

Ethnic Conflict in History

An ambitious overview of five millennia

by Lee G. Madland

In a previous issue of *The Social Contract*, this writer cited at least 120 specific cases of ethnic conflict or major ethnic tension in about half the 194 sovereign countries of the world, just during the last three decades or so.¹ One key conclusion was that the United States, in encouraging the present huge levels of legal immigration from diverse cultures and at the same time making few real efforts to staunch the also huge illegal flow, is sowing the seeds of a similarly dangerous situation, which have already started to sprout. It carries a clear potential for breaking up the nation. Just as many other countries in all parts of the world have split apart when cultural and consequent political strains between different ethnic groups reached a breaking point, if the current trend continues it could easily happen here, very possibly well before this century is out.

The immigration-fueled demographic trend in the U.S. shows no signs of abating, and the ethnic-cultural mix of America has already been changed in irreversible ways with breathtaking speed — in barely over one generation, let alone the next two or three. It's a looming, mushrooming problem that the present generation and those following will be forced to deal with if they can. The longer it takes to come to grips with it, the greater the ultimate disaster will be.

Here we'll take a look at such problems by way of a historical overview. As there have been too many throughout history to be covered here, we'll take a number of examples to illustrate their pervasiveness from ancient through classical and medieval to modern times (prior to what we are pleased to call the "post-modern" period since the late 1960s, covered in my earlier article.) Some cultures span more than one, or even all, these

eras. If situations affecting Western cultures receive more emphasis here, it is both because these are our own heritage and historical information is more readily available for them. Many non-Western examples show, however, that all types of human cultures are susceptible to problems of this sort.

In Ancient Times (c. 3000-500 BC)

Human history based on actual written records dates back little more than 5000 years or to roughly 3000 BC. Writing, first developed in the Near East a few hundred years earlier for accounting purposes, had by then become capable of recording the nuances of language. Thus writing came to be applied to more than just administrative records, as rulers began having their heroic deeds recorded to ensure their legacies after death. "History" by definition is what can be derived from written sources, with sciences such as archeology and anthropology filling in some of the gaps.

The first known non-pictorial writing was developed in the Sumerian city-states on the floodplain at the head of the Persian Gulf. (The world's first known major city, Uruk, with tens of thousands of people during the 3000s BC, was located on the lower Euphrates and followed by others including Ur, founded at its mouth on what was then the Gulf coastline). The Sumerians were probably a people of Caucasian² type, as were more surely those who lived in the region that included not only the Caucasus but stretched over a much larger area from the Anatolian Peninsula (Asia Minor, today's Turkey) well into present Iran. Flanking Sumeria were Caucasian hill peoples such as the Hurrians, Gutis, and Kassites to the north and Elamites to the east. In the river plains upstream from Sumeria lived Semitic farmers such as Akkadians, and in the deserts to the south and west were nomadic Arabians. Far to the southwest lay Egypt, home to a Hamitic people who established the world's first extensive kingdom in about 3000 BC.

The region dominated by various Caucasian peoples was to shrink over the next two millennia as they became squeezed not only by the Semitic Amorites out of Arabia, but also by pincer pressures from two Indo-European

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groups: Iranians from the northeast out of Central Asia who conquered and settled much of the Iranian Plateau, and, from the west, Hittite invaders from Europe who took over the core of Asia Minor and dominated it for a thousand years. Thus were seeds of conflict between major cultural groups planted in the region. In these struggles the Caucasian peoples were the biggest losers, ultimately becoming confined to the Caucasus region itself. Today the only independent country speaking a Caucasian language is Georgia.³

Around 1640 BC, Egypt was successfully invaded for the first time by Semitic nomads whom Egyptians called the Hyksos (“foreign rulers”) who made good use of war chariots, a new weapon that enabled them to carry all before them. Their specific origins are murky but Colin McEvedy depicts them as probably “the final upheaval of the Amorite expansion.”⁴ The Biblical Joseph’s move into Egypt is usually ascribed to “the time of the Hyksos pharaohs, with their presumably favorable attitude to Semitic immigrants.”⁵

The Iranian eruption from Central Asia was far from over. During the 1600s and 1500s, beside continuing movements into the Near East and Fertile Crescent, other Iranians moved east into the Tarim Basin, making China their neighbor. (To forestall these and later nomads the Chinese were prompted to build a series of earth barriers, forerunners of the Great Wall.) And in an epoch-making invasion the chariot-assisted Aryan nomads swarmed southeastward into India, which they dominated sufficiently to ensure that most languages of North India today are of the Indo-European group.⁶

Shortly after 1200 BC an apparent confederation of roving barbarian groups whom Egyptians called the “Sea Peoples” swept along the eastern Mediterranean by both land and sea. The initiators may have been of partly Dorian Greek origins but the invaders seem to have included many different groups who joined in the conquest along the way, such as Luvians of western Anatolia and Phrygians, a Thracian people, who joined in invading central Anatolia and overthrew the Hittites. The Mycenaean Greek civilization was snuffed out, and Egypt repulsed the Sea Peoples only with great difficulty. The best known single group of these invaders were called Philistines, who after being thwarted in Egypt fell back to settle in a land which came to be named for them — Palestine — where they harried the neighboring hill-dwelling Hebrews and Canaanites as well as the coastal

Phoenician Canaanites. A 400-year dark age followed the various ravaging groups’ passage through the Aegean, Asia Minor, and the Levant.

The period of Hebrew glory gained under David and Solomon in the 900s BC lasted barely over three quarters of a century and was followed by a split between Israel and Judah, then a series of invaders on both flanks who imposed tribute, and later total conquest by the Semitic Assyrian and Babylonian empires, both of which deported many of the Israelites and Judeans — the beginning of the Jewish Diaspora.

Meanwhile, Iranians were becoming increasingly organized and powerful. The first true Iranian empire was that of the Medes, until the Achaemenid Persians of the south under Cyrus II overthrew it around 550 BC. He and his successors Cambyses and Darius in quick succession then conquered Anatolia, Central Asia to the Jaxartes (Syr Darya) River, Babylonia, and Egypt. By 513 Persian control extended from Libya and northern Greece to the Indus River of northwestern India. The Persian Empire was easily the largest the world had yet seen and the first “cosmopolitan” one, ending the cultural isolation of several disparate civilizations. Despite being expelled from Greece shortly after Xerxes’ defeat there in 480 and later temporarily losing Egypt to native rule, the Persian Empire remained essentially intact for more than two centuries.

In ancient times, since writing was used especially to commemorate the glories of kings, the internal troubles of kingdoms and empires such as ethnic dissonance tended to be given short shrift in the chronicles. Nonetheless it is a safe assumption that such problems, though under reported, were persistent. Although power struggles and wars were the order of this and other eras, the choice of enemies is often revealing. For instance, Persians found Greeks sufficiently different from their other subjects that the Empire’s inclusive cosmopolitanism often was not applied to them. Although the Persians withdrew from Greece itself, many Greeks on the Persian-ruled mainland of Asia Minor were exiled to the faraway eastern reaches of the Empire to get rid of potential troublemakers. Most people of these (and later) times, of course, could not write, even had they dared to express dissent. A conspicuous example of a people who did leave extensive writings about such things were the Jews, considerable parts of their Biblical scriptures being almost a compendium of sufferings

imposed by other peoples who lorded over them, the falling out of the weak among themselves, and the determination of others not to succumb to the intrigues of outsiders.

The Classical Era (c. 500 BC – AD 500)

During this roughly thousand-year period the main centers of power shifted westward to Mediterranean lands. Some civilizations extended outside the geographical limits of this Europe-centered name for the era, but it is nonetheless a useful one.

For several hundred years before the “golden age” that followed the expulsion of the Persians from Greece proper, various Greek cities had been planting colonies not only along Mediterranean shores from Cyprus in the east to Iberia (Spain) in the west, but along the Black Sea coast as well. These did not constitute an empire since the separate city-states generally ran their own affairs and not infrequently warred on one other. Some of the cities founded as colonies, however, acquired what amounted to mini-empires in their own right. Syracuse, on the island of Sicily, for some time controlled the Greek-settled areas of southern Italy; Athens and Sparta fought each other for decades in four Peloponnesian wars from the mid-400s BC well into the 300s. A result of all this, however, was to spread Greek culture widely around the Mediterranean, to become a potent influence in many other developing cultures.

And not only in the Mediterranean. When Philip acceded to the throne of the northern state of Macedon in 359 BC, that once-“barbarian” region had already become thoroughly Hellenized. Philip’s genius for organization and campaigning transformed Macedonia into a superpower, bringing most of Greece under effective control. He then declared war against Persia, but before he could get it under way he was murdered in 336.

His son Alexander took over and just two years later led his army across the Hellespont into Asia. The story of Alexander’s campaigns through the crumbling Persian empire has been told too often to need more than the barest outline here. Alexander marched through Anatolia, Phoenicia, Egypt, then into the heart of Persia where he burned its capital, Persepolis, in 330. Pushing beyond and far into Central Asia after crossing the Hindu Kush in Afghanistan, and later bridging the Indus River, Alexander defeated a large Indian army sent against him.

