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NEW GLOBAL TRENDS IN CULTURE AND IDENTITY

by Shireen T. Hunter

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New Global Trends in Culture and Identity
Shireen T. Hunter, CEPS/CSIS, September 17, 1994

The way peoples define themselves -- in other words, their notions of self-identity and their underlying cultures -- have important consequences for the structures of their societies, for their social and political lives, and for regional and international politics. This is so because to a great extent these factors determine peoples' values, goals, and aspirations. They also deeply color their perceptions of the outside world and their own place in it. Thus these factors influence the pattern of a nation's external relations. Therefore, any changes in the focus of a people's identity or underlying culture -- and hence value systems -- have considerable, sometimes far-reaching, operational and practical significance and consequences.

During the last decade, several important trends and forces related to questions of culture and identity have gained momentum. Regarding identity-related issues, some of the new, or newly-revitalized, forces can be characterized as transcendental and integrationist. Others, by contrast, can be seen as emerging micro-identities and the fragmentation of larger collectivities. This process of both fragmentation and integration is equally observable in regard to cultural trends. The integrationist cultural trend is often referred to as "globalization" as opposed to the fragmentation notion of "cultural authenticity".

Two other important cultural trends can best be characterized as "absolute secularism" and as more religiously- or spiritually-based value systems. In some societies, a high level of polarization is emerging between secular and more spiritually-based culture and value systems.

This dichotomy is particularly strong in Muslim societies, where the Islamist trend wants to preserve and revive the Muslims' Islamic culture and values, whereas the secularists favor adopting Western secular value systems and changing and adapting indigenous cultures to the requirements of those systems. In this sense, the Islamists belong to the category of "cultural authenticists", while the Muslim secularists belong to the ranks of cultural globalists. However, it is important to mention at the outset that this growing dichotomy between the secularists and the spiritualists, between the globalists and the authenticists, is not limited to the Islamic peoples; it is, indeed, a worldwide phenomenon. In the Mediterranean region, in its broadest definition, all these tendencies and trends are present -- albeit to varying degrees in different countries.

Before discussing these trends, their causes, and their potential ramifications -- both for individual countries of the Mediterranean region and for the evolution of regional politics, plus their potential international ramifications -- the following basic points need to be noted. Indeed, the rest of this analysis will be undertaken within the framework set by these essential points.

First, in this paper identity and culture will be analyzed as an evolving and dynamic -- rather than static -- phenomenon. The self-identity of peoples and collectivities, as well as their underlying cultures, are not immutable. Rather, they change in response to a variety of

material transformations and external stimuli and influences -- including ideological propaganda -- as a result of industrialization, economic development, modernization, and the social consequences of all three.

Second, identity and culture will be analyzed not as a linear phenomenon, starting from a particular point and moving inexorably to the next, but rather more as a cyclical phenomenon or as a series of ebbs and flows. This means that certain trends and tendencies, which for a long period become dormant or even appear to have been eliminated, can reappear with renewed force and vigor. Sometimes they cause permanent transformations and sometimes they revert to a state of dormancy or even lead to a new synthesis containing elements of old and new.

Third, identity will be analyzed as a multidimensional phenomenon. Both individuals and collectivities have a composite and multi-layered sense of identity. For example, individuals identify themselves with their family, tribe, ethnic group, religious community, etc. Collective identities, too, often consist of several levels, ranging from regional to national and transnational. However, in the cases both of individuals and of collectivities, often one of these levels is more important in determining the core of self-identity and hence the hierarchy of values and the focus of allegiances.

Fourth, the importance of the role of elites, propaganda, and myth-building in the formation of collective identities and cultures will be kept in mind.

From Tribe to Empire to Nation-State to ?

With the exception of a handful of nation states which emerged in Europe in the late seventeenth century, until the nineteenth century (and in the case of some countries, well into the second half of the twentieth century) the basis of peoples' identities and collectivities was essentially tribal, regional, and religious. Tribe was the ethnic foundation of identity and sometimes also the basis of political organization. In the meantime, the dwelling-place of a people provided it with a territorial sense of identity. Religions, meanwhile, provided peoples with a sense of belonging to a larger, albeit more nebulous and amorphous, community of believers. Historically, political entities, more often than not, have been multi-ethnic and imperial in character, generally with one ethnic group dominating the rest. In such political organizations, allegiance was and is to a particular individual -- the feudal lord, monarch, the khan, the emperor, or religious figure -- rather than to a particular collectivity.

