Beyond International Relations Theory

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In the post–Cold War world, the most important distinctions among peoples are not ideological, political, or economic. They are cultural.[1]

– Samuel Huntington

Theories of American foreign policy are somewhat arbitrarily divided into two opposing camps: idealism and realism. Idealism involves constructing a world we hope would exist, such as freedom and democracy sweeping the globe, and then recommending foreign policy prescriptions based on this imaginary world. While realism is more firmly grounded in the world as it actually exists, it can suffer from a form of nihilism, sometimes positing that foreign policy is exclusively found in the domain of power politics and does not involve morality.

The great Harvard professor Irving Babbitt refused to concede that these two lenses were the only way to view world affairs. As a fierce critic of the Romantic movement, Babbitt was particularly alarmed by the tendency of Western leaders to offer policies that were based on chimeras conjured up in their idealistic imaginations. Babbitt refused to accept an amoral realism, however, because he believed that sound statesmanship was determined by the character of statesmen and that the choices they made would not simply be matters of prudence but also a matter of character. Power may be the operative principle of world af-

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[1] Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of the World Order* (New York: Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, 2011), 21.

fairs, but power wielded by leaders of poor character was the thing to be most avoided.

This article explores three representative theories of world order: one of idealism, one of realism, and one that comes closest to Babbitt's concept of moral realism. This third theory, that of Samuel Huntington's "clash of civilizations," embraces Babbitt's belief that only sound statesmanship can secure a peaceful world order. Huntington's theory also has the added benefit of updating some of Babbitt's concepts and applying them to contemporary events.

After two world wars and a Cold War, the nations of Western Europe desired to unite themselves around their common culture. The Maastricht Treaty of 1992 united former European enemies into a common economic, political, and cultural community. Nations lacking this common culture, such as Turkey, were deliberately excluded from the European Union despite their NATO membership. Turkey likewise began gravitating away from its Cold War alliances and toward nations with a common culture of Islam. After the Cold War ended, all over the world, political alliances of nations united by a common culture got stronger, while alliances across cultures got weaker. On a worldwide basis, peoples desired to remove themselves from artificial Cold War alliances and to seek refuge in their own cultures, histories, and traditions.

Despite the creation of the EU, leaders of the West were particularly slow to recognize this trend toward common culture, and rather than celebrating and refreshing a common Western culture, they adopted globalist positions and launched global wars to create a "new world order" based on international rules and institutions. One strain of elite culture, particularly in elite universities, felt that its mission, rather than celebrating Western or American civilizational achievements, was to disparage this tradition. In Europe, leaders permitted and even encouraged mass migration from alien cultures, threatening the common European culture.

The result of this dull-witted Western leadership was the rise of nationalism. The Trump phenomenon, the Brexit vote, and the rise of nationalistic political parties across Europe is the popular retort to the Western globalists and their failure to recognize that the world order was realigning itself along civilizational lines. Because elites failed to protect and celebrate a common Western culture—the original inspiration for the Maastricht Treaty—these populist movements are striving to protect this culture on a national level. There should be no doubt that the recent rise of nationalism in the West was a result of highly unimagi-

native leaders who were incapable of directing popular aspirations in a healthier direction.

Because the politics of nation-states now reflect this cultural and civilizational overlay, the contemporary challenges of world order, of peace, and of war are quite different from the intramural politics of Europe at the turn of the twentieth century that were analyzed by Babbitt. China has emerged as an economic behemoth, casting a long shadow over Asia, the Pacific, and beyond. Russia seems to be returning to its Orthodox and authoritarian roots and asserting itself in areas that share its cultural heritage, presenting significant security challenges by virtue of its enormous nuclear arsenal. A resurgent Islam has inflamed the Middle East and sparked a competition between nations seeking to lead an Islamic civilization. Many regions of the world have suffered violence at the hands of jihadists who have sprung from this Islamic or quasi-Islamic resurgence. The Cold War categories of free, communist, and nonaligned nations are no longer relevant, and the world is generally organizing itself around deeper cultural and historical commonalities.

In addition, the world has undergone an informational and technological revolution that has made it considerably "smaller." Jihadists can provoke Western audiences with beheadings shown over the Internet, while the greatest works of political science are also available to world leaders over the Internet.

The West went through a phase of religious wars in the seventeenth century, a post-Enlightenment period of imperialistic nationalism with the French Revolution and Napoleon in the eighteenth century, and a period of nation-state tension and balancing in the nineteenth century. The twentieth century, however, gives one the greatest pause. After the incomprehensibly brutal and nationalistic World War I, the last century witnessed the rise of totalitarian ideology and dictatorship, another world war, and a Cold War confrontation that threatened a nuclear conflagration.

None of these past challenges, however, provides a historical blueprint for analyzing the contemporary strategic situation. Technological change and recent world events have some rough parallels in history, but understanding contemporary trends and problems requires new approaches. Babbitt has much to contribute, but if we are to apply his ideas to the contemporary world, we must develop a framework for explaining and dealing with dominant trends. What are the main challenges in foreign policy and international affairs today, and how are Babbitt's theories relevant to them?

Romantic Democratist Ideology and the "End of History"

We turn first to an idealist theory, laid out initially at the end of the Cold War by Francis Fukuyama, that argues for the inevitable triumph of Western liberal democracy across the whole world. Leaders who ignore this direction of history, said Fukuyama, will likely be unable to bring "coherence and order to the daily headlines."[2] Fukuyama has revised his theory considerably over the years, but we focus here on his original thesis, which was quite influential among post-Cold War policymakers.

