FROM "CULTURE WARS" TO SHOOTING WARS: CULTURAL CONFLICT IN THE UNITED STATES

Ronnie D. Lipschutz

> Everyone knows what constitutes the notion of conspiracy. Conspiracy implies that members of a confession, party, or ethnicity . . . are united by an indissoluble bond. The object of such an alliance is to foment upheaval in society, pervert societal values, aggravate crises, promote defeat, and so on. The conspiracy mentality divides people into two classes. One class is pure, the other impure. These classes are not only distinct, but antagonistic. They are polar opposites: everything social, national, and so forth, versus what is antisocial or antinational, as the case may be.[1]

Popular wisdom and conventional history has it that Texas won independence from Mexico in 1836 and was annexed subsequently, in legal fashion, by the United States in 1845. Apparently, as we were reminded by the recent confrontation between the representatives of the sovereign "Republic of Texas" and agents of the "illegal occupation government of the United States," the conventional wisdom is wrong (as is so often the case). According to the republic's World Wide Web site, Texas has been a "captured nation since 1865":

> The congress of the United States failed from 1836 until 1845 to annex Texas to the U.S. as a state because *they did not have the authority under their constitution to do so.* They finally passed a resolution (an agreement which is only a statement of intent and has no force of law) to annex Texas. In 1861, the People of Texas, by popular vote, exercised their right under the resolution to withdraw from the agreement. . . . After the civil war, the Union Army came to the Southern States and also to Texas and took over by military force and rule.[2]

Perusal of various sites on the Web suggests that this is a common sentiment among some segments of the U.S. public. It is possible to find numerous statements of a similar ilk, usually associated with groups and organizations that might be generously characterized as being on the political margins rather than in the mainstream.

This standoff, the trial of Timothy McVeigh in the Oklahoma City bombing in 1995, and the case of the Montana Freemen in 1996 continue to be represented as unusual events. Yet only a few days after the peaceful resolution in West Texas, a similar well-armed group took up residence in an official building in Venice, claiming to represent the independence movement of the "Sublime Republic," the title of the once independent Venetian city-state. Such episodes force us to ask, once again, "What on earth is going on here?" Are such people a bunch of marginal lunatics, as the media would have us believe, who have no awareness of "real" historical events? Are they criminals bent on stealing money and property from others through various (il)legal strategies, such as property liens and official-looking warrants?[3] Or is there more than meets the eye to such standoffs between "separatists" and the "authorities"?

Although such groups are small and on the margin, it would be incorrect to think that they are aberrant; separatist groups such as the Montana Freemen, the Arizona Vipers, the Michigan Militias and various Aryans are all of a piece with a much more extensive process of cultural conflict affecting the United States as a whole, through which non-Anglo minorities are deemed to pose a threat to the integrity and survival of the white majority. In a typical example of the conspiracy mentality, these mostly white groups darkly warn of plots being carried out by cabals of bankers, Jews, Communists, Trilateral Commissioners, the Institute for Policy Studies, and members of the Council on Foreign Relations, among others, all meant to subjugate and enslave free, sovereign citizens.

Between these groups and the mainstream, there is a continuum of beliefs. Many members of U.S. society seem to feel that they too are under siege by subversive or foreign forces over which they have little or no control—these perpetrated by Hollywood, Washington, and Wall Street. Interestingly the "cultural offensive" waged by the Republican Right since 1990 or so is not so different in substance from the far right, although its warriors are more careful to pinpoint liberals of various stripes as the enemy. While the culture wars are

not obviously "ethnic"—it is the unruly minorities and supporters of multiculturalism who are categorized as ethnic or racial, not the majority—there are fascinating parallels between what is happening in the United States and so-called ethnic conflict in other places around the world. More to the point, in the United States culture is being used in instrumental fashion, as "ethnicity" has elsewhere been used, by political elites intent on acquiring or restoring declining power and privilege.

In this contribution, I map out the contours of cultural conflict in the United States today. I recognize that such conflict has been a feature of American politics since before the founding of the United States, but I believe it is useful to place the current wave in both an historical and comparative context. I begin with a brief discussion of the conception of culture and the way it is being used by academics and journalists. Next, I describe three manifestations of cultural conflict, including growing racial polarization throughout the United States, a more specific discussion focused on California, and the controversy over multiculturalism, and I situate these in the longer history of racial and cultural discord within the United States. In the third part, I address the erosion of the American social contract, which has much to do with the recent upsurge in cultural conflict. That social contract is under pressures that in some respects are similar to those of the past but in others are different. Finally, I provide some concluding thoughts about the possible consequences of the processes discussed here.

THE CLASH OF CONCEPTUALIZATIONS: CULTURE, IDENTITY, GEOPOLITICS

For most of the cold war, the omnipresent possibility of nuclear war, the threat of Communist subversion, and the fear of being identified in an FBI file somewhere in Washington, D.C. as a Pinko Comsymp were sufficient to keep U.S. citizens from straying too far from the free world straight and narrow. The 1950s set the standard for societal discipline, even though they also laid the seeds for the resistance and indiscipline that followed during the 1960s. But Red-baiting in the United States never went away completely; it continued

long after the end of the Red Scares of the 1950s—one can find it even today, in the excoriation of so-called liberals[4]—although the language of discipline and exclusion became more genteel as time passed. Still, since the end of the Soviet Union, it has been difficult for political and social elites to discipline a potentially unruly polity; that things could get out of hand without strong guidance from above is the message of both South Central and Ruby Ridge.

But why has such social disruption afflicted the United States? Here we begin to tread on somewhat shaky ground. The problem is, it would seem, a collapse of authority. Once upon a time, social rules and relations were fixed and people "knew their place." Today, as Marx might have observed again, "All that is solid melts into air." Marx attributed social instability to the workings of the market; today's social critics are more inclined to attribute it to an erosion of cultural "values." Culture and values are, however, problematic terms. Culture is generally seen as some kind of structure that is very slow to change—if indeed it changes at all—and is binding on those who belong to one. Values are in effect equivalent to the fixed preferences of rational choice theory and microeconomics. Finally, because both have contributed to societal success, they must have some evolutionary advantage in terms of competition among societies and countries. Conversely, the abandonment of both is a sure sign of decadence and decline.[5]

Nor is such essentialization of culture restricted to the domestic sphere. Since the end of the cold war, culture, identity, and values have become prominent explanatory variables in international relations. More than this, they have been invoked, in essentialist and history-ridden terms, as factors as invariant as the earth on which they are found. In this respect, states once came into conflict over raw materials (or so it is often said); today they are liable to come into conflict over raw ideals. Straits, peninsulas, and harbors were once the objects of military conquest; today religious sanctuaries, languages, and national mythologies seem to be the subjects of occupation. At one time, territory was viewed as the container of the nation; today some seem to see culture as a form of containment. The result is a new type of geopolitics that invokes not the physical landforms occupied by states but the mental platforms occupied by ethnies, religions, and nations. In this scheme of things, culture is understood as being fixed and immutable. It does not—indeed it

cannot—change, for such change would transform the society just as surely as would physical conquest.

Among the more prominent proponents of geoculturalism are Benjamin Barber, Robert Kaplan, and Francis Fukuyama,[6] although the best known is Samuel P. Huntington, with his "clash of civilizations":

> The years after the cold war witnessed the beginnings of dramatic changes in people's identities and the symbols of those identities. Global politics began to be reconfigured along cultural lines. . . . In the post-Cold War world flags count and so do other symbols of cultural identity, including crosses, crescents, and even head coverings, because culture counts, and cultural identity is what is most meaningful to most people.[7]

Huntington's definitions of culture and identity are peculiar, framed as oppositional to other cultures and identities and linked to what he calls "civilizations":

> People define themselves in terms of ancestry, religion, language, history, values, customs and institutions. They identify with cultural groups: tribes, ethnic groups, religious communities, nations, and, at the broadest level, civilizations. People use politics not just to advance their interests but also to define their identity. *We know who we are only when we know who we are not and often only when we know whom we are against*.[8]

Hence in his schema, culture, identity, and civilization are defined not in terms of associational values, but as *enemies* of one another.

While anthropologists continue to have serious disagreements about what exactly is meant by the term "culture," we can define it as the combination of social factors—norms, rules, laws, beliefs, and relationships necessary to the reproduction of a society—with material factors that help produce subsistence and foster accumulation. Huntington's cultural elements obviously fit into this schema, although he sees them as fundamental rather than contextual, and fixed rather than fluid. Most anthropologists would probably agree that while there are prominent and often ancient historical elements to be found in all cultures, they are neither static nor stagnant and that major changes in both internal and external environments are likely to disrupt a society and change it as its members adapt to new

conditions. Huntington, conversely, seems to believe that cultures and civilizations, like continents and oceans, are fixed and forever.

