

Ernst Fraenkel Vorträge
zur amerikanischen
Politik, Wirtschaft, Gesellschaft und Geschichte

Herausgegeben von Carl-Ludwig Holtfrerich

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Henry R. Nau

**America's Staying Power -
Does Europe Need a Partner?**

Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr.

**Reflections on the Multiethnic Society:
The American Case**

John F. Kennedy-Institut für Nordamerikastudien
der Freien Universität Berlin

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Editor's Preface

This series published by the John F. Kennedy Institute of the Free University of Berlin aims at preserving in a longer perspective the results of the Ernst Fraenkel lectures on American politics, economy, society and history and making them accessible to a broad public outside of Berlin as well. These lectures are dedicated to Ernst Fraenkel, himself a German-American and an internationally renowned political scientist and expert on American affairs, who taught at the Free University from 1951 to 1967 and whose initiative led to the founding in 1963 of the John F. Kennedy Institute for North American Studies. As was the case with Ernst Fraenkel's life and work, these lectures held by eminent American scholars and authorities of some particular field are meant to contribute to forging an academic link across the Atlantic and to provide stimulation for research at the Kennedy Institute as well as at other European institutes for North American studies.

This issue contains lectures delivered at the Kennedy Institute during the winter semester 1992/93 and summer semester 1993 by two prominent American scholars on topics in foreign and domestic policy currently debated in the United States.

On October 13, 1992, the political scientist Henry R. Nau (George Washington University in Washington D.C.) discussed the question of the future relationship between the United States and Europe after the end of the Cold War. He argued that in spite of America's relative economic decline, Europe and the U.S. would be better off continuing their partnership not only on the economic front, but in pursuing political goals as well. With a continuing transatlantic partnership, Europe and the United States would be better equipped (a) to keep their societies open and tolerant, (b) to stabilize the still fragile democratic political systems in Eastern Europe and in the Third World, and (c) thus to secure peace in the world against the danger of aggression emanating from nondemocratic states.

On May 12, 1993, the famous historian Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr. (City University of New York) lectured on a topic related to his most recent book *The Disuniting of America. Reflections on a Multicultural Society*, (1992). Schlesinger initially observed that with the end of the "warfare of ideologies" and with the mounting of mass migrations across international frontiers, the danger of ethnic conflicts has greatly increased. He argued against Americans substituting a variety of ethnic and cultural group identities for a common national identity - an identity rooted in a common language, and a social, political and civil culture. He reminded us that this common national identity, largely reinforced by the unifying content of school curricula, was now being challenged by "a cult of ethnicity". With the multicultural issue on the frontburner in Germany as well as other European countries, this lecture drew an especially large audience and was followed by a lively and controversial debate.

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Berlin, July 1993

Carl-Ludwig Holtfrerich



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America's Staying Power - Does Europe Need a Partner?

Henry R. Nau

The euphoria of German and European reunification is gone. The celebration of unity three years ago has turned into the chaos of division today with ethnic war in Yugoslavia, anti-foreign riots in Germany and other European countries, and massive production losses and unemployment in the former communist countries. In the new turmoil, it is hard to remember the extraordinary success of U.S. and European policies that brought the Cold War to an end in 1989 without the loss of a single soldier or the destruction of a single piece of property. Yet that success is worth remembering. America and Europe created and maintained the greatest partnership for peace and prosperity in the history of mankind. Today, for the first time ever, all industrial nations are democratic and free market oriented.

The U.S.-European partnership - or if that word bothers you - this coming together of two great continental peoples is worth remembering because it can, if preserved, become the anchor of an entirely new kind international system - one in which all the major industrial powers, including potentially Russia, are relatively open, free and tolerant societies. Democratic societies have demonstrated historically that they do not fight against one another or, indeed, even escalate political and economic disagreements into military disputes short of war. This is truly an astonishing finding of contemporary political science research, perhaps as significant for international politics as the discovery and splitting of the atom was for physics.¹ However, democratic states do fight against other, nondemocratic states. And therein lies the challenge for contemporary Europe and the United States. Will Europe and America remain united to see through, if possible, the democratic transformation of the former communist countries and reforming countries in the developing world? Will we remain the anchor that moors these countries to the bedrock of open political and economic societies even as the stormy gales of transition and economic upheaval slash at their superstructures? If we do, the prize is even greater than the victory we have just achieved together in the Cold War. It is nothing short of a century of peace, the absence of major wars and the ultimate vanquishing of the nuclear nightmare.

With that challenge in front of us, how can anyone say that history has ended or that America and Europe do not need each other any more? Only half the struggle has been won. Germany and Europe are whole once again but they are not yet equitably and durably free and prosperous. You know that in Germany better than anyone. For former East Germans as well as citizens of former communist countries in general, democracy still has to prove itself, and prosperity for these people today is more a source of envy and division than enjoyment and self-fulfillment.

Three Fallacies

If America and Europe have gained so much together and have so much more to gain, why is there so much doubt and questioning about the great partnership between our two peoples, even a desire to avoid the use of the term partnership? I think this

doubt arises from three fallacies in the traditional way we have been taught to think about international politics.

The first of these fallacies is that we are taught to focus on power - the decline of American power and the rise of Japanese or German and European power. By contrast, we ignore the context in which power is exercised and from which power draws its purpose. The fact that American power today is relatively less than it was in 1945 and that the power of united Germany and Europe is relatively more is not a sign of growing distance and conflict between the two continents but an indication of a more equitable and durable community that exists between them. After WWII America traded its dominant power for closer political and economic ties to Europe. Today the overwhelming reality in U.S.-European relations is not a shift in relative power but a convergence in political and economic values and institutions, an industrial world that for the first time in history is entirely democratic and free market-oriented. In such a community, relative power is much less meaningful. America does not need decisive power to protect its interests in the new all-democratic, industrial world. Nor does Europe. Would a country rather have dominant power in a bad world, or more equal power in a better world? The answer is clearly the latter. And one country probably cannot have dominant power and still live in a better world. As the Soviet Union learned, you either share power with your friends or you eventually lose your friends.

The second fallacy in traditional thinking about international affairs lies in how we think about markets. The secret to the U.S.-European postwar success is without question the openness of our markets and our societies to relatively free exchanges of goods and people. Under progressively more open markets, Europe (and Japan) became more equal in power and prosperity to the United States. Yet the mythology persists, despite the demise of Marxist-Leninism, that markets divide and create greater inequalities. The fallacy lies in failing to recognize that sophisticated, modern markets require a large degree of community to begin with and that only if people trust one another sufficiently to accept common currencies, common contracts and laws and common courts, will they be able to carry on complicated and highly efficient market transactions with one another. Restructuring or limiting (e.g. regionalizing) markets actually reflects a breakdown of trust. Trade restrictions divide people, first internationally when we erect tariff and other external barriers between nations but also domestically when we favor one special interest group - for example, farmers - over another - for example, consumers. If America and Europe go protectionist we will not only destroy trust and community between us, we will also become more special-interest-oriented, less happy communities internally.

The third fallacy that afflicts our current thinking about international affairs is to ignore the role of internal politics and domestic identity in determining a society's external as well as internal behavior. Traditional thinking holds that international behavior is determined exclusively by the external pursuit of power and wealth. States and people are purely materialistic creatures, aggregating wealth and power without any social or moral purpose. The charge would be true if individuals or societies pursued materialistic wealth and power for their own sake. But no individual or society does that. Even if they are wholly materialistic, individuals or societies pursue wealth and power for themselves. They do not pursue power and wealth for others. Thus it is appropriate to ask who these individuals or these societies are? What do they stand for and how do they differentiate themselves from others? In short, what is their identity?