Although he wanted to go on into the heart of India, at this point his exhausted men refused to push farther, and he reluctantly followed the Indus south before turning back west. He had, however, in just ten years, taken control of the whole of the vast former Persian Empire and made it his own. But during a two-month return march through the deserts of Baluchistan his army met its only real defeat — not to opposing armies but to thirst and flash floods that decimated the force. Two years later, in 323 BC, Alexander fell ill and died in Babylon at only 32 years of age.

Alexander’s genius was not only military but also cultural. He did not interfere with regional customs; on the contrary, he had such a show of adopting them that his men grumbled he was becoming more Asian than Greek. Although upon his death the empire split up and was divided among his generals, his legacy was to spread Greek cultural influence deep into Asia.

Greeks continued to migrate into these lands and ruled much of the huge region during the next 150 to 200 years. The most influential units were the vast Seleucid domain and the even longer-lived Ptolemaic kingdom centered in Egypt whose last monarch was Cleopatra. But another deserves special mention. In the remotest reaches of Alexander’s conquests the Bactrian Greeks — after breaking away from the Seleucids in 239 BC — reached an astonishing peak of power in the 180s, when Bactria not only conquered and ruled a huge region in Central Asia, including Afghanistan and northern India to beyond Delhi, but its armies campaigned even into the lower Ganges Valley as far as the walls of Mauryan India’s capital at Patna. A Greek king of its Indian half, Menander, is still enshrined as a Buddhist hero and saint for protecting Buddhists from a wave of deadly Hindu hostility that ran unchecked in the rest of India. Although most of Bactria was overrun in the 130s by Iranian nomads from the north, the last Greek principalities in the upper Indus valley did not disappear until about AD 1, three decades after the last Greek-ruled part of the Mediterranean, Cleopatra’s Egypt, was absorbed by Rome.

During these centuries the main power centers were shifting toward the western Mediterranean. Although Greeks managed to establish several colonies along the coasts of present France and Spain such as Massalia (today’s Marseilles), most of the early West Mediterranean cities grew out of trading settlements

founded by Phoenicians. The most important of these was Carthage in present Tunisia, traditionally founded in 814 BC from Tyre. In time Carthage became master of the western Mediterranean and beyond, her ships trading as far as Britain and well down the coast of Africa. These ventures proved so profitable that Carthage was to become the richest city in the entire world.

For centuries Carthaginians waged seesaw struggles with Greeks on Sicily, neither ever gaining control of the whole island. But meanwhile a new power was emerging to the north: Rome. Between 264 and 146 Carthage fought Rome in three epic Punic Wars, the greatest and bitterest conflicts fought in all antiquity. As a result of the first 25-year-long war, both sides fighting to exhaustion over Sicily, Carthage finally lost the island and Rome gaining her first territory outside the Italian Peninsula.

Punic⁷ armies were composed chiefly of hired mercenaries under Carthaginian commanders. Soon after peace was concluded those troops and Libyans, Iberians, Balearians, Gauls, Ligurians and diverse Western Greeks mutinied over arrears in pay. "Lacking a common language and without the unifying force of a Carthaginian command structure, [they] fragmented into groups along ethnic lines." They cut roads and captured nearby Utica while committing horrific atrocities, forcing a major citizen mobilization to put it down. The rebellion was spurred especially by Libyans (Berbers) and with substantial support from thousands of their "volatile blood-brothers of the interior." In the meantime, Rome made good use of the chaos by seizing Sardinia.⁸

In the years following the first war with Rome, Carthage gained more territory in Iberia (Spain) than it had lost in Sicily and Sardinia. Then, in 218 BC, Hannibal marched his army from Spain across the Alps into Italy itself (his famous thirty-seven elephants were not a factor, as nearly all died in the snows of the Alps). For fully thirteen years he led his troops up and down the Italian Peninsula almost at will, and although considerably outnumbered, decisively defeated every major Roman army sent against him. He has been called the most brilliant general in history, not excepting even Alexander.

But through a combination of Rome's dogged persistence and Carthage's lack of support and reinforcements (the leaders had determined to continue with business as usual), Hannibal was finally forced to return to Africa to fight an invading Roman force there and where, in 202, his hastily improvised Punic forces not

used to fighting together, lost a decisive battle at Zama that ended the war and Carthage's empire, leaving the Punic city with only its near hinterland in Tunisia. It left Rome with a good start on its own empire as it took Carthage's Spanish territory.

[At precisely the time Hannibal was preparing to invade Italy, far away on the opposite end of the Eurasian continent, the first Chinese empire was formed when the most powerful of its kingdoms, the Ch'in,⁹ had conquered the warring feudal states of the region and brought them under tight centralized rule (219 BC). Soon after the first emperor's death the Ch'in Empire was overthrown (in 202, the year of Hannibal's defeat) and succeeded by that of the Han whose rule proved less harsh and more durable. The Chinese to this day think of themselves as their cultural heirs, calling themselves Han.]

The Third Punic War, a half-century later, was instigated by Rome. On a legal pretext Rome sent a huge force to besiege the once again prosperous and hated city. The Carthaginians defended themselves desperately in a struggle to the death for three long years and despite being induced at the start to turn over all their weaponry in response to a false Roman peace offer. But in 146 BC the legions breached the walls and razed the city to the ground, her pitifully few survivors sold into slavery.

Thus an entire civilization was destroyed, including its whole literature as well as the spoken language itself. The only surviving writings in Punic are some terse graveyard monuments engraved in stone. In consequence, Carthage has had the singular misfortune of having had its history told entirely by its enemies, the Greeks and Romans, both of whom generally looked askance at her people and despised them as mere crafty traders while resenting their commercial success (although never averse to dealing with them). Not surprisingly, even today many scholars steeped in the Classics have acquired a bias against the Carthaginians. It is true that they practiced human sacrifice as a religious rite, though by the time of the Punic Wars that had almost died out. But a number of historians have noted that the envy, contempt and hatred displayed by Greeks and Romans toward Carthaginians and other Phoenicians marked the beginnings of Western anti-Semitism, for many of the same reasons that it was later to be directed against Jews.¹⁰

By the time Augustus became emperor in 27 BC the Roman superpower had expanded to encompass the entire Mediterranean, with its northern borders on the Rhine and Danube. During the first century AD Rome extended its frontiers to Britain and other peripheral areas. By the early 100s its territory had essentially stabilized.

The obverse of the question as to why the Roman Empire fell is how it lasted five hundred years. For most of that time it brought peace, prosperity and stability to the entire region, except for an occasional war on a faraway, usually eastern, frontier. It became the most universally inclusive polity the world had ever seen. In the words of the perceptive historian, Thomas Cahill, writing about these times, "The Gauls had long since become civilized Romans, and Rome offered the same Romanization to anyone who wanted it **n** sometimes, as with Jews, whether they wanted it or not. Normally, though, everyone was dying to be Roman."

The issue of whether Rome fell more from internal decay or invasions by outsiders has been endlessly analyzed from both viewpoints. But whether a cause or result or both, the latter certainly played a key role in the collapse. Its background was mostly undramatic. "The barbarian migration was not perceived as a threat by Romans, simply because it was a migration **n** a year-in, year-out, rag-tag migration **n** and not an organized, armed assault. It had, in fact, been going on for centuries ... Sometimes the barbarians came in waves, though seldom as big as this one [Germanic Vandals and Sueves swarming across the frozen Rhine in AD 406]. More often they came in trickles: as craftsmen who sought honest employment, as warriors who enlisted in the Roman legions, as tribal chieftains who paid for land, as marauders who burned and looted and sometimes raped and murdered."¹¹

During Rome's last century of empire whole Germanic tribes were allowed to settle in Roman territory as federates (allies) to help guard its now thinly manned frontiers. For instance, in AD 376 the Visigoths, fleeing Hun invaders from the Asian steppes, crossed the

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Danube and were given sizeable lands in what is now Bulgaria by the Eastern emperor. The record of these presumed allies was, to say the least, spotty. Within twenty years, under their new leader Alaric, Visigoths were again on the move and slashed their way through Greece, where they were granted another large area to settle. But after a short pause there, they then struck northward through Dalmatia. Even the hired general that Rome sent to bar them from

entering Italy, who did hold them off for a time, was of Germanic (Vandal) origin. But in 410 Alaric's forces reached Rome itself and plundered it before moving on. Later, after ravaging Spain, the Visigoths were bought off once more as federates and given sufficient good land in Aquitania (southwestern Gaul) for a rich kingdom. There they settled down for some forty years but in the 470s went on another rampage, doubling their territory in Gaul and re-invading Spain, the latter to become their core domain and remaining so for over two centuries until the Arab conquest.

The net result was that by 486 the last remnant of Rome's western empire had fallen to German tribes ranging from Franks moving south into Gaul (giving France its name), to Vandals who earlier took over the African region centered on Roman Carthage; in 455 these sent a seaborne force to sack what had been, and symbolically still was, the powerful shining light of the civilized world. Truly a bizarre twist laden with irony **n** Rome attacked from Carthage and vandalized ... literally.