Fukuyama argued in his famous 1989 *National Interest* article that "something very fundamental has happened in world history" and that "there is some larger process at work" to cause "an unabashed victory of economic and political liberalism." "Unmistakable changes" had occurred "in the intellectual climate of the world's two largest communist countries." These changes were reflected in phenomena such as Western consumerism in China, "cooperative restaurants and clothing stores" in Moscow, Beethoven being played in Japanese stores and rock music played in Iran.[3]

These developments, he suspected, were not simply another phase in history "but the end of history as such: that is, the end point of mankind's ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government." For Fukuyama, the "material world" of people actually living in history was lagging behind a human consciousness that had already conceded the victory of Western democracy and liberalism. History itself would eventually catch up "*in the long run*."[4]

Fukuyama expressed regret that Karl Marx had hijacked the dialectical theory of history promulgated by Friedrich Hegel. Fukuyama pointed with sympathy to Alexandre Kojève, a Hegel scholar and Russian émigré to France who argued that Hegel saw the end of history not in a final stage of communism but in the ideals of the French Revolution. "Kojève sought to resurrect the Hegel of the *Phenomenology of the Mind*, the Hegel who proclaimed history to be at an end in 1806. For as early as this Hegel saw in Napoleon's defeat of the Prussian monarchy at the Battle of Jena the victory of the ideals of the French Revolution, and the imminent universalization of the state incorporating the principles of

[2] Francis Fukuyama, "The End of History?" *The National Interest*, Summer 1989, 3.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid., 4 (Emphasis in the original).

liberty and equality."[5]

The end of history would not mean that world events ceased in 1806. Liberty and equality had not been achieved everywhere—for example, slavery still existed in parts of the world. Nonetheless, from an intellectual perspective, "the *principles* of the liberal democratic state could not be improved upon." "There was no more work for philosophers as well, since Hegel (correctly understood) had already achieved absolute knowledge."[6]

Kojève and other Hegelians would decry economic materialists and superficial political pundits who failed to see the power of ideas in shaping human consciousness and driving the process of history. The ideals of the French revolutionaries and American Framers, once formed in the human consciousness, would shape history forever after.

> For Kojève, as for all good Hegelians, understanding the underlying processes of history requires understanding developments in the realm of consciousness or ideas since consciousness will ultimately remake the material world in its own image. To say that history ended in 1806 meant that mankind's ideological evolution ended in the ideals of the French or American Revolutions: while particular regimes in the real world might not implement these ideas fully, their theoretical truth is absolute and could not be improved upon.[7]

After sympathetically laying out Kojève's analysis of Hegel, Fukuyama turned to the question of the value of Kojève's theory for interpreting contemporary events. In short, he asked, "Have we in fact reached the end of history?" Is liberalism the final word on life and politics that can resolve all the mysteries of human life or at least provide the final intellectual structure for human beings pondering the "contradictions" of their existence?

Fukuyama then argued that the two great challenges to liberal democracy, fascism and communism, had both been defeated on the all-important level of ideas. Even in 1940, the future of fascism was, for Fukuyama, intellectually exhausted, since all it promised was the total war of "expansionist ultranationalism."[8] According to Fukuyama, fascism's material defeat in 1945 meant that it was defeated both materially and intellectually and would not have substantial appeal in the future.

Communism, on the other hand, with its Hegelian core, retained greater intellectual appeal and would not be so easy to defeat. However,

[5] Ibid., 4-5.
[6] Ibid., 5
[7] Ibid., 8.
[8] Ibid., 9.

over the long run, the material success of the huge middle class in capitalist societies such as the United States had defeated the Marxist intellectual assertion that a clash between capital and labor would destroy capitalism. Fukuyama observed that "[a]s Kojève (among others) noted, the egalitarianism of modern America represents the essential achievement of the classless society envisioned by Marx"[9] With these realizations, communism had lost its appeal, particularly among the young, and the major European communist parties had suffered from political atrophy.

Having disposed of fascism and communism as possible alternatives to liberalism, Fukuyama considered two other potential challenges: religion and nationalism. He pointed to the rise of religious fundamentalism around the world but in a single paragraph swept away the possibility of religion as a serious competitor to liberalism because "[m]odern liberalism itself was historically a consequence of the weakness of religiously-based societies which, failing to agree on the nature of the good life, could not provide even the minimal preconditions of peace and stability."[10] Although Islam advocates a universal theocratic state to compete with liberalism, Fukuyama was skeptical that this option would hold any universal appeal. Religious sentiments, Fukuyama concluded, could be satisfied as a private activity within the sphere of liberalism.

The last possible challenge to liberalism might be nationalism. Fukuyama admitted that nationalism had been a plague on the Western world since Napoleon and argued that most nationalism was not the virulent sort embodied by National Socialism. Rather, nationalism generally represented competition among various cultural groups and thus was not a coherent threat to liberalism. He believed that while it might cause conflict, nationalism was not an existential or intellectual threat to liberalism.

Fukuyama finally concluded that liberalism had successfully overcome its major intellectual and political competitors, though many observers of international relations have not caught up to this shifting consciousness and are still trapped in the obsolete paradigm of balance-of-power theory.