Every society (or individual) has an identity before it has a market or before it pursues power. That identity is critical not only for its domestic but also for its foreign behavior.

Domestic affairs therefore is the starting point of international affairs. The two are inextricably linked. Those in Europe and America today who urge that our societies withdraw from international commitments or avoid spending on foreign assistance to concentrate on problems at home make a fundamental logical error. They overlook the fact that a decision to retreat from international commitments already implies a more restricted sense of domestic identity, a society less open and tolerant internally as well as externally. I fear a protectionist America - one that seeks to bar goods as well as immigrants from other countries - more because it will reflect a less tolerant America internally than because it will mean less efficient markets externally.

Now, let me address these three fallacies of contemporary thinking about international relations and play out in more detail their consequences for the continuation of European-American partnership to achieve a durable and equitable peace between the West and reforming countries in the East and South.

America's Decline, Europe's Rise

First, the preoccupation with power: America is obsessed with the decline of its power. All three perspectives that contend today for control of America's foreign policy after the Cold War assume a weaker America. Isolationists want to stop paying the defense bills for Europe and Japan and roll up the drawbridges of immigration and freer trade, protecting a weaker America and American jobs for existing Americans. Nationalists want to reassert American power. They emphasize America's weakness, depict the 1980s as a squandered decade of debt and declining living standards, and worry about the threat of rising allies in Germany/Europe and Japan to America's national economic security. They are critical of multilateral and in some cases regional trade arrangements (such as the North American Free Trade Agreement) and generally urge that America get much tougher with its allies in both defense burden-sharing and economic areas.

Internationalists are more inclined to accept the decline of American power and a multipolar, more pluralistic industrial world community. But they too fear American weakness and cling to traditional institutions such as NATO, the United Nations and the Bretton Woods economic institutions as the only way to keep a retreating America entangled in world affairs.

The Bush administration has generally remained internationalist, deferring to Germany and the European community in the historic changes of 1989-1990 and working patiently with the allies in the Gulf War and multilateral trade negotiations. But internationalism has lost steady support both within the administration's own ranks and within Congress, and the nationalists in the Bush administration have in many cases defected to the Democratic side. Thus, the battle between nationalists and internationalists rages most fiercely within the Clinton campaign. While Clinton himself has shadowed and avoided conflict with Bush on almost every foreign policy issue, his view that the Bush administration has neglected domestic affairs and that foreign policy

must begin with a strong national economic and industrial base echoes some of the same refrains heard early in the Reagan administration and is likely to lead to a tougher, nationalist and perhaps even unilateralist policy toward foreign allies under a new Clinton administration.

In my judgment, all three groups - isolationists, nationalists and internationalists - suffer from the first fallacy of contemporary thinking about international affairs. They focus too much on the distribution of relative power and not enough on the changed context in which relative power is being exercised. The nationalists expect economic conflict with allies because power is more equally shared. They miss the fact that power is more equally shared because there is a closer community in which economic competition does not need to be considered as a threat to America's standard of living. The more aggressive nationalists, especially those obsessed with Japan, go so far as to describe Japan as a nondemocratic state which seeks to dominate the world economically.² This is a tragic misreading of the contemporary situation in Japan. To be sure, Japan is not a democratic state like Europe or the United States. But it is far more democratic than it has ever been in its history, and this fact alone suggests that it has changed and can change further. To view it as a nondemocratic state and to deal with it on different terms, as the aggressive nationalists advocate, is to stop the process of integrating Japan slowly but surely into the postwar family of democratic nations.

Some nationalists express similar views about Germany, although less frequently and vigorously. With reunification, they argue, Germany will once again dominate *Mittel Europa*, reject liberal capitalism and seek a different way (*sonderweg*) or regional counterweight to U.S. and Japanese interests.³

Internationalists are gentler and kinder to the allies, but they too are more preoccupied with conflict and the need to preserve order in the post Cold War world - hence the new world order of the Bush administration - than with the opportunities for enlarging the zone of democratic peace and prosperity. Thus, they badger the allies for contributions to the Gulf War and concessions in the multilateral trade talks but fail to rally the allies to deal with ethnic wars in Yugoslavia or massive economic dislocations in the former communist countries. President Bush and other internationalists in his administration are rightly criticized for being short of vision.

But America is not the only partner obsessed with shifting power. Germany and Europe, too, are short of vision. In Europe, as reflected in the attempt to accelerate European integration and act independently in Yugoslavia, there is a sense of rising power and a desire to move ahead with or without the United States and to put domestic and regional concerns above global ones, as in the multilateral trade talks. There is a thoughtless tendency to criticize and weaken the institutions that won the Cold War for the West - NATO and GATT - and to believe that untested and in some cases even unformed institutions such as the CSCE and WEU can carry the burdens of security issues amidst the dramatic ethnic and economic upheavals in the East. Most troublesome, there is a desire in some quarters, as there has always been but now with less justification, to dismiss the United States as an imperial and infantile power, lacking the soul to be a part of the deep historical and philosophical traditions of Europe.

These attitudes in Europe, like their counterparts in the United States, ignore the most fundamental fact about U.S.-European relations today. Never have our two

continents been closer - in political institutions and values, economic interests and practices, and cultural habits. Closer does not mean identical, but closer does mean more capable of common understanding and cooperative action. If this is so, then America and Europe should be thinking not about head-to-head competition, or a Cold Peace among the allies, the titles of two recent books by Lester Thurow and Jeffrey Garten,⁴ but about how the two continents can work together to help the countries of the former communist world and many countries in the developing world who are struggling to join the community of democratic and market-oriented nations.

This is a task which neither continent can undertake alone and achieve. Germany has learned the enormous costs of transition for only 17 million former East Germans, all of whom speak the same language and share certain common historical roots. Can Europe alone pay similar costs for the East European countries, let alone the republics of the former Soviet Union? Or can Europe alone manage the ethnic conflicts which are sure to occur during this transition era. In Yugoslavia, for example, it may not have been a mistake for Europe to recognize the independence and right of self-determination of Slovenia, Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, but it was certainly a mistake not to think through how Europe alone or with others might have also provided the military assistance without which these new nations could not hope to defend their independence. Doesn't Europe need the capacity for military threat and, if necessary, military intervention to prevent a reoccurrence in the East of the ethnic and national nightmares of the 1920s and 1930s? Shouldn't NATO play a role in this process? It is the only functioning multilateral military capability in Europe. U.N. and WEU forces might and probably should supplement NATO but can they substitute for it? Paradoxically, the former Warsaw Pact nations and the Baltic republics appear to recognize the value of NATO more than some of the European Community states. The former Warsaw Pact countries are now part of NATO through the newly organized North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC). In dealing with the uncertain withdrawal of Russian troops from their soil and the fearsome prospect of nuclear proliferation in the republics of the former Soviet Union, they understand the indispensability of tested Western military institutions.

Community and Markets

Let me now turn to my second point - the failure to understand that markets require and do not destroy community. If we fail to create a community of common destiny and security with the former communist countries, we will surely fail to create the markets that are needed to achieve prosperity in the East. The notion that efficient markets require preexisting community is quite contrary to conventional thinking. Right-wing supporters of the market see the market as a substitute for community, that is as a way to minimize government. Left-wing detractors of the market assume markets destroy community and hence urge that markets either be severely regulated or dispensed with altogether, as in the failed communist experiment of the past 70 years. Both perspectives miss the point that individuals and societies do not trade with one another frequently and massively unless and until they trust each other substantially.

