7

Contesting America in a Global Era

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"You know what? I'm a nationalist. Nationalist. Nothing wrong. Use that word. Use that word" (Blake, 2018, para. 3). Former U.S. President Donald Trump's proud embrace and public promotion of "that word" during a 2018 campaign rally for Texas Senator Ted Cruz set off a firestorm of debate about what the terms "nationalist" and "nationalism" signify. Some Democrats, like Representative Gregory W. Meeks of New York, accused Trump of using "very dangerous language" that "reminds me of the kind of words that came from people like Hitler... repressive dictators — those are the individuals that generally use that kind of phrase" (Sonmez, 2018, para. 9). Other critics focused less on the authoritarian connotations of "nationalist," generally, and more on the term's close association with white nationalism specifically (Abedi, 2018). Describing nationalism as a "radical, racially-based dogma," Jennifer

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Rubin of *The Washington Post* wrote that: "nationalism is antithetical to America's founding creed ('All men are…') and contrary to the principles of a multiethnic, multiracial democracy." As to the most likely explanation for Trump's embrace of the term, Rubin posited: "He knows exactly what it means, his base knows exactly what he means and he knows the strongest bond with followers is xenophobia" (Rubin, 2018, paras. 6–10).

Trump responded to the criticism by doubling down on his embrace of the term. After acknowledging, "we're not supposed to use that word [nationalist]," he insisted, "I think it should be brought back" (Sonmez, 2018, para. 5). Trump defended his form of nationalism as a laudable desire to protect the United States against unfair international trade practices. When queried as to whether his comments were a nod (or "dog whistle") to white nationalists, he denied any knowledge of that association, as he had done on previous occasions (O'Connor, 2018).

Trump's pronouncements were not surprising, given the content (often exclusionary) and style (regularly combative) of the former president's politics, but were intriguing in that: (1) "nationalism" as an unapologetic rallying cry has been largely absent from mainstream political discourse in the United States; and (2) the heightened emphasis on borders, boundaries, and bans on international travel and trade by Trump and his supporters seemed out of place in a twenty-first century world characterized by movement, mixing, and the remarkable compression of planetary time and space (Harvey, 1990; Pedersen, 2021). Regarding the former intrigue, even a cursory overview of U.S. history reveals that, in fact, nationalism has been evident, in its many guises, for much of the country's history, although it is rarely named as such. In fact, prior to Trump's remarks, the identifier "nationalist" had been "so out of circulation in American politics," one observer noted, "that pollsters haven't even tested it, outside the context of white nationalism, for decades" (Blake, 2018, para. 10). Most Americans prefer the term "patriotism," seemingly to distinguish a civic form of national belonging rooted in a shared commitment to political ideals from "nationalism" as a darker, more sinister configuration of collectivity associated with racial and ethnic exclusion on the part of less "enlightened" polities in other parts of the world.

Not only did the former president's bold public appeals to nationalism deviate from common American practice, but the enthusiasm on the part of Trump and his supporters for fortifying borders, building walls, and erecting fences, also warrants examination, coming as it has at a time when so much else, whether in the realms of technology, economy, or culture, points to the transcendence of barriers—including those of the national community Trump professes to defend. Globalization is the term typically used to describe this "intensifying planetary interconnectivity" (Steger, 2020, p. 17), and for many scholars of nationalism, the evolution toward world-space and world-time was expected to mark the twilight of the national form. That we currently see nationalism invigorated, in the United States and elsewhere, confounds these predictions. But, more so than a contradiction to twenty-first century globalization, nationalism's pervasiveness, potency, and ethno-racial tint appear to be a consequence of that interconnectedness.

This chapter examines the interrelationship between globalization and the contemporary politics and practices of American nationhood. In doing so, it situates the not-new, but arguably heightened, tension over the nature of American national identity within the context of the concurrent contestation over the efficacy of belonging to nation-states in an era of amplified global interconnectedness.

Nation and Globalization

"Nation" and "globalization" are among the most widely used and difficult to define concepts in contemporary discourse. Each term, on its own, refers to powerful, pervasive, and multifaceted phenomena. Sorting through the interrelationship between national identification and globalization compounds this complexity, but is highly instructive in terms of making sense of contemporary social and political issues in the United States.