"The evolution of human consciousness," Fukayama said, had made a return to balance-of-power theory impossible; and he concluded with a series of predictions and assertions that, with the benefit of hindsight, seem more than slightly off the mark. He predicted that the Soviet Union

[9] Ibid.
[10] Ibid., 14.

would probably not revert to nineteenth-century imperial Russia or return to communism, as "from their writings and from my own personal contacts with them, there is no question in my mind that the liberal Soviet intelligentsia rallying around Gorbachev has arrived at the end-of-history view in a remarkably short time, due in no small measure to the contacts they have had . . . with the larger European civilization around them." With the end of history and ideology, Russia would turn its attention to economic concerns and to a view of world affairs in which "the use of military force becomes less legitimate."[11]

Regarding China, the end of history and ideology would follow a similar path. Since Chinese leaders had begun their "liberal" reforms, "Chinese competitiveness and expansionism on the world scene had virtually disappeared," and while China had engaged in some "troublesome" conduct on the international stage, that conduct was related to its commercial strategies—for example, selling missile technology to the Middle East.[12]

This new liberal consciousness would translate into a world in which economic concerns dominated and major war was less likely. "And the death of this ideology means the growing 'Common Marketization' of international relations, and the diminution of the likelihood of large-scale conflict between states. The martial virtues would wither, ideological debates would recede, and 'there will be neither art nor philosophy, just the perpetual care taking of the museum of history."[13]

Within a dozen or so years of the publication of Fukuyama's article, world events reduced his prognostications to rubble. The United States was involved in three major wars in the Middle East, driven by many of the geostrategic motivations that he predicted would wither, including balance-of-power theory (Gulf War 1) and religious fundamentalism (9/11). Russia has developed a nineteenth-century authoritarian government and invaded Crimea, destabilized eastern Ukraine, and launched military operations in Syria. China has launched an unprecedented rearmament and through its military power has become threatening to a number of its neighbors, including Vietnam, Japan, and others, by claiming rights to various islands where in recent history China had no legal claim. Chinese leadership under President Xi Jinping has moved in a decidedly illiberal rather than liberal direction. Religious fundamentalism overwhelmed the Arab Spring in the Middle East, and Fukuyama's

[11] Ibid., 17.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Ibid., 18.

assertion that religion would not be a legitimate competitor to democratic liberalism in that region is untenable. Far from adopting a liberal democratic consciousness, the Middle East is in the process of actively repudiating liberal principles and is in fact doing so by utilizing consumer culture techniques such as Twitter and Facebook that Fukuyama argued would promote the success of liberalism. Beheadings published on Facebook and YouTube seem not to embody the "universal consumer culture" that Fukuyama argued would foster liberal values.

Even in the realm of ideas or "consciousness," democratic liberalism is losing its appeal among many peoples of the globe. Ballooning debt, racial and ethnic tensions, cultural decadence, and dysfunctional political institutions have rocked the democratic regimes of the West. Developing nations are more likely to emulate the model of Singapore, South Korea, or China than that of Great Britain, the United States, or France.

Irving Babbitt would likely have scoffed at Fukuyama's paradigm of world order. Fukuyama's view was that history was not shaped by the struggles and choices that happen in the breasts of individual leaders. His paradigm is the Rousseauistic model with a quasi-Hegelian flair. History, he thought, would reshape human nature through a new consciousness, and the historical dialectic has created the final "Idea" of government: liberal democracy and market-based economies. In Fukuyama's paradigm, peace would be the inevitable result of this mysterious historical process and not of the temperament, restraint, and personal sagacity of statesmen.

Babbitt would have pointed out that the future success of liberal democracy would not be related to a mysterious Hegelian historical process but would be determined by the quality of the leadership in those democracies. Even if world events seemed to portend a rise of democratic regimes (which seems less and less the case), one should not assume that this trend would lessen the chances of world conflict; rather, it could worsen world order. Liberal democracy presupposes leaders who exhibit moderation, restraint, ethical behavior, and self-control. These qualities were not apparent in the American leaders who launched the invasion of Iraq, demonstrating that liberal democracy provides no relief from the vices of human nature. In diagnosing world order, Babbitt would ask about the characteristics that the world's emerging leaders are likely to exhibit.

Babbitt also would have predicted that the adoption of Fukuyama's outlook by American leaders would breed not cosmopolitanism but imperialism. The assertion that liberal democracy should be the only aspi-

ration of governments around the world would result in war because it would declare all nonliberal governments illegitimate. George W. Bush embodied this spirit of democratic imperialism when he declared an international crusade for democracy in his Second Inaugural Address: "So it is the policy of the United States to seek and support the growth of democratic movements and institutions in every nation and culture, with the ultimate goal of ending tyranny in our world." Bush asserted that this task was not "primarily the task of arms," yet he launched two major wars to create democracies in Iraq and Afghanistan. He also embraced Fukuyama's quasi-Hegelian historicism by asserting, "History also has a visible direction, set by liberty and the Author of Liberty."[14]

A harsher critic might argue that Fukuyama is the kind of grotesque gnostic intellectual who claims secret knowledge about the direction of history and whose historicist theories are then used to justify disastrous political decisions such as the Iraq War. Similar historicist and idealistic theories, it can be argued, were influential in justifying the inhumanity of the twentieth century. For the purposes of this essay, it is enough to argue that Fukuyama's model was wrong, did not prove predicative or sagacious, operated in a dream world of idealism rather than reality, and, as Babbitt would argue, suffered from a failure to consider the potentialities of human nature in shaping world events.

