

# Geertz's Challenge: Is It Possible to Be a Robust Cultural Pluralist and a Dedicated Political Liberal at the Same Time?

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*We seem to be in need of a new variety of politics, a politics which does not regard ethnic, religious, racial, linguistic, or regional assertiveness as so much irrationality, archaic and ingenerate, to be suppressed or transcended . . . It depends on developing a less simplistically demonizing, blankly negative attitude toward it as a relic of some savage or some early stage of human existence. It depends on adapting the principles of liberalism and social democracy, still our best guides for law, government, and public deportment, to matters with respect to which they have been too often dismissively reactive or uncomprehending; philosophically blind . . . That is, a new approach depends on our gaining a better understanding of how culture, the frames of meaning within which people live and form their convictions, their selves, and their solidarities, comes to us an ordering force in human affairs.<sup>1</sup>*

“Geertz’s Challenge” is a response to a provocative, taxing, and unsettling question raised with a sense of urgency by the late great American anthropologist Clifford Geertz during the last decade of his life.<sup>2</sup> The interrogative I have in mind was so strongly implied as to be nearly visible on the surface of several of his writings (see above) and can be formulated most generally as follows: How is it possible to be a robust cultural pluralist and a dedicated political liberal at the same time? Is it coherent to embrace, justify, or defend ways of life grounded in durable bonds of ethnic, cultural, and religious community while also (a) endorsing individual autonomy, (b) valuing transactions and forms of association premised on freedom of choice, and (c) acting in accordance with the duty to treat all individuals equally with regard to their just claims regardless of their ethnic, cultural, religious, or family backgrounds? Alternatively stated: What are the specific way(s) robust cultural pluralism and dedicated political liberalism might be reconciled, if at all?<sup>3</sup>

Geertz posed his query as a philosophical provocation and a public policy challenge; in the daunting face of which this essay is little more than the preparation of some conceptual ground as a prelude to the development of an adequate response. He posed his query in part because he recognized that we live in a tumultuous post–Cold War era, marked by a combustible mixture of neo-liberal globalization, expanding markets, the borderless free flow of everything (including the type of labor migration across cultural divides that raises hot button issues about the scope of domestic tolerance for alien beliefs, values, and customs), ethnonational conflicts (for example, in Eastern Europe, in West Asia, and in various regions in Africa), and domestic multicultural anxieties (for example, almost everywhere).<sup>4</sup> The world is “growing both more global and more divided, more thoroughly interconnected and more intricately partitioned, at the same time. As the one increases, so does the other,” he wrote;<sup>5</sup> and he anticipated that this volatile period in human history, during which the forces of integration (for example, of local economies) and the forces of separation (for example, empowering ethnonational identities and challenging the integrity of multinational states) walk hand in hand, was not likely to be short lived.

He also posed his query because he understood that some of the more destructive collisions between “nations”<sup>6</sup> caused skeptical questions to be raised that any self-reflective cultural pluralist (who is also a faithful citizen of a modern liberal state) must sooner or later confront: not only questions about the future of cultural pluralism in a liberal cosmopolitan world system but also questions about the future of cosmopolitan political liberalism in a culturally balkanized world.

### **Robust Cultural Pluralism and Dedicated Political Liberalism in a “Differenced World”**

Clifford Geertz was himself a robust cultural pluralist. He believed that cultural diversity was inherent in the human condition and that the ecumenical or missionary impulse to value uniformity over variety and to overlook, devalue, subordinate, or even eradicate difference was not a good thing. Based on his reading of history and his case-based knowledge of the current international multicultural scene (for example, in Canada, the former Yugoslavia, Sri Lanka, Nigeria, India, and Indonesia) he viewed it as evident that cultural differences

derived from real or imagined primordial ties to ancestral groups are ever-present, robust, and resilient, a fact about which he had no global regrets.

Indeed, one of his main accomplishments as a writer of ethnographies was to help us understand how it is possible for morally decent and intellectually reasonable members of the divergent cultural lineages in our global human family to live their lives guided by goals, values, and pictures of the world very different from our own.<sup>7</sup> In other words, his ethnographies sought to show us how it is possible for normal members of other cultural worlds or “nations” to live their lives piloted by different conceptions of the self, of gender, of morality, of emotions, of religion, of political and legal authority, of property, of kinship, of even different conceptions of time, space, causation, and the good life. His was a version of cultural pluralism in which one seeks, to the extent it is possible (and there are times it is not possible), to understand others as coequal moral subjects (rather than as defective moral subjects or as mere objects); and to do so without assuming that if two nations are moral equals then their goals, values, pictures of the world, and ways of life must be uniform or essentially the same.

Nevertheless when the famous anthropologist took the measure of primordial group identities, anxieties, hostilities, and fears in the contemporary world, and the associated political disorder, his assessment of various extant multicultural realities (domestic and global) was not necessarily pretty. His words and judgment on this matter are haunting: “[T]he image of a world full of people so passionately fond of each other’s cultures that they aspire only to celebrate one another does not seem to me a clear and present danger,” he wrote. “[T]he image of one full of people happily apotheosizing their heroes and diabolizing their enemies alas does.”

He was mindful, alas, that we live in an age when political and marketplace transactions (including competition for jobs, land, natural resources), both domestic and international, produce fateful (and sometimes destructive) encounters between members of ancestrally distinct groups, resulting in the mutual demonizing of the “other.” “Positioning Muslims in France, Whites in South Africa, Arabs in Israel, or Koreans in Japan are not altogether the same sort of thing,” he noted. “But if political theory is going to be of any relevance at all in the splintered world, it will have to have something cogent to say about how, in the face of a drive towards a destructive integrity, such structures can be brought into being, how they can be sustained, and how they can be made to work.”<sup>8</sup> And of

course we are not talking here just of Muslims in France or Koreans in Japan, but also of Bangladeshis in Saudi Arabia, Gambians in Norway, Francophones, Filipinos, and Inuit in Canada, Guatemalans in Mexico, Thais in Israel, and Mexicans, Samoans, Amish, Haitians, Satmar Hasidim, Palestinians, Cubans, Somalis, Hmong, and many others in the United States, and so on and so forth.

Geertz was not only a robust cultural pluralist but also a political liberal, although a nervous one, who was aware that a major cause of the “drive towards a destructive integrity” in the modern world was the ethnonationalist impulse to disaggregate or dismantle multinational states and resolve them into a world of political communities in which nation, people, state, and country—culture and politics—are made to coincide. He describes resistance to ethnonationalism as a “moral imperative.” Making that point, although somewhat elliptically, he writes: “Resisting the coalescence of the dimensions of political community [nation, state, country, people], keeping the very lines of affinity that turn abstract populations into public actors separate and visible, seems suddenly, once again, conceptually useful, morally imperative, and politically realistic.”<sup>9</sup> Not very far from the surface of his writings on this subject is his clear and considered judgment about the worthiness of what I shall later argue is a distinctively liberal American conception of nationality: a conception of a “civil political community” in which all the people who are citizens of the state and are willing to live their lives constrained by a basic set of liberal democratic principles with respect to (what Geertz described as)<sup>10</sup> the “law, government and public comportment” are part of the nation, regardless of their ethnic, racial, or religious origins. Later too I will have more to say about this type of state-based conception of nationality (which contrasts sharply with any nation-based conception of the state), and I will clarify both conceptions.

Geertz, however, was acutely aware that critics of political liberalism around the world often argue that liberals are prevented precisely because of their commitments (for example, to the liberal ideals of autonomy, equal life chances, and the freedoms of expression, association, and choice) from celebrating (or from even tolerating) cultural differences, especially when those cultural divides or separations are sustained by means of real or imagined primordial ties to ancestral groups. As a robust cultural pluralist and a dedicated political liberal it made him edgy to see such critics argue, as he put it in one brief but effective summary of their views, that political liberals are barred by their own liberal principles “from recognizing the force and durability of ties of religion,

language, custom, locality, race, and descent in human affairs, or from regarding the entry of such considerations into civic life as other than pathological—primitive, backward, regressive, and irrational.”

So he offered up his challenge: can anthropologists, political philosophers, and globalization theorists develop a version of liberalism with both the courage and the capacity to engage itself with (rather than try to homogenize) “a differenced world”? And can they do so with regard to, and respect for, a multicultural world in which at least some of that diversity has its source in the real or imagined primordial ties of individuals to kith and kin and particular ancestral groups, and not in some original autobiographical act of free choice or expressive liberty?

The writer died before he was able to fully spell out his own affirmative response to his own questions. Nevertheless, he invited us to rethink the implications of political liberalism, to search for a practical philosophical antidote to the “diabolizing” of others and, thus, to develop a way of thinking about the reality and organization of ethnic, religious, and racial differences in the contemporary world which, even though it might fall short of getting us to actually celebrate diversity, might at the very least support an attitude of cooperative mutual sufferance among culturally distinct groups.

### **Keeping Cultural and Political Identities Straight: From Nation v. State to Nation (Based)-State v. State (Based)-Nation**

Even a prelude to an answer to a challenging question benefits from the clarification of terms. This is especially true in an essay concerned to distinguish between nations and states and to then build out of that contrast a second distinction between a nation-state and a state-nation (which, for sake of clarifying the sought-after distinction, I will also refer to as the distinction between a nation [based]-state) and a state [based]-nation). I hope to keep those identities straight and separate here and elsewhere in this essay.

### **Nation v. State Defined**

When I speak of nations I use the term “nation” in the premodern sense, to refer to any people or potential in-group or faction, regardless of population size, whose members are networked or tied to each other by a real or imagined

common ethnic ancestry and shared cultural heritage, whether or not the nation coincides with a territory/country controlled by a sovereign political entity such as a state. I use the term “state” to mean any sovereign governing body that is an instrument for the realization of collective goods with political, legal, and compulsive (police/military) control over a territory as made manifest in (a) the authority of the sovereign governing body to legislate and define the norms of behavior within that territory and regulate transactions (both cooperative and hostile) with other sovereign political entities, (b) the power of the sovereign governing body to enforce those norms and transactions, and (c) the capacity of the sovereign governing body to be recognized by, and to recognize, other sovereign political entities as such.

The idea of nation used in this essay is meant to be reminiscent of the seminal concept of a cultural community developed by the German romantic philosopher Johann Herder, and his vision of the world composed of historically grounded communities, each appealing to some local conception of truth, virtue, and beauty and dedicated to divergent social norms that seem justified in the light of those local conceptions.<sup>11</sup> The real existence of a primordial group (whose members feel tied to each other in the ways suggested) does not depend on the historical or ethnographic truth of those primordial ties (they can be and often are fictive to some more or less substantial extent); when it comes to the reality of primordial groups, collective memory and the sense of fellow-feeling it promotes trumps true history, and true history may be far less relevant to the formation and analysis of the behavior of primordial groups than one might suppose. Herder’s view, which linked the self-development of individuals to the freedom of primordial groups to flourish and to try to develop their distinctive ways of life, has been cogently summarized by British political philosopher Isaiah Berlin as follows: “For Herder there is a plurality of incommensurable cultures. To belong to a given community, to be connected with its members by indissoluble and impalpable ties of a common language, historical memory, habit, tradition and feeling, is a basic human need no less natural than that for food or drink or security or procreation. One nation can understand and sympathize with the institutions of another only because it knows how much its own mean to itself. Cosmopolitanism is the shedding of all that makes one most human, most oneself.”<sup>12</sup>

Perhaps that last sentence will seem shocking to some readers, especially

those who live or idealize a liberal cosmopolitan/individualistic/ nationless way of life. But that in itself is not surprising given that Herder's conceptualization of cultural community was in large measure an act of intellectual resistance to the European Enlightenment ideal for a modern self with its highly individualistic image of a fully realized human person: as one who has become liberated or emancipated from all traditions, from all revelations or faith-based attachments to groups, from all commitments to received values or pictures of the world other than those that can be worked out by oneself and universally justified or grounded in logic or science. It is that cosmopolitan vision of the liberated individual (who is at home nowhere in particular or feels at home only when detached from all groups and loyal to none) that Johann Herder opposed and viewed as the shedding of all that makes us most human.

