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We need to think ourselves beyond the nation. This is not to suggest that thought alone will carry us beyond the nation or that the nation is largely a thought or an imagined thing. Rather, it is to suggest that the role of intellectual practices is to identify the current crisis of the nation and in identifying it to provide part of the apparatus of recognition for postnational social forms. Although the idea that we are entering a postnational world seems to have received its first airing in literary studies, it is now a recurrent (if unselfconscious) theme in studies of postcolonialism, global politics, and international welfare policy. But most writers who have asserted or implied that we need to think postnationally have not asked exactly what emergent social forms compel us to do so, or in what way.

This latter task is the principal focus of this chapter.

Postdiscursive Colonies

For those of us who grew up male in the elite sectors of the postcolonial world, nationalism was our common sense and the principal justification for our ambitions, our strategies, and our sense of moral well-being. Now, almost half a century after independence was achieved for many of the new nations, the nation form is under attack, and that, too, from many points of view. As the ideological abli of the territorial state, it is the last refuge of ethnic totalitarianism. In important critiques of the postcolony (Mbembe 1992), its discourses have been shown to be deeply implicated in the discourses of colonialism itself. It has frequently been a vehicle for the staged self-doubts of the heroes of the new nation—Sukarno, Jomo Kenyatta, Jawaharlal Nehru, Camal Abdel Nasser—who fingered with nationalism while the public spheres of their societies were beginning to burn. So, for postcolonial intellectuals such as myself, the question is, does patriotism have a future? And to what races and genders shall that future belong?

To answer this question requires not just an engagement with the problematics of the nation form, the imagined community (Anderson 1991), the production of people (Balibar 1991), the narrativity of nations (Bhabha 1990), and the colonial logics of nationalist discourse (Chaterjee 1986). It also requires a close examination of the discourses of the state and the discourses that are contained within the hyphen that links nation to state (chap. 2, Mbembe et al. 1992). What follows is an exploration of one dimension of this hyphen.

There is a disturbing tendency in the Western academy today to divvy up the study of discursive forms from the study of other institutional forms, and the study of literary discourses from the mundane discourses of business practices, armies, private corporations, and nonprofit social organizations. This chapter is in part a plea for a widening of the field of discourse studies. If the postcolony is in part a discursive formation, it is also true that discursivity has become too exclusively the sign and space of the colony and the postcolony in contemporary cultural studies. To widen the sense of what counts as discourse demands a corresponding widening of the sphere of the postcolony, to extend it beyond the geographical spaces of the former colonial world. In raising the issue of the postcolony, I will suggest that the journey from the space of the former colony (a colorful space, a space of color) to the space of the postcolony is a journey that takes us into the brain of whiteness. It moves us, that is, in America, a postnational space marked by its whiteness but marked too by its raced engagements with diasporic peoples, mobile technologies, and queer nationalities.

The Trope of the Tribe

In spite of all the evidence to the contrary, these are hard times for patriotism. Mainstream bodies and barbed wire in Eastern Europe, xenophobic violence in France, flag waving in the political rituals of the election year here
in the United States—all seem to suggest that the willingness to die for one's country is still a global fashion. But patriotism is an unstable sentiment, which thrives only at the level of the nation-state. Below that level it is easily supplanted by more intimate loyalties, above that level it gives way to empty slogans rarely backed by the will to sacrifice or kill. So, when thinking about the future of patriotism, it is necessary first to inquire into the health of the nation-state.

My doubts about patriotism (patria-tom) are tied up with my father's biography, in which patriotism and nationalism were already diverging terms. As a war correspondent for Reuters in Bangkok in 1940, he met an expatriate Indian nationalist, Subhas Chandra Bose, who split with Gandhi and Nehru on the issue of violence. Bose had escaped from British surveillance in India, with the active support of the Japanese, and established a government-in-exile in Southeast Asia. The army that Bose formed included Indians and enlisted men whom the Japanese had taken prisoner and called itself the Indian National Army. This Indian Army was roundly defeated by the British Indian Army in Assam (on Indian soil, as my father never tired of noting) in 1944, and the provisional government of Azad Hind (Free India) in which my father was minister of publicity and propaganda soon crumbled with the defeat of the Axis powers.

