4-1-2007

Using World History to Predict the Future of the First Civilization

William McGaughey
wmcg@prodigy.net

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/ccr

Recommended Citation
Available at: https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/ccr/vol56/iss56/8

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the All Journals at BYU ScholarsArchive. It has been accepted for inclusion in Comparative Civilizations Review by an authorized editor of BYU ScholarsArchive. For more information, please contact scholarsarchive@byu.edu, ellen_amatangelo@byu.edu.
My book, Five Epochs of Civilization, lays out a specific theory of world history which builds upon the organic model of civilizations developed by Oswald Spengler and Arnold Toynbee. At the same time, it differs from theirs in asserting the existence of a worldwide (not regional) culture which develops in successive stages. Each stage, or historical epoch, is associated with a “civilization.” The civilization has two principal dimensions - first, a new technology of communication which becomes dominant during its epoch; and, second, an institution (or institutions) which becomes dominant.

The successive civilizations are labeled: Civilization I, Civilization II, Civilization III, Civilization IV, and Civilization V. The following table summarizes them with respect to the two keys:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Civilization</th>
<th>Communication Technology</th>
<th>Dominant Institution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Civilization I</td>
<td>Ideographic Writing</td>
<td>Government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civilization II</td>
<td>Alphabetic Writing</td>
<td>World Religion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civilization III</td>
<td>Printing</td>
<td>Commerce and Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civilization IV</td>
<td>Electronic Recording &amp; Broadcasting</td>
<td>News &amp; Entertainment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civilization V</td>
<td>Computer Communication</td>
<td>The Internet &amp; ?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I believe that humanity (especially in the United States) now finds itself in the epoch of Civilization IV. The next civilization, Civilization V, is on the horizon. We see this civilization in its stage of infancy but cannot predict what it will become in its maturity. All we know is that computers will play a large part in determining the culture.

With respect to time periods, the following dates indicate approximate beginning and ending points of each epoch.

- Civilization I: 3000 B.C. to 300 B.C.
- Civilization II: 300 B.C. to 1450 A.D.
- Civilization III: 1450 A.D. to 1920 A.D.
- Civilization IV: 1920 A.D. to 1990 A.D.
- Civilization V: 1990 A.D. to present

Keep in mind that these dates are approximate and do not indicate a clean-cut “birth” or “death.” For instance, despite having passed the first epoch of history, all societies still have well-developed governments. China yet retains an ideographic script. The world religions are
major institutions in society though their heydays may have passed. Each of the communication technologies continues to be used. Each institution remains firmly embedded in society.

This is my scheme of comparative civilizations. I am not comparing geographically distinct societies with each another but a single society at several points in time. I call this single society one civilization when, at a certain stage in its development, it exhibits certain institutional and cultural characteristics; and another civilization when, later in its development, it exhibits different characteristics. But the civilizations each have a kind of organic unity that follows a life cycle. Regular life cycles make it possible to predict the future of an organism when observed at an early stage of life. So it is that we can predict the future of civilizations.

**Prediction**

What will be the future state of our society? At the present time, we have a society comprising many institutions and using all the communication technologies developed over the past millennia. The strategy here for predicting the future will be to look at the past course of the earlier civilizations and imagine that the same pattern will apply to society in the present and future. For civilizations are like living organisms that go through predictable life cycles. As we can anticipate our own fate in old age from what happened to our parents, so past history may give clues to the future of the civilization in which we live. First, some definitions:

A civilization is a particular cultural configuration appearing in certain societies at certain times. The term, “Civilization I,” for instance, refers both to the institutional configuration of the society (and its related culture conveyed through the dominant media of communication) and to the period in world history when this condition existed. In this case, we say that a society of the Civilization I type is one concerned with the development of monarchical government. It culminates in imperial governments where the emperor exercises total control over society - i.e., where no so-called “higher religion” participates in a power-sharing arrangement with the political authority.

