

## **Rethinking the Moral Agenda within American Foreign Policy: Lessons From Niebuhr, Huntington, and the Japanese Experience**

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### **Abstract**

Since the end of the First World War, the strategy of the United States in global affairs has undergone several evolutionary leaps. Nevertheless, beginning with the international vision of Woodrow Wilson and culminating in the present neoconservative agenda, the grand strategy of American foreign policy has been guided by a moral imperative. Recently, however, the pursuit of that moral imperative has led to unforeseen and undesirable consequences, not the least of which has been the war in Iraq. This paper invites discussion as to whether the United States should continue to pursue a foreign policy based on individual morality and the exportation of democracy and proposes that the best course of action might be for the United States to purge itself of any moral considerations in conducting foreign affairs and adopt, instead, a neo-realistic strategy that allows its leaders to promote American interests at home while withdrawing from the international scene in all but the most fundamental and inescapable ways. The proposition is supported by the assumption that the world as envisioned by Samuel Huntington in his work, *The Clash of Civilizations*, and as practiced by the Japanese government, represents the most accurate picture of the 21<sup>st</sup> century global system and the most effective way to deal with that system.

### **Introduction: Dissonance and American Foreign Policy**

When Commodore Matthew Perry sailed into Tokyo Bay in 1853, the Japanese people suffered a cultural shock that was roughly the equivalent of the shock that the American people suffered on 9/11.<sup>1</sup> Of course, there are dramatic and significant differences. The events of 9/11 were much more violent, more sudden, and certainly more tragic. Nevertheless, both events signaled a profound change in the sociopolitical, economic, and philosophical environment of each nation. In each case, from the perspective of those who lived through the events, the entire global scene was thrown out of balance, and they were faced with a landscape that was unfamiliar and threatening. The noted political theorist, Thomas Barnett, has identified this experience with a single phrase. He calls it a *system perturbation*, that is, an event that, in an instant, destroys the old paradigm and replaces it with one that embodies a newer and more accurate representation of global reality.<sup>2</sup>

One of the key difficulties with any new global paradigm is that it appears to make no sense. Unlike the clear-cut rule set that was evident before the event (in the case of the Japanese people that would have been the feudal reign of the Tokugawa regime and for the Americans it was the paradigm of the Cold War), the New World Order seems to consist of situations and events that are as frightening and confusing as they are strange and unpredictable. For the Japanese people it meant facing foreign invaders with technology, financial resources, and military power that far outstripped anything they had ever

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Ichiro Ozawa, *Blueprint for a New Japan: The Rethinking of a Nation* (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1994), 13; Kenneth R. Pyle, *Japan Rising: The Resurgence of Japanese Power and Purpose*, (New York: Public Affairs, 2007), 67, 74-75. 133-34.

<sup>2</sup> Thomas Barnett, *The Pentagon's New Map: War and Peace in the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Berkley Books, 2004), 258-67.

witnessed before. In the case of the Americans, it meant facing a world filled with shadowy groups of violent terrorists, old allies who suddenly appeared as enemies, a foreign policy dedicated to preventative war rather than diplomacy, and an uneasy sense that things were spiraling out of control. The goal of this paper is to invite debate on how to reformulate American foreign policy and return it to a coherent and productive path that will support its allies, revitalize its military, and reassure its own citizenry.