David Miller, a political philosopher of the left, makes the point this way: "Nations stretch backwards into the past, and indeed in most cases their origins are conveniently lost in the mists of time. In the course of this history various significant events have occurred, and we can identify with the actual people who acted at those moments, reappropriating their deeds as our own. . . . The historical national community is a community of obligation. Because our forebears have toiled and spilt their blood to build and defend the nation, we who are born into it inherit an obligation to continue their work, which we discharge partly towards our contemporaries and partly towards our descendants. The historical community stretches forward into the future too. This then means that when we speak of the nation as an ethical community, we have in mind not merely the kind of community that exists between a group of contemporaries who practice mutual aid among themselves and would dissolve at the point at which that practice ceases: but a community which, because it stretches back and forward across the generations, is not one which the present generation can renounce. Here we begin to see something of the depth of national communities which may not be shared by other more immediate forms of association."<sup>13</sup>

Roger Scruton, a political philosopher of the right, makes the point wryly, this way: "Since the Enlightenment, it has been normal for Europeans to think of society as a contract. The novelty of the idea is two-fold: first, it implies that social membership is a free choice. Second, it suggests that all members of society are currently living. Neither of these thoughts is true." "Care for the dead and care

for the unborn go hand in hand,” Scruton then avers, strongly suggesting that those who are alive act as though they are part of a historical ethical community (even though in the secular modern world they lack a language for expressing their communal commitments) and avoid “pillage” and “sacrilege” by allowing the dead and the unborn to have a vote on how one lives one’s life today.<sup>14</sup>

Given those definitions and interpretations of the idea of a nation and the idea of a state, one can readily (and coherently) conceptualize the existence of a nation without a corresponding state (Jews in the Diaspora prior to the formation of the nation-state of Israel, Kurds in the Diaspora today, Tamils living in Sri Lanka, Sunni Muslims living in India, the Amish or the Seminoles living in the United States); indeed, that has been the characteristic state of affairs for nations, most of which have existed within the political framework of some multinational or multicultural state, rather than in the political framework of a nation-state. One can thus also readily (and coherently) conceptualize the existence of states in which the territories controlled by the sovereign governing body are occupied by peoples from many nations. States of that sort I shall refer to as multinational states. Over the course of recorded human history most people most of the time have lived in multinational states, some of the clearest examples of which are empires or imperial states, such as the Roman Empire, the Austro-Hungarian Empire, or the Ottoman Empire.

The global breadth and historical depth of the human experience of living in multinational states is impressive. A short list of political formations with multinational characteristics, often with the members of diverse nations or culturally distinct ancestral groups residing in enclaves, cantons, or millets within the territorial borders of the multinational state and under the ultimate (although in practice often quite limited) governing authority of a single (often culturally, ethnically, and religiously and even physically remote) sovereign, includes the following empires: the Akkadian, Ancient Egyptian, Incan, Ethiopian, Athenian, Hellenic, Roman, Byzantine, Aztec, Mayan, Persian, Latin, Mongol, Spanish, Chinese, Mughal, Siam, Holy Roman, Ottoman, and Austro-Hungarian empires; the African empires of Ghana, Benin, Bamana, the Second Mexican, Brazilian, Russian, German, French, and British empires; and also, as I shall suggest later, the currently emerging global multinational state or transnational liberal empire—the “New World Order”—in which the diverse peoples or nations of the world come under the formal regulatory control of a culturally and education-

ally distant cosmopolitan elite whose power is exercised through various global political, legal, financial, military, moral, and economic organizations, such as the WTO, the World Court, the United Nations, the World Bank, and the IMF.

Consider, for example, the following observation about the multinational character of the Ottoman Empire, made by the historian David Fromkin in his account of the demise (around World War I) of that long-standing multinational political arrangement.<sup>15</sup> Fromkin writes: "According to the eleventh edition of the *Encyclopedia Britannica* (1910–11) the Ottoman Empire at the time was inhabited by twenty-two different 'races' [read 'nations'], yet no such thing as an Ottoman nation has ever been created." He goes on to say: "Within the Empire (as distinct from the steppes to its east) even those who spoke Turkish were often of non-Turkish origin. Sir Mark Sykes, a British member of parliament who had traveled extensively in Asia, began one of his books by asking: 'How many people realize, when they speak of Turkey and the Turks, that there is no such place and no such people . . .?' The ancient homeland of the Turkish peoples, Turkestan, was in the possession of Russia and China. More than half the Turkish peoples of Asia lived either there or elsewhere outside the Ottoman Empire, so that the Czar [the sovereign of a different multinational state—the Russian Empire] could lay greater claim to speak for the ethnic Turks than could the Sultan." And, as Fromkin notes, the cities of the Ottoman Empire (Baghdad, Cairo, Algiers, and Damascus) were full of people of mixed national background "spanning the vast range of ancient peoples and cultures that extended from the Atlantic Ocean to the Persian Gulf."

Even to mention the Ottoman Empire is, of course, to run the risk that the reader will either immediately bring to mind the image of aggressive marauding bands of medieval warriors whose notion of economic success was to invade new territories for the sake of capturing wealth and slaves—a style of domination associated with several European powers as well (for example Spain and Portugal) that is neither peaceful, orderly, nor just. Or else one runs the risk the reader will bring to mind images from the final years of a dissolving multinational state in the early twentieth century—images of horrifying ethnic conflicts between particular pairs of groups (the Turks and Greeks, the Turks and the Armenians, and so forth) that were largely motivated by modern aspirations and a political discourse aimed at national self-determination and the formation of autonomous nation-states.

So some caveats and qualifications are in order. Conquest is something the Ottoman Turks did very well for a few hundred years starting in the thirteenth century, before their rate of expansion was slowed, offset, and then reversed by another empire at the gates of Vienna in 1683. Notably, however, the Ottoman Empire managed to remain viable as a diverse and multinational state for an additional 250 years, until 1922, when its domestic realm was divided and its reach dismembered by modern ethnolnational succession movements (Serbian, Bulgarian, Greek, Armenian, Saudi) and as a result of the political settlements that followed its military defeat in World War I. Today there are historians who look back on that 1922 political settlement with regret (“the peace to end all peace” as Fromkin refers to it in his brilliant book by that title). Here I am simply abstracting out a few features of the Ottoman multinational political order in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It might be a way of imagining some of the possible contours of a future, relatively stable global multinational world. And indeed, the Ottoman Empire, despite its many foibles and failings, and ultimate dissolution, had managed for an impressively long time to make space (and had figured out a way, through decentralized and indirect rule, to maintain some semblance of peaceful coexistence) for the many diverse peoples, religions, and ethnic groups (“nations”) incorporated within its expansive territory.

There are other risks to using the domestic Ottoman case as a model for thinking about a future international or transnational society. If the reader hasn’t already recoiled at the mention of the Ottoman as a multinational state because of an association with military conquest, an alternative feeling of wariness might arise from images of court intrigue, fratricidal conflicts, corruption, or even the loss of economic and legal independence (granting extraterritorial jurisdiction—the so-called capitulations—to foreign powers, for example). In the nineteenth century the Ottoman Empire ran up a huge national debt (perhaps not unlike the United States today) and became more and more dependent on foreign capital and loans to keep themselves afloat (also not unlike the United States today). Needless to say, none of those are the aspects of Ottoman domestic society that I have in mind when I mention the multinational Ottoman state in the context of imagining possible models for global society today. In making these remarks I am not trying to be nostalgic about the Ottomans so much as to draw a lesson or two from their approach to the challenges of diversity (of peoples). Those challenges are not unlike those we face today.

There are many notable features of multinational states. In the context of a discussion of robust cultural pluralism one particular feature deserves mention: in a genuine multinational state there is often no popular consensus about how sovereign state power should specifically be exercised, precisely because the state consists of diverse peoples (for example, those twenty-two “races”), who are diverse in the sense that they live their lives in somewhat different ways, according sacred or customary authority to different social norms, and guided by somewhat different goals, values, and pictures of the world. In the Ottoman Empire, at least in the years prior to the modern emergence of strong ethnonationalist movements, those diverse nations lived their lives for the most part separated from each other in a state of mutual coexistence and with an attitude of mutual sufferance, and without much interference from the central government (except for the direct or often indirect collection of taxes and the maintenance of existing physical boundaries between the nations). In practice the everyday governing power of the sovereign was limited, leaving plenty of space for diverse peoples pretty much to do as they wanted with regard to their own local customs, rituals, and beliefs.

As the political and moral philosopher Michael Walzer has aptly remarked, therein inviting us to imagine the Ottoman governing elite incorporating Joseph Smith and the Mormon community into their multinational state: “The Ottoman Empire, for example, would have had no problems with Mormon polygamy—and wouldn’t have had problems whatever its own standard family arrangements.”<sup>16</sup> Indeed, there probably was no “standard family arrangement” in the Ottoman Empire, given that the empire was not a single nation at all. In other words, at least during some substantial part of its seven-hundred-year existence, the Ottoman Empire was a heyday for robust cultural pluralism. Walzer also discusses the Ottoman case and the institutional structures that make for de facto toleration between nations in multinational empires in a brilliant schematic chapter called “Five Regimes of Toleration” (Multicultural Empires, International Society, Consociations, Nation-States, and Immigrant Societies) in his book *On Toleration*.<sup>17</sup> The distinction drawn and introduced below between nation (based)-states and state (based)-nations is built on many of the same features discussed by Walzer in his treatment of some of the contrasts between what he calls “nation-states” and “immigrant societies.”

Finally, to round out this first part of this definitional exercise one can imag-

ine two other logical possibilities: (1) a state without any nation (the nation-less state) and (2) a nation with many states (the multistate nation) (although the historical viability of either of those forms of political association may be arguable).

A state without a nation would by definition be a sovereign political body with legislative, regulative, and enforcement powers over a society of individuals who lacked ancestral ties and autobiographical attachments to any primary groups (ethnic, racial, religious, linguistic, or regional) and had absolutely no cultural heritage or sense of primordial communal loyalty or identity. The individual citizens of such a nationless state (which might in principle be global in its political power and regulatory reach) would live and comprehend their lives and develop their beliefs, values, and normative commitments free of any tradition and all traditions, and exclusively within the terms legislated and enforced by the state, which depending on the nature of the state, might or might not be in liberal terms. Perhaps such nationless citizens, an undifferentiated mass of strangers whose sense of self had no reference to primordial bonds of any sort, might speak Esperanto and be raised from birth by the state, detached from all bonds to kith and kin, and with no sense of tradition, accumulated social capital, or ancestry. As far as I know no example of a nationless state, populated entirely by individuals who have no historical or contemporary sense of themselves or fellow feeling for other members of their historically shaped kind, has ever existed. As we shall see (below) certain theoretical varieties of secular cosmopolitan individualism (conceptualizing a world or some region of the world—Europe, for example—as a state without nations populated by deracinated individuals who are uniformly governed by means of some transnational rule of law) invite us to push our imagination (it would be Herder's nightmare) in that extreme anticommunitarian civic republican direction.