The parallels between classical geopolitics and Huntington's geoculturalism have been widely noted.[9] The classical geopolitics of Halford J. Mackinder, Karl Haushofer, and Nicholas J. Spykman were a discourse of power and surveillance, a means of imposing a hegemonic order on an unruly world politics.[10] Cold war geopolitics divided the world into West and East, good and evil, with perpetual contestation over the shatter zones of the Third World (adrift in some purgatory of nonalignment). Today these neat geographic boundaries can no longer be drawn between states and across continents; the shatter zones are within both countries and consciousnesses. Yet in a cartographic fantasy, Huntington offers tidily drawn maps whose geocultural borders, with a few exceptions, follow modern boundaries between states. (A few oddities do show up, such as an outpost of "Hindu civilization" in Guyana; Hong Kong remains "Western," in spite of its return to China; Circumpolar Civilization is entirely missing).[11]

There is yet another contradiction evident here: geoculture, as pictured in Huntington's conceptualization, seems to lack any material basis. To be sure, geoculture is connected to great swaths of physical territory, the "civilizations" that loom much larger than the states found within them, but these have no evident material or even institutional existence. For example, the Islamic *umma,* imagined by some and feared by others, is much larger than the states it encompasses, but between Morocco and Malaysia it is also riddled by sectarian as well as cultural differences, even down to the local level. Geoculture shows no such variegation. People simply identify with those symbols that tell them who they are—"crosses, crescents, and even head coverings," as Huntington puts it—killing, stealing, and raping for no reason other than fealty. Culture and identity, twinned together, come to function as a sort of proto-ideology, almost a form of "false consciousness," to which people are loyal because they seek anchor in a tumultuous world. And because ideologies are of necessity mutually exclusive, civilizational cultures must also be unremittingly hostile to one another. The inevitable conclusion is the "clash" predicted in Huntington's title, and the replacement of the cold war order with a new set of implacable enemies.

Just as "culture"—whether racial, linguistic, religious, or something else—is invoked for instrumental purposes in Huntington's schema, so does it fill the same role at the domestic level. The key to his conception of culture as fixed is that people cannot change cultures any more than the color of their skins, and if they are not of us, they must be against us. In similar fashion, it must follow that those who are culturally labile cannot be of the culture that they have forsaken and must be enemies of that culture. In other words, culture wars abroad and at home are part and parcel of the same phenomenon. Indeed Huntington is quite explicit on this point:

> A more immediate and dangerous challenge [than the erosion of Christianity among Westerners] exists in the United States. Historically American national identity has been defined culturally by the heritage of Western civilization and politically by the principles of the American Creed on which Americans overwhelmingly agree; liberty, democracy, individualism, equality before the law, constitutionalism, private property. In the late twentieth century both components of American identity have come under concentrated and sustained onslaught from a small but influential number of intellectuals and publicists. In the name of multiculturalism they have attacked the identification of the United States with Western civilization, denied the existence of a common American culture, and promoted racial, ethnic, and other subnational cultural identities and groupings.[12]

As we shall see below, however, Huntington is not quite correct.

IF CALIFORNIA LED, WOULD OTHERS FOLLOW?

January 7, 1995, was a day of independence for California. While giving his second gubernatorial address, Governor Pete Wilson threw down the gauntlet of states' rights, declaring defiantly that "California is a sovereign state, not a colony of the federal government."[13] Needless to say, Wilson did not call out the troops, nor did civil war break out in the state, although he did seem to be trying to provoke a form of civil conflict, manipulating a wave of statewide public sentiment based on the scapegoating of "outsiders" and "aliens." These foreigners were a variegated lot. They included the Clin-

ton administration, various agencies and representatives of the federal government in Washington, D.C. and elsewhere, legal and illegal immigrants (mostly from Mexico), ethnic and racial minorities, and others. At the time, Wilson's declaration of independence was simply shrugged off as rhetoric; in light of other themes that emerged during his aborted run for the 1996 Republican presidential nomination and since, it should be understood as more than just mere provincial populism.

Wilson was not alone in this. Virtually all Republican candidates for public office, and not a few Democratic ones, incumbents as well as newcomers, ran against government and the state in 1996. This electoral tactic arose partly as a result of the success of Congressman Newt Gingrich and his "Contract with America" in 1994, but also in response to what seemed to be a groundswell of resentment, suspicion, and even hate against the federal government and other unnamed actors. Underlying this was a broadly felt sense—irrational perhaps, but nonetheless felt—that America was no longer in control of its destiny. The sources of this resentment are not well understood, but scapegoats—many of them revived from earlier times—were easily found.

Wilson came to the presidential race with a built-in advantage (even though it did not in the end prove very helpful). As the lone office-holding governor running for the Republican nomination, Wilson hoped to exercise control over what no other candidate truly possessed: a territorial base and fifty-two electoral votes. This enabled him to play a triple game: first, he could claim to be looking out for the interests of his "republic" by arguing that California was getting a rotten deal from Washington;[14] second, he could enhance his political stature at home by playing on Californians' "national" resentments against outsiders who were consuming the state's resources and money; and third, he could propose to reform (literally, perhaps) federal policies so that Californians would believe they might get more of the spoils flowing from Washington. Not everyone shrugged off his game as just presidential politics or sectoral interests. The leader of the Aryan Nation, speaking at the annual Aryan World Congress in Idaho, said that Wilson was "beginning to wake up to Aryan views," an endorsement that was quickly disavowed.[15] Still, in his run for the presidency, Wilson became the political entre-

preneur *par excellence,* determined to play various divisive cards as a means of enhancing his power and political base.

A political entrepreneur is someone—usually a well-educated member of the professional class or intelligentsia—who, as David Laitin puts it,

> is one who knows how to provide "selective incentives" to particular individuals to join in the group effort. Communal groups will politicize when there is an entrepreneur who (perhaps instinctively) understands the constraints to organization of rational individual behavior.[16]

Thus a political entrepreneur is one who is able to articulate, in a coherent and plausible fashion, the structure of opportunities and constraints that face a specified group of people and in particular can emphasize clearly the potential costs of *not* acting collectively. Such appeals have historically been especially persuasive in times of trouble, when societies are faced with high degrees of uncertainty and particular groups within societies see their economic and social prospects under challenge. It is under these conditions that we find the emergence of cultural conflict. More to the point, such conflict is often highly instrumental: those who would grasp power try to mobilize populations in support of their struggles with other elites for political power, social status, and economic resources (see the quotes from René Lemarchand in "Seeking a State of One's Own," above).[17]

Some might challenge this analysis, but whether or not it is an accurate description of Wilson's strategy, his entrepreneurism is best understood as a product of economic globalization and political fragmentation that has come to play a major role in cultural conflict around the world.[18] That the United States has not yet fragmented or fallen into internal warfare in this century does not mean that it might not in the future; the evidence of constitutive conflict—manifested in racial, "ethnic," and "cultural" terms—is already all too clear.[19] Such conflict is not merely about welfare or middle-class entitlements or taxes. It is *constitutive* and thereby represents a challenge to the very basis of the American state and its social contract. It is not about the *size* of one's piece of the pie, in other words. It is about who is *entitled,* under the terms of the contract, to participate in the *division* of the pie.[20] And, it is not primarily about ethnic *mi-*

norities demanding enhanced rights or returns; it is mostly about elements of the white majority fearful of losing in what they see increasingly as a zero-sum game.[21]

Whether American political institutions are sufficiently flexible to adjust to the pressures engendering such constitutive conflict is as yet unclear, especially in light of historical divisions around race and ethnicity. There is little reason to think, however, that American "exceptionalism," pluralism, or political liberalism will necessarily be sufficient to prevent such internal conflict from becoming much sharper and more evident than it is today, or that it might not also acquire a territorial aspect beyond the current evident ethnic and communal character. What will matter in the long term are the ways in which groups of people will organize collectively to protect themselves against larger political and economic forces over which they feel they have neither control nor influence. While it is not out of the question that such organization could take on a states' rights character, pitting one state against another, there are other fault lines in American society—some territorial, some demographic—that have in the past formed the basis for intrasocietal conflict. These could reappear.

CONSTITUTIVE AND CULTURAL CONFLICT: THREE CASES

SLOBODAN ON THE SACRAMENTO?

In the past, California's Governor Pete Wilson has had a fairly "liberal" reputation, for which he has often been taken to task by more conservative Republicans. Given this, his political transmogrification to a harder conservativism came as something of a surprise and made many fellow party members suspicious of his true motives. To establish conservative *bona fides* in his run for the presidency, Wilson played off what was seen as a growing concern over the real or imagined impacts of changing demography and immigration on the state's politics and economy. Because Republican primary voters tend to be overwhelmingly white and conservative, the potential alienation of other voting blocs was not a concern to him. Hence in the months before the 1994 election, Wilson gave his active

support to Proposition 187, a citizen-launched ballot initiative that proposed to eliminate virtually all welfare benefits for individuals living in California without legal sanction. Wilson claimed that such illegals were costing the state more than $3 billion a year, a not insignificant sum considering the economic and budgetary problems California had experienced during the first half of the 1990s. The proposition was overwhelmingly passed by the state's voters in November 1994 but stayed by judicial injunction. If and when the law is implemented, however, it can only marginally redress the growing demographic shift toward minorities in the state.

Wilson next filed suit against the federal government, demanding that it reimburse California $3 billion spent on mostly Mexican illegal alien prisoners and welfare recipients. He argued that the federal government had failed in its responsibility to guard the country's borders and that therefore these costs were the fault of federal policy and should not be borne by California alone. Given the country's financial problems, Congress was reluctant to approve even as much as the $300 million or so promised by the Clinton administration. But the point of the suit was less budgetary than political: it provided a means to mobilize the resentment of the citizens of California against the federal government's not paying its "bills," as well as those ethnic immigrants who did not "belong" in the state.