With respect to time, we estimate that most “civilized societies” - those which had advanced beyond the level of tribal organization - fit the Civilization I model between 3000 B.C. and 300 B.C., roughly speaking. Again, keep in mind that the dates of historical epochs are approximate. There are periods of overlapping civilizations extending
for centuries in some cases.

In anticipating the future, we look at how a civilization's dominant institution changed in the epochs following its period of dominance. If the institution of government belongs to Civilization I, we will want to see what type of government existed in the second, third, and fourth epochs of world history. (Since the fifth civilization is still in an immature stage, it would be pointless to carry the analysis through this period.) Likewise, we will want to see how government fared after its period of dominance had ended. In other words, what historical trends may be observed in the period between 300 B.C. and 1450 A.D. (Civilization II), in the period between 1450 and 1920 A.D. (Civilization III) and between 1920 A.D. and 1990 A.D. (Civilization IV)?

An important theme in this history is the swing between two poles representing opposite modes of political cohesion. One consists of kinships, blood ties, or family relationships which cause particular groups of people to band together. The other is the structure of state power consisting of laws, administrative apparatus, military force, and religion (or ideologies that create social values). Let's call the first "ethnicity" and the other "structure of power." Prior to civilization, ethnicity was what counted. There was a natural political order based on extensions of the family. The establishment of royal governments in the first city-states brought a more formal type of power and authority. Such governments had a certain legitimacy based on religious support and lawful succession to the throne. They also had a variety of mechanisms to enforce obedience, notably military power.

Thus the rise to "civilization" is associated with the process of abandoning kinship as a basis of political organization and instead embracing a framework of "culture" and laws. Nationhood is based on a certain set of ideas. Lately, I have detected a reversal of that process as race and ethnicity have advanced their political prerogatives. This paper will look at world history from that perspective with an eye to anticipating what the future will bring. What were some of the significant events in each of the four civilizations with respect to the forces of cohesion underlying the political order? What "trend" can be observed in the grand sweep of history that indicates where government as an institution might be headed?

**Government in the Epoch of Civilization I**

Pre-civilized societies are those which lack literacy and exist in small tribal communities. Basically, they are an extended family.
Blood kinship is the tie that binds. The human tribes that lived in this condition may have been hunters and gatherers, roaming the land for food, or they may have pursued agriculture in settled communities. They practiced a form of nature worship under the direction of shamans and hereditary priests.

Toynbee believes that civilized societies first emerged in places such as Egypt and southern Iraq where it was necessary to reclaim the land for agriculture by large-scale irrigation projects. To organize work on such a scale required a larger and more sophisticated form of political organization. City-states arose to meet that need. Each had a temple and local god who would look after the community’s needs. It also had a monarch to administer justice and deal with external threats to peace and security.

The city-states went to war against each other. As one city conquered another, the monarch of that city came to rule over a territorially extended kingdom. The losing peoples became slaves of the winners. Gradually, larger and larger kingdoms were formed through the processes of war culminating in the great empires we study in history. The first civilization culminated in the four great empires that spanned the southern Eurasian continent around 200 A.D.: (from west to east) the Roman, Parthian, Kushan, and Han Chinese empires.

This was Civilization I. Buddhism was yet confined to a small territory in northern India. Christianity was a persecuted sect in the Roman Empire. Islam did not yet exist. Therefore, the societies comprising these empires were under totalitarian rule. Each had a hereditary monarch, or emperor, at the head of government. Government enforced its power through well-disciplined armies. Its internal administration depended upon laws and taxation. It developed systems of religion to inspire civic obedience. It also provided services such as road building, coinage of money, standardization of weights and measures, official languages, etc. that contributed to an orderly, prosperous society. Its main service was to secure the peace.

So when we look at this type of civilization, we see that it had a culture based upon writing, supported large-scale political organization and offered the luxuries and amenities that specialized occupations can produce. Government had moved away from relations based on personal kinship to the more abstract mechanisms of law. Its empires comprised many nations. While the city of Rome and its people and culture had a special place in the Roman Empire, imperial law provided a certain equality of treatment. Roman religion included a pantheon of gods
including tribal gods of the subject peoples as well as Rome’s. Emperor worship attempted to create a personal allegiance to the emperor as representing the entire community. To create a political melting pot, it was necessary for these empires to suppress consciousness of ethnicity and instead promote abstract moral and religious ideas.