Trump's embrace of nationalism not only prompted criticism, but revealed public confusion regarding the meaning of "nationalist" and associated terms (Rubin, 2018). Similar confusion exists among scholars, some of whom have bemoaned the "terminological chaos" (Connor,

1978, p. 384), and characterized "nation" as "one of the most puzzling and tendentious items in the political lexicon" (Tilly, 1975, p. 7). Despite these challenges, one point that enjoys widespread agreement is that "nation" and "state," although closely associated, are not synonymous. States are definable by objective criteria (bounded territory, established population, identifiable administrative structure, internationally recognized sovereignty; Connor, 1978). Nations, on the other hand, are portrayed in subjective terms: as "a soul, a spiritual principle" (Renan, 1882, p. 26), a "sentiment of solidarity" (Weber, 1948, quoted in Gerth & Mills, 2009, p. 172), an "imagined political community" (Anderson, 1991). Nations, then, are more intangible entities than states, but closely connected to them in that nations typically have, or desire to have, their own state. Anderson's (1991) famous definition of nations as "imagined communities" is one of many that emphasizes the significance of sovereignty. "Nations dream of being free," he writes, "the gage and emblem of this freedom is the sovereign state" (p. 7). Meanwhile, from the perspective of democratic theory, acting on behalf of a constituent national community is, for states, what justifies their very existence. The nation, in other words, serves as an "ideological alibi" of the state (Appadurai, 1996, p. 159). This symbiotic relationship between nation and state is critical to understanding the effects of globalization on national identification and attachment.

In addition to persistent questions about the meaning of the terms, "nationalist," "nationalism," et cetera, debate also takes place around the nature of nationhood. As a form of group identification and attachment, is nationhood civic, liberal, and inclusive, or does it tend toward exclusion and ethnic chauvinism? In the former case, for which the United States is an oft-cited example, the national community is said to be united around shared political principles (liberty, equality, and democracy), and membership in the civic nation is open to those who share a commitment to those values. In the latter case, membership in the nation is determined by ancestry and ethnic lineage. Belonging is organic, not voluntarist. Japan is an oft-cited example, as was Germany prior to a series of reforms implemented in the mid-1990s. The problem with these ideal types is that, in practice, the distinction between civic nations and ethnic nations tends to be "bogus" (Ozkirimli, 2005, p. 28). In

those countries purporting to be civic nations (the United States, France, Canada), ample evidence exists that national belonging has ethnic, racial, and religious undertones. As political theorist Bernard Yack (1999) writes:

> [T]he civic/ethnic distinction itself reflects a considerable dose of ethnocentrism, as if the political identities French and American were not also culturally inherited artifacts … The characterization of political community in the so-called civic nations as a rational and freely chosen allegiance to a set of political principles seems untenable, a mixture of self-congratulations and wishful thinking. (p. 105)

For proponents of the civic version of nationalism, "patriotism" is the preferred identifier. In a not-so-subtle rebuke of Trump's explicit embrace of nationalism, French President Emanuel Macron, in a 2018 speech commemorating Armistice, asserted that: "Patriotism is the exact opposite of nationalism: nationalism is a betrayal of patriotism" (Baker, 2018, para. 3). Americans tend to share Macron's assessment—hewing closely to a distinction articulated by George Orwell (1945), at the close of World War II:

> By nationalism … I mean the habit of identifying oneself with a single nation or other unit, placing it beyond good and evil and recognizing no other duty than that of advancing its interests … By 'patriotism' I mean devotion to a particular place and a particular way of life, which one believes to be the best in the world but has no wish to force on other people. (para. 2)

But beyond characterizing patriotism as defensible and nationalism as not, the distinction between the two remains murky, and, similar to the civic/ethnic categorization, ignores the common roots of both (Wimmer, 2019).

A final issue of interest in the study of nations and nationalism, and one with important implications for understanding the effects of globalization, concerns the "when" of nations. Generally characterized as a debate between primordialists and modernists, the former conceptualize nations as seamless entities existing in nature since time immemorial, and

the latter group emphasizes the historical specificity of nations as forms of political and cultural belonging emerging during and unique to the modern era (Motyl, 2002). Over time, the modernist perspective came to predominate and gave rise to a rich body of scholarship detailing how the specific conditions and functional demands of the modern era led to the creation of national communities (Anderson, 1991; Gellner, 1983; Hobsbawm, 1990).

Modernity, in this case, refers roughly to the period beginning in the mid-eighteenth century, including the onset of industrialization (and related technological innovations particularly in the realm of communications), urbanization, increased literacy and social mobility, and, notably, the consolidation of the modern state. The era of industrialization, as Ernest Gellner (1983) explained, demanded a high degree of literacy, cultural standardization, and political cohesion, which nations and nationalism provided. Other scholars attributed the rise of nations and nationalism even more specifically to the demands of modern capitalism, positing nations as part of the ideological superstructure used by elites to legitimate capitalist development (Nairn, 1977; Wallerstein, 1991). Modernity, all of these scholars agreed, created the conditions that made nationhood as a form of belonging both necessary and possible (Giddens, 1985). Particularly influential was Benedict Anderson's (1991) portrayal of nations as "imagined political communities." For Anderson, nations are cultural artifacts created toward the end of the eighteenth century when various modern mechanisms, including print capitalism (and the dissemination of newspapers and novels), maps, museums, and the census, made it possible, and functional, for individuals to *imagine* themselves members of a political community—even though few would ever actually know or meet their fellow members.

