Examining how governance itself is being restructured illuminates the likely future of sovereignty. Political theorist James Rosenau (1997) proposed the concept of “*framgregation*” to capture the simultaneous fragmentation and integration of authority occurring in the contemporary world. In his analysis, authority is dispersing simultaneously in multiple directions: upward into international and transnational arrangements, horizontally across a broadening range of non-state actors, and downward toward sub-national governments and civil society organisations (Rosenau, 1997). Crucially, however, Rosenau (2003) did not conclude that the state was vanishing; rather, he argued that the traditional state was undergoing a transformation and a reduction in certain capacities, a metamorphosis rather than an extinction.

The twenty-first-century state thus confronts a set of structural paradoxes. It continues to occupy the central position in the international system, states created the very institutions and legal frameworks that made globalisation possible, yet it finds itself progressively constrained by the forces those institutions have unleashed (Held et al., 1999). Globalisation has broadened political participation and generated new pressures for accountability, while anti-globalisation movements in both the developed and developing world have questioned the democratic legitimacy of global governance arrangements. Rather than abandoning sovereignty as a principle, states are more likely to renegotiate and reconstitute its meaning in response to these pressures (Held & McGrew, 2000).

The near-universal persistence of nation-states as the primary form of political organisation counsels scepticism toward predictions of their imminent collapse. Two qualifications are particularly important when evaluating such claims (Bloomfield & Wynner, 1977). First, not all erosions of national capacity can be attributed to globalisation — domestic political failures, ethnic conflict, and institutional decay are equally significant. Second, the effects of globalisation on the state are genuinely ambivalent: they do not uniformly weaken state capacity but often redirect and reconfigure it. The single most significant structural change in the international order since World War II has arguably been the emergence of a collective security framework embodied in the United Nations, which has altered the conditions under which states must operate (Morgenthau, 1973).

Despite its well-documented shortcomings, including the absence of Security Council authorisation for various wars and invasions, the post-war multilateral order has offered weaker states a degree of protection against external aggression that was simply unavailable in earlier periods. The combination of expanded economic

opportunity under globalisation and enhanced security guarantees from multilateral institutions has enabled the re-emergence and flourishing of small city-states such as Singapore and Hong Kong (Cram, 2009). These cases demonstrate that it is possible to achieve economic prosperity and citizen welfare within compact political structures, so long as the broader international environment provides stability and openness. The peaceful dissolution of Czechoslovakia into two independent states, each seeking its own path into the European Union and under the security umbrella of NATO, exemplifies this logic. In earlier decades, such a separation would have been violently resisted; by the 1990s, the security architecture had changed sufficiently to make it not only feasible but orderly. The same logic governed the departures of Slovenia and Montenegro from Yugoslavia: integration into European structures was easier to achieve from a position of separate statehood (Feld & Boyd, 1980).

The notion that economic forces operate autonomously from political ones, a conviction that gained considerable currency over the past four decades, is itself a political product. Financial liberalisation and market opening were not spontaneous outcomes of impersonal globalisation; they reflected deliberate policy choices, advanced most energetically by the United States, and shaped by the interests of those most influential in international economic negotiations (Hirst & Thompson, 1996). This observation itself constitutes evidence of the enduring power of the nation-state: the world economic order remains, at its foundations, a politically constructed and nationally organised one.

There is a telling irony in the fact that the state most responsible for creating and propagating the conditions of globalisation has simultaneously been among the most insistent defenders of national sovereignty and national interest. Looking ahead, China represents the most plausible candidate for great-power status in the coming decades, and it has pursued its rise almost exclusively through the prism of national strategic interest, economic advancement, territorial integrity, and geopolitical influence (Morgenthau & Thompson, 1985). On global challenges such as climate change, major powers have tended to privilege national interests over collective solutions. Despite the many dramatic shifts and incremental adjustments in global politics, the nation-state endures as the fundamental organising unit of the international system. Since World War II it has ceded some of its formerly exclusive prerogatives, yet it remains the primary framework through which human beings understand and exercise political agency in a complex world (Rosenau, 2003).

References

1. Bloom, W. (1990). *Personal identity, national identity and international relations*. Cambridge University Press.

2. Bloomfield, L. P., & Wynner, E. (1977). What future for the UN? Transaction Books.
3. Cram, L. (2009). Identity and European integration: Diversity as a source of integration. *Nations and Nationalism*, 15(1), Pg. **109–128**. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1469-8129.2009.00367.x>
4. Feld, W. J., & Boyd, G. (1980). Comparative regional systems: West and East Europe, North America, the Middle East and developing countries. Pergamon Press.
5. Giddens, A. (1987). The nation-state and violence: Volume two of a contemporary critique of historical materialism. University of California Press.
6. Held, D., & McGrew, A. (Eds.). (2000). The global transformations reader: An introduction to the globalization debate. Polity Press.
7. Held, D., McGrew, A., Goldblatt, D., & Perraton, J. (1999). Global transformations: Politics, economics and culture. Stanford University Press.
8. Hirst, P., & Thompson, G. (1996). Globalization in question: The international economy and the possibilities of governance. Polity Press.
9. James, A. (1999). The practice of sovereign statehood in contemporary international society. *Political Studies*, 47(3), Pg. **457–473**. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9248.00212>
10. Krasner, S. D. (1999). Sovereignty: Organized hypocrisy. Princeton University Press.
11. Morgenthau, H. J. (Ed.). (1973). Peace, security and the United Nations. Ayer Company Publishers.
12. Morgenthau, H. J., & Thompson, K. W. (1985). Politics among nations: The struggle for power and peace (6th ed.). Alfred A. Knopf.
13. Rosenau, J. N. (1997). Along the domestic-foreign frontier: Exploring governance in a turbulent world. Cambridge University Press.
14. Rosenau, J. N. (2003). Distant proximities: Dynamics beyond globalization. Princeton University Press.
15. Scholte, J. A. (2005). Globalization: A critical introduction (2nd ed.). Palgrave Macmillan.
16. Wallace, M., & Singer, J. D. (1970). Intergovernmental organization in the global system, 1815–1964: A quantitative description. *International Organization*, 24(2), Pg. **239–287**.