NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL

MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA

THESIS

UNDERSTANDING AMERICAN IDENTITY: AN INTRODUCTION

by

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December 2017

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REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE			Form Approved OMB No. 0704–0188

Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instruction, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302, and to the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Project (0704-0188) Washington, DC 20503.

1. AGENCY USE ONLY *(Leave blank)*	2. REPORT DATE December 2017	3. REPORT TYPE AND DATES COVERED Master's thesis

4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE UNDERSTANDING AMERICAN IDENTITY: AN INTRODUCTION	5. FUNDING NUMBERS
6. AUTHOR(S) Mark A. Widmer and Bradley M. Erickson	
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) Naval Postgraduate School Monterey, CA 93943-5000	8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER
9. SPONSORING /MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) N/A	10. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY REPORT NUMBER

11. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES The views expressed in this thesis are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the Department of Defense or the U.S. Government. IRB number ____N/A____.

12a. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for public release. Distribution is unlimited.	12b. DISTRIBUTION CODE

13. ABSTRACT (maximum 200 words)

Why are Americans' identity narratives important for national security? This thesis utilizes a qualitative approach to analyze American identity narratives in U.S. history and contemporary society. The historic disagreement over the distribution of the fundamental American value of liberty makes the possibility of a cohesive national identity challenging. Given the effects of globalization, advances in technology, and changes in traditional demographic and sociocultural trends, any form of a national-level, narrative-based identity is not a feasible means to unify Americans. Leaders must make domestic policy decisions that increase inclusiveness in American society and avoid valuing one identity over another. Policymakers must depart from divisive identity policies in favor of those that unify Americans. Any attempt to shape the existing conflict in terms of identity is contrary to a cohesive society and, more importantly, threatens national security. This research led to two policy recommendations. First, the United States must encourage separable identities and emphasize citizens as individuals rather than groups. Second, policymakers must promote "cross-cutting ties," since much of the division in the United States stems from the isolation from one another that many citizens experience. Revamped civic education and national service programs can serve to form those cross-cutting ties.

14. SUBJECT TERMS American identity, national identity, patriotism, separable identities, national service, Roman identity, Soviet identity, e pluribus unum, civic education, American Creed	15. NUMBER OF PAGES 91
	16. PRICE CODE

17. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF REPORT	18. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE	19. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF ABSTRACT	20. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT
Unclassified	Unclassified	Unclassified	UU

NSN 7540–01-280-5500 Standard Form 298 (Rev. 2–89)
Prescribed by ANSI Std. 239–18

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UNDERSTANDING AMERICAN IDENTITY: AN INTRODUCTION

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MASTER OF SCIENCE IN DEFENSE ANALYSIS

from the

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ABSTRACT

Why are Americans' identity narratives important for national security? This thesis utilizes a qualitative approach to analyze American identity narratives in U.S. history and contemporary society. The historic disagreement over the distribution of the fundamental American value of liberty makes the possibility of a cohesive national identity challenging. Given the effects of globalization, advances in technology, and changes in traditional demographic and sociocultural trends, any form of a national-level, narrative-based identity is not a feasible means to unify Americans. Leaders must make domestic policy decisions that increase inclusiveness in American society and avoid valuing one identity over another. Policymakers must depart from divisive identity policies in favor of those that unify Americans. Any attempt to shape the existing conflict in terms of identity is contrary to a cohesive society and, more importantly, threatens national security. This research led to two policy recommendations. First, the United States must encourage separable identities and emphasize citizens as individuals rather than groups. Second, policymakers must promote "cross-cutting ties," since much of the division in the United States stems from the isolation from one another that many citizens experience. Revamped civic education and national service programs can serve to form those cross-cutting ties.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank the Naval Special Warfare Command for granting me the opportunity to attend the Naval Postgraduate School. Thanks to Professor Doug Borer for helping "wrestle the jellyfish" that is American identity. Your stern academic guidance, demand for sound output, and embrace of the arts will forever be a source of inspiration for me. To Dr. Anna Simons, your unorthodox pedagogy and classroom leadership set me off on some of the most interesting academic journeys of my life. To Major Bradley Erickson, I am delighted in the fact that our friendship began over a shared love for the pursuit of knowledge. We have started a great conversation that I hope to continue far into the future. My only regret is that I will never be able to serve under your command. Thank you for allowing me to partake in this journey with you. To my wife, Laurel, thank you for handling the realities of everyday life while I immersed myself into the depths of philosophy. I cannot express to you how valuable our dinnertime arguments and Sunday morning discussions were toward the completion of my thoughts. Your intuitive understanding of the human condition never ceases to amaze me. With all of my heart, thank you.

— Mark A. Widmer

I would like to thank Dr. Anna Simons and Dr. Doug Borer, whose guidance and mentorship has been invaluable during this writing process. Their instruction and perspectives during the course of my time here at the Naval Postgraduate School has equipped me to return to the fight armed with better critical thinking skills and sure of the cause for which we fight. I would also like to thank my parents, Wayne and Margie Erickson, who developed a sense of patriotism and civic duty in me from an early age. Foremost, I am grateful to my wife, Hayeon, whose perspective encouraged me to pursue this topic and whose critical feedback caused me to reevaluate my own positions and present a more well-rounded argument.

— Bradley M. Erickson

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. INTRODUCTION

A few weeks before leaving office in January of 2017, President Barack Obama addressed the U.S. military one last time. Speaking at the Armed Forces Full Honor Farewell Ceremony, the President declared that the United States possessed the "greatest military in the history of the world."[1] He went on to say that the U.S. military would "remain the greatest force for freedom and security that the world has ever known."[2] Not long after, President Donald Trump expressed a similar sentiment on a state visit to Japan when he said, "We dominate the sky… the sea… land and space… no one, no dictator, no regime, and no nation should underestimate American resolve."[3] He went a step further in a direct statement to the U.S. military: "Your devotion, prowess and expertise make you the most fierce fighting force in the history of our world."[4] President Trump also guaranteed that the U.S. military would "have the equipment, the resources, and the funding they need to secure our homeland, to respond to our enemies quickly and decisively, and when necessary, to fight, to overpower, and to always, always, always win."[5]

These words from the two most recent Presidents of the United States communicate the widely accepted belief in U.S. military might. There is little question that the United States is the most powerful nation on earth. In fact, in a recent article for Business Insider, Logan Nye made a compelling case that even if the entire world joined

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[1] Jack Warren, "15 Days to Go! Obama Pays Tribute to U.S. Military for Final Time as President," *The Daily Express*, Last updated January 5, 2017, https://www.express.co.uk/news/world/750634/Barack-Obama-US-military-powerful-speech-final-president.

[2] Warren, "15 Days to Go! Obama Pays Tribute to U.S. Military for Final Time as President."

[3] Jordyn Phelps, "Trump Touts U.S. Military Might while in Japan: 'We Dominate the Sky; We Dominate the Sea,'" ABC News, Last updated November 5, 2017, abcnews.go.com/Politics/trump-touts-us-military-japan-dominate-sky-dominate/story?id=50938031.

[4] Phelps, "Trump Touts U.S. Military Might While in Japan: 'We Dominate the Sky; We Dominate the Sea.'"

[5] Phelps, "Trump Touts U.S. Military Might while in Japan: 'We Dominate the Sky; We Dominate the Sea.'"

together in a war against the United States, America would likely still prevail.[6] Claims such as these draw little critical attention largely because such beliefs are not thought to be controversial. However, while U.S. military power is arguably unmatched, there seems to be a crisis of identity in the United States.

There is no shortage of authors and pundits who have identified this paradox. Samuel Huntington foresaw problems in his 2004 book *Who Are We?* but the topic has only become more popular in recent years: John Eblen describes an American identity crisis in his article for *Think Big* in 2007.[7] Recently however, contributors from *The Huffington Post*, *The New York Times*, *Politico*, and even international outlets such as BBC and *The Spectator* have all run stories featuring an American identity crisis.[8]

We began to examine this paradox over the course of our studies at the Naval Postgraduate School. While our military experience (as an Army Special Forces major and as a Naval Special Warfare senior non-commissioned officer with a combined thirty-plus years of special operations and conventional service) gives us confidence in American military power—as both Presidents Obama and Trump alluded—we still wrestled with one question: if no nation, or combination of nations, is an existential threat

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[6] Logan Nye, "How long would the U.S. military last in a war against the rest of the world?" *Business Insider*, Last updated March 18, 2016, http://www.businessinsider.com/how-long-would-the-us-military-last-in-a-war-against-the-rest-of-the-world-2016-3.

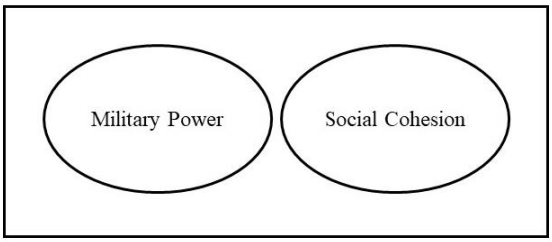
[7] John Eblen, "The American Identity Crisis," November 15, 2017, http://bigthink.com/articles/the-american-identity-crisis; Tobin Harshaw, "America's Identity Crisis," *The New York Times*, October 3, 2007, https://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2007/10/03/americas-identity-crisis/; Shane Looper, "America is Suffering an Identity Crisis," The Huffington Post, January 17, 2017, https://www.huffingtonpost.com/shayne-looper/america-is-suffering-an-i_b_14150438.html; Michael Lind, "How to Fix America's Identity Crisis," Politico, July 4, 2016, https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2016/07/a-new-american-melting-pot-214011; "Salmon Rushdie on Trump and U.S. Identity Crisis," BBC, October 6, 2017, http://www.bbc.com/news/av/world-41523903/salman-rushdie-on-trump-and-us-identity-crisis; "Donald Trump and America's identity crisis," The Spectator, August 19, 2017, https://www.spectator.co.uk/2017/08/americas-identity-crisis/.

[8] John Eblen, "The American Identity Crisis," November 15, 2017, http://bigthink.com/articles/the-american-identity-crisis; Tobin Harshaw, "America's Identity Crisis," *The New York Times*, October 3, 2007, https://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2007/10/03/americas-identity-crisis/; Shane Looper, "America is Suffering an Identity Crisis," The Huffington Post, January 17, 2017, https://www.huffingtonpost.com/shayne-looper/america-is-suffering-an-i_b_14150438.html; Michael Lind, "How to Fix America's Identity Crisis," Politico, July 4, 2016, https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2016/07/a-new-american-melting-pot-214011; "Salmon Rushdie on Trump and U.S. Identity Crisis," BBC, October 6, 2017, http://www.bbc.com/news/av/world-41523903/salman-rushdie-on-trump-and-us-identity-crisis; "Donald Trump and America's identity crisis," The Spectator, August 19, 2017, https://www.spectator.co.uk/2017/08/americas-identity-crisis/.

to the United States, what is? What threatens our way of life? Our research has led us to believe that what really threatens America is the disintegration of its union by its people. We suspect this begins with the loss of shared identity.

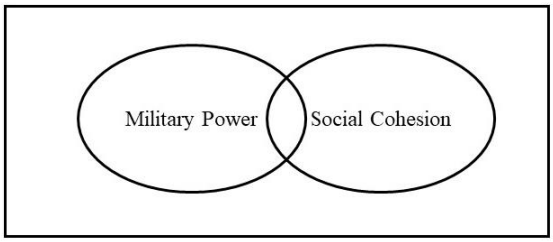
Our supposition drove us to explore the concept of national identity in America. To address this challenge, we asked several questions, such as what are the sources of American national identity? What does it consist of? What challenges arise from the divergence of meaning given to patriotism and nationalism? How has it changed over the nation's history? Is the current crisis identified by the experts and pundits really a problem? Have other historic superpowers dealt with this same paradox? We believe the answers to these questions may illuminate the dangers that exist when the strength of the military and the coherence of identity become mutually exclusive. We postulate that when there is no or little overlap in social cohesion, as demonstrated in Figure 1, a crisis of identity can emerge to threaten the state.

Figure 1. A Lack of Fit



The closer that military power and social cohesion align, however—as shown in Figure 2—the more effectively a nation can withstand challenges.

Figure 2. Aligning Military Power and Social Cohesion



In order to find a better alignment between U.S. military power and U.S. social cohesion, we need to understand why identity matters to the U.S. government.

B. WHY IDENTITY MATTERS

In 2017, the United States Special Operations Command has cited identity narratives as an area of research interest as it seeks to better understand how identity impacts the operating environment.[9] However, prior to analyzing the significance of identity within the complex operating environment in the world "out there," it seems prudent to first follow the Socratic aphorism of "know thyself." Consequently, this thesis briefly examines the multiple levels of "personal and communal" identities in the United States.[10]

American identity matters to the USG because a divided society may lead to a divided military, or, in a worst-case scenario, a civil-military divide so profound that the military might one day resemble some version of a Praetorian Guard—an element almost as divorced from its citizens as it is from its adversaries. Additionally, the tradition of assigning identities to groups and individuals creates social tensions that degrade the necessary cohesion for a healthy American society from which the military will continue to need to draw recruits.

As these are all serious problems, policymakers must understand the current state of American identity. In order to provide rising military leaders with the understanding necessary to conceive of potential solutions, this thesis will examine modern American identity issues. The ultimate goal of this thesis is to draw attention to the conflicting American identity narratives, which, at the time of this writing, show no signs of self-correction.

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[9] Joint Special Operations University, *Special Operations Research Topics 2018* (MacDill AFB, FL: Joint Special Operations University, 2017).

[10] Joint Special Operations University.

C. HOW AMERICANS DEFINE IDENTITY

Most Americans consider the country's identity defined by the legitimacy of its institutions and the liberties they enable. According to a recent poll, when asked how important a fair judicial system is to American identity, 88% of those surveyed put it at the top of the list.[11] Just below the rule of law, 84% agreed that individual liberties, as protected by the Constitution, personify the national character.[12] Prioritizing a legitimate judicial system and rule of law is not unique to America. The same attachment to a rational-legal authority exists in a number of other nation-states.[13] More fundamental to what really makes an American an American is our profound and conflicted attitude toward liberty.

D. RESEARCH APPROACH

In our research, we used a qualitative analysis approach and drew on a broad range of disciplines. This included extensive efforts to read and examine many different bodies of literatures related to American identity. From the disciplines of political science and international relations,[14] we learned that identity matters; identity means many different things to many different people; and there is a link between conceptions of

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[11] Matt Sedensky, "AP-NORC Poll: Political Divide over American Identity," *U.S. News and World Report,* March 6, 2017, https://www.usnews.com/news/politics/articles/2017-03-06/ap-norc-poll-political-divide-over-american-identity.

[12] Sedensky, "AP-NORC Poll: Political Divide over American Identity."

[13] Max Weber, "The Three Types of Legitimate Rule," *Berkeley Publications in Society and Institutions* 4, no. 1 (July 1958): 1.

[14] Books we read in political science: Alexis de Tocqueville's *Democracy in America*, John Stuart Mill's *On Liberty*, G.K. Chesterton's *What I Saw in America*, Gunnar Myrdal's *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy*, Max Weber's *Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Samuel Huntington's *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* as well as his seminal piece on American identity *Who are We?* We also reviewed Alexander Wendt's *Anarchy Is What States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics*, Henry Kissinger's *World Order*, Fareed Zakaria's *The Post-American World* (as well as his insightful blog posts), Robert Putnam's *Making Democracy Work, Bowling Alone*, and "E Pluribus Unum," Ronald Inglehart's *Silent Revolution*, Robert Bellah's *Civil Religion in America* and Walter McDougall's *The Tragedy of U.S. Foreign Policy: How America's Civil Religion Betrayed the National Interest*. We also read Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities*, James D. Armstrong's *Revolution and World Order*, Charles Tilly's *Citizenship, Identity and Social History*, Walter Russell Mead's *Special Providence: American Foreign Policy and How it Changed the World*, Mark Lilla's *The Once and Future Liberal*, Seymour Martin Lipset's *American Exceptionalism*, Henry R. Nau's *At Home Abroad: Identity and Power in American Foreign Policy*, and Arthur Schlesinger's *The Disuniting of America*

national identity and foreign policy initiatives. Additionally, we discovered that a lack of social capital may result in reduced identity coherence.