When my father returned to India in 1945, he and his comrades were unwelcome heroes, poor cousins in the story of the nationalist struggle for Indian independence. They were patriots, but Bose's anti-British sentiment and his links with the Axis powers made him an embarrassment both to Gandhi's nonviolence and Nehru's Fabian Anglophilia. To the end of their lives, my father and his comrades remained pariah patriots, rogue nationalists. My sister, brothers, and I grew up in Bombay wedged between former patriot, Bose-style, and bourgeois nationalism, Nehru-style. Our India, with its Japanese connections and anti-Western ways, carried the nameless aroma of treason, in respect to the cozy alliance of the Nehrus and Mountbattens, and the bourgeois compact between Gandhian nonviolence and Nehruvian socialism. My father's distrust of the Nehru dynasty predisposed us to imagine a strange, deterritorialized India, invented in Taiwan and Singapore, Bangkok and Kuala Lumpur, quite independent of New Delhi and the Nehrus, the Congress Party and mainstream nationalists. So, there is a special appeal for me in the possibility that the marriage between nations and states was always a marriage of convenience and that patriotism needs to find new objects of desire.

One major fact that accounts for strains in the union of nation and state is that the nationalist gesture, never perfectly contained in the bottle of the territorial state, is now itself diastropic. Carried in the repertoires of increasingly mobile populations of refugees, tourists, guest workers, transnational intellectuals, scientists, and illegal aliens, it is increasingly unretained by ideas of spatial boundary and territorial sovereignty. This revolution in the foundations of nationalism has crept up on us virtually unnoticed. Where soil and place were once the key to the linkage of territorial affiliation with state monopoly of the means of violence, key identities and identifications now only partially revolve around the realities and images of place. In the Sikh demand for Khalistan, in French-Canadian feelings about Quebec, in Palestinian demands for self-determination, images of a homeland are only part of the rhetoric of popular sovereignty and do not necessarily reflect a territorial bottom line. The violence and terror surrounding the breakdown of many existing nation-states are not signs of reversion to anything biological or innate, dark or primordial (Comaroff and Comaroff 1992b). What then are we to make of this renewed blood lust in the name of the nation?

Modern nationalisms involve communities of citizens in the territorially defined nation-state who share the collective experience, not of face-to-face contact or common subordination to a royal person, but of reading books, pamphlets, newspapers, maps, and other modern texts together (Faherinas 1989, Calhoun 1992). In and through these collective experiences of what Benedict Anderson (1991) calls "bureaucapitalism" and what others increasingly see as "electronic capitalism," such as television and cinema (Warner 1992; Lee 1993), citizens inscribe themselves to belong to a "national society." The modern nation-state in this view grows less out of natural facts—such as language, blood, soil, and race—and more out of a differential cultural product, a product of the collective imagination. This view distorts itself, but not quite enough, from the dominant theories of nationalism, from those of J. G. Herder and Giuseppe Mazzini and since then from all sorts of right-wing nationalists, who see nations as products of the natural destinies of peoples, whether rooted in language, race, soil, or religion. In many of these theories of the nation as imagined, there is always a suggestion that blood, kinship, race, and soil are somehow less imagined and more natural than the imagination of collective interest or solidarity. The trope of the tribe reactivates this hidden biology largely because forceful alternatives to it have yet to be articulated. The historical conjunctures concerning reading and publicity, texts and their linguistic mediations, nations and their narratives are only now being juxtaposed to formulate the special and specific dialectics of the national imaginary and its public spheres (Lee 1993).
The leaders of the new nations that were formed in Asia and Africa after World War II—Nehru, Nehru, Sukarno—would have been distressed to see the frequency with which the ideas of tribalism and nationalism are confused in recent public discourse in the West. These leaders spent a good deal of their rhetorical energies in urging their subjects to give up what they saw as primordial loyalties—to family, tribe, caste, and region—in the interest of the fragiler abstractions they called “Egypt,” “India,” and “Indonesia.” They understood that the new nations needed to subvert and annexe the primary loyalties attached to more intimate collective activities. They rested their ideas of their new nations on the very edges of the paradox that modern nations were intended to be somehow open, universal, and emancipatory by virtue of their special commitment to citizenly virtue but that their nations were nonetheless, in some essential way, different from and even better than other nations. In many ways these leaders knew what we have tended to forget, namely, that nations, especially in multilingual settings, are tenous collective projects, not eternal natural facts. Yet they too helped to create a false divide between the artificiality of the nation and those facts falsely projected as primordial—tribe, family, region.