Then Wilson decided to actively oppose affirmative action, claiming not only that it discriminated unfairly against "qualified" whites and Asian-Americans, but also that the sins of the past should not have to be atoned for by the present generation. In July 1995 he attended his first meeting of the University of California Board of Regents since 1992 to vote on a proposal to eliminate affirmative action programs in university admissions, contracting, and hiring. Wilson next signed an executive order eliminating affirmative action in a number of state agencies. He filed suit against California and a number of state officials, arguing that they were violating state law in implementing affirmative action (although the case was later thrown out). Finally, he expressed unqualified support for a November 1996 ballot measure (Proposition 209), colloquially called the "Angry White Man's Initiative," which banned all affirmative action by state agencies. The initiative was passed overwhelmingly. Political analysts suggested that Wilson had latched onto these issues in order to revive his flagging presidential campaign, which eventually

collapsed. Recent data issued by Boalt Hall School of Law at Berkeley show an 81 percent decline in black admissions and a 50 percent drop in Hispanic admissions as a result of the elimination of affirmative action.[22]

For most analysts and voters, Wilson seemed to be doing what was necessary to become a viable presidential candidate. In order to appeal to an increasingly conservative primary electorate, Republican presidential candidates must stake out increasingly conservative positions. These in turn have acquired a growing antigovernment and antiminority tone, presenting federal institutions—Congress, the Internal Revenue Service, the Environmental Protection Agency, federal police forces, plus those who illegally or unfairly reap benefits from Washington, D.C.—as "enemies of the people." Not only are such positions socially conservative, but they also tend to delegitimate government and the welfare state policies of the past seventy-five years. But such positions do not grow out of some sort of objective political logic about the optimal size of government or the proper role of the state; rather, they tap into sentiments held by the active primary electorate regarding a desire for the state to establish and police *moral* boundaries.

There is no reason to believe that Wilson or any of his colleagues are sympathetic to far-right, militaristic, and racist currents that have surfaced and been discussed in the media since the bombing of the Oklahoma City Federal Building in April 1995. Nor, for that matter, is there anything new about running against government or minorities in the quest for public office. But attacks on Washington and federal efforts to redress economic, social, and political inequities range from the mild antistatist claims of a Bob Dole to right-wing conspiracy theories about black helicopters subscribed to by a Helen Chenoweth.[23] With the systematic delegitimization of some aspects of government, the state and its representatives become the focus of broader attacks on their legitimacy. These attacks, moreover, have less and less to do with what government can or should do, and more and more to do with politicians' adherence to fundamental social, moral, and constitutional values.[24] And they are increasingly couched in historically constructed *cultural* terms, thereby challenging membership in the American polity of certain groups, ethnic as well as political. They are, in other words, *constitutive* challenges.

MULTICULTURALISM AS CONSPIRACY AGAINST THE NATION

In an article on the collapse of the "First Russian Republic," Michael Urban points out that "Ordinarily, the concept of ethnic or national conflict connotes a hostile relationship that has developed between or among different ethnic or national groups." Within homogenous nationalities, however, we might see "various groups laying mutually exclusive claims to represent a single nation."[25]

Urban writes about Russia, where the Yeltsin government has been sponsoring a competition for the best conceptualization of a new Russian ideology, but he might as well have been speaking of the United States. What is fundamentally at stake in Russia—who is a "true" Russian?—is also the case in the United States: What does it mean to be "American"? What must one do to be a member of the American community or nation? To what ascriptive or shared characteristics and beliefs must one subscribe in order to be accepted?[26] That this question, once thought to be long settled, has not been decided can be seen in the vociferous attack from some quarters on the notion of "multiculturalism." Multiculturalism is viewed by those opposed to it not only as a repudiation of fundamental American beliefs, but also as a conspiracy against the nation and its founding culture.[27]

Of course, the United States has never been as culturally homogenous or unchanging as is sometimes pictured in political rhetoric or imagined in public discourse. Still, there does exist a core mythology, rooted in images of the Founding Fathers, the American Revolution, religion, family, and capitalism. These are routinely invoked in discussions of American history, its politics and social programs, and so on. As William S. Lind (of the Center for Cultural Conservatism at the Free Congress Research and Education Foundation) put it several years ago, "Traditional American religious and cultural values remain the foundation of both prosperity and liberty; if America abandons them, it will end up neither prosperous nor free."[28] Who threatens such values? Who claims that they should be abandoned? Critics of multiculturalism argue that it involves an attack on the United States itself and have gone so far as to declare a "culture war" to be under way. While there is no single definition of what the term itself means—it depends, as Humpty Dumpty would have it, on "which is to be master—that's all"—we can characterize

it as a movement whose members seek others with whom they share cultural and ascriptive bases on which to organize, associate, and perhaps act politically. This is radical only insofar as it overturns the American myth of the "melting pot," via which all citizens, of whatever background, came to adopt the dominant, mostly white American creed of patriotism.

According to Lind, therefore, the threat to America comes from not only foreign sources, but also, in his words, "the explicit assault on Western culture by 'politically correct' radicals," the acolytes of multiculturalism. Huntington argues the following:

> The American multiculturalists . . . reject their country's cultural heritage. . . . The multiculturalists also challenged a central element of the American Creed, by substituting for the rights of individuals the rights of groups, defined largely in terms of race, ethnicity, sex [*sic*] and sexual preference.[29]

Oddly, the culture war is being conducted less against multiculturalism per se than against traitors within the ranks, in line with Freud's "narcissism of small differences." How else to explain Newt Gingrich's analysis of the impact of the so-called "counterculture" on American society, a tendency that he has claimed is "terrified of the opportunity to actually renew American civilization."[30]

Such renewal seems to involve a revival of the two hundred years preceding the 1960s and the creation of a peaceful country and social consensus that hardly ever existed. Others have sounded similar trumpets. For example, in a 1991 essay on multiculturalism entitled "Whose America?," Paul Gray warned:

> The customs, beliefs and principles that have unified the U.S. . . . for more than two centuries are being challenged with a ferocity not seen since the Civil War. . . . Put bluntly: Do Americans still have faith in the vision of their country as a cradle of individual rights and liberties, or must they relinquish the teaching of some of these freedoms to further the goals of the ethnic and social groups to which they belong?[31]

Supporters of multiculturalism would deny such intent and assert that the movement represents an effort to appreciate the contributions of non-Western, nonwhite societies to American culture, an effort that, if successful, would contribute to greater social equality

and cultural enrichment. This seems fairly innocuous, but there is, I would argue, a fundamental misunderstanding of what is actually going on.

Both perspectives seem to take it for granted that what is at issue here is a fairly simple struggle for power: which is to be master—that's all. The master, however, gets to define the culture, and the culture defines how people will behave. In a world of economic liberalization and individual opportunity, why does this matter? Surely culture is next to irrelevant? No. As I have suggested elsewhere,

> Defining oneself in [different cultural] terms requires defining someone else in different terms; differentiation thus draws a boundary between the self and the Other. This Other is not, at first, necessarily a threat in terms of one's own continued existence, although ethnicity can and does become securitized. But the peaceful acceptance of an Other requires that boundaries be drawn somewhere else, and that security, the speech act, specify another Other. . . . There are always implicit risks in the peaceful acceptance of an Other as a legitimate ontology, because doing so raises the possibility, however remote, of accepting the Other's characteristics as a legitimate alternative and, consequently, of being taken over by the Other.[32]

In this struggle—and despite exclamations of allegiance to political liberalism—demography seems to be destiny: majorities rule, minorities lose. This notion was evident in the political response to the ideas thought to be present in Lani Guenier's writings; it cropped up in commentaries on the Million Man March; it is evident in debates over employment and welfare mothers. That whites still constitute a demographic majority throughout the United States—even in places such as California—does not, however, temper that majority's fear that it is in decline and will at some point in the future be overtaken by others. In the future, if majorities continue to rule, members of the formerly majority culture will have to either adjust to these new realities or struggle to maintain the old ones.