We also explored broad swaths of polling data to gauge the salience of identity issues in American society, which in turn, increased our awareness of the public's opinion regarding what makes an American and American.[15]

The stories we read from the disciplines of history and law, informed us about the roles of liberty and patriotism in early iterations of American identity[16] and the conflicts that arise from divergent interpretations of each concept.

From the field of economics, we gained insights about the connections between economic growth and individual agency.[17] Additionally, we learned that extreme income inequality may increase social identity awareness among certain groups and, therefore, make appeasement difficult to achieve.

We also dipped into literature,[18] political anthropology,[19] psychology, and contemporary media analysis. This allowed us to gain insight into exactly how identity-related divisions may be exacerbated by technology and what can happen when cultural superiority is promoted above all else. Most importantly, we learned the need to move past the discomfort of group dissimilarities in order to communicate.[20]

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[15] Polling data we analyzed: Pew Research Center, Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs, Harris Poll, and Rasmussen Reports.

[16] History and law books we read: Daniel Boorstin's *The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-events in America*, Eleanor Flexner's *Century of Struggle*, Arthur Mann's *The One and the Many: Reflections on the American Identity* and James M. McPherson's *Drawn with the Sword*. In law we read, Alan Dershowitz's *Shouting Fire: Civil Liberties in a Turbulent Age* and dissents written by Justices John Marshall Harlan and Antonin Scalia.

[17] Books about the economy we read: Karl Polanyi *The Great Transformation*, Amartya Sen *Development as Freedom*, and Erik Brynjolfsson *The Second Machine Age*.

[18] English literature we read: George Orwell's *Notes on Nationalism and How to Shoot an Elephant*, Graham Greene's *The Quiet American*, and Robert A. Heinlein's *Starship Troopers.*

[19] Anthropology books we read: Clifford Geertz's *The Interpretation of Cultures* and Anna Simons' *Purity is Danger: An Argument for Divisible Identities*.

[20] Psychology and media analysis books we reviewed: Robert McDermott *National Identity*, Jonathan Haidt's *The Righteous Mind: Why Good People are Divided by Politics and Religion* and Kevin MacDonald's *The Netflix Effect: Technology and Entertainment in the 21st Century*, Thomas Mullen's *Where do Liberals and Conservatives Come From?*, and Thomas Frank*'s What's The Matter with Kansas?*.

The works we read persuaded us that American identity is distinct in that it correlates more with a commitment to a common set of ideals—specifically those outlined in the American Creed—rather than affiliating us to a common historical place, a shared ethnicity, or deep-seated cultural traditions. Consequently, the present crisis that so many point to, might be rooted in the decline of the American form of patriotism and increase of loyalty to other sub-national identities. More than anything, our reading reinforced for us that national identity has been a hotly contested issue since the adoption of the Declaration of Independence in 1776.

E. THESIS ROADMAP

In Chapter II, we explore the evolution of the American identity and highlight the historic disagreement over a fundamental trait, which makes any attempts at narrative-based unification difficult. Chapter III describes the current, dysphoric state of American identity and highlights some factors contributing to the identity crisis. Chapter IV examines two historical case studies of great powers that similarly, wrestled with their own identities. Chapter V summarizes the discussion and offers pragmatic recommendations. Our solutions are not new or innovative. However, their implementation, we believe, could bring radical change to the way Americans see themselves and one another in American society. Finally, in Chapter VI we offer our concluding thoughts and suggest areas for future research.

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II. THE EVOLUTION OF AMERICAN IDENTITY

Come Liberty, thou cheerful sound,
Roll through my ravished ears!
Come, let my grief in joys be drowned,
And drive away my fears.

—George Moses Horton, Slave Poet, *On Liberty and Slavery*[21]

A. AMERICAN IDENTITY IN HISTORY: A COMPLEX TALE

The ideal of liberty seems to be present in the earliest conceptions of American identity, but actual events in America's past often contradict the ideas expressed in its founding documents. At the same time, there is a pattern defined by the continuous attempt to reconcile society with the country's founding ideals.[22] The "American Creed," as described by Gunnar Myrdal,

> has been centered in the belief in equality and in the rights to liberty… liberty, in a sense, was easiest to reach. It is a vague ideal: everything turns around whose liberty is preserved, to what extent and in what direction… liberty often provided an opportunity for the stronger to rob the weaker. Against this, the equalitarianism in the Creed has been persistently revolting.[23]

Individual liberty has been the central theme of American identity.[24] During his farewell address, George Washington declared, "your union ought to be considered as a main prop of your liberty, and that the love of the one ought to endear to you the preservation of the other."[25] Washington made it unequivocally clear: liberty might define the nation, but the concept of liberty would not last long without national unity.

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[21] George Moses Horton, *The Black Bard of North Carolina: George Moses Horton and His Poetry*. University of North Carolina Press, 1997, 75.

[22] Arthur Mann, *The One and the Many: Reflections on the American Identity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 88.

[23] Gunnar Myrdal, *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy* (New York: Routledge, 1962), 9.

[24] Anthony D. Smith, *National Identity* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1991), 14.

[25] Richard Rohrs, *Washington's Farewell Address* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2004).

Indeed, what history reveals is that even if the goal is to preserve the union, social dissonance arises whenever individual liberties are oppressed. Given this social condition, forming a coherent national identity demands an ideology that is capable of resonating across all regions and sectors.[26] Americans must be comfortable and familiar with the contours of their identity. Otherwise the more discrepancies there are, the more problematic the social fit.[27] Promoting unity is no easy task, however, when liberty is the critical variable for success.

There is a profound relationship between the ideals of the Founders and their version of patriotism, for theirs was a patriotism of "common liberty."[28] American patriotism is defined by the dedication to the political ideals of liberty, freedom, and the pursuit of happiness; it is comprised of a love and respect for an idea rather than blood, soil, or ethnicity.[29] Maurizio Viroli, professor of politics at Princeton University describes the "patriotism of liberty" as one that does not need social, cultural, religious, or ethnic homogeneity.[30] Viroli goes on to say that the purpose of this love of "common liberty" is to ensure that we do not become "too culturally, socially, and religiously divided…[or]…too inclined to identify with our own tribe."[31] Most importantly, this type of patriotism requires continued investment in civic participation. In a speech given to the Hebrew Congregation of Newport, RI, in 1790, George Washington declared

> The Government of the United States, which gives to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance, requires only that they who live under its protection should demean themselves as good citizens in giving it on all occasions their effectual support.[32]

Washington recognized that the patriotic commitment to uphold this ideal would take work. And, as history shows, he was correct.

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[26] John D. Bishop and Michael J. George, *Governing in a Post-Conflict Society: Social Fit* (Monterey: Naval Postgraduate School, 2011), 14–17.

[27] Bishop and George, *Governing in a Post-Conflict Society: Social Fit*, 14–17.

[28] Maurizio Viroli, *For Love of Country: An Essay on Patriotism and Nationalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 179.

[29] Jonathan Foreman, *The Pocket Book of Patriotism* (New York: Sterling Publishing, 2005), 6.

[30] Maurizio Viroli, *For Love of Country: An Essay on Patriotism and Nationalism, 9.*

[31] Maurizio Viroli, *For Love of Country: An Essay on Patriotism and Nationalism, 186.*

[32] Jonathan Foreman, *The Pocket Book of Patriotism, 72.*

It is an empirical fact that the United States has violated certain aspects of its founding creed; this thesis does not seek to argue with that. America has represented the ideals—not the perfect execution—of liberty. The existence of slavery and the destruction of indigenous peoples are just two of many events that cast "dark shadows" across America's history.[33] The founders "imagined a nation by and for Protestant white males."[34] As a result, America has repeatedly failed to grant equal liberty for all as outlined in the Creed. This chapter examines the notion of liberty and highlights the value of liberty in contemporary society, as well as different historical interpretations, and the pivotal events that have resulted in an ever-broader conception of national identity.

B. THE IDENTITY DEBATE: A CRACK IN THE LIBERTY BELL

Competing notions of the meaning of liberty in American society make a sequential or linear roadmap of a coherent national identity difficult to construct. William R. Greg, a nineteenth century English essayist, claimed that, "the French notion of liberty is political equality; [while] the English notion is personal independence."[35] These notions came from two political philosophers: Jean-Jacques Rousseau and John Locke. Rousseau promoted "eighteenth century humanitarianism and equalitarianism" in France, while Locke promoted the "seventeenth century liberalism" of England.[36] Another political philosopher, John Stuart Mill, considered the struggle between individual liberty and government authority as "the most conspicuous feature in the portions of history… which we are earliest familiar."[37] Mill defined liberty as "pursuing our own good in our own way," and that freedom was a necessary "element of being" for happiness—the pursuit of which the Founding Fathers believed was inalienable.[38] The aim of the patriots

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[33] Robert McDermott, *National Identity*; Arthur M. Schlesinger, *The Disuniting of America*, (New York: Norton, 1992), 53–55; Arthur Mann, *The One and the Many: Reflections on the American Identity*, 177.

[34] Robert McDermott, *National Identity*.

[35] William R. Greg, *Miscellaneous Essays: 1809–1881* (London: London, Trübner & Co., 1882), 89; Gunnar Myrdal, *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy*, 9 and 1182.

[36] Myrdal, *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy*, 1182.

[37] John S. Mill and Elizabeth Rapaport, *On Liberty* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1978), 1.

[38] Mill and Rapaport, *On Liberty*, xviii.

"was to set limits to the power which the ruler should be suffered to exercise over the community; and this limitation was what they meant by liberty."[39] Mill's understanding emerged from the historical relationship between the government and its subjects and as a result of this interplay, he noted conflicts within the American population.[40] As Seymour Martin Lipset later illustrated via his "double edged sword" theory, conflict lies "at the heart of the American experience" and makes development of a shared identity challenging.[41] The indistinct relationship between liberty and equality in American society is akin to a magnetic field; this force will either bring people together or force them apart.

Jonathan Haidt describes this divergence in his book, *The Righteous Mind*. His research reveals that modern liberals tend to "sacrilize equality," which they pursue through campaigns for greater human and civil rights for all.[42] In contrast, modern conservatives are "more parochial [and] concerned about their groups, rather than all of humanity." Conservatives "sacrilize" liberty rather than equality.[43] This profound divergence becomes more salient as liberals "sometimes go beyond equality of rights to pursue equality of outcomes" which, according to Haidt, "cannot be obtained in a capitalist system."[44] Thus, the public disagreement over the notion of liberty makes unity a seemingly unattainable goal.

C. KEY MOMENTS IN THE EVOLUTION OF AMERICAN IDENTITY

1. The Revolution

Though there is some debate about the myths surrounding Americas revolutionary founding, the proclamations made in the Declaration of Independence were undoubtedly

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[39] Mill and Rapaport, *On Liberty*, 2.

[40] Myrdal, *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy*, 1182.

[41] Seymour Martin Lipset, *American Exceptionalism: A double-edged Sword* (New York: WW Norton & Company, 1996) 267–292.

[42] Jonathan Haidt, *The Righteous Mind: Why Good People are Divided on Politics and Religion* (New York: Random House, 2012), 204.

[43] Haidt, *The Righteous Mind: Why Good People are Divided on Politics and Religion*, 204.

[44] Haidt, *The Righteous Mind: Why Good People are Divided on Politics and Religion*, 204.

inspired by the notion of liberty.[45] Perhaps nothing more profoundly demonstrates the Founders' preference for liberty than their choice of independence from, rather than reconciliation with, England.[46] Or, as the American historian Clinton Rossiter puts it,

> While the king fumed, the ministry blundered, assemblies protested, mobs rioted, and Samuel Adams plotted, the people of the colonies, however calm or convulsed the political situation, pushed steadily ahead in numbers, wealth, self-reliance, and devotion to liberty. The political theory of the American Revolution can be understood only within this context of material and spiritual progress. It was a theory dedicated to ordered liberty, for liberty was something most Americans already enjoyed.[47]

It was precisely during America's infancy that liberty began to congeal into the American Creed and become embedded in an early sense of national identity.[48]

Though the Declaration of Independence explicitly states that "all men are created equal," at the time it was published, there existed a clear dissonance between these ideas and the popular acceptance of slavery.[49] In other words, the ideas professed in the Declaration of Independence did not match the reality of American society.[50] Thomas Jefferson, the Declaration's primary author, himself "began to reflect on the injustice of human bondage," yet still did not feel that former slaves could ever enjoy equality in a mixed society.[51] The claim that "no responsible statesman in the revolutionary era had ever contemplated, much less endorsed, a biracial American society" captures the

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[45] Robert Middlekauff, *The Glorious Cause: The American Revolution: 1763–1789* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 3–6; John C. Wahlke, *The Causes of the American Revolution* (Lexington: DC Heath & Co, 1973), 224.

[46] Lipset, *American Exceptionalism: A double-edged Sword*, 31; Wahlke, *The Causes of the American Revolution*, 143.

[47] Rossiter, Clinton Lawrence, *The First American Revolution: The American Colonies on the Eve of Independence* (Boston: Mariner Books, 1956) 1–12.

[48] Clinton L. Rossiter, *Seedtime of the Republic* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1953); G. K. Chesterton, *What I Saw in America* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1922), 7.

[49] Middlekauff, *The Glorious Cause: The American Revolution: 1763–1789*, 329–332; Michael J. Klarman, *The Framers' Coup* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 265; Joseph J. Ellis, *Founding Brothers* (New York: Vintage Books, 2002), 81.

[50] Middlekauff, *The Glorious Cause: The American Revolution: 1763–1789*, 331; Klarman, *The Framers' Coup*, 259.

[51] Klarman, *The Framers' Coup*, 259.

zeitgeist of the time.[52] The divergence between the inalienable rights ideology of the Declaration of Independence and the injustices inherent in slavery would create a schism so great that the nation proved unable to form a singular identity.

2. The Civil War

The U.S. Civil War set the course for a national destiny that still impacts contemporary American society. In many people's view, the Civil War remains the "decisive event in American history" because its aftermath provided a "sense of identity, of resurrection through disintegration, and a set of common reference points for all Americans."[53] In one soldier's words, "Every soldier [knows] he [is] fighting not only for his own liberty but for the liberty of the human race for all to come" and "resolved that the present struggle will do more to establish and maintain a republican form of government than the Revolutionary War."[54] The late professor of American history at the University of Chicago, Arthur Mann, elaborates on the discrepancy between the American Creed and human slavery:

> Without a counterargument of moral compulsion, there could have been no effective challenge to the doctrine that America was a white man's country. But such an argument existed. Besides bequeathing their race consciousness, the Revolutionary generation released the idea, as Lincoln testified many times, that America was synonymous with immediate liberty. That legacy provided posterity with a moral yardstick to measure the distance between actualities and professions. Therein lay the creative tension, and self-renewing mechanism, in the national identity. To live up to their better selves, Americans had to square the what-is with the what-ought-to-be.[55]

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[52] Ellis, *Founding Brothers*, 104.

[53] James M. McPherson, *The War that Forged a Nation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 5; Brian Holden Reid, *The Origins of the American Civil War* (London: Harlow, Longman, 1996), 1.

[54] Charles J. LaRocca, *The 124th New York State Volunteers in the Civil War* (Jefferson: McFarland & Company Inc., 2012), 230.

[55] Mann, *The One and the Many: Reflections on the American Identity*, 88.