Realism without a Moral Center: Kissinger

Henry Kissinger has been one of the most prolific commentators on world affairs and has for years been considered the paradigmatic realist. While Kissinger has analyzed a bewildering set of world events going back to the 1950s, his general theory of world order has remained consistent. For Kissinger, peace depends on "a system of independent states refraining from interference in each other's domestic affairs and checking each other's ambitions through a general equilibrium of power."[15] For Kissinger, the Peace of Westphalia and to some degree the Congress of Vienna embodied such an arrangement, offering the lesson that realism and balance-of-power theory are indispensable outlooks in analyzing world events.

Kissinger seeks to extinguish any hint of idealism. He believes that "the Westphalian peace reflected a practical accommodation to reality,

[14] George W. Bush, "Selected Speeches of President George W. Bush: 2001–2008," 274-78. https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/infocus/bushrecord/documents/Selected_Speeches_George_W_Bush.pdf.

[15] Henry Kissinger, *World Order* (New York: Penguin Press, 2014), 3.

not a unique moral insight." European statesmen of those eras "reserved judgment on the absolute in favor of the practical and the ecumenical," creating order "from multiplicity and restraint."[16]

At the time, non-European nations or empires, such as China and the Ottoman Empire, did not accept these Westphalian principles. Yet as European influence spread, the Westphalian principles spread, too, despite the competing worldviews in other regions: "Westphalian principles are . . . the sole generally recognized basis of what exists of a world order."[17] The modern system of nation-states, which now "encompasses every culture and region," is a creation of Westphalia, and the rules of engagement among nation-states are still guided by Westphalia. Out of Westphalian principles grew the contemporary network of international institutions, trade treaties, international financial systems, and other "accepted principles of resolving international disputes" that "set limits on the conduct of wars when they do occur."[18]

However, Kissinger expresses deep concern that the Westphalian system has begun to fray. Religious fundamentalists in the Middle East pine for a regional or even worldwide caliphate. Some large Asian nations look back to a time when they were regional hegemons and nation-states were less important than imperial warrants. The United States—the nation that kept world order for decades—has been traumatized by successive wars and has historically been ambivalent about Westphalian balance-of-power principles that contrast with the U.S. propensity for democratic idealism.

Kissinger is concerned that these fissures in the Westphalian system are leading to a crisis in world order. He worries that "all of the major centers of power practice elements of Westphalian order to some degree, but none considers itself the natural defender of the system. All are undergoing significant internal shifts. Can regions with such diverse cultures, histories, and traditional theories of order vindicate the legitimacy of any common system?"[19]

The problem for Kissinger is that the Westphalian system was easier to implement and maintain in the small geographic area of Western Europe with its common culture and civilization than it is in the modern world: "The smaller the geographic area to which it applies and the more coherent the cultural convictions within it, the easier it is to distill a working consensus. But in the modern world the need is for a global

[16] Ibid., 4.
[17] Ibid., 6.
[18] Ibid., 7.
[19] Ibid., 8.

world order. An array of entities unrelated to each other by history or values (except at arm's length), and defining themselves essentially by the limits of their capabilities, is likely to generate conflict, not order." What Kissinger recommends is "a modernization of the Westphalian system informed by contemporary realities."[20]

Kissinger sees the world always precariously balanced and ready to tip into imbalance and conflagration rather than moving, Hegelian-style, toward some mysterious consensus of consciousness. Diverse histories and cultures prevent leaders from a variety of power centers from accepting the same rules. Order can erode as a consequence of swings in relative economic and military power or of religious eruptions and ideological outbursts. The only answer to this volatility is for enlightened leaders in the most important power centers of the world to accept the Westphalian consensus, "a set of commonly accepted rules that define the limits of permissible action and a balance of power that enforces restraint where rules break down, preventing one political unit from subjugating all others."[21]

Such a consensus will not prevent all conflict but will mitigate the possibility of a fundamental breakdown in world order. "A consensus on the legitimacy of existing arrangements does not—now or in the past—foreclose competitions or confrontations, but it helps ensure that they will occur as adjustments within the existing order rather than as fundamental challenges to it."[22]

While Kissinger has always been described as a realist or a balance-of-power theorist, there is a kernel of something deeper in his thought. Kissinger strongly implies that for world order to take hold, leaders must have a certain *temperament*. There is an unmistakable similarity between Kissinger's language and concepts and those of the authors of *The Federalist*, who urged the construction of a system in which the passions and ambitions of the people would be cooled "through the medium of a chosen body of citizens, whose wisdom may best discern the true interest of their country" and who would be "least likely to sacrifice it to temporary or partial considerations."[23] When Kissinger says that the Westphalian system was designed so that nation-states could "check each other's ambitions through a general equilibrium of power," the echo of

[20] Ibid., 9-10, 373.

[21] Ibid., 9.

[22] Ibid.

[23] Federalist No. 10, *The Federalist*, ed. George W. Carey and James McClellan (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2001), 46.

