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Five Regimes of Toleration

Multinational Empires

The oldest arrangements are those of the great multinational empires—beginning, for our purposes, with Persia, Ptolemaic Egypt, and Rome. Here the various groups are constituted as autonomous or semi-autonomous communities that are political or legal as well as cultural or religious in character, and that rule themselves across a considerable range of their activities. The groups have no choice but to coexist with one another, for their interactions are governed by imperial bureaucrats in accordance with an imperial code, like the Roman *jus gentium*, which is designed to maintain some minimal fairness, as fairness is understood in the imperial center. Ordinarily, however, the bureaucrats don't interfere in the internal life of the autonomous communities for the sake of fairness or anything else—so long as taxes are paid and peace maintained. Hence they can be said to tolerate the different ways of life, and the imperial regime can be called a regime of toleration.

whether or not the members of the different communities are tolerant of one another.

Under imperial rule, the members will, willy nilly, manifest tolerance in (most of) their everyday interactions, and some of them, perhaps, will learn to accept difference and come to stand somewhere on the continuum that I have described. But the survival of the different communities doesn't depend on this acceptance. It depends only on official toleration, which is sustained, mostly, for the sake of peace—though individual officials have been variously motivated, a few of them famously curious about difference or even enthusiasts in its defense.¹ These imperial bureaucrats are often accused of following a policy of “divide and rule,” and sometimes indeed that is their policy. But it has to be remembered that they are not the authors of the divisions they exploit and that the people they rule may well want to be divided and ruled, if only for the sake of peace.

Imperial rule is historically the most successful way of incorporating difference and facilitating (requiring is more accurate) peaceful coexistence. But it isn't, or at least it never has been, a liberal or democratic way. Whatever the character of the different “autonomies,” the incorporating regime is autocratic. I don't want to idealize this autocracy; it can be brutally repressive for the sake of maintaining its conquests—as the histories of Babylonia and Israel, Rome and Carthage, Spain and the Aztecs, and Russia and the Tatars amply demonstrate. But settled imperial rule is often tolerant—tolerant precisely because it is everywhere autocratic (not bound by the interests or prejudices of any of the conquered groups, equally distant from all of them). Roman procurators in Egypt or British regents in India, for all their prejudices and the endemic corruption of their regimes, probably

and Jewish—were permitted to form autonomous organizations. These three were equal among themselves, without regard to their relative numerical strength. They were subject to the same restrictions vis-à-vis Muslims—with regard to dress, proselytizing, and intermarriage, for example—and were allowed the same legal control over their own members. The minority millets (the word means religious community) were subdivided along ethnic, linguistic, and regional lines, and some differences of religious practice were thereby incorporated into the system. But members had no rights of conscience or of association against their own community (and everyone had to be a member somewhere). There was, however, further toleration at the margins: thus, Karate sectarians within Judaism were accorded fiscal independence, though not full millet status, by the Ottomans in the sixteenth century. Basically, again, the empire was accommodating toward groups but not toward individuals—unless the groups themselves opted for liberalism (as a Protestant millet, established late in the Ottoman period, apparently did.)

Today, all this is gone (the Soviet Union was the last of the empires): the autonomous institutions, the carefully preserved boundaries, the ethnically marked identity cards, the cosmopolitan capital cities, and the far-flung bureaucracies. Autonomy did not mean much at the end (which is one reason, perhaps, for imperial decline); its scope was greatly reduced by the effect of modern ideas about sovereignty and by totalizing ideologies uncongenial to the accommodation of difference. But ethnic and religious differences survived, and wherever they were territorially based, local agencies, which were more or less representative, retained some minimal functions and some symbolic authority. These they were able to convert very quickly, once the empires fell, into a

kind of state machine driven by nationalist ideology and aimed at sovereign power—and opposed, often enough, by established local minorities, the great beneficiaries of the imperial regime and its last and most stalwart defenders. With sovereignty, of course, comes membership in international society, which is the most tolerant of all societies but, until very recently, not so easy to get into. I shall consider international society only briefly and incidentally in this essay, but it is important to recognize that most territorially based groups would prefer to be tolerated as distinct nation-states (or religious republics) with governments, armies, and borders—coexisting with other nation-states in mutual respect or, at least, under the rule of a common (even if rarely enforced) set of laws.