Liberty, the notion of which was much different between the North and the South, "formed the ideological cause for which Civil War soldiers fought."[56] While the Confederates fought for liberty from a perceived "tyrannical government," the "Unionists fought to preserve the union"—as Washington had previously implored—not only for the sake of their own liberty, but ultimately for the "freedom of another race."[57]

The Civil War made salient the divergent tensions between patriotic love for the political ideals of the "common liberty" and love for an agrarian way of life based on attachment to the soil. The war exemplified how "things can go haywire when rigid adherence to regional tradition displaces informed understanding of how a situation evolved."[58] Expressing the belief that Americans have no "pedigree except that of the idea," at a Fourth of July celebration in 1858, President Abraham Lincoln stated:

> We have besides these men—descended by blood from our ancestors—among us perhaps half our people who are not descendants at all of these men who come from Europe—German, Irish, French and Scandinavian—men that have come from Europe themselves, or whose ancestors have come hither and settled here, finding themselves our equals in all things. If they look back through this history to trace their connection with those days by blood, they find they have none, they cannot carry themselves back into the glorious epoch and make themselves feel that they are part of us, but when they look through that old Declaration of Independence they find that those old men say that "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal," and then they feel that that moral sentiment taught in that day evidences their relation to those men, that it is the father of all moral principle in them, and that they have a right to claim it as though they were blood of the blood, and flesh of the flesh, of the men who wrote that Declaration, and so they are. That is the electric cord in the Declaration that links the hearts of patriotic and liberty-loving men

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[56] James M. McPherson, *What they Fought for, 1861–1865* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1994), 6.

[57] While it is true that not all Confederates ideologically supported slavery or owned slaves, the states they represented in the conflict absolutely fought for the right to retain slavery. Curtis F, "Absolute Proof the Civil War was About Slavery," Portside, accessed on October 15, 2017 from http://portside.org/2013-11-04/absolute-proof-civil-war-was-about-slavery; James M. McPherson, *What they Fought for, 1861–1865*, 46.

[58] Michael Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory: The Transformation of Tradition in American Culture* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993), 301.

> together, that will link those patriotic hearts as long as the love of freedom exists in the minds of men throughout the world.[59]

The war's outcome further changed the way in which the Founders' notion of patriotism, defined as love for the "common liberty," would come to be understood. From the Civil War on, patriotism increasingly "began to encompass the idea that the government must live up to the principles of the Declaration of Independence."[60] For Lincoln, true patriotism is about the idea, not simply the nation itself.

By the end of the war, 600,000 Americans had given their lives in defense of some notion of liberty, representing half of all U.S. wartime deaths from the 1770s to the early 2000s. Though both sides were committed to different interpretations of liberty, a new nation rose from the ashes of conflict.[61] Shifts in the social lexicon signaled this change. Prior to 1861, the term "United States" was used primarily as a plural noun. After 1865, it began to be used as a singular noun.[62] Other phrases changed as well. By the time of Lincoln's Gettysburg and second inaugural address, his use of the word "Union" had been replaced by "nation." The "old decentralized republic" became a "centralized polity." Hallmarks of the modern American nation solidified, to include: federal level courts, a common currency, banks, social welfare programs, a draft policy and systematized tax collection.[63] Yet, even though the Civil War "forged the framework of modern America," and although the war abolished slavery, contested views of liberty remained.[64]

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[59] Garry Wills, *Lincoln at Gettysburg: The Words that Remade America*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2006), 86–7.

[60] Janny Scott, "Ideas and Trends: In Us We Trust; The Changing Face of Patriotism," *The New York Times*, Last updated July 6, 2003, http://www.nytimes.com/2003/07/06/weekinreview/ideas-trends-in-us-we-trust-the-changing-face-of-patriotism.html.

[61] Samuel P. Huntington, *Who are we? The Challenges to America's National Identity* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2004), 119; Montserrat Guibernau, *The Identity of Nations* (Great Britain: Polity Press, 2007), 120; James M. McPherson, *Drawn with the Sword* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 63.

[62] McPherson, *Drawn with the Sword*, 63; Huntington, *Who are we? The Challenges to America's National Identity*, 119.

[63] McPherson, *Drawn with the Sword*, 64; Huntington, *Who are we? The Challenges to America's National Identity*, 121.

[64] McPherson, *Drawn with the Sword*, 62 and 64

To be sure, in the century following the Civil War, multiple events further confirmed the centrality of liberty to the American identity. The process began with the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth amendments to the Constitution. According to American Civil War historian James M. McPherson, those amendments "converted four million slaves into citizens and voters within five years, the most rapid and fundamental social transformation in American history—even if the nation back-slid on part of this commitment for three generations after 1877."[65] Foundationally, the amendments extended the inalienable rights of the Creed to blacks, and showed that "where the Constitution led, the law followed… [and brought]…the American creed into line with itself."[66] Although the amendments delivered real change, dissonance remained, as seen in the establishment of Jim Crow laws which "perpetuated the divide between liberty and equality."[67] Although blacks were granted freedom, they would not experience equal treatment under the law until the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s. Before this could occur, however, another group secured its liberties under the law.

3. Women's Suffrage

Borrowing from the same intellectual framework that inspired the American and French revolutions, women's suffrage helped close the gap between liberty and equality.[68] Although "women's secondary position in society [at that time] was [likely] the result of some mistake, an oversight, [and] carried on through ignorance and custom," it nonetheless ensured "that opportunity for complete human development had been withheld from one half of the nation."[69] The suffrage movement was made possible because the Founders outlined aspirational goals in the American Creed: "had there been no prescriptions, there [would] have been no contradictions. The founders established the

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[65] McPherson, *Drawn with the Sword*, 64.

[66] Mann, *The One and the Many: Reflections on the American Identity*, 88.

[67] Mann, *The One and the Many: Reflections on the American Identity*, 88; Lipset, *American Exceptionalism: A Double-Edged Sword*, 113–150.

[68] Barbara Ryan, *Feminism and the Women's Movement* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 12; Eleanor Flexner, *Century of Struggle* (Cambridge: Belknap, 1959), 73–77.

[69] Barbara Ryan, *Feminism and the Women's Movement*, 9; Eleanor Flexner, *Century of Struggle*, 1959, x-xxiv.

country's standards, goals, aspirations…[and by]…equating America with an idea—more accurately, with a cluster of ideals—the Revolutionary generation ensured that their posterity would be in search of themselves as they ought to be."[70] America's increased extension of liberty over time proves Mann's statement that "fundamentally, the United States has been the land of the enduring Enlightenment."[71] For this reason, the suffrage movement is an important step in the evolution of contemporary American identity.

4. The Civil Rights Movement

The Civil Rights Movement offers another, especially poignant example of the tension between liberty and equality. Although many other groups have suffered chronic inequality under the law, the African-American experience has been different, as Arthur Mann notes:

> Blacks form one of many groups in America, yet bitter memories prevent them from viewing themselves as comparable to others in a pluralist democracy. None but their kind was brought to the New World in chains; defined as things in the national compact; fought over in the country's only civil war; needful of special Constitutional amendments; or set apart from everyone else by the supreme tribunal of the land. Throughout their history in America others have told blacks who they were.[72]

In hindsight, the repression of black rights in America was undoubtedly a violation of the U.S. Constitution. On this, Supreme Court Justices John Marshall Harlan and Antonin Scalia shared a similar view. Harlan himself said, "Our Constitution is color-blind, and neither knows, nor tolerates, classes among citizens."[73] Scalia echoed him nearly a century later when he wrote, "Under our Constitution there can be no such thing as either a creditor or debtor race… in the eyes of government, we are just one race here. It is American."[74]

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[70] Mann, *The One and the Many: Reflections on the American Identity*, 68–69.

[71] Mann, *The One and the Many: Reflections on the American Identity*, 68–69.

[72] Mann, *The One and the Many: Reflections on the American Identity*, 173.

[73] Justice John Marshall, *Harlan's Dissent to Plessy Versus Ferguson Decision 1896* (Washington, DC: 163 U.S. 537, 1896).

[74] Justice John Marshall, *Adarand Constructors V. Peña* (Washington, DC: 515 U.S. 200, 1995).

Both men believed the Constitution's focus was on the individual.[75] The dissonance between segregation—which assigned individuals to groups—and the American Creed was unsustainable.

The treatment of blacks in the United States demonstrated that "policies based on inherited [national] identity fail to satisfy the goal originally sought by so many: the rule of law-equality for all and special privileges for none."[76] According to Alan Dershowitz, Professor of Law at Harvard University, rights evolve "on a foundation of trial and error," and "*rights* come from *wrongs*."[77] There is no doubt that wrongs were committed, and though gains have been made regarding black and white race relations in the United States, some argue that the country has not yet achieved the vision described by Frederick Douglass as: "one country, one citizenship, one liberty, one law, for all people without regard to race."[78] The ongoing struggle for African-American equality has more than just secured the rights of blacks under the law, however. It has also shaped American identity.[79]

D. CONCLUSION

Given the trial-and-error nature of the struggle, a singular narrative that appeals to all Americans may be impossible to achieve. The American fiction author Frank Herbert suggests that "a process cannot be understood by stopping it. Understanding must move with the flow of the process, must join it and flow with it."[80] New social struggles for liberty and equality are emerging in relation to immigration and the lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) community. Americans must consider how they

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[75] Jonathan J. Bean, *Race and Liberty in America: The Essential Reader* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2009), 311.

[76] Frederick Douglass, *The Effect of the Accession of the Democratic Party to Power*, 1893.

[77] Alan M. Dershowitz, *Shouting Fire: Civil Liberties in a Turbulent Age* (United States of America: Little, Brown and Company, 2002), 4.

[78] Douglass, *The Effect of the Accession of the Democratic Party to Power*, 1893, 312.

[79] Lipset, *American Exceptionalism: A double-edged sword*, 113–113; Mann, *The One and the Many: Reflections on the American Identity*, 40; Huntington, *Who are we? The Challenges to America's National Identity*, 146–149.

[80] Frank Herbert, *Dune* (Philadelphia: Chilton Books, 1965), 30.

will extend liberty to these groups. Historical precedents suggest that the United States needs to become—and ideally will become—increasingly more inclusive.

It may be that the best description of the source of paradox associated with American identity is Alex de Tocqueville's: "they will endure poverty, servitude, barbarism, but they will not endure aristocracy."[81] The nation's Founders may have envisioned a liberty from aristocratic tyranny, but they thought little of or about those experiencing servitude, poverty, and barbarism on the frontiers. Ironically, modern conceptions of American identity appear to embody the opposite of Tocqueville's formation. Americans seem to be fine with aristocratic class, but they rise up in revolt in the name of inequality.[82] Of course, a large percentage of the population also disagrees about the extent to which inequality exists.[83]

Since a singular narrative cannot unite the country, we Americans must look elsewhere for inspiration. Before doing so, we must first better appreciate America's identity dysphoria.

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[81] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (New York: Vintage Books, 1954), 103.

[82] Nikki Johnson-Huston, "The Culture of the Smug White Liberal," Huffingtonpost.com, October 20, 2017, https://www.huffingtonpost.com/nikki-johnsonhuston-esq/the-culture-of-the-smug-w_b_11537306.html.

[83] Brakkton Booker, "How Equal Is American Opportunity? Survey Shows Attitudes Vary by Race," NPR, September 21, 2015, http://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2015/09/21/442068004/how-equal-is-american-opportunity-survey-shows-attitudes-vary-by-race.

III. AMERICA'S IDENTITY DYSPHORIA

Dysphoria: a state of feeling very unhappy, uneasy, or dissatisfied

—*Merriam-Webster Dictionary*[84]

"Of all the collective identities that human beings share, national identity may be among the most fundamental and inclusive."[85] For some Americans today, shifts in values and social norms challenge their view of the country's identity, and they feel the U.S. is more disunited then united.[86] When a shared sense of identity is lacking, this can threaten national security. This divide threatens the United States in three ways. First, it creates vulnerabilities that adversaries and competitors can exploit. Second, the lack of a coherent identity also means that in a crisis, or a prolonged series of crises, the United States might lack sufficient "glue," or resilience, to come together to meet the challenge. Third, polarization makes national policies more ineffective because policies that are not widely supported are often difficult to execute effectively.[87]

From the outset, there has been debate over what should constitute American identity. Today, globalization poses challenges to the ideal of maintaining a common American culture. Demographic changes and sociocultural trends have resulted in acute levels of political and social polarization. All of these factors contribute to America's current identity dysphoria.

A. GLOBALIZATION'S INFLUENCE

While globalization has shrunk the world through interconnectedness and improvements in media, communications, and transportation, it has also generated

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[84] *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, "Dysphoria," Accessed November 20, 2017, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/dysphoria.

[85] Anthony D. Smith, *National Identity* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1991), 143.

[86] Ronald Inglehart, *Silent Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), entire book covers the subject of changing values.

[87] Smith, *National Identity*, 144.

instability because of the social changes these rapid improvements have wrought.[88] This phenomenon has most recently led to a situation in which "identity, not ideology, is moving the world."[89] Driven by a "mixture of insecurity and assertiveness," society appears to be "changing beyond recognition."[90] As Fareed Zakaria notes, the perception is that we are being ruled by "vast, distant [what the Founders may have labeled 'tyrannical'] forces—the European Union in Brussels, the International Monetary Fund or the federal government in Washington—that are beyond their [people's] control."[91] The Brexit vote, European elections in France and Germany, the migrant crisis, and the 2016 Presidential election, all resulted in the daily media being dominated by discussions related to national identity.[92] Debates over identity appear to be tearing at the global social fabric.

This new global environment is "characterized by unprecedented degrees of local and global interdependence as well as an *exacerbation* of civilizational, societal and ethnic self-consciousness."[93] According to political scientist Samuel Huntington's thesis in *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, maintaining civilizational identities is the "surest safeguard against world war."[94] Huntington recommends a "renewal of Western identity" since it was "Western culture that enabled a

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[88] Globalization "refers to a multidimensional set of social processes that create, multiply, stretch, and intensify worldwide social interdependencies and exchanges while at the same time fostering in people a growing awareness of deepening connections between the local and the distant." Manfred B. Steger, *Globalization: A very Short Introduction* (Great Britain: Oxford University Press, 2003), 13.

[89] Fareed Zakaria, "Identity, Not Ideology, is Moving the World," *The Washington Post*, July 4, 2014.

[90] Zakaria, "Identity, Not Ideology, is Moving the World."

[91] Zakaria, "Identity, Not Ideology, is Moving the World."

[92] J. M. Berger, "A Dangerous New Americanism? When Extremists Wield the Full Force of the Federal Government, American Identity is Profoundly Threatened," October 4th, 2017, https://warontherocks.com/2017/04/a-dangerous-new-americanism; Mark Lilla, "The End of Identity Liberalism," *New York Times*, November 20, 2016, https://search.proquest.com/docview/1841505177; Robert P. Jones, "The Collapse of American Identity," *New York Times Online*, May 2, 2017, https://search.proquest.com/docview/1893778741.

[93] Roland Robertson, "Globalization Theory and Civilization Analysis," *Comparative Civilizations Review, No. 17*, (October, 1987): 22.

[94] Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996), 321.

nation as multicultural as America to survive as long as it has."[95] Huntington's view is interesting because it highlights the raw emotions that may contribute to America's identity anxiety.

B. THE IMPACT OF TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCES

Rapid advances in technology have only intensified the anxiety felt over the perceived loss of American identity.[96] This new digital age has progressed so quickly that traditional boundaries—whether technological or social—appear to have been thrown aside.[97] This new age has fundamentally changed the way Americas interact with each other. A new phenomenon, the "Netflix Effect," offers an illustrative example of how the changing digital landscape impacts the American public.[98]

The "Netflix Effect" is a term used to describe increasing social polarization thanks to every individual possessing the ability to "binge watch" content customized to his/her political or social preferences.[99] The impact goes well beyond news and news analysis to include popular culture as well.[100] The "cultural bubble" this creates is one in which people have less in common with each other, thereby reducing the culture they

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[95] Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, 318.