The Medieval Era (c. 500-1500)

During medieval times most of the histories continued to be written by kings or other potentates, or rather for them by educated scribes or scholars in their employ, much as in previous eras. However, in Europe and the Near East another source of learned discourse had become influential: the religious authorities. At first this mostly meant Christian — Roman Catholic in the West and Orthodox in the East, the latter based in Constantinople following the schism that developed in the late Roman Empire. The eastern part ruled by Greeks

became known to history as the Byzantine Empire. It endured in one form or another for nearly a thousand years after Rome's collapse, though it had great ups and downs in the territory it controlled. (During its last two centuries Byzantine political rule was mainly confined to Constantinople and parts of Greece until the isolated city fell to the Ottoman Turks in 1453 although by 1000 Orthodox Christianity had spread to the Balkans, Georgia and Russia to stay.)

During these times a religious schism with consequences visible to this day split the Slavic world. By about 700 the Croats had been converted to Roman Catholicism and by 1000 so were the Czechs and Poles, while also around 700 the Serbs, in the 860s the Bulgars, and shortly before 1000 the Russians, were converted to Eastern Orthodoxy. This nipped any pan-Slavism in the bud and led to enduring antipathies between Russians and Poles as well as between Serbs and Croats.¹²

The Roman abandonment of Britain in 407, ostensibly to deal with the Germanic flood into Gaul, had left the island to the Celts. But soon the British Celts were to face raids and settlement by several Germanic tribes: Frisians, Jutes, Angles, and Saxons. Before the complete collapse of the last remnants of Rome's western empire the latter two peoples especially, out of northern Germany, had established a firm foothold in the southeast of England ("Angle Land") and were slowly pushing west. One group of British Celts in fleeing them crossed the Channel to the end of the great peninsula of northern Gaul, in numbers sufficient to give the region its present name Brittany, or "Little Britain." The Anglo-Saxons who during the 500s became dominant in much of southern Great Britain also brought their Germanic Saxon and "Anglish" tongues to the island, which were to merge and metamorphose into English.

The autocrats in Europe and the East alike, whether political or ecclesiastical or feudal, did not encourage reporting of dissent, culturally based or otherwise. In any case, those under them were rarely strong enough to consider actively challenging the status quo. While the major military conflicts involved potentates fighting over control of lands and peoples, whenever practicable they used any ethnic dissidence in lands of enemy rulers to stir up trouble against them.

In Africa and the Middle East, Arab tribes united in the name of Muhammad and barely a year after the Prophet's death in 632 burst out of Arabia, their fired-up

armies carrying all before them. In quick succession they overran then-Persian-ruled Palestine, Syria, Mesopotamia, and Egypt, conquered the Sasanian Persian homeland itself and moved into Central Asia all in less than twenty years. They swept across North Africa and crossed to Spain in 711, where they obliterated and replaced the Visigothic kingdom. Concurrently in the east, the Arab conquest expanded farther into Central Asia; and in India, like Persians and Greeks of the preceding millennium, they reached and crossed the Indus. Religious authority in all those regions changed instantly to Islamic, with little or no distinction made between political and religious control.

In a broad sense, the overlay of cultural unity the Roman Empire had once brought to the whole Mediterranean was replaced by a wide schism between Islamic cultures dominating its southern and eastern shores, and the lands on its northern and western regions which remained mainly Christian as is true today, though Christians in Spain and much later the Balkan Peninsula were under Muslim rule for centuries.

In Persia, the Zoroastrian faith also fell to Islam but the Iranians, being non-Arab with a proud Persian heritage, made efforts to turn the new religion to their own ends. What began as a dynastic struggle over the succession of the caliph (a sort of combined emperor and pope in early Islam) led to the most important religious division within that faith, the "orthodox" Sunni and "renegade" Shi'a factions. While both contended in many Muslim regions, Iranians gravitated toward the Shi'a. Today, Iran is the single Muslim country with a lopsided Shi'ite majority, over 90 percent of the population.

In the following centuries Iranians staged a number of rebellions, which they justified by their own interpretations of Islamic law or doctrine. In one of the more successful of these, in 946, a Persian dynasty, the Buyid or Buwayhid, took over both Iran and Mesopotamia, and in conquering Baghdad reduced the Caliph himself to a Shi'ite vassal. Given the wide ethnic-cultural gulf between Iranians and Arabs, such developments should hardly be surprising.¹³

Shi'a Islam spawned its own renegades. An offshoot of its Ismaili branch was the Assassin sect, known for frequent use of the political technique to which it gave its name. Bernard Lewis has called it the world's first systematic long-term terror network, operating out of remote mountain castles in Iran and Syria (1090-

1273). Its dedicated and fanatical operatives were feared by potentates from Egypt to Mongolia who took elaborate precautions, not always successful. Victims were usually notables in the orthodox Muslim establishment but also a few prominent Crusaders, including in 1192 the reigning Christian king of Jerusalem, Conrad of Monferrat.¹⁴

In the East, Tibetans had a century of power when during the latter 700s they expanded in all directions from their high plateau. On their western side they reached to the fringes of the Muslim world in Central Asia. They conquered India's Ganges Valley to the Bay of Bengal, and also made major inroads into China. In 763 they even sacked the Tang capital of Chang'an (now Xian) in the Wei River Valley, at the time the world's largest city with over a million inhabitants. By 800 the Tibetan Empire's area was greater than that of the Chinese Tang Empire itself.

In Europe, the Franks had become the most powerful group in the post-Roman West, soon after 500 subduing the rival Alemanni Germans east of them and driving the Visigoths south of the Pyrenees. Two centuries later, in 732, the Franks put an end to Arab expansion in the West at Poitiers. At their peak in the early 800s Charlemagne provided a partial respite to the Dark Ages as the Frankish Empire encompassed France, Germany, and the greater part of Italy, but in 843 the empire was divided into basically those three parts in a dynastic deal among his grandsons.

During the latter part of Charlemagne's rule and throughout the 800s the French and German realms were hard put to stave off savage Viking raids out of Norway and Denmark that harried their coasts and river valleys. The Anglo-Saxon and Celtic lands of Britain and Ireland were attacked and partly occupied for some time longer. Swedish Vikings also both raided and traded far up the rivers in Russia and established the first Russian state from Kiev. (The very name Russia derives from a Viking tribe called Rus.)

The Northmen's activity evolved from independent freebooting to organized conquest to farming settlement; but their numbers were never sufficient to swamp the existing populations, with whom they took wives, adopted Christianity, and in time became fully assimilated. The final invasion of England came from across the Channel, led by William the Bastard in 1066. (Danish Normans, i.e. Northmen, had been granted lands to settle in Normandy a century and a half earlier by the French king

in return for desisting from further raiding in France.)¹⁵ By that time the Normans were speaking French, which became the official language of England for three centuries until English gradually reasserted itself, albeit with significant changes wrought by French usage.

Following the breakup of the Frankish Empire, the Holy Roman Empire was constituted in 962 and officially existed until 1806. Consisting initially of Germany and northern Italy and spilling into some French- and Slav-inhabited lands, it loomed large on the map of Europe but has been aptly described in the cliché, "neither holy nor Roman nor an empire." This "German empire" was in no way a real unification of Germany, but rather a loose confederation of large and small feudal territories ruled by independent-minded princes, dukes, counts, and also Church lands. Its map resembled a complex and changeable jigsaw puzzle, with few paying much attention to the "Imperial" authorities except when necessary — which was not often.

A most conspicuous ethnic struggle enduring for two thousand years has seesawed between Germans and Slavs. In the first German *Drang nach Osten* ("drive toward the east") one group, the Ostrogoths, had by AD 300 penetrated southern Russia to the Black Sea and Don River and at one point even to the Volga, but before that century was out they and other German tribes were overrun by Huns from out of the Asian steppes. Later the Huns under Attila pushed to the Rhine and in one spot even touched the North Sea. (Various German groups fleeing them in turn broke across the Roman frontiers, as we have seen.) Upon Attila's death his empire quickly disintegrated and the Huns withdrew to the Black Sea steppes while the displaced German tribes finished off Rome's Western empire. To the north, the power vacuum was filled by migrating Slavs who shortly after 600 had pushed to the River Elbe and in some places beyond it — the farthest west they had ever reached — and also moved into the Balkans. The "Elbe line" was to remain a German-Slav frontier until the 1100s.

During the 1200s and 1300s the Slavic rulers of Bohemia encouraged Germans to settle in the hilly regions (*Sudentenland*) surrounding its central basin, in order to reap economic benefits from their industry and enterprise. While these hopes were amply fulfilled, considerable Slav territory was culturally transformed as

dozens of new towns sprang up, entirely German in character.

Fast-forward some six centuries: When Hitler annexed this area to his Third Reich, the sparks it set off led to World War II. Student Germans avidly if understandably supported Hitler's plan, and paid a terrible price afterward. (Other areas where Germans were invited to settle in Slavic territories, and their descendants centuries later were expelled or massacred, include Polish Silesia and Pomerania and several areas in Russia.) Ethnic identity **n** for better or worse **n** can be as durable as any aspect of human nature, waiting only for a suitable opportunity to reassert itself.