International Society

International society is an anomaly here because it is obviously not a domestic regime; some would say that it is not a regime at all but rather an anarchic and lawless condition. If that were true, the condition would be one of absolute toleration: anything goes, nothing is forbidden, for no one is authorized to forbid (or permit), even if many of the participants are eager to do so. In fact, international society is not anarchic; it is a very weak regime, but it is tolerant as a regime despite the intolerance of some of the states that make it up. All the groups that achieve statehood and all the practices that they permit (within limits that I will come to in a moment) are tolerated by the society of states. Toleration is an essential feature of sovereignty and an important reason for its desirability.

Sovereignty guarantees that no one on *that* side of the border can interfere with what is done on *this* side. The

people over there may be resigned, indifferent, stoical, curious, or enthusiastic with regard to practices over here, and so may be disinclined to interfere. Or perhaps they accept the reciprocal logic of sovereignty: we won't worry about your practices if you don't worry about ours. Live and let live is a relatively easy maxim when the living is done on opposite sides of a clearly marked line. Or they may be actively hostile, eager to denounce their neighbor's culture and customs, but unprepared to pay the costs of interference. Given the nature of international society, the costs are likely to be high: they involve raising an army, crossing a border, killing and being killed.

Diplomats and statesmen commonly adopt the second of these attitudes. They accept the logic of sovereignty, but they can't simply look away from persons and practices that they find intolerable. They must negotiate with tyrants and murderers and, what is more pertinent to our subject, they must accommodate the interests of countries whose dominant culture or religion condones, for example, cruelty, oppression, misogyny, racism, slavery, or torture. When diplomats shake hands or break bread with tyrants, they are, as it were, wearing gloves; the actions have no moral significance.

But the bargains they strike do have moral significance: they are acts of toleration. For the sake of peace or because they believe that cultural or religious reform must come from within, must be local work, they recognize the other country as a sovereign member of international society. They acknowledge its political independence and territorial integrity — which together constitute a much stronger version of the communal autonomy maintained in multinational empires.

Diplomatic arrangements and routines give us a sense of what might be called the formality of toleration. This formality has a place, though it is less visible, in domestic life,

my criticism of the formality
in domestic life

where we often coexist with groups with which we don't have and don't want to have close social relations. The coexistence is managed by civil servants who are also domestic diplomats. Civil servants have more authority than diplomats, of course, and so the coexistence that they manage is more constrained than that of sovereign states in international society.

But sovereignty also has limits, which are fixed most clearly by the legal doctrine of humanitarian intervention. Acts or practices that "shock the conscience of humankind" are, in principle, not tolerated.⁵ Given the weak regime of international society, all that this means in practice is that any member state is entitled to use force to stop what is going on if what is going on is awful enough. The principles of political independence and territorial integrity do not protect barbarism. But no one is obligated to use force; the regime has no agents whose function it is to repress intolerable practices. Even in the face of obvious and extensive brutality, humanitarian intervention is entirely voluntary. The practices of the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia, to take an easy example, were morally and legally intolerable, and because the Vietnamese decided to invade the country and stop them, they were in fact not tolerated. But this happy coincidence between what is intolerable and what is not tolerated is uncommon. Humanitarian intolerance isn't usually sufficient to override the risks that intervention entails, and additional reasons for intervening — whether geopolitical, economic, or ideological — are only sometimes available.

One can imagine a more articulated set of limits on the toleration that comes with sovereignty: intolerable practices in sovereign states might be the occasion for economic sanctions by some or all of the members of international society. The enforcement of a partial embargo against South African

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apartheid is a useful if unusual example. Collective condemnation, breaks in cultural exchange, and active propaganda can also serve the purposes of humanitarian intolerance, though sanctions of this sort are rarely effective.⁶ So we can say that international society is tolerant as a matter of principle, and then more tolerant, beyond its own principles, because of the weakness of its regime.

Consociations

Before I consider the nation-state as a possibly tolerant society, I want to turn briefly to a morally closer but not politically more likely heir to the multinational empire—the consociational or bi- or trilateral state.⁷ Examples like Belgium, Switzerland, Cyprus, Lebanon, and the stillborn Bosnia suggest both the range of possibility here and the imminence of disaster. Consociationalism is a heroic program because it aims to maintain imperial coexistence without the imperial bureaucrats and without the distance that made those bureaucrats more or less impartial rulers. Now the different groups are not tolerated by a single transcendent power, they have to tolerate one another and work out among themselves the terms of their coexistence.