Civilization I ended when the large political empires existing in the first two centuries after Christ broke up through internal rebellion or were overthrown by nomadic invaders. The Huns were a factor in this. In China, the eastern Han dynasty split into three kingdoms controlled by warlords around 220 A.D.; and it was not until 589 A.D. that the next imperial dynasty, the Sui, was established. The Parthian empire in Persia gave way to a new dynasty, the Sasanian, in 224 A.D. when Ardashir I overthrew the previous regime.

In Western Europe, Germanic migrants encroached upon the eastern territories of Rome. Alaric, king of the Visigoths, sacked the city of Rome in 410 A.D. The last ruler of the western empire, Romulus Augustulus, was deposed in 475 A.D. The eastern empire, ruled from Constantinople, remained intact for another thousand years. In India, the period between the 5th and 7th centuries A.D. saw its greatest indigenous empire, the Gupta, followed by centuries of territorial division.

Government in the Epoch of Civilization II

We are talking here of the period between the end of the first group of political empires and the beginning of western colonial expansion in the 15th century A.D. In Western Europe and North Africa, territories once belonging to the Roman Empire were now controlled by various Germanic tribes including Lombards, Ostrogoths, Visigoths, Alamanni, Vandals, and Franks. The Frankish king Clovis began to consolidate these territories with the help of the Roman church in the late 5th century A.D. His royal dynasty and a successor increased their holdings for the next three centuries, reaching a climax in Charlemagne’s reign. Then, a generation later, the empire was divided among Charlemagne’s three grandsons, creating a cleavage in Europe’s political geography that has lasted to this day.

The memory of imperial Rome remained strong during this period. Since Christianity had been its official religion, the bishop of Rome, the Pope, was regarded as the heir to Roman culture and authority. The barbarian kings sought the Pope’s blessing as a token of their legitimacy. In 800 A.D., Pope Leo III crowned Charlemagne “Emperor of the Romans.” He was the first in a line of Holy Roman Emperors lasting...
until the 19th Century A.D. The idea became accepted that earthly kings were appointed to their positions by God; and the Roman church could withhold favor from political regimes that displeased it, perhaps by excommunicating the monarch. And so there was a power struggle between the Pope and Holy Roman Emperor. The church and secular rulers in Western Europe effectively shared power throughout the epoch of Civilization II.

In the eastern half of the empire, of course, the Roman imperial government continued to function until 1454 A.D. when the Ottoman Turks breached the walls of Constantinople and deposed the last emperor. The bishop of Constantinople was not a peer of the emperor but a bureaucrat in charge of religion. The government’s nemesis until the early 7th century A.D. was the Sasanian Empire of Persia. Two empires, one Christian and the other Zoroastrian, engaged each other in a series of wars. Then, both exhausted, they confronted a new adversary in the form of Islam’s Arab armies. The Sasanian Empire was extinguished. The Byzantine Roman Empire battled one or another Islamic government for the next eight hundred years, ending ultimately in defeat.

The period between 220 A.D. and 589 A.D. in China was a culturally fruitful but politically unstable time. Kingdoms arose in the south and in the north for brief periods of time but no dynasty was able to unify the territory once controlled by Han rulers. This was the period of “six dynasties”, when the Buddhist religion came to China for the first time. Then, in 589 A.D., a new imperial dynasty arose, the Sui, which lasted for 37 years; and then came the T’ang dynasty, arguably China’s most glorious, which lasted almost three centuries, until 907 A.D. After that, there was another period of political instability lasting fifty to sixty years, followed by four dynasties - the Sung, Yuan, Ming, and Ch’ing - which extended almost continuously into the early 20th century. These were all imperial dynasties patterned after the earliest empires, the Ch’in and Han, which were created in the 3rd century B.C.