This emphasis on a specific historical time period as giving rise to the national form begs the question of what happens to nations in an era beyond, or different than, the modern one. Little consensus exists as to whether modernity has ended, or if so, what has replaced it: post-modernity, post-industrialism, late-modernism, a second modernity? In each case, the conditions depicted conform to general descriptions of globalization as the "multidimensional and uneven intensification of social relations and consciousness across world-time and world-space"

(Steger, 2020, p. 17). And a central theme running through this voluminous literature on globalization concerns the changing role and relevance of the modern nation-state. Sociologist Ulrich Beck (2000) illustrates clearly how globalization has weakened the modern state:

> The national state is a territorial state: that is, its power is grounded upon attachment to a particular place (upon control over membership, current legislation, border defense, and so on). The world society which, in the wake of globalization, has taken shape in many (not only economic) dimensions is undermining the importance of the national state, because a multiplicity of social circles, communication networks, market relations and lifestyle, none of them specific to any particular locality, now cut across the boundaries of the national state. This is apparent in each of the pillars of sovereignty: in tax raising, police responsibilities, foreign policy and military security. (p. 4)

Because nationhood as a form of collective attachment is closely linked to the modern era and modern state, as the conditions of modernity that made the nation necessary and useful evolved, new more functional forms of political consciousness were expected to emerge. Indeed, scholars writing within the modernist frame explicitly anticipated the eventual demise of nations and nationalism (McNeill, 1986). "Nations are not eternal," wrote French philosopher, Ernest Renan (1882); "They have begun, they will end. They will be replaced, in all probability, by a European confederation" (p. 29). A century later, historian Eric Hobsbawm (1990) reiterated the prediction: "Nation-states and nations will be seen as retreating before, resisting, adapting to, being absorbed, or dislocated by the new supranational restructuring of the globe" (p. 182). And throughout the 1990s, a burgeoning scholarship on "postnationalism" and "transnationalism" focused on that restructuring, and movement toward a "postnational global order:"

> We are looking at the birth of a variety of complex, postnational social formations … 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. (Appadurai, 1996, p. 168)

Despite some agreement regarding the finite lifespan of nations and nationalism, less clear was the forecast for what alternative social formations might replace nations. One common description of (and prescription for) a post-national order came in the form of cosmopolitanism. Resurrecting a worldview held by the Cynics and Stoics of Ancient Greece, cosmopolitanism calls for having as our primary allegiance "the community of human beings in the entire world" (Nussbaum, 2002, p. 4). The argument is a moral one, insisting on the equal worth of all humans, but also responding practically to material conditions wrought by globalization that necessitate collective consciousness beyond the level of the nation-state: global warming, international terrorism, pandemics (Held, 1997; Warf, 2012).

Evidence of globalization's challenge to the sovereignty of states continued to mount throughout the first decades of the new millennium, as global terrorism, international financial crises, and the COVID-19 pandemic left the United States and countries around the world struggling to safeguard their national constituencies. Meanwhile, owing to unprecedented advancements in information, communication, and transportation technologies, the capacity for individuals and groups to imagine community within and across the boundaries of states expanded exponentially. Yet, despite conditions and capabilities arguably different than those that characterized the modern era, nationhood as a form of identification, and nationalism as a powerful political ideology, have persisted.

The United States and Twenty-First Century Globalization

The twenty-first century began with the promise of progress and change. The Cold War had ended; Russia was joining NATO; the Pope was visiting Cuba, and Europe was days away from adopting a common currency. Global travel had reached an all-time high, as had global Internet access. Automobile manufacturers were making electric cars, and scientists were closing in on the mysteries of the human genome. In the United States, unemployment was low, real hourly wages were growing

for all income levels (Mishel et al., 2015), inequality existed, to be sure, but not to the staggering degree it does today (Horowitz et al., 2020). Some analysts warned, presciently, of risk (Beck, 2000; Giddens, 1985), but as Americans embarked on a new millennium, few could have imagined the deadly scourge of international terrorism, a mortgage crisis that would spawn crippling worldwide recession, or a global pandemic that, by the end of 2021, would kill close to 800,000 Americans, more than those who lost their lives in World War II, the Korean War, and Vietnam combined. In these ways and many more, the twenty-first century has reminded Americans repeatedly that, for better and worse, they share a planet with close to 8 billion other inhabitants, and that their collective futures are intertwined.