Constitutive conflict is thus about the nature and content of the American social contract—and the way it is changing or being changed. Those who advocate a return to "traditional values" are, in

effect, endorsing the reinstatement of social conditions as they imagine them to have been in the past—*whether or not they ever existed in the imagined form.* To accomplish this reconstruction, it is necessary to undo those changes that have, it is thought, led to current conditions. Inasmuch as this would wreak economic havoc and lead to much greater social turbulence, the next best possibility is to attempt to change society's historical consciousness, editing it in such a way as to make that past a golden age when the problems of the present did not exist. Nationalism is, after all, about the creation and possession of a particular history that provides the legitimation of the particular nation. Lose control of history, and you lose the nation.[33]

BLACK HELICOPTERS, UNMARKED CARS, AND NEW WORLD ORDERS[34]

The extremes of constitutive conflict are most notable in the emergence of the mostly white and religiously conservative militias or "Patriot Movement." Although the origins of the militias in their more or less current form can be traced back at least to the 1950s,[35] the movement only really emerged in the public eye after the bombing of the Oklahoma City Federal Building in April 1995. Prior to 1995, there had been a limited amount of research conducted on these groups; since that time, the literature has exploded, although it remains largely in the realm of storytelling.[36] Understandably, the members of these groups are reluctant to discuss with nonmembers their beliefs and practices, although they are all too willing to post them on Web sites.[37] Nonetheless, Web sites, newspaper and journal reports, and recent books contain enough information to illustrate how these groups and their members view the American state and government.[38]

According to these sources, on the order of 10,000 to 100,000 Americans belong to militias, although some observers believe that the number of "soft supporters" could run into the millions.[39] The organized groups are found primarily in three parts of the United States: the "Rust Belt," especially Michigan and midwestern farming regions; rural areas throughout the west, where property rights are thought to be threatened by environmental regulation; and inland sections of the far west—between the Cascades and the Great Plains—which have the lowest minority population in the contigu-

ous United States.[40] These are regions whose historical comparative advantage lay in raw material extraction and commodity production, and which have been hit particularly hard by the vagaries of international markets and globalization over the past twenty years.[41] Historically, moreover, these areas have proved fertile ground for populist movements of both right and left, which have grown most rapidly during difficult economic periods among people who have found their relative material status in decline. As one newspaper story puts it,

> Many of the far-right extremists are relatively unskilled white males who are the unwitting and now angry victims of a rapidly changing world, a world where borders are constantly disappearing and a kind of "one-worldism" is rapidly engulfing them.[42]

Or, as an article on the Militia of Montana observes:

> The growth of militias in this state can in part be ascribed to the local psycho-geography and economic hard times. Montana is conservative and poor, and many of its citizens have always felt "colonized" by remote centers of power; the state suffered through a ten-year recession in the 1980s and is now enduring the transition from a mining and timber economy to a low-wage vacation and service economy.[43]

It would be a mistake, however, to leave it at that. Increasingly, this type of limited-education, blue-collar populism is being linked to white-collar workers who are fearful for their job security or have already been downsized (as the English like to say, "made redundant"). As seems to be the case with these types of groups throughout the world, many of the leaders of the Patriot groups are well-educated, articulate, and widely read professionals.[44] But, excepting a very small number of organizations and members, they are virtually all white, too.

Most of the militia members interviewed by journalists—who are on the lookout for the more extreme rather than the average member—seem to share a conspiratorial view of U.S. politics. The country, they claim, is coming under the control of orgranizations such as the Council on Foreign Relations, the Trilateral Commission, international bankers—often thought to be Jewish—and the United Nations, all of which are part of a plan to create a "one-world gov-

ernment."[45] "What has happened," claims a member of the El Dorado County (California) Militia, "is that the military have painted all their helicopters black and the government is run by FEMA [the Federal Emergency Management Agency]":

> If [President] Clinton declares a national emergency, he has this big multinational force, a United Nations force, made up of German, Dutch, French and Gurkha soldiers. There's a bunch of them out at the air base and a bunch more right across the border in Canada.[46]

According to another article,

> Some [conspiracy] theorists believe that proof of a planned U.N. takeover can be found on the back of a 1993 Kix cereal box, which shows a map of the United States carved up into 11 regions. This, conspiracists say, is an illustration of the New World Order plot to reduce the country to departments after the conquest.[47]

While the militias themselves seem not to have yet become involved in organized systemic violence against ethnic minorities, some of the more extreme groups with which they share ideas and views have been implicated in such acts. Indeed, although there is reported to be a growing migration of white racists to the Pacific Northwest—called the "Northwest Imperative"[48]—and few minority members in militias, most Patriot Movement groups stress that they are not racist.[49] They are more a manifestation of what has been called in another context "white siege culture"—that is, "Where a dominant group's self-awareness is heightened by attacks on its power and privilege . . . the group may mobilize its resources and members to respond to what are seen as threats to its well-being."[50]

Such violence as has occurred has been directed primarily toward government representatives and returned by the latter. A few well-known episodes, including the destruction of the Branch Davidian compound near Waco, the confrontation between federal agents and white separatist Randy Weaver in Ruby Ridge, Idaho, and the siege of the Montana Freemen compound, as well as the exhortations and activities of "home rule" advocates—who believe that the highest level of state authority is the county and the highest representative is the county sheriff—have fed a tendency to issue warnings about and threats against not only government police

agencies but also any agent of the federal government, including resource agency staff in the field.[51] These representatives, some fear, are there to take away property and rights, a view that is also offered by the "Wise Use" movement, as well as a few right-wing members of Congress.[52]

What are the central beliefs of these groups? First, they believe that the federal government's failure to respect individual rights—manifested in the Waco and Idaho episodes—its apparent yielding of authority to the United Nations and various "conspiratorial" organizations, and its support of various international trade initiatives such as NAFTA and the World Trade Organization are deliberately aimed against Americans. These make it illegitimate. Second, if the federal government has no local authority under the Constitution and the county is the fundamental unit of government, the authority of the federal state to regulate and enforce laws and contracts is called into question. Third, if Washington is the enemy, as some constitutional fundamentalists suggest, it should be resisted and even deposed, and this effort must originate at the local or regional level.[53] Thus Washington—and the culture associated with its politics—becomes the enemy that must be ejected from the body politic.

While these views might seem paranoid, if not wholly unreasonable, they are not an example of isolated extremism. Indeed they rest at one end of a continuum of beliefs that run from Christian Identity all the way to Republicans and Democrats in the middle of the political spectrum. And it is not that Pete Wilson and his colleagues endorse the extreme positions of these groups or the violence that might erupt as beliefs are put into action. What links the extreme with the middle is the systematic effort to delegitimize the existing political system and its policies. In the case of the politicians, this is done as an instrumental tool for mobilizing political supporters in various electoral contests, not in order to overthrow the state. In the case of militia members and others, it represents an effort to restore the constitutive beliefs—the "American Creed"—as the basis for politics and society. But if the state is illegitimate, then who is legitimate? And who decides?

THE END OF THE AMERICAN SOCIAL CONTRACT?

How might we explain these stories? In the sections that follow, I offer a two-part framework. Here I propose that although antistatism in the United States has a long and often tawdry history, this latest cycle is a reaction to what is broadly perceived as the erosion of the American social contract.[54] To reiterate the underlying framework: All stable countries are characterized by political and social arrangements that have some form of historical legitimacy.[55] The concept of the social contract is conventionally ascribed to Locke and Rousseau, who argued that the state is the result of what amounts to a contractual agreement among people to yield up certain "natural" rights and freedoms in exchange for political stability and protection. Locke went so far as to argue that no state was legitimate that did not rule with the "consent of the governed," a notion that retains its currency in the contemporary rage for "democratic enlargement." Rousseau's theory of the origin of the state owed much to the notion of consent as well, although he recognized that some sovereigns ruled through contempt, rather than consent, of the governed. Both philosophers acknowledged, as well, the importance of material life to the maintenance of the social contract. My use of the term is somewhat different in that it assumes nothing so formalized. Sometimes these contracts are expressed in written constitutions; at other times, they are not written down, but are found instead in the political and social institutions of a country. In either case, social contracts structure the terms of citizenship and inclusion in a country's political community, the rules of political participation, the political relationship between the central state and its various regions, and the distribution of material resources within the country.

Social contracts also tend to specify the roles that people may occupy within the country and society and the relationships between these roles. Frequently these roles and relationships have what we would call an "ethnic" or "religious" character as, for example, in the traditional caste system in India or the ethnic divisions of labor one might have found throughout the lands of the former Ottoman Empire, institutionalized in the *millet* system, and still found in places in the Caucasus (as well as in American cities). Such social contracts are frequently neither just, equitable, nor fair; they are,

however, widely accepted, and people tend to try not to disrupt them, if only because disruption can also affect the disruptors' material position. The social contract is therefore the constitutive source of social and political stability within countries. I do not claim that these social contracts are necessarily respectful of human rights or economically efficient; only that as historical constructs, they possess a certain degree of legitimacy and authority that allow societies to reproduce themselves in a fairly peaceful manner over extended periods of time.

These forms of social contract are not, of course, found only in "traditional" societies; the ex-socialist countries were also characterized by such arrangements, which were, once again, constitutive, if not constitutional. Certain groups or classes—the *nomenklatura*—were endowed with mostly informal rights and access to resources that gave them power and wealth within these societies, while other groups, lacking such rights and access, nonetheless had their welfare provided for by the arrangements in place.[56] Again, it is not my intention to argue the relative merits or faults of such contracts—only to point out that they maintained a relative degree of social stability and cohesion within these countries. It is critical to recognize, moreover, that social contracts as such are not only present with respect to state-society relations; societies themselves are characterized by such arrangements, often in spite of the active attempt by a state to alter or eliminate them. Institutions whose role it is to maintain political stability contribute to the maintenance of these social contracts, and so it should come as no surprise that when these institutions undergo transformations of a fundamental sort, so do social contracts. Indeed it is at these points of transformation that social conflict is most likely to break out.