### **A Statement of the Problem**

The problem is easy to state: American foreign policy suffers from a sharp disconnect between rhetoric (what policy makers say they are doing) and action (what those policy makers and their agents actually do). This schizophrenic disconnect manifests itself in bizarre behavior that is remarkably inconsistent with American ideals. Thus, on the one hand, we have an American president arguing that the United States overthrew the government of Iraq to rid that nation of a repressive regime that terrorized its own citizens, while, on the other hand, we witness alleged incidents of brutality and cruelty on the part of the American forces sworn to protect those same citizens. How did this disconnect emerge? The root of the problem can be found in the history of American foreign policy. Since the end of the First World War, the strategy of the United States in global affairs has undergone several leaps. Nevertheless, for the last 100 years, beginning with the international vision of Woodrow Wilson and culminating in the present neoconservative agenda, the grand strategy of American foreign policy has been grounded in a single constant: the American belief in universal moral values that apply to all people at all times under all circumstances.<sup>3</sup> These universal values include (1) a belief that each individual has innate worth; (2) a dedication to the idea that human beings must be free to pursue their destinies; (3) a contention that the best way to preserve those rights is through a democratic process, and (4) a conviction that those who have benefited from the democratic process have a duty to see that other people have the opportunity to enjoy that process as well. To express this problem another way, for 100 years American foreign policy has been guided not by common sense or by national self-interest, but by morality. Unfortunately, the American pursuit of a moral foreign policy has led to unforeseen and undesirable consequences, not the least of which has been its involvement in Iraq.

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Of course, there is always debate over whether these "universal values" really are "universal." One interesting perspective on this problem has been tendered by Hans Morgenthau who in his essay, "The Twilight of International Morality," argues that nations that pursue military agendas often find themselves in the same disconnect between individual and national morality that the United States is experiencing today. Morgenthau offers the notion that the disconnect is often solved by assuming that the values of the military nation are "universal" in nature. See Hans J. Morgenthau, "The Twilight of International Morality," in *Crisis and Continuity in World Politics: Readings in World Politics*, eds. George A. Lanyi and Wilson C. McWilliams (New York: Random House, 1966), 368-78.

This paper challenges the reader to consider whether the United States should continue to follow its current moralistic foreign policy or adopt, instead, a realistic foreign policy that allows its leaders to defend the vital interests of the United States in a way that is prudent and well-informed, and which contemplates the idea that the best course of action may be to reduce its presence on the international scene in all but the most fundamental and inescapable ways. This central proposal emerges from three sources: (1) the ethical theories of Reinhold Niebuhr and Max Weber, (2) the political philosophy of *Realpolitik* as originally conceived by Machiavelli, articulated by Theodore Roosevelt, and practiced by Japan and (3) the civilizational new world order envisioned by Samuel Huntington. To develop a foreign policy based on these sources, the following two propositions are offered and elaborated upon for the remainder of this paper:

*Proposition One: Attempting to construct a global strategy based on moral principles that are best left to individuals creates a disconnect in U. S. foreign policy between American rhetoric and American action that inevitably confuses national leaders and bewilders the people to such an extent that it is impossible for the leaders to make strategic decisions without committing serious errors, endangering lives, and disillusioning a majority of the citizenry.*

*Proposition Two: To deal with this disconnect, American foreign policy makers must adopt a new American Prime Directive that recognizes that certain irreconcilable differences exist now (and will always exist) between and among different civilizations, and that, Western Civilization, in general, and the United States, in particular, should adopt a strategy of noninterventionism (or limited engagement or, perhaps, disengagement) that empowers it to protect its own citizens, to develop energy independence, and to build a network of diplomatic, economic, and military alliances with those nation-states that are culturally compatible and willing to operate within the established rules of global cooperation.*

These propositions form the focal point of the study. However, they are not simply stated and accepted at face value. Rather, they are presented as questions that must be investigated, tested, and then, should they pass the investigative and testing stages, restated as conclusions. The propositions can be reformulated and reduced to two fundamental questions: “How did the political disconnect between national and individual morality emerge?” and “How can this disconnect be replaced by a new American Prime Directive based on *Realpolitik*?”

### **Proposition One, Part 1: The Historical Roots of American Foreign Policy**

American foreign policy cannot be studied in a vacuum, but must be seen, instead, on a continuum that leads from its initial stages in the expansionist environment of 19<sup>th</sup> century, through the war torn twentieth century, and into the present era of globalization. The first proposition is offered in this spirit:

