A More Complete Realism: Grand Strategy in a New Key

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The field of international relations centers on the problem of war and peace. For many decades nuclear weapons have given great urgency to dealing wisely with the subject. Countries having sometimes very tense relations with each other possess these weapons. Nevertheless, because they have not been used since World War II, the threat of nuclear war has appeared distant. We tell ourselves that no sane, rational leader would resort to these weapons. Self-preservation and enlightened self-interest forbid their use.

And yet history is full of evidence that human beings often act not prudently but out of the intense passion of the moment—out of hatred, fury, wild abandon, sheer desperation, or boundless ambition. Nuclear weapons are but one of the reasons why theories of international relations should include as complete and subtle an understanding as possible of what might induce prudence and restraint. Realism is certainly needed, but the belief that human beings are rational actors pursuing self-interest and that states behave in a quasi-mechanical manner needs to be revised and supplemented. Because of the potentially disastrous consequences of flawed assumptions in international relations, simplified theories of human nature are out of place. Even more than other fields, international relations needs in-depth reflection on subjects that some may consider too subtle, esoteric, or "philosophical."

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What, ultimately, induces self-restraint, prudence, and circumspection in leaders of countries? That enlightened self-interest can be and frequently is a source of restraint is not in dispute, but it is important to understand why a capacity for such thinking cannot be taken for granted. Enlightened thinking presupposes an already sturdy check on the passions and an already existing inclination to listen to argument. Self-interest also has many layers. It will be suggested here that international relations would benefit from broadening and deepening its view of what shapes human conduct, specifically, of what might avert conflict.

For about a century it has been unfashionable in dominant Western scholarly circles to raise questions of human conduct that were considered central in the preceding millennia of classical and Christian civilization. It was then assumed that the crux of human existence was *moral-spiritual*. The great question was how human beings ought to live for the sake of their own ultimate well-being as well as to avoid disaster. This was the central subject for Homer, Plato, Sophocles, Aristotle, Cicero, Jesus, Augustine, Aquinas, Dante, Shakespeare, and countless others who shaped the Western mind and imagination. In the East, moral-spiritual traditions such as Confucianism, Buddhism, and Hinduism played an analogous role. Yet dealing more than marginally or cursorily with the moral-spiritual terms of human existence has for decades been rare in academic disciplines. In the twentieth century, attempts to drain the study of history, politics, and even the humanities of the content known in lived human experience have transformed the universities.

The field of international relations has adopted standard modern epistemological assumptions. Briefly put, scholars must observe a distinction between "facts" and "values." They cannot adjudicate disputes regarding putatively "universal" higher values. There is, in the opinion of this author, a sense in which a facts-values distinction can be philosophically defended, but that distinction has little or nothing to do with what is asserted by modern empiricistic, quantifying notions of scholarship.[1] In the modern "scientific" study of history, politics, and other subjects "higher values" are said to belong to a sphere of merely "subjective preferences." Scholars should be methodological "positivists" and aspire to a thoroughgoing empiricism. Moral-spiritual phenomena can be empirically observed and classified—from the outside, as it were—but cannot be assigned a value by scholarly methods. To deal with

[1] The special sense in which a facts-values distinction can be defended is explained in depth in this author's *Will, Imagination and Reason*, 2nd exp. ed. (New Brunswick and London: Transaction, 1997).

moral-spiritual factors from the inside and try to assess whether they are conducive to peace and a life more truly worth living has been judged incompatible with the scholarly enterprise. Rationalistic explanations of human conduct have been treated all the more favorably.

Yet, historically speaking, epistemological positivism is a minority position that has long been challenged, in recent decades by so-called postmodernism. But it has made even international relations, a field intensely interested in what leads to war and peace, skirt, if not ignore, a subject deemed central by the ancient civilizations, the chronic tension within human beings between higher and lower motives—not between what is rational and irrational, but between the potential for noble, more than selfish conduct, on the one hand, and malicious, destructive self-indulgence, on the other.

Moral-spiritual factors are intimately connected to other factors that affect human conduct—more or less powerful, if subtle, influences on will, imagination, and reason such as education, the arts, literature, and entertainment. The latter phenomena can be summed up in the term "the culture." But how the culture in that sense may foster or undermine peace has not been a central topic in international relations. This is particularly problematic at this time in history because of the special complication of multiculturalism. The world has always been multicultural, but in this globalizing era diverse groups and societies brush up against each other in an unprecedented manner, adding greatly to the danger of conflict. One might have hoped that for this reason international relations would be well-prepared for dealing systematically and in depth with how cultural diversity and peace might be reconciled or how conflict might be defused.

But the dominant approaches to international relations and grand strategy largely avoid both moral-spiritual and cultural issues. Samuel Huntington pointed, however tentatively, in a different direction, but he was widely challenged, and his efforts seem not to have resulted in a surge of deeper reflection on these interrelated topics. International relations theory rests predominantly on highly abstract and otherwise selective assumptions, e.g., that peace will be served by a savvy balancing of power and/or by cleverly constructed institutions; that increasingly intertwined "markets" will reduce tensions; that general enlightenment and the spread of "democracy" will make for peace; or that the introduction of human rights legislation will defuse conflict. Behind some of the more optimistic notions of how to achieve peace one detects the dream of a "brotherhood of man" that has been with us since the eighteenth

century.

