Dangerous Ideas: A Conceptual Framework for Anticipating Threats to Pluralist and Decent Societies

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"Ideas are like stars."

Mary Chapin Carpenter

"Absolute freedom mocks of justice.
Absolute justice destroys freedom.
To be fruitful, the two ideas must
find their limits in each other."

Albert Camus

Like stars in the sky, there are an almost infinite number of political ideas. Such ideas vary in their significance from particularistic notions that shape fleeting current issues to abstract concepts that transform history. Potent abstract ideas are usually interrelated – like constellations of stars – into philosophies and ideologies that legitimate and challenge current political arrangements and practices. Scholars continue to debate the ideas that were important to the founding of various political systems and remain important to their maintenance. Competing paradigms direct attention to different potent ideas, and no methodology has been recognized as providing scientific and scholarly consensus enabling identification of the most potent past and present ideas. Such difficulties suggest that any effort to predict those future ideas that will challenge the legitimacy and functioning of existing arrangements will be highly general and uncertain. This paper is less concerned with identifying specific challenger ideas than suggesting a framework for thinking about the kinds of ideas that might challenge and endanger American pluralist democracy and our fundamental global interests.

My approach is more analytical than empirical, more concerned with identifying theoretical possibilities than assigning probabilities based on current conditions and predictions of future conditions. An empirical approach would seem to require identification of the most dangerous and violent groups and movements today and extrapolating their ideas into the future,[1] but such an approach would be limited for two reasons. First, as Carol Swain (2002:4) points out, some extremist groups are expanding their influence by renouncing violence and employing "rational discourse;" by focusing only on violent groups, we could miss challenger ideas that are becoming prominent through nonviolent means. Second, tomorrow's challenges may be quite distinct from those we face today. If asked to identify challenger ideas during the 60s and 70s, one would have been inclined to focus on Marxist, communist, and emerging left-wing ideas associated with radical student

[1] This approach is exemplified by Rex A. Hudson (1999). Among the groups that Hudson focuses on are Al-Qaida, Hizballah, Aum Khinrikyo, and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE).

movements, black militancy, and eco-terrorism. The conditions of that period would have prompted few students of ideology to believe that the most potent challenger ideas at the beginning of the 21st century would be those of various religious fundamentalisms and nationalisms.[2] Because of such difficulties, a framework that is fairly comprehensive in directing attention to theoretical possibilities would have the benefit of ensuring that we are not overly focused on those challenger ideas that appear most prominent, potent, and dangerous today.

Perhaps Francis Fukuyama (1992) has provided the most influential scholarship relevant to the task of identifying challenger ideas. He argues that the post-cold war world has achieved a consensus that the ideas of liberal democracy -- of capitalism and freedom, on the hand, the democracy and equality, on the other -- are universally the best ideas for governing our political economies, and thus challenger ideas would seem to be their antithesis. Moreover, by grounding his analysis in the work of Hegel and Kojeve, he suggests that the consensus in not merely a political *modus vivendi* but a philosophical understanding. If this brief overview of Fukuyama's analysis is accurate, it would seem that his great virtue is to point analysis of challenger ideas to those that violate philosophical norms rather than those that endanger American interests. If our analysis of challenger ideas were to focus on those ideas that challenge American interests, we should then ask whether those interests are legitimate ones that ought to be preserved. If our analysis were to focus instead on ideas that challenge consensually (or at least broadly) held philosophical ideals, the identified ideas could be considered dangerous not simply to American interests but to a well-ordered global community.[3] Of course, the idea of a philosophical consensus would appear highly dubious if not absurd, but Fukuyama at least provides us the perspective that there are possibilities for political knowledge beyond relativism and skepticism. There is a certain plausibility to his assessment that democracy and capitalism are ideas that cannot be improved upon -- and thus equal plausibility to the ideas that anti-democratic and anti-capitalist ideas are dangers to a well-ordered global community. But Fukuyama's framework has several problems.

First, Fukuyama's perspective posits consensus at a very high level of abstraction, and in so doing, draws attention away from legitimate and indeed healthy ideological differences that can and do occur within democratic capitalist societies. In other words, Fukuyama ignores or downplays the "pluralism" that is fundamental to the very societies he claims as possessing ideological consensus. John Rawls (1992: 133-172) recognizes that the overlapping consensus within pluralistic societies is limited, and people having a wide variety of "comprehensive moral doctrines" partake in that consensus while having very different ideas on many other

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[2] Indeed Diggens (2003) argues that many analysts continued to focus on the communist challenges well into the 1980's, missing the emerging dangers of Islamic Fundamentalism.

[3] In politics, science, and philosophy, consensus does not mean the complete absence of opposition, but rather widely accepted understandings among informed and unbiased persons.

political, philosophical, and moral matters.[4] To recognize the ideological diversity that Fukuyama misses, I use the term "pluralism" to designate that constellation of ideas that comprise Rawls' overlapping consensus within liberal society, that encompass those ideas that Fukuyama believes are the liberal democratic ideals that cannot be improved upon, *and* a considerably broader set of ideas that, while not consensually embraced, are generally thought to be acceptable orthodox ideas about politics.

Pluralist societies thus have ideological conflict among what Bernard Crick (1962) calls "friends of politics" - such as conservatives, liberals and social democrats. Despite much ideological agreement on such matters as the need for some democratic institutions and procedures, the desirability of some aspects of a free market and capitalism, and the importance of some conceptions of equality and freedom, these ideological "friends" are also competitors who often regard each other's ideas as dangerous to the health of our society and our global interests. The concern of this paper is to establish at least tentative boundaries between orthodox and heretical ideas -- between those competing ideas that are acceptable within a pluralist society and those that endanger it.[5]

By focusing attention on the ideals of democracy and capitalism (and the values associated with these ideals), Fukuyama draws attention away from the possibility that ideological challenges may arise over a variety of other fundamental political issues such as: (1) Who should be members of our political communities? (2) How should the relationships between capitalism and democracy be structured? (3) What form of democracy is best? (4) What are the fundamental rights and obligations of citizens of our community? (5) To what extent should democratic governments use their authority to restrain freedom? (6) What does justice require? And (7) what are the legitimate means of social change? Furthermore, current agreement on the importance of capitalism and democracy may occur despite people having very different philosophical assumptions about human nature, society, ontology, and epistemology. Some philosophical assumptions may be prevalent or may become more widespread that form the bases for challenges to the long-term viability of a well-ordered global community. In short, a broader conceptual framework than that provided by Fukuyama is necessary to identify the range of ideas beyond anti-democratic and anti-capitalist sentiments than could challenge America and its global interests

Additionally, Rawls (1999: 59-88) has more recently distinguished between "liberal pluralist societies" and "decent societies" in a way that has important

[4] For Rawls and most political theorists, pluralism involves the presence of competing value systems and political ideas within a society. Such pluralism is a central feature Rawls' *Political Liberalism.* Indeed the terms pluralism, liberal democracy, and democratic capitalism are often used interchangeably.

[5] Walter Laqueur (2002) has stressed the importance of boundaries separating "extremist" and "terrorist" challenges from less severe challenges.

implications for Fukuyama's thesis and the identification of challenging ideas.[6] Unlike liberal pluralist societies, decent societies may have governments that are more hierarchical than democratic and economies that are more statist than capitalist, but if they still honor basic human rights and if they do not pursue aggressive aims in their relations with other countries, they may not challenge America or its global interests. In short, just as we need to define boundaries between those many contested ideas that are acceptable within pluralist societies and those ideas that endanger such societies, we also need to define boundaries between the even broader array of contested ideas that may be acceptable for non-liberal decent societies and those ideas that would compromise the decency of such societies, making them dangerous "outlaw countries."