*Proposition One: Attempting to construct a global strategy based on moral principles that are best left to individuals creates a disconnect in U. S. foreign policy between American rhetoric and American action that inevitably confuses national leaders and bewilders the people to such an extent that it is impossible for the leaders to make strategic decisions without committing serious errors, endangering lives, and disillusioning a majority of the citizenry.* When the first leaders of the United States constructed a foreign policy they were aware of three factors: (1) that the Western Hemisphere was a place of great wealth; (2) that certain European powers coveted that wealth and, in fact, had a foothold in the hemisphere; and (3) that, even though the United States in its infancy was a relatively weak nation, it would eventually control a good portion of the North American continent and the oceans that surround it.<sup>4</sup> Even more significant was the fact that American foreign policy makers at the time (at least until around 1912 or so) had no difficulty articulating those factors as their central political strategy.<sup>5</sup> The first 125 years of American foreign policy can, thus, be seen as an era of territorial expansion based on principles of *Realpolitik*.<sup>6</sup>

The term *Realpolitik* has different meanings in different settings, but in this context, it refers to the belief that, in politics at least, certain laws govern trends and events in history with almost, but not quite, the same precision that the laws of physics follow in the natural world. The laws of *Realpolitik*, as we will use them here, include four principles: (1) the global order is best described as an anarchical system;<sup>7</sup> (2) nation-states are the central actors on the international scene;<sup>8</sup> (3) nation-states are primarily motivated by outside influences, rather than domestic politics<sup>9</sup> and (4) the leaders of those nation-states always seek rational, comprehensible, and relatively predictable ways to maintain or extend their own power base.<sup>10</sup> American policy makers, who followed the principles of *Realpolitik* without necessarily saying so, realized that, in order to make the United States competitive in the global marketplace, they had to make the Western Hemisphere safe and secure for investment, development, and trade. Thus, we can see the 19<sup>th</sup> century as a series of expansive moves that gradually added land and water rights to the American economic arsenal.<sup>11</sup> A summary of that expansion looks like this: (1) in 1803, the Americans negotiated the Louisiana Purchase from France; (2) the United States purchased Florida from Spain in

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<sup>4</sup> Joyce P. Kaufman, *A Concise History of U.S. Foreign Policy* (New York: Rowman/Littlefield, 2006), 34-39.

<sup>5</sup> Kaufman, 42-45.

<sup>6</sup> See Francis Fukuyama, *America at the Crossroads: Democracy, Power, and the Neoconservative Legacy* (New Haven: Yale UP, 2006), 1-11, for an explanation of the dominant political theories of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. See also Henry Kissinger, *Diplomacy* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1994), 104, 121-27, 137-67, for an in-depth explanation of classical realism or *Realpolitik* the term favored by Henry Kissinger.

<sup>7</sup> Tim Dunne, Milja Kurki, and Steve Smith, *International Relations Theories: Discipline and Diversity* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2007), 73.

Richard W. Mansbach and Kirsten L. Rafferty, *Introduction to Global Politics* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 20; John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: Norton, 2001), 17.

<sup>9</sup> Mearsheimer, 17.

<sup>10</sup> Dunne, 74.

<sup>11</sup> Kaufman, 34-45.

1819; (3) in 1845 Texas was annexed by the Americans; (4) Oregon was ceded to the United States by Britain in 1846; (5) in 1848, California was ceded to the Americans by Mexico; and (6) in 1898 Spain declared Cuba independent, transferred control of Puerto Rica and Guam to America, and sold the Philippines to the Americans for \$20 million.<sup>12</sup> Even though the rallying cry for the Spanish–American War, the last expansionist war in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, was “Remember the *Maine*” it was clear to the “man and woman in the streets,” that they were “remembering the *Maine*” for economic and expansionist reasons.