[96] Erik Brynjolfsson and Andrew McAfee, *The Second Machine Age* (New York: Norton, 2014), 55.

[97] Brynjolfsson and McAfee, *The Second Machine Age*, 81.

[98] Kevin McDonald and Daniel Smith-Rowsey, "How Netflix is Shaping American Society," 125–127.

[99] Todd A. Campbell, "iPads, iPods and Technology-Enabled Isolation: If We're so Connected, Why are we so Alone?" *GSTF Journal of Music*, No. 1, (March 2014): doi:10.7603/s40958-014-0003-x.

[100] This point is perhaps best represented by an anecdote about two American women. Both are the same age, but grew up in extremely different environments. One grew up an atheist, the other a conservative Protestant. One learned progressive politics as a child, the other conservative politics. One grew up on the coast of America—the other in the Midwest. One works in corporate law, the other is a stay-at-home mother of four. One volunteers her free time to represent undocumented immigrants, the other has welcomed several foster care children into her home and served as their mother. One is a "person of color," the other is white. These two Americans, separate in almost every way, both grew up watching the popular 1990s television show, "Full House." Neither had control over the popular culture entertainment they watched as children. Consequently, "Full House" provides an important social bridge and 'cross-cutting tie' that can open the dialogue to more discourse. The advent of customizable entertainment options, however, means neither one's children is likely to share the same sort of cross-cutting tie their mothers had.

share.[101] This is because viewers experience something that author Zachary Snider calls "narrative transportation," which refers to a situation whereby viewers emotionally immerse themselves in a story so that it impacts their "attitudes, beliefs, and opinions about their own social relationships."[102] However, if viewers only consume content which reflects their biases and values—rather than content which challenges their preconceived biases—it ultimately "hinders their ability to empathize with others who may be different from them."[103] Apprehension about the technological abyss—combined with massive amounts of data that seem to fit every emotion, impulse, and thought—contribute to a palpable anxiety among those who study American society; they see the "Netflix Effect" causing increased social isolation and erosion of the social bonds necessary for a healthy society.[104]

C. AMERICA'S PLACE IN THE WORLD

Many believe that another cause of America's identity dysphoria, is that the United States no longer has a near-peer enemy akin to the Soviet Union.[105] (Although China is rising, and Russia appears to be attempting a return.) No longer able to occupy one of the ideological poles in a bipolar world, the United States has had to reconsider its role once the "commie devil" had been banished. According to the Pew Research Center in 2016, the American public's top three security concerns were ISIS, cyberattacks, and global economic stability.[106] Although China and Russia made the top ten, neither near-peer competitor evoked the same level of fear among Americans as did the likes of infectious diseases, international refugees, and climate change. With ISIS in decline, the specter of terrorism remains incapable of being enough of an oppositional force to shape

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[101] Robert D. Putnam, Robert Leonardi, and Raffaella Nanetti, *Making Democracy Work* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 167.

[102] McDonald and Smith-Rowsey, "How Netflix is Shaping American Society," 117.

[103] McDonald and Smith-Rowsey, "How Netflix is Shaping American Society," 117.

[104] McDonald and Smith-Rowsey, "How Netflix is Shaping American Society," 125; Husein Lokhandwala, "Does Binge-watching TV affect Social Interactions?" Academia.edu, 19–20.

[105] Henry R. Nau, *At Home Abroad: Identity and Power in American Foreign Policy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002), 5; Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, 1–6.

[106] *Public Uncertain, Divided Over America's Place in the World*, Pew Research Center, 2016.

U.S. national identity. In the absence of an existential threat great enough to bind people together, might a resurgent nationalism unite the American public? Would such a nationalism be bad or good?

D. OTHER INFLUENCERS OF NATIONAL IDENTITY

1. Nationalism

Walter Russell Mead describes American nationalism as "the sense that Americans are bound together into a single people with a common destiny [which is] a noble and necessary force without which American democracy would fail."[107] However, strengthening the national identity through identity-driven nationalist policies also tends to perpetuate "enemy-othering, reinforced by discourse that relegates others to a race, gender, and religion."[108] A reversion back to the argument of nation over ideas, that contributed to the onset of the Civil War, is contrary to national unity and moreover, atavistic in nature. Thus, avoiding the revitalization of othering while binding the nation and promoting a national identity is preferred.

Perhaps a revitalization of the Founders notion of patriotism would help. In *Notes on Nationalism*, George Orwell distinguishes patriotism as a "devotion to a particular place and a particular way of life, which one believes to be the best in the world but also has no wish to force on other people."[109] Patriotism is defensive in nature, "both militarily and culturally."[110] Orwell's definition resembles the Founders understanding of patriotism, however, theirs was more a matter of "respect, charity, and compassion" than simply a "devotion" to a place or way of life. The nuance here is important as "the object of compassion and love for the [American] patriot was the republic and the ability to live in freedom in a particular place."[111] Once again, it was more about the ideas rather

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[107] Walter Russell Mead, "'Nationalist' Shouldn't be a Dirty Word," *The Wall Street Journal, Asia*, May 3, 2017.

[108] Walter L. Hixson, *The Myth of American Diplomacy: National Identity and U.S. Foreign Policy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008).

[109] George Orwell, *Notes on Nationalism* (London: Polemic, 1945).

[110] Orwell, *Notes on Nationalism*.

[111] Maurizio Viroli, *For Love of Country: An Essay on Patriotism and Nationalism, 3*.

than the land itself or a particular way of life. Whereas nationalism is "an organizational loyalty leading to the simplistic confusions, rivalries and delusions often encountered when defining oneself by allegiance to a single political unit."[112]

The concept of placing any single unit—be it a nation, religion, class or ethnic, social or political group—beyond "good and evil, and recognizing no other duty than that of advancing its interests"[113] suggests that nationalism is "inseparable from the desire for power."[114] Again, this is not to say that nationalism is never necessary, as it can be critical to forming a coherent identity in the earliest stages of nation-state development.[115] For the modern state, its value remains less clear. Indeed, nineteenth and twentieth century history offers numerous examples of nationalist-infused causes leading to devastation.[116] Thus, if we were to put aside nationalism, what would offer a more optimal means of social cohesion? Current public opinion provides some clues.

2. Public Opinion

The American public holds a wide range of views concerning what it takes to be "one of us." According to a Pew Research Center poll, 92% believe "it is very, or somewhat, important that a person speak English."[117] 45% believe that it requires sharing "American customs and traditions."[118] Regarding birthright nationality, 32% of Americans agree that "to be truly American it is *very* important to have been born in the

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[112] Orwell, *Notes on Nationalism*.

[113] Orwell, *Notes on Nationalism*.

[114] Orwell, *Notes on Nationalism*.

[115] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 1990); Charles Tilly, "Citizenship, Identity and Social History," *International Review of Social History* 40, no. S3 (1995): 1–17.

[116] Polanyi, Karl and Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation the Political and Economic Origins of our Time* (New York: Farrar & Rinehart, 1944).

[117] Pew Research Center, *What it Takes to Truly be 'One of Us*' ACI Information Group. http://scholar.aci.info/view/14bd17773a1000e0009/159fb4c19b30001fa06d8ed.

[118] Pew Research Center, *What it Takes to Truly be 'One of Us*'.

United States."[119] 32% also believe that Christian religious affiliation is "*very* important to being truly American."[120]

Although many Americans agree that the ability to speak English is important, responses to other polling questions are quite mixed. These mixed views have led Americans to harbor strong feelings about what they perceive to be a changing national identity. According to the Associated Press, National Opinion Research Center (AP-NORC), the American public believes that "national identity" relates to the "beliefs and values the country represents." The poll reports that 70% of Americans feel the United States "is losing its national identity," while the remaining 30% regard the country's identity as "secure."[121] On the other hand, "50% of Americans say the mixing of cultures and values form the around the world is important to the U.S. national identity," while just 28% say it has "no effect," and 16% say it makes the country "weaker."[122]

In light of public opinion, perhaps our identity should reflect *what we are* —we are ethnically and religiously diverse; the oldest constitutional democratic republic; and the world leader in GDP— rather than *who we are*, which requires a prescribed identity.

3. Ethnicity

Although the United States may have been founded by white European settlers and immigrants, demographics have shifted over time, especially recently.[123] According to the Pew Research Center, in 1970 only 4.7% of Americans were first generation immigrants. The last four decades have seen a steady increase in the number of people born outside of the United States. In 2015, data revealed that 13.9% of Americans were foreign born—an overall increase of over 9%. Of those foreign-born immigrants, 27% arrived from Mexico, 27% from South and East Asian countries, 24% from Latin

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[119] Pew Research Center, *What it Takes to Truly be 'One of Us*'.

[120] Pew Research Center, *Hispanic Trends Project*, Choice Reviews Online 53, No. 4, (December 1, 2015), 1599, doi:10.5860/CHOICE.191643 .

[121] Sedensky, *AP-NORC Poll: Political Divide over American Identity*.

[122] Sedensky, *AP-NORC Poll: Political Divide over American Identity*.

[123] Huntington, *Who are we? The Challenges to America's National Identity*, 2004, 302.

American countries other than Mexico, and 14% from Europe and Canada. If current demographic trends continue, the United States will not have a single ethnic or racial majority in 2055.[124] A similar trend is seen in Americans' professed religious affiliations.

4. Religion

While it is true that the initial waves of settlers professed Protestant values, the American religious landscape has changed.[125] A 2015 Pew report revealed that from 2007 until 2014, Americans who identified as "Christian" dropped from 78.4% to 70.6% of the population.[126] At the same time, there has been an increase in those who claim "non-Christian" affiliations, to include those identifying as Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Sikh, Baha'i, Taoist, Jain, and so on.[127] The changes in religious demographics are not only due to increased immigration. The largest shift may be due to a rise in secularism, to include those who claim to be "unaffiliated" or who identify with "nothing in particular."[128] As pluralism and secularism both increase, the nation can no longer turn to religion or even Protestant or Judeo-Christian values as a cross-cutting tie through which to re-secure its national identity.

5. Class

Despite being residents of the world's preeminent capitalist country, Americans appear to value other aspects of their identity much more than class. Indeed, according to political scientist Francis Fukuyama, identity has become a "proxy for class."[129]

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[124] Pew Research Center, *Demographic Trends that are Shaping the U.S. and the World*, November 15, 2017, http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/03/31/10-demographic-trends-that-are-shaping-the-u-s-and-the-world/.

[125] Huntington, *Who are we? The Challenges to America's National Identity*, 2004, 59–75; McDermott, *National Identity*, 2006.

[126] Pew Research Center, *Demographic Trends that are Shaping the U.S. and the World*.

[127] Pew Research Center, *America's Changing Religious Landscape*, ACI Information Group.

[128] Pew Research Center, *America's Changing Religious Landscape*.

[129] Francis Fukuyama and Natalia Koulinka, "Donald Trump and the Return of Class: An Interview with Francis Fukuyama," *Open Democracy*, (January 20, 2017), https://search.proquest.com/docview/1860193495.

However, as others note, social and political environments become dangerous when people define themselves in identity terms because "identity does not lend itself easily to compromise."[130] If the divides were class-based, "you could split the difference" and perceived class inequalities could be resolved through political solutions in the form of wealth redistribution or other social programs.[131]

This predicament of non-economic identity trumping class, has led Fukuyama to claim that the "greatest challenge to liberal democracy comes not so much from overtly authoritarian powers such as China, as from within."[132] One source of concern is a significant "anti-elite" class in America, whom Fukuyama defines as those who have not done well economically and have less than a high school education. Yet, these Americans do not consider themselves part of the "proletariat."[133] They instead think of themselves "in identity terms and foremost in terms of racial identity."[134] This new identity-based dimension of the working class creates tensions that have no clear or immediately identifiable outlet. If anything, they add new political complications.

6. Political Division

Since the Reconstruction Era, Congress has not been as divided as it is today. According to polling data following the 2016 U.S. presidential election, "identity-based hyper-partisanship" caused political gridlock even as more Americans were calling for political compromise.[135] Another Pew Research Center poll released in 2017 reveals that

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[130] Ronald Inglehart and Pippa Norris, "Trump, Brexit, and the Rise of Populism: Economic have-Nots and Cultural Backlash," (Boston: Harvard Kennedy School, 2016; Fareed Zakaria, "The Country is Frighteningly Polarized. This is Why," *The Washington Post*, June 15, 2017.

[131] Inglehart and Norris, "Trump, Brexit, and the Rise of Populism: Economic have-Nots and Cultural Backlash;" Zakaria, "The Country is Frighteningly Polarized. This is Why."

[132] Francis Fukuyama, "US Against the World? Trump's America and the New Global Order." *FT.Com*, (November, 2016), https://search.proquest.com/docview/1847742805.

[133] Fukuyama and Koulinka, "Donald Trump and the Return of Class: An Interview with Francis Fukuyama."

[134] Fukuyama and Koulinka, "Donald Trump and the Return of Class: An Interview with Francis Fukuyama."

[135] Pew Research Center, *The Demographic Trends Shaping American Politics in 2016 and Beyond*, ACI Information Group, October 13, 2017, http://scholar.aci.info/view/14bd17773a1000e0009/152845172dd00014c17.

divisions between the two political parties in America reached record levels during Barack Obama's presidency. During Donald Trump's first year in office, the gaps have only grown larger.[136] The survey, which poses the same questions it did in 1994, discovered just how much more polarized the parties have become over the past two decades. The results are discouraging. Of the ten areas that the Pew Research Center tracked from 1994–2017, the data shows that the average partisan gap increased from 15% to 36%. At the same time, these numbers provide quantitative proof of the increased "partisan antipathy" animating the U.S. political system.[137]

Table 1 depicts the partisan gaps: both parties are further apart ideologically than they have been at any point in the last 20 years. For example, the median Republican is more conservative than 97% of Democrats. Conversely, the median Democrat is now more liberal than 95% of Republicans.[138] One can clearly see that in 1994[139] there was significant overlap of shared values and beliefs between Democrats and Republicans, and significantly more so than at present. In other words, 23% of Republicans in 1994 were more liberal than the median Democrat today. At the same time, 17% of Democrats were more conservative in 1994 than the median Republican is today. In 2017, however, these numbers have decreased to just 5% and 3%, respectively.[140]

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[136] The Pew Research Center, *The Partisan Divide on Political Values Grows Even Wider*, October 5 2017.

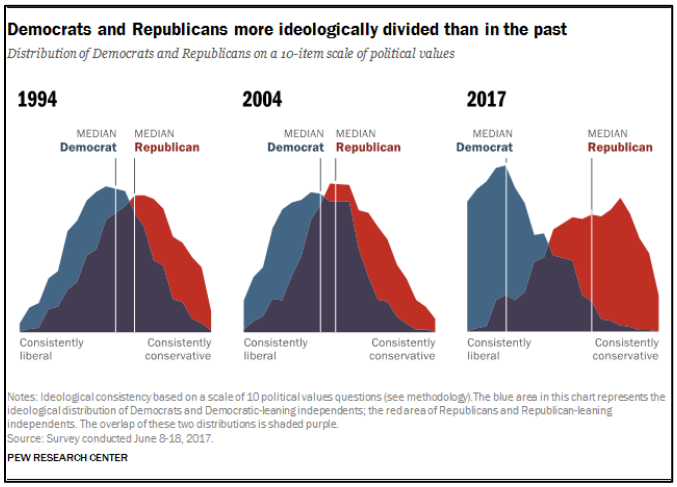
[137] The Pew Research Center, *The Partisan Divide on Political Values Grows Even Wider*.

[138] The Pew Research Center, *The Partisan Divide on Political Values Grows Even Wider*.

[139] In 1994, 64% of Republicans were to the right of the median Democrat; 70% of Democrats were to the left of the median Republican.

