

The End of E Pluribus Unum

By [Daniel Mallock](#) (July 2018)



Jeremiah Lamenting the Destruction of Jerusalem, Rembrandt, 1630

The foundation of the United States, a country built on (legal) immigrants, with its statue in New York harbor welcoming those of the human race who would legitimately come here to make a life, accept and defend our constitution, and appreciate the freedoms that our democratic system provides—is unity. In no other way can a society of any stripe thrive and survive with an ever-growing collection of self-conscious members of subset groups.

There is just one group, and this has been the case since the founding, it is called “American.” All other subgroups, all other identities are meant to be subsumed in the greater self-identification of “citizen of the United States.”



E Pluribus Unum appears prominently in the national seal. Translated from Latin it means “out of many, one.” The founders understood that the future of the United States was dependent upon a perpetual appreciation by its citizens of the supersedence of the national identity above all other sub-identities. The country is a polyglot, a “melting pot,” a conglomeration of people who all are meant to understand, appreciate, and defend the freedoms that we have, how we got them, the sacrifices made to keep them and, now, most importantly, what must be done to retain our national cohesion and thereby our existence.

This vitally necessary ideal sublimation of group identities into a national whole—based upon the acknowledgment of the critical importance of unity and the exceptional value of

sustaining the American revolutionary experiment in freedom and democracy—is not an easy thing. Jefferson’s [comment](#) to Lafayette (April 2, 1790), made during the hopeful early days of the French Revolution, that “we are not to expect to be translated from despotism to liberty in a feather-bed” is still pertinent. Nobody ever said that democracy would be easy.

The greatest challenge in sustaining American democracy is two-fold: first, is an unending appreciation of the absolute necessity for national unity (and the necessary self-acknowledgement from all citizens that no sub-group identity supersedes that of “American citizen”). Secondly, and equally as important, is toleration of political differences within the political life of the country. Jefferson knew that this would be an enormous challenge, as did his friend John Adams. After the bitterly divisive presidential election of 1800 in which Thomas Jefferson defeated Adams, the new president spoke of the divisiveness in national politics. Until recent days this election was the leading template for electoral partisan acrimony in this country. In his [first inaugural address](#), March 4, 1801, Jefferson acknowledged the political divide that had been created during the election which the country had no option but to put behind it. He said:

Let us, then, fellow-citizens, unite with one heart and one mind. Let us restore to social intercourse that harmony and affection without which liberty and even life itself are but dreary things.

. . .

We are all Republicans, we are all Federalists. If there be any among us who would wish to dissolve this Union or to change its republican form, let them stand undisturbed

as monuments of the safety with which error of opinion may be tolerated where reason is left free to combat it.

What makes the American political community? Not so many things:

- love of country;
- respect and reverence for the Constitution.

A citizen and participant in the political life of the country *must* believe these things.

Those lacking these beliefs do not understand the country, the democracy, the Constitution, American history, and world history, nor do they comprehend a national political life based on an open and free discourse of ideas. Other motives are possible, of course, all of them negative.

Consider the disastrous consequences of the rejection of the E Pluribus Unum unifying concept by one of the two great political parties of the United States. This is no rhetorical matter but a true problem of national politics and culture of the present moment.

In such a scenario that now plays out in the media and from public platforms throughout the society all the way down to restaurant tables and private discourse is the root of the greatest fears of the founders and other leaders of our history—that the country's greatest danger is not external but resides here at home. Lincoln saw similar fault lines building in 1858. In a [speech](#) delivered to the Republican State Convention in Springfield, Illinois, Lincoln warned ominously

that “a house divided against itself cannot stand.”

In 1870, in a letter to a former colleague, Robert E. Lee wrote that, though history gives us cause for hope, “we often see only the ebb of the advancing wave and are thus discouraged.” As political division continues to grow in the United States, the wave advancing toward us is clear for all to see; and it is with a certainty that the majority are discouraged.

A June 27th [Rasmussen poll](#) shows that “thirty-one percent (31%) of likely U.S. Voters say it’s likely that the United States will experience a second civil war sometime in the next five years, with 11% who say it’s Very Likely (*sic*).” Later, in the same poll summary, there is this:

Fifty-one percent (51%) of voters also agree with the Democratic gubernatorial candidate from Wisconsin who said last week that his party is ‘[pickled in identity politics and victimology](#).’

Many fear that the lessons of history go largely “unlearned.” While experiences of the past stand as a stark warning they also provide guidance on resolving the dangerous and difficult challenges of today.





In 1912, the cornerstone for a [monument](#) to Confederate war dead was laid at Arlington National Cemetery.