Far to the east, other events were taking place that were to transform the greater part of the Asian continent and large parts of Europe as well. At various times nomadic peoples had periodically burst out of the Asian steppe grasslands — Aryans, Scyths, Sakas, Xiongnu, Kushans, Huns, Juan-juan, Avars, Pechenegs, Cumans and others who variously conquered regions from India to Iran to China to Europe. And during the 1000s, Seljuk Turks out of Central Asia similarly overran Iran, Mesopotamia, most of Arabia, and all but pushed the Byzantine Empire out of Anatolia. It brought a new ethnicity to the Near East that was ultimately to effectively change the name of that peninsula to Turkey. (At the same time it was an expansion of Islam since the Seljuks themselves had converted.) Within decades of their high-water mark in the 1090s, however, their vast empire split into several sultanates run by rival Seljuk tribes. Turks remained in regional control except for pinpricks by Crusaders in the Levant.

All this was a prelude to another nomad invasion that in organization and scale was to dwarf all the rest. A minor but astute tribal leader, Temujin, after twenty years of campaigns, had by 1206 united all the tribes of the faraway Mongolian steppe when in a grand council he was proclaimed Jenghiz Khan ("universal ruler").¹⁶ By that time he had molded his horse-mounted warriors into what would prove to be the most effective mobile fighting force the world had yet seen.

In 1209 he struck outward, first south of the Gobi Desert and then east into a divided China, within six years conquering a large part of the Chinese north. By 1218 he turned west, and in response to an odious provocation from a Turkish governor in Central Asia swept across its great expanses during the next two

years while leaving horrendous death and destruction in his wake. At Samarkand he divided his forces. While the larger force raided Afghanistan and northwest India, the smaller one led by his brilliant commanders Subedei and Jebe conducted a probing "reconnaissance in force" around the south end of the Caspian Sea, slashed through Georgia and crossed the Caucasus to the Crimea and almost to Kiev, mowing down every army sent against it before returning to Mongolia in 1223. Jenghiz Khan himself died four years later during another campaign in China.

His son and successor Ogedai sent forces into Persia and against the Seljuks in Turkey, and another army to exploit the weakness previously uncovered in Europe. In 1238-39 the latter force conducted the only successful winter invasion of Russia in history, conquering or coercing its principalities into long-term tribute agreements from Novgorod in the north to Kiev in the south. At Kiev the Mongol army once more divided into two forces. In 1241 the northern branch decisively defeated the combined armies of the Poles and Teutonic Knights at Legnica on the borders of Germany — while the southern force decimated the Hungarian opposition and prepared to attack Vienna. But when in 1242 news arrived that Ogedai Khan had died, the commanders turned back via Adriatic shores toward Mongolia to participate in the succession, leaving Poland and Hungary to their own devices while retaining direct control of the lower Danube lands and the Ukraine. But for this purely fortuitous event, the Mongol Empire might have reached not just to the Danube but to the Atlantic, so weak and disorganized was the remaining European opposition.

The Mongols were not finished, however. In 1243 another force defeated the Seljuk Sultanate in Turkey. Then a major offensive to secure the rest of the Near East began in 1256 led by the Mongol prince Hulegu, who started with a massive assault on the Assassins' hitherto impregnable fortress of Alamut in the Elburz Mountains, putting an end to that threat. (For 175 years Alamut had been within the Turkish domains but outside their control.) Two years later Hulegu attacked and destroyed Baghdad, captured and executed the Caliph, and massacred captives numbering an estimated one-fifth of the population, piling their 200,000 skulls into macabre pyramids. The shock to Islam was immense, and Baghdad never recovered its preeminence in the Muslim world. The Mongol sweep of the Near East was finally

stopped only at Goliath's Spring in Galilee in 1260 by forces of the Mamluk Turkish sultanate of Egypt after (once again!) the main Mongol force under Hulegu withdrew to help select a new Khan.

There was one major conquest to complete, that of the Song Empire of southern China. When Kubilai (or Kublai) was named the fifth Great Khan in 1260 that became his great priority. Mongol assaults finally conquered the Song in 1279; its conquest was slower and less savage than those preceding because Kubilai wanted to win over its people rather than annihilate them, and also because its forests and intensively cultivated lands were less suited to Mongol tactics than the open grasslands of the north. With the Song capitulation the period of Mongol territorial expansion essentially came to an end except for a few relatively small gains shortly after. There were also some disastrous failures, such as Kubilai's massive seaborne attempts to conquer Japan and Java.

Kubilai was the khan that the Venetian traveler Marco Polo knew. In his account he reports having been appointed governor of Yangzhou and ruling that city for three years (population today 800,000, located 140 miles northwest of Shanghai). Marco's claim has been doubted by modern Western scholars as a boastful exaggeration of service as a minor trade official; but Professor Zhu Jiang at Yangzhou University has disagreed, saying, "Kublai needed administrators. He had recently captured southern China, the Song dynasty territory. He didn't trust the Song officials, and there were not many Mongols for those jobs. So he was using 'colored eyes,' the foreigners."¹⁷ (It is known that he employed as administrators thousands of foreigners, including many Persians and Arabs; Europeans were a decided novelty, probably even more attractive for that.) Kubilai's ethnic preference for responsible positions thus favored foreigners from faraway lands over the easily available but likely resentful Chinese, for good practical reasons. The Song capital, Hangzhou, which Marco Polo knew also, was then probably the world's largest city at 1.5 million.¹⁸ (About 100 miles southwest of Shanghai, Hangzhou's population today is comparable at close to 2 million.)

By that time the empire had been divided into four khanates. Kubilai's Great Khanate (comprising China-Mongolia plus Korea and Tibet), now centered in China at his recently built capital Daidu (Beijing), had nominal

suzerainty over the other three: the Ilkhanate ("subordinate khanate") of the Near East; the Chagatai Khanate in Central Asia; and the Khanate of the Golden Horde covering Russia and much of present Kazakhstan. At Kubilai's death in 1294 the area of Mongol rule including vassal states¹⁹ was by far the world's largest land empire, before or since — and contained, incredibly, a good *forty percent* of the entire world population.²⁰

The Mongol conquests, especially in their earlier periods, were conducted mercilessly on an appalling scale. North China, Central Asia, Persia and Mesopotamia all suffered major depopulation. At the same time, the Mongols were religiously and culturally tolerant toward those subdued. Within their own ranks Buddhism, Islam, Confucianism and Christianity coexisted. (The wife of the second Great Khan Ogedai was a Nestorian Christian; she was instrumental in installing the fourth Khan, her son Mongke.) Most Mongols came to adopt the religion of the region they conquered.

After Kubilai's death Mongol supremacy began a long decline. The first to go was the Ilkhanate, in 1335. Twenty years later the Great Khanate itself split into several independent states during a period marked by Chinese peasant uprisings, and in 1368 the first emperor of the Ming Dynasty took power. The other two Mongol khanates lasted longer, but before 1400 the Chagatai Khanate of Central Asia had been mostly conquered by Timur (or "Tamerlane") of Samarkand, who was culturally Turkic though claiming descent from Jenghiz Khan, whose empire he saw himself as restoring. Timur's savagely gained empire in Central Asia, Iran, and Mesopotamia (complete with making pyramids of myriad victims' skulls from Damascus to Delhi) did not long outlast him. The Russians labored under the "Tatar yoke" the longest; but the Khanate of the Golden Horde split up in 1438 and its last remnant state was overrun by a Turkic khan in 1502, and taken over by Russia a half-century later. The impact of Mongol control, however, left indelible marks on the cultures of the lands they conquered.

The Modern Period (c. 1500 - 1970)

The Modern era may be defined as lasting from the great voyages of discovery until the pullout of the European colonial powers, which began after World War II, substantially completed by 1970. European powers had been politically predominant in far-flung areas of the

world for centuries, directly or indirectly, starting with the Portuguese and Spanish and consummated by the British, French, Dutch, and Russians (with minor or later players including Sweden, Denmark, Belgium, Germany, and Italy). Europeans also came to be the dominant population element in three overseas continents (the Americas and Australia) and gained varying degrees of control in much of Asia and later in nearly all of Africa.

The modern European empires, with the major exceptions of the Russian and Austrian, were different from previous ones in that their holdings were scattered around the globe and held together by sea-lanes as their connecting web. The usual concept of an “empire” as opposed to a mere “state” is that an empire is a large political unit that includes a number of distinct regional ethnic groups under its sovereignty, the latter usually occupying distinct homeland territories that may truly be called nations. The European empires of this era qualify in this respect. Overseas lands were not usually deemed part of the home state, however, and the degree of political control varied widely, but all used the word “empire” proudly, at least until recently.²¹

Inter-ethnic tensions and conflict, though present during all of human history, can be better discerned in detail during this era than in those preceding, not only because they reach into our own time and historians are now more interested in them but also because the volume of historical information for the era is much greater.

While overseas empires were being gained by European countries the main Asian-based empires during this era were the Chinese, the Mughal in India, and in the Near East the Ottoman and its rival the Safavid Persian. In Africa even Morocco gained an empire in 1590 by sending a force across the Sahara to overthrow the native Songhai kingdom of the middle Niger River area.