The approach to international relations that is often called "realism" has a great deal more to recommend it. Realism shuns wishful expectations that are contradicted by the historical record. Realism recognizes the inescapably prominent role of self-interest in human affairs, the inevitability of conflict among states, the role of fear, and the limits of politics. But realism is also prone to a simplified understanding of self-interest and an overly abstract, quasi-mechanistic theory of power-relations. Economists have long attributed a self-regulating, disciplining dynamic to the economic system; order in the marketplace requires no other explanation. Realists are similar in that they underestimate what peace and order owe to influences not generated by the power play itself. Grand strategy would be well served by a more nuanced, variegated view of human nature.

The criticism that realists such as E. H. Carr and Hans Morgenthau directed at "idealism" and heavy reliance on international law was, for the most part, salutary. Their rather dark view of human nature and their emphasis on the role of power and interests were a needed counter to romantic dreaming, but they were at the same time disinclined to inquire into the subtleties and complexities of the inner life of human beings. They thought a focus on external power-relations and constellations of forces sufficient to explain war or peace. They took little account of the role and variability of moral-spiritual and cultural factors. Morgenthau attributed the idiosyncracies, foibles, and pathologies of individual actors to "irrationality" and stressed the "rational" dimension of international politics. "Neoclassical" realists have attempted to fill gaps in the older realism by considering more variables, including domestic factors, the role of perceptions, and trends in the international system, but they have nevertheless, as in their penchant for behaviorist methods, evinced insufficient sensitivity to the kind of issues that are here being brought into the foreground.

Considering that in this age of nuclear weapons intemperate action by particular individuals can have cataclysmic consequences, there is an urgent need for more deeply probing the origins of either self-control or its opposite.

To explore moral-spiritual and cultural factors is to advance a more complete understanding of both dangers and opportunities in foreign affairs. Supplementing realism, as here proposed, would have the additional benefit of undermining spurious "idealism." Idealists of various kinds cater to the need that so many feel for a higher goal of national

policy, but they usually have rather naive expectations that are bound to backfire in the real world. A deepened realism can address moral and cultural concerns without succumbing to sentimental dreaming.

Study of the mentioned moral-spiritual and cultural factors would sharpen awareness of the complexities of human motives and of what either increases or reduces conflict. More attention needs to be paid to questions of character in the old sense and to corresponding social patterns than is done, for example, in standard leadership psychology or in evolutionary psychology, whose behavioristic or biologistic proclivities do not capture the intricacies and intangibles of human personality, including moral tensions.

Especially in really tense political circumstances, a surge of passion in a leader can easily overwhelm ingenious power balancing, sturdy international arrangements, enlightened ideas, or democratic structures. Leaders are often hard-charging and not only irritable but inclined to sheer intemperance. Recent American foreign policy actors such as Richard Holbrooke, Mike Pompeo, and John Bolton come immediately to mind. What could be more relevant to understanding war and peace than in-depth study of the origins of or the remedies for irascibility in leaders? But mainstream academia has chosen to place outside of its purview what may be central to understanding human action: the morally cleft nature of man and the preconditions of self-imposed restraint. Struggles of conscience, once regarded as the crux of human personality, are deemed inaccessible or inconsequential. As ordinarily conceived, even mainstream psychology simply avoids raising the ancient moral-spiritual questions. Behaviorist research may explore the role of emotion, but it is a very blunt instrument for studying the varieties and deeper sources of emotion and for understanding how individuals become able to control the passions of the moment.

When emotions run high in foreign affairs, leaders are needed who can control the kind of personal intensity—arrogance, ruthlessness, ethnic-nationalistic ardor, anger, or hatred—to which human beings are all-too-prone. Tense situations call, in brief, for statesmanship—for calm, detachment, caution, circumspection, foresight, and creativity. But traits of that kind can be expected only in people who are used to taming their less admirable urges, people of strong character whose souls are deep down balanced and peaceful rather than unruly and belligerent. Without such leaders, external supports for peace can be swept aside in an instant.

It needs to be better understood that efforts to avoid or defuse con-

flict are likely often to turn on moral-spiritual and cultural factors that are rarely placed at the center of attention in international relations. Attempts to achieve peace are likely to fail unless those on different sides are predisposed to such a course in the first place. Whether actors will indulge or transcend dangerous passion will depend importantly on the strength or weakness of moral-spiritual and cultural dispositions in themselves and their societies. In the study of war and peace this question should be receiving at least as much attention as other topics.