James Madison in *Federalist 51* is clear: "The provision for defence must in this, as in all other cases, be made commensurate to the danger of the attack. Ambition must be made to counteract ambition."[24]

For Kissinger, the Westphalian leader achieves order not simply through a balance of power but through "restraint," a word he uses several times to describe what is required of leaders. Enlightened diplomats must accept certain "limits of permissible action." Kissinger does not use philosophical language to describe this type of self-control but instead uses the term *consensus legitimacy* or refers to the quest to find leaders and nations who accept certain rules that will lead them to act with "restraint when rules break down" and will not collaborate in "subjugating" other nations. Kissinger states explicitly that a balance of power "does not in itself secure peace." The essential ingredient in Kissinger's thought is enlightened and restrained leaders who recognize the realities of power politics but who can then craft a common consensus of legitimacy. A balance of power must be "thoughtfully assembled and invoked" so that it can "limit" and "curtail" the "fundamental challenges" to an orderly world.[25]

Kissinger's realism contrasts strongly with Fukuyama's idealism. Kissinger, in fact, gives Fukuyama a kind of rhetorical pat on the head in the last paragraph of his 2014 book, *World Order*: "Long ago, in youth, I was brash enough to think myself able to pronounce on 'The Meaning of History.' I now know that meaning is a matter to be discovered, not declared."[26]

Kissinger may eschew any moral dimension to his thought, but he implicitly acknowledges that the clever navigation of power politics will not be enough to ensure world order. His thought is more complex and philosophical than even he may be aware of, for he has an inchoate sense that a "common order" will require leadership by persons of a certain moral temperament and character. Leaders must be willing to refrain, to set limits on their own (and their nation's) ambitions, to find common ground with diverse cultures, and to achieve cosmopolitanism in their approach toward different cultures. "The mystery to be overcome is one all peoples share—how divergent historic experiences and values can be shaped into a common order."[27]

Kissinger does not address this philosophical challenge in his writ-

[24] Federalist No. 51, *The Federalist*, ed. Carey et. al.., 268.
[25] Kissinger, *World Order*, 9.
[26] Ibid., 374.
[27] Ibid., 10.

ings. He presents a commonsense, realistic analysis of contemporary world affairs and the obstacles to creating a Westphalian order when contemporary events display a resurgent Islam, a democracy-crusading United States, rising hegemony in parts of Asia, the explosive growth of deadly weaponry, and other impediments to finding a "common order." He seems to avoid taking the next step of exploring deeper sources of the desirable restraint and cosmopolitanism and instead insists on proceeding from a kind of self-contained amoral balance-of-power realism. This is in contrast to Babbitt's moral realism, which argued that the *creation* of Westphalian statesmen of moderate temperament is at the heart of solving problems of war and peace. Babbitt argued that the more fundamental challenge is how to shape the culture and the educational system to produce leaders of moderation, character, and self-control. Where does one find, or how does a civilization produce, leaders of a Westphalian temperament? If one ignores the moral challenge of how to actually cultivate the moderation and restraint of the Westphalian statesman, Babbitt pointed out, peace is unlikely. Kissinger maintains a clear realism that Babbitt would have embraced, because idealists have caused so much damage to the world order in recent centuries. Babbitt, however, would have asked Kissinger to focus on how the culture and the educational system shape or fail to shape the temperate Westphalian statesman.

A Clash of Civilizations

While Kissinger's contemporary writings provide a well-informed description of the challenges of modern international affairs, they lack an analytical paradigm for explaining why contemporary challenges have arisen. Why did the first post–Cold War conflagration take place in the former Yugoslavia? Why has a resurgent Russia attacked Crimea and Ukraine? Why did Western European nationalism partially recede and give birth to a common market, currency, and even political order? Why has Greece been the most uncomfortable participant in the EU and turned to Russia for support? Why has travel increased exponentially between mainland China and Taiwan? Why has Turkey become more Islamic and less Western in its culture and politics? Why has the United States not succeeded in bringing Western democracy to the Middle Eastern nations that it invaded?

These developments in world events are neither explained nor anticipated by either Fukuyama or Kissinger. For perhaps the soundest of widely known paradigms for explaining contemporary events, we turn to Harvard historian and political scientist Samuel Huntington, who

published a much-discussed article, "The Clash of Civilizations" in *Foreign Affairs* in 1993 and a book-length work, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of the World Order*, three years later. In these writings, Huntington seeks to explain the world that emerged after the Cold War and then, in the book's conclusion, offers a very specific description of how leaders from different civilizations might create peace in this new world order. Huntington's description of how civilizations might come together in peace is strikingly similar to Babbitt's concept of cosmopolitanism.

Advocates of greater restraint in foreign policy have criticized Huntington for offering a theory that justified American wars in the Middle East while neoconservatives embraced his theory for the same reason. Both analyses are mistaken and represent serious errors in interpreting Huntington's ideas.

Huntington opens his book by describing the ways in which many current theories of world order are unsatisfying. He sees some merit in portions of these theories but ultimately finds them wanting. Liberal democracy has not triumphed, as Fukuyama predicted, and the many theories that split the world into two camps—for example, rich and poor or civilized and barbaric—do not capture the complexity of the current environment. The realist theories that view state actors as the most important units of analysis fail to capture how international alliances are increasingly formed not on the basis of pure national interest but because "publics and statesmen are less likely to see threats emerging from people they feel they understand and can trust because of shared language, religion, values, institutions and culture."[28] Finally, Huntington addresses the "chaos" theories of Zbigniew Brzezinski and Daniel Patrick Moynihan. The world is indeed chaotic, he points out, but the truth is more complex: "The world may be chaos but is not totally without order."[29]

Huntington accepts that some of these theories could help explain pieces of the world scene, but he believes that none could serve as a contemporary paradigm of the current world order. Instead, he argues that the world that emerged after the Cold War features a multiplicity of civilizations organized around common cultures.

In the post–Cold War world, for the first time in history, global politics has become multipolar *and* multicivilizational:

> In the post–Cold War world, the most important distinctions among peoples are not ideological, political, or economic. They are cultural. Peoples

[28] Huntington, *Clash of Civilizations*, 34.
[29] Ibid., 35.