The idea is attractive: a simple, unmediated concurrence of two or three communities (in practice, of their leaders and elites) that is freely negotiated between or among the parties. They agree to a constitutional arrangement, design institutions and divide offices, and strike a political bargain that protects their divergent interests. But the consociation is not entirely a free construction. Commonly, the communities have lived together (or, rather, alongside one another) for a very long time before they begin their formal negotiations. Perhaps they were initially united by imperial rule; perhaps

they first came together in the struggle against that rule. But all these connections are preceded by proximity: coexistence on the ground, if not in the same villages, then along a frontier only roughly defined and easily crossed. These groups have talked and traded, fought and made peace at the most local levels—but always with an eye to the police or army of some foreign ruler. Now they must look only to each other.

This isn't impossible. Success is most likely when the consociation predates the appearance of strong nationalist movements and the ideological mobilization of the different communities. It is best negotiated by the elites of the old "autonomies," who are often genuinely respectful of one another, have a common interest in stability and peace (and, obviously, in the ongoing authority of elites), and are willing to share political power. But the arrangements the elites work out, which reflect the size and economic strength of the associated communities, are dependent thereafter on the stability of their social base. The consociation is predicated, say, on the constitutionally limited dominance of one of the parties or on their rough equality. Offices are divided, quotas established for the civil service, and public funds allocated—all on the basis of this limited dominance or rough equality. Given these understandings, each group lives in relative security, in accordance with its own customs, perhaps even its own customary law, and can speak its own language not only at home but also in its own public space. The old ways are undisturbed.

It is the fear of disturbance that breaks up consociations. Social or demographic change, let's say, shifts the base, alters the balance of size and strength, threatens the established pattern of dominance or equality, undermines the old understandings. Suddenly one of the parties looks dangerous to all the others. Mutual toleration depends on trust, not so much

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in each other's good will as in the institutional arrangements that guard against the effects of ill will. Now the established arrangements collapse, and the resulting insecurity makes toleration impossible. I can't live tolerantly alongside a dangerous other. What is the danger that I fear? That the consociation will be turned into an ordinary nation-state where I will be a member of the minority, looking to be tolerated by my former associates, who no longer require my toleration.

Lebanon is the obvious example of this sad collapse of consociational understandings; it has guided the description I have just given. But in Lebanon something more than social change was involved. In principle, the new Lebanese demography or the new economy should have led to a renegotiation of the old arrangements, a simple redivision of offices and public funds. But the ideological transformations that came with social change made this very difficult to achieve. Nationalist and religious zeal and its inevitable concomitants, distrust and fear, turned renegotiation into civil war (and brought the Syrians in as imperial peacemakers). Against this background, consociation is clearly recognizable as a pre-ideological regime. Toleration is not out of the question once nationalism and religion are in play, and consociation may still be its morally preferred form. In practice, however, the nation-state is now the more likely regime of toleration: one group, dominant throughout the country, shaping public life and tolerating a national or religious minority—rather than two or three groups, each secure in its own place, tolerating one another.

Nation-States

Most of the states that make up international society are nation-states. To call them that doesn't mean that they have

nationally (or ethnically or religiously) homogeneous populations. Homogeneity is rare, if not nonexistent, in the world today. It means only that a single dominant group organizes the common life in a way that reflects its own history and culture and, if things go as intended, carries the history forward and sustains the culture. It is these intentions that determine the character of public education, the symbols and ceremonies of public life, the state calendar and the holidays it enjoins. Among histories and cultures, the nation-state is not neutral; its political apparatus is an engine for national reproduction. National groups seek statehood precisely in order to control the means of reproduction. Their members may hope for much more—they may harbor ambitions that range from political expansion and domination to economic growth and domestic flourishing. But what justifies their enterprise is the human passion for survival over time.

The state these members create can nonetheless, as liberal and democratic nation-states commonly do, tolerate minorities. This toleration takes different forms, though it rarely extends to the full autonomy of the old empires. Regional autonomy is especially difficult to implement, for then members of the dominant nation living in the region would be subjected to "alien" rule in their own country. Nor are corporatist arrangements common; the nation-state is itself a kind of cultural corporation and claims a monopoly on such arrangements within its borders.