The Challenge and Promise of Multiculturalism

One of the reasons why an intellectual reorientation is necessary and urgent is an historical development that could not bear more directly on the issue of war and peace. It is that globalization is bringing culturally disparate and potentially incompatible groups into ever closer contact with each other. The benefits of globalization are widely discussed and celebrated, though mired at the same time in controversy, but the peoples of the world are also increasingly confronted with what divides them. Contrary to wishful thinking, growing physical rapprochement carries a potential for great dissonance. Exploring how the dangerous consequences of globalization might be mitigated requires unusual scholarly range and great intellectual seriousness as well as a willingness to question widely held assumptions. Here, too, international relations needs to expand its scope and refine its thinking, notably by addressing the moral-spiritual questions previously discussed. The field must cultivate greater cosmopolitan breadth and versatility. Supposedly comprehensive and sophisticated but abstract theorizing on war and peace is a poor substitute for reflection informed by historical and cross-cultural learning and philosophy.

Progressive globalization is but one reason why it is important to resist intellectual insularity and a preoccupation with ideas currently in vogue in the Western world. Broadmindedness requires critical distance to the present and a willingness to weigh historically prominent ways of thinking about what makes human beings tick. The assumption that moral-spiritual claims can be nothing more than subjective, historically conditioned beliefs must not go unchallenged. To approach this question from a more historical, international, and ecumenical perspective is, to be sure, initially to discover a bewildering diversity of beliefs and many at least apparent disagreements, but study of this kind also discloses a remarkable, far-reaching convergence of views concerning humanity's central problem. At its very core, this problem is regarded as moral-

spiritual. Human experience over millennia seems amply to confirm that the human will is torn between opposing inclinations. Human beings are chronically prone to self-indulgent, short-sighted, cruel, reckless action. The role of pettiness, rank partisanship, and outright malice can be studied not least in current American politics. Man is his own worst enemy. But human beings also have a potential for restraining these lower inclinations. With sustained effort and the aid of cultural supports, they can achieve the kind of character that makes for nobility and respect for a common good.

Although the terminology for describing what produces the higher forms of life varies among cultures, one finds across geographical boundaries and historical epochs a striking consensus on the substance of what is inherently desirable conduct and conducive to a deeper kind of well-being. The ancient Greeks summarized the universal values of human existence as the good, the true, and the beautiful, while the East referred to the *dao*, "the way," the "right path." Ecumenical research reveals a widely shared trans-historical sense of the general direction in which to look for the most deeply satisfying life. There is far-reaching agreement on the existence of an enduring moral-spiritual compass. It is reflected in the encouragements and prohibitions of a corresponding culture that tempers destructive self-indulgence and the tendency of the strong to act ruthlessly.

When leaders of nations *respect* rather than violate the highest standards of their own traditions they tend to restrain their own arrogance and partisanship and reduce the incidence of crude, short-sighted exercise of power. These standards help transform narrow-minded, improvident egotism into *enlightened* self-interest, the realization that it is in one's interest to curb one's egotism in hopes that others will return the favor. Although this motive can keep large egos from clashing, compromise among egotists is an inherently fragile stand-off and offers no stable basis for peace. To be a force to be counted on in statecraft, enlightened self-interest itself must be leavened to some degree by a desire on the part of leaders to do what seems right for its own sake. In short, even enlightened self-interest presupposes ascent from a raw, primitive pursuit of power. One need look no further than to recent American domestic politics for an illustration of the fact that politics often does not rise much above small-mindedness, rank partisanship, and blind hatred. It should be easy to understand that if people who behave in this manner have influence in foreign affairs the result will be similarly unenlightened.

The spread of today's Western culture around the world creates a kind of global commonality, but it should be carefully noted that this culture is in many ways disdainful of the ancient moral and cultural traditions of mankind, including those of the Western world itself. Acceptance in the West of certain desires and behaviors that were scorned by its old traditions will tend to antagonize rather than impress representatives of more traditional cultures, not least people at the grass roots. The more that peoples and civilizations display what may be their least admirable traits, the more likely they are to recoil from each other—a state of affairs that power-seeking demagogues will be quick to exploit.

Dubious Assumptions

Some issues that require more attention will strike most scholars in international relations as remote from their field as they have come to understand it. They operate on assumptions that they rather passively assimilated from their mentors. Issues that are quite different, like the ones raised here, are bound to appear far-fetched or just puzzling. In this regard, scholars in international relations are no different from other mainstream Western academics. When they think about how to achieve peaceful human relations they routinely ignore, at least in their capacity as scholars, the ancient view that human beings are chronically torn between morally opposed potentialities. They are more likely to be making rationalist assumptions. A prime example of mainstream Western rationalism is the thought of John Rawls, whose famous theory of justice simply neglects the issue of moral character and regards wholly ahistorical ratiocination as the guide to action. Rawls is famous for his notion of "the veil of ignorance." Human beings would become impartial and reasonable if, when contemplating policies, they would be ignorant of how policies might affect them personally. Mere self-interest would not infect decisions. A glaring weakness of this argument is that any kind of reasonableness is wholly unlikely unless human passions have already been brought under control. An equally serious problem is that the supposedly perfect frame of mind for making enlightened decisions is utterly different from any situations actually to be faced by real-life leaders. Although most scholars in international relations do not delve into considerations like these, this kind of abstract thinking has been a part of the air that Western academics breathe, especially in the Anglophone sphere, and, in one version or another, it has echoed and reechoed in the background, helping to make rationalism in international relations, e.g., in realism, seem plausible.