Finally, these conceptions of pluralist societies and decent societies enable us to think more clearly not only about ideas that endanger these societies but also ideas that endanger a well-ordered global society. Such a society stands in contrast to international anarchy. A global society is conceived as both independent of existing nation-states and as a composite of such nations. If global society itself has institutions and values that resemble those of pluralist states,[7] and if it is comprised of nations that are pluralistic, it is well ordered. To the extent that global society itself resembles only a decent society (or worse, an outlaw society) and is comprised of outlaw (and merely decent) societies, it is less well ordered.[8]

In sum, the framework for studying challenger ideas to be presented in the next section is inspired by Fukuyama's claim that there is a certain philosophical consensus about beneficial political ideals and thus a philosophical basis for identifying ideas that are dangerous because they challenge those regimes and practices that strive to achieve these ideals. However, this framework will be broader than Fukuyama's by suggesting that there is a need to consider explicitly a broader array of ideas than those that are the focal points of Fukuyama's work. This framework will suggest that philosophical consensus is most likely to exist on a "certain range of acceptable ideas" rather than on specific ideals; thus, dangerous ideas are not the antithesis of specific ideals but instead are constellations of ideas beyond the range of philosophical acceptability. Finally, this framework will suggest that there is not one borderline between acceptable and dangerous ideas but at least two borderlines that are politically important: (a) those ideas that are beyond the

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[6] Rawls also discusses "benevolent absolutist regimes" as standing for ideas anathema to liberalism but not constituting a threat to it, but for present purposes we can include such regimes as within "decent societies."

[7] Robert Keohane (2001:10-11) argues that the pluralist norms of accountability, participation, and persuasion are essential to having legitimate global institutions, even if these institutions have less coercive power than nation states.

[8] This conception of a well-ordered global society is intended to parallel what Rawls (1999: 6) calls a "world society of liberal and decent peoples." The term "well-ordered global society" is preferred in the present analysis to encourage us to think less about Rawls' ideal than about possible departures from such an ideal.

range of ideas acceptable to pluralist societies and (b) those ideas that are beyond the range of ideas acceptable to decent societies. As a practical matter, this framework should allow us to identify dangerous ideas that might:

- become sufficiently strong that they would undermine American pluralism;
- arise in other pluralist societies and thus undermine our relationships with countries sharing our political ideals;
- become more prominent in decent societies and curtail their evolution toward becoming pluralist societies;
- arise in decent societies turning them into "outlaw" or "rogue" regimes that threaten pluralist and decent societies;
- become stronger or weaker within outlaw regimes, thus enabling assessments of whether efforts to bring such regimes into the global community are effective or ineffective.

A Framework for Identifying Dangerous Ideas

Figure 1 presents a schematic diagram for thinking about dangerous ideas. It directs attention to three broad conceptual categories that contain ideas that might challenge American pluralist democracy and our global interests. The most fundamental category deals directly with fundamental political principles (beliefs and norms) involving the following concepts and addressing the following questions:[9]

- Community: Who are we? Who are the peoples with whom one identifies, with whom one participates community decision-making, and to whom one is primarily obligated? Who should be extended opportunities to be members of the community?
- Structure: What are the primary institutions within the community that give meaning and purpose to lives and that control and distribute many important resources and social goods? What is the balance of power among these institutions?
- Citizens: Are there various classes of citizens (full citizens and second-class citizens)? What rights are provided to citizens? What duties must citizens perform?
- Rulers: Who should rule? What are the mechanisms for limiting the power of rulers and the occasions for holding rulers accountable?
- Authority: What are the realms of community life that political rulers can legitimately govern? What constraints on individual freedom can governmental authorities impose?
- Justice: What laws and processes should structure the competition among members of the community for greater shares of political power, economic resources, and other social goods? What principles of justice should guide the distribution of these social goods?

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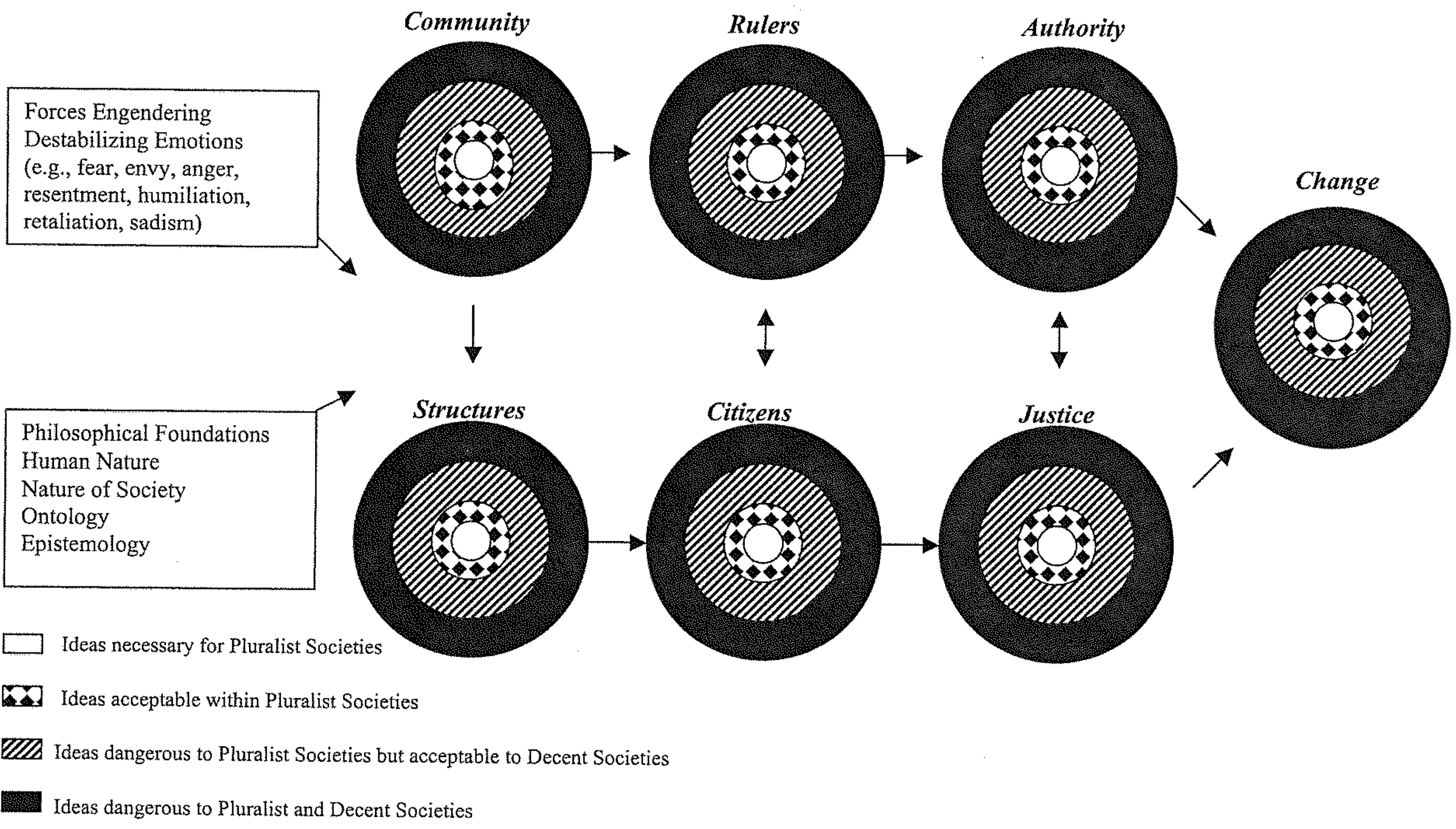
[9] When trying to profile extremists, many analysts like Hudson (1999) distinguish religious and political ideas, and Jenkins (2002) argues that religious ideas will be greater dangers than political ones throughout the 21st century. Such views suggest that, by not explicitly including religious categories, our framework would be inadequate. However, religious ideas that become politically threatening can be included within the broad categories presented here.

Figure 1
Conceptualizing Challenging Ideas



• Change: How much and what kind of change is desirable? What tactics used by change agents – including disruption and violence - are justified? To what extent and under what conditions is repression of change agents legitimate?

The concentric circles associated with each of these concepts suggest the boundaries between orthodox and heretical ideas -- between concepts and principles that are within the acceptable diversity of legitimate ideas that exist within pluralist and/or decent societies and those that would undermine such societies. Four sorts of ideas must be identified for each concept. First, what ideas (at the core of each sphere in our conceptual framework) are necessary for the foundation and maintenance of pluralism? Here we try to delineate more precisely those ideas that comprise Fukuyama's consensus at "the end of history" and Rawls' "overlapping consensus" within liberalism. Second, what non-dangerous ideas are in the inner ring of nonconsensual but acceptable ideas (regarding community, structure, and so forth) for pluralist societies? Third, what ideas are in the intermediate ring - ideas unacceptable to pluralist societies and thus a danger to them while still being acceptable to decent societies? Fourth, what sorts of ideas are in the outer ring – endangering decent societies as well as pluralist ones?[10]

Our fundamental theoretical premise is that in response to these questions, an array of answers can be delineated on continua where orthodox, moderate positions are flanked by both far-right and far-left extremist positions, which challenge first pluralist societies and then decent societies.