So, with the exception of the Chinese empires, one might make the following observation of governments in the epoch of Civilization II. First, they do not represent the original growth of political empires but are in the “second wave” following destruction of the earlier group. These empires therefore hold the earlier ones up as a model: European governments compared themselves to imperial Rome. Of course, the one in Constantinople had a direct claim to succession. The Sasanian (second) Persian Empire lived in the shadow of the first empire, the Achaemenian, which Alexander the Great overthrew. It, too, adopted
Zoroastrianism as its state religion. One might add that the adulation of earlier models was greatest in China considering that the Han model was revived again and again as imperial dynasties rose and fell.

A second point is that these empires, except for China's, were no longer totalitarian governments. By this time, the religions of Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, Christianity, and Islam had developed their own institutions claiming power in the society. Religious power was greatest in Western Europe, where the Pope was independent of earthly rulers and exercised spiritual authority over society, and in Islamic society where the political rulers were successors of the prophet Mohammed. And so, unlike earlier empires that had a single point of authority, this type of society had a dual power structure, one secular and the other religious. But we are still in a period when "structures of power" hold the political unit together. It's just that religion has been added to the mix of building materials.

Government in the Epoch of Civilization III

What affected the Old World's geopolitics at the time of the Renaissance (which was the start of the epoch of Civilization III)? A big factor had to be the dissolution of the Mongol empire. Genghis Khan was a barbarian chieftain who built a large political empire not unlike those in Civilization I. It united by force a multitude of nations. The Mongol rulers used religion, law, and skilled administration to hold their empire together. Even so, it started to crumble in the late 14th century A.D. After a series of local revolts, a warlord named Chu Yuan-Chang seized power in China, founding the Ming dynasty. One might regard this as an expression of Chinese nationalism. The Mongols, after all, had excluded native Chinese from high-level administrative positions. The Ming Empire restored Chinese culture and the imperial form of government under Chinese natives.

Elsewhere, the recession of Mongol power opened the way to other nationalistic governments. The Mongols had extinguished the Abbasid caliphate in Iraq during the 13th century A.D. They overran much of the Middle East but were unable to conquer Egypt or Syria due to Mamluk opposition. A century later, as Mongol power was receding, Ottoman Turks moved into Anatolia (Turkey). This was the beginning of the Ottoman Empire. A self-styled successor to Genghis Khan named Tamurlane went on a rampage through India, Russia, and the Middle East. His enduring legacy through a successor was the creation of a Moslem empire, the Mogul, in India. A third Moslem empire, the
Safavi, occupied Persia after a rebellion against Ottoman rule. At the end of this process (before the arrival of the British in India) we had three Islamic empires extending from Turkey to India which had been created by nomadic peoples from the Eurasian steppe, notably Turks.

To the north, Slavic peoples were meanwhile casting off the yoke of Mongol rule. In the 14th century A.D., Prince Ivan Kalita of Moscow helped the Mongols suppress a local rebellion. As a reward, he was given the title Grand Duke. The Eastern Orthodox Church in Russia made Moscow its seat of power as well. The Muscovite dukes continued to help the Mongols control the smaller principalities while annexing them when it was convenient. In the 15th century, the Golden Horde split into four successor states. Moscow took advantage of the situation by annexing more territory. When the Byzantine Empire fell to the Ottomans in the middle of this century, Moscow became the new center of orthodox Christianity. Ivan III in the 16th century married the last Byzantine emperor’s niece and took the title of “Czar” (meaning “Caesar”). So it was that by shrewdly supporting and opposing Mongol rule, the dukes of Moscow built up their own Slavic empire and Moscow became “the third Rome”.