The evolution of the European Community is less a story of opening markets than of reconciling societies and building trust. The real change in Western Europe came about because of massive human efforts to tear down the ethnocentric and

nationalist prejudices that had torn Europe apart for generations - the reconciliation with Jews, between French and Germans, Germans and Dutch, British and French, and so on. This change is much less often studied or even noticed because we persist in ignoring the basis of trust that must exist before sophisticated markets can work. Today, within the EC, mutual trust includes the acceptance of a de facto common currency (the D Mark), the application of national laws on foreign soil (the principle of mutual recognition at the heart of EC 92), and the increasing adjudication of disputes in foreign national or common European courts.

This decades-long process of growing trust among EC countries has been disrupted, paradoxically, by the good fortune of German and European reunification. Some believe that further European integration must wait for the consolidation of German and European reunification. Widening must take precedence over deepening. I think not. Recent difficulties in the ratification of the Maastricht Agreement and the operation of the Exchange Rate Mechanism (ERM) do not, in my view, represent the reversal of European integration. They represent instead a struggle to deepen the level of debate and ultimately the levels of trust among EC societies.

For example, just as the other EC members have learned to trust the Bundesbank in establishing the DM as the de facto common currency, the Bundesbank will be asked in the future to trust the central banks of other members and eventually to share sovereignty with other members over the common currency, whether that be through a new currency, the ECU, and new central bank or through closer coordination of separate currencies and central banks. Similarly, British resistance at Maastricht to a federal union and its withdrawal from the ERM in September do not constitute a rejection of Europe but a deepening debate about what kind of Europe it will be, with what kind of division of labor between central and national institutions. Popular disappointment with Maastricht, particularly German disappointment about enhancing the powers of the European Parliament, reflects a similar issue among the broader public. Will the Europe of the future be largely a Council and Commission in Brussels relatively unaccountable to parliaments or a Europe influenced more strongly by a powerful peoples' assembly in Strasbourg?

Most importantly, Europe is debating, with its new power and self-confidence, how it will relate to the non-Community and non-European world. Will it be a fortress Europe or an open Europe? At root, this question is what the agricultural issue in the GATT is all about. In contrast to Europe's open attitude in the GATT toward manufactured trade, agriculture represents an inward-looking Europe, a Europe of centralized and regulated markets, indeed a Europe of highly mobilized and divisive special interests. In its present form, the CAP excludes not only or even primarily the United States; it also excludes the Eastern European countries and the former Soviet republics, most of whom in their present economic difficulties can only export competitively in agricultural and low-skilled manufactured goods. Unless Europe opens these markets to Eastern suppliers and soon, there is little prospect that democracy will succeed in the East.

Now, Europe does not have to do this alone. While it was growing into a more trustful community within the EC, it was also developing a closer political and economic community with the United States, North America as a whole, and to a lesser extent, Japan and advancing nations in Asia. It can and should call upon America and

Japan to share the burden of development in the East. Indeed, unless it does, I fear the nationalists will grow stronger in the United States, and Japan, we all know, is unlikely to play a role in Europe without the United States.

It is in Europe's interest, therefore, not to complain about America's role and to resist American leadership because it knows America will lead anyway. This is the old Cold War pattern which particularly affected French policy both in NATO and GATT. Rather America is likely to lead the more it is asked to share that leadership with Europe. Paradoxically, Europe needs to encourage America to lead in general even as it disagrees with American leadership on specific issues. That much, it seems, ought to be expected of Europe given its increasing power.

Domestic Identity and Foreign Affairs

This last thought - that leadership on both continents needs to spend more time encouraging the better side of the other society - brings me to my third and last point about the importance of how we think about ourselves domestically for how we behave internationally. Traditionally, we have thought little about domestic affairs in international politics. International politics depended on unchanging external circumstances. Britain, Lord Palmerston said, had no permanent friends and no permanent foes, only permanent interests. One wonders on the basis of that statement who or what Britain was. If it could not relate stably to anyone - friend or foe - was it simply a chameleon, a nation for all seasons? Obviously, it was not because then it would have had no permanent interests. Lord Palmerston's statement is completely contradictory, even though it has served as the standard of traditional thinking about foreign policy for over one hundred years.

Nations have personalities. These personalities are both identifiable - that is, they cannot accommodate any kind of foreign policy behavior - and they change, that is they do not equate with permanent interests. A nation's personality or identity informs both its sense of self and its sense of others. It infuses and constrains political relationships with others, and it infuses and shapes markets. Hence we talk about different types of capitalism in Europe, Japan and America even though we are talking about markets in all three.

What impresses me are not the differences between European, American and Japanese capitalism but the similarities. Capitalism in all three territories operates within the framework of free political societies. That was not the case with German or Japanese capitalism in the 1930s. All three territories shape and accept the rules and institutions - GATT, IMF, World Bank - of the integrated world economy. An integrated world economy did not exist in the 1930s. Common democratic and world market orientations among industrial nations represent massive similarities; they dwarf continuing domestic differences in government-business or producer-consumer relations. In fact, you can argue that our continuing differences are essential to preserve our growing similarities. You cannot run a heterogeneous society in the United States with the policies or institutions of a homogeneous society in Japan. Similarly, Europe cannot run a more diverse EC with the same dirigiste, uniform policies that apply in France. And the United States cannot run its more diverse domestic society with the same policies that apply in a less diverse society such as Germany, Sweden or Denmark.

Our domestic societies in the industrialized world, despite continuing and indeed essential differences, have converged; and that fact more than the end of the Cold War shapes the possibilities that lie before us in the future. The member states of the European and Atlantic Communities have become what they are internationally largely because of changes they have undergone domestically. Germany is a better neighbor today in Europe because Germany has an open, progressive society that tolerates differences and promotes reconciliation. America successfully led the coalition that won the Cold War, less because it pursued a canny policy of containment, than because it made progress domestically on all fronts - race, income, education, etc. - and became a symbol with other Western societies of a more desirable, alternative form of economic and political life than that offered by communism.

This understanding of the relationship between domestic and foreign affairs is very different from traditional thinking. Nationalists in America believe that America sacrificed domestic gains to achieve the Cold War victory. Internationalists believe the same thing; they are simply more willing to accept the sacrifices. Both believe America has to divert more attention and resources from foreign to domestic problems. In fact, however, domestic sacrifice is not necessary because a successful foreign policy requires it. This point applies today in Europe no less than in the United States. For example, Europe does not need to liberalize agriculture and thus sacrifice income benefits for its farmers in order to pursue a successful foreign policy toward the East; it needs to liberalize agriculture and change domestically to become a better society for itself and to keep its people open and tolerant, willing to accept change and to seek reconciliation and fairness at home as well as abroad. Similarly, America does not need to retreat from the world to solve its continuing domestic problems of fiscal profligacy, racial discrimination, and inadequate education and health facilities. It needs to deal with these domestic problems to remain credible and effective in the world. It cannot succeed in terms of its own self-image, let alone be any good to the transforming countries of the former communist world, if it fails to continue to build a multiracial, multiethnic society that works and lives up to the American motto of "e pluribus unum", unity through diversity.