Arlington is the national cemetery of the United States—how is it possible that soldiers of the Confederacy could be honored, and eulogized by American presidents no less, at one of America’s most hallowed sites? Such an incredible thing could only occur because the sections reunited, and those who once had been American, then Confederate, were American once again—the people of the North and the US government welcomed them back, just as Lincoln had always said they would be.

The dedication of the Confederate monument at Arlington was the perfect occasion to reiterate the essentialist American message of unity, forgiveness, and reconciliation. These are fundamental elements to American greatness *and survival*.



William H. Taft (above Right) was the president in 1912. He was invited to the cornerstone laying ceremony by the United Daughters of the Confederacy, the group that spearheaded the monument's construction.

Early in his [remarks](#) Taft acknowledged the fact that the sponsors (and the monument itself) were not commemorating the Confederacy but the men who died for it. After the war, the Confederates, living and dead, were no longer Confederates only—they were Americans.

Taft said, "If the occasion which brings you here were the mourning at the bier of a lost cause, I know that the nice sense of propriety of a fine old social school would have prevented you from inviting me, as the President of the United States, to be present. You are not here to mourn or support a cause."

Because men who had fallen for the Confederate cause were now considered American once again and welcomed back into the national fold they could be remembered with honor. Taft continued,

So great was the genius for military leadership of many of your generals, so adaptable was the individual of your race to effective warlike training, so full of patriotic sacrifice were your people that now when all the bitterness of the struggle on our part of the North has passed away, we are able to share with you of the South your just pride in your men and women who carried on the unexampled contest to an exhaustion that few countries ever suffered.

It should be noted that the “trigger word” “race” was used by Taft as a reference to the Southern people, as was customary at that time, and nothing more.

Taft closed his short speech by invoking the renewed sense of commonality and unity that had arisen between the once warring sections after years of horrible war.

It fell to my official lot, with universal popular approval, to issue the order which made it possible to erect, in the National Cemetery of Arlington, the beautiful monument to the heroic dead of the South that you founded today. The event in itself speaks volumes as to the oblivion of sectionalism. It gives me not only great pleasure and great honor, but it gives me the greatest satisfaction as a lover of my country, to be

present, as President of the United States, and pronounce upon this occasion the benediction of all true Americans.



Twelve years later, President Calvin Coolidge (L), known as “Silent Cal” for his lack of commentary and avoidance of public pronouncements, appeared at the Confederate monument to make a short [speech](#). The purpose of his 1924 address was to reiterate Taft’s message of reunification and unity.

Early in his characteristically concise address, Coolidge focused on religion as a unifying force.

It was Lincoln who pointed out that both sides prayed to the same God. When that is the case, it is only a matter of time when each will seek a common end. We can now see clearly what that end is. It is the maintenance of our American form of government, of our American institutions, of our American ideals, beneath a common flag, under the blessings of Almighty God.

Continuing, Coolidge talked about the hundreds of thousands of

Civil War dead, blue and gray, as Americans.

They were all Americans, all contending for what they believed were their rights. On many a battle field they sleep side by side. Here, in a place set aside for the resting place of those who have performed military duty, both make a final bivouac. But their country lives.

Coolidge, as per his reputation, quickly concluded:

It is not for us to forget the past but to remember it, that we may profit by it. But it is gone; we cannot change it. We must put our emphasis on the present and put into effect the lessons the past has taught us. All about us sleep; those of many different beliefs and many divergent actions. But America claims them all. Her flag floats over them all. Her Government protects them all. They all rest in the same divine peace.

Two years prior to Coolidge's address at the Confederate memorial monument, an equestrian statue of General Grant was dedicated on the Mall in Washington. Among the dignitaries participating in the April 27, 1922 ceremony was Julian Carr, Commander in Chief of the United Confederate Veterans. President Coolidge was there, too, and gave an [address](#). Perhaps Carr's comments were helpful to him when he wrote his later speech at Arlington.

. . . As a Confederate soldier who followed Lee at Appomattox, in the name of the Confederate soldiers, I

unfurl this beautiful silk American flag here today, and ask that its stars and stripes float from that memorial as a lasting testimony to a great general and to a firm friend from his former foes but now eternal friends, the Confederate soldiers! (Prolonged applause from the audience and cheers and applause from the Civil War veterans.) And may these colors ever float o'er our common land of the free and home of the brave, the country of us all, and I dedicate and promise that all of our time and talent, all of our affection and influence, the very lives of our Confederate soldiers shall be devoted to maintaining this Union, which that brave soldier there fought for in the days of conflict, and we promise that we shall do our humble part in keeping that great Union indestructible and indivisible, now and forever, one country, under one flag. Amen. (Prolonged cheers and recurrent applause, the audience and Civil War veterans standing.)