In contrast, there are real instances of the multistate nation (for example, the states of East Pakistan and West Pakistan, if one views the Sunni Muslims of British Imperial India as a single nation; or the nationally akin but politically distinct states of East Germany and West Germany). If one defines the boundaries of the nation broadly enough (for example, if Scandinavia is a nation), then there are many instances of the multistate nation. The Scandinavian nation, for example (if there is such a nation), manifests its historical and cultural heritage and way of life by means of several states (Sweden, Denmark, and Norway).

And if whole “civilizations” (for example, Western Christendom, the Muslim World, sub-Saharan Africa) are ever really and credibly thought of as “nations,” as Samuel Huntington has proposed,<sup>18</sup> then again there will be many cases of the multistate nation. Nevertheless, in such cases, it seems likely that over time the relevant and operative national identity will lead either to a unification of the multistates (as with the case of the unification of the two German states, which is something that has not happened within Western Christendom, sub-Saharan Africa, or the Muslim World, perhaps because national identities do not attach themselves to whole civilizations, as nominally defined by history textbooks or studies of cultural diffusion); or alternatively will lead to the political division of such postulated but merely nominal national identities (as in the case of South Asian Sunni Muslims, where a Bengali language based and Northeast coast of India regional Muslim national identity led to the formation of the independent state of Bangladesh and separation from Pakistan). The case of Scandinavians is also instructive, where Danes, Swedes, and Norwegians think of themselves as three nations not one, and do not seem inclined to unify their states or their languages, even as they abstractly recognize a broad shared cultural kinship that in principle differentiates all three of them from the Finns, the Dutch, the Flemish, the Russians, and the Germans.

### **Nation (Based)-States v. State (Based)-Nations Defined**

Having distinguished the idea of a nation from the idea of a state (and briefly acknowledged the historical pervasiveness of multinational states and the arguably unstable existence of multistate nations), it becomes possible to define and identify two other forms of political community—the nation-state (henceforth the nation [based]-state) and the state-nation (henceforth the state [based]-nation), both of which are of great significance in the modern world and may well be modern creations. I use the phrase “nation (based)-state” to denote mononational states—that is to say, states that originate out of a prior national identity and use their legislative authority and judicial and police/military powers to promote the beliefs, values, and social practices associated with that national identity; and where the territory controlled by the sovereign political entity is governed as though it were a special preserve, sanctuary, or homeland for members of some single nation (Denmark for the Danes, Bulgaria for the Bul-

gars, Armenia for the Armenians, Turkey for the Turks, Kurdistan for the Kurds, Palestine for the Palestinians, Israel for the Jews, a sovereign Navaho reservation for the Navahos).

In such cases political citizenship tends to be associated with a particular national identity, defined Herder-like “by a shared heritage, which usually includes a common language, a common faith and a common ethnic ancestry,” as the intellectual historian Jerry Z. Muller has put the matter in his discussion of the power and emergence of ethnonationalism as a peculiarly modern force.<sup>19</sup> Muller makes the telling historical point: “Today, people tend to take the nation-state for granted as the natural form of political association and regard empires as anomalies. But over the broad sweep of recorded history, the opposite is closer to the truth. Most peoples at most times have lived in empires [multinational states], with the nation-state the exception rather than the rule.” In the light of Muller’s historical observation it is tempting to imagine that the future shape of the New World Order might amount to the return of empire on a global scale, albeit a liberal empire that accommodates itself to the reality of robust cultural pluralism and endorses the Herder-like principle that the self-development of individuals and the liberty of peoples to flourish and promote their distinctive ways of life go hand in hand. Much more will be said later in the essay about this augury.

In any case, whatever the facts might be about the scope of its distribution and durability over time and territory, the modern nation (based)-state, as I will use the phrase, is, by definition, mononational in its conception of itself. It is crucial to emphasize that this does not necessarily imply that the actual populations of nation (based)-states are in fact perfectly homogeneous with respect to primordial characteristics such as ethnicity, race, religion, language, or cultural heritage. Michael Walzer makes the relevant point clearly when he writes: “Homogeneity is rare, if not nonexistent, in the world today. [To call a state a nation-state] . . . means only that a single dominant group organizes the common life in a way that reflects its own history and culture, and, if things go as intended, carries the history forward and sustains the culture. It is these intentions that determine the character of public education, the symbols and ceremonies of public life, the state calendar and the holidays it enjoins. Among histories and cultures, the nation-state is not neutral; its political apparatus is an engine for national reproduction.”<sup>20</sup>

It is just as crucial to emphasize that this mononational concept of the state is the ideal or object of desire for so-called ethnonationalistic movements, whose overriding impulse is to form a political community based on a primordial sense of fellow feeling in which nation, state, and territory coincide. In such instances the state is the instrument of the nation and has as one of its main purposes the furthering of the development (moral, spiritual, social, and economic) of a "people." This was the case in the original formation of nation (based)-states such as Denmark, Italy, Greece, France, Croatia, or Israel—each was created when the members of some particular nation (real or imagined) not only conceptualized themselves as an in-group or faction (based on common descent, religion, culture, ethnicity, race, or language) but also sought sovereignty and independence from the governing body of some preexisting multinational state.

There are many nations throughout the world today living without states of their own, from Francophiles in Canada to Kurds in Iraq or Turkey to Albanian Muslims in Serbia to Catalans and Basques in Spain to Palestinians on the West Bank to the Flemish in Belgium to various Native American Indian nations in the United States and Canada, whose members are motivated by an ethnonational impulse and its nation-state ideal. In each instance members of these nations seek to establish a political community ultimately grounded on a personal trust and social bond promoting sense of fellow feeling for members of some real or imagined primordial self-defining "kind."

Indeed, as noted earlier, it has not gone unnoticed that the rise of what is sometimes called "the modern state system" is largely the story of the demise of multinational states or empires. The ascendancy of the modern nation (based)-state is a complex (and often violent) story about the separation (or depending on where you stand the "liberation" or "uplifting") of nations or peoples by means of migration, succession, deportation, civil war, genocide, or the incorporation of smaller nations and peoples into some relatively larger and homogenizing national "mainstream" by means of missionary efforts and forced or voluntary conversion, cooptation, or assimilation.<sup>21</sup> The latter processes—conversion, cooptation, and assimilation—are typically motivated by the personal desire of members of minority nations to acquire the mainstream cultural capital (associated with the dominant national group) necessary for material success, upward mobility, and social prestige in the context of some

particular nation (based)-state. Overall, and in one way or another, whether voluntary or coerced, whether accomplished peacefully or not, a process that in its effects looks very much like cultural customs control and “ethnic cleansing” has gone hand in hand with the formation of the modern nation-state. As the old and dismal observation goes, the modern nation-state is “born in sin.”

Jerry Muller argues that ethnonationalism (the impulse to form nation [based]-states) is not only a deep feature of European modernity but is a concomitant of the spread of modernity on a global scale.<sup>22</sup> With regard to Europe per se he even suggests that the forty years of European stability after World War II and prior to the end of the Cold War was due in some measure to the success of various ethnonational movements. It was a peace forged between nation (based)-states and worked out over hundreds of years, and at a very great price, by means of all the processes noted above—of separation, civil conflict, and war (including World War II), and forced and voluntary conversion or assimilation. It was a peace that resulted from rewriting territorial borders and redistributing or relocating the populations of different nations so as to create temporarily stable political boundaries between nation (based)-states. With regard to the last hundred or so years Muller observes that “a survey would show that whereas in 1900 there were many states in Europe without a single overwhelming dominant nationality, by 2007 there were only two, and one of those, Belgium, was close to breaking up. Aside from Switzerland, in other words—where the domestic ethnic balance of power is protected by strict citizenship laws—in Europe the ‘separatist project’ has not so much vanished as triumphed.”<sup>23</sup>

### **Keeping Cultural and Political Identities Separate: The American Exception as a Multinational State (Based)-Nation and Not an Anglo-Protestant Nation (Based)-State**

Muller avers that the United States of America may be an exception to the rule (so far) and that Americans are in possession of an alternative conception of nationality, one apparently more in keeping with the spirit of a multinational state, although one that is not governed like an empire. It is a conception of the sort I believe Clifford Geertz had in mind when he challenged political philosophers, anthropologists, and globalization theorists to creatively reconcile robust

cultural pluralism and dedicated political liberalism and have the courage to apply their political theories globally to our “differenced world.”

The American exception is historically unusual indeed, despite the obvious and consequential failures of the original founding political community with respect to the many (indigenous) Indian and (imported) African nations of North America;<sup>24</sup> and it invites the postulation of a form of political association that is a state (based)-nation rather than a nation (based)-state. As noted earlier a nation (based)-state (such as Israel or Serbia or perhaps one day Chechnya, Quebec, Kurdistan, or Pashtunistan) is a readily identifiable and previously existing nation (a group whose members feel bound to each other through real and imagined primary ancestral ties and a shared cultural heritage) that manifests itself (expresses and perpetuates its particular way of life) in the form and through the powers of a state.

In the case of a state (based)-nation the opposite is more nearly true. A state (based)-nation is a political community where the state gives birth to a nation and provides the design for a new communal identity. Thus, in the case of the state (based)-nation, national identity (and associated feelings of common ancestry, shared heritage, and even fellow feeling) is largely a matter of devotion to the basic constitutional principles that made possible the formation of the state in the first place or originally. In political communities of that type (state [based]-nations), the political community becomes an additional or supplemental source of national identity; and thus the founding political moments, the founding political “fathers,” and the founding political contract or constitution become highly salient symbols; and the celebration and reiteration of one’s commitment to the state and especially its basic constitutive political principles becomes one of the central messages of public communal ritual (for example, the never-ending election season in the United States). In political communities of that type (state [based]-nations), the most widely shared national heritage that is relevant to personal identity formation (for example, to American national identity) is defined by the constitutional principles underlying the founding of the political community, and the only common ancestry that really matters (for example, when it comes to being part of the American nation) is not ethnic, racial, or religious ancestry but rather a shared sense of fictive or adoptive kinship with the heroic or even mythic progenitors and protectors of the values and principles constitutive of the state.

The recent election of U.S. president Barack Hussein Obama (whose broad appeal to American voters was not unrelated to the fact that from the point of view of almost every primordial ancestral characteristic—race, religion, ethnicity—he is the personification of a hybrid identity and of complex mixed roots) is not only the apotheosis of this state (based)-nation conception of American national identity, but also a reminder to the world (and to many American citizens as well) that America is not an (Anglo-Protestant) nation (based)-state, despite the ethnic, religious, and racial ancestry of its founders. Indeed, the concept of the state (based)-nation helps us understand the only sensible sense in which Irish, Italian, and Mexican Catholics, Eastern European Jews, South Asian Hindus, Bosnian Muslims, and a politician who is the son of a black Muslim man from the Luo people of Western Kenya can truthfully be said to descend from and embrace the Pilgrims, or the white Protestant “founding fathers” who wrote the charter for the American state, as their own ancestors.