Who is Germany, Europe and America? That is the critical question that each of us will address in the days ahead and that will determine toward what ends power will be used and for what purpose wealth will be produced in the post Cold War world. What is a united Germany to be? What will be the great defining principle of this reborn society, a society that unlike any other Western European society has known on its soil both the totalitarianism of the right and the dictatorship of the left. Germany has so much to offer. Its experiences have been both deep and searing, but for that very reason it could become the moral trumpet in Europe against the excesses of radicalism and extremism. No other people could speak with more authority about the human ravages of political oppression or the material costs of centralized economies.

And what about America? Let me conclude with a few thoughts about its defining character, its moral soul, and what it can offer to Europe if Europe asks for its partnership. The United States has many faults and many problems today, but with everything it still stands as the most successful multiethnic society in the West. People forget that one-quarter of America's population is composed of ethnic minorities, projected to grow to 45 percent by the year 2080. The only societies to have a more

mixed population were the former Soviet Union and Yugoslavia and they both failed. No Western European society comes close to the United States in diversity; some such as Sweden are almost completely homogeneous. As Europe moves toward greater integration, both within the EC and then with Eastern countries, it will need to accommodate greater and greater diversity. If it does not, Europe could become a chess board of ethnically pure (dare I say, ethnically-cleansed) societies which will reciprocate mutual hostility toward one another. And if Europe fails to build a truly multi-ethnic society, can America succeed?

For America, too, will have to continue to accommodate greater and greater diversity. The New World is becoming more and more a composite of the Old World - 12 percent black expected to grow to 16 percent by 2080, 8 percent hispanic expected to grow to 19 percent, and 3 percent Asian expected to grow to 11 percent. The melting pot faces its greatest challenge ever. And if the experiment in diversity fails in America, where it has been most successful to-date despite all of America's problems, can it succeed in Europe and in the rest of the world?

Conclusion

This human problem of accommodating greater diversity within free, prosperous and peaceful societies is the reason in my judgment why Europe and America need a continuing and strengthened partnership. If America tries to solve its immigration and ethnic problems by withdrawing from Europe or going protectionist, it will become a meaner America internally. Similarly, if Europe decides that America has nothing more to offer now that the Cold War is over and that Japan is too different to be involved, it too will become a meaner Europe internally. Europe and America need each other to become and remain their better selves. and then we need each other to help others, the reforming countries of the East and the South.

A new way of thinking about international affairs thus begins with the question of what kind of societies we want to be - societies alike in that we are open and tolerant of differences or societies apart in that we emphasize and contest our differences. This issue of domestic identity then defines the boundaries of community and conflict with others - community that has grown stronger within the West since WWII and gradually could include the reforming countries of the East and South; or conflict that could fragment the West and turn us back again, together with the East and South, toward reliance on old and dangerous devices of racism, nationalism and fanaticism. And finally community and conflict define the limits of efficient, modern markets and hence the potential of prosperity for a greater and greater number of people. Opening markets is not a matter of sacrifice at home or exploitation abroad, the old way of thinking about international politics, but a matter of commitment to trust new partners - to accept their currencies, to buy their products, to honor their contracts, and to settle disputes with them in common judicial proceedings.

The new way of thinking about international politics starts with ourselves, not with markets or the forces of production. It starts with human beings and human societies, not impersonal material forces or unchanging geographic realities. This way of thinking about U.S.-European relations seems much more appropriate to the unprecedentedly peaceful, prosperous and multiethnic world we live in at the end of the

20th century than the traditional way of thinking that came out of the revolutionary and anarchic world of the 19th century.

Endnotes

- 1 See *inter alia*, Melvin Small and J. David Singer, *Respond to Arms*. Beverly Hills: Sage, 1982; and Bruce Russett, *Controlling the Sword*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1990, especially ch. 5.
- 2 Karel Van Wolferen, *The Enigma of Japanese Power*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1989.
- 3 James Kurth, "Things to Come: the Shape of the New World Order," *The National Interest*, No. 24 (Summer 1991), pp. 3-13.
- 4 Lester Thurow, *Head to Head: The Coming Economic Battle Among Japan, Europe and America*. New York: William Morrow and Company Inc., 1992; Jeffrey Garten, *A Cold Peace: America, Japan, Germany and the Struggle for Supremacy*. New York: Times Books, 1992.

Reflections on the Multiethnic Society: The American Case

Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr.

The world today is passing, I believe, from one grand historical epoch to the next. The 20th century may well appear in retrospect as an era defined above all by the warfare of ideologies. It was a time when the liberal democratic idea was under siege by two mortal foes, two variations on the totalitarian idea: the challenge of fascism in the first half of the century; the challenge of communism in the second. Democratic society finally succeeded in defeating both totalitarian creeds: fascism perishing with a bang, communism with a whimper. Freedom appears triumphant in the political realm, the market in the economic realm.

But the fading away of the ideological conflict does not mean, as some sages optimistically forecast, the "end of history." While liberal democracy seems victorious for the moment, it is not home free. Let us not forget at the start of the 20th century the tendencies of history seemed to be moving nations toward liberal democracy. Yet 40 years into our century the Great War and the Great Depressions had put liberal society desperately on the defensive, its back to the wall, fighting for its life. By 1942 there were only about a dozen democracies left in the world. The failures of freedom had handed the initiative to the totalitarian faiths.

Something like this could happen once more. If liberal democracy fails again, as it failed before, to construct a humane, prosperous and peaceful world, then, as before, we invite the rise of new alternative creeds very likely to be based, like fascism and communism, on the abolition of individual freedom.

Still for the moment the warfare of ideologies is over. But the cessation of ideological battles does not mean the end of social conflict. One set of hatreds replaces another. Lifting the iron lid of ideological repression in Eastern Europe and what used to be the Soviet Union releases pent-up ethnic, national, religious, linguistic antagonisms deeply rooted in history and in memory. The evaporation of the Cold War removes superpower restraints on national and tribal conflicts in the Third World.

Most fundamentally perhaps, the collapse of communism, the total bankruptcy of Marxism-Leninism, leaves an ideological vacuum for peoples habituated to authoritarian rule and authoritarian faith. "Marxism," Vaclav Havel of what used to be Czechoslovakia said recently, "had left behind it great unsettling void that had to be filled at any cost" (*New York Review of Books*, 9 April 92). This is the void that nationalism and ethnicity rush to fill.

The new faith has a different content from the old but performs similar functions and has a similar structure. Where once the Communist Party was the source of authority, now the tribe or the ethnic group or the church or the nation takes its place. In a time of scary change, many feel the need to belong to some monolithic entity and find therein an escape from the horrid uncertainties and complexities of modern life. Where

before class was destiny, now ethnicity is destiny. The world is once again redefined in terms of terrible simplifications.

As the warfare of ideologies subsides, the world thus enters - or, more precisely, re-enters - a possibly more dangerous era of ethnic and racial warfare. If the 20th century was the century of the warfare of ideologies, the 21st century promises to begin as the century of the warfare of ethnicities - and this, it should be noted, is a much older, profounder and more unyielding form of warfare, one whose roots go back forever in time. "A long-forgotten history," Vaclav Havel says, "coming back to haunt us, a history full of thousands of economic, social, ethical, territorial, cultural, and political problems that remained latent and unnoticed under the surface of totalitarian boredom." Or, in the words of Klaus Kinkel, the German foreign minister, "As if buried beneath a sheet of ice... ethnic conflicts were in a state of suspended animation under communist rule. Now that this sheet has cracked, these conflicts are surfacing violently" (J O Tamayo, *Buffalo News*, 7 July 92).