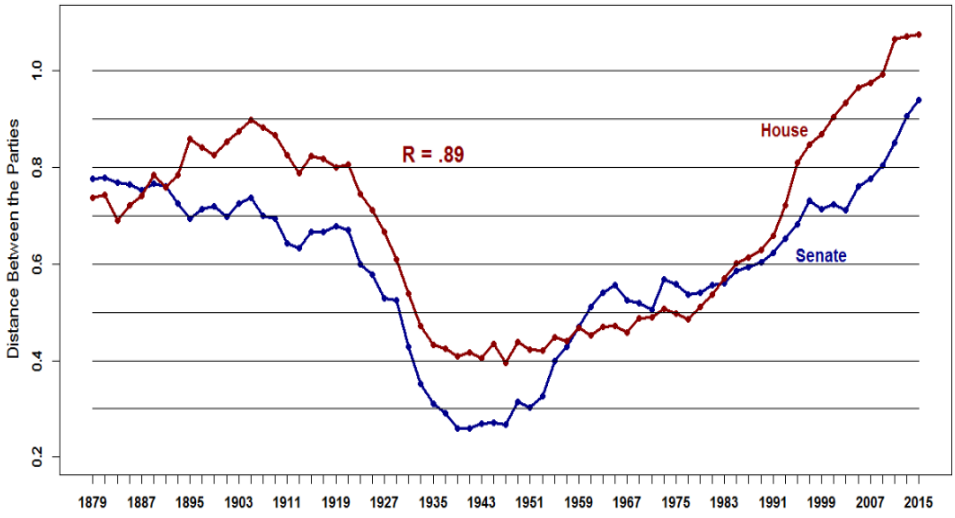
[140] The Pew Research Center, *The Partisan Divide on Political Values Grows Even Wider*.

Table 1. The Partisan Divide on Political Values[141]



For a more long-term picture of political party polarization, one can see in Table 2 the extent of party polarization from 1879 until 2015.

Table 2. Party Polarization 1879–2015[142]



[141] The Pew Research Center, *The Partisan Divide on Political Values Grows Even Wider*.

[142] The Authors of Voteview, "Party Polarization 1879–2015," January 30, 2016, https://legacy.voteview.com.

What has given rise to this polarization?

7. Culture Wars

A recent study conducted at the Harvard Kennedy School of Government describes a cultural spectrum whose two poles are defined by 1) a desire to prioritize the nation first (America-first, populist values), and 2) a more cosmopolitan approach (liberal values). The study points out that since the 1970s, the evolution of liberal values and progressive ideas has led to a "cultural backlash" among those who feel threatened or isolated by the trend. The "pull of cultural politics" increases political polarization and disrupts "long-established patterns of party competition."[143] In addition to leading to political gridlock, American's social relations are so disrupted that populist leaders are able to center their political campaign messages on the promotion of short-term policy agendas.[144] Such moves only strengthen antipathy towards the "other" and deepen identity politics.

8. Identity Politics

Identity politics essentially splits people into two types. One type believes that overemphasis on differences rather than attention to similarities "fractures coalitions and breeds distrust of those outside one's group."[145] Rather than eliminating "the salience of identity in everyday life," identity politics renders identity all-important.[146]

Mark Lilla, professor of the Humanities at Columbia University contends that "American liberalism has slipped into a kind of moral panic about racial, gender, and sexual identity that has distorted the message of traditional liberalism and prevented it from becoming a unifying force."[147] In his view, segments of American society have

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[143] Inglehart and Norris, "Trump, Brexit, and the Rise of Populism: Economic have-Nots and Cultural Backlash."

[144] Francis Fukuyama, "The Global Rise of Populist Nationalism," Lecture, World Affairs Council of the Monterey Bay Area, Carmel, CA, July 14, 2017.

[145] Linda Alcoff, Michael Hames-Garcia, S. Mohanty, and Paula Moya, *Identity Politics Reconsidered* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 22.

[146] Alcoff, Hames-Garcia, Mohanty, and Moya, "Identity Politics Reconsidered," 22.

[147] Mark Lilla, "The End of Identity Liberalism," *International New York Times*, November 18, 2016.

become "narcissistically unaware" of the "other" through an over-emphasis on diversity and a myopic focus on identity issues.[148] Over-emphasis on only one or two aspects of an individual's identity turns the debate into a zero-sum struggle.[149]

In contrast, those in favor of identity politics admit that identity politics have minimized the "common citizenship," but only in reaction to injustice and inequality.[150] They believe liberalism will remain hypocritical unless there is an end to "the protocols and practices of wealth and power against which it's reacting."[151] Jim Sleeper critiqued one of Lilla's more recent essays by writing, "Americans have always had to wage disciplined battles for a common citizenship that wasn't prepared for them by the republic's founders, who had deep doubts about its viability."[152] He goes on to acknowledge that while a racial identity "is little more than a social construct imposed on people of certain colors and cultures, it can become all-defining for anyone whose ancestors and elders have been subjected to it."[153] According to Sleeper, this may work to reinforce an individual's identity and, therefore, limit their actions in the face of "new openings and opportunities."[154] Consequently, socially enforced identities shore up and deepen existing divisions rather than create cohesion. According to Sleeper, these socially enforced identities were often "masked by promises of safety and even comfort and affection as long as every group kept its place, with a label on its face."[155]

Author Amin Maalouf points out the dangers when each individual is understood to have a "fundamental truth" as to who they are that is "determined once and for all at

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[148] Lilla, "The End of Identity Liberalism."

[149] Alcoff, et al., *Identity Politics Reconsidered*, 3.

[150] Jim Sleeper, "What NY Times Op-Ed Writer Mark Lilla Gets Wrong about 'Identity Liberalism,'" *AlterNet*, November 21, 2016, https://www.alternet.org/election-2016/what-ny-times-op-ed-writer-mark-lilla-gets-wrong-about-identity-liberalism.

[151] Jim Sleeper, "What NY Times Op-Ed Writer Mark Lilla Gets Wrong about 'Identity Liberalism.'"

[152] Sleeper, "What NY Times Op-Ed Writer Mark Lilla Gets Wrong about 'Identity Liberalism.'"

[153] Sleeper, "What NY Times Op-Ed Writer Mark Lilla Gets Wrong about 'Identity Liberalism.'"

[154] Sleeper, "What NY Times Op-Ed Writer Mark Lilla Gets Wrong about 'Identity Liberalism.'"

[155] Sleeper, "What NY Times Op-Ed Writer Mark Lilla Gets Wrong about 'Identity Liberalism.'"

birth, never to change thereafter."[156] This reduces individuals to labels and denies them the opportunity to evolve their principles as they mature as citizens.[157] It prevents people from being able to choose whatever identity is most appropriate to them in their own pursuit of happiness.

According to Maalouf, there is a danger in preventing an individual from sustaining "multiple allegiances" and forcing them "to take sides or…stay within their own tribe."[158] Such constraints create difficulties when one wishes to maintain and affirm another form of identity.[159] The result is dissociation from society and, potentially, a move to extremist activity as the transition is made from dissociation to opposition.[160]

Similarly, political anthropologist Anna Simons highlights the danger posed by denying or assigning individuals identity.[161] Simons claims this may pose the "ultimate challenge" to the democratic state as the state's "moral authority…depends on individuals being free to choose and change their own associations."[162] Individuals may feel an allegiance to a number of identities, like their state, city, club, team, church, community, or gender.[163]

E. CONCLUSION

Technological, demographic, and sociocultural trends appear to be chipping away at America's traditional understanding of itself. Given these shifts, conflicts have developed regarding identity. For instance, the apparent privileging of multiculturalism

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[156] Amin Maalouf, *In the Name of Identity: Violence and the Need to Belong* (New York: Arcade Publishing, 2001), 2.

[157] Maalouf, *In the Name of Identity: Violence and the Need to Belong*, 9–15; Della Porta, Donatella, and Mario Diani, *Social Movements: An Introduction* (San Francisco: John Wiley & Sons, 2009), 96.

[158] Maalouf, *In the Name of Identity: Violence and the Need to Belong*, 5.

[159] Porta, Donatella, and Diani, *Social Movements: An Introduction*, 100.

[160] Anna Simons, "Purity is Danger: An Argument for Divisible Identities." *Terrorism and Political Violence* 12, no. 3–4 (December, 2007), 185.

[161] Simons, "Purity is Danger: An Argument for Divisible Identities." 184.

[162] Simons, "Purity is Danger: An Argument for Divisible Identities." 184.

[163] Maalouf, *In the Name of Identity: Violence and the Need to Belong*, 9–15.

provokes a social backlash because, to some, it threatens the value of the individual in American society by applying a greater value to subnational identities. In Chapter V we take a greater look at this phenomenon and further examine its impact on society

Of the identity-related trends in today's American society, the most alarming is the reemergence of nationalistic rhetoric, especially since resurgent nationalism appears to be nativist and xenophobic. In a recent speech, former President George W. Bush sought to bring this to the attention of the American people:

> Our identity as a nation—unlike many other nations—is not determined by geography or ethnicity, by soil or blood. Being an American involves the embrace of high ideals and civic responsibility. We become the heirs of Thomas Jefferson by accepting the ideal of human dignity found in the Declaration of Independence. We become the heirs of James Madison by understanding the genius and values of the U.S. Constitution. We become the heirs of Martin Luther King, Jr., by recognizing one another not by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character.
>
> This means that people of every race, religion, and ethnicity can be fully and equally American. It means that bigotry or white supremacy in any form is blasphemy against the American creed. And it means that the very identity of our nation depends on the passing of civic ideals to the next generation.
>
> We need a renewed emphasis on civic learning in schools. And our young people need positive role models. Bullying and prejudice in our public life sets a national tone, provides permission for cruelty and bigotry, and compromises the moral education of children. The only way to pass along civic values is to first live up to them.[164]

But first, how have other militarily dominant states wrestled with identity issues in the past?

[164] George W. Bush, "Remarks by President George W. Bush Accepting the Sylvanus Thayer Award," *George W. Bush Presidential Center*, Last updated October 19, 2017, http://www.bushcenter.org/about-the-center/newsroom/press-releases/2017/10/gwb-remarks-thayer.html.

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IV. IDENTITY IN ROME AND THE U.S.S.R.

Both ancient Rome and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (U.S.S.R.) are relevant to this discussion for several reasons. First and foremost, both empires possessed nearly unmatched military might while simultaneously wrestling with existential identity questions. Both also incorporated patriotism into their respective identities, though both had distinctly different conceptions of patriotism. While Rome encouraged a patriotism toward ideals—not bound by any particular ruler or ruling party—the U.S.S.R. tried to inculcate a patriotism toward a particular political party and its ideology of Communism, something embraced mostly by only high-ranking party members. Additionally, Rome faced identity challenges as it determined how to incorporate new tribes and ethnicities into its polity. Similarly, the U.S.S.R. also confronted the need to expand its conceptions of identity if it hoped to successfully incorporate several different satellite states—each with its own strong nationality—into its empire.[165]

A. ROMAN IDENTITY

Early Rome placed primacy on its historic territory and common culture until expansion forced it to elevate common legal rights, civic duties, and a common economy above cultural or ethnic identity. In its earliest days, the Roman empire prioritized a narrative-based identity[166] based on the Latin word "Romanitas" (meaning "Romanism," or "what makes a Roman a Roman?").[167] Initially treated as an immutable characteristic, Romanitas evolved over time to include genealogy, legal status, and cultural tradition. As the empire grew and no longer contained a single language or lineage, Romanitas came to

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[165] Igor Zevelev, "Russian National Identity and Foreign Policy," *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, (December 2016): 3.

[166] A "narrative-based" identity is an identity crafted around a story or theme about who someone or a group of people is or are. Dan P. McAdams defines it as, "Narrative identity is the internalized and evolving story of the self that a person constructs to make sense and meaning out of his or her life. The story is a selective reconstruction of the autobiographical past and a narrative anticipation of the imagined future that serves to explain, for the self and others, how the person came to be and where his or her life may be going." (Dan P. McAdams, "Narrative Identity," *Handbook of Identity Theory and Research*, (February, 2011), 99)

[167] Claudia I. Arno, *How Romans Became 'Roman:' Creating Identity in an Expanding World* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2012, 207–209.

signify membership in a political community that was secured by the Roman army and in which people shared morals, values, and customs.[168] The Romanitas ideal of the citizen-soldier-farmer represented the three qualities that Romans most admired: a strong work ethic, frugality, and practicality (the farmer); courage, strength, and sacrifice for the common good (the soldier); and guaranteed rights to everything that Rome had to offer in the form of citizenship. Because citizenship enabled all three aspects of Romanitas, it became the ultimate prize.[169]

As Rome evolved, so did concepts of Roman identity. As more Romans urbanized, the early ideal of the citizen-soldier-farmer was cast aside for another powerful, identity-shaping concept called gravitas. Similar to Romanitas, gravitas conveyed a sense of personal responsibility and an unwavering commitment that was synonymous with honor.[170] This new aspect of identity gave Rome an advantage. While other polities resorted to corruption, Rome conducted business based on a system of trust; while other militaries compelled their subjects to war, the Romans developed a force that fought for "the glory of Rome."[171] The spirit of gravitas enabled Rome to rise to global superpower status.[172]

As Rome grew more imperial, the idea that outsiders could 'become' Roman became a more pervasive and powerful force. Yet, as more and more outsiders became Roman, there arose a need to create a common culture for this even broader "imagined

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[168] Greg Woolf, *Becoming Roman: The Origins of Provincial Civilization in Gaul* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000), 93.

[169] The legend of Cincinnatus is perhaps the most famous representation of the Roman ideal. As the story goes, Cincinnatus was tending his fields when a messenger arrived with news that Rome was under attack. The Senate elected Cincinnatus to be dictator to defeat the threat. (This Roman law provision allowed the Senate to grant one man unlimited dictatorial powers for a six-month period to resolve any existential crisis.) Though reluctant to go, he eventually accepted the nomination, led the Roman armies to defeat the enemy invaders, abdicated the throne, and returned to his farm—even though he could have retained his absolute power for a few more months or longer. This was the ideal: a humble farmer, a sacrificial soldier, and a loyal citizen; Greg Woolf, *Becoming Roman: The Origins of Provincial Civilization in Gaul*, 208; The Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica, "Lucius Quinctius Cincinnatus, Roman Statesman," July 19, 2017, https://www.britannica.com/biography/lucius-quinctius-cincinnatus.

[170] Richard Abels and Phyllis Culham, "Roman Republican Virtues," United States Naval Academy education website, July 19, 2017, https://www.usna.edu/users/history/abels/hh205/romevirt.htm.

[171] Abels and Culham, "Roman Republican Virtues."

[172] Abels and Culham, "Roman Republican Virtues."

community."[173] Patriotism toward the ideal of what it meant to be a Roman became important. As Kenneth Minogue explains, "The Romans' moral strength, virtue, freedom, and love of country (patriotism) all contributed to the empire's success."[174]

When Romans began to accept that national identity could be shared beyond Rome proper, the value of Roman citizenship grew. At the same time though, and at what many perceive to have been the height of the empire, Rome began to face numerous new and difficult challenges. It is a common misperception that the Roman empire ceased to exist with the barbarian invasion of Rome in 410 AD.[175] Even so, the stresses Rome was under led Roman leaders to reconsider and readjust Roman identity (again).

Prior to the sack of Rome, a host of problems faced the empire. Severe economic crisis (caused by unending military ventures and excessive government spending) emptied the national coffers and resulted in oppressive taxation.[176] Overly dependent on slave labor, Rome could not replace its aging laborers quickly enough. Severe economic decline loosened Rome's grip on Europe and set the stage that led to the later invasions of the Goths and the Huns.[177]

A loss of social capital also contributed to Rome's decline. Government corruption in the form of favors, nepotism, and bribery replaced business practices based on traditional gravitas and caused political instability.[178] Corruption became the norm and everything became a commodity to be bought and sold: political appointments, military commands, court verdicts, and access to all levels of authority—even the

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[173] Arno, *How Romans Became "Roman:" Creating Identity in an Expanding World*, 207–209.