The terrorist attacks on the United States on September 11, 2001, offered particularly powerful, and ironic, testament to the global condition. Waging war on what was arguably the epicenter of globalization, Al-Qaeda terrorists also made skillful use of globalization (namely a range of sophisticated information, communications, and transportation technologies). Although the militants killed many hundreds of U.S. citizens in the World Trade Center that day, owing to the global nature of the financial industry (and captured in the name of the iconic edifice) they also killed individuals from 80 other countries around the world. Americans, many of whom had long enjoyed a comfortable, albeit parochial, sense of national security, were left feeling newly vulnerable, and alerted to their interconnectedness with a broader world.

The U.S.-led war on terror would become a long-standing reminder of that global interconnectedness, as would the vagaries of economic neoliberalism that intensified as the decade wore on. George W. Bush's two-term presidency, which began with terrorists flying deadly planes into U.S. targets, ended with the United States and much of the world sliding ever deeper into the worst global economic crisis since World War II. Nor are the two episodes unrelated. In the weeks after the 2001 terror attacks, Bush encouraged Americans to carry on with life as usual, to go shopping with their families, to attend a baseball game, and to travel to Disneyland. Other leaders, like former New York City mayor Rudolph Giuliani did the same: "If you like to go out and spend money, I would encourage that. It's always a good thing" (Cannon,

2003, p. 3244). Although Bush addressed the importance of the war, he did not, as international relations professor Andrew Bacevich (2008) explained, call on Americans to sacrifice, as had previous U.S. presidents during times of national crisis. His administration sought no additional revenue to cover the costly and protracted wars, and instead delivered tax cuts, while simultaneously encouraging banks to offer easy credit; "As the American soldier fought, the American consumer binged" (Bacevich, 2008, para. 3). By 2007, fiscal recklessness in the United States manifested in a mortgage crisis, which quickly sparked "the recession felt around the world" (Roubini, 2008).

As with 9/11, the Great Recession of 2008 turned out to be less a death knell for globalization than a testament to its ubiquity. The United States, and other governments, did step in to address the economic fallout, but ultimately, transnational corporations (TNCs) and financial institutions ceded little of their global dominance. Approximately 80 percent of world trade continues to be controlled by TNCs, and they far outnumber countries on lists of the largest economic entities worldwide (Inman, 2016). In this context, the sovereignty of states has "fractured."

> Demands [on governments] are largely no longer answerable, because governmental tools and resources (material as well as symbolical ones), have withered or moved elsewhere. If you announce that you will tax capital, this will quickly vanish in thin air, moved with a mouse-click to some more hospitable realm. (Romero, 2019, p. 5)

The Great Recession was also a reminder of the inequity that globalization can unleash. Income and wealth inequality that had been growing in the United States since the 1970s, was exacerbated in the aftermath of the financial crisis of 2008, and continues to grow (Kuhn, 2018). Today, experts agree that the wealth divide among upper-income families and middle and lower-income families is "sharp and rising" (Horowitz et al., 2020) and that globalization plays a key role in widening these gaps (Gould, 2019; Soergel, 2017). With regard to the implications for national belonging, Anderson's conceptualization of nations as "imagined" gave great weight to the notion of "deep, horizontal comradeship,"

by which he meant that "regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail," the nation is always conceived as a community (Anderson, 1991, p. 7). Such a myth becomes increasingly difficult to sustain in the face of deep vertical inequalities.

It was in this context that candidate, and later President, Donald Trump identified "globalists" and "globalism" as his primary foes. Whether immigrants, the United Nations, international trade agreements, treaties, or alliances, Trump and his supporters maintained that globalization was not working for the United States, and "making America great again" would necessitate a more "go-it-alone" approach. When Trump delivered his first speech to the United Nations, he was clear regarding global threats: "International criminal networks traffic drugs, weapons, people; force dislocation and mass migration; threaten our borders." He also made clear his solution: "strong sovereign states." "The nation-state," Trump declared, "remains the best vehicle for elevating the human condition" (POLITICO staff, 2017, para. 24). In fact, Trump used the word sovereign or sovereignty 21 times. Obama, in his first address to the United Nations, used it once.

By early 2020, COVID-19 made it deadly clear that in a world where more people traverse longer distances more often and more quickly than ever before, options for isolation are limited. Speaking more than a year into the pandemic, at meeting of the G-20 countries, U.S. Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen warned: "We are very concerned about the Delta variant and other variants that could emerge and threaten recovery." The story of the pandemic is still being written, but what is clear is Yellen's final caution: "What happens in any part of the world affects all other countries" (Rappeport, 2021, para. 3).

The globality Yellen evoked not only challenges the autonomy of states, it has shown the boundaries of collective identity, national and otherwise, to be both fluid and contentious. As American citizens and politicians react to repeated reminders of global interconnectedness what is revealed is ambivalence regarding both the *form* and the *nature* of American belonging. Regarding form, events from 9/11 to COVID-19 signal vulnerabilities for the American nation wrought by globalization, but left unclear whether the appropriate response was *more* global interconnectedness, cooperation, and identification, or *less*. Regarding

the nature of American nationhood, as the interplay between global and national belonging intensified, so did the battle between the ideal of America's civic nationhood and the persistent, seemingly galvanized, reality of ethnic exclusions.