This fact is clear from the speeches of the day. A case in point is Theodore Roosevelt who, after becoming president in 1901, clearly delineated American foreign policy in the language of *Realpolitik*. It must be remembered, however, that *Realpolitik* did not originate with the Americans. In fact, it probably originated with the Greeks. It can certainly be seen within the pages of Plato’s *Republic* and was placed, at least implicitly, within the Just War theory as proposed by Thomas Aquinas in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. Nevertheless, the theory clearly reached fruition within the pages of Machiavelli’s *The Prince*. Unfortunately, *The Prince* and Machiavelli have both suffered from bad press over the last 500 years, so much so that his name and the title of his book have become somehow synonymous with political evil, which causes many people to miss the essential truth hidden within the book. That truth is that nations seek power to preserve their own existence and to provide civil peace so that their citizens can go about their lives, safe from foreign enemies and domestic criminals.<sup>13</sup>

Many political scientists admit that the nation-state’s power to protect itself and its citizens is its central characteristic, even those who call that characteristic something else.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, they also recognize that, for the most part, nation-states act in a reasonable and measured way. Even Pope Benedict XVI, in his book, *Values in a Time of Upheaval*, recognizes the central role of reason in international politics. Benedict is not an advocate of *Realpolitik*, but it is interesting, nevertheless, to see in his work a recognition of the role of reason in global politics, even if he does see that role as controlled by a different set of the ethics.<sup>15</sup> Max Weber has no difficulty crossing the line that Benedict has identified. In fact, Weber is quite at home defining the term “state” as “a relation supported by legitimate . . . violence.”<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Kaufman 36, 40-41.

<sup>13</sup> Jean Bethke Elshtain, *Just War Against Terror: The Burden of American Power in a Violent World* (New York: Basic Books, 2003), 46-48.

<sup>14</sup> Gabriel A. Almond and G. Bingham Powell, Jr., *Comparative Politics: A Developmental Approach* (New York: Little Brown, 1966), 17-18; Several works referenced by Almond and Powell include: David Easton, *The Political System* (New York: Knopf., 1953), 130 ff.; David Easton, *A Framework for Political Analysis* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1965), 50 ff.; Harold D. Lasswell and Abraham Kaplan, *Power and Society* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1950); Robert A. Dahl, *Modern Political Analysis* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1963), 5 ff.

<sup>15</sup> Joseph Ratzinger, *Values in a Time of Upheaval* (New York: Crossroad, 2004), 24.

<sup>16</sup> Max Weber, “Politics as a Vocation (from *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*),” in *The Great Political Theories: From the French Revolution to Modern Times*, ed. Michael Curtis (New York: Harper, 2008), 427.

The American version of *Realpolitik* evaporated in 1917 when President Woodrow Wilson manufactured a moral rationale for the American entry into the Great War. Wilson had several practical reasons that he could have used to support the American decision to enter the war. According to Selig Adler in his book, *The Isolationist Impulse*, President Wilson could have argued that American ships would be safer on the Atlantic Ocean were it controlled by Britain rather than Germany, or he might have contended that, if the Germans defeated the French and the English, they would attack the United States next. He did neither. Instead, he focused on America's moral responsibility to make the international community safe from uncontrolled aggression and to protect the institutions of democracy and peace.<sup>17</sup> With this decision, Wilson abandoned the traditional American strategy of enlightened self-interest as inherent within *Realpolitik* and adopted a mission designed to save the world. Wilson's inaugural address, stressing these points, and the ultimate involvement of the United States in the Great War altered the course of history. These events also altered the ability of the United States to deal effectively with global events because they distanced American rhetoric from American action.

### **Proposition One, Part 2: Difficulties Resulting from America's Moral Foreign Policy**

Besides representing an unrealistic view of how the world of international power politics actually works, Wilson's utopian plan for global harmony also reflects a flawed understanding of basic moral principles and a failure, or perhaps a reluctance, to admit that a moralistic international doctrine, while attractive on the surface, is, nonetheless, flawed at a practical level. The underlying error in Wilson's thinking is his inability to see the difference between individual moral responsibility and the moral responsibility of a nation-state. Reinhold Niebuhr focuses on one side of this issue, the morality of the nation-state, in his book, *Moral Man and Immoral Society*. In that work Niebuhr argues, quite convincingly, that there are times when a nation-state is obligated to use force for some "acceptable social end,"<sup>18</sup> such as "the emancipation of a nation, a race, or a class."<sup>19</sup> Applying Niebuhr's principle to Wilson's idealism, we soon see that Wilson's approach, while acceptable in the abstract, is flawed in practice. Wilson did not hesitate to use force during the war, but, in the war's aftermath he attempted to outlaw its use as an international tool. In doing so he failed to recognize that military force can never be eliminated from the arsenal of weapons used by nations to deal with one another. According to Niebuhr,

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<sup>17</sup> Selig Adler, *The Isolationist Impulse: Its Twentieth Century Reaction* (New York: Collier, 1961), 36-37.