Historically, from a cultural point of view, various tribal and imperial entities often formed part of broader civilizations, such as Christian, Muslim, and Hindu. Within these civilizations, religious beliefs played an important role and provided the principal value system and framework for societal organization. In the Mediterranean region for the last fourteen centuries, the Islamic and Judeo-Christian civilizations have formed the basis of regional cultures and values systems, albeit with considerable variations within each. Beginning in eighteenth century Europe and increasingly since the mid-nineteenth century, the trend has

been towards the disintegration of empires and the emergence of primarily -- but not exclusively -- ethnically-based political and territorial entities, leading to the birth of the so-called nation-state.

In the Mediterranean region, the emergence of nation-states has taken place over an extended period of time and at an unequal pace. The European countries of the Mediterranean experienced this change at a much earlier time than did essentially Muslim societies. However, the underlying characteristics of this process have been quite similar in the case of all countries, European and Islamic.

For instance, at least in their initial stages, all nation-states have been politically centralizing and culturally homogenizing. Consciously or unconsciously, the political elite of the new nation-states has tried to eliminate ethnic, linguistic, and regional differences and to homogenize their countries and peoples according to a certain vision of their national identity and culture. Some of this process of homogenization and centralization has been inevitable and has happened naturally as a result of modernization, increased communication, and universal education, which has blurred various differences. But in some cases, this centralization and homogenization has been achieved at high human cost and at the expense of certain ethnic groups and cultures. In Algeria, for example, the Arabizing and Islamizing policies of the post-independence governments has tended to marginalize the Berber culture. In Turkey, the efforts of the republican authorities to forge a new Turkish identity in the wake of the collapse of the Ottoman Empire has tended to marginalize the Kurds and to submerge completely the cultural identity of other ethnic groups, such as the Laz. Since the 1970s, Ba'athist Iraq has pursued a policy of de-Kurdification and Arabization of Iraqi Kurdistan.

Within the nation-state, a basically political and territorial concept -- namely, that of "citizenship" -- has formed the basis of identity rather than ethnicity or religion, as opposed to tribal and imperial systems, where the latter factors were more important in defining the self-identity of peoples, if not always their focus of allegiance.

Similarly, the nation-state, rather than a particular individual, became -- at least officially but often superficially -- the focus of collective allegiance. However, often a charismatic and/or authoritarian leader came to symbolize and dominate the nation-state. Therefore, for a long time, in reality the personal basis of loyalty remained unchanged within the context of the new system. In the Mediterranean context, for example, for decades General Francisco Franco came to symbolize Spain. In the Muslim parts of the Mediterranean, this pattern is still largely prevalent.

The advancement of the interests of the nation-state and its glorification became the dominant value. And national cultures, real or imagined -- rather than the larger civilizations from which they had evolved -- often became the principal frame of cultural reference. Exceptions to this rule have included the Arab nationalist theories which transcend in a cultural sense individual Arab states. However, even the most Pan-Arab nationalists and other cultural transnationalists have considered to be most important the contributions of their country, tribe, etc., to the overall civilization.

The nation-state also became the main provider of economic goods and the protector of the people against external threats. However, the success of the nation-state as the only basis of identity, allegiance, and culture has been far from complete. On the contrary, forces of a transcendental and integrationist -- and also centrifugal fragmentary -- nature have been challenging and eroding the nation-state's centrality, both as a focus of collective identity and allegiance and as a frame of cultural reference. Stresses on the nation-state from both these sources have been on the increase in the last decade and are likely to continue to increase for some time in the future. Obviously, these pressures have been felt to varying degrees by different countries.

Nation-State Under Stress: Micro-Nationalism and Trans-Nationalism

Despite its centralizing and homogenizing propensities, the nation-state never succeeded in eliminating ethnic, regional, and other peculiarities. On the contrary, often because of its more intrusive nature, the modern state provided an external stimulus and challenge and thus heightened the sense of separateness and desire for autonomy among its constituent ethnicities and regions. Needless to say, this process has been more pronounced in the case of more ethnically and culturally heterogeneous states. Similarly, education, economic development, and modernization have often led to a heightening of social and political consciousness of the peoples and hence to a desire to assert their ethnic and/or cultural uniqueness.