Other examples of abstract rationalism that neglect the divided human self and ignore concrete historical circumstances are theories of "communicative" or "deliberative" democracy. Open, continual communication among interests is expected to yield a fair outcome. But these theories, too, assume what cannot be assumed, that human beings are naturally predisposed to hearing and weighing views that challenge their own. They are in actuality more likely to treat opposing views as obstacles to be removed. When people are genuinely open to competing opinions and to compromise it is because they have learned through protracted effort to resist the urge simply to overpower opposition. It is civilizing habituation that has made openness of mind and compromise possible.

Yet another example of viewing rational calculation as the source of order and peace is the notion long prominent in economics that those pursuing their interest in the market are rational actors. What needs to be much better understood is that the rationality and "spontaneous order" of the market owe greatly to moral-spiritual and cultural restraints long operating among the participants.

Although scholars in international relations ordinarily do not go into issues of this kind or speak this kind of language, most of them make assumptions similar to those of their intellectual cousins in political theory, economics, and other fields. They share the academic prejudice against addressing moral-spiritual and cultural issues, except perhaps in a truncated, empiricistic, social-scientific manner, preferring to view the system to which they pay the most attention as generating its own self-disciplining dynamic, independent of "higher" considerations.

An Enhanced Realism

To indicate further the kind of considerations that ought to be central to the study of international relations, it may be useful to refer to thinking generally familiar to most educated Americans. The framers of the U.S. Constitution did not expect spontaneous reasonableness of political leaders. They prepared rather for the opposite. They feared the darker side of human nature and designed a system of government that would help rein in the partisan passions of the moment, specifically, those of a "majority faction." They put a premium on seeking consensus and increasing the chances of genuine debate. They wanted mere partisanship to yield as much as possible to what has been called the "deliberate sense." But external, procedural checks would here be insufficient. Participants had to impose restraints upon themselves. They had to exhibit

what this writer calls the "constitutional personality." The prominence of unbridled partisan passion, cynicism, and viciousness in recent American politics suggests that today this personality is in short supply.

To assume that reasonableness comes naturally and does not have any particular moral-spiritual and cultural prerequisites is to ignore plentiful evidence. Realists in international relations are quick to criticize people with sentimental illusions about peace, but they are, in their own way, as reluctant to explore moral-spiritual and cultural origins of reasonableness or of tendencies toward either peacefulness or belligerence. It is enough, they tell themselves, to say that persons and states are "self-interested" and rational and to concentrate on the discipline induced by the balance-of-power itself. But both "self-interest" and "power" come in different forms that have different implications for conduct.

It was taken for granted in Greek, Roman, and Christian societies and in the East that only protracted moral and cultural exertion and habituation could produce people of wisdom, persons who would be able to act in their long-term interest and guide others in the same direction. The central purpose of civilization was to assist individuals in controlling their least admirable traits and in developing their more admirable ones, for their own good. Those who failed to control their lower desires undermined not only their own well-being and the cohesion of their society but good relations with other societies. At the extreme, self-indulgence could become diabolical and wreak havoc.

The ancient Greeks referred to *eudaimonia*, happiness, as the goal of life. Happiness referred not to a maximization of pleasure, but to the deeper sense of self-respect and well-being—the serenity—that attends living nobly. The Christians spoke of a peace that passeth understanding. A small minority—priests, monks, and nuns—aspired to otherworldliness, a further intensification of the moral-spiritual life outside of ordinary social life. In the East, Confucius and the Buddha represented similar modes of life. It was for the sake of what completes our humanity that persons learned to forego actions that are pleasurable or advantageous in the moment. The old Western and Eastern traditions coincided on this point: one who lacks character cannot achieve happiness or peace by some other means. Society must encourage the kind of working on self that holds the key to building meaning and worth into personal and social existence.

What was most to be feared? It was the kind of conceit that elevates the ego and turns other human beings into supporting cast. The ancient Greeks warned of the greatest failing of all, *hubris*, believing that you are

among the gods. In Christianity the greatest sin was pride. We are not to dedicate ourselves to remedying the flaws of others, but work first of all on our own failings. Jesus said: "Take the log out of your own eye first, and then you will be able to see and take the speck out of your brother's eye."

It is central to understanding these older traditions that for them the key measure of human progress was the quality of *actions*. Jesus of Nazareth declared: "I am the way and the life and the truth." He did not here formulate a new doctrine to be tested in the intellectual abstract. What he proclaimed had to be tested in action. In Buddhism, similarly, the right Way was to work tirelessly on self to extinguish destructive desire. The *Dhammapada*, attributed to the Buddha, said about the path to Nirvana: "You yourself must make an effort."

Civilization had many aspects and prerequisites, but there was wide agreement among the old traditions that their health ultimately depended on a certain quality of will. There was no substitute for the often arduous inner moral-spiritual struggle.

The Redefinition of Morality

The modern Western thinker whose challenge to this view of the human condition was most radical and influential was Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778). Rousseau inspired the Jacobins, whose ideas dominated the French Revolution. Rousseau flatly rejected the old view that man is chronically torn between good and evil. There is in man's essential nature no propensity to evil, certainly no original sin. Man in his pre-social, "natural" state was good. His life then was primitive, simple, peaceful, and happy. What causes evil in existing societies are the wholly artificial and perverse norms and institutions of civilization. The natural goodness of man can be restored by destroying traditional society.