Social contracts are characterized by certain terms of membership (or citizenship) to which are attached particular distributions of power and wealth, which have become institutionalized and legitimated over time.[57] Note, moreover, that actual possession of these attributes is not necessary; membership in or affiliation with the group to which those who actually possess power and wealth belong may be sufficient. Political and economic changes challenge these distributions and threaten those who have possessed power and wealth. At the same time, however, such transitions also offer great possibilities for power and wealth to those entrepreneurial enough

to see the opportunities inherent in the newly emerging systems. But they also provide the context in which political violence can erupt, as struggles develop over who is to gain access to the newly contested levers of institutional power. In the section that follows this one, I argue that the pressures forcing change in the social contract are to be found primarily in the economic sphere, the result, in part, of globalization. As I define the term here, globalization is more than just an economic phenomenon; it is also about the redrawing of borders and boundaries, with concommitant cultural and social effects. As such, it is a culturally destabilizing process with political implications for the nation-state that have hardly been acknowledged but which are potentially quite serious.

What then are the terms of the American social contract (or "Creed," as Huntington and others call it)? What does it take to become "an American" (as opposed to a citizen of the United States)?[58] Traditionally such questions were thought to be relatively easy to answer. One "melted" into American society—even if one did not give up all cultural attributes—found gainful employment that would improve one's lot, and participated regularly in the civic rituals of the country, including the customary invocation of its founding myths through voting, holidays, education, and political rhetoric.[59] The three major clauses implicit in this process—equal economic opportunity, procedural equality, and national allegiance through integration—have long been fundamental. They are principles of action to which are linked specific ideological beliefs.

EQUAL ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

Theoretically, at least, each American is granted the possibility of achieving a modicum of economic well-being through access to education and job markets.[60] Historically the basis for such opportunity and access was to be found in, on the one hand, the steady expansion of the American economy, which created a rising demand for labor (except during periods of economic recession) and, on the other hand, through growth in the educational system, which not only supplied the demands of business, but also socialized children into the practices of American politics and production.

In practice, access was always uneven, with some groups—especially racial minorities such as African-Americans, Asian-Americans, Hispanics, and Latinos—finding themselves structurally disadvantaged for historical and geographic reasons. The civil rights movement, as well as subsequent affirmative action programs that were later extended to other ethnic and racial minorities, were intended to redress these disadvantages by providing a substitute for the social connections and linkages to power that accrue to members of the dominant group.[61] Despite the claims of opponents to such programs, these programs have been focused primarily on *individual,* not *group,* access and opportunity, and thus do not violate the tenet of individual equal economic opportunity. I return to this point below.

PROCEDURAL EQUALITY

The second "clause" of the American social contract granted equal legal and political rights to all Americans. Again in practice such equality was not granted to everyone, which was one reason for voter registration efforts during the civil rights movement and under subsequent federal legislation. It was also the rationale behind the extension of certain procedural rights, through court decisions and legislation, to individuals arrested on suspicion of having committed crimes. Provision of such legal rights was intended to develop a sense of membership in the political community and responsibility to it that was not forthcoming in the social and economic contexts. Through such membership, it was believed, the citizen would come to feel as though s/he had been treated fairly and with justice, no matter what the specific outcomes of political, legislative, and judicial processes might be.

ALLEGIANCE THROUGH INTEGRATION

The third "clause" of the contract, more implicit than the other two, made membership in the American "community" contingent upon an individual's acceptance, espousal, and practice of certain patriotic tenets. This included adherence to the country's founding myths. Following World War II, anticommunism became an addi-

tional badge of inclusion (who can forget "America: Love it or leave it"?). To reject such tenets and myths was tantamount to treason, and for a time, anyone who professed support for communism was alienated from the community at large, fired from his job, and even expelled from the country. Such allegiance to the nation also made it possible, on the one hand, to obscure various internal divisions within the nation and, on the other hand, to justify and promote various welfare-state programs—ranging from the War on Poverty to the Apollo program to the National Defense Highway Act to the New Math—as integral parts of a united cold war effort against the enemy.

There are other clauses in the social contract, but these three have been the central ones. The critical point here is that each element is related to *individual* behavior, not that of *groups* (or places specifically defined in terms of disadvantaged minorities or geography).[62] In recent decades, in spite of widespread belief to the contrary, there have been no systematic efforts to redress the *structural* economic disadvantages accruing to ethnic minorities as communities within the United States, unlike the case in the European Union, which has active programs of redistribution to redress some of the disparities in wealth among member-states and regions.[63] To be sure, affirmative action programs have been targeted toward members of ethnic minorities, but in fact, in contrast to regional policies in places such as Yugoslavia or Europe, it has been individuals within these minorities, and not the groups themselves, that have been the targets of such policies. In other words, affirmative action has been entirely in keeping with the liberal, individualistic tendencies of U.S. politics. Nonetheless, there is a widely held and growing belief that such programs provide collective advantages to minorities and therefore represent a fracturing of the postwar social contract.[64]

As suggested by the stories presented above, a large segment of conventional wisdom has to be that a liberal and alienated government, in collaboration with a social and political elite, is systematically trying to promote multiculturalism and undermine white privilege. But the erosion of the social contract is not quite so simple. First, while "equal economic opportunity remains the sine qua non of the system, as evidenced by Newt Gingrich's repeated invocation of the concept of an "opportunity society," one must possess appro-

priate tools and skills in order to seize opportunities. Those who lack the requisite skills or cannot sell themselves to prospective employers might well face dismal economic prospects or downward mobility. Moreover, to the extent that those who confront these dismal prospects see their lot as arising from the policies put in place by the country's political leadership—which they are, but not in the way generally understood—the material basis for broad belief in this element of the social contract is undermined.

Procedural equality remains in place, although it is coming under increasing pressure as well. The number of registered voters in the United States continues to decline, as does actual participation in elections. There is a growing movement, as evidenced in laws such as "Three strikes and you're out" and Proposition 187 in California, to strip various procedural rights from two-time felons, illegal immigrants, and even legal ones. Efforts to limit AFDC (Aid to Families with Dependent Children) and other welfare benefits granted to those who have moved from one state to another essentially restrict rights of citizenship granted in principle by the U.S. Constitution. And whether it is true or not, events such as the criminal trial of O. J. Simpson suggest to many that wealth makes it possible to evade the law.[65]

Finally, allegiance through integration has become the focus of the culture wars, as I suggested above. The collapse of communism removed one central and unifying element in the contract—anticommunism—and in spite of a search for new enemies, nothing has as yet emerged to take its place.[66] Paradoxically, perhaps, the changing demographic complexion of the United States and the emergence of affirmative action and multiculturalism are in no small part a *result* of the policies associated with anticommunism. These policies, on the one hand, facilitated the immigration of large numbers of refugees from Communist countries in the name of maintaining that social contract while, on the other, they helped to foster the economic prosperity that has made the United States so economically attractive to immigrants.[67] But economic globalization has eroded the old borders between countries that made allegiance through integration essential in the past; cultural loyalties are split, even if political ones are not.

IT'S THE ECONOMY, STUPID!

How can we explain the erosion of the American social contract and the cultural conflict that has emerged? As I suggested above, conventional wisdom claims that the emergence of both multiculturalism and the largely white reaction to it is cultural and value-based. Few attempts have been made to ask *why* culture and values appear to so many to be under threat—most accounts invoke "modernization" and resistance to it.[68] Consequently the culture wars are waged in and through a variety of venues, including the media, education, politics, and social policy. Studiously avoided by almost everyone, however, are the economic roots of the entire process of social and cultural change. Indeed it is in the economy that the origins of culture wars are to be found, in the final stages of integration of America into the global economy (and to some extent vice versa), the global move toward hyperliberalism, and the industrial revolution associated with the information age.[69]

The result of these policies—liberalization, social reorganization, and a partial form of structural adjustment—has been a squeeze on labor and the privileging of capital.[70] Gradually the squeeze has been extended from the blue-collar to the white-collar workforce, as well as the military and defense sectors, with successive downsizings and mergers among corporations as they struggle to reduce costs, improve balance sheets, and maintain share value.[71] By now, whether or not it is statistically correct, there is a widespread perception within major segments of the American labor force that no forms of employment are secure.[72] While policymakers and academics such as Robert Reich argue that "symbolic analysts," the production workers of the information age, are secure for the future,[73] the reality is that new information technologies may make many of them redundant too.[74]

Moreover, many people who are downsized or mergered out of a job have little or no chance of finding new employment at comparable wage rates.[75] As Paul Krugman has somewhat optimistically put it, trying to explain what is happening,

> Modern technology in effect mandates much wider disparities in earnings among workers than we have experienced in the past. . . . In the long run . . . the trend toward growing economic

> disparities is likely to reverse itself even in the absence of any deliberate policy action. The Industrial Revolution created huge inequalities in its first half-century, but eventually produced [after fifty years] a middle-class society of unprecedented affluence. The Information Revolution will probably do the same.[76]

Until this happens, however, the effects of this new industrial revolution will have to work their way through the system. Those who do not lose their jobs will be fearful of the possibility; those who do lose their jobs will become disillusioned with the system; those who are educated but unable to find jobs commensurate with their skills will become cynical and nihilistic. And all will be thrown into the hypercompetitive arena of the "opportunity society," where success is measured in terms of wealth and status. The practical consequence of the process Krugman describes is that the material basis for American "culture" is being steadily eroded, even as we hear calls from conservative pundits for a need to restore that culture through a return to historical "values." But whereas material prosperity legitimated the American social contract of the 1950s, a revival of the value system of the 1950s will not restore the material prosperity of those times.[77] The reality is that not only is such restoration not possible, but also attempting to do so would further undermine the material base of American society.