The tragedy of Yugoslavia is only the most murderous portent of a darkening future. A Yugoslav political scientist, Simon Petrovic, put it well the other day: "Minorities are going to be an acid test for all post-communist societies. With communism all but disappearing, tribal instincts are coming back" (*Newsweek*, 9 Sept 91). And the hostility of one tribe for another is among the most ancient and most instinctive human reactions.

Yet the history of our planet has been in great part the history of the mixing of peoples - and more so perhaps today than ever. Mass migrations have existed since the beginning of time - and from the beginning of time they have generated mass antagonisms. Today, as our 20th century staggers to a close, a number of factors - not alone the evaporation of the Cold War but, more enduringly, the development of swifter modes of communication and transport, population growth, the breakdown of traditional social structures, the flight from chaos, from tyranny, from poverty, from ecological disaster, the dream of a better life somewhere else - all these factors drive people in mass migrations across national frontiers.

Territorial boundaries rarely coincide with ethnic boundaries. Consider Europe today - a cauldron of boiling fears and animosities. It is estimated that there will be 25 million migrants into the European Community in the next decade; and all this is quite apart from the 2 million Hungarians who live in Romania, the 700,000 Hungarians who live in Slovakia, the 25 million Russians who live outside Russia, the 3.5 million Germans living in the former Czechoslovakia. The mixing of peoples will as never before be a salient problem for the century that lies mistily ahead.

What happens when people of different ethnic origins, speaking different languages and professing different religions, settle in the same geographical locality and live under the same political sovereignty? Unless a common purpose binds them together, tribal resentments and enmities will drive them apart.

No one in the 19th century thought more carefully about the problems of representative government than John Stuart Mill. The two elements that defined nationality, as Mill saw it, were the desire to be governed together and the "common sympathy" created by shared history, values and language. He wrote, "Free institutions

are next to impossible in a country made up of different nationalities. Among a people without fellow feeling, especially if they read and speak different languages, the united public opinion, necessary to the working of representative government, cannot exist.... It is in general a necessary condition of free institutions that the boundaries of governments should coincide in the main with those of nationalities" (*Representative Government*, ch xvi).

Nationhood is difficult both to achieve and to sustain. Events every day demonstrate the fragility of national cohesion. Ethnic and racial warfare, it seems evident, is replacing the warfare of ideologies as the explosive issue of our times. On every side today, ethnicity is the cause of the breaking of nations. The ex-Soviet Union, ex-Yugoslavia, India, Lebanon, South Africa, Ireland are all in ethnic, racial or religious turmoil. Crises of "ethnic cleansing" in one form or another disturb and divide Sri Lanka, Burma, Indonesia, Afghanistan, Iraq, Israel, Turkey, Ethiopia, Somalia, Nigeria, Liberia, Angola, Sudan, Zaire, Guyana, Trinidad - you name it. Even nations as stable and civilized as Britain and France and Germany, Belgium and Spain and Austria, face growing ethnic and racial troubles. "The virus of tribalism," says the *Economist*, "... risks becoming the AIDS of international politics - lying dormant for years, then flaring up to destroy countries."¹

Take the case of America's neighbor to the north. Canada has long been considered the most sensible and sedate of nations. "Rich, peaceful and, by the standards of almost anywhere else, enviably successful," the *Economist* observes: yet today "on the brink of bust-up."² Michael Ignatieff (the English-resident son of a Russian born Canadian diplomat and thus an example of the contemporary mixing of peoples) writes of Canada, "Here we have one of the five richest nations on earth, a country so uniquely blessed with space and opportunity that the world's poor are beating at the door to get in, and it is tearing itself apart... If one of the top five developed nations on earth can't make a federal, multi-ethnic state work, who else can?"³

The answer to that increasingly urgent question has been, at least until recently, the United States.

Now how have Americans succeeded in pulling off this almost unprecedented trick? Other countries break up because they fail to give ethnically diverse peoples compelling reasons to see themselves as part of the same nation. The United States has thus far offered such reasons. What is it then that, in the absence of a common ethnic origin, has bound Americans together over two turbulent centuries?

How have we wrought the miracle of nationhood? For America has been a multiethnic country from the start. Hector St John de Crevecoeur emigrated from France to the American colonies in 1759, married an American woman, settled on a farm in Orange County, New York, and published his *Letters from an American Farmer* during the American Revolution. This 18th century French American marveled at the astonishing diversity of the other settlers - "a mixture of English, Scotch, Irish, French, Dutch, Germans, and Swedes," a "strange mixture of blood" that you could find in no other country.

Crevecoeur recalled one family whose grandfather was English, whose wife was Dutch, whose son married a French woman, and whose present four sons had married

women of different nationalities. "From this promiscuous breed," he wrote, "that race now called Americans have [*sic*] arisen." (The word race as used in the 18th and 19th centuries meant what we mean by nationality today; thus people spoke of "the English race," "the German race," and so on.) What, Crèvecoeur mused, were the characteristics of this newly emergent American race? In the *Letters from an American Farmer* he propounded a famous question: "What then is the American, this new man?" (20th century readers must overlook 18th century male obliviousness to the existence of women.)

Crèvecoeur gave his own question its classic answer: "He is an American, who leaving behind him all his ancient prejudices and manners, receives new ones from the new mode of life he has embraced, the new government he obeys, and the new rank he holds. The American is a new man, who acts upon new principles ... *Here individuals of all nations are melted into a new race of men.*"⁴

E pluribus unum: one out of many. The United States had a brilliant solution for the inherent fragility, the inherent combustibility, of a multiethnic society: the creation of a brand-new national identity by individuals who, in forsaking old loyalties and joining to make new lives, melted away ethnic differences - a national identity that absorbs and transcends the diverse ethnicities that come to our shores; ethnicities that enrich and reshape the common culture in the very act of entering into it. Those intrepid Europeans who had torn up their roots to brave the wild Atlantic *wanted* to forget a horrid past and to embrace a hopeful future. Their goals were escape, deliverance, assimilation. They saw America as a transforming nation, banishing dismal memories and developing a unique national character based not on common ethnic origins, but on common political ideals and experiences. The point of America was not to preserve old cultures, but to establish a new *American* culture. Americans have never, until very recently, believed in ancestor worship.

From the Revolution on, Americans have had a vigorous sense of national identity, forged in the War for Independence, articulated in the Declaration of 1776 and the Constitution of 1787, deepened by the subsequent experience of self-government. George Washington affirmed the national creed when he invited the "oppressed and persecuted of all Nations and Religions" to come to America, but not, he suggested, in clannish groups, sticking to themselves; rather to come as individual prepared for "intermixture with our people" so that they could be "assimilated to our customs, measures and laws: in a word, soon become one people." John Quincy Adams as Secretary of State advised prospective immigrants to "cast off the European skin, never to resume it. They must look forward to their posterity rather than backward to their ancestors." America had its own identity, derived from its own experience and its own ideals. From the start, citizenship was defined not by bloodlines but by political principle - not by *jus sanguinis* but by an adaptation of *jus soli*.