Toleration in nation-states is commonly focused not on groups but on their individual participants, who are generally conceived stereotypically, first as citizens, then as members of this or that minority. As citizens, they have the same rights and obligations as everyone else and are expected to engage positively with the political culture of the majority; as members, they have the standard features of their "kind"

however, pose a common danger: that the distinctiveness of the group and of its way of life will slowly be surrendered.

Despite these difficulties, a variety of significant differences, especially religious differences, have been successfully sustained in liberal and democratic nation-states. Minorities often, in fact, do fairly well in enacting and reproducing a common culture precisely because they are under pressure from the national majority. They organize themselves, both socially and psychologically, for resistance, making their families, neighborhoods, churches, and associations into a kind of homeland whose borders they work hard to defend. Individuals, of course, drift away, pass themselves off as members of the majority, slowly assimilate to majority lifestyles, or intermarry and raise children who have no memory or knowledge of the minority culture. But for most people, these self-transformations are too difficult, too painful, or too humiliating; they cling to their own identities and to similarly identified men and women.

National (more than religious) minorities are the groups most likely to find themselves at risk. If these groups are territorially concentrated—like the Hungarians in Romania, say—they will be suspected, perhaps rightly, of hoping for a state of their own or for incorporation into a neighboring state where their ethnic relatives hold sovereign power. The arbitrary processes of state formation regularly produce minorities located in this way, groups that are subject to these suspicions and very hard to tolerate. Perhaps the best thing to do is to pull in the borders and let them go, or to grant them a full measure of autonomy.⁹ We tolerate the others by contracting our state so that they can live in social space shaped to their own needs. Alternative solutions are more likely, of course: linguistic recognition and a very limited degree of administrative devolution are fairly common, though

these are often combined with efforts to settle members of the majority in politically sensitive border regions and with periodic campaigns of assimilation.

After World War I, an effort was made to guarantee the toleration of national minorities in the new (and radically heterogeneous) "nation states" of Eastern Europe. The guarantor was the League of Nations, and the guarantee was written into a series of minority or nationality treaties. Appropriately, these treaties ascribed rights to stereotypical individuals rather than to groups. Thus the Polish Minority Treaty deals with "Polish nationals who belong to racial, religious, or linguistic minorities." Nothing follows from such a designation about group autonomy or regional devolution or minority control of schools. Indeed, the guarantee of individual rights was itself chimerical: most of the new states asserted their sovereignty by ignoring (or annulling) the treaties, and the League was unable to enforce them.

But this failed effort is well worth repeating, perhaps with a more explicit recognition of what the stereotypical minority member has in common with his or her fellows. The United Nation's Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966) takes this further step: minority individuals "shall not be denied the right, in community with other members of their group, to enjoy their own culture, to possess and practice their own religion, or to use their own language."¹⁰ Note that this wording still falls within the nation-state norm: no recognition is accorded to the group as a corporate body; individuals act "in community with"; only the national majority acts as a community.

In time of war, the loyalty of national minorities to the nation-state, whether or not the minorities are territorially concentrated or internationally recognized, will readily be called into doubt—even against all available evidence, as in

the case of anti-Nazi German refugees in France during the first months of World War II. Once again, toleration fails when the others look dangerous, or when nationalist demagogues can make them look dangerous. The fate of Japanese-Americans a few years later makes the same point—their fellow Americans imitated, as it were, conventional nation-statehood. In fact, the Japanese were not, and are not, a national minority in the United States, at least not in the usual sense: where is the majority nation? American majorities are temporary in character and are differently constituted for different purposes and occasions (minorities are often temporary too, though race and slavery together make an exception; I shall consider the exception later on). It is a crucial feature of the nation-state, by contrast, that its majority is permanent. Toleration in nation-states has only one source, and it moves or doesn't move in only one direction. The case of the United States suggests a very different set of arrangements.