The time seems to have been ripe for Rousseau's ideas. They became a major influence in the West. They inspired a powerful strain in the Romantic movement. It brought a profound change in the understanding of man's moral predicament. Briefly put, the notion of morality as right willing and character was replaced by the notion of morality as having a "heart." Virtue became understood as a sentiment and as having "pity" at its center. The old idea of morality had been loving, responsible *action,* as in love of neighbor, which required an ability to rise above what was easy and convenient. For Rousseau, virtue was not a matter of self-discipline but of liberating man from confining and perverting socio-political structures. Inherited traditions, social groups, and institutions were

not needed to support moral striving; they were positively destructive of man's natural goodness and had to be abolished. Earlier the central problem of human life had been for the person to overcome the importunate ego. Now the focus shifted to society, where virtuous, caring people like Rousseau had to root out evil. "Idealists" soon propounded ambitious plans for transforming society and the world.

The emergence in the Western world of this new idea of morality coincided in time with the spread of Enlightenment rationalism. The latter advanced the notion that abstract rationality was the defining characteristic and proper guide of humanity. According to the rationalists, the old Western view of man was superstitious and unscientific. Rationalists and romantic idealists had disagreements, but they shared the view that there was no chronic sinful self in human beings that required inner vigilance. The key to remedying social ills, both groups also agreed, was a basic reconstruction of society. Rationalism and sentimental idealism came together in social engineering. Dreamy idealistic vision defined the goals, while supposedly rational manipulation provided the method for remaking society.

This new outlook on life, inspired at bottom by dreams of brotherhood and equality, would in time pervade Western thought and practice. People thinking about international politics envisioned a new world order. Perverse traditions and wars would one day give way to a transnational uni-culture and peace. Rousseauistic faith in human goodness and in the transformative power of politics affected the study of international relations and remained influential, but it was virtually antithetical to what would become known as realism. Representatives of the latter sided, to their credit, with Machiavelli. This is as good a place as any to state that, surely, no view of international relations is adequate that has not taken full account of the Machiavellian understanding of politics. It must at the same time be noted that in rejecting a cloying sentimental moralism realists have been too prone to a rather crude amoralism that is not even true to the spirit of Machiavelli.

Toward a New Multiculturalism

Having indicated the kind of issues that international relations would do well to explore in depth, it is time to connect what has been said about the moral-spiritual and cultural life to the special challenge of multiculturalism. However much traditional cultures have changed due to globalism and other influences, they have not disappeared. Indeed, they have to some extent been reaffirmed, and they are today coming

into ever closer contact. Together with new forms of cultural diversity, they are compounding the problem of peace.

Today's dominant multiculturalists favor diversity—the more the merrier—especially if the diversity challenges traditional culture. But, again, this thinking leaves unexplained how different cultural entities are to be kept from clashing. Because they lack a sense of how to handle the darker side of human nature, neither sentimental rationalism nor mainstream multiculturalism can deal satisfactorily with the role and meaning of culture.

Grand strategy needs a new type of moral-cultural cosmopolitanism that may at first blush seem paradoxical. This cosmopolitanism is rooted in a particular soil. It is not some kind of homeless universalism that has abandoned dense and concrete cultural phenomena for bland, abstract, supra-national commonalities. Neither is it a form of globe-trotting tourism. The needed cosmopolitanism is at the same time pan-cultural and strongly attached to distinctive cultural particulars—a merely apparent paradox. Indeed, it is difficult to distinguish the cosmopolitanism in question from patriotic love of one's own society. A person cannot be genuinely cosmopolitan without cherishing and having deep roots in his or her own primary national, regional, or local culture. Without being well-versed in the best that his own society has to offer a person will lack the understanding and sensibility to recognize and appreciate corresponding feats of goodness, truth, and beauty in other societies. A person only superficially familiar with his own heritage will find moral, intellectual, and aesthetic phenomena in other societies confusing and alien, charming and diverting perhaps, but just as likely annoyingly different. A patriot intimately familiar with his own heritage, on the other hand, is likely to find much in other societies unfamiliar and yet, qualitatively, intriguingly kindred to what he already values. Only a person of that kind can understand and really appreciate the equivalent or superior achievements of other societies. The genuine patriot is not a self-absorbed, self-enclosed nationalist, but assesses what he considers lovable about his own society by a more than national higher standard. Though his tastes may still be limited, he has the *sine qua non* for a genuine cosmopolitanism.

Truly cosmopolitan thinkers or leaders who see disturbing weaknesses in a people that they would like to see changed would not demand that the people abandon their historical heritage for a wholly different way of life assumed to be inherently superior. Fruitful, authentic change can only result from the particular society trying to be more fully itself,

by living up to and in the process also revising its own *highest standards*. To the extent that particular societies are anchored in the moral-spiritual and cultural striving previously discussed, cultural distinctiveness and pan-cultural unity will tend to coincide qualitatively and form a basis for respect and mutual accommodation. The reason is that, despite obvious cultural differences, traditional cultures tend to be similar in what they consider admirable. Character traits that are widely praised, such as restraint, humility, circumspection, and respect for others, tend to aid peace. What is disdained—recklessness, arrogance, narrow-mindedness, dishonesty, ruthlessness, etc.—generates conflict.

