

## CHAPTER

# 4

## LIVING IN A WORLD OF NATION STATES



**T**he supposed advantage of dividing the entire planet into internationally recognized nation-states is that it brings a social order that benefits all. Someday, if liberal democratic ideals truly prevail, we will live in a world without nation-states. People will treat each other as individuals, and not as a part of this group or that. Until that day, the world is better off with Israel's continued existence.

Calling a group of people a "Nation" is a way to encapsulate a set of characteristics that give those people a particular identity. As such, nationhood, whether ancient, or through recent mythological creation, is the basis for the formation of many independent states.<sup>1</sup> A "state" is nothing more than a political organization.

The traditional criteria for statehood in international law is a critical mass of people large enough to ensure that the state can indeed engage in relations with other states, and more importantly be capable of undertaking certain vague

responsibilities and obligations under international law.<sup>2</sup>

The modern world has worked for about three centuries with the sovereign state as the basic operating entity. The international system developed to unify authority in ways in which feudal systems could not. The idea was that each state could focus on promoting the general economic and social welfare of its citizens, and peaceful coexistence between states would foster contributions to the well being of all.<sup>3</sup>

In the nation-state system, each sovereign state is supposed to have full authority inside its boundaries, and is considered equal to other sovereigns in the sense that it is not to interfere in affairs outside its boundaries.<sup>4</sup>

In the abstract, a state is based on the relation between the governors and the governed, a relation based on the agreement of the governed, either intentionally or coerced, to obey the authority. Ultimate enforcement of the agreement is backed by the threat or use of legitimate (i.e., considered to be legitimate) force.<sup>5</sup> In affect, a state is supposed to have a monopoly on the use of armed power within its borders.

In the late nineteenth century, the favored term associated with sovereign political authority was not “nation” or “state,” but rather, “power.” Among these powers were seven or eight “Great Powers” which together dominated the world.<sup>6</sup>

As the state system evolved, the imperialistic powers imposed geographic boundaries on regions throughout the world to eliminate, from their perspectives, global voids in recognized authority.

Today, authority of every state theoretically includes policies regarding land ownership and transfers, water, immigration, security, fiscal and monetary affairs, military and police matters and foreign affairs.

But complete state sovereignty has always been at