In its preoccupation with the control, classification, and surveillance of its subjects, the nation-state has often created, revitalized, or fractured ethnic identities that were previously fluid, negotiable, or nascent. Of course, the terms used to mobilize ethnic violence today may have long histories. But the realities to which they refer—Serbo-Croatian language, Basque customs, Luhano cuisine—were most often crystallized in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Nationalism and ethnicity thus feed each other, as nationalists construct ethnic categories that in turn drive others to construct counterethnicities, and then in times of political crisis, these other demand counterstates based on newfound counternationalisms. For every nationalism that appears to be naturally destined, there is another that is a reactive byproduct. While violence in the name of Serbs and Muslims, Khmer and Laotians, Germans and Jews tempts us to think that all such identities run deep and deep, we need only turn to the recent riots in India occasioned by the report of a government commission that recommended reserving a large percentage of government jobs for certain castes defined by the census and the constitution as “backward.” Rioting and carnage, and not a few killings and suicides, took place in North India over such labels as “other backward caste,” which come out of the terminological distinctions of the Indian census and its specialized protocols and schedules. How astonishing it seems that anyone would die or kill for entitlements associated with being the member of an lower backward caste. Yet this case is not an exception: in its macabre bureaucratic banality it shows how the technical needs of censuses and welfare legislation, combined with the cynical tactics of electoral politics, can draw groups into quasi-ethnic identifications and fears. The matter is not so different as it may appear for such apparently natural labels as Jew, Arab, German, and Hindu, each of which involves people who choose these labels, others who are forced into them, and yet others who through their philological scholarship shoo up the histories of these names or find them handy ways of sidying up messy problems of language and history, race and belief. Of course, not all nation-state policies are hegemonic, nor are all subaltern forms of agency impotent to resist these pressures and seductions. But it does seem fair to say that there are few forms of popular consciousness and subaltern agency that are, in regard to ethnic mobilization, free of the thought forms and political fields produced by the actions and discourses of nation-states.

Thus, minorities in many parts of the world are as artificial as the majorities they are seen to threaten. Whites in the United States, Hindus in India, Englishmen in Greater Britain—all are examples of how the political and administrative designation of some groups as minorities (blacks and Hispanics in the United States, Celts and Pakistanis in the United Kingdom, Muslims and Christians in India) helps to pull majorities (silent or vocal) together under labels with short lives but long histories. The new ethnicities are often no older than the nation-states that have come to rest. The Muslims of Bosnia are being reluctantly ghettoized although there is fear among both Serbs and Croats of the possibility of an Islamic state in Europe. Minorities are as often made as they are born. Recent ethnic movements often involve thousands, sometimes millions of people who are spread across vast territories and often separated by vast distances. Whether we consider the linkage of Serbs divided by large chunks of Bosnia-Herzegovina, or Kurds dispersed across Iran, Iraq, and Turkey, or Sikhs spread through London, Vancouver, and California, as well as the Indian Punjab, the new ethnicities are complex, large-scale, highly coordinated acts of mobilization, reliant on news, logistical flows, and propaganda across state borders. They can hardly be considered tribal, if by this we mean that they are spontaneous uprisings of closely bonded, spatially segregated, naturally allied groupings. In the case we find most frightening today, what could be called Serbian tribalism is hardly a simple thing given that there are at least 2.8 million Yugoslav families who have produced about 1.4 million mixed marriages between Serbs

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and Croats (Holbawn 1992). To which tribe could these families be said to belong? In our horned preoccupation with the shock troops of ethno-nationalism, we have lost sight of the confused sentiments of civilians, the torn loyalties of families that have members of warring groups within the same household, and the urgings of those who hold to the view that Serbs, Muslims, and Croats in Bosnia-Herzegovina have no fundamental enmity. It is harder to explain how principles of ethnic affiliation, however dubious their provenance and fragile their parsing, can very rapidly mobilize large groups into violent action.