Fluid Forms of Collectivity

Responding to an emotional crowd gathered at ground zero on September 14, 2001, then-President George W. Bush stepped up to avenge the attacks. Bush (2001a) shouted through a bullhorn: "I can hear you. The rest of the world hears you…the people who knocked these buildings down will hear all of us soon!" (para. 2). This now iconic proclamation foreshadowed the U.S.-led war on terror, but also reveals how globalization intensifies the ambiguity attached to configurations of "us" and "them."

The people Bush was referring to "who knocked these buildings down," turned out to be a complex global network of terrorists, hailing from more than twenty different countries, who had spread their organization across as many as sixty different states. "Were this a peaceful enterprise," observed political scientist Robert Jervis (2002), "we would celebrate it as showing the ability of people from different countries, social classes, and experiences to work together" (p. 40). That the aggressor was not a country complicated the U.S. response (and would do so for years to come), but it also exemplified one of many ways globalization facilitates forms of collectivity beyond, and other than, the territorially bounded nation-state.

Globalization also influenced the "we" who would actually wage the looming war on terror in Iraq and Afghanistan. The U.S. military forces are made up largely, but not solely, of "Americans," in the formal sense of the term. After 9/11, in order to enlist sufficient troop numbers to fight terror, the U.S. military turned to immigrants. To facilitate recruitment of non-citizen soldiers, the United States promised an expedited path to citizenship. By 2003, over 30,000 non-citizens were serving in the four branches of the U.S. military (Hattiangadi et al., 2005). Not only has that number continued to grow, but these non-citizen soldiers

comprise a disproportionate twenty percent of Congressional Medal of Honor recipients. One of those Medal recipients, Alfred Rascón, shared: "I was once asked by a reporter why as a non-citizen of the United States, I volunteered to join the military. I answered, I was always an American in my heart" (Citizen Path, 2020, "Quotes From Imminent Veterans" section). Some immigrants, like Rascón, volunteered for the U.S. military out of a commitment to the country they had come to call home. Others were motivated by an even more local sense of belonging. Upon enlisting, Alexandr Manin, a recent immigrant from Kazakstan, remarked: "It doesn't matter that America is not my country. New York is my city" (Chen & Sengupta, 2001, para. 4).

Bush's claim on September 14, 2001, that "the world" was listening, was accurate, and the response from around the world was overwhelmingly one of compassion for the victims of 9/11, and condemnation of the attacks. Even countries not friendly toward the United States (e.g., Cuba and North Korea) sent their condolences. The tragic events of 9/11 presented an opportunity for Americans to broaden their identifications, and for countries, groups, and individuals worldwide to make common cause in defense of innocent civilians worldwide. Cosmopolitan philosopher Martha Nussbaum advocated just this. Concerned that the terrorist attacks would lead Americans to the demonization of an imagined, evil "them," and to wish for abasing, humiliating, and crushing anyone who crosses an imagined and superior "we," Nussbaum (2002) characterized 9/11 as, "an occasion for expansion of our ethical horizons," noting that "we can learn something about the vulnerability all human beings share," and "extend our strong emotions… to the world of human life as a whole" (pp. xiii–xiv).

As formations of "us" and "them" took shape following 9/11, some did transcend the bounds of nation, but fell decidedly short of encompassing humankind. On September 12, 2001, French newspaper, *Le Monde*, ran the headline: "We Are All Americans." That declaration might have signaled a world united in opposition to the brutal murder of innocent civilians, but shortly thereafter, French President Jacques Chirac hinted at a more limited configuration of "we." "Today it is New York that was tragically struck, but tomorrow it may be Paris, Berlin, London" (Barrow, 2001, para. 10). Chirac's "we" telegraphed less "the

world," than a community of Western, liberal, democracies whose role in a global, postcolonial, economic network had lured large numbers of immigrants and diversified the ethnic, racial, and religious makeup of their populations. While Chirac insinuated a distinctly Western "we" that was threatened by a non-Western "they," Italy's Silvio Berlusconi asserted it: "We should be confident of the superiority of our civilization, which consists of a value system that… guarantees respect for human rights and religion. This respect certainly does not exist in Islamic countries" (Erlanger, 2001, para. 4).

Despite Bush's efforts to clarify that the United States was not at war with Islam, he also portrayed the fight against terror as one of dueling civilizations. On September 20, 2001, in an address to Congress, Bush (2001b) declared the U.S.-led war on terror as "civilization's fight" (para. 16), and just days before he characterized the fight as a "crusade," evoking, for Muslims in particular, the bloody battles waged in medieval Europe by Christian soldiers to recapture the Holy Land from Muslim control (Bush, 2001c, para. 15). Bush would repeat this theme throughout this administration, characterizing his war on terrorism as "a struggle for civilization" (Bush, 2006, para. 13).