Moreover, the modern nation-state, while essentially a territorial and political phenomenon, nevertheless has had a significant ethnic dimension. This has been so because nation-states were built on the basis of cultural and political dominance of one ethnic group over others. The glorification of one group over others, in turn, was bound to generate similar feelings on the part of others. With no one individual or a transcendental idea to bind them together as did loyalty to a king, emperor, or caliph -- or commitment to a religion -- different groups within nation states have tended to drift apart.

The extent and intensity of what can be described as micro-nationalism has varied according to time and space. Several factors have played a role in their intensification in recent years, including the following: 1) The failure of many nation-states to provide the economic and social goods expected from them by the people; 2) The excessive homogenization efforts and, in some cases, attempts to eliminate certain groups, either through total cultural assimilation or through more brutal means; 3) Discriminatory policies by the dominant ethnic group toward others; and 4) External meddling and encouragement as part of inter-state and international games of power and influence.

The nation-state has also been under pressure from sources best characterized as trans-national, both in the ethnic and ideological senses of the term. To these two forms should be added a third, which can be characterized as functional or economic transnationalism. Examples of ethnically-based trans-nationalisms have been Pan-Arabism, Pan-Turkism, and Pan-Slavism.

The best example of ideologically based transnationalism is the Soviet experience and the idea of socialist internationalism. It is true that, in the final analysis, the Soviet Union could not eliminate ethnic particularisms, identities, and loyalties. Nor could it break the hold of traditional cultures and value systems. On the contrary, the Soviet Union itself fell prey to these powerful forces. Nevertheless, its ambition was to create a socialist man and a socialist society where ethnic and cultural particularisms and loyalties would be subsumed under an overwhelming sense of socialist solidarity.

If religion can be considered as ideology, which in many respects it is, then Pan-Islamism can be considered to be another ideologically-based trans-national trend which has witnessed a revival in recent years.

The best, and most successful, example of economic and functional trans-nationalism has been the European Community -- now the European Union. However, the European Union also has significant ideological and cultural dimension, because it is based on the European countries' common Greco-Roman/Judeo-Christian and liberal democratic traditions and cultures.

Yet despite all these pressures and stresses, the territorial and political nation-state has survived and shown a tremendous level of durability and resilience. Nor are the more established nation-states on the verge of imminent collapse. Nevertheless, in many parts of the world, including certain areas of the Mediterranean region, pressures on the nation-state have mounted. Whether any of the existing states will succumb to these pressures will depend on a variety of factors, ranging in nature from economic and political to cultural and ideological.

Trans-Nationalism, Sub-Nationalism ,and the Future of the Nation-State

Since becoming the principal unit of the international political system after the First World War -- and increasingly so since the end of the Second World War -- several factors have helped strengthen the nation-state and its centralizing and homogenizing tendencies. The following are among the most important of these factors.

1) The nation-state has thus far been the most effective economic unit and hence -- despite its deficiencies -- the best available provider of economic goods and services. Thus many regions and ethnic groups which otherwise would have preferred to be independent for reasons of economic viability have remained within a given national unit.

2) The nation-state and its representative organs have had the monopoly of coercive forces. The extent to which the cohesion of most nation-states is still based on coercion should not be underestimated. This is, of course, more true in the case of some states than others. Certainly in the less developed parts of the world, coercion rather than popular consensus plays a more important role in maintaining state power.

3) The low level of social and political consciousness of large segments of populations and the absence of adequate democratic liberties.

4) The impact of external political factors, in particular the requirements of great power politics.

It is true that, in modern times, great power politics and rivalries have often had disintegrative consequences and have led to the territorial and political fragmentation of large ethnic and cultural entities, such as various empires.

In the Mediterranean region, a good example of this disintegrative process is the emergence of such new political and territorial entities as Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, and the Maghreb countries as a result first of imperial rivalries and then the two world wars and their impact on colonial powers.

However, because of the Cold War and the all-embracing East-West conflict, during most of the post-world war years the great powers' tendency has been to discourage the break-up of the new nation states, lest such developments could benefit the rival camp.

But a number of changes in all these factors has in the last few years been putting tremendous pressure on the viability of nation-states. First, in the economic area, two important developments of a totally different nature are undermining the status of many nation-states as the most effective economic unit and best provider of economic goods and services.