When Alexis de Tocqueville came to America half a century after the adoption of the Constitution, he wondered how this miscellaneous American society, "formed of all the nations of the world ... people having different languages, beliefs, opinions: in a word, a society without roots, without memories," could turn into a single nation. The answer, Tocqueville decided, was that nations could be based on adherence to an idea. The American secret, he concluded, was the national commitment embodied in the Constitution to democracy, self-government, individual freedom and equality before the

law. It was this common purpose that would enable Americans to forge a single culture and a single nation from people of bewilderingly diverse racial, religious, ethnic and linguistic origins. The rights of citizenship, the experience of political participation, the development of a civic culture - these would dissolve ethnic differences and become the great national unifier.

National unification had its brutal limits, as we shall soon note. Yet half a century after Tocqueville another great foreign observer of the American commonwealth, the Britisher James Bryce, was similarly struck by "the amazing solvent power which American institutions, habits, and ideas exercise upon newcomers ... quickly dissolving and assimilating the foreign bodies that are poured into her mass." Half a century after Bryce, a third perceptive foreign observer, Gunnar Myrdal of Sweden, in his great study of race relations, *An American Dilemma*, found the essence of the "solvent power" in what he called the American Creed. He showed why that Creed held out hope even for those most cruelly excluded by the dominant white majority, the Creed acting as the spur forever goading white Americans to live up to their proclaimed principles.

This vigorous sense of national identity accounts for America's relative success in converting Crevecoeur's "promiscuous breed" into Washington's "one people". The power of the civic culture as an agency of assimilation has enabled the mixture of peoples in the United States to coalesce into a single nation. Many have doubted the capacity of a nation so curiously formed to survive. The mixture of peoples led Adolf Hitler, for example, to underrate the strength and unity of the United States. In a speech on 10 November 1938, he dismissed the United States as nothing but "a conglomeration of races in which, out of 128 million inhabitants, barely 60 million were of Anglo-Saxon origin, the rest being composed of Negroes, Jews, Mongolians, and other inferior races" (Friedlander, *Prelude to Downfall*, 10). By 1945 Hitler had learned better.

This is not to say that the United States has lived up to its own best ideals. New waves of immigration brought in peoples who fitted awkwardly into a society that was inescapably English in language, ideas and institutions. For a long time Anglo-Americans dominated American culture and politics. The melting process described by Crevecoeur did not easily melt immigrants from Ireland, from Germany, from southern and eastern Europe. Still even those snubbed and spurned by the Anglo-Americans were enabled by the exercise of democratic rights to enter into, join, and remold the American culture.

As for the non-white peoples - those already in America whom the European newcomers overran and massacred; or those others hauled in against their will from Africa and Asia - deeply bred racism put them all, red Americans, black Americans, yellow Americans, brown Americans, well outside the pale. We must face the shameful fact: historically America has been a racist nation. After all, white Americans started out as a people so confident in our own racial superiority that we felt licensed to kill red people, to enslave black people and to import yellow and brown people for peon labor. We white Americans have been racist in our laws, in our institutions, in our customs, in our conditioned reflexes, in our souls. The curse of racism has been the great failure of the American experiment, the glaring contradiction of American ideals and the still crippling disease of American life.

Yet even non-white Americans, miserably treated as they were, contributed to the formation of the national identity. They became members, if third-class members, of

American society and helped give the common culture new form and flavor. Like white Americans, black Americans did not cling to their past but rather helped change the present and the future. The infusion on non-Anglo stocks steadily reconfigured the British legacy and made the United States, as we all know, a very different country today from Britain.

This faith in the absorptive capacity of American society received its celebrated metaphor early in the 20th century. In 1908 a play by Israel Zangwill, an English writer of Russian Jewish origin, opened in Washington. It told the story of a young Russian Jewish composer in New York whose artistic ambition was to write a symphony expressing the vast, harmonious interweaving of races in America and whose personal ambition was to overcome ethnic barriers and marry a beautiful Christian girl. Zangwill called the play *The Melting-Pot*. As the hero cries in one of the dramatic scenes, "America is God's crucible, the great Melting-Pot where all the races of Europe are melting and re-forming! Here you stand in your fifty groups, with your fifty languages ... and your fifty blood hatreds.... A fig for your feuds and vendettas! Germans and Frenchmen, Irishmen and Englishmen, Jews and Russians - into the Crucible with you all! God is making the American."

When the curtain fell on opening night in Washington and the author walked onstage, President Theodore Roosevelt called from his box: "That's a great play, Mr Zangwill, that's a great play." Later TR told the playwright's wife, "I'm not a Bernard Shaw man or Ibsen man, Mrs. Zangwill. No, *this* is the stuff." "We Americans," TR liked to say, "are children of the crucible."

This vision of America as a new national identity, superseding and absorbing the diverse ethnicities of those who came here, prevailed through most of the two centuries of the history of the United States. But the 20th century has brought forth a new and opposing vision.

In a nation marked by an even stranger mixture of blood than Crèvecoeur had known, his celebrated question - "What then is the American, this new man?" - is asked once more, with new intensity - and with a new answer. Today many Americans disavow the historic goal of "a new race of man." The escape from origins has given way to the search for roots.

A cult of ethnicity has arisen: It began among non-Anglo white minorities (remember Michael Novak and his book of 1971, *The Rise of the Unmeltable Ethnics?* - "The new ethnic politics is a direct challenge to the WASP conception of America. It asserts that groups can structure the rules and goals and procedures of American life," 270); and soon was taken up by non-white minorities - all joining to denounce the ideas of assimilation, integration, the melting pot, and to protect, promote and perpetuate separate ethnic and racial communities. There thus arises the current multicultural challenge to the traditional concept of American nationhood.

The eruption of ethnicity has had some good consequences. It has forced the American culture at last to reflect on the inexcusable persistence of group inequalities and to give shamefully overdue recognition to the achievements of minorities subordinated and ignored during the high noon of Anglo dominance. American

education began at last to acknowledge the existence and significance of the great swirling world beyond Europe. All this is to the good.

But, pressed too far, the cult of ethnicity has had disturbing consequences too. The new ethnic gospel in its militant form rejects the unifying concept of a unique American identity. It rejects the vision of individuals from all nations melted into a new race. It rejects the ideals of assimilation and integration. It rejects the common culture. Its underlying philosophy is that America is not a nation of individuals at all but a nation of groups, that ethnicity is the defining experience for Americans, that ethnic ties are permanent and indelible, that Americans must be primarily classified according to ethnic and racial criteria and that division into ethnic communities establishes the basic structure of American society and the basic meaning of American history.

While the ethnic interpretation of American history, like the economic interpretation, is valid and illuminating up to a point, it is fatally misleading and wrong when presented as the whole picture. The ethnic interpretation, moreover, reverses the historic theory of America - the theory of Americans as "one people," the theory that has thus far managed to keep American society whole.

Instead of a transformative nation with an identity all its own, America in this new revelation - this "politically correct" revelation - is seen as preservative of diverse alien identities. Instead of a nation composed of individuals making their own unhampered choices, America is seen as a collection of ethnic and racial tribes, each more or less ineradicable in its commitments and loyalties. This latter-day exaltation of ethnic and racial separatism repudiates historic American purposes, replacing assimilation by fragmentation, integration by *apartheid*, a single nation founded on an idea by a multiple nation founded on ethnic communities. It reverses the national motto: making it *e unum pluribus* - many out of one.