Another category of ideas in Figure 1 deal with philosophical assumptions, ideas that are broader than political principles and often foundational to them. The political ideologies of the 19th and 20th centuries were based on or implicitly assumed such ideas (Schumaker, Kiel, and Heilke, 1996). Compared to political principles, philosophical ideas are essentially uncontestable because there exists no agreed upon method for validating or falsifying these ideas. However, that does not diminish the extent to which such philosophical assumptions are firmly held and basic to political worldviews. They concern ideas about:

• Human Nature: Are humans inherently equal and, if so, in what ways and on what basis? In what ways are humans unequal? What are essential (and desirable) human motivations and purposes?

• Nature of society. To what extent and in what ways are societies homogeneous and heterogeneous? What are the fundamental cleavages (or lines of social conflict) within societies, and are these cleavages enduring or "cross-cutting" over a broad range of issues and over time? What role does civil society play in organizing people by their common interests?

• Ontology. Is ultimate reality (being) essentially material, ideational, or supernatural? Are our ultimate ends (what becomes of the world) determined by

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[10] A paradox is evident. Although pluralist societies pride themselves on the broad array of dissenting ideas that most be tolerated, ideas intolerable to pluralist societies might be tolerable to decent societies.

divine and supernatural causes, by material and natural causes? Or our ultimate ends undetermined, subject to human will and power?

• Epistemology. To what extent can we have certain knowledge or tentative knowledge, or must we accept complete uncertainty about fundamental political questions? How do we achieve political knowledge?

The modern era and the Enlightenment emphasized certain philosophical assumptions and these were central to liberalism and to our conception of non-liberal but decent societies. But the development of pluralism has led to relaxing these philosophical assumptions, to recognition that alternative assumptions have at least limited value. What is highly dangerous to pluralist societies and what is often dangerous to decent societies is dogmatic insistence or overemphasis on particular philosophical assumptions to the exclusion of alternative assumptions. In other words, while dangerous political ideas are extremist responses to fundamental political questions, dangerous philosophical assumptions are narrow preconceptions about human nature, society, ontology and epistemology - understandings that exclude other possible philosophical assumptions.

Figure 1 also suggests another category of challenging ideas: those ideas that are expressions of such human emotions as anger, resentment, fear, hatred, humiliation, retaliation, and envy.[11] Without question, such emotions are the immediate cause of many acts that threaten our system and interests. If our goal is to reduce threats to our system, then we must of course understand the political, social, and economic forces that give rise to these emotions and devise policies and strategies that contain such emotions. Rather than dealing directly with such emotions, however, this paper will be limited to considering how various ideas give rise to dangerous emotions and how various emotions might find expression as dangerous ideas.[12]

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[11] Laird Wilcox (1996: 54-62) argues that "style" constitutes still another category of characteristics relevant to identifying extremists. According to Wilcox, "extremists" may pursue moderate goals but "muddy the waters of discourse" with invective, defamation, fanaticism, hatred, character assassination, intimidation, use of buzzwords, and other uncivil traits. Since our concern is with the ideas that spawn extremism, such "stylistic matters" are introduced here only insofar as they are connected to the ideas emphasized in our conceptual framework.

[12] If is important to differentiate collective emotional states - as when a group of people have come to hate America - from individual mental illnesses like paranoia. Many dangerous people may indeed be mentally ill, but dismissing extremists and terrorists as mentally ill misses the fact that such people can act on behalf of and with the support of angry and frustrated people with legitimate grievances (Hudson, 1999: 35). Our framework focuses attention on the widely-held emotions that give rise to rebellion and other destabilizing collective actions (Gurr, 1970; Tarrow, 1994) and the ideas that are used to express these emotions in a way that may engender sympathy for the people experiencing them.

Dangerous Political Ideas

Community. Contemporary political philosophers agree that it is desirable for humans to identify with, participate in, and have obligations to many communities. People should see themselves within nested boxes ranging from smaller to larger communities. In America, allegiance to federal principles gives an initial expression of this idea. I simultaneously identify with the locality, state, and nation in which I live. In a more cosmopolitan manner, some might also identify with the European Union, Western Civilization, or the global community. In a more parochial manner, some might identify with their neighborhoods or other face-to-face communities. Of course, the communities with which we identify need not be political "states," but can also be non-institutionalized "national" communities, such as the French-Canadian Quebecois or the various indigenous nations among Native Americans.

Having and appreciating multiple community identities, memberships, and obligations is of vital importance to pluralism, decency, and a well-ordered global society. Having multiple community identities heightens our sense of connection to others while dampening our zeal for the narrow interests and understandings of any one community with which we might identify (Spinner-Halev and Theiss-Morse, 2003). Having multiple obligations reminds us that obeying the dubious dictates from authorities in one community can undermine our capacity to fulfill our moral and political obligations to others in the broader or narrower communities in which we are members. Having multiple memberships enables us to appreciate those communities in which we have rights as members to participate, and those communities in which we are not members and which have a right of self-governance independent of our influence.

Accepting the idea of multiple-community identities leaves unresolved many very important issues about community, and thus pluralist societies (including a pluralist global order) will experience conflicts between those who would give greater or less priority to global interconnections, national sovereignty, states rights, and local control. But pluralist politics does not deny any of these identities or dissolve any of these communities, but rather involves marginal adjustments strengthening and weakening our identities with these communities and their influence over our lives.

Pluralism is endangered by rejecting (or forgetting) our multiple community identities and obligations or by placing one national, sub-group, or religious identity far above all others. Ireland is endangered by Catholics and Protestant identities that supercede Irish ones. The U.S. could be endangered if European Americans, African Americans, or other racial or ethnic group identities overwhelmed a broader American identity. In short, pluralist democracies can obviously be threatened by the diffusion of separatist ideas - where sub-community identities based on common ethnic and religious ties overwhelm identities with the larger community.

Pluralist societies like the US can also be endangered by restrictive ideas about who should be extended opportunities to become members of their communities.

Nativism is a danger to religiously or ethnically diverse communities. Opposing immigration to (for example) Arabs enrages those Arabic Americans who interpret such opposition as a rejection of their rightful place in the community.

However, while widespread acceptance of nativist ideas challenge the continued viability of pluralist societies, it is less clear that such ideas are incompatible with non-pluralist but decent societies. Some political communities can reject religious, ethic, racial, and linguistic pluralism -- especially when homogeneity was central to their founding and to their historical traditions – and still be decent societies by providing fundamental rights to all residents and by avoiding hostile actions against others with different ethnic and religious backgrounds (Rawls, 1999: 74). The proposed Afghanistan Constitution will not produce a liberal pluralist society because it declares Islam as its official religion, but it could produce a decent society because it also allows non-Muslims to perform their religious ceremonies and ensures other fundamental religious and human rights (Feldman, 2003).

Within both pluralist and decent societies, two ideas concerning community identity can endanger a well-ordered global community. First are the sorts of cross-national comparisons and evaluations that occur when people strongly identify with their national group and denigrate or fear other national groups. On the one hand, a national identify that assumes "we are a superior people" or that "our nation is supreme" can lead to the belief that international politics has no moral dimension but only a power dimension and thus "we can impose our way of life" on others (Soros, 2003). On the other hand, a national identity that "we are an inferior people" or "our nation is dominated by others" can motivate people to respond aggressively through violence to bolster their self-esteem (Spinner-Halev and Theiss-Morse, 2003: 521-22).[13]

Second, a well-ordered global community is threatened by denying the independent existence of an international community. As Fukuyama (2002) argues, if people believe that only nation-states are legitimate, they will regard all international agreements as binding only so long as nations remain committed to them. Lacking a stronger identity with the international community, nations can withdraw from international agreements at any time and act unilaterally in ways that threaten a well-governed global society. Unless international obligations are recognized and international regulations constrain various nationalisms, the danger is that nationalism could spin out of control in the 21st century, as it did during the first half of the 20th century.