The U.S. media also adopted the civilizational frame, placing the events of 9/11 within the context "of Islam, of cultural conflicts, and of a Western civilization threatened by the Other" (Abrahamian, 2003, p. 531). Mainstream news outlets like *The New York Times* regular ran headlines the likes of "Barbarians at the Gates," "A Head-On Collision of Alien Cultures," and "This *Is* a Religious War" (Abrahamian, 2003, p. 531).

This civilizational thinking exemplified a worldview articulated years earlier. While many observers were celebrating the end of the Cold War as the dawning of a new more peaceful, global era, political scientist Samuel Huntington (1993) warned of globalization's more ominous implications for identity:

> The fundamental source of conflict in this new world will not be primarily ideological or primarily economic. The great divisions among humankind and the dominant source of conflict will be cultural. … The

> fault lines between civilizations will be the battle lines of the future. (p. 22)

Of particular concern was the civilizational fault-line between "the West" and "Islam." Ultimately, civilizational thinking proved limited as an explanation for world affairs, but potent as a self-fulfilling prophecy: both "the West" and "Islam" fell into parroting simplified versions of the demonic other (Said, 2001).

Fear of terrorism persisted, but by the time Bush left office, Americans were more focused on economic threats to their security emanating from the Great Recession. Bush's successor, President Barack Obama, inherited the recession-plagued economy, but also spent his two terms in office navigating signature complexities related to American nationhood. That Obama was America's first Black president is widely recognized, but he was also perceived, by critics and supporters alike, as America's "first global president" (Raasch, 2009, para. 1), "first cosmopolitan president" (Shataan, 2009, para. 3), and first political leader to "fit snugly into the skin of globalization with all its promises and contradictions" (Ngugi, 2008, para. 10). These characterizations of Obama stemmed not only from his personal background, but also from his public proclamations and policy proposals. During a 2008 speech in Berlin, then-candidate Obama declared himself a "citizen of the world" (Obama, 2008, para. 2). In that, and other speeches and writings, Obama spoke eloquently to the realities of global interconnectedness and the need to think beyond the confines of nation-states. In doing so, however, he encountered fierce opposition from critics who saw the U.S. President's global vision as a betrayal of the American nation. *The Washington Times* columnist Frank Gaffney (2008) warned that, "Global citizenship amounts to code for subordinating American interests," and voters should consider "whether they want a global citizen in the White House or a president of, by and for the American people" (p. A22). Conservative talk show host Rush Limbaugh agreed: "Why isn't it good enough to say, 'I'm a proud U.S. citizen'… ?" (Limbaugh, 2008, para. 9).

Criticism of Obama's global perspective mounted, and by his second term in office he was referring less often to "our common humanity," and more often to "economic patriotism" and "U.S. exceptionalism"

(Croucher, 2015). That Obama's political rhetoric trended away from world citizenship toward a familiar form of civic patriotism ultimately said less about his personal convictions and more about the recalcitrance of nationhood as a potent source of identification. By the time Obama left office, globalization as a set of processes connecting the planet was in full swing, but nationalism as deep attachment to a bounded community, rather than waning, was resurging.

Embodying that resurgence was the 45th President of the United States, Donald Trump, who began his political career questioning whether his predecessor was, in fact, American. And if Obama was perceived as a global president, Trump left no doubt that he, himself, was not. His worldview was explicitly "America first," and his self-identification was explicitly "nationalist." Despite his proud personification of nationalism, Trump's four years in office came to a close amidst a vivid reminder of the reality of globalization. As Nussbaum had argued in relation to 9/11, the pandemic offered a "cosmopolitan moment" (Holley, 2020). As arguably the first global phenomenon in human history, the pandemic had the capacity to, and in some respects did, "open our eyes to a shared human experience across state borders and the boundaries of difference" (Holley, 2020, p. 3). Instances of positive solidarity and universal acts of kindness competed, however, with "health nativism" (DeGooyer & Murthy, 2020), vaccine nationalism, and the U.S. refusal to cooperate with the World Health Organization. This, along with Trump's commitment to labeling COVID-19 the "China-virus," surging hate crimes against Asians Americans, and U.S. leaders blaming immigrants for spikes in COVID-19 cases were a reminder of contestation over not only the appropriate scale of identification (global or national), but the nature of American national identity.