The Ottoman Turks broke out of northwest Anatolia by the late 1300s and subjugated most of the Anatolian and Balkan peninsulas before the century was out, bringing their own ethnicity and Muslim religion to further complicate the Balkan demographic mix. During the next two centuries, besides pushing farther into Europe (Hungary and Transylvania then falling to them) they swallowed Mesopotamia, the Levant, most of Arabia that mattered, plus Egypt, and swept west along the North African coast to subdue Algeria, all by the mid-1500s. If the Ottoman Empire didn't encompass the entire Mediterranean as had the Roman, its land area was fully

as great as Rome's. It was a critical threat to the heart of Europe, besieging Vienna itself in 1529 and 1683. (To the east, the Safavid Persians had prevented them from bringing their full force to bear on Europe.) In any case the Ottoman Empire, like that of Rome, endured for over half a millennium. It finally collapsed only at the end of World War I.

Around 1500 a group descended from Timur's Muslims who proudly called themselves Mughal (“Mongol,” although like Timur they were culturally Turkic) were forced out of the Fergana region of Central Asia by remnants of the Golden Horde who were then migrating eastward. The Mughals (or “Moguls”) in their retreat pushed south to capture the Kabul area of Afghanistan. Descending through the Khyber Pass to enter India, they went on to conquer most of the Ganges plain by mid-century, becoming a powerful Islamic empire that came to encompass nearly all of India.

The Mughal Empire began to disintegrate early in the 1700s. Within a half-century the collapse was nearly complete, its territories lost to native Hindu Marathi rebels in the southwest and central regions, a Persian invasion in the northwest, and the British who were ready to expand inland from their trading base at Calcutta. The Mughal legacy in India includes the famed Taj Mahal but a more important result was to intensify the Hindu-Muslim split that led ultimately to the present partition of the subcontinent (which even so has left a huge Muslim minority within India today).

Even while European states were acquiring overseas empires and footholds around the globe, during most of the early modern period (c.1500-1800) the world's greatest single power was China, first under Ming and then Manchu rule. The Manchu tribes, of Tungusic (Siberian) origins, united and swept southward from Manchuria across the Great Wall to overthrow the Ming dynasty and conquer China by the mid-1600s while making vassal states of Korea, Taiwan, Annam (North Vietnam), Laos, and Burma — and later turned west to subjugate Mongolia, Tibet, and Central Asia as far as Lake Balkash in present Kazakhstan. At the same time, Russians were penetrating across Siberia to form an empire that loomed even larger than Manchu China on the map, though most of it sparsely populated. After Cossacks set up posts on the Amur River in the Far East, the Manchus expelled them in 1689 and held the large region north of it for a century and a half before the

Russians returned. But like earlier invading nomads Manchus were never numerous compared with the Chinese, and by the 1700s had been assimilated to the point that they became culturally Chinese themselves. (Numbers matter!) Today their visible remnants are minuscule. The Manchu Empire was to retain most of its huge territories until about 1900 but by then it was in terminal decline; the dynasty was finally overthrown in 1912 and the Republic of China was established.

We cannot more than briefly outline here the major European empires of the time: overseas colonization began with the Portuguese, the first mariners to round Africa in search of trade routes to the Far East that could bypass Muslim control of the intervening land routes. And find them they did. After Diaz rounded Africa's southern tip in 1487-88 and Vasco de Gama followed ten years later to reach India, the way was opened to establish Portuguese coastal trading stations there, in the Indies, China, even Japan, and on African coasts along the way. Spain quickly followed with the voyages of Columbus and others, hoping to find a more direct route by sailing west. Discovering that America was in the way (as the Portuguese did also in finding and founding Brazil), the Spanish who initially landed only a few hundred adventurers using an incredible mix of audacity, skill, guile and luck, conquered both of the powerful Aztec and the Inca empires — each then ruling millions of people — during the first half of the 1500s.

The Spanish and Portuguese successes were followed by those of the British, who during the 1600s established farming settlements in North America and island outposts for sugar plantations in the Caribbean, and also set up trading bases in India. The French settled mainly in Canada to practice farming and fur hunting, and set up sugar plantations in the Caribbean. The Dutch, besides some less fruitful efforts in the New World, achieved major success in the East Indies and the spice trade, where they soon overshadowed the Portuguese. At the same time, the Russians were expanding overland across Siberia with independent fur hunters (*promyshlenniki*) and especially Cossacks (“free warriors”) in the vanguard, effectively extending the Czar's holdings at no cost to him. Cossacks reached the Pacific by 1643 via the Amur, thus bringing Europeans to share a frontier with China. Bering's voyage of 1741 discovered Alaska, resulting later in the addition of Russian America to the Empire. Meanwhile, the British

extended their settlements in North America, as did the French in Quebec although ejected from Acadia (Nova Scotia) by the British. The French were later also to lose political control of Quebec to the British (in 1763), though not demographic predominance there.

In the Americas, invaders and settlers alike were aided mightily by European diseases such as smallpox, to which the indigenous peoples had little biological resistance, which caused widespread depopulation. In Asia, the little coastal trading stations could be protected by mobile seaborne firepower. Later whole coastal cities could be cowed by cannon bombardment if deemed necessary. By 1650 the Dutch had established a firm and growing presence on most of the more important Indonesian islands. And during the second half of the 1700s the British East India Company extended its control well inland from the Bay of Bengal as the Mughal Empire crumbled. When the British lost their richest thirteen North American colonies to the Revolution they compensated by increasing their efforts in India and elsewhere.

Tropical Africa, by contrast, long had been protected from European incursions by the same factor that had been a nemesis of America's original inhabitants but with the shoe now on the other foot: deadly diseases, especially malaria, to which Europeans had little immunity or remedy. For centuries the European presence in tropical Africa was mainly confined to a few coastal outposts and (preferably) ships offshore where trading with native leaders for commodities and slaves was conducted. Europeans certainly did not conduct slave raids inland which would mean almost certain death from disease, if not native hostility.²² (It was not until the mid-19th century, when quinine's ability to protect against the deadliest forms of malaria was discovered, that Europeans could penetrate inland at acceptable risk — and that was well after slave trading had been outlawed by the chief Western nations.)

The Portuguese and Spanish, and a bit later the British, Dutch and French, purchased slaves from tribal chiefs and shipped them in large numbers to their new colonies in the Western Hemisphere, to satisfy the demand for plantation labor. The biggest and closest market was Brazil; next in importance were the Caribbean islands (mostly for sugar harvesting in both cases). The more distant British colonies in North America, too far north for growing sugar, where cotton

and tobacco plantations had been established, were a distant third in numbers of slaves imported, though a considerably larger proportion of these survived to reproduce themselves.

It is estimated that during the 16th to 19th centuries roughly eleven million African slaves were shipped to the New World, the majority from West Africa. Less reported and thus less known to the general public today is that over the centuries considerably greater numbers of black African slaves were transported by Arab traders to the Near East and North Africa. These have been estimated at fourteen million, not to mention the many killed in the initial raids and those who died en route. They were in demand for both labor and for harems, women as concubines and domestic servants, men for menial labor as well as a great number castrated to become eunuchs for service in the harems. (White European slaves were also common until the late 19th century.)

The distinguished black American scholar, Thomas Sowell, has graphically described the journeys of slaves forced to walk across the Sahara. During three-month journeys from Lake Chad several died for every one that reached the Mediterranean alive. On the infamous overland route to Cairo the estimate was ten dead for every survivor. Also, about ninety percent of the many men or boys castrated before arrival for eunuch service died from the crudely performed operation. And the toll of women and children on these routes was especially high. Survival rates were better on the sea routes from the slave-trading port of Zanzibar (Omani-Arab-controlled from the late 17th until late 19th centuries), although a ship's telltale human cargo might be thrown overboard to drown when a British slaver-hunting warship appeared on the horizon.

The overall death rates of black African slaves bound for the Near East by land and sea were twice as high — an estimated twenty percent — than for those shipped in crowded holds to the Americas in the 18th century in British vessels, horrific as that was at 10 percent.

Although the numbers of African slaves who did reach their destinations in Muslim lands, especially the Ottoman Empire, were clearly greater than the numbers sent to the Americas, that fact has been underreported in the West, mainly because there was no anti-slavery movement in the Muslim world and almost no outsiders

able to observe the daily lives of slaves. Also, there are nowhere near the numbers of people of clearly black African descent in the Near East today as are found in the Americas, for the simple reason that in Muslim lands they were by and large unable to reproduce themselves. Marriage and sex among them was suppressed, and, of course, the eunuchs could not leave any descendants at all.