Citizens. Members of pluralist communities accept the idea that people who have long resided within the community are entitled to equal citizenship and the rights and obligations that citizenship entails. Perhaps newcomers – recent

[13] Obviously the plummeting favorable evaluations of the U.S. in recent years are worrisome in this regard. According to Pew polls taken prior to the Iraq invasion, pluralist societies in Europe have seen favorable evaluations of the US decline from the 60-85% range to the 25-50% range, and decent societies elsewhere register widespread fears that the US is a military threat to those who pursue non-Western values (Mendelsohn, 2003).

immigrants, guest workers, the young, etc. - must undergo naturalization or maturation processes, but these exist only to prepare newcomers for full citizenship, to familiarize them with their fundamental rights and commensurate obligations, and not to create a permanent group of "second-class citizens" or "alien residents" with lesser or no rights.

Such ideas are widely accepted within liberal pluralist societies, as restrictions on various kinds of people within the community (e.g., in the US on African Americans, Native Americans, and women and in other pluralist countries on people of various ethnic backgrounds and religious orientations) have been eased and eliminated. Moreover, citizen rights - especially political and legal rights -- are fairly extensive. Of course, within this consensus, there is extensive and important conflict over the precise delineation of citizen rights and obligations and over exceptions to equal provision of rights and imposition of equal duties on all subgroups.[14] But the ideas brought to bear on these issues do not endanger pluralism.

For pluralism, two kinds of citizenship issues seem particularly dangerous. First, extremists on the right might put forth ideas identifying certain kinds of people as privileged in ways that exempt them from equal obligations under the law or other kinds of people as so unworthy that they should be denied equal rights. Obviously, this dangerous idea is illustrated by the notion that we should deny certain legal rights to those Americans having similar racial, ethnic, or religious backgrounds as those with whom we are at war. Second, extremists on the left may make exaggerated rights claims and deny or forget the commensurability between citizen rights and obligations. While political theorists have normally understood that all rights entail corresponding obligations - for example, the right of people to a jury trial requires that citizens accept the civic obligation to be jurors - pluralist societies are challenged by demands for increasing rights (e.g., the right to health care) while citizens simultaneously disparage, deny, and avoid their corresponding obligations (e., to pay taxes to cover costs of providing such rights).

Decent but nonpluralist societies may be able to endure somewhat more extreme ideas of citizenship. They may, for example, have very closed immigration laws, denying citizenship to outsiders who are of different racial and religious backgrounds as most existing citizens. Or they may have some restrictions on citizens' political rights, restrictions that are more burdensome to some members of the community than others.[15] Or they may incorporate beliefs that there are various classes of citizenship. Perhaps people in a decent society accept the idea that only native-born men are privileged citizens, entitled to the broadest array of citizens' rights, such as the ability to hold office. As long as those of lesser citizenship status - such as guest workers - are nevertheless provided basic human rights (and have

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[14] Whether subgroups - like Native Americans or the Amish - have group rights that exempt them from certain obligations illustrates this issue (Kymlicka, 1995).

[15] For example, they may prohibit people from forming political parties whose goals would undermine the fundamental orientations of the community.

reduced obligations), decent societies may still be operating within the boundaries that pose no danger to the broader global community.

Decency is, of course, threatened by the idea that certain residents in the community are simply not citizens or are citizens of such reduced status that they are not afforded basic human rights.[16]

Structure. According to the pluralist consensus, each of our communities should have a variety of social, economic, and political structures that provide order and rules of conduct to our lives. Governments (and their military forces), business organizations, unions, churches, schools, and families are among the most important such institutions.

Central to pluralist societies is that these structures should be countervailing powers to one another, ensuring that no one institution dominates people's lives (Walzer, 1983). Pluralists believe in civilian control over the armed forces, to prevent militarism. They seek mixed political economies where governments check the power of corporations and unions, which in turn check each other's power. They preach separation of church and state, not simply to prevent church domination of government, but so that government does not dominate the religious sphere. Families are too limited in their powers to control pluralist governments, and such governments have constitutional provisions that limit their infringement on "the private affairs" within the family.

However, this broad philosophical consensus on the idea of countervailing structures does not curtail conflict within pluralist societies about the precise balance of power among institutions. Elected officials within government can exercise greater or lesser control over the military. Governments generally may place more or less regulations over corporate and union activities, and these business organizations may have greater or less influence in government. Governments can try to place greater or lesser controls over religious expression, and religious organizations can seek various levels of penetration of pluralist governments. But these conflicts - when properly bounded - are all part of "politics as usual" within pluralism.

Danger occurs when structural balances of power are so weakened that one institution becomes dominant within the community. The idea that the military, the police, and other security forces must be given relatively uncontrolled power to thwart terrorism or disorder is anathema to pluralism. The idea that capitalist institutions should be free of governmental control or that governments should own and control the means of production are beyond the bounds of moderation that are required by a pluralist political economy - whether this economy be global, national, or local.[17] The ideas that "churches must come under state control" or that "there

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[16] Specification of basic human rights is a topic beyond the scope of this paper, but useful delineation of such rights is provided by Rawls (1999: 65) and in the 1948 UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

[17] Globalization has given rise to the "globalist" ideology that claims that unregulated capitalism is universally beneficial (Steger, 2001: 43-80). And an influential "economistic"

should be a state religion" also are beyond the bounds of moderation that are required by a pluralist community.

Still, in pluralist societies government must be seen as strong and authoritative relative to other institutions. The necessary authority of the state is zapped if central governments are under siege from other institutions in ways that make them unable to regulate crime, drugs, weapons, and money (Zakaria, 2003). Danger exists when the state is seen as so weak that it cannot perform its necessary functions.

However, compared to pluralist societies, decent societies may have a wider array of acceptable ideas regarding social structures. The armed forces, of course, are dominant under military rule, but a society under military rule might be decent if it does not undermine other institutions and maintains basic human rights. In theocracies, a particular church becomes dominant, but that dominance may not involve suppressing other institutions. And theocracies that provide basic religious rights to persons who worship outside of the state-sponsored religion can be decent societies. Socialist societies may have dominant governments that plan and control the economy, but still allow significant market activity. Socialist governments that provide certain property and economic rights can be decent. Capitalist societies may have corporations and other private business organizations that dominate the production and distribution of material goods, but if these economic institutions are subject to certain minimal governmental controls, and if government is strong enough to provide sufficient political and human rights, the society can still be decent.

While decent societies might survive large imbalances in the power and role of various social structures, ideas calling for the abolition of long-standing structures can transform a decent society to an outlaw state. When various institutions – whether they are governments, military forces, political parties, corporations, labor organizations, or churches -- become so powerful that they are unchecked by other social structures, they seldom remain benevolent. To retain their power, they typically restrict human rights. To enlarge they power, they usually become aggressive towards other political communities.

Rulers. Despite loose talk about the universal acceptance of democratic systems of selecting rulers and of democratic processes for ruling a society, there is much more philosophical consensus supporting "polyarchial" systems of governance than "democratic" ones. In a polyarchy the most powerful rulers are representatives of the public who are accountable to citizens through regular elections, and the power of any person or group within government is limited through constitutional and institutional provisions (Dahl, 1989: 218-24). The "democratic" consensus within liberal or pluralist societies is actually an agreement on the attractions of polyarchy.

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perspective on city politics claims that governments need to underwrite capitalism (rather than regulate it), in order to serve the collective interests of the city (Peterson, 1981). Such ideas threaten the countervailing power of government over capitalist institutions that is an essential of a pluralist mixed political economy.

