
The Judaic origins of the nation state and the renewal of strategy

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Disraeli always considered foreign affairs to be the most critical and interesting part of statesmanship. Critical is the word – what is at stake in our age is existential.

So we might ask: what might a conservative geostrategy look like?

Because a conservative geostrategy means renewing the conservative worldview in a much more fundamental way.

What might its principles be? We need to draw out practical suggestions.

I'd like to start by briefly quoting a speech this April – a toast to our King, in the White House. Even Jefferson, President Trump told the King, called Britain “our mother country”.

“America’s founders [...] fought not to reject this heritage, but to reclaim it and

perfect it [...] the political bonds between the United States and Great Britain were dissolved forever, they thought on July 4th, 1776, [but] memory, culture and identity proved unbreakable [...] Our two people [...] They built an English-speaking world upon which the sun never sets and provided an example to which free people will always turn.”

We need take no party-political position, nor back any leader. But various countries’ leaders are starting to address something fundamental and cultural.

In this new atmosphere, I shall propose five principles for conservative geostrategy today:

- First, building on the Judaic origins of the nation;
- Second, the sovereignty of law;
- Third, recognising the concentric circles of affinity;
- Fourth, Anglosphere first; and
- Fifth, foreign policy as a tool of cultural defence and primacy;

Because things are so urgent, I think we need to go back to the start. Hence our first principle.

The Judaic origins of the nation.

Of all the tribes that inhabited the Middle East 4,000 years ago, perhaps only one still flourishes. The Jewish people had the right ideas and they wrote them down. They knew: culture beats strategy every time.

One God not many. So human life itself became sacred. They had another idea too. The nation. Possibly the earliest source of the independent nation as a concept is the Torah, the Old Testament, which has a lot to say about of nations.

The ideal of the self-governing, independent nation seems to begin as a feature of ancient Israelite thought. Why? As Yoram Hazony suggests: “The world [...] was dominated by a succession of imperial powers: Egypt, Babylonia, Assyria [...] each of these empires sought to impose a universal political order on mankind [...] in the words of Babylonian king Hammurabi, to “bring the four quarters of the world to obedience.” Ancient Israel felt deep opposition to such aims. Egypt was “the house of bondage”. Members of a nation were to see each other as “brothers”.¹

This rested on common heritage – history, language, religious identity – passed from parents to children, yet open to outsiders who choose to join: Egyptians attached themselves to Hebrew slaves in the flight from Egypt.

So the second principle is related.

¹ Hazony, Y. (2025) *The Virtue of Nationalism (Updated Edition)*. London: Basic Books (p.17-18).

The sovereignty of law.

If our lodestar is the nation, it follows that the sovereignty of law is the next principle. It was the Mosaic Law that united Israelites into what we now call a nation-state. Its king would be drawn “from among your brothers.” Its priests would teach the traditional laws to the king, so “his thoughts should not be lifted above his brothers.”²

As John Selden explained in 1640, the Anglo concept of natural law is therefore ““law of nations”: “Divers nations, as divers men, have their divers collections.”³ If the Germanic Holy Roman Empire, for over a millennium, aligned Christianity with the idea of universal empire, Christianity nonetheless preserved the Bible’s Judaic idea of nations. Thus sovereignty might not be an obstacle to rights, but their corner-stone.

Concentric circles.

To grasp the relevance of our next principle, concentric circles, we need to start with the concept of Just War. This was developed by three saints: Ambrose, Augustine, and Thomas Aquinas. First, from St Ambrose (in the 300s AD), we have the concept of war for defensive purposes.

Second, St Augustine tells us to avoid immediate resorts to violence: yet Christians need not be ashamed of punishing wickedness and promoting virtue. And it is from Augustine that some lasting ideas in conservative geostrategy emerge: Legitimate authority; just cause; intention (which cannot be vengeance); and the ultimate goal: establishing peace.

Third, Thomas Aquinas. In *Summa Theologica*, he describes the battlefield itself: even there, violence is only justified to the extent necessary. This is because created things are inherently good.

However, to love them inordinately, a lesser good over a greater one, means a disordered soul. I suggest that this implies circles of affinity: it is difficult to create the same level of trust between nations with highly different cultures. This is just common sense. This does *not* imply that we shall necessarily come to violence. But it does imply that we should not expect to be able to achieve the same things. And that has implications for strategy.

² *Ibid.*

³ Haivry, O. (2021) *John Selden and The Western Political Tradition*. Cambridge University Press. (p.272).

Anglosphere first.

Perhaps this idea started with Disraeli himself. Disraeli supposedly caused fury at the Congress of Berlin in 1878 by speaking in English not French, the language of diplomacy. He started a trend – we should be grateful.

This is where circles of affinity should guide us. We should part with the Twentieth-Century idea that wealth automatically begets freedom. The China experience over the last generation shows that. The same could be said of Russia. This misunderstanding was based on a very Anglo idea: that people will choose freedom as they get wealthier, because of something called “reason”.

The experience with China over the last generation suggests we should end the (globalist) view that prosperity-inducing relationships are interchangeable – that we can get the same outcomes, pursuing the same aims, with different countries.

Conversely, it is time to end what is called the “benign neglect” of our most fruitful relationships. We choose these over rationalist, one-size-fits-all wild-goose chases like European integration.

This points us to British geostrategy in these uncertain times that is rooted in the relationships tested by time – in cultural affinity and the trust it begets.

So a conservative geostrategy will be an Atlanticist one. And that is an opportunity we must not miss. Of course, there are caveats. All nations’ interests sometimes diverge. And culturally divergent nations can develop strong affinities from shared need. We make common cause with the pragmatic, where we can.

But the only chance for the unique growth in human prosperity that Pax Britannica unleashed to continue is Pax Americana. The fundamental threat today is from authoritarian competitors, with their economies based on statism, cronyism and censorship: these are the mortal threats to our prosperity. So finally, a fifth principle.

Foreign policy as a tool of cultural defence and primacy.

What do we mean by a tool of cultural primacy? Our strength in the world rests, above all, on our strength at home.

A conservative strategy requires a conservative understanding of the nation itself. A nation springs from a culture, so above all it is a vehicle for the preservation of that culture. Thus foreign policy is a tool of domestic policy. And our experience of mass-immigration in general should remind us: many people are not interested in our values. In the long sweep of history, British society

and the unique period of prosperity it has created are extremely unusual – and very fragile.

Culture beats strategy every time. Of course, this doesn't mean other cultures can't become democracies: take South Korea.

But geostrategy for cultural primacy, cultural defence – and civilisational defence – means acting, above all, to preserve; it is Burke's pact between the dead, the living, and the yet-to-be-born.

What, then, of the practical implications? If culture beats strategy, the biggest questions for British geostrategy are not about foreign policy at all, but concern what we do here, on the home-front. But it should begin with renewing the British constitution.

Likewise, a culture that cannot fund its armed forces will in due course collapse. In his book *War What is it Good For?*, Ian Morris describes a cyclical ebb-and-flow of civilisations: from Ancient Rome to Britain in the Industrial Revolution, as a civilisation gains the technological advantage it undergoes outward expansion.

The danger comes when its competitors master enough of its technologies. A nation that does not maintain the military technological advantage is on its way to being a subject nation.

What is needed is not simply strategy, but commitment to the defence of civilisation. What is needed is not just diplomacy, but kinship.

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