Contesting America [Civic v. Ethnic]

> It doesn't matter if you came here rich or poor, if you came here voluntarily or involuntarily, … All that matters is that you embrace America

> and understand its ideals … we're like a religion really. A secular religion. We believe in ideas and ideals. We're not one race, we're many; we're not one ethnic group, we're everyone; we're not one language, we're all of these people. So what ties us together? We're tied together by our belief in political democracy. We're tied together by our belief in religious freedom. (Giuliani, 2001, paras. 9–10)

Former New York City mayor, Rudy Giuliani, made these comments on December 27, 2001, just months after terrorists flew deadly planes into the World Trade Center. The man who would come to be known during that time as "America's Mayor" was reinforcing a familiar narrative of the United States as an inclusive melting pot, welcoming the world's tired and poor, and asking in return only that they adopt the shared values of liberty, equality, and justice for all. Twenty years later, Giuliani had become more widely known as Donald Trump's embattled attorney, architect of the Muslim travel ban, cheerleader for the border wall with Mexico, and tireless defender of, and participant in, a mounting rhetoric of exclusion directed at ethnic, racial, and religious minorities in the United States.

This one man's shifting views highlight a long-standing tension between both civic and ethnic elements of American national identity. At the time of the country's founding, a group of White European men invoked declarations of liberty for which the new republic would stand, while enslaving other men, and deeming them only three-fifths human. Similar contradictions persisted over the course of U.S. history as the country honed a national narrative of enlightened, democratic inclusivity ("All men are created equal…"), while instituting national origins quotas, interning Japanese Americans, and perpetually exploiting and disenfranchising non-White Americans. In short, the U.S. rhetoric of civic belonging has always existed awkwardly alongside the opposing reality (and rhetoric) of exclusion; and this contradiction continues.

This equivocality regarding the nature of American nationhood was evident in official and unofficial responses to 9/11. As described above, then-President Bush endeavored to assure Muslims that the U.S. fight was not with Islam, and that they, too, belonged to the American nation. Speaking at the Islamic Center of Washington D.C. on September 17,

2001, Bush emphasized, "This is a great country… because we share the same values of respect and dignity and human worth. And it is my honor to be meeting with leaders who feel just the same way I do.... They love America just as much as I do" (Bush, 2001d, para. 10). Various faith-based organizations reached out to Muslim Americans, and some U.S. citizens otherwise critical of the country's broken promises fell in line behind the national community and the notion of civic belonging. "We're supporting Bush, we're supporting the USA," said gangsta rap music mogul, and co-founder of Death Row Records, Suge Knight, shortly after the attacks; "At this moment there's no such thing as ghetto, middle class, or rich. There's only the United States" (The Economist, 2004, para. 5).

These gestures of national inclusivity were quickly over-shadowed by acts, official and otherwise, of exclusion. Congress moved with lightening speed to pass the USA Patriot Act—a sweeping piece of legislation that, with little regard for civil liberties, granted broad powers of surveillance to authorities and resulted in countless incidents of racial profiling, verbal harassment, and even physical assault against Arab and Muslim Americans (Ahmed & Senzai, 2004). Hate crimes against Arab and Muslim Americans surged, and public opinion polls pointed to widespread animosity toward these perceived outsiders. In 2001, 79% of Americans surveyed supported restricting the immigration of certain ethnic or religious groups. Thirty-one percent favored allowing the federal government "to hold Arabs who are U.S. citizens in camps until it can be determined whether they have links to terrorist organizations," and 32% agreed that the United States "should put Arab Americans in this country under special surveillance" (Croucher, 2006, p. 188).

The "othering" of Arab and Muslim Americans persisted, and intensified, in the years to come. By 2011, as the United States commemorated the ten-year anniversary of 9/11, a Brookings Institution report, "What it Means to be American," revealed a country in the midst of deep struggle over the implications of diversity for American society. While 88% of respondents surveyed nationally agreed that "America was founded on the idea of religious freedom for everyone," 47% deemed Islam incompatible with American values, and 46% reported discomfort with the idea of a mosque being built near their home (Dionne et al., 2011). The

report concluded optimistically, predicting, "the arc of American history will, again, bend toward inclusion," but cautioned that "we are in for some transitional turbulence," owing in large part to the unprecedentedly partisan dimension of the diversity debate identified by the study (p. 38).

A deep partisan divide surrounding diversity in the United States solidified during the Obama administration (2008–2016). While Obama's presidency was a testament to an American dream, reactions to him were reminders of the American dilemma of persistent obstacles to full inclusion for racial and ethnic minorities. As a candidate, and throughout his presidency, Obama was subjected to racist stereotypes, accused of being anti-White and anti-Christian, and asked to prove his birthright as an American (Dyson, 2016). As Yale history professor, Greg Grandin (2014), wrote:

> No other American president has had to face, before even taking office, an opposition convinced of not just his political but his existential legitimacy. … [This new kind of racism was] based not on theological or philosophical doctrine but rather on the emotional need to measure one's absolute freedom in inverse relation to another's absolute slavishness. This was a racism that was born in chattel slavery but didn't die with chattel slavery, instead evolving into today's cult of individual supremacy, which, try as it might, can't seem to shake off its white supremacist roots. (paras. 9–10)