Within pluralist societies, there is often conflict about whether the best system of governance is aristocratic republicanism or democratic republicanism (Dahl, 1989: 24-28). Aristocratic republicanism, which traces its roots to Edmund Burke and Alexander Hamilton, stresses the importance of strong leadership - of empowering those with the most wisdom, knowledge, and virtue and insisting that such persons exercise "independent judgment" when governing rather than pandering to ill informed public prejudices. Democratic republicanism, which traces its roots to Jefferson and early British liberals, stresses the importance of responding to the preferences of citizens. As democratic norms have spread and deepened, democratic republicanism has also taken the form of demands that marginalized groups be more fully included in the political process and that the political agenda be expanded to address their concerns (Guidry and Sawyer, 2003). Debate often rages within pluralist societies over issues regarding such matters as the frequency and form of elections and the legitimacy of disruptive protest as a vehicle for including marginal groups in political decision-making , but when the debate occurs within the range between aristocratic republicanism and democratic republicanism, pluralism itself is unchallenged.

Three kinds of ideas about rulers are dangerous for pluralism. First are conspiratorial ideas inferring that democracy is a sham. Conspiratorial ideas play on fears that the government is controlled by some sort of hidden elite - that there exists an International Zionist Occupied Government (IZOG), or a cabal of Transnational Corporate (TNC) elites, or a group of communists within government, etc. - that make irrelevant formal institutional or electoral restraints on rulers. Widespread belief in such conspiratorial theories are dangerous because they undermine the legitimacy of the existing regime and encourage citizens to support demagogues who claim the need to work outside existing restraints to eliminate the conspiratorial threat.

Second are elitist ideas that carry the need for strong leadership and expertise beyond the limits of aristocratic republicanism. Pluralist nations can, for example, call for an unrestrained president - one capable of pushing aside legislative and judicial restraints or one who is able to turn elections into a plebiscite endorsing his "emergency powers" rather than a genuine contested election in which citizens can hold an "imperial president" accountable. International organizations are frequently said to be governed by elites whose deliberations are closed to non-business interests and who are unaccountable to citizens.

Third are populist ideas that carry the idea of democracy beyond the limits of democratic republicanism. Populist ideas claim that "the popular will" is the true basis of governance and is beyond any restriction. The dangers of populism are well stated by William Riker (1982: 249),

> "With a populist interpretation of voting, it is easy for rulers to believe their programs are the 'true' will of the people and hence more precious than the constitution and free elections. Populism reinforces the normal arrogance of rulers with a built-in justification for tyranny, the contemporary version of the divine right of rulers. The main threat to democracy from populism is

not, however, the exceptional temptation to subvert elections but the exceptional ability to do so. Populist institutions depend on the elimination of constitutional restraints, and the populist interpretation of voting justifies this elimination. With the restraints removed, it is easy to change electoral arrangements, which is why populist democracies so often revert to autocracies.

Over reliance on referenda and initiatives can thwart the deliberation, compromise, and long-term planning that pluralism requires. And over-use of recalls (and impeachment) can result in rulers being removed from office because they make hard but unpopular decisions (rather than because of corruption, illegal actions, or incompetence).

These threats to pluralist societies may not, however, undermine the viability of a decent society. Autocrats, such as imperial presidents or other leaders who dominate political power, may not use that power to restrict human rights or act aggressively toward other nations. And super-empowered popular majorities, even if freed of constitutional restrictions, may not restrict minority rights within their communities.

Autocratic regimes, however, can turn into indecent outlaw regimes when there is widespread belief that it is acceptable for unrestrained and unaccountable leaders to crush dissent within their societies or to mobilize their people for aggression against outsiders. Populist regimes can also become indecent when citizens use their direct power to suppress civil liberties and to pursue aggression. Some societies may remain decent only because they lack strong democratic institutions that would empower angry citizens with aggressive fundamentalist and nationalist goals (Weissman, 2003). In short, simple-minded notions of democracy – that countries should be ruled by majorities of citizens, even if those citizens lack democratic norms of extensive equal political rights and of peaceful resolution of conflict – can be a grave danger to a well-ordered global community.

Authority. Within liberal pluralist societies, there is consensus that the authority of government should be significant but limited. Both pluralist and decent states must have the effective authority to cope with a wide array of social, economic, and security problems, and they are endangered by a breakdown of these capacities (Skocpol, 1994). Although the authority of the state in pluralist societies is limited, to ensure sufficient freedom for citizens to pursue their happiness and life plans, it is understood that government authority needs to be exercised in ways that constrain freedom in order to pursue concerns about justice and morality.

As John Stuart Mill (1859) argued long ago, liberal morality traditionally accepts governmental authority that restricts individual freedom only at that point where it infringes on other's freedoms and rights. But deeper moral systems central to conservative and socialist thought would restrict human freedom in order to pursue human goodness, social justice, and our obligations to various communities, humanity, and nature. In order to promote human goodness or "perfection," pluralistic governmental authority can be used to enact and enforce some

paternalistic laws and policies intended to prevent individuals from harming themselves and to encourage their intellectual and moral development. In order to promote social justice, pluralistic governmental authorities can restrict economic freedoms and property rights. In order to protect society and the environment, pluralist societies can restrict many other individual freedoms. Of course, libertarians within pluralism will contest such restrictions, but they are not dismissed out-of-hand as beyond the proper scope of governmental authority. Within pluralism there is extensive conflict over the extensiveness of governmental authority and individual freedom, and ideas calling for greater uses of governmental authority or greater freedoms for the individual are simply part of pluralist politics as usual.

However, pluralism is threatened by widely accepted strong libertarian ideas that would greatly limit the role of governmental authority in limiting freedom to pursue moral concerns. Similarly, pluralism is threatened by strong moralistic ideas that would have governmental authority impose extensive moral restraints that are not widely accepted within the community, that go beyond traditional moral values (MacIntyre, 1981) or beyond the democratically derived moral restrictions achieved by republican processes (Sandel, 1996).

Decent societies can be more libertarian or moralistic than pluralist ones. Libertarian societies could accept ideas that would have governments do little beyond protect basic human rights and ensure that their societies not become sanctuaries for terrorist and other violent groups with aggressive aims on their fellow citizens and other societies. Decent libertarian societies, however, are threatened by anarchistic ideas that government authority has no legitimate claim on individual autonomy, and would thus harbor groups that violate human rights and have aggressive and violent aims. Moralistic societies could (reluctantly) accept governments that would restrict human freedoms for reasons that authoritarian rulers believe are necessary for human goodness, social harmony, or environmental survival. But when these restrictions are so extensive that they violate human rights, decent societies can become dangerous totalitarian ones.

Justice. Pluralist societies accept that justice is a complex concept involving a variety of tradeoffs. Pluralists uphold the importance of legal justice – of providing formal and regularized procedures and equal treatment under the law. Pluralists also uphold market justice (Lane, 1986), the idea that unequal incomes, wealth and property are legitimate if they have been achieved by processes of production and exchange that reflect the willing choices of individuals and are free of coercion and exploitation (Nozick, 1974). But fair legal procedures and market exchanges must be complemented with other principles of justice involving equality, desert, and need (Miller, 1999). In pluralist societies, some policies provide certain social goods (like basic education) equally to everyone, other social goods (like welfare) to those in greatest need, and still other social goods (like administrative offices) to those who deserve them given their qualifications. In pluralist society, no single conception of justice is viewed as universally valid, and pluralist politics involves continuous conflict over the emphasis given to various justice principles.

Forgetting, denying, or ignoring the importance of each of these aspects of complex justice endangers pluralism. Suspension of the rule of law and its accompanying ideas such as due process -- perhaps because of perceived "emergency conditions" -- can threaten pluralism. Or excessive cynicism about the law - widely accepted understandings that legal codes are created by special powerful interests and intended to further their interests (rather than being the product of reasonable political deliberation intended to produce rules serving the public interest) - can lead to disrespect for and disobedience of the law that can disrupt a well-ordered pluralist society.

Pluralist societies can threaten a well-ordered global community if their leaders believe that international law is so flawed as to be nonbinding on them. Perhaps pluralist societies can still claim to be decent societies if they ignore or violate international laws to deal with extraordinary emergencies, but if they do so when there is no compelling international threat or simply because they declare themselves above international law, they begin to resemble outlaw nations and endanger a stable international order.[18]

Pluralism can also be threatened by cynicism about market justice - that the market rewards deception, fraud, exploitation, etc. while failing to reward hard work, innovation, and producing goods and services that people want and need - can lead to the withdrawal of support for free enterprise. However, excessive celebration of the virtues of the free market and the way it distributes income and wealth can lead to forgetting the importance of equality and need-based distributions as important aspects of a just pluralist society.