There is no confusion about the great lesson of our past: only with forgiveness, toleration, and unity can the country stand.

The veterans and survivors of our bitter Civil War, a conflict that cost almost a million American lives, resolved their issues of contention on the battlefields of that war and later among the graves of the fallen and in the public squares and private rooms of the country. That these issues are now again matters of controversy and contention, though they were

resolved long ago, is an indicator of the intellectual and communitarian collapse of a sizable segment of the polity.

The rejection of American unity and the abandonment of the E Pluribus Unum principle is a profound threat to American democracy—perhaps it is the greatest threat. Unity is the foundation of stability and strength, disunity is the essence of instability and conflict.

Since so many on the political left in the United States now see themselves as members of any number of different identity groups based on national origin, skin color, sexual preference, gender self-identification, religion, level of perceived victimization, etc., rather than as simply an “American citizen” the deconstruction of the country is already underway.

Deconstruction is an essential element in pervasive crackpot leftist social and academic theories such that nothing previously seen as true can be trusted, and nothing trusted can be verified or properly validated. It limits the power of language and of what can be learned and communicated with it. It is a cornerstone of leftist education and understanding of the world which includes the [perversion of science](#) so that even gravity itself is considered unprovable. This false intellectualism now corrupts our institutions of higher learning and has seeped into the culture like a bad paint job on a classic car. False intellectualism which posits that nothing really is knowable does little to add to real knowledge though it does add a great deal to the destabilization of the society.

In Tolkein's *Lord of the Rings Pt I: Fellowship of the Ring*, the character Galadriel sums up nicely. "The Quest stands upon the edge of a knife. Stray but a little, and it will fail, to the ruin of all. Yet hope remains while the Company is true."

If it is purposeful to destabilize the country by emphasizing division rather than fostering unity and upholding the E Pluribus Unum principle, what could possibly be the purpose in such a negative and potentially destructive program? Destabilization itself is the purpose.

How does Destabilization benefit anybody? It benefits those who believe that stability is the enemy, and that any "establishment" no matter what it is must be brought down; it benefits those with a deep distrust and deep cynicism about the E Pluribus Unum principle.

The highly questionable general performance of members of the famous millennial generation—their moral and ethical confusion, hyper-sensitivity, lack of stability and intellectual vigor and of responsibility, and desire to evade to "safe spaces" those issues/comments/discussions/books/people that might "trigger" them into emotional turmoil or intellectual contretemps is clear indication of the damage that absurdist liberal education and politics has wrought. This is not to say that all members of the millennial generation have failed, there are many exceptions. But, overall, our young people are confused, ignorant, unhappy, unfulfilled, and yearning for meaning and value.

There can never be meaning and value where nothing can be trusted nor properly understood.

A destabilized society in which there is no truth, and truth is undiscoverable is a society ready for a fall.

According to a recent poll a sizable minority of Americans believe that we will have a civil war. This is a devastating number. The divisiveness of our politics, the hard and rigid lines of viewpoint and approach, and the inability to compromise mark a retrograde of our political life and a deconstruction of American public discourse.

The harsh and threatening rhetoric from a member of Congress, as of this writing, yet goes unpunished. Certainly, Representative Maxine Waters (D-CA) should be censured by the Congress and expelled from that national body for recently exhorting her supporters to harass and intimidate government officials. That no punishment has occurred and that public incitement, which is not protected speech, is allowed to stand further degrades the trust in critical institutions among the people.

A large segment of the public has lost sight of, and lost faith in, the E Pluribus Unum concept. Many on the political left ignore the lessons of history which substantiate the value and importance of unity, forgiveness, toleration, and national greatness.

The collapse of the left and its leading political party is

the essential problem in American politics today.

Fears of civil unrest, even civil war are growing. Our politics seem on the edge of a proverbial knife.

At risk is nothing short of American cohesion, threatened directly by extremist identity politics and leftist utopian, anti-sovereignty, globalist fantasies. History shows without exception the value of E Pluribus Unum; the founders considered it the core of the fabric of our country so they inscribed it on the national seal.

The wave of dissension and discord and division has already washed over us. The ebb of the wave showed us exactly what the crest of the next would look like. The end of E Pluribus Unum is upon us; when this wave crests comes the deluge.

Daniel Mallock is a historian of the Founding generation and of the Civil War and is the author of