To a certain extent, the same process was occurring in Western Europe. Instead of the Mongols, the Papacy represented the imperial power as the Bishops of Rome saw themselves exercising real authority over western Christendom. Pope Alexander VI, for example, felt empowered to grant Spain and Portugal exclusive rights to colonize the newly discovered lands in North and South America. Charles V, Holy Roman Emperor and heir to both the Iberian and Austrian Hapsburg thrones, was a staunch supporter of the Roman church. But then the Protestant Reformation occurred, splitting Europe religiously and politically. In the following centuries, political power shifted from its Catholic center in southern Europe to northern nations bordering the Atlantic Ocean and North Sea: France, the Netherlands, and England. The European nation state was born. Unlike earlier models of government, these new monarchies tended to encompass relatively homogeneous populations, ethnically and linguistically speaking. There was a “French” or “English” people enjoying common blood lines as well as political structure and history.

Civilization III was also the epoch of western European colonialism. This meant that agents of the various European nations seized control of territories in Asia, Africa, the Americas, or Australia and imposed their culture and political rule upon non-European peoples. In India,
where the native population was immense, the British became an elite ruling class. In China, they established trade enclaves. In Australia and the Americas, however, where populations were more sparse, European immigrants populated the empty lands. African slaves were brought to do work in the Americas.

Here, again, the political structure became more sharply defined along the lines of race and ethnicity. Black slaves had, of course, a socially inferior position while the white rulers of the earth’s nations could exult in their own racial and religious supremacy. The colonized dark-skinned people, too, identified themselves in nationalistic or ethnic terms.

The history of government in the period of Civilization III must also include four great democratic revolutions - the English Puritan of the 17th century, the French and American revolutions of the late 18th century, and the Russian revolution of the early 20th century - which to one degree or another advanced the ideas of freedom and self-determination. This epoch came to an end in the two World Wars of the early 20th century. World War I brought the collapse of three great European monarchies (in Germany, Russia, and Austro-Hungary) and advanced, in Wilson’s Fourteen Points, the idea of “national self-determination” which sowed the seeds of decolonization in the 20th century. European political ascendancy waned as the blood of European manhood was spilled on French fields.

Government in the Epoch of Civilization IV

Here we are talking about what happened politically after World War I. The empires of Eastern Europe collapsed. Germany was a republic saddled with debt. The Austro-Hungarian Empire was split into a number of smaller nations. Russia had a communist government. Britain and France were weakened from Europe’s fratricidal war. Only the United State of America seemed in a strong position. Nationalistic competition between the European nation states, primarily Germany and Great Britain, led to this debacle, ending the third civilization.

But now, in a second convulsive wave, came World War II sparked by military aggression by the Axis powers. Post-war Germany, Italy, and Japan were even more nationalistic than the nations that fought in World War I. Their ideologies involved ideas of racial supremacy and purity of the blood line. But these powers were defeated by a coalition led by the United States, Great Britain, and the Soviet Union. The United Nations was established at the end of the war, like the old
League of Nations but set on a firmer foundation.

After World War II, we had the “Cold War” in which erstwhile allies found themselves on opposite sides of a political divide. Competing economic ideologies defined the contest. Capitalism claimed one bloc of nations (the “first world”) and communism claimed the other (the “second world”). These were quasi-religious ideologies framed in economic terms. Communism gained some converts in the developing world, notably China, because it promised a path of development and offers political cohesion to government. Capitalism fought back with policies of containment. The threat of nuclear conflict between the two sides hung over the world.

In the end the Soviet Union abandoned communism and was broken into a number of nation states that are ethnically and religiously more unified. International capitalism was left standing. Indeed, multinational corporations played the different nations to their own advantage. As a supplier of goods to developed nations, China acquired, in effect, a capitalistic economy. Vietnam aspired to similar development.

The period after World War II was also a time of decolonization in the Indian subcontinent, Africa, Indonesia, and French Indochina. Great Britain and France agreed to grant independence to their colonies, the British more peacefully than the French. The United States granted independence to the Philippines. And so the model of the European nation state was extended to other parts of the world. All nations had membership in the United Nations. These once-colonized nations generally belonged to the group of “non-aligned nations” (neither communist nor capitalist) in the “Third World.” The latter term implied a low state of industrial development in which the masses of people were poor. Over time, however, the spreading regime of free trade brought a realignment in the world economy as jobs once held in the First World escaped to the Third World because of lower production costs. That has produced a crisis in First World employment.