<sup>18</sup> Reinhold Niebuhr, *Moral Man and Immoral Society: A Study in Ethics and Politics* (New York: Scribner's, 1932), 234.

<sup>19</sup> Niebuhr, *Moral Man and Immoral Society*, 234.

the better strategy is to concentrate on how that force is used. Thus, using military force to emancipate, protect, or promote justice is acceptable while using it to invade, enslave, or oppress is not.<sup>20</sup>

Despite his insight into the legitimate use of force, Niebuhr does not go far enough. He fails to recognize the fundamental moral principle that lies at the heart of this problem. That principle is the dual nature of moral responsibility. True, Niebuhr does hint at this principle, but he never grasps the full extent of its meaning. Thus, he is able to write that:

(S)ociety claims the right to use coercion but denies the same right to individuals. The police power of nations is a universally approved function of government. The supposition is that the government is impartial with reference to any disputes arising between citizens, and will therefore be able to use its power to moral ends.<sup>21</sup>

It is on this point that Niebuhr becomes confused. He states that nation-states have a monopoly over the use of force and that granting such a monopoly is based on the assumption that the government of a nation-state is impartial when judging disputes among its own citizens but partial when determining how to deal with external threats.<sup>22</sup> In this Niebuhr is correct. However, what he fails to understand is that we want the nation-state to be partial. That is, in fact, the whole point of recognizing the existence of the nation-state's police power in the first place. We expect, no, we demand that the nation-state be partial in favor of protecting its own citizens. Otherwise that nation-state has no basis upon which to defend its own citizens against invasion, oppression, or enslavement. It is precisely because the government prefers to protect its own citizen's that it has the power to provide that protection. We call this exercise of power, the nation-state's right to protect its own vital interests.

It is at this point that the dual nature of morality comes into play. We cannot give the same level of power to the individual that we give to nation-states because the individual is too selfish to act responsibly. Individuals will pursue their own interests and must thus be counseled to be charitable and benevolent. A nation-state must preserve the collective good of its citizens, and must, therefore, be counseled to pursue self-interest, rather than benevolence or charity. The same moral indulgence granted to a nation-state cannot be granted to an individual who must, instead, be encouraged to "turn the other cheek" when faced with aggression. Nation-states cannot be counseled to "turn the other cheek" when faced with aggression because such counsel would be irresponsible. The moment that the leaders of a nation-state forget this principle and try hold the nation-state to the same standard as that placed on individuals, those leaders will experience a sharp disconnect between what they say is their policy and what their agents actually do in the field. Asking nation-states to be understanding of one another is an

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<sup>20</sup> Niebuhr, *Moral Man and Immoral Society*, 234-35.

<sup>21</sup> Niebuhr, *Moral Man and Immoral Society*, 238.

<sup>22</sup> Niebuhr, *Moral Man and Immoral Society*, 238.

idealistic goal that sounds good in inaugural speeches, but does not work on the international scene. In fact, the leaders of a nation-state who act with tolerant restraint when their nation-state is threatened have acted irresponsibly, probably immorally, and perhaps even criminally, in relation to their own citizens, if only because they are adopting a strategy that will not work.

