George Washington Memorial Luncheon

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It is a great honor for me to deliver the George Washington Memorial Lecture here in Estoril for the second year in a row, but I do not intend to make a habit of it. Following the model of George Washington, who allowed himself to be prevailed upon by his friends and fellow citizens to serve a second term as president but not a third, I think two Washington memorial lectures will be more than enough for me.

Washington's second inaugural address, delivered in Philadelphia on March 4, 1793, was by far the shortest in American history, totaling 135 words. While I will try to emulate Washington's example of brevity, I cannot match it. If I did so, upon finishing this sentence, it would already be time for me to sit down.

I do plan to continue, however, and I want to speak about an issue that is at the heart of much political controversy today, especially in Europe but also in the United States. A recent article on the political situation in Europe by two European authors speaks of the EU as being "caught in the crossfire between nationalists and internationalists." And an American commentator, in an analysis of the upcoming presidential contest between Donald Trump and Hilary Clinton, has described the key political fault line separating the two candidates as "nationalism vs. globalism." Since Britain's vote to leave the EU, of course, discussion of nationalism has become even more prominent on both sides of the Atlantic.

I agree that a resurgence of nationalism is roiling the current politics of the Western democracies, but it is not always easy to identify the character of that nationalism. The term nationalism itself is a contested one, subject to different meanings and interpretations. The word, which was hardly used in English before the middle of the 19th century, is defined by the Oxford English Dictionary as "Advocacy of or support for the interests of one's own nation, especially to the exclusion or detriment of the interests of other nations." The clause following that word "especially" points to the reasons why there is disagreement not only about the meaning of nationalism but also about whether it is a good or bad thing.

The OED adds that while nationalism now "usually refers to a specific ideology," in earlier usage the term appears to have been "more or less interchangeable" with patriotism. Today patriotism certainly has a more positive connotation that nationalism, though it too is not without its opponents, who might be characterized as cosmopolitans.

Or if one wanted to use more philosophic language to describe the dichotomy between nationalism and globalism or between patriotism and cosmopolitanism, one might speak of particularism vs. universalism.

In a brief but powerful essay published in 1990, the late Polish philosopher Leszek Kolakowski warned of the future dangers that "malignant nationalism" would pose for democracy. Nationalism is malignant, he contended, "when it asserts itself through belief in the natural superiority of one's own tribe and hatred of others; if it looks for pretexts . . . to expand into others' territories; and above all, if it implies an idolatrous belief in the absolute supremacy of national values when they clash with the rights of persons who make up this very nation." Yet Kolakowski also argues that "patriotic feelings are not in themselves incompatible with a democratic outlook, insofar as they mean a preferential solidarity with one's own nation, the attachment to national cultural heritage and language, and the desire to make one's nation better off and more civilized."

George Washington, of course, was famous above all as an exemplar of patriotism. His writings make it clear that he regarded duty and service to his country as his highest calling. He was often compared to the great Roman patriot Cincinnatus, who during a military emergency was chosen to be dictator for a six-month term, left his plow to command Rome's army, defeated the enemy, and within 15 days resigned and returned to his farm.

Yet although Washington was a patriot in the old Roman mode, he also was very much a man of the Enlightenment. He celebrated the fact that the birth of the American republic had occurred not "in the gloomy age of Ignorance and Superstition, but at an Epoch when the rights of mankind were better understood and more clearly defined, than at any former period." He emphasized the importance of scientific progress in supporting a political order founded upon liberty. In his First Annual Message to Congress in 1790, he told the assembled legislators: "[T]here is nothing which can better deserve your patronage than the promotion of science and literature. Knowledge is in every country the surest basis of public happiness." And he affirmed the universality of the principles underlying the American Revolution.

I would argue that there is no contradiction between Washington's Enlightenment-bred universalism and his deep-seated patriotism, but there is certainly a tension between them. Universalism or cosmopolitanism appeals to principles that apply equally to all human beings, regardless of where they live or the community to which they belong. Patriotism or nationalism, on the other hand, demands above all allegiance to one's own political community. There are obviously times and situations in which these two

standpoints can come into conflict. And yet I would argue that reconciling them has been and remains essential to the healthy functioning of democracy.

Here the U.S. experience is particularly illuminating. This year marks the 240th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence, an event that Americans will celebrate as Independence Day a week from now. The Declaration is perhaps the first political document to justify the founding of a new polity on unambiguously universal principles, as its most famous lines make clear: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness."