The first phenomenon is that of unequal economic development among various regions of a given state. This phenomenon often generates separatist tendencies, on the part both of the richer and economically more advanced and of the underprivileged regions.(1)

In the Mediterranean region, this phenomenon is observable in the case of Spain and Italy, where, in the industrial province of Catalonia and in the equally-industrialized northern provinces of Italy, autonomist and even separatist tendencies have been on the rise.(2)

The second phenomenon is growing global economic interdependence and the emergence of trans-national economic and political entities. These entities offer sub-national groups and regions economic and political space within which to operate and survive, a fact which reduces their dependence on the existing nation-states. Because of this phenomenon, "...regions nursing ancient grievances are claiming independence, or at least autonomy, confident they are not committing economic suicide..."(3) The best example of a highly advanced and elaborate trans-national entity is the European Union, which some observers believe is, paradoxically, encouraging centrifugal and disintegrative tendencies in Europe.

The nation-state's monopoly on coercive force, or at least on its indiscriminate use, has also increasingly been eroded by the growing tendency to question the validity of the principle of the "non-interference in the internal affairs of states." Indeed, during the last few years and especially since the end of the Cold War, the concept of the international community's right to intervene -- the so-called "droit d'ingerence" -- in certain cases, notably those involving the violation of minority and other human rights, has been gaining ground. If this trend were to

continue and gain influence, it most likely would encourage centrifugal and disintegrationist tendencies, because the breakaway regions and sub-national groups could feel that international pressure would protect them against the use of force by the central state. However, it will likely take some time before the principle of international intervention is applied universally and indiscriminately. However, even its selective use -- as illustrated by the case of Iraqi Kurdistan -- could have significant ramifications for the fate of a number of existing nation-states.

The growth in the level of social and political consciousness of the people, the growth of what could be best described as "mass politics", plus the global communications revolution have also been contributing to disintegrative tendencies. For example, enhanced social and political consciousness encourages sub-national groups to assert their cultural and political rights, which range from demands to speak their own language to outright separation. Indeed, this phenomenon has led some observers to argue that the spread of democracy is likely to lead to the breakup of states.(4) Furthermore, the global communications revolution, by facilitating contacts and exchanges among various groups with similar aspirations, encourages their centrifugal tendencies. For example, during a recent visit to Brussels. Slovakia's Deputy Prime Minister met with leaders from Flanders and Wallonia and tried to explain to them that the breakup of Czechoslovakia shows that "...if both sides agree to separation it can be done without violence and without especially any negative effects." Similarly, the Catalanian regional President is reportedly planning to meet with the Quebec separatists in Montreal next spring.(5) The communications revolution and its results -- notably, the globalization of certain values and trends -- have added to the erosion of national cultures. This has created a cultural and spiritual vacuum of the national level and a dilution of a sense of collective identity. As a result, increasingly peoples are seeking comfort in either religious or sub-national values and cultures.

Finally, since the collapse of the Soviet Union, many of the great powers' inhibitions regarding the breakup of existing nation-states have disappeared. Indeed, as far as certain countries are concerned -- notably, those with the potential to become competitors either at global or regional levels -- the present dominant powers may even welcome their breakup provided the process does not lead to the destabilization of regions in which the dominant powers have a vital interest. But even in those circumstances, the ability of the great powers to prevent such centrifugal tendencies has become more limited. The case of Yugoslavia is a good example of this twin process. Thus the great powers did nothing to prevent the breakup of the former Yugoslavia, whereas during the Cold War years such a development would have generated fears of a third world war. But even when the situation in Yugoslavia created risks to other interests of a number of key countries, their ability to control events was limited.

Likewise, during the last few years, there has been increasing Western commentary that the breakup of China may be desirable.(6) Russia, meanwhile has been consciously encouraging the *de facto* breakup of some of the ex-USSR states, notably those in the Transcaucasus.(7)

However, the concept of what a Western academic characterized as "small is beautiful" is not applied indiscriminately across the board. Rather, this is considered more desirable in

the case of countries with which great powers have difficult and hostile relations. By contrast, in the case of those countries with which the great powers have close ties, they still insist on the principle of the sanctity and territorial integrity of the nation state. For example, the West is more receptive to the idea of the potential breakup of Iran or Iraq -- provided such developments do not endanger other Western interests -- than of Turkey.