[174] Kenneth Minogue, *Politics: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 19–24.

[175] Reit Meyer, "What are the Differences Between the Roman Empire and the Byzantine Empire?" October 21, 2017, https://www.enotes.com/homework-help/what-differences-between-roman-empire-byzantine-601954.

[176] Ramsay MacMullen, *Corruption and the Decline of Rome* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1988), 281.

[177] MacMullen, *Corruption and the Decline of Rome*, 281.

[178] Evan Andrews, "Eight Reasons Why Rome Fell," History.com, January 14, 2014, http://www.history.com/news/history-lists/8-reasons-why-rome-fell.

emperor.[179] As the situation worsened, civic pride waned and trust in the government faded. Gravitas all but disappeared as an essential element of Roman identity.

Christianity posed another existential threat to traditional Roman ideals by calling into question the divine status of the emperor, and by emphasizing the "glory of God" over the "glory of Rome." Moreover, the church's leaders challenged Rome's political authority.[180] Conversion to Christianity overrode tribal and ethnic differences and enabled tribes such as the Angles, Saxons, and Jutes to unite, creating a much more formidable risk to Roman rule. Though outlawed at first, Christianity spread throughout the empire, was legalized in 313 AD, and became the official state religion in 380 AD.[181] More importantly, in a time of crisis, Christianity united social and ethnic classes in a way that traditional Roman values no longer could.

Rome's military, unmatched throughout so much of its history, grew weak when its legions could no longer recruit enough soldiers from among the citizenry. Not being able to use Romanitas which valued the citizen-soldier-farmer, or gravitas as a motivator to recruit new soldiers, Rome filled its legions with foreign mercenaries. Though fierce warriors, the mercenaries possessed little allegiance to Rome. In fact, many of the barbarians who sacked the city of Rome in 410 were former members of the Roman legions.[182]

A declining economy, an unreliable army, and an inability to control its vast territory from the capital, forced Rome to reconsider its ruling structure. Eventually this led to the establishment of a new capital in Constantinople in 330 AD.[183] Adoption of Christianity and the move to Constantinople thus represent a third shift in identity.

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[179] MacMullen, *Corruption and the Decline of Rome*, 281.

[180] The Saylor Foundation, "Christianity and the Roman Empire," Saylor.org, October 21, 2017, https://www.saylor.org/site/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/HIST101-6.4.2-ChristianityAndTheRomanEmpire-FINAL1.pdf.

[181] The Saylor Foundation, "Christianity and the Roman Empire."

[182] Andrews, "Eight Reasons Why Rome Fell."

[183] Donald L. Wassen, "Constantinople," Published by The Ancient History Encyclopedia, April 9, 2013, http://www.ancient.eu/Constantinople/.

First, Rome had been united by Romanitas. Then as the empire urbanized, the citizen-soldier-farmer ideal of Romanitas gave way to gravitas. When civic honor faded, some Romans began to look to a new source of identity and found it in Christianity which enabled Constantine to establish his city and extend the empire another 1,000 years. In essence, when Roman leaders embraced Christianity, they demonstrated that the empire's survival mattered more than historical narratives about historic Roman traditions or traditional religion. Kenneth Minogue mentions this in his book when he writes,

> Conflict within the state, so long as it was subordinated to the public interest, merely reflected the Roman concern for liberty and for the protection of civil rights. The policy of Rome… issued not from some supposedly supreme wisdom but from a freely recognized competition between interests and arguments within a society.[184]

Rome made the religion of Christianity a patriotic religion, by weaving Christianity into nearly every aspect of the state. As Christianity became more prevalent, Rome embraced it and perhaps laid the foundations for future U.S. political ideas. Minogue explains,

> Western politics is distinguished from other forms of social order by its exploration of this theme: that beyond the harmony that results from everyone knowing his place is another harmony, in which conflict is resolved by the free discussion and free acceptance of whatever outcome emerges from constitutional procedure.[185]

Rome's patriotism, based on an ideal that could change as the public changed, allowed the empire to maintain the patriotic loyalty of its citizenry even as it transitioned away from hundreds of years of political and religious tradition, and eventually leading to Byzantium.

B. SOVIET IDENTITY

Though there were many causes for the Soviet collapse, it was perhaps a disconnect between patriotism toward the Communist party ideals and satellite state nationalism that appeared to be a major ingredient. The Soviets suppressed, rather than emphasized, the history and common myths of each individual member state. In return,

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[184] Minogue, *Politics: A Very Short Introduction,* 19–24.

[185] Minogue, *Politics: A Very Short Introduction,* 19–24.

member states tolerated Soviet ideology, but it never became an organic part of their identity. This was especially apparent during the years of Soviet decline as satellite state nationalism became a source of discontent throughout the empire.

While Soviet ideology emphasized allegiance to the Communist party, only the party members were truly patriotic toward the party, and they participated in the charade of patriotism only by compulsion. As Eugenia Sokolskaya puts it in her article, "Patriotism, A U.S.S.R. Story,"

> under Communist leadership patriotism became a duty, a necessary prerequisite for success, with an obligatory component of praising the CPSU specifically, or at least Lenin and the current leader. Like a piece of gum chewed a little too long for lack of a trash can, patriotism became an inescapable, tasteless burden.[186]

To many residents of the U.S.S.R.'s satellite states, the U.S.S.R. was a distant entity concentrated in Moscow; they did not view Moscow as *their* capital.[187] Intrusive control over such things as school curricula, crop acreage, and the types of goods that could be sold increased antipathy toward Moscow. Larger states resented smaller states that enjoyed disproportionate autonomy and representation. And, though Soviet leaders sought cohesion by prescribing a common identity in place of local solidarities, no one bought into this.[188]

Though Moscow attempted to subdue the Russian aspects of the identity it prescribed for everyone in the Soviet Union, there was no denying Moscow's control over political power and economic decision-making.[189] Although each independent state was allowed to celebrate its own heritage with its own flag, language, and customs, cross-cutting *Soviet* ties were lacking.[190] In the end, populist movements in the Soviet satellites

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[186] Eugenia Sokolskaya, "Patriotism, A U.S.S.R. Story," *Russian Life*, Last updated September 11, 2013, https://russianlife.com/stories/online-archive/patriotism-a-ussr-story/.

[187] Rick Fawn, *Ideology and National Identity in Post-Communist Foreign Politics* (Portland: Frank Cass, 2004), 16.

[188] Fawn, *Ideology and National Identity in Post-Communist Foreign Politics*, 16.

[189] Fawn, *Ideology and National Identity in Post-Communist Foreign Politics*, 16.

[190] Fawn, *Ideology and National Identity in Post-Communist Foreign Politics*, 16.

gained momentum. Tired of Moscow's domination, when the opportunity presented itself they declared their sovereignty. Soon after, the Soviet *Union* collapsed.[191]

The disintegration of Soviet identity resulted from two major events: 1) the loss of satellite states comprising the Soviet bloc, and 2) Moscow's loss of superpower status. As soon as the Berlin Wall fell, 25 million Soviet Russians who lived outside of Russia proper became minorities overnight.[192]

To this day, Moscow's repressive past casts a shadow over Russia's relations with its former satellite states. Today, instead of seeking to reabsorb these states directly, Russia works hard to extend its identity to members of the Russian diaspora living in them. This means Russians may become problematic for these states in the future, but it also makes it all the less likely they will tolerate any attempt to be reabsorbed.

The greatest irony of Soviet history is that the goal of unifying the U.S.S.R.'s diverse peoples—a noble goal in and of itself—was frustrated by an ill-conceived policy of cultivating non-Russian national consciousness. The Soviets did not fear nationalism because they believed socialism would eventually render the nation-state obsolete. Indeed, the socialist ideal was never achieved and republics that had been forced to remain in the Soviet Union quickly seceded once Gorbachev liberalized Soviet political life. Group identities, then, became the time bomb that exploded in the vacuum of a bankrupt Soviet ideology.[193] This ideology was inadequate to inculcate true patriotism in the people. This is because the U.S.S.R. limited its patriotism to Communism. In contrast, Western patriotism was not based on an economic system or political party, but rather, on ideals that could change as the people's interpretation of those ideals changed. In the West, capitalism represented the economic means toward the ideological end: liberty for all, whereas in the U.S.S.R., communism served as the end in and of itself.[194]

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[191] Fawn, *Ideology and National Identity in Post-Communist Foreign Politics*, 16.

[192] Fawn, *Ideology and National Identity in Post-Communist Foreign Politics*, 16.

[193] Reza Zia-Ebrahimi, "Empire, Nationalities, and the Collapse of the Soviet Union," *Vestnik, the Journal of Russian and Asian Studies*, July 19, 2017 http://www.sras.org/ empire_nationalities_and_the_collapse_of_the_ussr .

[194] Vladimir Brovkin, *Russia After Lenin: Politics, Culture and Society 1921–1929* (London: Routledge, 1998), 8.

C. SUMMARY

A clear understanding of how these two empires managed their identities is suggestive for the United States. Roman identity evolved in such a way that while the Eastern Empire was eventually destroyed, Christianity enabled Rome to survive in the guise of the Holy Roman Empire. Christianity facilitated different ethnic groups, tribes, and peoples to stay at peace with one another in ways that traditional Roman identity had not been able to make possible. Following the designation of Christianity as the Holy Roman Empire's official state religion, the Emperor ruled through the church and exerted influence via religious leverage. Christianity became a form of patriotism. In contrast, Moscow initially suppressed group (or nationalist) identities before later encouraging them. Because an overarching Soviet identity was never embraced, and because satellite states never bought into the Soviet patriotism that party leaders emphasized, Moscow was unable to hold the union together once satellite states began using their nationalism to assert their autonomy.

Both cases demonstrate that overarching identities should evolve as the state evolves. When leaders attempt to suppress identities, prevent them from changing, or prescribe identities for the people, problems arise. Rome extended its empire by reimagining its identity as its people adopted new beliefs and practices. The Soviet Union, on the other hand, squelched independent nationalities before labeling people according to national identity. Soviet identity remained insufficiently compelling or attractive. Or, another way to put this is that Rome became more inclusive by expanding citizenship rights to all. In contrast, the U.S.S.R. promoted sub-national (group) identities, then unscrupulously allowed nationalism to fester thinking that Soviet patriotism would overcome it, while ignoring individual rights in favor of unfairly distributed group rights.

As discussed in Chapter III, sub-national identities in the case of nation-states, or national identities in the case of empires, are limiting in that they cannot offer as many components as a national identity can when it is fully inclusive. Furthermore, they

provide no sense of a shared or special destiny for the group.[195] Thus, one challenge for leaders is to figure out how to allow American identity to evolve without appearing to force it on people. The next chapter examines this challenge in greater detail and offers recommendations for cultivating a more fitting national identity for 21st century America.

[195] Smith, *National Identity*, 177.

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V. THE WAY AHEAD

> Unity is not the great need of the hour, it is the eternal struggle of our immigrant nation.
>
> —Jonathan Haidt[196]

The contest over national identity has been integral to the American experience. Yet, current attempts to define or discover a coherent American identity appear to fall short. American identity might seem to be defined by the process of aligning current social values with the country's founding ideals. One aim for such an identity, is to help create sufficient social capital that America strikes most Americans as a fulfilling place to live, both now and in the future.[197] The unifying spirit that binds Americans in spite of their diversity—whether their differences are ethnic, religious, class-based, or ideological—should be evident in the national identity.

There are many challenges to developing and maintaining social capital in a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural, and poly-religious country like the United States. Robert Putnam addresses this challenge in his 2007 article entitled "E Pluribus Unum," when he explains that, in the very near future, demographic changes will challenge common American community and diminish social trust in America. But Putnam also offers a solution:

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[196] Jonathan Haidt, "What Makes People Vote Republican?" Edge: The Third Culture, October 5, 2009, 9

[197] According to Robert Putnam, "*social capital* refers to the collective value of all 'social networks' (who people know) and the inclinations that arise from these networks to do things for each other. The term social capital emphasizes a wide variety of benefits that flow from the trust, reciprocity, information, and cooperation associated with social networks. Social capital creates value for the people who are connected. It improves information flows, norms of reciprocity, collective action, and broadens identities and social solidarity. Some examples of social capital include: When a group of neighbors informally keep an eye on one another's homes; when a tight-knit community of Hassidic Jews trade diamonds without having to test each gem for purity; barn-raising on the frontier was social capital in action; as well as email exchanges among members of a cancer support group. Social capital can be found in friendship networks, neighborhoods, churches, schools, bridge clubs, civic associations, and even bars. The motto in Cheers 'where everybody knows your name' captures one important aspect of social capital." (Robert Putnam, "Social Capital Primer," Robertdputnam.com, accessed on October 15, 2017 from http://robertdputnam.com/bowling-alone/social-capital-primer/.

> History has shown that, over time, successful immigrant societies create new forms of social solidarity and dampen the negative effects of diversity by constructing new, more encompassing identities. Thus, the central challenge for modern, diversifying societies is to create a new, broader sense of "we."[198]

Ideally, one could say that American identity should capture the imagination or, at the very least, not alienate every citizen. It must be inclusive enough that every citizen looks toward the nation's future and sees a place for herself or himself in it. However, there are several obstacles that stand in the way of forging such a common identity. This final chapter outlines these challenges and offers some potential workarounds.

A. A COMMON PURPOSE: *E PLURIBUS UNUM*

In order for every American to experience liberty as outlined in the American Creed,[199] policymakers must cultivate a society in which every member of society can find purpose and belonging. America's Founding Fathers had such a plan in *e pluribus unum*. As Jonathan Haidt writes, "The process of converting *pluribus* (diverse people) into *unum* (a nation) is a miracle that occurs in every successful nation on earth. Nations decline or divide when they stop performing this miracle."[200]

Turning "many" into "one" requires more than just the simple rule that we should all just "leave each other alone." Nor does a to-do list of policy items that promote individual freedom, redistribute to the less fortunate, and stand up for the oppressed suffice. Arthur Schlesinger Jr. makes this clear in his book, *The Disuniting of America*:

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[198] Robert Putnam, "E Pluribus Unum," *The Journal of Scandinavian Political Studies, Vol. 30 – No. 2*, 2007, 138.

[199] The official American Creed was written by William Tyler Page and approved by the U.S. House of Representatives on April 3, 1918. It states, "I believe in the United States of America as a government of the people, by the people, for the people; whose just powers are derived from the consent of the governed, a democracy in a republic, a sovereign Nation of many sovereign States; a perfect union, one and inseparable; established upon those principles of freedom, equality, justice, and humanity for which American patriots sacrificed their lives and fortunes. I therefore believe it is my duty to my country to love it, to support its Constitution, to obey its laws, to respect its flag, and to defend it against all enemies." (William Tyler Page, "The American's Creed," USHistory.org, accessed on October 10, 2017 from http://www.ushistory.org/documents/creed.htm.)

[200] Haidt, *The Righteous Mind: Why Good People are Divided by Politics and Religion*, 193.

> When people of different ethnic origins [who may] speak different languages and [practice] different religions, settle in the same geographic area under a singular political sovereignty, the only way to keep them from breaking apart into small subgroups is to bind them together with a common purpose.[201]

Without a common purpose, he writes, tribal hostilities will surface and drive them apart.[202] Tellingly, the Founding Fathers emphasized unity because they experienced their own internal divisions within the 13 original colonies.

For the American Founding Fathers, *e pluribus unum* required citizens to forsake old loyalties, make new lives, and minimize differences so that diverse Americans would focus on what they had in common. The goal was not to destroy old cultures, but rather to create a new, common culture.[203] What, meanwhile, has happened since the Founders first established their goal of *e pluribus unum*? In 2017, the political commentator Angela Rye expressed one popular view in a CNN news segment about national identity. She said "…this country that some people call 'melting pot' I prefer [to call it] Jambalaya, because we are all different and I like that we can appreciate differences."[204] This is illuminating because two of the things she implicitly celebrates—multiculturalism and an over-emphasis on ethnicity—serve to reduce social trust.