Abraham Lincoln would later call attention to this aspect of the Declaration by stating: "All honor to Jefferson--to the man who, in the concrete pressure of a struggle for national independence by a single people, had the coolness, forecast, and capacity to introduce into a merely revolutionary document, an abstract truth, applicable to all men and all times, and so embalm it there, that today, and in all coming days, it shall be a rebuke and a stumbling-block to the very harbingers of re-appearing tyranny and oppression."

As Lincoln's statement reminds us, however, the American Founders appealed to these universal principles in support not of a universal political goal but of a particular one—a struggle for "national independence" by Britain's North American colonies. The Declaration seeks to set forth and to justify a policy not of political union or integration but rather one of *separation*. Its opening paragraph invokes the necessity "for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the laws of nature and nature's God entitle them."

The Constitution of the United States, drafted and approved 11 years after the Declaration, also reflects the separateness of this "one people." As the Preamble states, it is "We the people of the United States" who establish this Constitution "in order to . . . secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity." So while the American Founders believed that they were implementing universal principles that applied to and would appeal to all mankind, they saw this as perfectly compatible with establishing a political regime that would aim at securing the liberties not of all mankind but of its own citizens.

Few would deny that governments—especially democratic governments--have a fundamental obligation to serve the interests of their own citizens. No one thinks it unreasonable for democratic political leaders to place the interests of their own country

above those of other countries. Indeed, a president or prime minister who exposes his country's military forces to the risk of combat is expected to do so only if it promises to bring some larger benefits to his fellow citizens. And in a case where any of those citizens are in grave danger, such a leader would be regarded as derelict in his duty if he did not make the rescue of his fellow countrymen a much higher priority than that of other nationals.

The willingness to risk one's life on behalf of the political community to which one belongs remains a quality that is widely praised and admired. Patriotism is still generally considered a virtue. But does this mean that nationalism should also be considered virtuous? That of course depends on how the term nationalism is understood.

Nationalism clearly involves some kind of attachment to the nation, but the meaning of the word nation is itself ambiguous. For it can have both an ethnic and a political character. Moreover, for members of ethnic minority groups in heterogeneous societies these two meanings can be at odds with each other. A person's ethnic attachments may in some circumstances run counter to his political attachments, leading him to seek independence for his ethnic group rather than to support the larger political nation in which he lives. Catalan nationalists who seek independence or at least greater political autonomy for Catalonia are not considered Spanish nationalists.

By contrast, the term patriotism, as it is used in English at least, usually does not carry any ethnic overtones. It is most often defined simply as love for or devotion to one's country, and country is a word that describes the political community in its undivided totality.

- How, then, should we understand nationalism's relationship to democracy? I certainly agree with Kolakowski that it can take malignant forms that put it at odds with democracy. A majoritarian nationalism that refuses to recognize the equal citizenship of members of ethnic minorities is incompatible with the equality before the law that is an essential element of democracy. At the same time, it is virtually inevitable that the culture of the majority, especially if it has a large numerical preponderance, will take precedence in areas such as language and education policy. A democratic country will show a decent respect for the culture and the rights of its minorities, but there is no feasible way to achieve perfect equality or fairness in these matters, and thus multiethnic societies will inevitably experience tensions and disputes over them.
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prudent policies and practical compromises that will vary from country to country. But does nationalism also contribute in a positive way to democracy? Might it even be true that nationalism supplies something essential to democracy? I would ask you to consider the possibility that this may be the case.

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- In the early 1990s the Journal of Democracy published an article by the Georgian political scientist Ghia Nodia entitled "Nationalism and Democracy" that I still consider one of the most insightful treatments of this complex and difficult question. Nodia's analysis was strongly influenced by his experience of the breakup of the Soviet Union, during which, in his words, "all real democratic movements (save the one in Russia proper) were at the same time nationalist." Both movements for democracy and movements for independence, he argues, act "in the name of 'self-determination': 'We the People' (i.e., the nation) will decide our own fate . . . and we will allow nobody—whether absolute monarch, usurper, or foreign power--to rule us without our consent." Nonpopular forms of rule may be able to do without nationalism, but democracy cannot. Despite the dangers from its malignant forms, nationalism provides the cohesion that is necessary for a people to be able to govern itself.

What do these brief reflections suggest about the situation in which we currently find ourselves? There is no doubt that much of the nationalist resurgence we are witnessing today has an ugly aspect. But I think it would be a grave mistake to counter these tendencies by demonizing nationalism tout court. Indeed, I think one source of today's outbreak of ugly nationalism is that political and intellectual leaders have tended to give insufficient weight to popular feelings of patriotism and national pride. A democracy cannot be healthy if its citizens do not share such

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