To characterize this period of political history, one would observe that initially the traditional type of government prevailed in which ethnicity and race were subordinated to a common set of laws and ideals. The ethnically pure nation states of Europe, having twice experienced fratricidal war, found themselves outflanked by two multi-ethnic superpowers, the United States and Soviet Union. The United States had a legacy of racial and ethnic equality inherited from the Civil War and a population based on immigrants that had come together in a “melting pot.” The Soviet Union held various nationalities together through the
stern ideology of communism. Stalin, who had once been commissar of nationalities, effectively stifled ethnic dissent.

After World War II, the earth’s people were horrified by the racist ideologies and murderous behavior of the Nazis and the Japanese militarists. The image of the Holocaust reminded people of the damage that race-based politics could cause. The Civil Rights movement made Americans aware of white racism and its ill treatment of black people. The majority population was forbidden to practice a politics based on race, religion, or ethnicity.

This consensus has started to crumble in the late stages of Civilization IV. Once the iron hand of communism was removed, ethnic conflicts began to surface in Yugoslavia. Tribal conflicts led to genocide in post-colonial Africa. In the Middle East, the State of Israel presented itself both as a democracy and a “Jewish state” - i.e., a state where a birth-determined group receives official preference - and accordingly found itself in conflict with an ethnically disadvantaged group, the Palestinians, who engaged the sympathies and support of their Moslem coreligionists. In the United States, the call for “color-blind” policies has given way to policies that recognize racial differences. Immigrants from Latin America have entered the United States illegally by the millions, causing a backlash. In Europe, the political situation is similarly affected by immigration from Moslem countries.

Summary of Government in the Four Epochs

So what have we with respect to the opposing forces underlying the state? In the first epoch of civilization, we rise from “nations,” which still imply a genetically unified people, to “empires” in which a political leader assembles many nations through military conquest and welds them together through adept administration. The institution of government was erected upon a foundation of power made effective through abstract ideas, whether they be laws or military science.

The world religions which arose in the second epoch of history were a spiritual accompaniment to political empire. Jesus framed the issue when his biological mother and brothers were brought to him: “Who is my mother? Who are my brothers? ... Here are my mother and brothers. Whoever does the will of God is my brother, my sister, my mother.” (Mark 3: 33-35) Blood kinships and ethnicity did not matter, only obedience to God’s will - i.e., to God’s word, or certain principles and ideas. (Ironically, the prophetic scripture which brought Jesus into the role of Messiah was produced in response to the Jews’ unwillingness
to assimilate into multiethnic empires under someone else’s leadership.)

The political state was insisting on obedience to its laws or to certain abstract ideas that defined the moral order. The polyglot empire of Rome needed to hold ethnicity in check since this posed a threat to political unity. The religion of Christianity, inherited from Rome, served to unify political kingdoms in the period following the empire’s collapse in the west.

What we see in the third civilization is a retreat from empire based on political or religious structures of power as Mongol power receded and the Papacy lost its political grip in the west. A certain revival of this idea occurs toward the end of the epoch as European nations establish colonies throughout the rest of the world. But this is a different kind of empire. It is not one which tries to conquer as much territory or population as possible regardless of ethnicity but an empire established for the purpose of commercial exploitation which is controlled by a relatively unified ethnic or racial group. The colonial masters belong to particular European nation states. The subjects are nonwestern people, often of a different race. Likewise, slavery in the Americas involves a racial distinction. Ethnicity is an evident factor in the various nationalities of immigrant groups which blend in the American melting pot. By and large, however, the legal framework assumes that, regardless of ethnicity, all citizens of a nation are in the same category and should be treated equally.