The idea of a unifying American identity is now in trouble in many arenas - in our politics, our voluntary organizations, our churches, our entertainment, our language. And in no arena is the movement to do away with the conception of an overriding national identity more crucial than in our system of education. For our public schools have been historically the great agency of assimilation - the great means of transforming newcomers into Americans. The multicultural challenge is above all a challenge to the educational system. As Woodrow Wilson put it 80 years ago, "The great melting-pot of America, the place where we are all made Americans of, is the public school, where men of every race and of every origin and of every station in life send their children, or ought to send their children, and where, being mixed together, the youngsters are all infused with the American spirit and developed into American men and American women" (*New Freedom*, 68). The Mexican American writer Richard Rodriguez observes in his new book, *Days of Obligation*, "From the schoolmarm's achievement came the possibility of a shared history and a shared future.... Grammar-school teachers forged a nation" (*Days of Obligation*, 161, 163).

What students are taught in schools affects the way they will thereafter see and treat other Americans, whether they see them as fellow citizens of the same country or as members of an alien group. The debate about the curriculum is a debate about what it means to be an American.

What then about multicultural education? It all depends how you define it. When multicultural education means teaching our kids about other continents, other cultures, other races, other creeds, I'm all for it. When it means, in teaching American history, for example, giving due and belated credit to the achievements of groups too long neglected in traditional accounts - women, blacks, Asian Americans, Latinos - this is plainly a great step forward. When it means teaching history from a variety of perspectives - seeing the arrival of Columbus, for example, from the viewpoint of those who met him as well as from the viewpoint of those who sent him - this too is a great advance.

But when multicultural education means that our schools should teach subjects like history and literature in order to make kids feel good about their particular ancestors and thereby allegedly promote minority 'self-esteem,' when it gives groups veto power over the way their particular histories are written and taught, when it calls on public schools to celebrate, reinforce, and harden ethnic loyalties and to promote and perpetuate separate ethnic and racial communities, that is a very different matter.

Multicultural education in this celebratory separation sense begins in ethnic breast-beating and cheer-leading and ends in fragmentation, segregation, ghettoization, and tribalization.

The American republic, let us never forget, was conceived as a nation of individuals, not of tribes. As President Wilson once told an audience of new citizens, "You cannot become a thorough American if you think of yourselves in groups. America does not consist of groups. A man who thinks of himself as belonging to a particular national group in America has not yet become an American."

One of the troubles with groups is that they tend to impose their party line and to censor and punish heretics and dissenters. As Henry Louis Gates Jr. recently observed, "The history of African-Americans is marked not only by its noble demands for political tolerance from the larger society but also by its paradoxical tendency to censure its own" (*New York Times*, 14 April 93) - as in stigmatizing fellow blacks working at their books and striving for academic excellence for the awful sin of "acting white." Cornel West of Princeton has similarly deplored the "closing-ranks mentality in black America." One of the most encouraging recent developments is the opening of debate within the black community itself.

And when multiculturalism means the running down, the systematic disparagement, of western history and values to the advantage of the history and values of non-western cultures, it weakens the foundations of the liberal democratic way of life.

Multicultural zealots denounce the 'Eurocentric' curriculum, oppose the study of western civilization and present Europe as the source of imperialism, racism, sexism; indeed, as the root of all evil. The crimes of Europe are famous - crimes against lesser breeds without the law (not to mention even worse crimes - Hitlerism and Stalinism - against other Europeans). But these crimes do not alter other facts of history: that Europe was the birthplace of the United States of America, that European ideas and culture formed the republic, that the United States is an extension of European civilization and that more than three quarters of all Americans are of European descent.

It may be lamentable that dead white males of European extraction have played so large a part in shaping our history. But that's the way it was. To pretend otherwise would be to falsify history.

And while Europe, like every other culture, has committed its share of crimes, unlike other cultures it has originated and acted upon ideals that expose and combat its own crimes. No other culture has built self-criticism into the very fabric of its being. The crimes of the west in time generated their own antidotes, provoking the great movements to end slavery, to raise the status of women, to abolish torture, to combat racism, to promote religious tolerance, to defend freedom of inquiry and expression, to enlarge personal liberty, to protect and promote human rights.

Whatever the particular crimes of Europe, that continent is also the source - the *unique* source - of those liberating ideals of individual liberty, political democracy, national independence, equality before the law, freedom of worship, human rights, women's rights and cultural freedom to which most of the world today aspires. These are ideals that empower people of every continent, color and creed - and they are *western* ideals. In Moscow today they are studying the Federalist Papers, and the students in revolt at Tiananmen Square raised up a replica of the Statue of Liberty.

Radical multiculturalists argue that the western tradition has nothing to say to non-white minorities. What argument could be better calculated to disable minorities in a democratic society! As the Palestinian-American Professor Edward Said reminds us, "Great antiauthoritarian uprisings made their earliest advances, not by denying the humanitarian and universalist claims of the general dominant culture, but by attacking the adherents of that culture for failing to uphold their own declared standards, for failing to extend them to all, as opposed to a small fraction, of humanity" ("The Politics of Knowledge," *Raritan*, summer 91).

Watching ethnic conflict tear other nations apart, one cannot look with complacency on proposals aimed to divide American society into distinct and immutable ethnic and racial communities, each taught to cherish its own apartness from the rest. I was interested in reading the other day William McGowan's book *Only Man Is Vile: The Tragedy of Sri Lanka* to find this comment: "Sri Lanka failed to build a stable multiethnic, multicultural society because it embraced many of the very concepts and ideas that multiculturalists in the West have advocated."

If we reject the ideal of a common culture and a distinctive American identity, what is left to hold the nation together? No society can survive unless people are encouraged to recognize what they have in common. One begins finally to wonder: Will the center hold? Or will the melting pot give way to the Tower of Babel?

I don't want to sound apocalyptic about these developments. Education is always in ferment, and a good thing too. Schools and colleges have always been battlegrounds for debates over beliefs, philosophies, values. 'Political correctness' in the universities is a pop fashion that, I am confident, will be here today and gone tomorrow. The assault of ideology and intimidation under the PC banner is at war with the freedom of inquiry that is the beating heart of the university; and I am sure that the sillier stuff will self-destruct once the great silent majority of professors cry 'enough' and rouse themselves to challenge what they know to be officious and intolerant. Higher education ought to

be able to take care of itself. But there is plainly inauthenticity in saddling our public schools with the mission of persuading children of the beauties of their particular ethnic origins. If ethnic subcultures had genuine vitality, ethnic enthusiasms would be sufficiently instilled in children by their family, church and community. It is surely not the role of the public school to promote artificial ethnic chauvinism - especially when a majority of Americans are of mixed ethnic ancestry anyway. Public schools should rather seek to make our young girls and boys contributors to a common American culture - to teach children of diverse classes, colors and creeds why their country was founded, what shaped its development and what it is all about.

Of course it remains a vital part of America for people to cherish their own traditions, observances, rituals, creeds, customs, cuisines. It is these strands of particularity that lend richness and texture to our society. But the preservation of such strands is the task of the family, the church, the subculture. The public schools have a different task - which is to emphasize not what keeps children apart but what brings children together as Americans. If the schools abandon this task, it threatens our national future.

"The none absolutely certain way of bringing this nation to ruin," Theodore Roosevelt once said, "of preventing all possibility of its continuing to be a nation at all, would be to permit it to become a tangle of squabbling nationalities, an intricate knot of German-Americans, Irish-Americans, English-Americans, French-Americans, Scandinavian-Americans, or Italian-Americans, each preserving its separate nationality." Three-quarters of a century later we must add a few more nationalities to TR's brew. This only strengthens his point.