Black slavery in Arab and other Islamic countries both began earlier and endured longer than in the West, continuing in the Ottoman Empire until its collapse in World War I, in some Arab countries until between or after the world wars, and still existing on a considerable scale in the Sudan and in Mauritania. In addition, slavery of blacks by blacks continues in parts of Nigeria and a few other places in West Africa.²³

The European colonial governments during the 19th and early 20th centuries attempted to suppress the institution of slavery wherever it existed, but it must be remembered that in Africa colonial rule did not last nearly as long as it had in the Americas or in Asia. The European "scramble for Africa" did not begin in earnest until the 1880s. (Although the Portuguese were in Africa much earlier and developed some disease resistance, even they did not expand very far inland in Angola until late in the 19th century. In South Africa the Dutch-descended Boers and then the British did move inland earlier, but that region was blessedly free from insect-borne tropical diseases.)

The European tide in Africa peaked between the world wars, to the point that during the 1920s and into the 1930s, other than Egypt's conditional sovereignty with some remaining British fetters, there were only two independent African-ruled states on the entire continent, Liberia and Ethiopia (then called Abyssinia), and even the latter was occupied by Fascist Italy in 1936, leaving tiny Liberia for the next five years as the continent's sole fully independent state.

Without doubt the premier modern example of an ethnically based multiple dismemberment of a sovereign state prior to the last decade of the 20th century is the former Austro-Hungarian Empire. Until with its German ally it lost the First World War, it had ruled substantially the same territories for some two hundred years, ever since Austria became strong enough to push the Ottoman Turks back into the Balkans. In the Versailles peace settlements ending World War I (1919) Austria fared

worse than Germany, whose territory was “clipped rather than shorn.” Unlike Germany, Austria-Hungary was ethnically far more complex than its name indicated, comprising not only those two peoples in their own lands but several major groups of Slavs both to their north and south, many Romanians to the Southeast in Transylvania, and a small Italian area on the south slope of the Alps. With the order of the day being President Wilson’s principle of self-determination, the former empire was split into no less than eight pieces, some independent, others assigned as parts of neighboring countries — a settlement politically imposed by the victors, yes, but nonetheless based mostly on ethnic-cultural groups. Ironically, the Great War itself had been touched off by the assassination of the heir to the Austrian throne by a Serb nationalist.

The major German-speaking region became a shrunken Austria and most of the Hungarian-majority region a separate Hungary, both with boundaries that remain today. In the Slavic areas to their north the Czech, Slovak and Ruthenian regions were combined into the new country of Czechoslovakia, while comparably-sized Galicia still farther north became part of a reconstituted Poland. The Empire’s South Slavs (Slovenes, Croats, Serbs and Bosnians), also Slav Macedonians plus ethnically Albanian Kosovars, all became part of another new country, Yugoslavia, built around the Serbian kingdom which earlier had freed itself from the Ottomans. Transylvania with Bukovina went to Romania, and South Tirol, plus Trieste with the Slavic Istrian Peninsula, to Italy.

There were anomalies. The northern half of the region called South Tirol by Austrians (Alto Adige to Italians) was overwhelmingly German-speaking, and despite strenuous government efforts to settle Italians there, outside of two cities is still Alpine Austrian in character and the area remains a potential sore point. The Czech borderlands or Sudetenland, populated by Germans since the Middle Ages (originally invited to settle there by Slav princes, as noted earlier), would prove to be the trigger of World War II after Hitler annexed the region in September 1938 under the Munich agreement and used it as the springboard for swallowing up the Czech heartland less than six months later. When the war ended the Germans in their centuries-old Sudeten cities were forcibly sent “back” to Germany, with many killed in the process. And then, the peacemakers’ attempt

to patch together several mutually antagonistic groups as Yugoslavia was in the end to prove a tragic failure of colossal proportions in which millions would be either savagely killed or forced to flee home and country as refugees. Two other Slavic groups whom diplomats had deemed sufficiently akin to maintain a viable nation — Czechs and Slovaks — have since split into separate nation-states, in this case at least peacefully. (Not to mention the Russians, Belarussians, and Ukrainians.)

The European colonial powers, exhausted after World War II, began to pull out of Asia in the late 1940s (India, Burma, Indonesia, etc.), and from Arabic North Africa in the 1950s. The process accelerated and in 1960 came the “grand slam,” with sixteen countries in tropical black Africa formally granted independence that year. It continued during the 1960s, European countries most often relinquishing power without major struggle. (An exception was Arab-Berber Algeria with its million French settlers.) By 1970 the pullout was almost complete except for the long-held territories of Portugal (which also put up a struggle, especially Afro-Portuguese in Angola and Mozambique until Portugal gave up in 1975). Africa-based white rule still prevailed in Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), Namibia and South Africa — but black rule came even to the latter in 1994. On most of the continent the period of white rule had lasted well under a century.

The problem of strife between a multiplicity of rival ethnic groups within most African countries by no means disappeared with the departure of the European colonial powers, however. On the contrary it more often intensified with the removal of foreign administrations that in many cases had served as a kind of arbiter between them. The Congo, Uganda, Angola, Mozambique, the Nigeria-Biafra conflict, Sudan, Somalia, Rwanda, Burundi, and Sierra Leone, were some of the more searing of such recent conflicts, in some cases causing deaths numbered in millions. Even Liberia, the single African country that had never known colonial rule, was by no means immune to ethnic strife of the most devastating and deadly sort.

Two peoples whose roots in the Near East span thousands of years and whose histories have taken conspicuous turns in the 20th century deserve special notice here.

The continuing Arab-Israeli conflict had roots in the arrival of some tens of thousands of Jewish refugees in

then Ottoman Turk-ruled Palestine starting near the end of the 19th century, these having been repelled by pogrom massacres in their Russian settlements and attracted by the ideals of the Zionist movement to set up a Jewish homeland in the land of their ancient origins. Upon arrival they found few Arabs. (During that period Mark Twain wrote a striking description of the region's emptiness and desolation after a visit.) Numbers of Jews continued to trickle in during the remainder of Ottoman rule and after World War I during the British mandate of what was given the name Palestine, then applied to the whole area between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean. Numbers of Arabs also came to settle during that time in response to economic opportunities the Jewish towns were increasingly providing.

Then in the 1930s and again in the aftermath of World War II in the mid-1940s, Jewish immigration increased dramatically as survivors of the Nazi persecutions and its wartime Holocaust flocked to Palestine. The UN in 1947 called for the territory's partition into Jewish and Arab sectors. Six months later on May 14, 1948, the British formally ended the mandate in order to withdraw. On that same day Jewish leaders proclaimed the independence of Israel. The combined armies of surrounding Arab countries attacked the next day in an attempt to eliminate the Jewish state. They were not only defeated but the Israelis were able to extend their holdings. Ever since, a state of hostility has prevailed between Arabs and Israelis, marked by three more short but major wars (1956, 1967, 1973) and many outbreaks of Arab-Israeli violence with no end in sight.

Another people of ancient Near East origins show almost uncanny parallels in their history with that of the Jews. These are the Armenians, not of Semitic but of Indo-European ethno-linguistic background. They are apparently descended from Phrygians (whose earliest known origins were in Thrace in the eastern Balkans) who invaded Asia Minor and with Luvians overthrew the Hittite kingdom around 1200 BC. A group of them subsequently moved on and settled in the South Caucasus-Lake Van region. Armenia as such first appears on the map around 330 BC after emerging out from under the Persian Empire upon its overthrow by Alexander. After periods of varying Greek influence or rule, Armenia gained a sizeable empire of its own, which peaked early in the first century BC when its territory stretched all the way from the eastern Mediterranean to

the Caspian Sea. Subsequent Roman and Parthian/Persian expansion reduced Armenia to its core area, and although for some years it was officially annexed as Roman territory, Rome's control was generally loose at best. About AD 300, Armenia became the first state in the world to adopt Christianity officially.

During the eras following Rome's collapse, however, the Armenian homeland came successively under Persian, Arab, Seljuk Turk, Mongol, Timurid, Ottoman Turk and Russian domination, with only a few fleeting periods of independence between. During this long era of political eclipse Armenians became scattered around the world in a diaspora in many ways similar to that of the Jews, and like the Jews never lost sight of their national identity or their religion (Armenians hold to their ancient and distinctive Christian rite). Both Jews and Armenians living in the United States today number in the millions and comprise a large proportion of their respective world populations. Another striking similarity with the Jews (and others in history such as Carthaginians, Lebanese, and in modern times overseas Indians and Chinese) is that Armenians have long been a commercially-minded people and have excelled as traders, their success redounding in the resentment and envy, and, many times, persecution by other groups among whom they lived and who have had difficulty competing with them. (It is often not recognized by the ignorant or spiteful that in trading and other pursuits requiring above average resourcefulness and ingenuity such groups create wealth where it didn't exist before, in the end economically benefiting the other peoples among whom they live as well as themselves.)