This is not to deny the existence and persistence of an alternative conception, voicing and defending the view that the United States of America is and ought to be an Anglo-Protestant nation (based)-state. That conception interprets the American form of political governance as exceptional because it is thought to be imbued with the unique or at least distinctive features of one or more of the primordial Anglo-Protestant founding communities and their distinctive cultural heritages (although, as David Fischer has argued in his monumental book *Albion's Seed*, those early Anglo-Protestant communities were strikingly different from each other in their beliefs, values, and social practices). According to that ethnonational conception the well-being of the American state is dependent upon retention of an Anglo-Protestant majority in the population. That interpretation is sometimes linked to the assumption that the relevant Anglo-Protestant cultural heritage cannot be easily exported to other peoples or other lands.<sup>25</sup>

That claim about the reason for the supposed nonexportability of the U.S. form of national identity (binding it to the cultural particularity of Anglo-Protestant primordial communities) should not be confused with the more general debate about whether the shape of American national identity should be taken as a global model of success for all political communities. It is quite possible that the American model does not travel well, but for historical reasons other than its cultural origins among Anglo-Protestant settlers. The general ques-

tion of whether there is one ideal form of the state and whether it will flower if transplanted in diverse climes was famously raised and answered in the negative by Montesquieu in the eighteenth century and has been debated ever since, although as the political philosopher Michael Walzer has noted in his 1990 Tanner Lecture on Human Values, the question of whether one particular nation (for example, the ancient Jews ) can be, or should be, “a light” unto all nations has a very long history.<sup>26</sup>

In recent years, especially in connection with the war in Iraq, U.S. foreign policy has been influenced by a positive answer to that general question. For example, President George W. Bush speaking on January 29, 2002, with evangelical zeal on the occasion of his first State of the Union Address to Congress and the Nation after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, delivered one of his earliest justifications for the project of global nation-building and the spread of the ideal form of the state as a moral crusade. He spoke with intimations of the preemptive use of American military and economic force to promote universal human progress by transplanting one particular form of governance widely, on the assumption that the ideal form of the state is transferable to all cultural groups or nations: “America will lead by defending liberty and justice because they are right and true and unchanging for all people everywhere,” President Bush declared. “No nation owns these aspirations and no nation is exempt from them. We have no intention of imposing our culture, but America will always stand firm for the non-negotiable demands of human dignity, the rule of law, limits on the power of the state, respect for women, private property, free speech, equal justice and religious tolerance.”

By way of contrast, when understood as a state (based)-nation rather than a nation (based)- state, U.S. national identity is essentially defined by an attachment to the liberal democratic constitutional principles underlying the founding of its sovereign governing body, and not by ethnic, racial, or religious ancestry. And, quite ironically, and remarkably, it is precisely because the American nation per se is state-based in origin and identity and (is thus) defined by a shared faith in those constitutional principles, the United States ends up being a rather special type of multinational state: one in which Americans are able to retain a sense of national American identity as a political community even as (with varying degrees of conviction and comfort) they routinely employ those liberal democratic principles (for example, freedom of association, religion,

and speech) to make private, factional, separatist, or “splintering” choices in which they selectively express solidarity and affiliate with members of their own particular ethnic, racial, religious, or cultural group (for example, in marriage, residential location, occupational choice, or social life), and thereby perpetuate the wide range of national heritages distinctive of the rather diverse (real or imagined) primordial groups residing within the borders of the land. According to this state-based conception of American national identity, the territory under the sovereign political authority of the U.S. government is not the national homeland of any particular ethnic, racial, religious, or cultural group (including Anglo-Protestants), but is rather a place where the members of each and every particular ethnic, religious, racial, and cultural group (including Anglo-Protestants) is at liberty and have the space to feel at home.

The concept of a state (based)-nation described above is similar to the notion of “constitutional patriotism” as discussed by some political theorists, notably by Jan-Werner Muller.<sup>27</sup> The concept is often applied to “Europe” (the EU) as an evolving political community, although it remains to be seen whether the European state (based)-national identity formation project and the attempt to weaken or downplay nation (based)-state identities will ultimately be successful. Unlike in the case of the American exception, where the historical origin of the state went hand in hand with the formation of a state (based)-national identity, there are significant ethnonational voices within the various already standing and long ago established nation (based)-states of Europe (for example, in Ireland, Denmark, or Norway) who continue to have serious doubts about the desirability of the EU constitutional patriotism project. The issue of Turkish entry may further heighten ethnonational resistance to the extension of fellow-feeling at the inclusive transnational level of European national identity. Those critical of the European constitutional patriotism project might well disparage it as a New World American transplant of a state (based)-national identity into the Old World soil of nation (based)-states. On the other hand, the experiment is didactic and should be useful in learning how best to forge and make viable a state (based)-national identity that is liberal and pluralistic at the same time and does not provoke a rebellion among diverse nation-based groups who are concerned to retain control over and remain at home in their distinctive traditions and with their language and local way of life.

With regard to New World soil, in effect, the political liberalism that has

been the blueprint for American state (based)-nationalism makes it possible for the United States to have a unifying national identity and, at the same time, to remain a pluralistic multinational state in its own historical memory and collective self-conception (“a land of immigrants” or, somewhat more metaphorically, “a world-federation in miniature”).<sup>28</sup> The blueprint contains instructions that make it possible for every American (including Anglo Protestant-Americans) to be a hyphenated American, in a way that is not really possible in a nation(based)-state such as Denmark or Norway or Saudi Arabia; in Norway, for example, the dominant indigenous white Lutheran population thinks of itself as Norwegian pure and simple, and not in hyphenated terms as one group of Norwegians among many. This plural conception of hyphenated identities for members of all state-based national groups was probably missing even in the Ottoman Empire, where the cultural pluralism was robust but nothing like a widely shared state (based)-national Ottoman identity and sense of a common political community ever formed (except perhaps among the sultan and the ruling elite, who were themselves ethnically diverse, and socially diverse—many were former slaves—in their origins).<sup>29</sup> Indeed, it is precisely because American national identity permits everyone the expressive liberty (in both private and public spaces) to be a hyphenated American, and hence permits every American to belong to more than just the American state (based)-nation, that what it means to be an American can be a unifying identity and has patriotic appeal.<sup>30</sup>

The following historical example from a note of appreciation, dated September 1, 1820, sent by Thomas Jefferson to Rabbi Jacob de la Motta, is illustrative of this exceptional (and somewhat ironic) way of thinking about a unifying national identity, and its appeal. Jefferson was in receipt of a copy of the rabbi's sermon, delivered on the occasion of the consecration of the first synagogue in Savannah, Georgia. In his response he wrote, “Thomas Jefferson returns his thanks to Dr. de la Motta for the eloquent discourses on the Consecration of the Synagogue of Savannah which he has been so kind as to send him. It excites in him the gratifying reflection that his own country has been the first to prove to the world two truths, the most salutary to human society, that man can govern himself, and that religious freedom is the most effectual anodyne against religious dissension: the maxim of civil government being reversed in that of religion, where its true form is ‘divided we stand, united we fall.’”<sup>31</sup>

More recently, Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas, a political liberal,

described the core defining feature of American national identity as follows: “The melting pot<sup>[32]</sup> is not designed to homogenize people, making them uniform in consistency. The melting pot as I understand it is a figure of speech that depicts the wide diversities tolerated by the First Amendment under one flag.”<sup>33</sup> That depiction of a distinctive type of national identity associated with the American experience (and symbolized by its flag) is one with regard to which Clifford Geertz surely would have felt considerable sympathy, although it is not out of the question (here I am just speculating) that Geertz might have wondered (as I do) about alternative interpretations of the actual historical use of “the melting pot” as a figure of speech for American national identity—for example, as a “meltdown” of diverse peoples (a metaphor for cultural assimilation that might be quite suitable as an expression of national identity in a nation [based]-state such as Denmark) rather than as a large pot with plenty of space for the distinctive heritages of many primordial groups (a metaphor for cultural and religious freedom that, as Justice Douglas suggests, is suitable as an expression of national identity in a state [based]-nation such as the United States).

### **Predicting the Shape of the New World Order<sup>34</sup>**

Contemporary prophecies about the future of the New World Order are usually predictions about the consequences of a process called “globalization” for human betterment and for the future of the various nations, nation (based)-states and multinational states (including empires) of the world. Typically, in discussions of globalization, the idea of human betterment is equated (somewhat narrowly in the spirit of economics) with global increases in aggregate human wealth and with the worldwide establishment of wealth-producing efficiencies in the division of expertise and labor across and within nations and states.<sup>35</sup> Among globalization theorists questions about the consequences of globalization for the future of the existing nations of the world are usually about their capacity to reproduce themselves and perpetuate their cultural heritage and way of life. Questions about the future of the existing states of the world are usually about the manner and degree to which such states will, or should be allowed to, retain their sovereignty and govern their citizens free of external interference or international regulation.

The process itself, called globalization, is an accordion-like concept. There

are both narrow and expansive conceptions of the character of globalization. The predicted consequences of the process for nations and states, and hence for the shape of the New World Order, vary accordingly.

### **Globalization in the New World Order**

The narrow definition of globalization refers to the linking of the world's local economies (for example, free trade and market exchange bringing together members of distinct nations and states) with the aim of promoting overall human betterment. This narrow "free trade and exchange" conception of globalization is quite compatible with the liberty of peoples to carry forward and socially reproduce their distinctive way of life, and to do so by means of primordial bonds of community based on ancestry, ethnicity, race, religion, or culture. Despite Voltaire's ironic Enlightenment contempt for religion and cultural tradition, one of his caricatures might be read to suggest that the basic pursuit of wealth in a free marketplace (in his example, in the London Exchange in the early days of modern capitalism) actually promotes attitudes of harmonious sufferance between ideologically antagonistic and self-perpetuating Herder-like cultural communities (or nations).

To wit, Voltaire wrote: "Although the Episcopalian and the Presbyterian are the two main sects in Great Britain, all the others are welcome and live quite well together, while most of their preachers detest each other with about as much cordiality as a Jansenist damns a Jesuit. Come into the London Exchange, a place more respectable than many a court. You will see assembled representatives of every nation for the benefit of mankind. Here the Jew, the Mohametan and the Christian deal with one another as if they were of the same religion, and reserve the name "infidel" for those who go bankrupt. Here the Presbyterian puts his trust in the Anabaptist, and the Anglican accepts the Quaker's promissory note. Upon leaving these peaceful and free assemblies, one goes to the synagogue, the other for a drink; yet another goes to have himself baptized in a large tub in the name of the Father through the Son to the Holy Ghost; another has his son's foreskin cut off, and over the infant he has muttered some Hebrew words that he doesn't understand at all: Some others go to their church to await divine inspiration with their hat on their head. And all are content."<sup>36</sup>

In other words, limited free trade at the borders or frontiers where mem-

bers of different groups make contact with each other and mutually benefit from the exchange because of each other's comparative advantages (the logic of comparative advantage is the core logic of narrow definitions of globalization) is not incompatible with a stable equilibrium of ideological differences among "primordial" groups.

Hidden, however, within the apparently narrow definition of globalization is a more expansive idea of the various ways that nations and states ought to transform their economies, politics, ideologies, and loyalties if they want to be recognized or accepted as players in an aggregate wealth-producing global capitalist economy. Thus, while the narrow idea of globalization begins with open entry to the market, the elimination of tariffs, and the free trade of material goods across borders, it readily expands also to include the free flow of capital and labor. This more expansive conception of globalization goes beyond contact at the borders (or in the commodities exchange) and calls for a much deeper penetration into the social and cultural hearts of the various free trading "primordial" groups.

Indeed, guided by the aim of expanding free markets and keeping them efficient in their wealth-production capacity a far-flung economic, legal, and political order gets imagined by expansive globalization theorists. It consists of international legislative and regulatory organizations (the IMF, the World Bank, the WTO, perhaps a World Court, or even a World Parliament with a global constitution), corporations with a global reach managed and staffed by citizens from diverse nations and states, and states whose borders have been opened to capital, goods, and labor from all over the world. According to this normative vision of a "neoliberal" or "borderless" capitalism, goods, capital, and labor ought to be freely marketed on a worldwide scale for the sake of global prosperity. In the minds of those who adopt such a perspective, nation (based)-states, ancestral homelands, and bonds of solidarity based on religion, ethnicity, race, language, or shared cultural heritage are potential barriers to the globalization project, especially if they result in restrictions on residence, affiliation, and trade, or lead to economically costly preferences for in-group over out-group members (for example, buying the same product, or even an inferior version of the product, at a higher price, if it is locally produced or produced by in-group members); which is one reason liberal globalization theorists sometimes disparage ethnonationalism as separatist, illiberal, and retrograde.