Immigrant Societies

The fifth model of coexistence and possible toleration is the immigrant society.¹¹ Now the members of the different groups have left their territorial base, their homeland, behind them; they have come individually or in families, one by one, to a new land and then dispersed across it. Though they arrive in waves, responding to similar political and economic pressures, they don't arrive in organized groups. They are not colonists, consciously planning to transplant their native culture to a new place. They cluster for comfort only in relatively small numbers, always intermixed with other, similar groups in cities, states, and regions. Hence no sort of territorial autonomy is possible. (Though Canada is an

immigrant society, Quebec is an obvious exception here; its original settlers did come as colonists, not as immigrants, and were then conquered by the British. Another exception must be made for the Aboriginal peoples, who were also conquered. I will focus here primarily on the immigrants. On the Québécois and Aboriginals, see the section "Canada" in Chapter 3; on American blacks, imported as slaves, see the section "Class" in Chapter 4.)

If ethnic and religious groups are to sustain themselves, they must do so now as purely voluntary associations. This means that they are more at risk from the indifference of their own members than from the intolerance of the others. The state, once it is pruned loose from the grip of the first immigrants, who imagined in every case that they were forming a nation-state of their own, is committed to none of the groups that make it up. It sustains the language of the first immigration and, subject to qualification, its political culture too, but so far as contemporary advantages go, the state is, in the current phrase (and in principle), neutral among the groups, tolerant of all of them, and autonomous in its purposes.

The state claims exclusive jurisdictional rights, regarding all its citizens as individuals rather than as members of groups. Hence the objects of toleration, strictly speaking, are individual choices and performances: acts of adhesion, participation in rituals of membership and worship, enactments of cultural difference, and so on. Individual men and women are encouraged to tolerate one another as individuals, to understand difference in each case as a personalized (rather than a stereotypical) version of group culture—which also means that the members of each group, if they are to display the virtue of tolerance, must accept each other's different versions. Soon there are many versions of each group's cul-

ture, and many different degrees of commitment to each. So toleration takes on a radically decentralized form: everyone has to tolerate everyone else.

No group in an immigrant society is allowed to organize itself coercively, to seize control of public space, or to monopolize public resources. Every form of corporatism is ruled out. In principle, the public schools teach the history and "civics" of the state, which is conceived to have no national but only a political identity. This principle is, of course, only slowly and imperfectly enforced. Since public schools were founded in the United States, for example, the schools have mostly taught what English-Americans conceived as their own history and culture—which extend back to Greece and Rome and include classical languages and literature. There was and still is considerable justification for this standard curriculum, even after the immigrations of the mid-nineteenth century (when Germans and Irish arrived) and the turn of the century (when Southern and Eastern European peoples came), for American political institutions are best understood against this background. In more recent times (and in the course of a third great immigration, which this time is largely non-European), efforts have been made to incorporate the history and culture of all the different groups, to ensure a kind of equal coverage and so to create "multicultural" schools. In fact, the West still dominates the curriculum almost everywhere.

Similarly, the state is supposed to be perfectly indifferent to group culture or equally supportive of all the groups—encouraging, for example, a kind of general religiosity, as in those train and bus advertisements of the 1950s that urged Americans to "attend the church of your choice." As this maxim suggests, neutrality is always a matter of degree. Some groups are in fact favored over others—in this case,

groups with "churches" more or less like those of the first Protestant immigrants; but the others are still tolerated. Nor is church attendance or any other culturally specific practice turned into a condition of citizenship. It is relatively easy, then, and not at all humiliating, to escape one's own group and take on the reigning political identity (in this case, "American").

But many people in an immigrant society prefer a hyphenated or dual identity, one differentiated along cultural or political lines. The hyphen joining Italian-American, for example, symbolizes the acceptance of "Italianness" by other Americans, the recognition that "American" is a political identity without strong or specific cultural claims. The consequence, of course, is that "Italian" is a cultural identity without political claims. That is the only form in which Italianness is tolerated, and then Italian-Americans must sustain their own culture, if they can or as long as they can, privately, through the voluntary efforts and contributions of committed men and women. And this is the case, in principle, with every cultural and religious group, not only with minorities (but, again, there is no permanent majority).