What does seem clear is that the tribal model, unwise as it suggests prepackaged passions waiting to explode, lies in the face of the contingencies that spark ethnic passion. The Sikhs, until recently the bulwark of the Indian army and historically the lightning arm of Hindu India against Mus- lim rule, today regard themselves as threatened by Hinduism and seem willing to accept aid and succor from Pakistan. The Muslims of Bosnia-Herzegovina have been forced reluctantly to revitalize their Islamic affiliations. Far from activating long-standing tribal sentiments, Bosnian Muslims are torn between their own conception of themselves as European Muslims (a term recently used by Ejub Canic, vice president of Bosnia) and the view that they are part of a transnational Islam, which is already actively involved in Bosnian warfare. Wealthy Bosnians who live abroad in countries such as Turkey are already buying weapons for the defense of Muslims in Bosnia. To free us from the trope of the tribe, as the primordial source of those nationalisms that we find less civic than our own in the United States, we need to construct a theory of large-scale ethnic mobilization that explicitly recognizes and interprets its postnationalist properties.

Postnational Frontiers

Many recent and violent ethnonationalisms are not so much explosive as explosive. That is, rather than being rooted in some primordial substrat of affect deep within each of us that is brought up and out into wider sorts of social engagement and group action, the reverse is often the case. The effects of large-scale interactions between and within nation-states, often stimulated by news of events in more distant locations, serve to cascade (Rossen 1990) through the complexities of regional, local, and neighborhood politics until they energize local issues and impede into various forms of violence, including the most brutal ones. What were previously cool ethnic identities (Sikh and Hindu, Armenian and Azerbaijan, Serb and Croat) thus turn hot, as localities implode under the pressure of events and processes distant in space and time from the site of the implosion. Among Bosnia’s Muslims it is possible to watch the temperature of these identities change before our very eyes as they find themselves pushed away from a secular, Europeanist ideal of themselves into a more fundamentalist posture. They are being pushed not only by the threats to their survival from Serbs but also by pressure from their fellow Muslims in Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Sudan, who suggest that Bosnian Muslims are now paying the price for playing down their Islamic identity under Com- munist rule. Bosnian Muslim leaders have begun to explicitly state that if they do not receive help quickly from the Western powers, they might have to turn to Palestinian models of terrorist action.

One important way to account for those cases in which cool identities turn hot and implosions from one place generate explosions in others is to remind ourselves that the nation-state is by no means the only game in town as far as translocal loyalties are concerned. The violence that sur- rounds identity politics around the world today reflects the sensitivities attendant on the search for transnational principles of solidarity. The move- ments we now see in Serbia and Sri Lanka, Mauritania, Kenia, and Namibia, Punjab and Quebec are what might be called “third nation- alisms.” Such nationalisms actually contain transnational, subnational links and, more generally, nonnational identities and aspirations. Because they are so often the product of forced as well as voluntary diaspora, of mobile intellectuals as well as manual workers, of dialogue with hostile as well as hospitable states, very few of the new nationalisms can be separated from the anguish of displacement, the nostalgia of exile, the repatriation of funds, or the brutalities of asylum seeking. Haitians in Miami, Tamils in Boston, Moroccans in France, Malagasy in Holland are the carriers of these new transnational and postnational loyalties.

Territorial nationalism is the alibi of these movements and not neces- sarily their basic motive or final goal. In contrast, these basic motives and goals can be far darker than anything having to do with national sover- eignty, as when they are driven by the motives of ethnic purification and genocide, thus, Serbian nationalism seems to operate on the fear and ha- tred of its ethnic Others far more than on the sense of a sacred territorial patrimony. Or they can be simply idioms and symbols around which many groups come to articulate their desire to escape the specific state regime that is seen as threatening their own survival. Palestinians are more wor- ried about getting Israel out of their backs than about the special geographical magic of the West Bank.

While there are many separatist movements in the world today—the
Basques, the Tamils, the Quebecois, the Serbs—these are a few examples of how displacement does not always generate the fantasy of state building. Although many antistate movements revolve around images of homeland, soil, place, and return from exile, these images reflect the poverty of their (and our) political languages rather than the hegemony of territorial nationalism. For another way, no ideology has yet emerged to capture the collective interests of many groups in translocal solidarities, cross-border mobilizations, and postnational identities. Such interests are many and vocal, but they are still enrafted in the linguistic imaginary of the territorial state. This is true of many of the territories that have been designated as nation-states in the past century, and it is not just a matter of global markets and cross-national-taste cannibalism but a matter of the inextricable link between production, taste transfer, pricing, and exhibition. The variety of Green movements that has begun to organize itself transnationally around specific sorts of biopolitics. Consider the world of refugees. For long we have taken refugee issues and organizations to be part of the flat-sam and jersam of political life, floating between the certainties and stabilies of nation-states. What we cannot see is that refugees, refugee movements, and networks of Christian philanthropy, such as World Vision, that have long blurred the boundaries between evangelical, developmental, and peace-keeping functions in many parts of the world. Perhaps the best example is the Olympic movement, certainly the largest modern instance of a movement born in the context of European concerns with world peace in the latter part of the nineteenth century. This movement, with its special form of dialectical play between national and transnational allegiances (MacAlon 1981, Kang, MacAlon, and DaMatt 1988) represents only the most spectular among a series of sites and formations on which the uncertain future of the nation-state will turn.