There is an even more expansive idea of globalization. Here the concept is extended to reach beyond just the removal of all barriers to trade, foreign investment, and the opening of borders to migrant labor. The idea gets linked to demands for “structural adjustments” of lagging economies and even for moral adjustments in the content of lagging cultural heritages as well. The structural adjustments usually begin with the firing of an overemployed civil service and the reorganization of economic life to reduce imports and increase exports (ironically, in many countries this means promoting cultural tourism, and putting the local cultural heritage on commercial display, since there is little else to export), all with the aim of accumulating foreign exchange that can then be invested in the pursuit of further wealth. This is ironic, of course, because the local cultural traditions that are put on display for the sake of attracting tourists and accumulating foreign financial capital are the very cultural traditions that are often viewed as backward, superstitious, or primitive by Westernized elites in the less wealthy countries of the world; yet from the point of view of identifying local traditions that enhance the aggregate wealth-production project they are indeed a form of “cultural capital,” even if their value is dependent on the curiosity of, and desire for travel, adventure, and exotic experiences by, visitors from the most wealthy countries of the world.

There may also be structural adjustments in the direction of Western ways of running banks, enforcing contracts, paying off debts, and settling disputes. Transparency and the elimination of corruption are key objectives in this structural adjustment process. Ultimately the ideal is to model your economy and your political community (including your legal institutions) following the example of the richest countries in the Western world. Such adjustments may be entered into voluntarily so to encourage foreign investment, or they may be mandated (for example, by the World Bank) as necessary conditions for securing low-interest loans.

In its broadest form globalization thus ceases to be just an economic concept with political and legal entanglements and consequences and comes to imply the free flow of everything, including cultural heritage. Typically, however, the flows turn out to be asymmetrical (because when it comes to relations between nations' and states' power, prestige and wealth are asymmetrical); and, in practice and in fact, the international or global system calls for greater linguistic, social, cultural, aesthetic, and intellectual adjustments for some players than for

others (so that, for example, if English becomes the language of global capitalism the adjustments are far easier for the cosmopolitan elites of former British colonies, including the citizens of the United States and Canada).

When fully expanded the idea of globalization becomes a somewhat immodest hypothesis about human nature and an imperial call for “enlightened” moral interventions into other ways of life in order to free them of their supposedly barbaric, superstitious, or irrational (that is, economically counterproductive) cultural heritages. This unabashed and fully expanded globalization hypothesis makes three related claims: (1) that for the sake of human betterment (that is, aggregate wealth accumulation) Westernlike aspirations, tastes, and ideas about what is true, good, beautiful, and efficient are objectively the best aspirations, tastes, and ideas in the world; (2) that Westernlike aspirations, tastes, and ideas will be fired up or freed up by economic globalization and the pursuit of wealth; and (3) that the world will/already has or ought to become Westernized so as to become maximally rich.

Westernlike aspirations include the desire for liberal democracy, free enterprise, private property, autonomy, individualism, equality, and the protection of natural or universal rights (the contemporary human rights movement is in many ways an extension of an expansive globalization movement). Westernlike ideas include the particular conceptions of gender identity, sexuality, a “normal” body, work, reproductive health, and family life embraced by liberal men and women in the United States today. They include a heavy dose of the “Protestant Ethic” (now viewed as a universal moral ideal in the age of globalization), which suggests that more is better and that you are not really good if you are not really rich. Westernlike ideas also include the fundamentally liberal notion that all social distinctions based on primordial collective identities (ethnicity, religion, gender) are invidious. They include as well the notion that individuals should transcend their tradition-bound commitments and experience the quality of their lives solely in secular and ecumenical terms—for example, as measured by health, wealth, or years of life. Westernlike tastes include a preference for CNN, VISA cards, the Internet, iphones, and, of course, English as the language of global capitalism. That expansive conception of globalization thus imagines a very deep penetration into the social, legal, and cultural corpus of any aggregate human wealth-producing nation playing in the globally integrated economic game.

Here one once again comes face to face with Geertz's challenge. Is aggregate human wealth production compatible with the preservation of primordial communities and the continuation of their ways of life? Can the processes of economic integration and cultural division be reconciled, and if so how? What shape will the New World Order assume? Here we move into the realm of political and cultural prophesy.

### **Prophecy One: The Expansive View: Globalizing the Western Civilization Ideal**

November 9, 1989, is the day the Berlin Wall came tumbling down and the Cold War balance of power shifted dramatically in favor of the world's leading example of a multinational state (based)-nation, the United States. If you had kept your ear to the ground in those heady days you would have repeatedly heard one particular kind of prophecy about the shape of the New World Order that was expected to emerge to replace the old tripartite "First World" (capitalist world)/"Second World" (communist world)/"Third World" (underdeveloped world) classification of nations and states. It was prophecy premised on an expansive view of globalization.

The prediction went like this: "What we may be witnessing is not just the end of the Cold War, or the passing of a particular period of post-war history, but the end of history as such: that is, the end point of mankind's ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government."<sup>37</sup> That was perhaps the most common augury about the New World Order during the 1990s, the "Washington consensus," and it remains a very popular expectation today, even as current world tensions between "West" and "East" and between various liberal democratic states and more autocratic or theocratic states have led a political realist such as Robert Kagan to title his recent book *The Return of History and the End of Dreams*.<sup>38</sup>

For many prognosticators, especially those who were either triumphant Americans or foreign admirers of the United States, that type of "the West is best and is going to take over the world" augury was really a thinly veiled expression of their assumption that the American way of life is best and should, and will, be universalized. The notion that we had possibly reached "an end point to mankind's ideological evolution" expressed their expectation of a global con-

vergence of beliefs, values, and social practices in the direction of the American standard. And that expectation condensed and articulated a view dating to at least such eighteenth-century Enlightenment figures as Voltaire and Condorcet that the history of the world marches in the direction of an ideal universal civilization; and that at any moment one nation-state (perhaps England in the nineteenth century), and then another (perhaps America in the second half of the twentieth century), comes closest to realizing that progressive goal (“end”) of history.<sup>39</sup>

In its most triumphal form the prediction amounted to the claim that American civilization is the greatest flowering or most fully realized expression of the only true global civilization; and that American cultural designs for social, political, legal, economic, and family life (and for gender equality and the raising and education of children as citizens in a liberal polity) are so superior that they will be recognized as such and will diffuse over the entire globe. In some (slightly less conclusive) versions of the triumphal forecast the global diffusion of the American way of life gets pictured as a transitional or penultimate stage in the development of an advanced global political community uniting a world of liberated individuals (liberated from all primordial bonds, constraints, and attachments) under a sovereign global successor regime for the enforcement of universal human rights that will then truly signal the end of history and the apotheosis of the Western Enlightenment. The augury thus gives expression to a long-standing imperial liberal ideal: the dream of cosmopolitan citizenship without parochial nation-based loyalties in a world governed by universal or uniform laws, norms, and institutions enforced by a sovereign nationless political entity.

In a sense this is the American state (based)-nation conception of national identity projected onto a global scale, but without the hyphens connecting a person to other more primordial identities. It is an ecumenical (and antiparochial) ideal that liberal secular humanists and many human rights activists have found appealing and associate with the very idea of modernity. Perhaps it is a vision of that sort that inspires the very idea of “law without nations.” Perhaps it is the vision that inspired John Lennon, the song writer and former “Beatle,” to write his famous utopian ballet “Imagine,” the lyrics of which might well have precipitated a nightmare in the dream life of Johann Herder. The tune of the song can’t be sung in a written essay (although it is very appealing—and

catching), but notice the words in the song, in which John Lennon imagines, with approbation, that there are no countries, no religion, and nothing to live and die for.<sup>40</sup>

### **Narratives of the Enlightenment: Three Revealing Conferences**

Here I would like to pause for a moment to more concretely illustrate the character of various “The West Is Best and Will Take Over the World” prognostications. For starters consider the events at two World Bank meetings I attended toward the end of the last millennium, the first called “Culture Counts” (held in October 1999) and the second on the topic of gender and justice in Africa (held in May 2000).<sup>41</sup>

“Culture Counts” was a large international gathering held in Florence, Italy. It included talks by ministers of finance or culture or education from around the globe, and the president of the World Bank. Hillary Clinton was on the program. But the real highlight was the plenary academic session, which featured a keynote address by a prominent American economic historian. Given that the millennium was fast approaching, he reported on the last thousand years of what he presumed to be the universal race among nations to be successful (by which he meant to become as rich as possible); and he explained why the primordial national inheritance (read “cultural inheritance”) of a people makes all the difference for whether a territory is rich or poor. China was probably leading the race a thousand years ago, he supposed, but they inherited too many xenophobic beliefs from their ancestors and didn’t want to trade with outsiders. So the Chinese fell behind and didn’t get a ship to the Atlantic Ocean until well into the nineteenth century.

The keynote speaker then took the audience on an economic and cultural tour of the rest of the world. Culture counts everywhere, he said. In Latin America they have this attitude called *machismo*; so Latin men think they are little princes and don’t want to work. In Africa, okay, yes, the physical environment is not very good, but they fight with each other all the time and they beat their wives. And then there is Southern Europe and Catholicism. The Catholic Church turned against Galileo and science. So Southern Europeans fell into ignorance and superstition. But now we have reached the year 2000. Look

around! North Americans and Northern Europeans have won the race, and for good cultural reasons, the American exclaimed. Even before he could fully deliver his take-home message (Get with the progressive program: Westernize your culture, model yourself after us, or remain poor!) the Chinese delegate to the meeting had walked out of the room.

The second meeting, on gender and justice in Africa, was held at World Bank central in Washington, DC, with occasional satellite links to audiences in six African countries. A prominent Western liberal feminist, who believed that the ideal of progressive social evolution and the end of history requires the sisters of the world to transcend their primordial ethnic group identities and religious and national attachments and unite in opposition to a loathsome and oppressive universal patriarchy, delivered the following message to a predominately African female audience. Stop complaining about colonialism, she said. African traditions and customs were bad for women long before colonialism came along. She then invoked a sensational literary account of wife beating. As it turned out, the “sisters” in the audience were mainly united in opposition to what they perceived as the speaker’s Anglo-Protestant neocolonial attitudes, and all-too-familiar and high-minded first world missionary zeal. They certainly had some complaints about their men. But they still viewed them as members of the family and generally felt at home with them in their distinctive national traditions. And they actually thought African females were pretty powerful, in their own way.

But the meeting that was most revealing of the type of story I have in mind—of history ending with the apotheosis of the beliefs, values, and practices of a universal Western civilization—was the one held in April of 1999 at the house of the American Academy in Cambridge, sponsored by Harvard University’s Academy for International and Area studies, and organized by Lawrence Harrison and Samuel Huntington. A notable theme at that meeting was the general equation of progress and goodness with Anglo-Protestant values. One of the organizers suggested that successful Protestant missionary efforts in Latin America might enhance economic growth, with the implication that the more Catholics who are converted to Northern European ways the better. Others argued that Jews and overseas Chinese are good for the economy too, especially if they behave like Protestants. Or at least subscribe to some version of the Prot-

stant ethical law that only those who accumulate wealth have been chosen by God to be saved.