Groups and societies do of course often violate their own highest standards. Unless cultural diversity is humanized by moral-spiritual and other effort, it may descend into self-absorption and belligerence. Nationalistic conceit was the cause of horrendous suffering and turmoil in the twentieth century. The great weakness of the multiculturalism currently in vogue is that, like modern Western rationalism, it recognizes no deeper standard for distinguishing between what elevates and degrades human existence and between what reduces or increases conflict.

All peoples evince less than admirable attributes, and people from other countries will be quick to point them out. But so do societies have traits and achievements in which they can take pride. To call upon a people to discard what made them what they are and to insist on a supposedly superior uni-culture is to rob them of a source of identity and self-respect. A people cannot genuinely reform without building on its own strengths, without, in a sense, being itself. Imposing on it an allegedly universal culture inimical to its traditions can produce only mechanical, inorganic change.

A Philosophical Interlude

What is suggested here as the basis for a proper cosmopolitanism is that when people in different societies develop what is most admirable in their own traditions they are moving in the direction of a dynamic, never-static common human ground and reducing the danger of conflict. Though efforts to articulate the universal values of goodness, truth, and beauty must bear the distinctive imprint of the particular people and be adapted to its historical circumstances, those efforts can, by virtue of equivalent efforts in other societies, be a source of mutual understanding and respect.

What seems paradoxical turns out not to be such once it is recognized that the common human ground here discussed is not some kind of

fixed, static, abstract, predefined standard. It is thus not a call for uniformity, conformity, or ideological homogeneity. The ground in question is a sense of direction in the sense that it challenges human beings to rise towards a life more truly worth living, but the common ground is not a model, an unchanging set of ahistorical "principles," but a sense of the universal *qualities* that life can acquire. To become a living reality these must be forever rearticulated as to concrete specifics. To be an inspiring force and not a stale replica, true universality must be continually reinstantiated in particular historical circumstances through new moral, intellectual, and aesthetic creativity. Different cultural groups can express one and the same higher aspiration in varying ways, which they will of course do with varying degrees of success. It is by virtue of a shared, if sometimes imperfectly intuited, dynamic center of values that people in different historical circumstances can understand each other as fellow human beings and recognize each other as respecting a common higher standard. They can do so not *despite* but *through* their distinctive identities, namely, in proportion as their efforts are kindred. This point has been argued in philosophical depth in this writer's *A Common Human Ground: Universality and Particularity in a Multicultural Age*.[2]

It is because the higher unity finds expression in *different* circumstances that diversity is a possible source of respect and understanding across national, cultural, and historical boundaries. Moral-spiritual and cultural activities emanating from pursuit of the higher *unity* of mankind harmonize and elevate the diversity. The corresponding diversity varies, deepens, and enriches the unity. What is properly called higher values, then, involves a synthesizing of universality and particularity that contrasts sharply with universality understood as a static, purely abstract final norm.

The U.S. Constitution offers a domestic example of this merely apparent paradox. Implicitly agreeing with the philosophical point here made, the Framers sought a national unity that would co-exist with great diversity. As applied to the America they envisioned, the phrase *e pluribus unum* did not signify an attempt to abolish diversity but to cherish and draw strength from it.

[2] Expanded paperback edition (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2019).

Sources of Statesmanship

Progressives of various types expect that a new culture will come into being in proportion as the bad old days of history are left behind. Because of their ahistorical and "idealistic" notion of good, the progressives vastly underestimate the extent to which social and political practices that they favor—such as tolerance, respect for rights, rule of law, and freedom of speech—presuppose personality traits that are heavily indebted to precisely the ancient moral-spiritual and cultural traditions that they wish to expunge. They assume the future availability of certain character traits but see no need to inquire into their demanding moral-spiritual and cultural prerequisites. To repeat, both rationalists and dreamy sentimentalists ignore the most basic threat to domestic and international peace: that the human self is torn and easily falls prey to lower inclinations. Rationalists will concede that human beings are sometimes less than rational. The remedy, they think, is to be more rational. Sentimental idealists simply deny the basic problem. Both groups ignore or play down the deeper problem that human beings are often strongly prone to conduct—arrogance, partisanship, ruthlessness, laziness, greed, a wish to lord it over others, and so on—that shuts down debate and generates conflict. For prudence, reasonableness, and respect for others to have a chance, leaders of different societies must to the greatest extent possible be in the habit of checking their impulses and examining their consciences, which they will be prone to doing only because of previous moral-spiritual and cultural formation.

The proposed way of approaching international relations would, then, jettison the dogmatic positivism that forbids fundamentally addressing the moral-spiritual and cultural terms of human existence. It would revisit questions central to the old Western and Eastern traditions. That there is broad agreement among the ancient civilizations about the crux of human existence and about what is praiseworthy and disreputable conduct could not be more directly relevant to foreign affairs. What could be more appropriate for the field of international relations than asking what character traits are most likely to advance either peace or war? If enlightened self-interest is to be a source of prudence and restraint, what will make self-interest enlightened rather than primitive and narrow-minded? In a society without some concern for a common good, what will pull self-interest in the right direction?