I remain optimistic. My strong impression is that the appeal of assimilation and integration continues to be stronger than the ideologies advocating separatism and apartheid. Whatever their self-appointed spokesmen may claim, most American-born members of minority groups, white or non white, identify themselves primarily as Americans and not primarily as Irish or Hungarians or Jews or Latinos or Africans or Asians. They do not want a ghetto existence. They want to become full-fledged Americans and join the mainstream. In this regard minorities here are different from the historic minorities in Europe, as Gunnar Myrdal noted half a century ago: "The minority peoples of the United States are fighting for status in the larger society; the minorities of Europe are mainly fighting for independence from it" (*American Dilemma*, 50).

The proportion of foreign-born residents of the U.S. is far smaller today (7.9%) than in 1910 (13.5%). Though immigration has recently increased, assimilation and integration remain, despite the posturing of the ideologues, the ambition and the hope of the rank-and-file. A 1992 Latino National Political Survey reports that more than 90% of Hispanics, both citizens and non-citizens, think that residents of the U.S. should become fluent in English. 85% believe that the object of bilingual education should be not to maintain Spanish but to acquire English. Of the U.S.-born Latinos ten times as many speak only English at home as opposed to Spanish. Latinos are our more recent wave of immigrants and also those who can most easily return to their homelands. Yet the vast majority would appear to think of themselves as Americans first.

What is even more fatal to the cult of ethnicity is the simple fact that most Americans, as noted, are of mixed ethnic origin. They do not see themselves as belonging to one or another distinct ethnic group. And the mix is growing every day. The most telling indicator is the rising rate of intermarriage - across ethnic lines, across religious lines, even (increasingly) across racial lines. According to the Gallup poll, 3% of whites approved of interracial marriage in 1958; by 1991, the approval figure rose nearly to 50%. The number of black-white married couples has increased from 41,000 in 1970 to 231,000 in 1991. We increasingly resemble that humane Caribbean city which Derek Walcott in his 1993 Nobel Prize lecture contrasted with Europe's ethnic cleansing - the city where "its citizens would intermarry as they chose, from instinct, not tradition, until their children find it increasingly futile to trace their genealogy."

Today, I understand, in only about one-quarter of American marriages do the partners have the same ethnic background. We may therefore, I think, count on the power of sex - and of love - to defeat those who seek to divide up America into separate ethnic groups of communities.

The threat to unity increases when ethnic groups begin to coincide with economic classes - as when the 'underclass' of any society has a predominant ethnic or racial character. If the United States ever again falls into serious depression, for example, we could expect very grave ethnic troubles. Unemployment intensifies ethnic and racial conflict as much as it intensifies class conflict. Nothing brings out racial hatred more effectively than competition for jobs. Already in the United States racial tension is increasingly black versus Latinos or black versus Asian rather than black versus white. If we ever again enter a time of mass unemployment, the melting pot will become a boiling pot.

Still even black Americans, who have the strongest reasons to regard the American creed with cynicism and the American experience with despair, have not abandoned the ambition to join the mainstream. The other day George C. Wolfe, the talented black director (*Jelly's Last Jam* - Jellyroll Morton), was appointed head of the Public Theater in New York, the position once held by the late great Joseph Papp. "I was 13 or 14 before I was thrust into the white world," George C. Wolfe said. "And ever since then it's become clearer and clearer to me that I was part of the generation of black children who were raised like integration soldiers, who were groomed to invade white America.... With my parents it was definitely 'They think you're less than; you've got to be better than.' There's this warrior energy I learned early on that has served me well in the theater" (*New York Times*, 22 March 93).

Not walled off by themselves behind ethnic or racial barriers, but integration soldiers, imbued with warrior energy, groomed to invade white America - that's the American spirit; the spirit that may yet save us. As justice Thurgood Marshall once put it, "In light of the sorry history of discrimination and its devastating impact on the lives of Negroes, bringing the Negro into the mainstream of American life should be a state interest of the highest order. To fail to do so is to ensure that America will remain forever a divided society" (Justice Thurgood Marshall in *Regents versus Bakke*, 1978).

Only in the last half century has white America begun to acknowledge and confront the racism that has so wretchedly dishonored our national past. Only in the last half century have we finally grown conscious of the implications of the racial

oppression we white Americans have practiced so carelessly and unconsciously for the greater part of our history - practiced at the expense of the ideal of equality enshrined in our most sacred documents.

¶

We have made progress, but we still have far to go. And the increased militancy of black America is a sign not of despair but of hope and of expectation. As Tocqueville wrote in the *Ancien Regime*, "It is not always when things are going from bad to worse that revolutions break out.... Patiently endured so long as it seemed beyond redress, a grievance comes to appear intolerable once the possibility of removing it crosses men's minds."

The rioters of Los Angeles were not rioting in the cause of apartheid; they were rioting because they wanted the same amenities and opportunities as white Americans. Progress has been made and cannot be denied. Orlando Patterson, the distinguished black sociologist, recently wrote: "The sociological truths are that America, while still flawed in its race relations ... is now the least racist white-majority society in the world; has a better record of legal protection of minorities than any other society, white or black; offers more opportunities to a greater number of black persons than any other society, including all those of Africa; and has gone through a dramatic change in its attitude toward miscegenation over the past 25 years." If anyone had told me half a century ago that in my lifetime, with black Americans only 12% of the population, I would see a black general as chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, black justices on the Supreme Court, a black governor of Virginia, black mayors of Atlanta, Birmingham, New Orleans and other southern cities (as well as of New York, Chicago, Philadelphia and Los Angeles), I would have been incredulous.

But America still has far to go to fulfill the ideals on which it was founded. And when we invoke these ideals, we must understand the American democratic creed in its true dimensions. It is not an impervious, static and righteous orthodoxy, intolerant of deviation and dissent, to be fulfilled by ritualistic exercises like flag salutes, pledges of allegiance, hands over the heart. The American identity is always in the making, and the democratic creed fulfills itself by closing the gap between professed ideals and daily performance - and this requires free speech, free inquiry, debate, criticism, protest and irreverence. As James Reston puts it so well, "The only way to preserve democracy is to raise hell about its shortcomings." Because enough people have raised hell, the movement from exclusion to participation has been a central theme in American history.

America enjoys signal advantages in an era when racial and ethnic conflict threatens to convulse and divide the world. Americans have never grounded the national identity and citizenship in ethnicity. From the start America has had a mixed and multifarious population. To create a nation, Americans developed traditions and agencies of assimilation. And today the appeal of an American identity and of the mainstream of American life continues to be far more popular and powerful than the idea of a collection of ethnic and racial ghettos.

I am not sufficiently knowledgeable to try and prescribe for other countries. But in this age of uncontrollable mass migrations it would seem prudent for nations to replace ethnic origin by civic allegiance as the criterion for citizenship, to replace the *Volk* as a defining principle by ideals of liberal democracy and to nourish the

instruments of assimilation that convert immigrants into citizens. If we can stop the global reversion to tribal warfare, we may yet look on the century ahead not with foreboding but with hope.

Endnotes

- 1 "War in Europe," *Economist*, 6 July 1991, pp. 11-12.
- 2 John Grimond, "For Want of Glue," *Economist*, 29 June 1991, p. 52.
- 3 Michael Ignatieff, "A Rich Nation is Tearing Itself Apart," *Observer* (London), 9 June 1991.
- 4 J. Hector St John de Crevecoeur, *Letters from an American Farmer*. London: J. M. Dent & Sons LTD; New York: E. P. Dutton & Co INC, 1962. pp. 41-43.