The most dominant theme of the meeting, however, was the emphasis on progressive national development, so as to make the world a better place. Hence there was a good deal of discussion of what might be called the imperial Anglo-Protestant civilizing project. The project is aimed at establishing that the West (or at least its Northern-most sectors) is best, and at improving the rest of the world through exposure to Northern European and American values, beliefs, and customs. It would appear to be a sign of the times that the conference publication (a book called *Culture Matters: How Values Shape Human Progress*) became a media event. The book was reviewed in the *Wall Street Journal* and *Time* magazine and discussed in the *New York Times* and the *Atlantic Monthly*. For a short time it was one of the top 800 best-selling books at Amazon.com, a stunning achievement for an edited academic volume.

I was invited to the "Culture Matters" conference to fill the role of a designated skeptic. And to some extent I played that part. But there were other, quite unanticipated thoughts on my mind during those days in the house of the American Academy. I found myself asking, Is this how the famous Franz Boas (the founder of American anthropology) and other robust cultural pluralists felt one hundred years ago debating with liberal progressive European Enlightenment inspired cultural evolutionary theorists in an earlier heyday of Western initiated globalization (roughly 1870 to 1914)? I found myself wondering, What happened to the robust cultural pluralism message of Anthropology 101? In other words, I came face to face with the utter failure of my own discipline of anthropology to accomplish its most basic mission, to raise the awareness of social scientists, policy analysts, and the public at large to the virtue in the diversity of nations and to the hazards of any universal civilization ideal, whether it is Christian, Muslim, or secular in its ideological origins. And I found myself acutely aware of the responsibility of anthropologists, political philosophers, and globalization theorists to take up Geertz's challenge and once again develop and promote a conception of the relationship between a cultural community and a political community that might be useful in minimizing some of the risks associated with the problem of "primordial" group differences and with multinational life in a global and migratory world.

## **Prophecy Two: The Nation (Based)-State Model Projected on a Global Scale: Civilizations Are Local, Not Universal**

As far as I know the true connection between globalization narrowly conceived (as free trade) and globalization expansively conceived (Western values, culture, and institutions taking over the world) has yet to be firmly established. It is quite possible that other cultures and civilizations do not need to become just like the United States to materially benefit from participation in an emergent narrowly conceptualized global economy. Modern technologies (for example, television, cell phones, computers, weapons) and economic institutions (for example, private property) seem to have effectively served many interests, including the interests of primordial communitarians and religious fundamentalists all over the world.<sup>42</sup> It is also quite possible that even a genuinely successful narrowly conceived global economy will not emerge, or will fail to sustain itself, or that efforts to expansively globalize values, beliefs, and cultural practices will be effectively resisted (in some cases for very good reasons), or that the world will go to war. That is how the last big push to globalize the world came to an end, with World War I.

And, of course what really happened when the Berlin Wall went tumbling down in 1989 was that the boundaries of the former Soviet multinational empire began to dissolve, just as other empires have from time to time over the course of history splintered, fractured, or given up their sovereignty over one or more of the nations within their territorial realm. Speaking both metaphorically and literally, the flattening of that particular barrier unleashed a process in which diverse ethnic, racial, and religious satellite, vassal, and tributary regions under ethnic Russian hegemony or suzerainty (for example, the various nations in the Balkans and in the former Yugoslavia) began to seek autonomy as self-governing nation (based)-states; and in some instances those ethnonational movements engaged in violent conflict to achieve their aims. The result, which amounted to the construction of new nation-state territorial boundaries defined by culture, ethnicity, language, religion, or race, was not entirely anticipated or properly understood, although, given the role of the ethnonationalist impulse in the historical formation of modern nation-states all over modern Europe, Asia, and Africa, it should have been. Despite the popularity of end of history prognostications in the 1990s and the global projection of a coming

universal Western (more specifically American) civilization, augury turned out to be a very hazardous business, and the past twenty years have proved to be pretty baffling times. The ethnonational impulse is not necessarily pro-American. History has not come to an end, and ideological differences have not disappeared or converged on any single global standard. Instead history seems to be repeating itself, although there is debate about what precisely that recurrence might amount to.

Hence, alongside the prediction of the apotheosis of a universal civilization and the end of national differences one finds the opposite augury. It predicts the apotheosis of robust cultural pluralism and the triumph of the ethnonationalist separatist project not only in Europe (where as Muller argued it has already triumphed) but on a global scale; with ideological differences expressed not just at the level of nation-states but also at the more macrolevel of regional civilizations. The second augury thus envisions the return (or continuation) of an ideologically divided world partitioned into either regional civilizations or perhaps individual nation (based)-states that compete and cooperate with each other while retaining their distinct cultural identities and corresponding forms of political organization (democratic, oligarchic, monarchic; liberal, autocratic, theocratic). It is a model of a robust, culturally plural international system devoid of any (domestically) multinational states; in other words, it envisions cultural diversity across states (or regions) and cultural homogeneity within states (or regions).

Not surprisingly ethnonationalists love this image of the New World Order. In the 1970s I had a Sudanese student who did his Ph.D. on attitudes toward modernization among African graduate students at the University of Chicago, using a beliefs and values questionnaire inspired by the modernization research of the sociologist Alex Inkeles. The Sudanese student discovered that the "materialism" factor in his questionnaire was orthogonal to the "individualism" factor; one could value wealth accumulation without giving up one's primordial attachments or commitments and loyalty to the tribe. The Saudi Arabian ruling elite liked that message so much they hired him to teach in their universities. Perhaps that is why Samuel Huntington's thesis that the West is unique, but not universal, and that other nation-states and civilizations do not need to become Americans to benefit from globalization and the technologies of the modern world, is so popular in the non-Western world.<sup>43</sup> I think we have to take this

second prophecy very seriously, especially with regard to its expectation that globalization and human betterment can (and will) occur without the necessity of a deep penetration of cultural heritages from the West. Nevertheless, by the lights of this vision, diverse national communities, and even whole civilizations, are encouraged to remain domestically mononational so as to preserve their distinctive traditions while everyone gets a piece of the pie. It is the ideal of “when in Rome do as the Romans do” and “separate but equal” on a global scale.<sup>44</sup>

### **Prophecy 3: The Return of Multinational Empire, But (One Hopes) a Liberal One<sup>45</sup>**

A third and final prophecy concerning the shape of the New World order predicts the return of multinational empire, although this time on a truly global scale. It anticipates the formation of a global multinational empire managed by cosmopolitan elites from all over the globe whose primordial origins are less important than their sense of identity with the liberal constitutional principles underlying the blueprint for the global empire. This augury rejects the common assumption that an empire is an outmoded or premodern form of political community, a thing of the past. It rejects as well the assumption that a postmodern multinational empire must be illiberal in its approach to the development of individuals and “primordial” groups.

Indeed, this third augury begins with the observation that something very much like a global multinational empire (governed by cosmopolitan elites who have detached themselves from their primordial roots) is already in sight on the international scene; what still remains to be worked out is the precise character and scope of the empire’s liberality. The governing elites of this emerging global multinational empire currently seem divided: between those (for example, at the IMF or WTO or at meetings of the twenty wealthiest countries of the world) who are most dedicated to the pursuit of aggregate global wealth, which often means the implementation of a more expansive view of globalization and the liberation of individuals from the inherited traditions of their primordial groups, and those (for example, at the UN or the World Bank or at numerous NGOs) who are most dedicated to the pursuit of some form or another of social equality and global justice; which also often means the implementation of a

more expansive view of globalization and the liberation of individuals from the inherited traditions of their primordial groups.

Nevertheless this third augury predicts that, over time and in order to survive as an economically viable and just empire, the empire will have to accommodate itself to the reality of robust cultural pluralism on a global scale, or else risk dissolving into a balkanized world of hostile nation (based)-states. Assuming that necessity truly is the mother of invention, this means that the ruling elite of the emerging liberal global multinational empire will take steps to protect both the liberty of peoples to perpetuate their way of life and the liberty of individuals to be at home in their own distinct cultural traditions, or exit from them if they so choose. Imagined in this third augury is the evolution of a mixed model of global governance, combining some of the features of the multinational Ottoman Empire (for example, local control by diverse nations over their own parochial customs) with some of the features of state (based)-nationalism in the United States (for example, a state [based] sense of national identity compatible with a hyphenated cosmopolitan identity). It is a model for liberal global governance in which there is plenty of legal room and de facto space for cultural diversity.

As Geertz observed, robust cultural pluralism is not just an obdurate fact of life; it can also be the mother of liberal invention. If the history of human reflection on the experience of living in groups has taught us anything it is that diverse nations based on socially reproduced differences in beliefs, values, and related social practices are unavoidable features of human social life; and that it is both tyrannical and unwise for rulers or governments to try to coercively engineer a multinational society into a uniform shape. Instructive in this regard is James Madison's famous treatise concerning diverse factions in American society (in Federalist 10, originally published on November 22, 1787, in the *Daily Advertiser*): a faction, according to Madison's formulation, being a subgroup of the total population of some macropolitical community, whether in the majority or in the minority, who are bound to each other by some shared interests, values, opinions, passions, or historical identity that sets them in contrast to the interests, values, opinions, passions, or historical identity of some other subgroup.

Consider, for example, Madison's observations about the connection between faction formation and the liberal value of liberty or autonomy. He writes: "There are two methods of removing the causes of faction: the one, by destroy-

ing the liberty which is essential to its existence; the other, by giving to every citizen the same opinions, the same passions, and the same interests. It could never be more truly said than of the first remedy, that it was worse than the disease. Liberty is to faction what air is to fire, an aliment without which it instantly expires. But it could not be less folly to abolish liberty, which is essential to political life, because it nourishes faction, than it would be to wish the annihilation of air, which is essential to animal life, because it imparts to fire its destructive agency. The second expedient is as impracticable as the first would be unwise. As long as the reason of man continues fallible, and he is at liberty to exercise it, different opinions will be formed. As long as the connection subsists between his reason and his self-love, his opinions and his passions will have a reciprocal influence on each other; and the former will be objects to which the latter will attach themselves.”

In other words, in the absence of tyranny and in the presence human fallibility populations will naturally diversify over historical time; distinguishable national identities will form; and in the face of such diversity, whether global or domestic, wise rulers and wise states would do well to embrace Thomas Jefferson’s ironic maxim “Divided We Stand, United We Fall.” They would do well to figure out which dividing lines work (and should be defended) and which don’t, for the sake of peace, order, and human betterment.

Thus, all successful empires must come to terms with a fundamental problem of empire governance—the problem of how to exercise one’s sovereignty under conditions where there are deep disagreements among members of different communities within the empire about how sovereign state power should be exercised (deep enough to motivate collective resistance or civil unrest if the ruling elite try to penetrate too deeply into the way of life of a primordial group). Wise empires are adaptive enough to hold themselves together for long periods of time without relying on brute force and without a devastating loss of life, territory, and treasure. They learn to operate more or less as *de facto* federations; they try to avoid the many costs associated with forcefully imposing one’s will on others. In and through various failed and successful attempts to govern from the top or the center they come to understand some of the virtues of decentralization, indirect rule, and divided sovereignty.<sup>46</sup> In other words they come to appreciate not just the obdurate reality of cultural pluralism but also the liberal ideology of political pluralism.