In all these cases, what we are looking at are not just international slogans, or interest groups, or image transfer. We are looking at the birth of a variety of complex, postnational social formations. These formations are now organized around principles of finance, recruitment, coordination, communication, and reproduction that are fundamentally postnational and not just multinational or international. The classic modern multinational corporation is a slightly misleading example of what is most important...
about these new forms precisely because it relies crucially on the legal, fiscal, environmental, and human organization of the nation-state, while maximizing the possibilities of operating both within and across national structures, always exploiting their legitimacy. The new organizational forms are more diverse, more fluid, more ad hoc, more provisional, less coherent, less organized, and simply less implicated in the comparative advantages of the nation-state. Many of them are explicitly constituted to monitor the activities of the nation-state. Amnesty International is an excellent example. Others, largely associated with the United Nations, work to contain the excesses of nation-states, for example, by assisting refugees, monitoring peace-keeping arrangements, organizing relief in famine, and doing the unglamorous work associated with oceans and tariffs, international health and labor.

Yet others, like Oxfam, are examples of global organizations that work outside the semi-official United Nations network and rely on the growth of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in many parts of the developing world. These NGOs, which operate in a host of areas ranging from technology and the environment to health and the arts, grew from less than two hundred in 1960 to more than two thousand in the early 1970s. They often constitute major grassroots organizations for self-help that grow out of and contribute to a sense of the limited capability of national governments to deliver the basics of life in such societies as India.

Still other organizations, which we often call fundamentalist, such as the Muslim Brotherhood in the Middle East, the Unification Church, and any number of Hindu, Hindu, and Muslim organizations, constitute full-service global movements that seek to alleviate suffering across national boundaries while mobilizing first-order loyalties across state boundaries. Some of these evangelical movements (such as the radical Hindu group known as the Azande Marg, which has been held responsible for the assassination of Indian diplomats abroad) are aggressively opposed to specific nation-states and are frequently treated as seditionists. Others, such as the Unification Church, simply work their way around the nation-state without directly questioning its jurisdiction. Such examples, which we still tend to view as exceptional or pariah organizational forms, are both instances and incubators of a postnational order.

The Heart of Whiteness

The term postnational, so far used without comment, has several implications that can now be more closely examined. The first is temporal and historical and suggests that we are in the process of moving to a global order in which the nation-state has become obsolete and other formations for allegiance and identity have taken its place. The second is the idea that what are emerging are strong alternative forms for the organization of global traffic in resources, images, and ideas—forms that either contest the nation-state actively or constitute peaceful alternatives for large-scale political loyalties. The third implication is the possibility that, while nations might continue to exist, the steady erosion of the capabilities of the nation-state to monopolize loyalty will encourage the spread of national forms that are largely divorced from territorial states. These are relevant senses of the term postnational, but none of them implies that the nation-state in its classical territorial form is as yet out of business. It is certainly in crisis, and part of the crisis is an increasingly violent relationship between the nation-state and its postnational Others.

The United States is a particularly salient place in which to consider these propositions because, on the face of it, it has managed to retain most successfully the image of a national order that is simultaneously civil, plural, and prosperous. It appears to nurture a vibrant and complex set of public spheres, including some that have been called "alternative," "par- tial," or "counter" publics (Berlant and Freeman 1992, Fraser 1992, Hansen 1993, Robbins 1993, Black Public Sphere Collective 1995). It remains enormously wealthy by global standards, and although its forms of public violence are many and wronesome, its state apparatus is not generally dependent on forms of torture, imprisonment, and violent repression. When this is added to the fact that multiculturalism in the United States seems to take predominantly nonviolent forms, we appear to be faced with a great, uncontested power that dominates the new world order, that draws in immigrants in the thousands, and that seems to be a triumphant example of the classic, territorial nation-state. Any argument about the emergence of a postnational global order will have to engage its greatest apparent falsification, the contemporary United States. This last section lays the groundwork for such an engagement.