Donald Trump's unexpected victory in 2016 elicited countless explanations, but research has shown that racial resentment and anti-immigrant sentiment were key determinants (Hooghe & Dassonneville, 2018; Sewer, 2017). Meanwhile, Trump himself, though not the first U.S. leader to use xenophobia and racism to win support, did so in what presidential historian Douglas Brinkley described as "surprising," "Day-Glo fashion." "Since the Civil War," Brinkley exclaimed, "we've never had a president who tries to destroy the melting pot story" (Viser, 2018, para. 37). Trump's rhetoric, including references to: "Mexican rapists," "Islam hates us," "good people" participating in a neo-Nazi march, "shithole countries," et cetera, was shocking to many, but even

when the racism was not explicit, Trump's America First nationalism exposed deep-seated prejudices about who was truly "American."

The seemingly perpetual tension between an ethnic, and "chauvinist" (Lievan, 2016), version of American nationalism on the one hand, and a civic version on the other, shifted directions again with the election of President Joe Biden in 2020. Biden made this struggle explicit in a 2020 speech titled, "Battle for the Soul of the Nation," delivered at the same site where President Lincoln had delivered his famous, Civil War-era, Gettysburg Address. For Biden, reviving the civic nature of American nationhood was the best antidote to the dangers of a growing nationalist populism in the United States.

> Today we are engaged once again in a battle for the soul of the nation. We cannot and will not allow extremists and white supremacists to overturn the America of Lincoln and Harriet Tubman and Frederick Douglas. To overturn the America that has welcomed immigrants from distant shores. To overturn the America that's been a haven and a home for everyone no matter their background. Lincoln said: 'The nation is worth fighting for.' So it was. So it is. (paras. 124–125)

That Biden's Presidency began with an angry mob of Trump supporters attacking the U.S. Capitol, some wielding confederate flags, suggests that the debate over the nature of the American nation is far from over.

Conclusion

"Arguing against globalization is like arguing against gravity," remarked former UN Secretary General, Kofi Anan at an international conference in 2000 (Anan, 2000, para. 9). Today, U.S. citizens and leaders are deeply divided on their views of globalization, but it is, as the twenty-first century attests, a fact of life. As to globalization's implications for identity, American nationhood as a source and site of belonging has been challenged by globalization, but also invigorated (particularly in its more exclusionary variant). Growing planetary interconnectedness has left the United States grappling with a state that is less able to guarantee the

welfare of its constituents, a degree of inequality that makes a mockery of Anderson's "horizontal comradeship," and an increasingly heterogeneous population whose options for collective identification are not delimited by territory. All of this calls into question the efficacy of nationhood as a form of belonging; but, contrary to the predictions of modernist scholars, neither nations nor nationalism appear in retreat. Conditions in the contemporary world are ripe for cosmopolitan imagining, and some elected leaders, organizations, and individuals have called for and enacted a form of global belonging that transcends the boundaries of the nation-state. Just as pervasive, however, are attempts to fortify national boundaries and seek refuge in an imagined community that draws firm distinctions between "us" and "them."

If modernists and postnationalists were zealous in crafting obituaries for the nation-state, current pronouncements of their immortality would also seem premature. We seem stuck in "a global interregnum, a time after the era of state sovereignty, but before the articulation or instantiation of an alternative global order" (Brown, 2010, p. 39). The centrality of the sovereign nation-state is waning, but viable alternatives for the organization of identity and belonging seem limited. It is this context that fuels more exclusionary forms of national cohesion. This was the case in the United States under the leadership of Donald Trump, but has also been evident in the rise of nationalist populism elsewhere. If the national form is here to stay, attention must turn toward the viability of making nations "good" (civic, inclusive, democratic) (Ozkirimli, 2005). For opponents of Trump's exclusionary nationalist rhetoric, reforming nationalism was the solution. Harvard economist and former Treasury Secretary, Lawrence Summers (2016), called for "responsible nationalism," by which he meant that "countries are expected to pursue their citizens' economic welfare as a primary objective but their ability to damage the interests of citizens of other countries is circumscribed" (para. 9). Former director of policy for the U.S. State Department, Anne-Marie Slaughter (2017) similarly cautioned against denying the legitimacy of love of country, and advocated working instead to build "a new narrative of patriotism, culture, connection, and inclusion" (para. 12).

As concerns the nature of American nationalism, the struggle between civic and ethnic elements is not new, but because globalization compromises the efficacy of the national form, the content of what comprises the national community comes into sharper relief. Ultimately, it is the malleability of the national form that both accounts for its unexpected persistence, and may offer opportunities for its redemption.

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