Once again, decent societies can have less complete understandings of justice. They can be quicker to suspend aspects of legal justice, in order to deal with threats to their stability. They may be very enthusiastic about market justice, developing norms that accept the wide inequalities produced by market exchanges and that support few communal provisions or welfare benefits. Or they may be quite hostile to market justice, developing norms that greatly redistribute the inequalities in the market. But if such attitudes coexist with the understanding that society must recognize a sufficient level of human rights - both welfare rights and property rights - the basic decency of these societies is little threatened.

Decency is threatened, however, by forgetting certain dimensions of complex justice and supporting ideas that undermine these dimensions. Legal justice is threatened if people accept "kleptocracy" (Friedman, 1999: 146-160), the use of governmental authority for corrupt, arbitrary and self-serving purposes. Market justice, and the economic freedoms it allows, is threatened by the idea that justice can be reduced to simple equality - that everyone has a right to equal incomes and wealth regardless of their contributions to the production and distribution of economic goods. Social justice - and the provision of certain goods equally to

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[18] The dangers of unilateralism, even in the context of unipolar power, are discussed by John Ikenberry (2003).

everyone by virtue of their equal citizenship and the provision of other types of welfare services to people because of their extraordinary needs - is threatened by the idea that justice is nothing more than legal or "formal" equal opportunity to participate in the marketplace. Monistic acceptance of the ideas of either market justice or social justice are anathema to pluralism and decency because they deny the human rights associated with economic freedom or of providing for basic human needs.

Change. Pluralist politics requires widespread belief in the ideas that economic, social, and political changes are sometimes beneficial, and that adequate and legitimate processes are in place to bring about desirable change through peaceful means. Ideas about how much reform and what kind of reform (on issues regarding community, structure, rulers, citizens, authority, and justice) are, of course, the ordinary stuff of pluralist politics, and - as discussed above - the many conflicts and disagreements over these matters ensure there will be "no end of history" but perennial ideological battles within pluralist societies.

Some ideas seem contrary to the ideal of pluralist reform, but are probably not dangerous. The "reactionary" right may suggest that "the past was better than the present, and should be recaptured," but this idea only reminds us that "re-form" can involve a return to an original or prior condition,[19] as well as progressive and "modernizing" improvements that attack current ills in the name of a better future. Perhaps pluralist reform is challenged by the conservative ideas that "the present is the best of all possible worlds" and that any reform will have dysfunctional consequences for society and thus must be abandoned. However, such ideas can be interpreted as little more than cautionary arguments that opponents of reforms will bring to pluralist debates; even if such ideas are potent in the context in which they are raised, it is difficult to see how pluralist change is forever thwarted by such notions.

Pluralism is threatened when resistance to change goes too far. Vilifying, discrediting, and outlawing new social movements and political parties (pursuing acceptable pluralist goals) not only impedes desirable change but may violate political rights central to pluralism. Pluralist reform is also endangered by calls to use repression against dissent and nonviolent disruption - such as demonstrations and boycotts -- used by protesters and other relatively powerless groups within a pluralist society. On the other hand, dissenters go too far when they believe that tactics involving destruction and violence are necessary to bring about their desired changes.[20]

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[19] Indeed, the first great reform tradition in the West, the Protestant Reformation, was precisely about this kind of reform - that Luther and other reformers sought to reclaim the earlier Augustinian Christian institutions.

[20] Some white nationalists embrace racial holy war (RAHOWA) and some Islamic fundamentalists embrace jihad as "benevolent executions" and "spiritual cleanings."

Pluralist societies are threatened by extremist ideas about the role of violence, both in terms of bringing about chanage and maintaining stability. The belief in the necessity of violence by advocates of radial change forgets that democracy is a peaceful means of resolving conflicts - that pluralist politics involves persuasion, voting, and other non-forceful means to bring about change. Equally dangerous, however, is the idea of pacifism, if that idea extends to forgetting the role of the police and military in maintaining the peace. Criminals and outlaw nations must be kept at bay by the self-defense capabilities of effective pluralist and decent societies (Rawls, 1999: 94-104)

Decent societies can be challenged both by ideas that would lift them into liberal pluralist societies and by ideas that could prompt their decline into outlaw states. Groups and social movements that seek to transform a decent authoritarian regime into a liberal democracy would obviously endanger the old regime, and the authorities of such a regime may try to discredit and suppress these movements. The question that pluralist societies must confront is whether they should support the liberal challengers to a decent regime. Because the liberal challengers "stand for" ideals that are more defensible than the practices of the decent regime and because the world order would be improved by an increase in the number of nations committed to pluralism, it would be difficult for those in pluralist societies not to aid the liberal challengers. However, many hard assessments must be made that could lead to the judgment that the challengers pose more dangers than opportunities for a better world order. Perhaps the rhetoric of the challengers masks their real illiberal intentions. Perhaps authentic challengers lack the capacity to bring pluralism to their countries, and their challenge would only turn the decent regime into a more repressive one. Perhaps the authentic challengers could succeed only with the (military) intervention of other pluralist democracies, and such intervention may be destabilizing to the global order or costly to the other goals of the intervening democracy. In short, liberal challenges to decent societies pose questions that cannot be answered in the abstract by simply applying the concepts from the framework presented here.

However, decent and pluralist societies can be threatened by utopianism and nihilism. Utopian thought focuses on not just an improved future but a perfect one, and holds to the possibility that all social ills and human shortcomings can be redeemed. Utopians believe that existing institutions and practices that stand in the way of redemption should be dismantled or that the current generation should endure great hardships in order to secure utopia for their children.[21] Nihilist thought focuses on the present, and finds pluralist institutions like capitalism and democracy so oppressive and/or the existing liberal culture so repulsive that any means of their destruction is justified, regardless of what would replace them in the future. The changes sought by utopians and nihilists go beyond the reforms that are acceptable

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[21] The envisioned utopias seem never to materialize, perhaps because the utopia is flawed in theory as well as thwarted in practice by the dubious real motives of those who paint a pretty utopian picture. See Z (1990) and Glenn Tinder (1991: 188-94) for discussions of the difficulties of "the politics of redemption."

within pluralism, and they often believe tactics involving destruction and violence are necessary to bring about their desired changes.[22]

For a well-ordered global society, danger lies with utopian, nihilistic, and violent groups and organizations having goals that threaten human rights and would use (the formerly) decent society as a harbor for terrorism and other forms of aggression.

Dangerous Philosophical Orientations

Human Nature. Pluralism thrives and decency is furthered when people have weak assumptions about human equality, capacities, and motivations.[23] The rights provided and protected by pluralist and decent governments are based on the belief that humans are in some basic sense equal, but there is no need for consensus about the underlying basis of that equality. The ideas that "we are all children of God" or "we are all connected to a collective unconscious" may generate necessary belief in basic human equality, but secularists may reject such religious and spiritual foundations and instead base human equality on such beliefs as "we are all equally material beings, whose suffering of pain and capacity for pleasure, deserves equal consideration" or "we are all equal in our being members of this society." Efforts to secure consensus about the proper bases for belief in basic human equality may be dangerous to pluralism and decency because they are likely to involve repressive programs seeking to impose such beliefs on others.

Greater danger resides in beliefs that stress certain human qualities and capacities. On the one hand, the notion that humans are inherently evil or depraved often leads to support to highly coercive institutions with the capacity to control these alleged defects in humanity. On the other hand, the notion that humans are inherently good (and behave badly only because of alleged defects in social, economic, and political structures), often leads to anarchist notions about the need to destroy such institutions and to utopian notions about the natural harmony among humans that is possible without pluralist institutions.

Of course, humans have different talents which can and should be acknowledged, but danger resides in broad generalizations stressing a particular talent (such as intelligence) as the sole indicator of human excellence and believing that there is greater inequality in the distribution of such talents across groupings (like race and sex) than within these grouping. Also dangerous is the idea that there are fundamental inequalities in human ability to do good or resist evil. The idea that some sorts of people are sons/daughters of God or are chosen by God while others

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[22] Communism may have been the deadliest utopian fantasy, responsible for 60-100 million deaths (Rauch, 2003).