Armenians also share with Jews the ultimate tragedy of having been victims of government-instigated efforts to eliminate them with wholesale massacres of men, women and children. During World War I, when the decaying Ottoman Empire was allied with the German and Austro-Hungarian empires, the Ottoman regime in 1915-17 unleashed a pogrom in which an estimated 1.75 million Armenians were deported from their homes and some 600,000 massacred at the hands of the Turks, the latter figure conservative compared with some claims. In any case, the number of Armenians killed and driven out was, in proportion to their world population, on a similar order as to what was to happen a generation later to the European Jews at the hands of Nazis. In the turmoil a large number of Armenian

refugees managed to reach the U.S. with American help. After the Ottoman Empire's fall in 1918 and the establishment of the Turkish Republic, further suppression and massacres in northeastern Turkey took place in 1920-21 when Armenian separatist feelings were running high. As a result, most Armenian survivors left the region. Only the Russian presence and the establishment of the Soviet Republic of Armenia in 1921 averted a Turkish takeover of the whole Armenian homeland. This helped moderate any anti-Russian feelings on their part. On the breakup of the Soviet Union Armenia once again regained its independence, albeit occupying only a small fraction of its former lands.²⁴

In another instance of the ups and downs of ethnic conflict, Armenians shortly thereafter extended their area of *de facto* control by taking over the Nagorno-Karabakh region in a bitter armed conflict with neighboring Azerbaijan (Turkic and Muslim), after Armenians in the enclave declared independence from Azeri sovereignty. (After the Bolshevik revolution the new Soviet Union's internal boundary-making had given that nearby and mostly Armenian-inhabited area to Azerbaijan.) In consolidating their gains Armenians also seized sizeable intervening and neighboring areas of Azerbaijan. A million Azeris fled as refugees. The fighting has since been put on hold mostly on account of exhaustion on both sides but the situation remains unresolved and clearly contains potential for further conflict, not excluding the possibility of Turkey once more becoming directly involved in support of their ethnic cousins in Azerbaijan.

Where Do We Go From Here?

Regarding immigration, what does all this likely portend for America? If the record of conflicting cultural groups through history, both between and within sovereign countries, continues in patterns it has followed for thousands of years — especially apparent in the last half-century, more often within countries than between them — the changes that present immigration flows are bringing to the United States could easily split the American nation apart and cause its dissolution, quite conceivably before a tricentennial can be celebrated. As the eminent ecologist Garrett Hardin has noted succinctly, "Unity within a nation requires considerable uniformity in beliefs and practices."²⁵ That is precisely what is threatened by the current wave of immigration to the U.S. The numbers alone, in some years of the 1990s

neering a million new *legal* immigrants annually plus the variously estimated but certainly several hundred thousand net illegal immigrants per year,²⁶ would properly be of great concern wherever they came from. All these put additional pressure on an infrastructure and ecosystem increasingly hard put to serve the existing population adequately — as well as crowd out especially the lower-paying jobs and earnings of American-born citizens, as has always been the case. Are these people being consulted by vocal immigration enthusiasts, usually affluent, self-appointed champions of the unfortunate?

The character of U.S. immigration under the unexpectedly far-reaching reforms of the 1965 law is of at least equal concern. Within a few years after that measure became law the traditional European sources of immigration were drying up, crowded out by the filling of overall world quotas by immigrants from Third-World countries in Latin America and Asia — whose numbers came to be swelled further by a chain migration of relatives under that law's liberally defined "family reunification" rules (outside any quotas once citizenship is attained). Even so, that was not enough to accommodate all prospective migrants, so the illegal flow also increased dramatically. This trend was abetted by many American employers willing to "look the other way" when hiring cheaper illegals, and also by a successful selling of the diversity ideal by intellectuals and the media. (Although polls have shown consistently that a majority of Americans have remained unsold, many are unwilling to speak out at the risk of being labeled as bigoted, racist, etc., in the current intellectual climate. Prosperous times have also helped mute their reservations.) The revisions of 1986 (amnesty for persistent illegals) and 1990 (reinforcing diversity aims), ostensibly meant to tidy up and help limit the incoming flow, have had exactly the opposite effects. So the mess continues.

The overall effect of U.S. immigration reform has been not only to increase the flow enormously in total numbers, but to swell arrivals from impoverished Third-World countries to a proportion fluctuating around ninety percent of total immigration, whereas people of European origin in the era prior to 1965 accounted for ninety percent — a complete reversal of the historic American pattern upon which the nation was built, resulting in demographic consequences already mentioned. Even if immigration should be stopped in its tracks *now* — hardly

likely — the percentage of people of non-European origin in America's population will continue to rise for a long time on account of those groups' higher fertility patterns.

None of this is to denigrate individuals from those groups, most of whom have succeeded and will continue improving their own economic situations in the more open society to which they have come. But their radically different cultural backgrounds certainly make it more difficult for them to "fit in" in many ways, and their sheer numbers complicate the problem enormously. If those numbers continue to increase on the scale of the last three decades, a critical mass will be reached that will snuff out what is left of the assimilation process, resulting not in fusion, but fission. Early signs are already becoming apparent. America will have to face the problem squarely, and the sooner the better. If not — or not soon enough — the consequences will become irreparable.

The history of multicultural countries around the world is not encouraging. In the 1990s alone the examples are chilling: the breakup of what were Yugoslavia, the Soviet Union, and Czechoslovakia, rebellion in Chechnya, three decades of warfare before Eritrea managed to break off from Ethiopia, near-genocide in the Sudan and Rwanda, continuing chaos in other African countries earlier mentioned, recurring separatist disorders in India, prolonged and bitter civil war in Sri Lanka, savage interethnic violence in several regions of Indonesia, not to mention the endless Arab-Israeli and India-Pakistan conflicts, are only some of the larger examples. Some have ended in more or less peaceful resolutions for now at least, others in savagery and bloodshed almost unimaginable (to us), and some remain wholly unresolved, but their roots lie in cleavages between distinct ethnic-cultural groups.

Americans have become used to immigrants scattering around the country, with their second or third generation becoming genuinely part of the American nation. But the current glorification of diversity and officially encouraged retention of separate ethnic identities and language have thrown a monkey wrench into this process. Many groups are tending to coalesce in distinct districts or regions, and give signs of staying that way. In the largest such region, the Southwest from Texas to California, the now great and growing number of Mexican immigrants has spawned a group with radical separatist aims, the Aztlan movement, using rhetoric

blatantly racist while without a blink stereotyping Anglos as "racist/fascist." A prominent Aztlan activist and text writer, Rodolfo Acuña, told attendees at a Latino student gathering in 1996, "Right now you are in the Nazi United States of America."²⁷ The movement draws recruits from among increasing numbers of Chicanos in the U.S. and further strength from the presence of a nearby and porous border. Sufficiently large groups looking at an ethnic homeland just across a border have historically given rise to separatism. Other diverse groups who lack that advantage could still in due time coalesce in sufficient numbers to assert themselves in a separatist way. Where recent groups of immigrants differ from previous ones is that most are culturally much more different from the majority of Americans — white and black — than has been true in the past.

We should not forget that diversity is the direct opposite of unity. An underlying cultural unity nurtures and preserves nations. The most successful nations are based on a large degree of internal unity in such matters as language and basic culture, which make ready communication and working together effectively possible. Within nations, diversity in small doses can stimulate, but too much can be deadly poison. At the same time, diversity can and should be preserved *between* different nations: "The disappearance of nations would impoverish us no less than if all peoples were made alike with one character, one face. Nations are the wealth of mankind," Solzhenitsyn said in his Nobel Prize address. Fortunately "One World" is surely unattainable.

If the title of Victor Davis Hanson's new book, *An Autumn of War* (Anchor, 2002) should turn out to be prophetic, an idea also hinted at by Daniel Patrick Moynihan in *Pandaemonium* (Oxford, 1993), we may be spared much more war between countries, though we still need to keep fingers crossed on that one. But it would be more than tragic if a lessening of wars across borders was offset by a rise in the internal ethnic strife to which Moynihan's title referred, especially since the latter tends to be the more bitter and savage. (Of course, the two can be combined, *viz.* the Arab-Israel conflicts and the current anti-West jihad, which came to a horrendous apex on September 11, 2001.)

If international wars are contained, the problem remains of insuring a modicum of unity within sovereign countries. Major cultural contrasts within countries work against such unity and strongly tend to promote strife

among diverse groups, as we have seen again and again in all parts of the world. America can't do much to save the whole planet from cultural conflicts, but we can limit the damage here. The first line of defense is to regain control of U.S. borders and call a halt to open-ended immigration. It will take guts to do so, but *national survival hangs in the balance*. A moratorium on immigration could let us sober up after the binge, while new priorities are sorted out as to how many and who can prudently be admitted into the national family.

Hardin has suggested that a proper goal should be zero *net* immigration with newcomers limited to the same numbers as immigrants who leave,²⁸ the latter by no means insignificant. In any case, immigration at present levels is an indulgence America cannot afford much longer if it is to remain the United States of America.