> and nations are attempting to answer the most basic question humans can face: Who are we? And they are answering that question in the traditional way human beings have answered it, by reference to the things that mean the most to them. People define themselves in terms of ancestry, religion, language, history, values, customs, and institutions. They identify with cultural groups: tribes, ethnic groups, religious communities, nations, and, at the broadest level, civilizations.[30]

Huntington observes that as the free, communist, and nonaligned blocs faded from history, the world has organized itself around "seven or eight" civilizational units: Western, Latin American, African, Islamic, Sinic, Hindu, Orthodox, Buddhist, and Japanese. He explains that "the rivalry of the superpowers is replaced by the clash of civilizations" and that threats to world order were most dangerous when they represented "cultural conflicts" found "along the fault lines between civilizations," such as in the former Yugoslavia and Ukraine.[31]

Before we discuss themes and ideas common to Babbitt and Huntington, we should ask whether Babbitt influenced Huntington. We can say with some confidence that Huntington had read Babbitt, a famous Harvard predecessor. Huntington may have been nudged to do so by reading Russell Kirk. In a 1957 article on conservative thought, "Conservatism as an Ideology," Huntington harshly criticizes Kirk's *Conservative Mind* as an "effort to uncover a conservative intellectual tradition in America" by "resurrecting political and intellectual figures long forgotten." Huntington remarks that "few enterprises could be more futile or irrelevant" and argues that many of the figures resurrected by Kirk are not defenders of "established institutions" but "malcontents" who were severe critics of American culture and society.[32]

Huntington argues that Babbitt was one of these "malcontents" who "fled from America to Buddhism."[33] We can surmise from this statement that Huntington's sole exposure to Babbitt was not through Kirk's summary of Babbitt's thought in *The Conservative Mind*. That book contains twenty-one pages that mention or discuss Babbitt's thought with four mentions of "Buddha" or "Buddhism" as an influence on Babbitt's thought. There are a similar number of mentions of Plato, Socrates, and Aristotle. One could not conclude from Kirk's summary alone that Babbitt had "fled . . . to Buddhism." Huntington might have reached his

[30] Ibid., 21.

[31] Ibid., 28.

[32] Huntington, "Conservatism as an Ideology," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 51, No. 2 (June 1957), 471-72.

[33] Ibid., 472.

conclusion on the basis of Babbitt's last written essay, "Buddha and the Occident," a companion to his translation of *The Dhammapada* published posthumously in 1936.[34]

Huntington's characterization of Babbitt's thought as representing a flight to Buddhism has an element of truth. Babbitt certainly felt that the Western tradition of abstract rationalism and sentimental Romanticism contained the seeds of errors that might be corrected by an exposure to the great religious and humanistic thinkers of Asia. The West had been diverted from its classical and Christian traditions and from the perspective of ethics had been diverted into the worship of science and sentimental humanitarianism. The Asian focus on ethical concentration and the higher will was a fitting antidote to these Western trends. The thrust of Babbitt's thought was not an abandonment of the West and a flight into Buddhism, however. It was a project of diagnosis and treatment to strengthen the West through an ecumenical exposure to other humanistic and religious traditions that could balance adverse trends in Western thought.

This leaves open the question of whether Babbitt's thought influenced Huntington. It is clear that Huntington was familiar with Babbitt, and some circumstantial evidence indicates that Babbitt's ideas made their way into Huntington's theories. The conclusions to Huntington's two most important works feature concepts and terminology that contain significant echoes of Babbitt. Huntington's last book, *Who Are We: The Challenges to America's National Identity*, concludes that Americans had three alternative ways to consider their national identity: cosmopolitan, imperialistic, and nationalistic. These are key concepts in Babbitt's theory of internationalism.

Yet these concepts have different meanings for Huntington, which seems to indicate only a partial influence for Babbitt. He saw cosmopolitanism as an outlook that develops between world leaders who have access to a certain understanding of human existence and who can see the opportunity for peace with leaders of similar ethical elevation. For Huntington, cosmopolitanism simply meant globalism: "The ideal would be an open society with open borders, encouraging subnational ethnic, racial, and cultural identities, dual citizenship, diasporas, and led by elites who increasingly identified with global institutions, norms, and rules rather than national ones."[35]

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[34] *The Dhammapada, Translated and with an Essay on Buddha and the Occident*, by Irving Babbitt (New York: New Directions Books, 1965).

[35] Samuel P. Huntington, *Who Are We? The Challenges to America's National Identity*

Yet on the subject of imperialism, Babbitt and Huntington shared nearly identical views. For Babbitt, imperialism was driven by humanitarianism, a desire to "serve" fellow human beings that ignored the ethical obligations of individuals. Huntington similarly characterized imperialism as driven by "humanitarian intervention" and "foreign policy as social work."[36] Babbitt's phraseology was similar: "The humanitarian would, of course, have us meddle in foreign affairs as part of his program of world service."[37] At least one sentence from Huntington's book could have been written by Babbitt: "The imperial impulse was thus fueled by beliefs in the supremacy of American power and the universality of American values."[38] American imperialism was a crusade by the nation that felt itself superior. Huntington wrote: "In the cosmopolitan alternative, the world reshapes America. In the imperial alternative, America remakes the world."[39]

Finally, Huntington's concept of nationalism, while different from Babbitt's, clearly contained elements of Babbitt's view of history and culture. Babbitt viewed nationalism as a modern disease, a product of Rousseau's vision of a diversity of nations with separate and distinct democratic national wills that would push up against neighboring states. This form of nationalism would prevent nations from finding common ground and in Babbitt's view led to the Great War.