Multiculturalism prevents the miracle of *e pluribus unum* by giving a greater value to America's many sub-cultures rather than to the nation's common culture. This is not to say that America should ignore or suppress the many cultures that exist here. But rather, it is to espouse the idea that when all persons can feel included within the common culture, broader unity will emerge. At the moment, there appear to be three obstacles to a shared sense of identity in America: failed assimilation, the promotion of sub-national identities, and the suppression of particular identity subgroups.

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[201] Schlesinger Jr., *The Disuniting of America*, 10–13.

[202] Schlesinger Jr., *The Disuniting of America*, 10–13.

[203] Schlesinger Jr., *The Disuniting of America*, 10–13.

[204] Angela Rye, "Fareed Zakaria Global Public Square," CNN News, August 20, 2017, accessed from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z8m7tD1JP6k, 18:01.

B. THREE OBSTACLES TO UNITY

1. Obstacle # 1: Assimilation and Acculturation

In a nation founded by immigrants, for immigrants, and in which immigration has been a massive source of population growth, assimilation is an absolute necessity to establishing a sense of shared identity. During nearly every era of American history, immigrants have been critical to U.S. global economic dominance. This is because immigrants are more likely to start new businesses, achieve higher rates of employment, and are responsible for a disproportionate share of American inventions.[205]

From the beginning, a key component of American identity has been a supreme emphasis on the individual. George Washington outlined this important point when he said,

> The bosom of America is open to the oppressed and persecuted of all nations and religions. Let them therefore settle as individuals, prepared for "intermixture with our people." Then they would be "assimilated to our customs, measures, and laws: in a word, soon become *one people*."[206]

In Washington's view, achieving *e pluribus unum* required that Americans view their own cultural heritage as a facet of their identity rather than as the dominant feature of their personhood.

Speaking practically, and as Arthur Schlesinger Jr. notes, individuals are more likely to be willing to embrace a culture when they believe that it accepts them as fully fledged members. The more that an immigrant feels that his own culture is accepted by the host country, the more he will accept the culture of the host country.[207] But this actually applies to more than just immigrants. Native-born Americans must also feel their heritage is likewise respected. Ironically, this has proven to be a challenge thanks to globalization which has increased the velocity of cultural change in American society and has left some feeling that even the make-up of their home towns has become suddenly

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[205] Bruce Berkowitz, *The Strategic Advantage* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2008), 114.

[206] Schlesinger Jr., *The Disuniting of America*, 23.

[207] Schlesinger Jr., *The Disuniting of America*, 23.

foreign to them.[208] This can be especially true for older and more tradition-minded individuals who have neither the capacity nor the will to accept new social mores in their home towns. This is often epitomized when people can no longer communicate with the convenient store attendant because of a language barrier.

Language is one of the most important aspects of a common culture. Some believe that English should be made this country's official national language and anyone who immigrates to America should have to speak English upon arrival or shortly thereafter.[209] Others believe that America should embrace multiple languages and even encourage new immigrants to speak their native language with no requirement that they learn English. Though cogent rationales can be offered for both positions, both limit the prospects of the immigrant. The purpose of encouraging immigrants to learn English should not be so that the native-born consumer can more easily interact with the immigrant shopkeeper; it should instead be so that the immigrant may enjoy the same freedoms that the native-born consumer enjoys. Language allows both to more fully embrace the liberty and equality for individuals outlined in the Creed.

There are other reasons to encourage the use of English as our only national language. English has become the world's language of science, popular culture, and business;[210] approximately two-thirds of all web pages are in English.[211] But language does more than simply enable more individual liberty—it binds.

Language is perhaps the most basic "cross-cutting tie." Amin Maalouf explains:

> Among all our recognized allegiances, [language] is almost always one of the most influential; almost as much as religion, which throughout history has been the chief rival of language. When two communities speak different languages, a common religion is not enough to unite them: take

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[208] Schlesinger Jr., *The Disuniting of America*, 23.

[209] Brandon Brice, "Why English should be the official language of the United States," *The Washington Times*, December 31, 2014, https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2014/dec/31/why-english-should-be-official-language-united-sta/.

[210] Berkowitz, *The Strategic Advantage*, 129.

[211] Berkowitz, *The Strategic Advantage*, 129.

> for instance the Turkish, Kurdish, and Arab Muslims… or the Orthodox Serbs, Catholic Croats, and Muslims in Bosnia.[212]

Historically, language and religion have been great cultural dividers. Indeed, when locals can no longer communicate with people working in their home towns, it leaves them feeling that the rug has been pulled out from under them. When values and norms are perceived as eroding—as is the case thanks to globalization—it follows that further cultural change is viewed as a threat to what enabled America to become the secure place it has been for so many Americans.[213]

The burden of *e pluribus unum* rests, perhaps, more on the native-born than the immigrant. Cultural integration requires two prerequisites: those who wish to join America must desire to embrace the common culture, while native-born Americans must be willing to accept the newcomers. In short, both natives and immigrants must *want* to achieve a shared identity. Since most immigrants demonstrate their desire to join the American culture simply by arriving, a large portion of the burden of unity lies with the settled majority.[214]

2. Obstacle # 2: Subnational Identities

The second obstacle to *e pluribus unum* lies in the promotion of subnational identities. Subnational identities can include creed, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, class, religion, and language. President Theodore Roosevelt warned of the danger of such identities when he said,

> The one absolutely certain way of bringing this nation to ruin, of preventing all possibility of its continuing to be a nation at all would be to permit it to become a tangle of squabbling nationalities, an intricate knot of German-Americans, Irish-Americans, English-Americans, French-

[212] Maalouf, *In the Name of Identity: Violence and the Need to Belong*, 131.

[213] Will Wilkinson, "How Godless Capitalism Made American Multicultural," Vox.com, Published on September 21, 2016, accessed on August 12, 2017 from https://www.vox.com/the-big-idea/2016/9/21/12992880/immigration-identity-nostalgia-white-christian-america.

[214] Schlesinger Jr., *The Disuniting of America*, 19.

> Americans, or Italian-Americans, each preserving its separate nationality.[215]

Years later, in the days following a German submarine attack on the Lusitania, President Woodrow Wilson echoed Roosevelt's warning to an audience of recently naturalized citizens: "You cannot become thorough Americans if you think of yourselves in groups. A man who thinks of himself as belonging to a particular [sub-] national group in America has not yet become an American."[216] Both Roosevelt and Wilson understood the danger of prioritizing sub-national identities over the common American identity.

An over-emphasis on group identities rejects the unifying vision of *e pluribus unum* because it promotes the notion that America is not a nation of individuals, but one of groups, separated by their differences. The danger is to then begin thinking that groups are not just distinct, but irreconcilably different. This locks people into identities, and once people are forced to relinquish their individuality in order to identify with their ethnic group they no longer have the freedom to evolve as individuals. Worse, once individuals give up their personal liberty, their ability to succeed in American society becomes constrained by the stereotypes applied to their subgroup.[217] Instead of the nation being composed of individuals making choices in their own best interest, the country becomes a nation of groups. From this perspective, not only does the dogma of

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[215] Schlesinger Jr., *The Disuniting of America*, 118.

[216] Schlesinger Jr., *The Disuniting of America*, 35.

[217] Another way to think about this is in terms of the stereotype threat: "One's sense of self, preferences, and cognition are in large part constituted through the concepts, practices, and social interactions that society makes available. Individuals have many social identities: for example, a person may be a parent, spouse, landowner, Hindu, member of a particular caste, and member of many other groups. Seemingly irrelevant cues to a particular identity can affect how the individual behaves and his ability to perform. An experiment by Karla Hoff and Priyanka Pandey assessed the effect of making caste identity salient on boys' intellectual performance. In the experiment, students in a six-person session generally did not know each other. They were taught how to solve mazes and were rewarded financially and in private for the number of mazes that they solved (which was never publicly revealed). The control condition of the experiment, in which each student's caste was not revealed, demonstrated that boys of former untouchable castes solve mazes just as well as high-caste boys. However, publicly revealing the boys' caste identities reduced the performance of the low-caste boys. Holding all else equal, low-caste boys solved 23% fewer mazes than high-caste boys if they were in a mixed-caste setting where caste identities were revealed. This is an example of stereotype threat: cueing a social identity that is stereotyped as mentally deficient actually impairs on average the performance of members of the group. In the United States, it applies to African-Americans and women." (Alagaraja, Meera, Wilson, and Kristin. 2016. "The Confluence of Individual Autonomy and Collective Identity in India," Advances in Developing Human Resources 18, 26–37).

multi-ethnicity fly in the face of assimilation and promote separatism over integration, but "it belittles unum and glorifies pluribus."[218]

When individual liberty is sacrificed on the altar of group equality, people are considered to be members of groups first, and individuals second. This is contrary to the Creed, which privileges all individuals, but no groups. To realize the liberty guaranteed them by the American Creed, people have to be able to freely abandon the identity others might want to assign them. For instance, Simons notes that one of the things that makes the United States unique is that,

> There are no official subnational identities. Although there is a plethora of possible affiliations from which to choose, none carries an official imprimatur: none is a trump… at different times and in different regions, religion, place of birth, class and race may have seemed all-important. But none have been paramount across the country over time.[219]

Americans place *e pluribus unum* at risk when they place sub-national identities over the national identity. Simons continues, "When people treat identity as though it is a value, and grant it moral weight, they can (and likely will) use identity to cleave those they regard as morally inferior from members of the population at large."[220] This is how sub-national identities threaten the integrity and unity of democratic states.[221] Undoubtedly, some sub-national identity groups have played an integral role in the development of the country's national identity; however, privileging any group or according it cultural hegemony violates the principles of individual liberty *and* equality.[222] But, at the same time that America should not promote sub-national identities, it should also be careful not to suppress them.

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[218] Schlesinger Jr., *The Disuniting of America*, 16.

[219] Simons, "Purity is Danger: An Argument for Divisible Identities," 184.

[220] Simons, "Purity is Danger: An Argument for Divisible Identities," 184.

[221] Simons, "Purity is Danger: An Argument for Divisible Identities," 184.

[222] TJ Jackson Lears, "The Concept of Cultural Hegemony: Problems and Possibilities," *The American Historical Review*, 1985, 567–593.

3. Obstacle # 3: Subgroup Suppression

When societies suppress certain aspects of identity—be it ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion, or some other facet—with the goal of achieving or preserving unity, they often achieve the opposite. When individuals feel they are no longer free to identify with important components of their personal identity they will often become overly defensive of that aspect. This is because individuals tend to prize, above all else, that aspect of their own identity which they believe is most threatened. Regardless of whether they conceal or flaunt that aspect of identity, it becomes the one—above all others—with which they most identify. As soon as they discover others who share in the same struggle, they organize and reinforce their subgroup to confront the "other side."[223] Maalouf provides an excellent example of such a situation in his book on identity:

> Take the case of an Italian homosexual in the days of fascism. For the man himself, that particular aspect of his personality had up until then been important, but no more so than his professional activity, political choices, or religious beliefs. Suddenly, state repression swoops down on him and he feels threatened. This man, who a few years earlier was a patriot, perhaps even a nationalist, was no longer able to exult at the sight of the Italian army marching by; he may even wish for its defeat. Because of the persecution to which he was subjected, his sexual preferences came to outweigh his other affiliations, among them even the nationalism which at that time was at its height. Only after the war, in a more tolerant Italy, would our man have felt entirely Italian once more.[224]

This story is similar to that of Christians practicing their new faith before Rome legalized it. When Rome sought to suppress their religion, Christians responded by identifying even more closely with their faith. Similar to the Italian homosexual, Roman Christians identified more as Christians than as Romans until 313 AD, when the legalization of Christianity no longer forced them to choose between the state and their faith. Once Rome allowed its citizens to freely practice their Christian faith, this sub-

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[223] Maalouf, *In the Name of Identity: Violence and the Need to Belong*, 26; Arguably, this is why identity politics have worked so well for the Democratic Party in the United States. They use minority groups' perceived, or real, injustices to unite against the 'other' (conservatives). This is also how Trump was able to create a 'backlash' to identity politics with his own populism. (Rod Dreher, "Mark Lilla Vs. Identity Politics," *The American Conservative,* August 16, 2017, accessed November 10, 2017 from https://www.theamericanconservative.com/dreher/mark-lilla-vs-identity-politics/.)

[224] Maalouf, *In the Name of Identity: Violence and the Need to Belong*, 14.

national identity no longer threatened the state. With freedom to worship, Christians could now focus on other aspects of their identity, particularly those aspects useful to the expansion of the empire.

Understanding that America encourages or suppresses sub-national identities to its detriment, how *should* it cultivate an environment so that facets of identity can be celebrated without harming national unity?

C. ONE SOLUTION: ONE NATIONAL IDENTITY—MANY INDIVIDUAL IDENTITIES

The optimal approach doubtless lies somewhere in the middle, where individuals are neither praised nor ostracized for being different. For instance, when Rome realized that Christianity could be leveraged to the benefit of the empire, it encouraged Christians to embrace that aspect of their identity. But Rome wisely went a step further by incorporating Christianity into its government structure. Doing so made the Christian aspect of identity a patriotic aspect. Similarly, once the Italian homosexual was no longer attacked, he could contribute to the national cause. In a similar manner, the United States could leverage the various sub-national identities that many perceive to be threatening it through greater acceptance. In her article "An Argument for Divisible Identities," Simons discusses the value of an environment in which identities can be easily changed:

> One thing that *The Federalist Papers* make clear is that civil order depends on the kaleidoscopic ability of individuals to move in and out of social groups of their own free will, shifting affiliations as their interests shift. Only this can guarantee the persistence and proliferation of groups which, so long as there are enough of them, means none is likely to persist 'as is' for very long. In other words, if democracy is to be kept humming there must be room for flux and reflux.[225]

If current trends continue, by 2055 the United States will have no singular ethnic majority. In order for the United States to maintain its strength, individuals, not groups, must remain the unit of account, and they have to be able to choose their identities freely. When identity can be tied to an individual rather than a group, then accountability can

[225] Simons, "An Argument for Divisible Identities," 188.

also be tied to the individual, rather than to a group or to an individual as a representative of a group. Simons continues:

> Separable societies which fix (and fixate on) singular identities pose a series of dangers. No matter how counterintuitive it may seem, this is also why allowing individuals to claim as many identities as they want as often as they wish only makes sense. The government should want identities to morph. The reason? The more mixed up people are in terms of how they identify themselves, the more difficult it becomes for them to be divided.[226]

Societies that lack hard and fast groups are less vulnerable to being split along identity lines. Ironically, diversity (and the methodology for assigning people to racial and ethnic groups) is itself largely a socially constructed endeavor and even these categories have shifted over time. This is because each individual is comprised of a mosaic of identities—especially in America. Mirah Riben makes this point in her article entitled, "Being Black-ish: Race and Self-Identification:"

> Biologically speaking, we are all mixed. That is, we all have genetic material from a variety of populations, and we all exhibit physical characteristics that testify to mixed ancestry. Biologically speaking, there never have been any pure races—all populations are mixed.[227]

Putnam, like Simons, calls for making more of this by encouraging "permeable, syncretic, 'hyphenated' identities that enable previously separate ethnic groups to see themselves, in part, as members of a shared group with a shared identity."[228]

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[226] Simons, "An Argument for Divisible Identities," 189.

[227] Mirah Riben, "Being Black-ish: Race and Self-Identification," *The Huffington Post*, June 22, 2016, accessed from http://www.huffingtonpost.com/mirah-riben/being-blackish-race-and-s_b_7629612.html on September 28, 2017.