[23] To some extent, this section on philosophical orientations is inspired by Stephen K. White (2000) and his discussion of "weak ontology." Like White, I regard philosophical foundations as contestable commitments that underlie political principles but that lack "solid truth."

are offspring of Satan endangers pluralism and decency. Particularly dangerous are widespread characterizations of a group of people in dehumanized terms – as "pigs," "infidels," "tools of the system," or "puppets of the regime" – as such characterizations enable challenger groups to diminish the moral quandaries involved in using violence against them (Hacker, 1996:162)

Danger also resides in assumptions about human motivation that are overly restrictive. Liberalism assumes that we all seek happiness or fulfillment of our life plans, but such assumptions are both highly abstract and framed in a way that allows -- and indeed demands --freedom for humans to live in many different ways. But ideas that humans should be motivated toward communal harmony, union with God, or "perfection" (the highest levels of development on designated human virtues) – no matter how noble these ideas seem to some – can be the basis for totalitarian control over individuals in order to ensure that humans live according to these noble motivations. Such ideas can thus be highly dangerous.

Nature of Society. Pluralism assumes that societies are composed of people having different comprehensive moral doctrines (Rawls, 1992: 36-40), that differences are organized around a variety of temporary social cleavages, and that no cleavage is fundamental. Pluralism also assumes that people are committed to "civil society" – to the importance of many voluntary organizations and groups that people join to give them particular social identities, social purposes, a sense of belonging, and a place for pursuing their common interests.

Danger resides in beliefs that societies are or should be homogenous in belief systems. The ideas that all must devote ourselves to "the communist brotherhood," the "Aryan motherland," or Islam are usually accompanied by the corollary that absence of such devotion is heretical, threatening to the sustenance of true belief by others and thus to social harmony. The stability of pluralist society is built instead on tolerance of heterogeneity in belief systems. While decent societies may encourage more homogeneity than pluralist ones, their commitment to basic human rights can be endangered by intolerant movements.

Danger also resides in the belief that there is in society one overriding social cleavage. The image that society is divided between "us" and "them" is very prominent among the most violent terrorist groups (Hudson, 1999: 11) and provides justification for heinous acts of violence against "them."[24] In pluralism and decent societies, this image can be one of fundamental and persistent racial, ethnic, religious, or class conflict. Here the weaker side of the conflict will usually feel that they are victims of oppression or at least the continuous losers in political and social

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[24] Of course the "us-them" imagery can take the form of outside interveners being regarded as "them" by native peoples. As Jean Knutson (1984) has long argued, such imagery is exacerbated by counter-terrorist policies where the victims of terrorism seek retaliation against terrorists in societies that harbor them. Such policies are viewed as attacks on the religion, culture, and innocent civilians in he homelands of terrorists. To avoid such perceptions, Knutson advocates use of legal, political, financial, and psychological warfare policies that eschew counter-violence.

battles. And the stronger side will often fear loss of their dominant position in the future. As global society becomes more salient, the image that it is divided between "the West" and "the Rest" can be an extreme danger in hardening lines of conflict (Huntington, 1996).

Another danger is the disappearance of civil society - of many of the voluntary associations below the level of the state but greater than the family. If people lose their appreciation of the value of voluntary associations in their lives and disengage from civic society, the loss of "social capital" can contribute to diminished public spiritedness, social trust, and moderation, and less capacity of societies to solve collective problems. Social transformations that break down civil society have long been understood as major threats to pluralist societies, as disconnected, alienated, and estranged individuals become easy prey to various extremist movements.[25]

Another danger is that civil society could be infiltrated and captured by revolutionary forces, bringing about social and cultural transformations from the bottom up. According to Berman (2003), Egypt, Algeria, and Lebanon illustrate a pattern in which revolutionary Islamists have established voluntary associations that provide a wide variety of health care, housing, employment, and educational services while also indoctrinating citizens and generating extensive social pressure to conform to Islamic norms. In short, the emergence of a non-pluralistic civil society - one dominated by monistic and non-inclusive groups - can endanger pluralist societies.

Ontology. Pluralism thrives when people have thin ontologies, when they understand that their assumptions of ultimate reality (being) and ultimate causes of the future of the world (becoming) are of little relevance to political life. Pluralists do not reject the existence of God or the primacy of the material world, nor to they deny that political events could be influenced by divine or natural forces, but they insist that humans can resist these forces and attempt to make their worlds in a manner of their own choosing.[26] Pluralists assume that human ideas are a fundamental part of the world and have an existence independent of either supernatural or material reality. They also assume that these ideas will influence the future of the world, but which ideas will prevail is undermined, but will depend on human choices and the resources that humans bring to bear on furthering these choices.

Within pluralist societies, some individuals can believe that supernatural entities like God or other spiritual forces comprise ultimate reality. Others can

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[25] Robert Putnam (2000) argues that civil society has been breaking down for many decades, though he believes that are signs of its rejuvenation. This view is contested, however, by Fukuyama (1999).

[26] Perhaps the best articulation of this idea is by T.H. Huxley (1888) who insisted that even if evolution was influenced by the struggle for existence and the survival of the strongest, human societies could choose to follow socialist values of cooperation and helping the weak survive.

believe that reality is nothing but material objects. Still others can be Platonists who believe that ideas and ideals (forms of perfection) are the ultimate realities. For pluralism, danger resides in widespread insistence in a particular conception of ultimate being and a desire to impose this belief on all members of society.

More dangerous, however, are ontologies of becoming, such as Marxist notions of economic determinism or fundamentalist notions of divine determinism. Although neo-Marxists seldom cling to the orthodox interpretation of Marx (that history must take a path determined by economic laws that lead inevitably to the downfall of capitalism and the emergence of a communist utopia), a sort of economic determinism has re-emerged in the ideas of free-market globalists, who claim that the elimination of governmental restraints on global trade and investment is both inevitable and irreversible (Steger, 2001: 47-61). Such an idea is dangerous both because its belief would diminish the capacity of democratic governments to pursue goals that are contrary to those imposed by "the iron straight-jacket" of global capitalism (Friedman, 1999: 101-111) and because capitulation to the "inevitability" of global capitalism is likely to strengthen extremist forces on both the left and the right who oppose the expansion of globalism.

Extremists on the right – the fundamentalists of various religions – of course have their own determinist ontology: that the will and power of God (or Yahweh or Allah) will determine one's fate and history. One well-known version of divine determinism assumes that a Supreme Power will reward martyrs in service of His Will with a home in eternal paradise (Heaven), which obviously encourages suicide bombers to endanger pluralist and decent societies. Another version of divine determinism includes the idea that an apocalypse is arriving, which will be a day of reckoning between the forces of goodness and evil, and the good shall prevail. Such an idea endangers pluralist (and probably decent) regimes because its acceptance encourages believers to submit to those religious authorities who claim to provide a path for salvation when the day of reckoning arrives. At such a point, societies would be governed by claims of divine truth rather than the more limited claims of political knowledge.[27]

Epistemology. Pluralists rejects the idea of certainty for tentative knowledge. While "relativism," "skepticism," value noncognitivism" and other terms are often used to express the pluralist epistemological outlook,[28] pluralism does not require – and indeed must reject -- complete uncertainty about political truths. Pluralists are confident that pluralist societies are better than decent ones, and that

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[27] Religious terrorist groups and millenarian cults are especially dangerous because their aims are beyond even radical political goals such as separatism; thus, they may be undeterred from using weapons of mass destruction for fear to alienating the social support necessary to achieve political aims (Hudson, 1999: 45-47).

[28] Glen Tinder (1991: 225-38) endorses the concept of "humane uncertainty" to express liberalism's distain for claims to ultimate truth. George Soros (1998) endorses the concepts of "fallibility" and "open society" to capture Karl Popper's insistence on human imperfection in our search for ultimate truth.

decent societies are better than outlaw states (Rawls, 1999: 62). Pluralists can agree with Fukuyama that philosophical reflection affirms the values of freedom and equality and the virtues of democratic capitalism. But pluralists are always skeptical of Universal Truth, that there is some source of knowledge greater than the agreements reached by well-informed and thoughtful people after careful consideration of all points of views. Because pluralist knowledge is based on social understandings, and because these understandings can never be assumed in all places and in all times, such knowledge is always assumed to be tentative or capable of improved (and even radically different) understandings.