Huntington's term *nationalism* was not a pejorative but merely descriptive. Nationalism was the sum total of a nation's "culture, values, traditions, and institutions."[40] Yet Huntington had a broader definition of nationalism when he asserted that much of the success of America is bound up with "its Anglo-Protestant culture and its religiosity."[41] This view was not very different from Babbitt's assertion that America's greatness derived from a genuine Christian humility found in a character such as Washington: "Our unionist leaders, Washington, Marshall and Lincoln, though not narrowly orthodox, were still religious in the traditional sense."[42]

Yet Babbitt and Huntington probably had different understandings of nationalism because of the historical realities of nationalism that each

(Simon & Schuster Paperbacks: New York, 2004), 363.

[36] Ibid.

[37] Babbitt, *Democracy and Leadership* (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1979), 296.

[38] Huntington, *Who Are We?*, 364.

[39] Ibid., 363.

[40] Ibid., 364.

[41] Ibid., 365.

[42] Babbitt, *Democracy and Leadership*, 277.

faced. Babbitt faced the growth of a centrifugal nationalism in Europe that led to the disaster of World War I, a cataclysmic event for the West. The greatest danger for the contemporary world comes from the post-Cold War order, in which, as Huntington pointed out, the world had divided into civilizational blocs with separate and distinct religious and cultural traditions. As the nations of Western Europe in the early twentieth century could not find common ground, so the great civilizational blocs of the twenty-first century—Western, Orthodox, Sinic, and Islamic—either have clashed or seem destined to clash. For Huntington, the two predominant American paradigms for foreign policy were a soft, sentimental globalism based on international institutions and an imperialistic, ideological democracy promotion necessitating American invasions. He believed both to be unsuited to addressing the challenges arising from the clash of civilizational blocs because their premises represented a fundamental refusal to recognize the reordering of the world along civilizational lines since the end of the Cold War.

Huntington argued that after the Cold War "the U.S. government has had extraordinary difficulty adapting to an era in which global politics is shaped by cultural and civilizational tides."[43] The first Bush administration and the Clinton administration continued to operate under the assumption that global and "multicivilizational" mechanisms would be more important than historical and cultural heritage. This oversight led to terrible blunders in U.S. foreign policy decision making. Huntington pointed to several important mistakes of U.S. foreign policy in the immediate post-Cold War world:

> The Bush and Clinton Administrations supported the unity of a multicivilizational Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, Bosnia, and Russia, in vain efforts to halt the powerful ethnic and cultural forces pushing for disunion. They promoted multicivilizational economic integration plans which are either meaningless, as with APEC, or involve major unanticipated economic or political costs, as with NAFTA and Mexico. They attempted to develop close relationships with the core states of other civilizations in the form of a "global partnership" with Russia or "constructive engagement" with China, in the face of the natural conflicts of interest between the United States and those countries. At the same time, the Clinton Administration failed to involve Russia wholeheartedly in the search for peace in Bosnia, despite Russia's major interest in that war as Orthodoxy's core state. Pursuing the chimera of a multicivilizational country, the Clinton Administration denied self-determination to the Serbian and Croatian minorities and helped bring into being a Balkan one-party Islamist partner of Iran. In similar fashion the U.S. government also supported the subjection of

[43] Huntington, *Clash of Civilizations*, 309.

Muslims to Orthodox rule, maintaining that "Without question, Chechnya is part of the Russian federation."[44]

This failure to recognize the emergence of civilizational blocs has continued to generate fundamental errors in U.S. diplomacy. Among the endless examples, a few of the most important include probably the greatest U.S. blunder, the belief by many prominent policymakers that the Iraqi people would heartily embrace a model of Western democracy and ignore many generations of sectarian and ethnic connections. More recently, U.S. diplomats in Ukraine severely underestimated Russia's potential reaction to a U.S.-backed 2014 coup that led directly to the Russian invasion of Crimea. In the case of Ukraine, the supposed desirability of democracy promotion blinded Obama administration policymakers to the importance of the cultural and historical desire of Orthodox Russia to preserve its links to Orthodox peoples in Crimea and eastern Ukraine. The drift of Turkey away from NATO and that of Greece from the EU as well as the partial accommodation of Taiwan toward China were all largely unanticipated by U.S. policymakers, who continue to stress international organizations and norms.

Huntington believed that the failure to recognize the civilizational model had been driven by two separate and distinct U.S. foreign policy approaches. First, there were the soft globalists, such as Barack Obama, who argued that international law, institutions, and norms should underlie U.S. foreign policy decision making. The approach of the soft globalists is marked by summitry and international conferences designed to address human rights, environmentalism, nuclear proliferation, and other multicivilizational issues.

Huntington made clear that the far greater danger to the international order would be the democracy crusading promoted by the neoconservative foreign policy elite who populated the Bush administration. "In the emerging world of ethnic conflict and civilizational clash, Western belief in the universality of Western culture suffers from three problems: it is false; it is immoral; and it is dangerous." It is false, Huntington said, because the Fukuyama thesis is false: the world's cultural diversity is not eroding and giving way to Western values. It is immoral, Huntington said, because "of what would be necessary to bring it about." As in Iraq, the resistance to the imposition of Western values is significant, and only brutal imperialistic tactics have any hope of success in the imposition of those values. On a worldwide scale, the attempt to impose these values would be catastrophic. Finally, "Western universalism is dangerous to

[44] Ibid., 308-09.

the world because it could lead to a major intercivilizational war between core states, and it is dangerous to the West because it could lead to the defeat of the West."[45] The failure to recognize the historical and cultural claims of China in the Sinic region or of Russia in the Orthodox region could generate a world war of unimaginable proportions. The obliviousness of U.S. policymakers in backing a coup in Ukraine, for example, was the kind of reckless interventionism that could initiate a chain of events leading to a nuclear conflict.