[228] "Historically, Americans worshipped in such complete racial segregation that it was proverbial among sociologists of religion that '11:00 am Sunday is the most segregated hour in the week'. In recent years, however, many churches, especially evangelical megachurches, have become substantially more integrated in racial terms. In many large evangelical congregations, the participants constituted the largest thoroughly integrated gatherings we have ever witnessed. It remains true that most church-goers in America (53%) report that all or almost all of the people in their congregation are of the same race. However, younger people and those who attend evangelical megachurches report significantly more racial integration. It seems likely that this undoing of past segregation is due, at least in part, to the construction of religiously based identities that cut across conventional racial identities." (Putnam, "E Pluribus Unum," 161); Putnam, "E Pluribus Unum," 161.

But creating a distinct American identity is not enough, and Putnam highlights this fact when he writes that there must still exist a more inclusive identity to take the place of the old:

> Nevertheless, my hunch is that at the end we shall see that the challenge is best met not by making 'them' like 'us,' but rather by creating a new, more capacious sense of 'we,' a reconstruction of diversity that does not bleach out ethnic specificities, but creates overarching identities that ensure that those specificities do not trigger the allergic, 'hunker down' reaction.[229]

Putnam offers several suggestions for how American identity might evolve to embody "a greater sense of 'we'" for all Americans. Among other recommendations, policymakers must provide people with opportunities to interact and share common interests outside of their ethnic groups.[230] In order to foster a shared sense of belonging, steps toward a new identity must be deliberate. Tolerance, in his view, is a much overused word and does not go nearly far enough to unify Americans; Americans must do more than simply tolerate one another—they must accept one another. This does not mean that every American should hold the same values or beliefs, but that all Americans should seek to understand the core facets of one another's individual identity.

In *Bowling Alone*, Putnam makes the argument that people are more willing to trust each other when their identities are closely aligned. But again, individual identities are largely a social construct that can be changed over time. This occurs frequently in American society with proselytizing (e.g., religion), wealth redistribution and economic mobility (e.g., class), intermarriage (e.g., ethnicity), and campaigning (e.g., politics)—all aim to intentionally transform identities.

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[229] Putnam, "E Pluribus Unum," 161.

[230] Programs that do this include the American Field Service (AFS) or the Kentucky Rural-Urban Exchange that function as a domestic exchange program which allows students to travel the country and spend a "summer or a semester with host families, discovering new food and strange customs within their own country." Amanda Ripley. "REVIEW—America, Meet America—how can we Get Past Today's Toxic Partisanship and Political Segregation? Bringing Back Domestic-Exchange Programs could Help Remind Citizens what we all have in Common." *Wall Street Journal*, Jul 1, 2017, Eastern edition. https://search.proquest.com/docview/1914961405.

A changed identity can often result in changed behavior.[231] The question this leads to is, how can we begin this transformation?

D. HOW TO GET THERE: PATRIOTIC BUILDING BLOCKS

1. Civic Education

Many have argued that civic education is the key to achieving a more unified country.[232] Civic education can help align individual identities by providing opportunities for Americans to build community across demographic lines. In fact, public education was initially established in the United States for this very purpose.[233] Public education was the leading instrument for assimilating and incorporating new immigrants a century ago. Today it can be used to reincorporate natives and newcomers alike. The way that students are taught to think as children and in adolescence impacts the way they will treat one another and view America, and shapes the roles they see themselves playing in their nation's future.[234] In essence, civic education was built to develop patriotism toward the founding ideals of the United States. Inculcating loyalty toward the founding ideals ensured that no matter how far the American public evolved politically, morally, or demographically, a patriotic attitude toward the American Creed would ensure national survival.

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[231] Putnam, "E Pluribus Unum," 159.

[232] Adam Chan, "America Fails in Civic Education," The Gate, September 30, 2017, http://uchicagogate.com/2017/04/02/america-fails-in-civic-education/; Heather Malin, Parissa J. Ballard, Maryam Lucia Attai, Anne Colby, and William Damon, *Youth Civic Development & Education: A Consensus Report*, (Stanford, CA, Stanford Center on Adolescence William Damon, 2014), https://coa.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/Civic%20Education%20report.pdf; Great Schools Staff, *The state of civic education: Teaching the citizens of tomorrow*, (Published in Great Schools on April 27, 2015), https://www.greatschools.org/gk/articles/the-state-of-civic-education-teaching-the-citizens-of-tomorrow/; Brenden Bernicker, "The Decline of Civic Education and the Effect on Our Democracy," *Everyday Democracy*, September 19, 2016, https://www.everyday-democracy.org/news/decline-civic-education-and-effect-our-democracy.

[233] In her article on American adolescence, Fass describes the transformation of the U.S. public education system and writes, "High schools brought young people together into an adolescent world that helped to obscure where they came from and emphasized who they were as an age group." She went on to note, "It was closer to the core of the American experience than anything else I can think of." The novelist Kurt Vonnegut concludes in an article for *Esquire* in 1970 that, "High school was a critical part of how second-generation immigrants were incorporated into the U.S. mainstream." (Paula S. Fass, "The End of Adolescence," October 27, 2016, Aeon Essays).

[234] Paula S. Fass, "The End of Adolescence," October 27, 2016, Aeon Essays.

The education debate is really one about what it means to be an American. This is why topics such as school curricula, public education, and diversity of thought on college campuses are so hotly contested along political lines.[235] As recently as 2012, many believe the main objective of education should be the protection, strengthening, celebration, and perpetuation of ethnic identities. Dr. Matthew Lynch outlined this in his article entitled, "Promoting Respect for Cultural Diversity in the Classroom."

> Another important goal of culturally responsive education is to teach students to respect and appreciate their own culture and heritage. Minority students can sometimes feel pressured to dispose of their cultural norms, behaviors, and traditions in order to fit in with the prevalent social order. When this happens it can create a significant disconnect between the culture of the student's school and community lives and can interfere with emotional growth and social development, frequently resulting in poor performance in social and academic domains. Providing opportunities for students to investigate unique facets of their community is one effective way to help students gain a greater appreciation for their own culture.[236]

But this drives Americans apart by nourishing prejudices and magnifying differences. The ties that bind Americans are fragile and, thus, education must strengthen, not weaken them.[237] Instead, students must be taught the value of unity and how to leverage their individual liberty and equality in order to succeed as parts of a stronger whole.

2. National Service

National Service is perhaps the most effective means of developing cross-cutting ties, and enhancing social trust among increasingly diverse Americans. This point has been made countless times in what is now considerable literature, from Richard Danzig and Peter Szanton in *National Service: What Would it Mean?*"[238] to Charles Moskos in *A Call to Civic Service*[239] to Donald J. Eberly in "Service without Guns,"[240] to The Task

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[235] Schlesinger Jr., *The Disuniting of America*, 17–18.

[236] Matthew Lynch, "Promoting Respect for Cultural Diversity in the Classroom," *The Huffington Post*, March 7, 2012, accessed on November 10, 2017 from https://www.huffingtonpost.com/matthew-lynch-edd/promoting-respect-for-cul_b_1187683.html.

[237] Schlesinger Jr., *The Disuniting of America*, 17–18.

[238] Richard Danzig and Robert Szanton, *National Service: What Would it Mean?* (Lexington: Lexington Books, 1986), 265.

[239] Charles Moskos, *A Call to Civic Service* (New York: Free Press, 1988), 2.

Force on National Service's *Imagining America: Making National Service a Priority*.[241] Most recently, the Panetta Institute promoted the notion of voluntary national service in America.

The cross-cutting ties afforded by national service are especially important in the United States since it was not founded on aspects of blood and soil, but rather on a set of ideals. Maintaining an identity based on ideals alone requires hard work and sacrifice. National service, whether in the military or in other institutions and programs, can provide a space for U.S. citizens to come together.[242]

There are several benefits to broad participation in national service. First, it could enhance a sense of patriotism and purpose among the next generation of Americans. A 2016 study by Debra Viadero revealed that a majority of young Americans lack direction in life.[243] National service could help provide meaning by instilling in them a sense of duty and accomplishment toward a cause worth sacrificing: advancing American ideals such as liberty and equality for all. According to serviceyear.org, thousands of national service participants polled in recent years indicate that participation in organizations like AmeriCorps gave them a deeper sense of meaning, increased social trust would be second benefit to national service since it would involve Americans from every walk of life in civic engagement.[244]

Increased trust should reduce tensions among Americans from different backgrounds. In fact, another recent poll reveals that nearly half (45%) of national service participants believe that their experience led them to change opinions they previously held about different types of people.[245] This is also true for military experience. For

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[240] Donald J. Eberly and Reuven Gal, "Service Without Guns," (Raleigh, 2006), 125.

[241] The Task Force on National Service, *Imagining America: Making National Service a Priority* (American Jewish Committee, 2007).

[242] Leon E. Panetta, *The Case for National Service*, A Fellowship Research Project for The Panetta Institute for Public Policy, September 11, 2017, Introduction.

[243] Debora Viadero, "Majority of Youths Found to Lack a Direction in Life," *Education Week*, Last updated June 11, 2008, https://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2008/06/11/41purpose_ep.h27.html.

[244] Panetta, *The Case for National Service*, 2.

[245] Service Nation 2020, September 12, 2017, https://www.demos.co.uk/project/service-nation-2020/.

instance, Johnson & Johnson CEO Alex Gorsky credits his military service with teaching him the value of diverse teams. The former CEO of American Electric Power, Michael Morris, says that his service gave him "a willingness to listen and formulate an opinion that incorporates as many people's ideas as possible."[246]

National service works. Switzerland, Israel, and Singapore all benefit from its implementation. In Switzerland, a country with three distinct ethnic groups and four official languages, social trust is high in part due to a national service program which requires each participant to learn another group's customs and language, thus bridging ethnic divides and increasing a shared sense of community.[247] The same holds for national service in Singapore and in Israel. According to *The Straits Times* in Singapore,

> [Singapore National Service] began in 1967 to create a citizen military for a newly-independent nation, and about a million males have since experienced this rite of passage. While its primary purpose is defense and security, national service has increasingly come to be seen as a key part of national identity.[248]

For their part, Israelis have come to find national service to be something that binds all Israelis. In a recent *New York Times* article on Israeli conscription, Professor Yedidia Stern writes,

> Once the majority [of Israelis] will wear the I.D.F. [Israeli Defense Force] uniforms in Bnei Brak, in Yerushalayim, in all these Haredi ghettos, I think the I.D.F. will secure the Israeli society as one society in a crucial way. This is a mission for I.D.F., to help keep the cohesion of our society.[249]

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[246] Panetta, *The Case for National Service*, 4.

[247] "Switzerland referendum voters to keep army conscription," 2013, September 22, http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-24195870.

[248] Fabian Koh, "Celebrating NS50: 7 Ways How Singapore National Service has Evolved Over the Years," *The Straits Times*, accessed on September 30, 2017 from http://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/celebrating-ns50-7-ways-how-singapore-national-service-has-evolved-over-the-years.

[249] Jodi Rudoren, "Israeli Identity is at the Heart of a Debate on Service," *The New York Times*, July 5, 2012, http://www.nytimes.com/2012/07/06/world/middleeast/national-identity-at-heart-of-debate-on-israeli-military-service.html?mcubz=1 .

National service forces people from all different walks of life to be bored together. Shared boredom leads to dialogue. In *The Sovereignty Solution*, Simons et al. makes this point when arguing on behalf of mandatory national service:

> One advantage to making participation in some kind of national service mandatory is that it would automatically become an *all-American* rite-of-passage. That alone would help broaden, deepen, and mature America's youth. Indeed, for all the recent attention accorded the "Greatest Generation," many Americans forget that one of the most useful things World War II-era conscription did was force individuals who never would have had to interact with one another, to interact as codependents. Hollywood has probably over-romanticized just how diverse the stereotypical combat platoon really was—with a Pole, an Italian, an Ivy League blueblood, and a southerner all serving side by side as brothers in arms. But the great public works projects undertaken during the Depression did much the same thing. They not only exposed young people to new places and new experiences, but required them to pitch in and invest sweat equity in *their* country. But would such a program actually be supported by a majority of Americans?[250]

Simons and her co-authors wonder how national service might be incentivized to encourage broad participation if it cannot be made mandatory.[251]

Polls indicate that voluntary national service would receive broad support from young and old, liberals and conservatives. A recent Panetta Institute survey found that 59% of U.S. college students expressed interest in a national service program that would consist of two years of service in exchange for monetary help with college. Both political parties support an increase in federal government support to national service

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[250] Anna Simons, Joe McGraw, and Duane Lauchengco, *The Sovereignty Solution* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2011).

[251] National Service could be incentivized even if it were not compulsory. One idea put forward by Matthew S. Brennan and Kyle L. Upshaw is a plan called the National Service American Dream Account program. They explain the incentive structure this way: "The U.S. Treasury would administer a tax-free fund of $5,000 provided for every baby born in the United States and linked to the child's social security number. Parents would have legal custody over the fund and, along with family members and friends, could contribute to the account annually. No one would be able to touch the funds until the child turned 18 and performed a full term of national service. Once the service obligation was fulfilled, the government would grant him/her access to withdraw the funds but only for preapproved purposes (paying for higher education, buying a home, starting a business or non-profit organization, or opening a retirement investment). This fund could mature with and without annual contributions…" that could incentivize service with anywhere up to $18,803 at age 19 with no contributions, to $38,080 with annual $500 contributions, to $58,078 with $1000 annual contributions. (values are calculated at 7% interest). Service could also "carry with it some educational credit depending on the field of service. For example, serving in the environmental sector for a year might qualify an individual for between three and six credit hours' worth of college level equivalency credit." (Matthew S. Brennan and Kyle L. Upshaw, "American Service: New National Service for the United States," (master's thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 2012), 70).

initiatives.[252] A 2016 study by the market research firm Target Point revealed that 78% of Republicans, 84% of Independents, and 90% of Democrats want to maintain or increase current levels of federal spending on national service initiatives.[253] At the moment, such initiatives attract volunteers. Perhaps in the near future high levels of bipartisan financial support would lead to even higher rates of volunteerism.

[252] https://www.nationalservice.gov.

[253] Leon Panetta, *The Case for National Service*, 20.

VI. CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

A. TAKEAWAYS

Helping Americans embrace an evolving identity is not a simple task. Leaders in government, the business community, and academia should take practical steps toward promoting individuals the unit of account, free to choose as many identities as they like. There should be greater emphasis put on civic education, and—more encouragement, perhaps even a requirement—to engage in national service. Promoting an environment that encourages Americans to evolve with what we need as a truly *national* identity will ensure that *e pluribus unum* is maintained and that the sacred values of the American Creed; liberty and equality for all, are protected. As Henry Kissinger has said,

> Even as the lessons of challenging decades are examined, the affirmation of America's exceptional nature must be sustained. History offers no respite to countries that set aside their commitments or sense of identity in favor of a seemingly less arduous course.[254]

B. AREAS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

It has been hard to examine this topic without wondering what aspects of American identity—as it is currently constituted or as it might develop in the future—might lend themselves to be exploitable by our adversaries. This is certainly worthy of attention. So are realistic national service incentive options other than those listed in this thesis. What *would* it take for the United States to implement compulsory national service?

The military-civilian divide continues to grow, largely as a result of America's evolving identity. What can be done to curb this growth or reverse it altogether? With such a widening disconnect between the military and the people service-members are sworn to protect, the threat of a military coup during a time of crisis no longer seems as far-fetched as it once did. To what extent could such a catastrophe become plausible in the near future? *If* America's adversaries understand our fissures, could they be tempted

[254] Kissinger, Henry, *World Order* (New York: Penguin Books, 2015), 373.

to strike America, much as Hitler attempted to do when he invaded Russia? *Could* the divide between the United States and its 'Warrior Caste' represent a seam that an adversary might attempt to capitalize on? Conversely, Hitler actually united the Russians by his heinous acts of slaughter in the East. Had the Germans come as liberators in the Ukraine, for example, Hitler might have exploited fissures and altered the outcome of the war. *Could* an adversary pursue such an action against the United States?

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