Until a few years ago, I was content to live in that special space allotted to "foreigners," especially Anglophone, educated ones like myself, with footrances of a British accent. As a black woman at a bus stop in Chicago once said to me with approval, I was an East Indian. That was in 1972. But since that happy conversation more than two decades ago, it has become steadily less easy to see myself, armed with my Indian passport and my Anglophone ways, as somehow immune from the politics of racial identity in the United States. Not only is it that after nearly three decades of being...
a resident alien in the United States, married to an Anglo-Saxon American woman, the father of a bicultural teenager; my Indian passport seems like a rather slight badge of identity. The net of racial politics is now cast wider than ever before on the streets of the urban United States.

My own complexion and its role in minority politics, as well as in street encounters with racial hatred, prompt me to reopen the links between America and the United States, between biculturalism and patriotism, between diasporic identity and the immunities provided by passports and green cards. Postcolonial loyalties are not irrelevant to the problem of diversity in the United States. Bicultural loyalty may afford an escape from the racialization of America and Americalness changes its meanings, the whole problem of diversification in American life will have to be rethought. It is not just the force of certain deductions that moves me to this recommendation. As I oscillate between the detachment of a postcolonial, diasporic academic identity (taking advantage of the mood of exile and the space of displacement) and the ugly realities of being racialized, minoritized, and tribalized in my everyday encounters, theory encounters practice.

A book recently published by Random House is titled How Race, Religion, and Identity Determine Success in the New Global Economy (Kotkin 1998). Written by Joel Kotkin, "an internationally recognized authority on global, economic, political and social trends," in the dust jacket brochure, it traces the connections between ethnicity and business success. Kotkin's five tribes— the Jews, the Chinese, the Japanese, the British, and the Indians—are an odd group, yet they represent primordialism with a high-tech face. They are Max Weber's parish capitalists in late-twentieth-century transnational drag. Books like this are reminders that East Indians are still a tribe, as are the Jews and others, working the primordial lode to make their way to global dominance. The trope of the tribe can turn on its own premises, and we can have vast global tribes, an image that seeks to have it both ways, with primordial intimacy and high-tech strategies. However diasporic we get, like the Jews, South Asians are doomed to remain a tribe, forever fliers and dealers in a world of open markets, fair deals, and opportunity for all.

For those of us who have moved into the 'national fantasy' (Berlant 1991) of America from the former colonies, there is thus the seductiveness of a plural belonging, of becoming American while staying somewhere diasporic, of an expansive attachment to an unbounded fantasy space. But while we can make our identities, we cannot do so exactly as we please. As many of us find ourselves racialized, biotized, minoritized, somehow reduced rather than enabled by our bodies and our histories, our special diasporic experience becomes our prison, and the trope of the tribe sets us off from another, unspecified America, far from the clamor of the tribe, decorous, civil, and white, a land in which we are not yet welcome.

This brings us back to the pervasive idiom and image of tribalism. Applied to New York, Miami, and Los Angeles (as opposed to San Jose, South, or Colombia), the trope of tribalism both conceals and indulges a diffuse racism about those Others (for example, Hispanics, Italians, and African-Americans) who have assimilated themselves into the American body politic. It allows us to maintain the idea of an Americanness that precedes (and subsists in spite of) the hypocrisies of this land and to maintain a distinction between tribal Americans (the black, the brown, and the yellow) and other Americans. This trope facilitates the fantasy that civil society in the United States has a special destiny in regard to peaceful multiculturalism—intelligent multiculturalism for us, bloody ethnocentrism or mindless tribalism for them.