Huntington, like Babbitt, urged moderation and restraint: "The prudent course for the West is not to attempt to stop the shift in power but to learn to navigate the shallows, endure the miseries, moderate its ventures, and safeguard its culture." Much like Babbitt, Huntington argued that Western values are rooted in unique historical and cultural traditions such as "Christianity, pluralism, individualism, and the rule of law."[46] These values had made the West great, but they were unique to the West; while they might be admired by other civilizations, their adoption would not result from Western leaders simply proclaiming them to be universal. And their forced imposition at gunpoint would generate enormous cultural resistance. Huntington argued that Western leaders should prioritize renewal at home, not evangelization abroad: "The principal responsibility of Western leaders, consequently, is not to attempt to reshape other civilizations in the image of the West, which is beyond their declining power, but to preserve, protect and renew the unique qualities of Western civilization."[47]

Historically, while Babbitt faced a clash of European nation-states and Huntington saw a clash of civilizational blocs, their situations were analogous, and Babbitt's ideas still apply to a conflict between civilizations. When faced with a volatile international order both at the turn of the twentieth century and in the post-Cold War environment, U.S. policymakers responded with two similarly feckless foreign policy approaches. The first was a sentimental internationalism that placed inordinate faith in international institutions and that soft-pedaled deep historical and cultural differences rooted in religion and history. The second was a democratic imperialism that sought to impose "universal" Western values under the false belief that the spread of those values would lead to peace and that soft-pedaled the deep historical and cultural differences between societies.

[45] Ibid., 311.
[46] Ibid.
[47] Ibid.

While Babbitt and Huntington agreed on the folly of certain foreign policy approaches rooted in a misplaced idealism, they were applying their principles to different aspects of the international order. Babbitt foresaw the danger of tensions between civilizations but wrote about foreign policy and international affairs largely in the context of the Great War and the potential coming clash of European nation-states. In Huntington's case, the world had become what contemporary theorists characterize as "smaller." Huntington warned of clashes between blocs of civilizations that, as a consequence of technology, were more easily coming into contact and that in many important respects lack common outlooks, values, and institutions.

Both Babbitt and Huntington diagnosed and then rejected the two modern forms of idealism in foreign policy, and they arrived at very similar conclusions concerning the solution to the challenges that idealism posed for the international order. At the very end of *The Clash of Civilizations*, Huntington paralleled Babbitt in arguing that, while cultural and historical diversity is a fact of existence and cannot be ignored, human beings can and at times do unite on a higher religious or humanistic level. Huntington said that "whatever the degree to which they divided humankind, the world's major religions—Western Christianity, Orthodoxy, Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, Confucianism, Taoism, Judaism—also share key values in common."[48]

Huntington then argued that "commonalities" between culturally diverse civilizations could unite humankind on a higher level, a level that he characterized as "Civilization."[49] Babbitt, too, termed the higher striving of humanity as a quest for "civilization." Unlike Babbitt, Huntington did not try in any depth to explain what "commonalities" might have the desired effect. He did, however, ask precisely the question that Babbitt had asked—whether the religious and dogmatic differences between societies could be overcome by a common humanism that would cultivate the *higher* commonalities that can be drawn out of the cultural diversity. When Babbitt argued for his New Humanism, he asked and addressed the same questions that Huntington later asked: "Is there a general, secular trend, transcending individual civilizations, towards higher levels of Civilization?"[50] Since this is a topic that Babbitt explored in considerable depth, a deeper familiarity with Babbitt might have filled a gap in Huntington's work on international relations.

[48] Ibid., 320.
[49] Ibid.
[50] Ibid.

Huntington seemed as one with Babbitt in arguing that the only true answer to the challenges of the international order would be found when world leaders united on a higher plane while respecting cultural diversity: "The futures of both peace and Civilization depend upon understanding and cooperation among the political, spiritual, and intellectual leaders of the world's major civilizations."[51]

While Huntington's more philosophical musings never went as deep as Babbitt's and Huntington never defined his terms as clearly as Babbitt, Huntington embraced in his own way Babbitt's ultimate conclusion that questions of war and peace revolve around the ability of leaders to attain a higher plane of existence. If leaders meet on a lower plane, disastrous conflict may result. Huntington wrote: "In the greater clash, the global '*real* clash,' between Civilization and barbarism, the world's great civilizations, with their rich accomplishments in religion, art, literature, philosophy, science, technology, morality, and compassion, will also hang together or hang separately."[52]

Huntington provided a valuable paradigm for understanding the contemporary international order. He also offered a conclusion very similar to Babbitt's when he declared that leaders must respect and to some extent absorb the great human achievements across civilizations, achievements that would of necessity also bear the distinctive marks of the world's diverse cultures and civilizations. Babbitt and Huntington serve as reminders to U.S. policymakers that a strong dose of humility and a healthy respect for other cultures and civilizations, made possible by a proper familiarity with their own, represent the path to peace. Going considerably beyond Huntington, Babbitt provided a major and indispensable supplement to the best of international relations theory.

[51] Ibid., 321.
[52] Ibid.