NOTES

1. Lee G. Madland, "Immigration, Ethnic Strife, Nations — and America," *The Social Contract*, Spring 2000, p. 161-177. The figure of 194 sovereign states is currently correct if the Republic of China (Taiwan) and Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus are counted separately rather than as disputed parts of a single sovereignty. The former has been a *de facto* state for more than half a century and the latter for over a quarter-century. The newest addition to the list of countries is East Timor, a clearly ethnic-cultural split-off from Indonesia, born in fire in September 1999 with thousands killed and refugees in six figures in an area the size of Connecticut. Its independence became *de jure* in June 2002 when interim UN tutelage ended.
2. *Caucasian* is not used here in the "racial" sense which has largely appropriated the term in today's common usage, but in its original and correct cultural meaning as people who speak a tongue of the Caucasian group, which today stands in isolation as probably the world's oldest surviving language family, presumed to be a remnant of pre-Indo-European tongues and not known to be directly related to any others except possibly Basque.
3. Armenian is not a Caucasian but an Indo-European tongue distantly related to Greek. Chechen *is* a Caucasian language, but for all their trying Chechens have not yet, at least, achieved independence.
4. The first such upheaval took place around three centuries earlier; many believe it marked the migration of Abraham's clan from Ur, following the bend of the Fertile Crescent to the Land of Canaan on its opposite horn. That move, planting the seeds of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, may have been precipitated when Ur, caught between Amorites and Elamites, was sacked by the latter in 2004 BC, ending Sumerian rule and influence. If this were the case, in fleeing the Caucasian barbarians Abraham would naturally have moved into more kindred Semitic lands.
5. Colin McEvedy, *The Penguin Atlas of Ancient History* (Penguin, 1967, still in print), p. 28 and 30. Three companion volumes cover the medieval, modern, and recent periods. Other historical atlases by the same author and/or publisher cover specific topics such as Africa, ancient Greece, Rome and Egypt, Vikings, the Pacific, and North America. Also, John Haywood's *Atlas of World History* (Oxford, 1997), and six similar thinner volumes on each period containing additional maps and data, (1998). All these and a number of others are not simply collections of historical maps as has been usual in the past, but contain substantial text that explains and summarizes events covered by each map. All are highly recommended as aids in making sense of the complex sweep of human history and discerning meaningful trends within it.
6. *Aryan* simply means "Iranian." The word is attributed to Old Persian *ariya*, and Sanskrit *arya*. It seems also to have connoted "aristocrat," appropriate to progeny of conquerors. The misuse of this term for the Nazi ideal of a Nordic blue-eyed blond sub-racial type is ironic to say the least, which we cannot go into here (but see note under "Aryan" in the new 4th edition of *The American Heritage Dictionary*.) Linguists divide the Indo-European language family into three major groups: the Iranian (or Indo-Iranian) languages; to their east, the Indo-Aryan (or Indic) languages of northern India based on Sanskrit; and to the west most European tongues, running the gamut from Russian to Latin to English.
7. *Punic* is short for Phoenician, used by Romans specifically to mean Carthaginian.
8. Adrian Galsworthy, *The Punic Wars* (London: Cassell, 2000), p. 133-136 (1st quote: p. 134). Alan Lloyd, *Destroy Carthage: The Death Throes of an Ancient Culture*. (London: Souvenir Press, 1977), p. 129-131 (2nd quote: p.129).
9. Phoenicians, including Carthaginians, were of course Semites, speaking a Semitic language closely related to Hebrew. A few Classical historians such as Polybius (who was present at Carthage's fall) were, however, very critical of Rome's action. See Polybius, *The Histories* (Loeb Classical Library).
10. Or, *Qin* in the now-preferred pinyin spelling (q = ch). This is the source of our word *China*. Colin and Sarah McEvedy, *The Classical World* (MacMillan, 1973), p. 6.
11. Thomas Cahill, *How the Irish Saved Civilization* (Doubleday, 1995). Quotes: p. 16-17, 30.
12. Martin Gilbert, *Atlas of Russian History* (Oxford, 1993), p.15.

13. Many Americans today seem to be unaware of this ethnic cleavage, abetted by media coverage that often tends to equate Islamic countries and leads to thinking of them as Arab. But Iran is *not* an Arab country — ethnic Iranians are of Indo-European stock and language, Arabs Semitic. And though Arabic is by far the most widely spoken Semitic language, if one lists in order the countries with the greatest Islamic populations today, one does not find an Arabic-speaking one until the seventh down the list (Egypt). Too, it is worth remembering that during the 1980s Persian Iran and Arab Iraq fought a bitter eight-year war. Reaching a height of absurdity, some current press and TV commentary attributes “anti-Semitism” to Arabs in the current jihad against Israel, those writers and commentators apparently unaware that Arabs *are* Semites!

14. Bernard Lewis, *The Assassins: A Radical Sect in Islam* (Oxford, 1967).

15. Shortly before William took England, Norman adventurers were driving the Byzantines out of southern Italy. This region, with Sicily, was ruled by Normans for over a century afterward.

16. The most commonly used English transliteration of the Mongol title is “Genghis;” this spelling had led to the common mispronunciation of the initial letter as a hard G. (The second G is pronounced hard.) Recent writers have used spellings more clearly matching the pronunciation, such as Jenghiz and Chingis.

17. As quoted by Mike Edwards, “Marco Polo in China.” *National Geographic*, June 2001, p. 41.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 25

19. Vassal states, which paid annual tribute to Mongols, consisted of, in the West, the Russian principalities from Kiev to Novgorod; Georgia; and the Turkish Sultanate of Rum in Anatolia. Those in the East, added in the 1280s, were Kashmir including the greater part of the Punjab plain; Pagan, consisting of the northern half of present Burma; and Dai Viet and Champa comprising the northern two-thirds of present Vietnam.

20. The population estimate has been compiled by this writer from figures given by Colin McEvedy and Richard Jones in their *Atlas of World Population History* (Penguin, 1978). All the vassal states made up a small proportion, perhaps 10 percent of the total population of areas under the Mongol sway. It is true that the British Empire at its height in the early 20th century contained a somewhat greater total area (roughly 25 percent of the world’s land compared with the Mongols’ 20 percent), but it was scattered piecemeal around the globe, held by sea contacts, and its proportion of world population was half as great. Moreover, the British level of control varied widely from direct rule to protectorates and areas of indigenous authority with only symbolic fealty to

the Crown — plus large self-governing states like Canada and Australia, whose attachment to the Crown became mainly sentimental.

21. The pejorative use of the term (e.g., “imperialism”) is a recent innovation. In the early 20th century the newly established Soviet Union dispensed with the title of “empire” and started calling other countries imperialist although it was itself still an empire in all but name. For that matter so is the smaller but still huge successor state, Russia. Although the Soviet breakup did at least restore Great Russians from just half the population to an 80 percent majority status in the country, there are still around a hundred large and small non-Russian nationalities within its far-flung borders, most clustered in distinct regions. Such ethnic clustering is not only natural, but the larger and more cohesive of such groups have historically posed a threat to the unity of the governing state. We may not yet have seen the end of the Russian breakup.

22. A stark example of those hazards was an expedition led by the Englishman Mungo Park, who in 1805 set out to discover the course of the Niger River by descending it with a contingent of British soldiers. By the time Park got a boat launched on the upper Niger after a march inland from the Gambia of 300 miles or so, 42 of the 46 expedition members had died from malaria. The four determined survivors then descended the river for a thousand miles before they were killed by an attack of non-Muslim Africans who ironically mistook them for Muslim invaders. (McEvedy, *Atlas of African History*, revised edition, 1995) p. 92, 108.

23. Thomas Sowell, *Conquests and Cultures: An International History* (Basic Books, 1998). See p. 109-112 and 153-170 for data on slavery in Africa, the Near East and Western Hemisphere.

24. Another people, the Kurds with twenty percent of Turkey’s population, predominate in southeastern Turkey and overlap the former Armenian area. Although like Turks Islamic in religion, they speak a language of the Iranian group rather than Turkic. Groups of them have at times staged separatist agitation and rebellions, which Turkey has so far succeeded in suppressing.

25. Garrett Hardin, *The Immigration Dilemma: Avoiding the Tragedy of the Commons* (Federation for American Immigration Reform, 1995), in Preface, p. iii.

26. These numbers do *not* include the huge spike of “amnestied” immigrants in the late 1980s and early 1990s that had been in the U.S. illegally for some years (three-fourths of whom were from Mexico alone). In its peak year, 1991, these newly legalized residents outnumbered all new legal immigrants by 3 to 2; and in the 1989-1993 period the amnestied accounted for 42 percent of the total “legal” immigration of 6.3 million — which does not include the

hundreds of thousands of net illegal arrivals *each year* during that five-year period. President Bush currently favors a second amnesty to cover the new crop of more recently arrived illegals now in the U.S., although on account of popular and Congressional opposition since the events of September 11, 2001, the plan has so far been put on hold. Amnesty data: see Peter Brimelow, *Alien Nation* (Random House, 1995), charts p. 30-31, 32, 40-41; and table, Appendix 2 (from INS statistics).

27. See Maria Hsia Chang, "Multiculturalism, Immigration, and Aztlan," *The Social Contract*, Spring 2000, p. 207-211. Also Georgie Anne Geyer, "'Official Spanish' Push;" and Diana Hull, "Ethno-nationalism, Aztlan, and 'Official Spanish'," both in the Fall 1996 issue, p. 36-41.

28. Garrett Hardin, "Free Immigration, the Enemy of Free Enterprise," in *The Immigration Dilemma*, p. 121 (adapted from an essay originally in *Population and Environment*, vol. 14[1992], p. 197-200).