The foregoing leads to the following observations about the future of the nation-state and its role as a focus of identity. The first conclusion is that the nation-state is more threatened now than it has ever been, since its establishment as the principal unit of the international political system and as the principal focus of collective identity. Thus the likelihood of the fragmentation of a number of countries and the emergence and/or reassertion of sub-national identities is quite strong. At least, the trend towards regionalism and decentralization, along with the acceptance of multi-ethnicity and multi-culturalism, is likely to become stronger. Paradoxically, however, such a process may help to rescue the nation-state as a political and territorial -- if not ethnic and cultural -- entity, by reducing its centralizing and homogenizing tendencies. This would be so because the rise of sub-nationalism and regionalism has been partly a response to the overly intrusive character of the modern centralizing and homogenizing nation-state.

The second conclusion is that the breakup of a given state would depend on whether better alternatives exist for its constituent parts outside its framework. In this instance, the existence of trans-national entities, of which potential separatists could be part, are likely to play a key role. In the absence of such entities, the economic and other advantages of being part of a larger national entity may overcome the influence of other centrifugal tendencies. Indeed, separatist tendencies, if pushed to the extreme, may create a backlash and set in motion a process of regrouping of the fragmented entity. This would be so because, as Professor Paul Kennedy put it "...you can not just go on disintegrating..." Indeed, he points out that, as countries break down into smaller pieces to satisfy ethnic demands, they realize that larger questions -- such as security and economic gain -- can only be solved through greater integration.(8)

In the light the above, it could be argued that the nation, state rather than completely disappearing, may lose its centralizing and homogenizing aspects and acquire more of a federal or even confederal aspects, while at the same time economically become part of larger regional organizations.

The third conclusion is that external factors, most notably the influence of great power politics, will continue to have a tremendous impact on the outcome of tensions and struggle between centrifugal and integrationist tendencies within a number of countries. Thus those countries whose sub-national groups receive external backing of one form or another are more at risk than others.

Ideological Trends: Nationalism, Religion, Globalism

The question whether the nation-state is to survive as the principal unit of the international political system and the principal focus of collective identity, whether it will be submerged within a variety of trans-national entities, or whether it will be fragmented into smaller and smaller units cannot be answered with any certainty. Noted experts' views on these issues differ widely. What is more likely is that the fragmentary and integrationist tendencies will develop simultaneously. Thus political decentralization within states may be accompanied by greater economic integration at the regional level.

What is clear is that these new sub- and trans-national entities will require new ideological frameworks and value systems, within which to organize their social, economic, and political lives and to relate to the outside world.

In this area, a number of interesting and to a degree contradictory trends have also become increasingly powerful in recent years. Some of these trends have deep historic roots and have been influential for a long time. Others, by contrast, are either new interpretations of old concepts or are completely novel phenomena.

Here, too, several ideological trends, with implications for the individual and collective identity of peoples, are operating within various societies and are affecting their social and political development -- as well as, and in some instances, their external behavior. One old idea which has acquired new vitality is "nationalism", which is an ideology based on the glorification of a particular group of people and committed to the goal of maintaining, strengthening, and, perhaps, expanding their values, traditions, and cultures. Defined in this way, nationalist ideology could be both trans-national -- in a territorial, ethnic, and cultural sense -- and sub-national. For example, pan-Turkist ideology, which aspires to unite all Turkic peoples, is an ethnically, territorially, and culturally trans-nationalist ideology, as are the traditional theories of Arab nationalism and other transnationalist philosophies.

However, nationalist ideology in this sense of the word is inadequate as a comprehensive value system and framework for societal organization. In other words, for a people to want the glory of France, Egypt, Kurds, Turks, or Slavs -- and thus to strive to preserve their cultural peculiarities or unite all peoples who have the same real or imagined ethnic origins -- does not help produce answers to practical questions such as what should be a given country's economic system or what role, if any, religion and spirituality should play in its social and political life. Thus, while nationalism in the sense described above is an increasingly powerful force, as far as its specific contents are concerned it takes many forms as, indeed, it has in the past. For example, in the past there have been -- as paradoxical as this may sound, given the internationalist aspirations of the socialist movement -- Communist nationalists, Liberal nationalists and Fascists.