## The Ideology of Political Pluralism

Allow me to begin to conclude this engagement with “Geertz’s Challenge” by suggesting that political pluralism is a liberal political ideology well suited to robust cultural pluralism and multinational states ranging from the United States to the Ottoman Empire. The ideology is expressed by the political philosopher Hannah Arendt when she described a distinctive feature of the American political community this way: “In contradistinction to the classical principles of the European nation-state that power, like sovereignty, is indivisible, the power structure of this country rests on the principle of division of power and on the conviction that the body politic as a whole is strengthened by the division of power.”<sup>47</sup> William Galston, the political philosopher, describes a related “political pluralism” principle, which he also refers to as the theory of “multiple sovereignties,” and which he associates with the writings of the British political theorists Harold Laski, J. N. Figgis, and G. D. H. Cole and their critique of the European “plenipotentiary state.” The basic idea, as noted by Galston, is that “our social life comprises multiple sources of authority and sovereignty—individuals, parents, associations, churches, and state institutions, among others—no one of which is dominant for all purposes and on all occasions. Nonstate authority does not exist simply as a concession or gift of the state. A well-ordered state recognizes, but does not create, other sources of authority.”<sup>48</sup>

The ideology of political pluralism places a great emphasis on freedom of association (and the implied freedom to dissociate from others) as a fundamental right. The ideology makes the Herder-like assumption that fellow feeling for members of one’s kind “is a basic human need no less natural than that for food or drink or security or procreation.” It assumes that in-groups and local associations (including those based on real or imagined primordial ties to ancestral groups) that are independent of the government are not only natural to human beings but an essential condition for the flourishing of the social life of a political community. As Hannah Arendt emphasizes, a political community becomes totalitarian when all natural groupings, private associations, and primordial bonds of society are brought under state control and thought to exist only to the extent that they are given permission to exist or are licensed by the state. As the sociologist Paul Hirst makes note in his introduction to the selected writings of Cole, Figgis, and Laski: “The English pluralists challenged the theory

of unlimited state sovereignty and of a unified centralized state embodying such sovereign power in a hierarchy of authority.”<sup>49</sup>

One implication of political pluralism is that a despotism based on the will of the majority (the mob) is not much better than a divinely based despotism. Alternatively stated, the autonomy of local in-groups is threatened not only by theocracies claiming unlimited, central, and omniscient ruling powers but also by national assemblies based on majority rule and the absolute sovereignty of “the people.” When “the people” think of themselves as sovereign and also act that way, neither the dead nor the unborn have a vote and the (real and imagined) primordial ties that bind the present to the historical ethical community are dissolved. J. N. Figgis in particular tried to develop a theory of political pluralism designed to preserve the authority of autonomous associations (religious organizations, clubs, and trade associations) against internal regulation by external legislative bodies; by the lights of Figgis’s normative version of political pluralism, the role of the state should be restricted to the supervision of the interactions between diverse local self-regulating bodies. It is not too much of an imaginative stretch to suggest that in these theories of political pluralism one finds a liberal political ideology based on principles of divided sovereignty, limited government, and the dispersion of power, an ideology well suited to the evolution of a liberal global multinational empire, as anticipated by prophecy #3.

### **A Cautious Ottomanism and Prophecy #3**

Prophecy #3 imagines a global empire managed by ruling elites who are wise enough to leave plenty of space for the diversity of nations—and wise enough to ponder the Ottoman example, fully cautious and mindful of the caveats noted earlier. Recall that the Ottoman Empire lasted much longer than the British Empire. The Ottoman elite had a brilliant strategy (an arguably liberal principle focused on the liberty of peoples) for maintaining peaceful coexistence among the many primordial communities (those twenty-two “races”) who resided within their multinational state. Under the Ottomans the so-called millet was a term used to designate a community entitled to a good deal of deference and to semiautonomy in the administration of the affairs of its members.<sup>50</sup> This is one reason that the expression “Ottomanism” has come to mean a federation of semiautonomous millets, where membership in a millet is typically defined

by language, religion, and ethnic history; and where one's personal identity and sense of self-(efficacy, expressiveness, esteem) is part and parcel of being recognized as a Serb or an Arab or a Jew (or a Bulgar, or a Lebanese Christian, or a Greek, or a Sunni Turk, and so forth). Thinking through the Ottoman case, selectively and mindful of those caveats mentioned earlier, it is also not hard to imagine additional and rather more cosmopolitan millets (Cairo, Damascus) populated by relatively rootless or rebellious exiles who might have voluntarily exited (or been banished) from the various local territories where primordial ties and a customary heritage defined one's identity and way of life.

Thus, "Ottomanism," as I use the term, is meant to connote a relatively decentralized form of political administration in the Ottoman multinational state; where for example, the Mosul millet was internally administered by the Kurds, the Basra millet internally administered by the Shiites, and the Baghdad millet internally administered by the Sunnis, and the relatively nonintrusive Sunni sultans stayed away or were kept at a distance.

Indeed, the contemporary state of Iraq is a case in point. For "Ottomanism" was the model for the way the ruling elite of the empire organized their relations with the diverse peoples who lived in the territories that were subsequently (in the "modern" post-Ottoman Empire era) arbitrarily amalgamated by the European nation (based)-states into a single sovereign state, which for many years after World War I was dominated by a minority Sunni Muslim nation that viewed "Iraq" as their own nation (based)-state. More recently those arbitrarily amalgamated territories (the three former millets of the multinational Ottoman Empire) were invaded by the United States on the assumption that the American state (based)-nation model of national identity and political community could be transplanted onto almost any foreign soil. Under the earlier Ottoman model there was no Iraqi state but rather a decentralized form of indirect rule with local self-determination by primordial groups and with no demand by the Ottoman elite for a deep spiritual allegiance to the central figure of the Sunni sultan.

This decentralized federal form of organization, which is protective of the distinctive ways of life of diverse nations, is captured by the historian Caroline Finkel in her book *Osman's Dream: The Story of the Ottoman Empire from 1300–1923*. There she notes how the eventual territorial dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire upset the nineteenth century's relatively peaceful *modus vi-*

vendi . Different groups—Serbs, Bulgars, and others—broke away and sought their own nation (based)- states. And she makes the following revealing (and quite remarkable) observation: “Ottoman Jews subscribed to the idea of ‘Ottomanism’ for longer, continuing to hold prominent positions in the CUP (the Young Turk Party) even after the 1908 revolution. In the early years of the century about half of all Ottoman Jews lived in Thessalonica—where many had settled after their expulsion from Spain and Portugal at the end of the fifteenth century; they had shown little interest in Zionist efforts to establish a Jewish homeland in Palestine during the reign of Abdulhamid, and few chose to go there when Thessalonica was lost to Greece in 1912, migrating instead to France, Britain, Egypt, Brazil, South Africa and the United States. Following the 1908 revolution, a branch of the World Zionist Organization was established in Istanbul . . . [Many Zionists] . . . saw a homeland within the Ottoman Empire as the best guarantee of their security.”<sup>51</sup>

The Ottoman multinational state was thus a politically plural polity domestically arranged to discourage the temptation to proselytize or universalize one’s beliefs, values, and social norms or impose them on others. Instead, the empire made room and gave lots of real space for cultural pluralism. Under the Ottomans each group had control of its own local territory. Each was at liberty to carry forward its distinctive way of life, including its religious beliefs, and family and social life norms; while the ruling elite collected taxes and tried to garrison its policing forces so as to keep the boundaries of each of the millets secure. Hence this last augury or speculation about the future of a New World Order imagines a global system—a truly liberal empire on a global scale—that leaves plenty of room for diverse (and even illiberal) ways of life and consists of semiautonomous milletlike “primordial” political communities with limited sovereignty over their internal affairs (for example, the current nation [based]-states of the world) and managed by a international class of cosmopolitan citizens of the world.

Prophecy #3 thus imagines a world order that is politically liberal in the classical sense. Its political leaders assume a stance of neutrality with regard to substantive cultural issues. They don’t condition trade, aid, or protection on changes in local gender ideals, forms of authority, kinship structures, or coming of age ceremonies. They don’t try to tell the members of different nations or primordial groups that they have to live together or love each other or share the

same moral values, emotional reactions, aesthetic ideals, and religious beliefs. They don't try to tell them how to run their private lives, or even that they must have private lives.

Imagine that in this world order various sanctioning mechanisms make it possible to enforce minimal rules of respect for persons, civility, and safety within ethnic enclaves and between primordial groups: exit visas are always available, and no aggression is permitted across territorial boundaries. Imagine that such a world order is set up to permit or encourage decentralized control over cultural issues and hence to promote robust cultural pluralism.

It seems likely, and perhaps even necessary, that the worldwide liberal multinational empire envisioned in prophecy #3 will be stratified or operate at two levels, global and local. One tier, the transnational level, would need to be occupied by cosmopolitan liberals, who are trained to appreciate and value political pluralism and cultural diversity and to run the global institutions of the world system.

The other tier would need to be more milletlike and occupied by nation-based folk with primordial attachments to their cultural and religious heritages who are not necessarily liberal in their values and practices (although they might be), and who are dedicated to one form or another of thick ethnicity and inclined to separate themselves from others, thereby guaranteeing that there is enough cultural and religious diversity remaining in the world for the cosmopolitan liberals who run the global multinational state to appreciate. In conceptualizing this third prophecy one imagines that the global elite (those who are cosmopolitan and liberal), will come from diverse nationalities (as did the Ottoman elite). In the universal cosmopolitan culture of the global tier of the world system your ancestry and skin color will be far less important than your educational credentials, your politically liberal values, and your travel plans. Finally it should be possible in this New World Order for individuals to switch tiers in both directions, moving from global state-based liberalism to local national identity and back, within the course of a single lifetime.

With regard to the implications of globalization for human betterment one hazards this guess. If it should turn out as an empirical generalization that aggregate wealth accumulation can be pulled off relying only on free trade across borders and the shallow or thin aspects of Western society (weapons, information technology), then nations won't converge in their beliefs, values, and social

practices, even as they get richer. If aggregate economic growth is truly contingent on the universal acceptance (or enforcement) of the deep or thick aspects of the cultural heritage of any single nation or civilization, then nations will not converge, and they won't become significant players in the global wealth accumulation game either, because their sense of their historical and ethical heritage and their distinctive communal identity will supersede their desire for material wealth. The deontological side of their nature, their sense of duty and attachment to who they are as a people, will trump any simple utilitarian calculus; and the successful preservation of their distinctive way of life may itself become the measure of their own betterment.

Of course, divining successor regimes is a very hazardous business. And it remains to be seen whether history will come to an end with the apotheosis of a universal civilization (prophecy #1), the universal triumph of ethnonationalism with its many separated and autonomous nation (based)-states (prophecy #2), or whether human beings, having lived in multinational empires many times before the modern era, are ready to do so again, even on politically liberal terms (prophecy #3). Geertz's challenge is unsettling, and remains far from settled.

## Notes

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1. Clifford Geertz, "What Is a Country If It Is Not a Nation?" *Brown Journal of World Affairs* 4 (1997): 235–47.

2. See, esp., *ibid.*; and Geertz, "The World in Pieces: Cultural Politics at the End of the Century," *FOCAAL: European Journal of Anthropology* 32 (1998): 91–17 (reprinted in Geertz, *Available Light: Anthropological Reflections on Philosophical Topics* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000]); see also Geertz, "The Uses of Diversity," *Michigan Quarterly Review* 25 (1986): 105–23. For a much earlier and highly pertinent essay by Geertz, one concerned to elucidate the character of "primordial political communities"

(where self-consciousness about one's kind and the sense of fellow feeling is based on real or imagined communal ties of blood, language, region, religion, and shared social practice) and the implication of perceived or felt primordial attachments for the formation of "civil political communities," see Geertz, "The Integrative Revolution: Primordial Sentiments and Civil Politics in the New States," in C. Geertz, ed., *Old Societies and New States* (New York: Free Press, 1963).