A true return to the values of the 1950s would require a reversion to an economic Fortress America. Foreign capital inflows would dry up, interest rates would skyrocket, the value of the dollar would plummet, and a bear market on Wall Street and elsewhere would make 1929 look like a picnic. The resulting decline in living standards would hardly bode well for political stability. There is no turning back. Greater integration into the global economy poses risks for American society as well, in that the resulting benefits will not be distributed evenly across the United States. Some regions, some groups, and some individuals will find themselves better off than others but less willing to compensate those who do not do as well. In this context, it may well be, as David Rieff has suggested, that multiculturalism is a "superstructure" to these economic transformations, simply a means of making more money by appealing to niche markets.[78]

FAULT LINES AND FRONT LINES

Why does the erosion of the social contract matter, and what does it have to do with cultural conflict? To understand this connection, we must turn to a discussion of security and the state.[79] Generally speaking, national security is seen in *material* terms: the protection of territory, population, and resources against external enemies and internal subversion. But this conception is incomplete. At the core of any nation-state—in its social contract—there are a set of notions laying out what it represents. A state may embody certain ideals—freedom, liberty, etc.—or the aspirations of a group of people self-defined as a nation—Jews, Palestinians, etc.—or notions about a golden past and a bright future. These notions are wrapped up in a mythos that is central to what we generally call *nationalism*, and it is this that is generally held to animate the political life of the nation-state. But nationalism is not merely a means of animating the state; it is also central to its *reproduction*—that is, to its survival as a unified and distinct political entity.

Ordinarily threats to the survival or continuity of a state are seen as originating from the outside—the security dilemma and self-help in anarchy are the classical representations of this problem—while domestic problems fall under the police powers of the sovereign.[80] It is perhaps worth noting here that governments routinely suppress dissidents or "subversives" in the name of national security, although what is really being protected is a particular regime and not the state per se. There is, however, another category of domestic "threats" that strike at the very legitimacy of the idea of the state, and it is with these that I am concerned here. These are *constitutive* threats, which undermine the basis on which the state is organized and may, if allowed to proceed, disrupt domestic political continuity. Paradoxically, however, constitutive threats are rarely allowed to proceed to a logical conclusion; more frequently, the majority against whom such threats appear to be aimed will react to protect its prerogatives.

The stories told above suggest that the security of the state and its society must be intimately bound up with the national mythos—what Barry Buzan calls the *idea* of the state.[81] A failure to maintain the mythos can be, from the state's perspective, merely annoying or possibly catastrophic. That is why enemies are important.[82] In-

deed to the extent that it is possible to define external enemies arrayed against the nation, the mythos of national soli darity is reinforced, and having defined an "other," it is also much easier to define the "self."[83] When an enemy can be found, the national security mythos reproduces itself almost without effort.

Suffice it to say here that American postwar "culture" was rooted in a certain self-image of the relationship among individual and national identities, work, and economic growth. Both proponents and critics of liberalism often argue that economic growth is essential to social peace inasmuch as if everyone sees his or her position improving in absolute terms, he or she will be satisfied; a stagnant economic product, by contrast, sets the stage for distributional conflict.[84] When such conflict breaks out, who has a right to a share of the pie? With the argument I presented above about the ethnic/religious/class nature of the social contract, it becomes apparent why such conflict might break out along those preexisting divides. The history of those divides does matter.

In order to "recenter" displaced individuals—and explain their displacement in terms of the social requirements of the nation-state—it has historically been helpful, if not necessary, to find an enemy. One way is to create new boundaries, be they national, social, or both. During the cold war, the enemy was to be found outside the boundaries of the "free world."[85] In the name of national security, consequently, a variety of state-led welfare policies and economic strategies was deployed that might not under other circumstances have been ideologically permitted or politically possible. In the United States, in particular, national security policy allowed the development of a relationship in which the interests of state, capital, and labor, in joint opposition to communism, appeared to be complementary (whether true or not).[86] This coalition was greatly weakened beginning in the 1970s, as political relations with the Soviet Union and China improved, and it was further undermined by the structurally rooted loss of international competitiveness and chronic trade deficits. In the end, capital had no choice but to treat American labor as the functional equivalent of labor anywhere else in the world, and their interests diverged. The state, having yielded its mobilization prerogative to the market, had no choice but to follow.[87]

None of this explains clearly where and how the preexisting divides have been or might become real fractures. I would argue here

that there is a dialectical relationship between the processes of economic globalization and political fragmentation,[88] and that in the United States multiculturalism has something to do with the latter. Where the United States differs from places beset by ethnic and sectarian conflict is that it is not administratively divided along ethnic or national lines. There are no explicit fault lines "on the ground" that could stand as obvious boundaries between competitive territories because patterns of settlement and development generally cross state, county, and municipal borders. There are no juridically defined political units whose constitutive character is ethnic—at least not at the present time. But embedded in this dialectical relationship there is the possibility of spatial differentiation that could in the future have ethnic content.

Demographically such regions are to be found in some parts of the country, and not surprisingly, these have become potential front lines in the culture wars. What is surprising perhaps is that these regions are not necessarily ethnically or racially diverse—the Pacific Northwest is one such place—and that the target of public opinion is as much the political system itself as identifiable groups of people. As differentiation among places is fostered, by both economic/political competition and scapegoating, the ethnic element is more than likely to become sharper; indeed the very essence of the culture warriors' attack on multiculturalism is to be found in the latter's difference from "traditional" American (read white) norms, values, and culture.

Discrimination against ethnic minorities is not a new phenomenon in the United States; it was of course enshrined in the Constitution with respect to the question of slavery and institutionalized in Jim Crow laws following the Civil War. Other forms of discrimination against minorities have not been constitutively grounded, however; rather, they have been enforced through social norms and laws. While social discrimination has formed a more or less continuous background throughout the past two centuries, legal discrimination has been more cyclical, a response to both economic crisis and international political tensions. Thus, for example, the internment of Japanese during World War II was a response to war; earlier impositions on Chinese immigrants and restrictions aimed primarily at East Europeans during the first half of the twentieth century were

largely the result of economic pressures. In this respect, such "nativist" restrictions are nothing new.

Indeed responses by the white majority to successive waves of immigration into the United States have had a cyclical character running in parallel to the state of the domestic and international economies. This should come as no surprise either. During periods of relative prosperity and low unemployment, real or apparent competition in the labor market is limited; when recessions or bad economic times hit, this competition becomes a catalyst for antagonism against those who "take away jobs." Anti-immigrant nativist movements among the white population have also typically had a cultural character that paradoxically can be understood as a "liberal" response to deteriorating economic conditions. Indeed antagonisms are more often expressed in cultural as opposed to economic terms, inasmuch as the former are easier to understand—even if wrong—and have greater political resonance. Periods of prosperity are also likely to instill greater self-confidence in the members of society, as well as the society itself, and this also weighs against scapegoating of the culturally different.

Finally, "visibility" is important. Groups of people who maintain a low profile, for whatever reason, are unlikely to generate much in the way of resentment on the part of the white majority. It is no accident that the civil rights movement began in earnest in the 1950s and reached its apogee in the 1960s, for that is the period during and after a major influx of blacks into northern urban areas in search of opportunities growing out of the transformation of the American economy after World War II. The growing visibility of Latino communities in recent years, especially in the American Southwest, is a result of economic "push-pull" factors in Latin America and the United States and the changing demographics of places, such as the Northeast and southern California, which are often the focus of media attention.

That episodes of ethnic tensions in the United States have been largely catalyzed by changing economic conditions is less interesting for the purposes of this paper than how and why this latest round might be different from earlier ones. One of the framing hypotheses of this paper suggests that it is the changes in the social contract and efforts by ethnic entrepreneurs to restore power or wrest it from dominant elites—both wrought by the larger processes of global eco-

nomic integration and liberalization—that trigger hostilities between self-defined ethnic groups. In principle, this process ought to be evident in earlier cycles as well. What is different is that in earlier times, integration was not so evidently global, liberalization was not so unbounded, and the consequent changes in the domestic division of labor were not quite so all-encompassing as they appear to be today. Whether these processes are "real" is less important than how they are being perceived and acted upon. The result is a growing legitimation crisis of the American state and what appears to be an increase in constitutive conflict, especially that with a racial character.

Ultimately there is significant risk in the rhetorical tactics of those who would restore "traditional values and culture," inasmuch as there is little chance that the root causes of such extremism can or will be addressed through ordinary politics. Even were the Republicans to take full control of Washington, they could not fully undo the effects of globalization. There is likely, as a result, to be growing frustration and anger on the political extreme(s) that could move toward the political middle. The inability of American political institutions to address these root causes in the short term will further delegitimate them without putting in place new institutions or ideologies. There might then be a temptation in some places to "go it alone." Territorial secession seems far-fetched today; it could look less absurd in the future.