We may elaborate on the needed reorientation of international relations by explicitly associating it with a definition of statesmanship. What is real statesmanship and what makes it possible? The term has historical

resonances that connect it with the moral-spiritual and cultural considerations previously discussed. It is usually reserved for leadership out of the ordinary. The statesman is one who rises above the provincialism and opportunism of mere politicians. The statesman is not swept up in the passions and opinions of the moment, but has a sense of history that gives him or her critical distance to the present and an ability to see further than his or her contemporaries. The statesman is no mere partisan. He has the imagination and empathy to recognize that opponents are fellow human beings with legitimate interests. He is cautious and prudent and has the flexibility to compromise and defuse conflict. War may sometimes be unavoidable, but for the statesman it is a last resort.

There can of course be no effective leadership without the above traits being combined with great political skill, practical experience, toughness, daring, and strength of will. Moral rationalists often misinterpret Machiavelli as being a mere cynical advocate of ruthlessness. He is in reality concerned to show that no political purpose can be achieved without action being efficacious. That is to say that well-intentioned action, too, must contend with and overcome great obstacles—or it will fail. It is because of the sometimes brutal, even horrendous nature of politics that good leaders must sometimes violate conventional morality. Machiavelli himself does not speak explicitly and systematically on this point, but it can be plausibly argued that for morality to be itself *and* efficacious it must combine its moral motive with uncompromising realism. If something is *genuinely* necessary, does it really violate morality? All moralistic condemnations of Machiavelli notwithstanding, learning from his realism may be indispensable to political morality. Be that as it may, the old traditions created the presumption that for political skill and vigor to be truly statesmanlike they had to be aligned with moral integrity, intellectual humility, respect for others, personal dignity, good manners, courage, loyalty, and much else.

It is important to add that, given the flawed nature of man, great statesmen have far from always lived up to high standards of personal conduct. Indeed, persons egregiously lacking in personal virtue were sometimes capable of great feats of foresight and political creativity. Still, the virtues admired by the old traditions formed a gravitational field for political leaders.

Modernity itself has, despite its many attacks on traditional classical and Christian thinking, to some extent retained old views of what constitutes exemplary leadership. It has at the same time been strongly disinclined to explore what might produce such persons.

So where, in a modern world in which the mentioned traditions are fading away, are these desirable qualities to come from? International relations without an answer to that question is not equipped to deal with a vital part of the problem of war and peace. It ought to be for this field a central task to explore what kind of general upbringing and other social and cultural influences will tend to foster good leadership.

For reasons already explained, the cross-cultural and cross-historical confluence of views about nobility and depravity does not imply the possibility or even the desirability of some kind of global educational scheme. Trying to advance man's higher humanity, societies must draw on *their own* traditions, as adapted to *their own* current circumstances. Here, too, diversity not only is inevitable but desirable. Yet without efforts of this general kind, the danger of inferior leadership grows. For international relations to have little or nothing to say about how societies can raise future statesmen is a great disability.

Ideology and the Will to Power

The approach to international relations that is being advanced here may be explained further with reference to what it challenges or rejects. The need to revise and supplement realism has already been discussed. The proposed way of thinking contrasts more sharply with the sentimental-rationalistic ideology that has been so influential in the United States in recent decades. That ideology assumes that a certain political-economic model is inherently superior and that America, as an exceptional country based on universal principles, should champion that model everywhere, using military means if necessary. This thinking is reminiscent of the ideology of the Jacobins who spearheaded the French Revolution. The model they championed was "freedom, equality, and brotherhood." They regarded France as the liberator of humanity. The new, *American* Jacobins advocate "freedom" and "democracy" and believe that the United States should help remake the world accordingly. It is hard not to associate this political grandiosity with the Greek notion of *hubris* or the Christian notion of pride.

The ideas behind the U.S. Constitution and those behind the French Revolution were proximate in time but sharply different. The Framers had essentially classical and Christian views of human nature and society, whereas the French Jacobins were enamored with Rousseau. Moral virtue was for the authors of the U.S. Constitution first and foremost a matter of ruling self, of republican virtue. It was indistinguishable from a sense of one's own shortcomings. It was by checking self-indulgent

passion that leaders might rise to a concern for the common good. Jacobin virtue is chiefly political and does not recognize a need for humility or restraint, for its great cause is inherently right. To be virtuous is to favor the great cause, which is by definition a state of moral superiority. Because the cause is nothing less than to improve the lot of all humanity, Jacobins feel entitled to exercise great power, sufficient to transform the world. Virtue is not to check and improve self but to control and reform others. Instead of restraining the will to power, which was a preoccupation of the U.S. Framers, the Jacobin notion of virtue fuels and strengthens this will. It even inspires belligerence.