3. Clifford Geertz, of course, was not the only writer to raise the challenge or pose the questions discussed in this essay. One is heartened to see the sophistication and brilliance with which such issues have been taken up by a number of political philosophers, including, for example, Michael Walzer, William Galston, Will Kymlicka, and many others, including such scholars as Ernest Gellner and Michael Hechter. And it is humbling as well. My own concerns with political theory have their origins (somewhat remotely) in the discipline of cultural anthropology and not in political philosophy, and the hazard is real of oversimplifying a complex field. See Michael Walzer, *On Toleration* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997); William Galston, "Progressive Politics and Communitarian Culture," in *Toward a Global Civil Society*, ed. Michael Walzer (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 1995), 107–11; Will Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995); Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1983); Michael Hechter, *Containing Nationalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001). See also Stephen Macedo, *Diversity and Distrust* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003); Rob Reich, *Bridging Liberalism and Multiculturalism in American Education* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002); Ian Shapiro and Will Kymlicka, eds., *Ethnicity and Group Rights* (New York: New York University Press, 1997).

4. Concerning some of these anxieties, conflicts, and domestic attempts at customs control, see, for example, John Bowen, *Why the French Don't Like Headscarves* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007); Joan W. Scott, *The Politics of the Veil* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007); Richard A. Shweder, Martha Minow, and Hazel R. Markus, eds., *Engaging Cultural Differences: The Multicultural Challenge in Liberal Democracies* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation Press, 2002); Unni Wikan, *In Honor of Fadime: Honor and Shame* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008).

5. Geertz, *Available Light*, 246.

6. As a preliminary definition I use the term "nation" to refer to communities of people who believe they are tied to each other by bonds of descent and a shared cultural heritage. Much more will be said about "nations" and "states" and various forms of political community later in the essay.

7. See, for example, Geertz: *Islam Observed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968); *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973); *Negara: The Theatre State in Nineteenth Century Bali* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981); *Local Knowledge: Further Essays in Interpretive Anthropology* (New York: Basic Books, 1983).

8. Geertz, *Available Light*, 257.

9. Geertz, "What Is a Country If It Is Not a Nation?," 238.
10. *Ibid.*, 235–47. See also Geertz, "The Integrative Revolution"; and Ulf Hannerz, "Speaking to Large Issues: The World, If It Is Not in Pieces," in *Clifford Geertz by His Colleagues*, ed. R. A. Shweder and B. Good (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).
11. For a useful collection of seminal readings on the idea of a national identity, see Vincent P. Pecora, ed., *Nations and Identities* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2001).
12. As quoted in John Gray, *Isaiah Berlin* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 1997, 122).
13. David Miller, "In Defense of Nationality," in *Nations, Cultures and Markets*, ed. Paul Gilbert and Paul Gregory (Abingdon: Avebury, 1994).
14. Roger Scruton, *Modern Culture* (London: Continuum, 2000), 9–10.
15. David Fromkin, *The Peace to End All Peace* (New York: Holt, 1989), 48, 102. Concerning Ottoman society, see also Caroline Finkel, *Osman's Dream: The History of the Ottoman Empire 1300–1923* (New York: Basic Books, 2005); Halil Inalcik, ed., *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire*, vols. 1 and 2 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994).
16. Michael Walzer, "Response to Kukathas," in *Ethnicity and Group Rights*, 109.
17. Walzer, *On Toleration*.
18. Samuel Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of the World Order* (New York: Simon and Shuster, 1998).
19. Jerry Z. Muller, "Us and Them: The Enduring Power of Ethnic Nationalism," *Foreign Affairs* 87 (March/April 2008): 18–35.
20. Walzer, *On Toleration*, 25.
21. See, for example, Hechter, *Containing Nationalism*.
22. Muller, "Us and Them."
23. Concerning the situation in Belgium, see Robert H. Mnookin, "Ethnic Conflicts: Flemings and Walloons, Palestinians and Israelis." *Daedalus: Journal of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences* (Winter 2007): 103–10.
24. The literature on the topic of U.S. exceptionalism is of course vast, ranging from position papers by founders (for example, James Madison, Alexander Hamilton, and John Jay in the *Federalist Papers*) to ethnographic or journalistic classics such as Alexis de Tocqueville's *Democracy in America* (Signet 2005; originally published in 1835) to contemporary philosophical texts such as John Rawls's *Political Liberalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), Michael Walzer's *What Does It Mean to Be an American?* (New York: Marsilio Publishers, 1992), and William Galston's *Liberal Pluralism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), to detailed explications of the meaning of the U.S. Constitution (for example, Akhil Amar's *American Constitution: A Biography* [New York: Random House, 2005]), to the many popular and scholarly historical accounts of what Joseph Ellis has called "American Creation" in his best-selling book by that title (New York: Vintage Books, 2007).

25. See, for example, Samuel Huntington, *Where We Are: The Challenges to America's National Identity* (New York: Simon and Shuster, 2005); also Huntington, "The West Unique, Not Universal," *Foreign Affairs* 75 (1996): 28–45.

26. Michael Walzer, "Two Kinds of Universalism," in *Tanner Lectures on Human Values* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1990).

27. Jan-Werner Muller, *Constitutional Patriotism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007).

28. The image of the United States of America as "a world-federation in miniature" belongs to the early twentieth-century writer Randolph Bourne, who was himself influenced by the writings of the American philosopher of cultural pluralism Horace Kallen. With regard to the writings of Bourne and Kallen, see Stephen J. Whitfield, "Introduction to the Transaction Edition," in *Horace M. Kallen, Culture and Democracy in the United States* (London: Transaction Publishers, 1998; originally published in 1928).

29. Commenting on a provocative (and in my judgment brilliant) essay in which Chandra Kukathas explores the scope and limits of toleration for cultural diversity in any domestic political regime, the political philosopher Michael Walzer writes (with the Ottomans apparently in mind): "If a great warrior, or warrior tribe, conquered a great number of communities and was content to rule them indirectly, collecting tribute or taxes, leaving the local notables in place and allowing them to work out patterns of coexistence with their immediate neighbors, this would be a regime of toleration close to, though not identical with, Kukathas's ideal. Unlike international society, which just happens, this would, again, be a creation, someone's project. But now the project would not necessarily make for intolerance. The conquering warriors could celebrate their triumphs, build monuments, and write histories, and so on, without giving rise to a culture that was common to all their subjects. They would probably have contempt for their subjects—and no interest in commonality—but contempt of this sort is entirely consistent with toleration. The subject communities could still organize their own lives, maintaining among their members practices that a liberal democracy would not tolerate." Walzer, "Response to Kukathas," 110). What precisely those intolerable practices or "un-American activities" ought to be in a liberal state (based)-nation such as the United States is presumably a collective judgment that will be historically constrained by a process of interpretation of the constitutional blueprint for the state. In the instance of U.S. national identity "constitutional patriotism" might be quite consistent with tolerance for the diverse social practices of the different primordial groups living within the territory of a multinational state, although the scope and limits of that tolerance (for example, over practices such as gay marriage, head scarves, neonatal circumcision, prayer in school, polygamy) will always be matters for debate.

30. The one hyphenated identity that appears to have been historically treated as the most alien (or "other") to American national identity was "American-communist." Contrast this with the situation in Italy or France, where Italian-communists or French-

communists are not viewed as subversive outsiders or as foreign to national identity. One is tempted to speculate that this has something to do with the difference between a state (based)-nation and a nation (based)-state. It is communism (perceived as a threat to the foundational principles of the state [based]-nation) that gets viewed as alien to national identity in the United States, while it is Islam (and its mismatch with the traditions of the primordial nation [based]-state) that seems threatening to national identity in Denmark. The idea of an Indian Muslim-American is no less imaginable than German Jewish-American or Anglo-Protestant American; such hyphenated identities are perfectly grammatical within the language of the American national identity, and in the relevant state (based) American sense of nationality all three types of hyphenated Americans are equally Americans.

31. A note sent by Thomas Jefferson to Rabbi Jacob de la Motta. September 1, 1820.

32. The expression the “melting pot” derives from a 1908 play by that title written by Israel Zangwell.

33. Justice William O. Douglas, *DeFunis v. Odegaard*, 416 U.S. 312 (1974).

34. Here allow me to underline the conjectural and speculative nature of the remaining sections of the essay and note that the discussion of globalization and the three prophecies directly draws on or repeats, and seeks to unify and extend, several previous writings, for example, Richard A. Shweder, “Moral Maps, First World Conceits, and the New Evangelists,” in *Culture Matters: How Values Shape Human Progress*, ed. Lawrence Harrison and Samuel Huntington (New York: Basic Books, 2000); also Richard A. Shweder, *Why Do Men Barbecue?: Recipes for Cultural Psychology* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003).

35. By the lights of this conception of human betterment, human patterns of equality or inequality (both within and between nations and states and over time) are viewed as secondary issues or as subordinate to the end of aggregate wealth accumulation on a global scale. In other words, such patterns of equality or inequality in the distribution of wealth are viewed as one of the social means to the end of aggregate human wealth production, and are thus evaluated as good or bad solely (and instrumentally) in those terms. The cosmopolitan elites who have the greatest voice in the emerging New World Order differ in the extent to which they believe that aggregate wealth accumulation is the gold standard for evaluating the impact of any globalization measure, or whether other criteria (patterns of human equality, the capacity to maintain one’s cultural heritage, the capacity to exercise political sovereignty, individual liberty) matter as well, or more.

36. Quoted in Jerry Z. Muller, *The Mind and the Market* (New York: Knopf, 2002), 29.

37. Francis Fukayama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Free Press, 1992).

38. Robert Kagan, *The Return of History and the End of Dreams* (New York: Knopf, 2008). Think, for example, of the persistence of the varieties of ideological differences

between just these four states alone: Russia, Iran, China, and the United States; think too about all the significant ideological differences between primordial groups within a single multinational state such as Iraq or Nigeria or (these days) even Holland.

39. For more on progressive views of the march of history, see Keith Baker, *Concorcet: From Natural Philosophy to Social Mathematics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974).

40. John Lennon's nationless, propertyless brotherhood of pacified, sated, and fully secularized cosmopolitan individuals whose oneness consists of the shared absence of any homeland or primordial attachments other than to "the World" is anarchic, fanciful, and utopian, but it does capture in its own lyrical way the universalizing spirit of "end of history" augury.

41. I have narrated these experiences before: see, for example, Shweder, *Why Do Men Barbecue?* For an earlier schematic discussion of the three prophesies, see Shweder, "Moral Maps."

42. For a discussion of the way the liberal institution of private property can serve the communitarian purposes of primordial groups, see, for example, Nomi Stolzenberg, "The Culture of Property," in Shweder, Minow, and Markus, eds., *Engaging Cultural Differences*.

43. Huntington, "The West Unique, Not Universal."

44. Those who view the United States as an Anglo-Protestant nation (based)-state (for example, Samuel Huntington) are often advocates for robust cultural pluralism on a global scale while at the same time opposing domestic cultural pluralism or "multiculturalism" inside their own nation (based)-state. "You may have your culture and civilization," they seem to be saying to members of other nations, "but please stay away and let me have mine!" Opposition to foreign immigration readily follows from this stance. Consequently, those who view American national identity as ethnonational in character, as the unique and sovereign expression of a way of life distinctive of Anglo-Protestant ethnicity, race, religion, and culture, are often wary of immigrants (Mexican Catholics, Eastern European Jews, Chinese) who have primordial ties to ancestral groups other than those that are Anglo-Protestant.

45. If one had to bet, I would place my own bet on this prophecy.

46. See Hechter, *Containing Nationalism*.

47. Hannah Arendt, "Reflections on Little Rock," *Dissent* 6 (1958): 231–46.

48. Galston, *Liberal Pluralism*, 36.

49. Paul Q. Hirst, ed., *The Pluralistic Theory of the State: Selected Writings of G. D. H. Cole, J. N. Figgis, and H. J. Laski* (New York: Routledge, 1989), 3.

50. See Fromkin, *The Peace to End All Peace*, 289.

51. Finkel, *Osman's Dream*, 533.