As we enter the fourth epoch of civilization, the pendulum in the United States and elsewhere has continued to swing away from unified structures of state power in the direction of ethnicity. The Civil Rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s may have preached integration but its spirit was to nurture continuing grievances against white society. From there we moved to racial preferences, “protected classes,” and hate speech, which are laws and regulations that treat people differently depending upon race, gender, or other birth-determined characteristics. The drumbeat of sweeping accusations against America’s majority population in the schools, courts, and the mass media may take its toll in weakening loyalty to the state.

In 1970, a Soviet dissident named Andrei Amalrik wrote a book which predicted that the communist system would soon collapse and the Soviet Union would dissolve into a number of successor states. Improbably, those events came to pass. It’s possible that a similar process could affect the United States. Our national government is slowly being discredited by its imprudent trade policies and budget
deficits, the widening income gap between rich and poor, money-driven politics, disastrous wars of aggression in the Middle East, and its failed policies on immigration.

Race relations in the United States have improved at a disappointing pace despite stern policies against discrimination. Millions of Hispanic immigrants who have entered the United States without permission are seeking to legalize their status through political action; neither Democrat nor Republican wants to offend a voting bloc of increasing demographic strength. The bottom line here is that racial solidarity trumps law.

Rome fell not because barbarian hordes attacked the empire from beyond its perimeter but because Germanic peoples had infiltrated Roman territory and, indeed, the imperial army. They were not malicious opponents but persons envious of Roman civilization. So it is today with immigrants coming to the United States. Our educational system has raised career expectations among the native population. In our upwardly mobile society, no one is content to do the dirty, unskilled jobs that economic life often requires, especially if they are low-paying. Immigrants from Latin America willingly fill that gap.

The educational system promises that the road to prosperity lies in remaining in school and postponing childrearing activities. Careers on a track to success make it difficult to juggle work and family life. As more upwardly mobile men and women choose career success rather than children, a population gap is created in the native population which immigrants again fill. A peaceful replacement of ethnicities takes place, soon to be followed, perhaps, by a realignment of political power.

It has been 140 years since Lincoln died while saving the Union. This U.S. President promoted lofty ideals of a government controlled by the people and issued proclamations that ended black people’s legal inferiority to whites. But the Civil War and its aftermath left a continuing cultural and political rift between north and south east of the Mississippi River in which racial attitudes are a defining element. Right now, this manifests itself in a Republican “solid south” reacting to political events of the 1960s. There is secessionist talk among certain die-hard Southerners. In the southwest, conflict between Anglo and Hispanic populations may produce separate communities.

Throughout the nation, Americans are split between urban and suburban populations as white flight has left cores of black population concentrated in the inner cities. The widening income gap suggests a society in which some people live in gated suburban communities while
others inhabit large apartment complexes in densely populated areas of the city.

At an extreme, we may see down the line a collapse in the authority of the central government and a balkanization along socioeconomic, racial, and ethnic lines. Blacks may continue to be bitter about white racism. Hispanics may promote their own language and culture. The majority white population, reviled and abandoned by its own leaders, may decide that the nation state is not worth keeping.

Worse yet, there may be a burgeoning population competing for a dwindling supply of natural resources. Society may then break down into small groups which, in the absence of a strong central authority, fend for themselves. These resource-grabbing groups would likely be organized as family-based tribes. They would represent ethnicity carried back to the point at which civilization began. The institution of government would then have come full circle.

This is, of course, but one of several possible outcomes. Alternatively the United States could experience a revival of its national community under an optimistic and conscientious leader such as Theodore Roosevelt or Ronald Reagan or a political leader such as Franklin D. Roosevelt or Abraham Lincoln who rose to meet the challenge in a time of crisis. Or, it may be that in future times the nation state will cease to be important. Humanity may instead be caught up in a sense of world citizenship, where the sense of kinship is extended to everyone on the planet.

If the political order becomes extended to such a degree, it will take highly intelligent and inspired individuals to create this society’s cultural framework. Something approaching the religious inspiration of the second epoch of world history will be needed for the epoch of instantaneous global communication that is currently taking shape. Race in the form of the human race could become a unifying force among the Earth’s people. Once that paradigm shift has taken place, government might again pursue the common good.