The two major trends within the context of nationalism are secularism and religion -- or a variety of religiously-based ideas and value systems. Indeed, an interesting phenomenon has been emerging in the last few years which could best be characterized as "religious nationalism". In India, for example, there is Hindu nationalism and fundamentalism and Sikh nationalism. In this form, religion becomes the defining element of national identity rather

than ethnicity or language. It also provides the basic value system and ideological framework for the organization and operation of society and state. Even in the highly advanced and secularized societies of Europe and the United States, there seems to be a growing need for some kind of value system which has a spiritual dimension and is above man-made legal and value systems. Perhaps the best example of this trend is the recent speech of Czech President Václav Havel in Philadelphia, in which he talked about the need for "self-transcendence".(9) Political groups advocating a greater role for religious and spiritual values, sometimes referred to as the Christian Right, are also becoming more vocal and politically more powerful in the United States, and they are challenging secular positions on a number of important ethical and social issues, ranging from abortion to euthanasia. In Russia, meanwhile, following the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Orthodox Christian Church has become an important force.

These groups challenge the validity and superiority of secular belief systems based on the concept of natural law and the supremacy of man-made laws. Rather, they believe that such laws should be developed within the framework and limits of spiritual and ethical values of divinely-revealed belief systems.

But the most potent of religiously-based political and cultural trends has been the Islamist movement. This is also the movement which has been causing a high level of polarization within Muslim societies, including those of the Mediterranean region. Similarly, the Islamist movement has the greatest potential for causing both internal and regional conflicts and serious international friction.

The potency of the Islamist movement derives from the fact that it offers a cohesive and all-embracing belief system and ideological framework for the organization and conduct of both individual and collective life. A further source of strength of the movement comes from the fact that it is deeply rooted in the culture of the Muslims which, with few exceptions, is shaped by Islam.

However, as well-accepted by most though not all experts and analysts, the Islamist movement is not a monolithic phenomenon. Rather, there are significant ideological and other differences within the movement although its different branches also have many traits in common. The reasons for the existence of these differences relate partly to the nature of the Islamic faith and to the existence of a number of important schools within it, each with its own special characteristics. Some of these schools and their adherents are in sharp conflict with one another. In some instances, these theological differences -- which in the last two decades have also acquired political dimensions -- lead to inter-communal strife. A good example of this aspect of Islam is the strong animosity and hatred of the Wahabis towards the Shi'as. In Pakistan, this phenomenon has led to armed attacks by Wahabi groups against the Shi'as. Allegations have been made that Pakistani Wahabis have been responsible for anti-Shi'a attacks and fomenting communal tension in Eastern and South-Eastern parts of Iran. Tensions, albeit of a much lesser degree, also exist between the Shi'as and other Sunnis.

Doctrinal and other differences also exist among various Sunni schools. These differences, in turn, affect how various groups react to external stimuli and how they receive, internalize, and transform external influences.

The second source of difference within the Islamist movement is the diverse nature of the Muslim countries' national, cultural, and historical experiences, as well as the contemporary social, economic, and political context of their societies. In order to understand the importance of the first factor, it is essential to remember that the original Islam, which developed in Arabia and spread far and wide, underwent significant transformations in the new territories that it conquered, as a result of the impact of existing cultures and civilizations, some of which -- such as the Roman and Persian civilizations -- were of a high level of sophistication. Indeed, these indigenous cultures had a substantial impact on the evolution of Islamic civilization, especially in the arts, sciences, politics, and philosophy.

Obviously, the impact of various cultures on Islam was different in terms of the level of their importance and intensity. Nevertheless, in nearly all Muslim countries, pre-Islamic cultures and traditions have affected and molded their peoples' new Islamic identity. In some countries, most notably Iran, this pre-Islamic culture is still very potent and poses as a strong competitor for Islam as a basis of collective identity, culture, and focus of allegiance. In addition, the particular social, economic, and political conditions of various Muslim countries, along with their diverse historical experiences, greatly affect the shape of their Islamist movements.

To these factors must be added the fact that, during the last hundred years, nearly all Muslim societies have undergone some degree of modernization and secularization. In turn, this process has affected the evolution of Islam in these countries. Most notably, it has led to the emergence of both a reformist and liberal and an orthodox and conservative trend within Islam.

Regarding the role of the Islamist movement as the focus of identity is concerned, the following points need are particularly important.

First, the rise in Islamic consciousness has not led to the diluting, let along the elimination, of ethnic and national identities, despite the fact that, according to Islam, the Islamic community (Ummah), should be the principal focus of identity and loyalty for Muslims. Thus, as throughout its history, Islam and its resurgence have not succeeded in eliminating ethnic and national rivalries within the Islamic world.

Second, because of factors discussed earlier, it is highly improbable that a homogeneous Islamic culture will emerge which could become the focus of identity and allegiance of all Muslims and even lead to the political unification of the Muslim world.