CONCLUSION

In this paper, I have offered a framework for analyzing the erosion of the American social contract, a consequence of processes of globalization set in train following the end of World War II. In essence, I have argued that the favored material position of the United States during the 1950s and 1960s was during the following decades eroded by the very economic institutions put in place through the Bretton Woods system. This was neither intentional nor foreseen, but it had the effect of eroding the terms of the domestic social contract and creating political disaffection among certain segments of the polity who have seen their privileged position under

threat by both multiculturalism and economic transformations. There is no "ethnic conflict" in the United States, but there is nevertheless a large and disaffected group of white "dispossessed" who cannot come to terms with the social transformation that is a result of American success in the world. The resentment of these groups and individuals is channeled into a challenge to the legitimacy of the federal system, a challenge that runs the gamut of the American political spectrum. The extreme right proposes to take up arms in defense of its eroding position by positing an international threat to the national security of the country, aided and abetted by the federal government and its representatives. A failure to address these resentments—and I argue that they cannot be addressed, given the structure of domestic economic interests—will further exacerbate them. The "true nation" might, in this schema, rise up against the "false one" and restore the proper order of things, whatever that might be.

> Human beings are continually getting into situations wherein they can no longer understand the world around them. Something happens to them that they feel they did not deserve. Their suffering is described as an injustice, a wrong, an evil, bad luck, a catastrophe. Because they themselves live correctly, act in an upright, just manner, go to the right church, belong to a superior culture, they feel that this suffering is undeserved. In the search for a reason why such evil things happen to them, they soon come upon another group, an opponent group to which they then attribute certain characteristics: This group obviously causes them to suffer by effecting dark, evil, and secretly worked out plans against them. Thus the world around them is no longer as it should be. It becomes more and more an illusion, a semblance, while at the same time the evil that has occurred, or is occurring and is becoming more and more essential, takes place *behind* reality. Their world becomes unhinged, is turned upside down [*sic*]; in order to prevent damage to or destruction of their own group (religion, culture, nation, race) they must drive out, render harmless, or even destroy those—called "conspirators"—carrying out their evil plans in secret.[89]

NOTES

1. Serge Moscovici, "The Conspiracy Mentality," in *Changing Conceptions of Conspiracy,* ed. Carl F. Graumann and Serge Moscovici (New York: Springer Verlag, 1987), p. 154.
2. "An Introduction to the Republic of Texas"; http://republic-of-texas.prg/Intro.html. Emphasis in original.
3. As it turns out, Ambassador Richard McLaren had been excommunicated from the "true" Republic of Texas for his activities. So he was a criminal separatist, so to speak.
4. See, for example, "Conservative Accuses Gingrich of Cozying Up to Liberals," *San Francisco Chronicle,* 6 February 1997, p. A8.
5. I am not making this up; see Samuel P. Huntington, "The West, Civilizations, and Civilization," in *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996), ch. 12, esp. p. 304.
6. Benjamin R. Barber, *Jihad vs. McWorld* (New York: Times Books, 1995); Robert Kaplan, *The Ends of the Earth* (New York: Random House, 1996); Francis Fukuyama, *Trust: The Social Virtues and the Creation of Prosperity* (New York: Free Press, 1995).
7. Huntington, *Clash of Civilizations,* pp. 19, 20.
8. *Ibid.,* p. 21; emphasis added.
9. See, for example, Gearóid Ó Tuathail, "At the End of Geopolitics? Reflections on a Plural Problematic at the Century's End," *Alternatives* 22, 1 (January–March 1997): 35–55.
10. Halford J. Mackinder, *Democratic Ideals and Reality* (New York: Norton, 1919/1962); Nicholas J. Spykman, *The Geography of the Peace,* ed. H. R. Nicholl (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1944).
11. Huntington, *Clash of Civilizations,* pp. 26–27.
12. *Ibid.,* p. 305.
13. Steven A. Capps, "Wilson Sworn in with a Blast at Feds," *San Francisco Examiner,* 8 January 1995, p. A-1.
14. Wilson's suspicions survived the demise of his candidacy: he subsequently turned down a $40 million federal grant for California's educational system, claiming that it would be too intrusive.
15. Michael Janofsky, "White Supremacists Hold Hate Fest," *San Francisco Examiner,* 23 July 1995 (*New York Times* wire service), p. A2.
16. David Laitin, "Hegemony and Religious Conflict: British Imperial Control and Political Cleavages in Yorubaland," in *Bringing the State Back In,* ed. Peter B. Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer, and Theda Skocpol (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 302.
17. *Ibid.*; Paul R. Brass, "Ethnicity and Nationality Formation," *Ethnicity* 3, 3 (September 1976): 225–39.

18. See Lipschutz, "Seeking a State of One's Own," in this volume.
19. The white and black responses to the verdict in the Simpson trial, to the Million Man March, and to other racially polarized incidents suggest that a very serious racial divide lies just beneath the surface of American politics; see two essays by George M. Fredrickson: "Land of Opportunity?" *New York Review of Books* 43, 6 (4 April 1996): 4–7, and "Far from the Promised Land," *New York Review of Books* 43, 7 (18 April 1996): 16–20.
20. See John Rawls, "Two Concepts of Rules," *Philosophical Review* 64 (1955): 25.
21. Donald G. Baker, "Race, Power and White Siege Cultures," *Social Dynamics* 1, 2 (1975):144.
22. "Fewer Blacks Admitted to California Law School," *New York Times,* 15 May 1997 (national edition), p. A14.
23. Nina Burleigh, "The Movement's Sympathetic Ears on Capitol Hill," *Time,* 8 May 1995, p. 66.
24. For numerous examples of this point, see http://www.best.com/~jdulaney/politics.html.
25. Michael Urban in this volume.
26. Liberalism, of course, eschews ascriptive characteristics as indicators of nationality, yet shared beliefs, while not genetic or kin-based, are usually accepted without question.
27. Huntington, *Clash of Civilizations,* pp. 305–7.
28. William S. Lind, "Defending Western Culture," *Foreign Policy* 84 (Fall 1991): 40. See also Maureen Dowd, "G.O.P.'s Rising Star Pledges to Right Wrongs of the Left," *New York Times,* 10 November 1994 (national edition), p. A1.
29. Huntington, *Clash of Civilizations,* p. 306.
30. Cited in Dowd.
31. Paul Gray, "Whose America?" *Time*, 8 July 1991, p. 13.
32. Ronnie D. Lipschutz, "Negotiating the Boundaries of Difference and Security at Millennium's End," in *On Security,* ed. Ronnie D. Lipschutz (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), p. 218. See also Moscovici.
33. This paragraph would not be complete without invocation of George Orwell's *1984.*
34. For those unfamiliar with right-wing conspiracy theories, the New World Order is a UN-orchestrated movement intent on taking over the United States using unmarked (black) helicopters and cars, Russian tanks, and foreign troops stationed in Canada just across the U.S.-Canadian border.
35. See, e.g., "Robert Bolivar DePugh and the Minutemen," in John George and Laird Wilcox, *Nazis, Communists, Klansmen, and Others on the Fringe* (Buffalo: Prometheus Books, 1992), pp. 274–98.

36. Among the books that discuss some of these beliefs are James A. Aho, *This Thing of Darkness: A Sociology of the Enemy* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1994), and Michael Barkun, *Religion and the Racist Right: The Origins of the Christian Identity Movement* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994).

37. See, e.g., http://www.best.com/~jdulaney/urls.html; http://hatewatch.org; and Mark Rupert's tour at http://www.maxwell.syr.edu/maxpages/faculty/merupert.

38. The weekly newsmagazines—*Time*, *Newsweek, U.S. News and World Report*—as well as the *New York Times* provided extensive coverage of the Oklahoma City bombing, but most reports focused on guns and conspiracies. For brief overviews, see Alex Heard, "The Road to Oklahoma City: Inside the World of the Waco-Obsessed Right," *New Republic,* 15 May 1995, pp. 15–20; Chip Berlet and Matthew Lyon, "Militia Nation," *The Progressive* 59, 6 (June 1995): 22–25; Garry Wills, "The New Revolutionaries," *New York Review of Books,* 10 August 1995, pp. 50–55, and the books cited therein; Michael Kelly, "The Road to Paranoia," *New Yorker,* 19 June 1995, pp. 60–75. For a somewhat more sympathetic view, see Alan Bock, "Weekend Warriors: Is the Militia Movement a Threat?" *National Review* 47, 10 (29 May 1995): 39–42.

39. Berlet and Lyon, p. 22; Jill Smolowe, "Enemies of the State," *Time*, 8 May 1995, pp. 59–60. According to an April 1995 Gallup Poll, almost 40 percent of those surveyed agreed with the statement that the federal government "poses an immediate threat to the rights and freedoms of ordinary Americans" (cited in Victoria Pope, "Notes from the Underground," *U.S. News and World Report,* 5 June 1995, p. 24).

40. Marc Cooper, "Montana's Mother of All Militias," *The Nation*, 22 May 1995, p. 715.

41. See, for example, Timothy Egan, "Siege Is Subplot in Town's Survival Drama," *New York Times,* 23 April 1996 (national edition), p. A1; Mark E. Rupert, "Globalization and the Reconstruction of Common Sense in the U.S.," in *Innovation and Transformation in International Sudies,* ed. S. Gill and J. Mittelman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997). The article can be found at Rupert's Web site (see n. 37 above).