Pluralism is endangered by claims to absolute knowledge, whatever the source of that knowledge. Pluralists may believe in "the Divine Law," but they are skeptical that God's will is perfectly revealed in sacred texts or by the prophets and authorities of various religious traditions. Pluralists may believe that scientific procedure are the best method of attaining knowledge of this world, but they are skeptical that science has revealed the ultimate truth of nature. Pluralist may believe that democratic processes are the best way of arriving at decisions that embrace the "common good," but they are skeptical that "the will of the public" is some objective measure of the common good. Religious fundamentalism, scientism, and populism - when they become ideologies that claim that religion, science, and democracy are ultimate and absolute authorities -- are all dangerous to pluralism.

But just as pluralism is endangered by such authoritarianisms, so is it endangered by extreme skepticism - the belief that there is no basis for knowledge or truth, that one set of values and institutions is thus as good as another, that humans cannot distinguish good and evil, or that fascism and communism are morally equivalent to liberal and pluralist politics. Such skepticism leads to embracing pure power politics. Skeptics become cynics when they see domestic politics as nothing but a struggle for power among various interests; they see powerful interests as having no moral authority and their policies as having no legitimacy. Skeptics also become cynics when they see global politics as nothing but a struggle for power among various countries, each in pursuit of their national interests; if those countries with supreme or superior power are unrestrained by the political and moral consensual understandings that are the bases of international law and organizations, their applications of power will be interpreted as oppressive and dangerous to the global community.

In short, moral and political knowledge is based on social agreements that find there way into "social contracts," constitutions, laws, and international agreements and treaties. While these agreements may be imperfect expressions of "Truth" (of what is absolutely best for nations or the global community), they provide a tentative consensus on right and wrong conduct that can only be revised by parties to the agreements in light of new conditions and understandings. Absolutist claims to knowledge "higher" than these social understandings and nihilist rejection of the worth of these social understandings are the greatest dangers to political order.

Summary and Conclusions

Table 1 summarizes those political ideas that are dangerous to pluralist and decent societies. Table 2 summarizes dangerous philosophical assumptions that can undermine a well-ordered global society. The conclusions provided here and the broader conceptual framework that led to these conclusions are intended as mere beginnings for analyses leading to more accurate anticipations of the dangers that might confront America and its global interests in the years ahead.

If this analysis captures the range of dangerous thoughts that most concern us, the next step might be to consider how these dangerous ideas are interconnected to form ideologies that reinforce and give even greater intensity to these notions (Monroe and Kreidie, 1997). These ideas can be combined in many ways. Two possible highly general ideologies can be defined for illustrative purposes.

Religious fundamentalisms - whether Islamic, Hindu, Jewish, Christian, or otherwise - become dangerous when based on philosophical assumptions that the Divine Will has been reveled in sacred texts and will determines history, that humans are unequal in their devotion to Divine Will, and that society is thus divided between "us" who are good, and "them" who are bad. Such philosophical foundations lead to political principles that affirm a religious identity that overwhelms other community identities, that denies citizen rights to the unfaithful, that aspires to theocratic structures, that empower religious authorities as rulers who are unchecked by constitutional or electoral constraints, who use their political authority to impose excessive controls on individual liberty in the name of religious morality, who use legal justice to punish the unfaithful, and who - in sum - seek a religious utopia through violent means.[29]

Neo-anarchists - those who threaten pluralism and decency from the Left - are dangerous when they adopt philosophical assumptions that deny the existence of any political knowledge based on social understandings, that regard history as determined by the repressive power of the economically successful, that view humans as inherently good but corrupted by social divisions enabling the propertied classes to oppress and demoralize the propertyless masses. Such philosophical assumptions lead to political principles that reject identification with all political communities (save for small face-to-face communes), a conspiratorial theory about who really rules, a rejection of the legitimacy of governmental authorities and thus of citizens' obligations to obey such authorities, a view that legal justice is simply a system of rules that benefit the powerful and that market justice is a cover for exploitation. In sum, neo-anarchism have a series of nihilist views that reject and would destroy all existing systems.

After such ideologies are define, the next step in anticipating future dangers to America and its global interests is to identify the various expressions, languages, and narratives that are used to articulate these ideas throughout the world. It would be

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[29] Philip Jenkins (2002: 54) argues that such ideas will be the "prime animating and destructive force in human affairs" during the 21st century.

Table 1

Good, Acceptable, and Dangerous Political Ideas

	The Pluralist Consensus on Good Ideas	Range of Ideas Acceptable within Pluralism	Ideas Dangerous to Pluralism, but perhaps not Decency	Ideas Dangerous to Pluralist & Decent Societies
Community	Multiple identities & obligations	Strengthening or weakening various communities	Separatism; Nativism	National superiority or inferiority; Unilateralism
Citizens	Equal citizenship with equal rights and obligations	Extent of equal rights & obligations; Subgroup exceptions	Denial of equal rights; Forgetting commensurability between rights & obligations	Denial of basic human rights
Structures	Various institutions with countervailing power	Extend to which various institutions can have power over or within other institutions	Believing some institutions (other than nation-state) should become dominant	Accepting unchecked dominant institution
Rulers	Powerful officials constrained by electoral accountability & constitutions	Extent of aristocratic vs. democratic republicanism	Conspiracy theories; Unrestrained elitism or populism	Unrestrained rulers who crush dissent and mobilize citizens for aggression
Authority	Limited government that allows extensive freedom but with capacity to restrict freedom for moral purposes	Extent of legislation of morality	Strong libertarianism; Strong moralism	Anarchy; Totalitarianism
Justice	Rule of law; Multiple principles of distribution	Emphasis given to competing principles of justice	Suspension of rule of law; Cynicism about market and/or social justice	Kleptocracy; Complete rejection of market and/or social justice & international laws
Change	Reform is possible and sometimes desirable	Extensiveness and direction of reform	Repression of dissent: Violence and pacifism	(liberalism); Utopianism; Nihilism

Table 2

Beneficial and Dangerous Philosophical Assumptions

	Beneficial	Dangerous
Human Nature	Basic human dignity and equality	One correct basis of human equality; Humans inherently evil or good; Fundamental human inequalities based on ascriptive traits; Narrow conceptions of human motivations and purposes
Nature of Society	Existence of diversity Cross-cutting social cleavages Importance of civil society	Societies should be homogeneous; Existence of over-riding social cleavage; Decay or capture of civil society
Ontology	Thin ontological beliefs Human choices and resources affect fate of world.	Insistence on particular conception of ultimate reality; Economic determinism; Divine determinism
Epistemology	Emphasis on social understanding and agreement Tentative knowledge Doubt of universal truth	Divine Revelation; Scientism; Authority of popular choice; Extreme skepticism

useful for observers trained in many disciplines and having various local and regional expertise to describe local articulations of these ideas and the kinds of people and organizations who provide these articulations. It would be useful to learn what articulations have been most successful in mobilizing support for these ideas.

It would also be useful to learn the economic, social, and political conditions that have lead to the diffusion of these ideas and to the accelerating receptivity to these ideas among various audiences. Perhaps the most important hypothesis that needs extensive investigation is whether the economic and cultural forces that accompany globalization - whether the institutions and ideas that Fukuyama identifies as central to universal acceptance of democratic capitalism - are instead encouraging the diffusion of dangerous ideas antithetical to democratic capitalism (Keohane, 2001).[30] A related important hypothesis is whether new technologies like the Internet is increasing or decreasing the spread of dangerous ideas. While the Internet has usually been seen as a vehicle for transparency and the democratization of information (Friedman, 1999-60-72), it can also be seen as a vehicle for spreading and generating intense support for dangerous ideas (Swain, 2001: 30-33).

Finally, it would be especially important to discover what kinds of counter-measures can be taken to prevent this diffusion. Since it is doubtful that the diffusion of dangerous ideas can be prevented by coercive and military means, an especially challenging idea for Americans is to conceive effective strategies that honor and preserve our own liberal and pluralist traditions.

[30] There is some evidence terrorism is more rooted in religious and political fanaticism than in economic deprivation, and thus that the higher standards of living that accompany the spread of liberalism will not reduce the spread of dangerous ideas (Krueger and Maleckova, 2002).

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