Conclusions and Outlook

This discussion has illustrated that the world is now witnessing the simultaneous emergence or reemergence of several contradictory trends in the areas of culture and identity.

On the one hand, partly as a result of economic factors -- notably, the growing internationalization of the global economy and finance and the increasing importance of multinational companies -- there is a marked trend toward transnationalism. More and more peoples tend to identify with large trans-national entities, the best example of which is the European Union. Other transnational notions based on ethnic commonality have also gained some currency. These include, notably, concepts of Pan-Turkism and Pan-Slavism.

On the other hand, paradoxically, the same factors have led to the weakening of existing national entities and the resurfacing of sub-national and even tribal tendencies. This is especially observable in the former Soviet empire, but also in Africa and Asia. A similar pattern is also observable regarding cultural trends. In this respect, the principal divide is along the lines of what can best be characterized as globalism and cultural homogenization -- according to the Western secular model and values -- and maintaining the authenticity of native cultures and values systems. In part, this has been the result of the communications revolution and insistence on "cultural authenticity", coupled with a tendency to revert to traditional and often religious values. As noted, the rise in globalism is partly responsible for the strengthening of parochial tendencies because of the psychological problems which it causes for peoples who feel threatened by the erosion of their traditional social and emotional fabric of life. They thus seek refuge in religion or in micro-cultures such as tribe and ethnicity.

The most significant example of this cultural trend is the Islamist movement. However, milder forms of the same phenomenon are evident also in other societies. A good example is found in the efforts of the French government to prevent the contamination of the French language and culture by external influences, mostly emanating from the United States. And other example are the efforts of some Catalans to prevent the teaching of Spanish in their schools.

Another important cultural divide is that between those who adhere to what can be described as strict and absolute secularism and those who believe in a divinely-inspired system of ethical values. Indeed, in the next few years this divide may become the most significant force shaping the evolution of many societies and determining pattern of alliances on a wide range of issues -- more significant than even ethnicity and other cultural affinities, in what Professor Henry Louis Gates has described as "the perennial *Kulturkampf* between faith and secularism."(10)

A good example of this phenomenon and a potential precursor of things to come has been the coalition between the Vatican and a large number of Islamic countries against the strictly secular agenda of the 1994 World Population Conference in Cairo.

It is most difficult to predict the outcome of the tension among these trends and their ultimate impact on various national societies and on the pattern of regional and international relations. But it is relatively safe to assume that, before a new philosophical equilibrium is achieved and new entities are formed and new patterns of international interactions are established, the world will go through a period of difficult transition, with high level of cultural polarization, both within individual societies and among states and other actors within

the international system. This process will have a considerable potential for intra- and inter-state strife.

NOTES

1) See: Bob Davis, "Global Paradox: Growth Trade Binds Nations, But It Can Also Spur Separation", *Wall Street Journal Europe*, 22 June 1994. China is a good example of unequal economic development that exacerbates centrifugal tendencies. Some experts even speculate that this trend, if unchecked, could lead to China's breakup.

2) See: *Ibid.* According to the director of the Agnelli Foundations in Turin some Italians in the prosperous North favor breaking away from the rest of the country.

3) See: *Ibid.* This factor has led some experts, notably Paul Goble, to speculate that "Over time the world may fracture into 500 states instead of the present 200."

4) See: Francis Fukuyama, "Rest Easy, It's Not 1914 Anymore: Nations Breakup as Democracy Grows Up," *New York Times*, February 9, 1992. See also: Kakizawa "The United Nations Should Prepare for the Borderless World Ahead", *International Herald Tribune*, 27-28 August 1994.

5) See: "Global Paradox" *Op.cit.*

6) Leslie H. Gelb, *New York Times*.

7) For a detail study of this Russian policy, see: Shireen T. Hunter, *The Transcaucasus in Transition: Nation Building or a New Empire?*, Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic and International Studies, forthcoming, fall 1994.

8) See: Frederick Kemp, "Global Economic Integration Holds Perils as Well as Opportunities, Historian Says", *Wall Street Journal Europe*, 1-2 July 1994.

9) See: Vaclav Havel, "In Our Post-Modern World, A Search for Self-Transcendence", *International Herald Tribune*, 11 July 1994.

10) See: Henry Louis Gates, "Blood and Irony", *The Economist*, 11-17 September 1993, p. 38.

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