The Framers created checks and balances even among the limited powers granted to the central government. They left most of the power in states and localities and, above all, with the people themselves. The same spirit of restraint entailed limits on power in foreign affairs. For example, the president could not take the country to war without a congressional declaration. The new Jacobins stress that America's so-called "founding principles" belong to all mankind and require American armed global hegemony, which is to say that they favor an *unleashing* of American power.

It should be clear from this example that the field of international relations simply cannot do without addressing supposedly "subtle philosophical questions" or making supposedly "fine distinctions." Neo-Jacobinism and other forms of abstract universalism that disparage or discount diversity and the special needs and opportunities of particular societies might seem to warrant a turn in the direction of the "historicism" of modern multiculturalism and postmodernism. These do in a way recognize life's inescapably historical character. But they also deny the possibility of a universal element in life. By rejecting every deeper continuity and unity they actually exclude the possibility of an enduring human consciousness and can offer no real antidote to social-cultural fragmentation and conflict. Leo Strauss and his followers have long attacked "historicism" of various kinds in the name of what they call "natural right." Note, however, that multiculturalists and postmodernists, on the one side, and Straussians, on the other, *agree* that universality and particularity are incompatible. The former group rejects universality in favor of a radical historicism, while Straussians regard historical particularity as irrelevant to universality, which they regard as wholly abstract. Neither side entertains the possibility that has been emphasized in this article, that, in creativity that enhances and enriches life, universality and particularity cease to be discordant. In the articula-

tion of goodness, truth, and beauty, universality and particularity come together. Cosmopolitanism as here defined accepts the inescapably contextual, contingent, "historical" nature of human existence. Moral and cultural achievements must be rooted in a particular soil.

To reiterate a central point about multiculturalism and peace, the more than superficial and momentary unity across borders that true universality makes possible does not generate a homogeneous global culture. To the extent that peoples can be brought more closely together—so it has been argued here—it must be *through* diversity. The qualitative bond of the common human ground harmonizes the diversity. When persons, peoples, and civilizations cultivate their distinctive selfhood at the highest level, they do not undermine cordial relations but advance them. The very different idea that personal or other distinctiveness should yield to a single, ahistorical model betrays an inhumane, potentially tyrannical spirit.

Toward a Philosophy of International Relations

This article has argued that the field of international relations needs to expand its intellectual range and delve deeply into the moral-spiritual and cultural preconditions of peaceful relations. One of the reasons it must, as a part of this effort, achieve something like the cosmopolitanism here suggested is the acute need in this era of globalization to address the problem of multiculturalism. It is necessary and urgent to explore sources of more than superficially respectful relations among peoples and groups. A multiculturalism of the kind here proposed approaches diversity not indiscriminately but as *potentially* expressive of the higher life of humanity. A multiculturalism that celebrates diversity but without recognizing the need for moral-cultural restraint throws gasoline on a smoldering fire.

The supposed cosmopolitanism of people who have no deep cultural roots has in many places given cosmopolitanism a bad name. These are people who are not truly at home in any particular place and have no special love for particular people and places. They are "citizens of the world," belonging nowhere and everywhere. Having only a historically and philosophically shallow familiarity with their own society, they lack the moral and cultural sensibility to appreciate similar achievements in other societies. They are not able to intuit the presence of any deeper common ground and recognize no particular moral-spiritual and cultural preconditions for respectful relations. Peace or other beneficial conditions seem to them a merely external state of affairs, the result of

people like themselves advancing fine ideas and employing deft social engineering. Typical Eurocrats, for example, endorse abstract ideas like "democracy," "human rights," or "tolerance," but have only a limited understanding of what created European unity in diversity in the first place. It is anomalous for the field of international relations that it is exhibiting a similar reluctance to explore the moral-spiritual and cultural sources of cohesion and respect.

A grand strategy that aspires to the greatest possible realism must resist theoretical simplification and disciplinary compartmentalization and recognize that human beings and their societies are more intricate and have more multifaceted motives—for both good and ill—than the modern Western academy will take into account. Intellectual presentism and myopia should not be allowed to stand in the way of consulting and selectively drawing on the ancient wisdom of humanity. Mainstream academics are accustomed to viewing the moral-spiritual and cultural dimensions of the problem of war and peace as accessible only through empirical, sociological observation; as being beyond the scope of scholarly inquiry; or as being esoteric and insignificant. Studying these dimensions is actually indispensable to a full-bodied realism. What needs to be understood, simply put, is that no genuine lessening of the danger of conflict is likely unless persons, peoples, and civilizations cultivate the traits that are most admired in their respective traditions and that put strong checks on arrogance and belligerence.

As Americans revise and supplement the study of international relations, they have much to gain from repairing to the spirit of American constitutionalism, which is in many ways a summation of classical and Christian insights, as supplemented by modern ideas. The system that the Framers set up put a premium on cooling the passions, deliberating, compromising, and protecting minorities. The Framers assumed the desirability of precisely the character traits and cultural dispositions that have been discussed in this article. In their preference for limited, decentralized power and for state and local independence and diversity, they can be said to have exhibited a brand of multiculturalism appropriate to international as well as domestic affairs. The constitutional temperament of self-control and respect for cultural diversity can help guide a new approach to international relations.