There has developed a special set of links between democracy, diversity, and prosperity in American social thought. Built on a complex dialogue between political science (the only genuine made-in-America social science without obvious European counterparts or antecedents) and pecuniary constitutionalism, a comfortable equilibria was established between the ideas of cultural diversity and one or another version of the melting pot. Swinging between National Geographic and Reader's Digest, this anodyne polarity has proved remarkably durable and comforting. It accommodates, sometimes on the same page or in the same breath, a sense that plurality is the American genius and that there is an Americaness that somehow contains and transcends plurality. This second, post-Civil War accommodation with difference is now on its last leg, and the political correctness-multiculturalism debate is over. The trope of the tribe can turn on its own premises, and we can have vast global tribes, an image that seeks to have it both ways, with primordial intimacy and high-tech strategies. However diasporic we get, like the Jews, South Asians are doomed to remain a tribe, forever fliers and dealers in a world of open markets, fair deals, and opportunity for all.

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There has developed a special set of links between democracy, diversity, and prosperity in American social thought. Built on a complex dialogue between political science (the only genuine made-in-America social science without obvious European counterparts or antecedents) and pecuniary constitutionalism, a comfortable equilibria was established between the ideas of cultural diversity and one or another version of the melting pot. Swinging between National Geographic and Reader's Digest, this anodyne polarity has proved remarkably durable and comforting. It accommodates, sometimes on the same page or in the same breath, a sense that plurality is the American genius and that there is an Americaness that somehow contains and transcends plurality. This second, post-Civil War accommodation with difference is now on its last leg, and the political correctness-multiculturalism debate is over. The trope of the tribe can turn on its own premises, and we can have vast global tribes, an image that seeks to have it both ways, with primordial intimacy and high-tech strategies. However diasporic we get, like the Jews, South Asians are doomed to remain a tribe, forever fliers and dealers in a world of open markets, fair deals, and opportunity for all.
hyphenated (Asian-American-Japanese or Native-American-Sene or African-American-Jamaican or Hispanic-American-Bolivian) as diasporic identities stay mobile and grow more protean. Or perhaps the sides of the hyphen will have to be reversed, and we can become a federation of diasporas. American-Indians, American-Haitians, American-Irish, American-Africans. Dual citizenships might increase the societies from which we came remain or become more open. We might recognize that diasporic diversity actually pays loyalty to a transnational transnational first, while recognizing that there is a special American way to connect to these global diasporas. America, as a cultural space, will not need to compete with a host of global identities and diasporic loyalties. It might come to be seen as a model of how to arrange one territorial bloc (among others) for a cross-hatching of diasporic communities. In this regard, the American problem resembles those of other wealthy industrial democracies (such as Sweden, Germany, Holland, and France), all of which face the challenge of squaring Enlightenment universalism and diasporic pluralism.

The question is, can a postnational politics be built around this cultural fact? Many societies now face influxes of immigrants and refugees, wanted and unwanted. Others are pushing out groups in acts of ethnic cleansing intended to produce the very people whose presence the nation was supposed to ratify. But America may be alone in having organized itself around a modern political ideology in which pluralism is central to the conduct of democratic life. Out of a different strand of its experience, this society has also generated a powerful fable of itself as a land of immigrants. In today's postnational, diasporic world, America is being invited to weld these two doctrines together, to confront the needs of pluralism and of immigration, to construct a society around diasporic diversity.

But such images as the mosaic, the rainbow, the quilt, and other tropes of complexity-in-diversity cannot supply the imaginative resources for this task, especially as fears of tribalism multiply. Tribes do not make quilts, although they sometimes make confederacies. Whether in debates over immigration, bilingual education, the academic canon, or the underclass, these liberal images have sought to contain the tension between the centripetal pull of Americaneness and the centrifugal pull of diasporic diversity in America life. The battles over affirmative action, quotas, welfare, and abortion in America today suggest that the metaphor of the mosaic cannot contain the contradiction between group identities, which Americans will tolerate (up to a point) in cultural life, and individual identities, which are still the nonnegotiable principle behind American ideas of achievement, mobility, and justice.
What is to be done? There could be a special place for America in the new, postnational order, and one that does not rely on either nationalism or global domination as its alternative basis. The United States is eminently suited to be a sort of cultural laboratory and a free-trade zone for the generation, circulation, importation, and testing of the materials for a world organized around diasporic diversity. In a sense, this experiment is already under way. The United States is already a huge, fascinating garbage pile for the rest of the world. It provides golf vacations and real estate for the Japanese, business-management ideologies and techniques for Europe and India, soap-opera ideas for Brazil and the Middle East; prime ministers for Yugoslavia, supply-side economics for Poland, Russia, and whoever else will try; Christian fundamentalism for Korea; and postmodern architecture for Hong Kong. By also providing a set of images—Rambo in Afghanistan, "We Are the World," George Bernard Shaw in Baghdad, Coke goes to Barcelona, Peer goes to Washington—that link human rights, consumer style, antifascism, and media glitz, it might be said that the United States is partly accountable for the idiosyncrasies that attend struggles for self-determination in otherwise very different parts of the world. This is why a University of Iowa sweatshirt is not just a silly symbol in the jungles of Mozambique or on the barricades of Beirut. It captures the free-floating yearning for American style, even in the most intense contests of opposition to the United States. The cultural politics of queer nationality is an example of this contradictory yearning in the United States (Berlant and Freeman 1992). The rest of this yearning is provoked by authoritarian state policies, massive arms industries, the insistently hungry eye of the electronic media, and the despair of bankrupt economies.