42. Michael Taylor, "Extremists Bracing for New World Order," *San Francisco Chronicle,* 25 April 1995, p. A7.

43. Cooper, p. 717. See also Beverly A. Brown, *In Timber Country: Working People's Stories of Environmental Conflict and Urban Flight* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995).

44. Many of the leaders of right-wing ethnic and sectarian movements around the world are well-educated professionals, although the groups are invariably described as "grassroots" organizations. So far as I know, this phenomenon has not been studied.

45. Michael Janofsky, "World of the Patriots' Movement Is Haunted by Demons and Conspiracies," *New York Times,* 31 May 1995, p. A14. See also Berlet and Lyon; Pope; Smolowe. See especially http://www.best.com/~jdulaney/urls.html. Perversely, not long ago one found similar conspiracy theories about the Council on Foreign Relations, the Trilateral Commission, and other such groups emanating from the political left.
46. Taylor. What is ironic in this statement is that, in the 1980s, FEMA was assigned the task by the Reagan administration of conducting urban civil defense evacuation drills as a part of a program of nuclear deterrence against the Soviet Union. See Daniel Deudney, "Political Fission: State Structure, Civil Society, and Nuclear Security Politics in the United States," in Lipschutz, ed., pp. 87–123.
47. Serge F. Kovaleski, "Theories on Bombing Flourish," *San Francisco Chronicle,* 11 July 1995 (*Washington Post* wire service), p. A7. Others claim the map shows nine or ten regions: Philip Weiss, "Outcasts Digging in for the Apocalypse," *Time*, 1 May 1995, p. 49; Tom Morgenthau and Steven Shabad, "The View from the Far Right," *Newsweek,* 1 May 1995, pp. 37–38.
48. Tom Reiss, "Home on the Range," *New York Times*, 26 May 1995, p. A11.
49. Whether the militias are inherently racist is a contested question. Some are integrated; some are driven only by constitutional concerns; a few are even African-American. Many, however, appear to subscribe to racialist, if not racist, views. The Christian Identity movement, which has been linked to some armed groups and the Aryan Nation, is clearly racist.
50. Baker, p. 144.
51. Wills, pp. 54–55; Morgenthau and Shabad; Pope; Smolowe.
52. David Helvarg, "The Anti-Enviro Connection," *The Nation,* 22 May 1995, pp. 722–23; Burleigh.
53. Paul Glastris, "Patriot Games," *Washington Monthly* 27, 6 (June 1995): 23–26.
54. See Lipschutz, "Seeking a State of One's Own," in this volume.
55. "Stability" is obviously a tenuous concept. What appears to the outside or historical observer to be stable is usually quite dynamic. See, for example, the semifictional account of Višegrad in Bosnia in Ivo Andrić, *The Bridge on the Drina*, trans. L. F. Edwards (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977).
56. Leading to the famous dictum: "We pretend to work, they pretend to pay us."
57. These are the "conjunctural" time scales of Braudel, 50–100 years.
58. Verena Stolcke, "Talking Culture: New Boundaries, New Rhetorics of Exclusion in Europe," *Current Anthropology* 36, 1 (February 1995): 1–23, makes the distinction between citizenship, which involves legal rights and responsibilities, and nationality, which involves membership in the nation, either by birthplace (*jus soli*) or blood (*jus sanguinis*).
59.

This process is discussed, albeit in the British context, in T.H. Marshall, *Citizenship and Social Class* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1950), pp. 1–85.

60. In principle, each legal resident, whether citizen or green card holder, is granted this possibility. Native Americans were never included. More recently legal aliens have been excluded too.

61. Note that this is roughly equivalent to Robert Putnam's "social capital." Within these groups, such social capital did exist, but it was only weakly linked to the broader society.

62. Daniel Deudney, "The Philadelphian System: Sovereignty, Arms Control, and Balance of Power in the American States-Union, Circa 1787–1861," *International Organization* 49, 2 (Spring 1995): 191–228.

63. This might be a controversial statement, but even the programs associated with the War on Poverty did not, for example, deliberately direct capital investment into inner cities.

64. Why, for example, white males believe they are routinely "passed over" for promotion in favor of supposedly "less-qualified" women and minorities when the evidence is so inconclusive is not clear. But see below.

65. It should be pointed out that cases in which the defendant can afford to pay $10 million for a defense in a capital crime trial are extremely rare. More often it is the millions or more backing the prosecution matched against the few thousands available to the defendant.

66. This remains the case notwithstanding the efforts of some academics and commentators to construct new enemies. The best known is Huntington, *Clash of Civilizations*. A more recent example is Richard Bernstein and Ross H. Munro, *The Coming Conflict with China* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1997).

67. See Saskia Sassen, *The Mobility of Labor and Capital* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988). The emphasis on family reunification has further fostered such immigration.

68. This is Huntington's argument as well as Kaplan's. Barber blames the market.

69. See, e.g., Stephen Gill, "Structural Change and Global Political Economy: Globalizing Elites and the Emerging World Order," in *Global Transformation: Challenges to the State System,* ed. Yoshikazu Sakamoto, pp. 169–99 (Tokyo: United Nations University Press, 1994);Rupert, "Globalization"; Ronnie D. Lipschutz, "The Great Transformation Revisited," *Brown Journal of International Affairs* 4, 1 (Winter/Spring 1997): 299–318.

70. It does not qualify as bona fide structural adjustment because the dollar remains dominant in the global economy and the United States has not yet been forced to reduce its budget deficits. But it would be interesting to compare the effects of somewhat similar policies on labor in the United States and ex-socialist countries.

71. Sylvia Nasar, "More Men in Prime of Life Spend Less Time Working," *New York Times*, 12 December 1994 (national edition), p. A1.
72. Louis Uchitelle, "Changing Economy Spawns 'Anxious Class,'" *San Francisco Chronicle,* 21 November 1994 (*New York Times* wire service), p. A6; Jonathan Marshall, "Don't Tie Anger to Low Wages," *San Francisco Chronicle,* 29 May 1995, p. D1; *San Francisco Chronicle* article, 23 April 1996, p. A2. See also the series in the *New York Times,* "The Downsizing of America," 3–9 March 1996.
73. Robert Reich, *The Work of Nations* (New York: Vintage, 1992), Part 3.
74. For example, "electronic classrooms" may make it possible for one professor to lecture to many classrooms at the same time, thereby reducing labor costs for universities (see Jonathan Marshall, "Electronic Classes Give Students More Options When Teacher Is Far, Far Away," *San Francisco Chronicle,* 21 March 1995, p. A1). For a more optimistic view, see "A World without Jobs?" *The Economist,* 11 February 1995, pp. 21–23.
75. Peter Kilborn, "New Jobs Lack the Old Security in Time of 'Disposable Workers,'" *New York Times,* 15 March 1993 (national edition), p. A1.
76. Paul Krugman, "Europe Jobless, America Penniless?" *Foreign Policy* 95 (Summer 1994): 20, 31.
77. To some degree, conservatives recognize that exhortation is not enough; they are not, however, prepared to embrace the broader structural changes that would be required to reestablish traditional values. See, for example, Robert B. Gunnison and Erik Ingram, "GOP Group's Pitch to Switch Carriers for Christian Values," *San Francisco Chronicle,* 23 April 1996, p. B1, which describes an effort to get phone subscribers to transfer their long-distance calls from AT&T, MCI, and U.S. Sprint—all "godless" and "immoral"—to AmeriVision, a Christian phone company.
78. David Rieff, "Multiculturalism's Silent Partner," *Harper's,* August 1991, pp. 62–72. Actually in a rather crude, neo-Marxist fashion, Rieff argues that multiculturalism is a tool of niche marketing, rather than a collective positioning in response to globalization.
79. This section draws on Lipschutz, "Negotiating the Boundaries.
80. Ronnie D. Lipschutz, "The State as Moral Authority in an Evolving Global Political Economy," in *From Past Imperfect to Future Conditional: International Relations in the Decades Ahead,* ed. José V. Ciprut (forthcoming).
81. Barry Buzan, *People, States and Fear*, 2d ed. (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1991).
82. And why new enemies must sometimes be created out of whole cloth; see Dieter Groh, "The Temptation of Conspiracy Theory, or: Why Do Bad Things Happen to Good People?" in Graumann and Moscovici, eds., p. 16.
83. See Huntington, *Clash of Civilizations,* p. 21. Unfortunately this seems to be a necessary element of nineteenth- and twentieth-century nationalism, a point that I examine in *On Security* ("Neogiating the Boundaries").

84. This point is strongly argued in William Overholt, *The Rise of China* (New York: Norton, 1994). Overholt frames his argument in terms of liberalization in China, but the essential point remains the same.
85. Whether or not the Soviet Union actually constituted a security threat to the United States is here beside the point; the construction of such a threat served to bolster social solidarity.
86. Again, the nature of such a coalition is discussed by T.H. Marshall, *Citizenship,* pp. 114–27.
87. Lipschutz, "The Great Transformation Revisited."
88. Ronnie D. Lipschutz, "From Place to Planet: Local Knowledge and Global Environmental Governance," *Global Governance* 3, 1 (January–April 1997): 83–102.
89. Groh, p. 1.