Whether groups can sustain themselves under these conditions—without autonomy, without access to state power or official recognition, and without a territorial base or the fixed opposition of a permanent majority—is a question still to be answered. Religious communities, of both sectarian and "churchly" sorts, have not done badly in the United States until now. But one reason for their relative success might be the considerable intolerance that many of them have in fact encountered; intolerance often has, as I have already suggested, group-sustaining effects. Ethnic groups have done less well, though observers eager to write them off are almost certainly premature. These groups survive in

what we might think of as a doubly hyphenated version: the culture of the group is, for example, American-Italian, which means that it takes on a heavily Americanized form and is transfigured into something quite distinct from Italian culture in the home country; and its politics is Italian-American, an ethnic adaptation of local political practices and styles. Consider the extent to which John Kennedy remained an Irish "pol," Walter Mondale is still a Norwegian social democrat, Mario Cuomo is still an Italian Christian Democratic intellectual-in-politics, and Jesse Jackson is still a black Baptist preacher—each of them in many ways similar to, but in these ways different from, the standard Anglo-American type.¹²

Whether these differences will survive into the next generation or the one after that is uncertain. Straightforward survival is perhaps unlikely. But that is not to say that the successors to these four exemplary figures, and to many others like them, will all be exactly alike. The forms of difference characteristic of immigrant societies are still emerging. We don't know how "different" difference will actually be. The toleration of individual choices and personalized versions of culture and religion constitutes the maximal (or the most intensive) regime of toleration. But it is radically unclear whether the long-term effect of this maximalism will be to foster or to dissolve group life.

The fear that soon the only objects of toleration will be eccentric individuals leads some groups (or their most committed members) to seek positive support from the state—in the form, say, of subsidies and matching grants for their schools and mutual aid organizations. Given the logic of multiculturalism, state support must be provided, if it is provided at all, on equal terms to every social group. In practice, however, some groups start with more resources than

others, and then are much more capable of seizing whatever opportunities the state offers. So civil society is unevenly organized, with strong and weak groups working with very different rates of success to help and hold their members. Were the state to aim at equalizing the groups, it would have to undertake a considerable redistribution of resources and commit a considerable amount of public money. Toleration is, at least potentially, infinite in its extent; but the state can underwrite group life only within some set of political and financial limits.

Summary

It will be useful here to list the successive objects of toleration in the five regimes (I don't mean to suggest that they mark a progress; nor is the order in which I have presented them properly chronological). In the multinational empire as in international society, it is the group that is tolerated—whether its status is that of an autonomous community or of a sovereign state. Its laws, religious practices, judicial procedures, fiscal and distributive policies, educational programs, and family arrangements are all viewed as legitimate or permissible, subject only to minimal and rarely strictly enforced (or enforceable) limits. The case is similar in the consociation, but now a new feature is added: a common citizenship more effective than that of most empires, one that at least opens up the possibility of state interference in group practices for the sake of individual rights. In democratic consociations (such as Switzerland), this possibility is fully realized, but rights will not be effectively enforced in the many other cases where democracy is weak, where the central state exists by mere sufferance of the consociated groups and is mostly focused on holding them together.

Nation-state citizenship is more meaningful. Now the objects of toleration are individuals conceived both as citizens and as members of a particular minority. They are tolerated, so to speak, under their generic names. But membership in the genus (in contrast to citizenship in the state) is not required of these individuals; their groups exercise no coercive authority over them, and the state will intervene aggressively to protect them against any effort at coercion. Hence new options are made available: loose affiliation with the group, nonaffiliation with any group, or assimilation to the majority. In immigrant societies, these options are widened. Individuals are tolerated specifically as individuals under their proper names, and their choices are understood in personal rather than stereotypical terms. Now there arise personalized versions of group life, many different ways of being this or that, which other members of the group have to tolerate if only because they are tolerated by the society as a whole. Fundamentalist orthodoxy distinguishes itself by its refusal to take this general toleration as a reason for a more latitudinarian view of its own religious culture. Sometimes, its protagonists oppose the immigrant society's regime of toleration as a whole.

Complicated Cases

Every case is unique, as anyone whose case it is knows well. But I want to look now at three countries where the lack of fit with the categories developed in Chapter 2 is especially obvious. All three involve socially or constitutionally mixed regimes that are doubly or triply divided and thus require the simultaneous exercise of different kinds of toleration; they reflect the ordinary complexity of "real life" from which my categories are necessarily abstracted. I will then turn briefly to the European Community, which is altogether new not so much in its mixing of regimes as in its incorporation of them into a still-developing constitutional structure.

France

France makes for an especially useful case study because it is the classic nation-state and, at the same time, Europe's leading immigrant society; indeed, it is one of the world's leading immigrant societies. The extent of its immigration has been obscured by the extraordinary assimilative powers of