Of course, these products and ideas are not the immaculate conceptions of some mysterious American know-how but are precisely the result of a complex environment in which ideas and intellectuals meet in a variety of special settings (such as labs, libraries, classrooms, music studios, business seminars, and political campaigns) to generate, reformulate, and recirculate cultural forms that are fundamentally postnational and diasporic. The role of American music, movies, and record companies in the creation of world beat is an excellent example of this sort of down-home but offshore entrepreneurial mentality. Americans are loath to admit the preeminent, pragmatic, haphazard, flexible, and opportunistic ways in which these American products and reproductions circulate around the world. Americans like to think that the Chinese have simply bought the virtues of free enterprise, the Poles, the supply side, the Haitians and Filipinos, democracy, and everyone, human rights. We rarely pay attention to the complicated terms, traditions, and cultural styles into which these ideas are folded and thus transformed beyond our recognition. Thus, during the historic events of Tiananmen Square in 1989, when it seemed as if the Chinese people had become democratic overnight, there was considerable evidence that the ways in which different groups in China understood their problems were both internally varied and tied to various specificities of China's history and cultural style.

When Americans see transformations and cultural complications of their democratic vocabulary and style, if they notice them at all, they are annoyed and dismayed. In this misreading of how others handle what we still see as our national recipe for success, Americans perform a further act of narcissistic distortion: we imagine that these peculiarly American inventions (democracy, capitalism, free enterprise, human rights) are automatically and inherently interconnected and that our national saga holds the key to the combination. In the mirroring of our words, we see the victor of our myths. We are believers in terminal conversion.

The American "victory" in the Cold War need not necessarily turn pyrrhic. The fact is that the United States, at a critical point of view, is already a vast free-trade zone, full of ideas, technologies, styles, and idioms (from McDonald's and the Harvard Business School to the Dream Team and reverse mortgages) that the rest of the world finds fascinating. This free-trade zone rests on a volatile economy; the major cities of the American mainland (Los Angeles, Miami, New York, Detroit) are now heavily militarized. But these facts are of little relevance to those who come, either briefly or for more extended stays, to this free-trade zone. Some, fleeing vastly greater urban violence, state persecution, and economic hardship, come as permanent migrants, legal or illegal. Others are short-term shoppers for clothes, entertainment, loans, armaments, or quick lessons in free-market economics or civil-society politics. The very utterlessness, the rank unpredictability, the sheer cultural vitality of this free-trade zone are what attract all sorts of diasporas to the United States.

For the United States, to play a major role in the cultural politics of a postnational world has very complex domestic entailments. It may mean making room for the legitimacy of cultural rights, rights to the pursuit of cultural difference under public protections and guarantees. It may mean a painful break from a fundamentally Fordist, manufacture-centered conception of the American economy, as we learn to be global information brokers, service providers, style doctors. It may mean embracing as part of our livelihood what we have so far confined to the world of Broadway, Holly-
more deeply territorial than ever. But it is also possible to detect in many of these transformations (some ethnic, some religious, some philanthropic, some militant) the elements of a postnational imaginary. These elements for those who wish to hasten the demise of the nation-state, for all their contradictions, require both nurture and critique. In this way, transnational social forms may generate not only postnational yearnings but also actually existing postnational movements, organizations, and spaces. In these postnational spaces, the incapacity of the nation-state to absorb or accommodate diversity (as it seeks the homogeneity of its citizens, the simultaneity of its presence, the consensuality of its narrative, and the stability of its citizens) may, perhaps, be overcome.

Patriotism and Its Futures