Even Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, the ultimate optimist about the human condition, openly admits that there are times when a nation-state is morally obligated to use military force. In his essay, "The Moment of Choice: A Possible Interpretation of War," he states without equivocation or hesitation that, "It is against this barbaric ideal that we have spontaneously rebelled and it is to escape slavery that we too have had to have recourse to force. It is to destroy the 'divine right' of war that we are fighting."<sup>23</sup> Nor is Teilhard alone in this sentiment. Max Weber introduced the concept of dual morality in his essay, "Politics as a Vocation."<sup>24</sup> In that essay, which was originally delivered as a speech at Munich University in 1918, Weber explains that many commentators make the mistake of reducing the question of morality and politics to a pair of irreconcilable propositions, one of which asserts that ethics and politics can never be compatible and another that claims that politics must be practiced in the same way that individual morality is practiced.<sup>25</sup> Instead, Weber proposes a more realistic approach, which is to admit that there actually exist two different standards of morality, the "ethic of ultimate ends" and "the ethic of responsibility."<sup>26</sup> The ethic of ultimate ends is the ethic that an individual can practice because, ironically, it recognizes that individuals can never know the ultimate ends of their actions. Therefore, individuals cannot justify ignoring moral precepts even if the consequences of those violations appear troublesome.<sup>27</sup>

To put it in another mode, under the ethic of ultimate consequences, it is the action itself that is considered right or wrong, not the results of the action. Thus, the ethic of ultimate ends, which can also be labeled more descriptively as the ethic of benevolence, teaches that the ends never justify the means.<sup>28</sup> In contrast, the ethic of responsibility requires a moral outlook that takes into consideration the responsibilities that the actor has to those people who depend on that actor for their protection and safety, indeed, at times, for their very lives. This is the morality of the nation-state and it is quite different from the morality of the individual. The nation-state, as we have seen, has a primary duty that outweighs all others and that is to promote the civic peace of its own people. Difficulties arise, however, because the nation-state cannot act on its own. It must be guided by politicians, diplomats, and military strategists, among many others.

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<sup>23</sup> Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, "The Moment of Choice: A Possible Interpretation of War," *Activation of Energy: Enlightening Reflections on Spiritual Energy* (New York: Harcourt, 1976), 16.

<sup>24</sup> Weber, 426-36.

<sup>25</sup> Weber, 430.

<sup>26</sup> Weber, 430-31.

<sup>27</sup> Weber, 431.

<sup>28</sup> Weber, 431.

These people are individuals who are correct to deal with their own moral issues using the ethic of benevolence. However, when diplomats and soldiers interact with other nation-states as the official representatives of their own nation-state, the ethic of responsibility must take over. Once this shift occurs, conduct must change. Otherwise, those diplomats and soldiers get confused and disoriented and, as a result, will make questionable decisions under fire. Telling the truth, for example, may or may not be the responsible thing to do in the sphere of foreign affairs, political and diplomatic negotiations, and military campaigns. Is it wise for military leaders, for example, to reveal the movement of the troops under their command? Certainly not, and so when acting solely as a representative of a nation-state, military leaders may actually have a duty to mislead, to hide the truth, in fact, whenever necessary, to lie.

This is not to say, however, that the ethic of responsibility must be totally divorced from the ethic of benevolence. On the contrary, the ethic of responsibility must always be tempered by the ethic of benevolence, otherwise the ethic of responsibility can degenerate into ruthlessness. Some experts argue that the balance between the two ethical standards actually gives rise to a third ethical standard, which is referred to as *ethical realism*. Two such experts are Anatol Lieven and John Hulsman who argue that ethical realism emerges from the basic tenets of classical realism. According to Lieven and Hulsman, each nation-state is responsible for promoting its own best interests, but those self motivated actions must be moderated by several additional virtues. Lieven and Hulsman include within these supplementary virtues: prudence, humility, patriotism, study, and responsibility.<sup>29</sup> In this they are correct. However, in the interests of efficiency, four of these virtues can be reduced to three, all of which fall under the umbrella of the fifth--responsibility. Those newly minted three virtues are prudence, common sense (which includes humility and patriotism) and study.

First, the virtue of prudence requires national leaders to exercise due care in their foreign policy decisions. They must, for instance, look at all the facts, listen to all reasonable advisors, consider the future, and develop plans that permit them to change direction when the unexpected happens.<sup>30</sup> National leaders must also use basic common sense, which includes a combination of humility and objective patriotism. Common sense will help leaders to be humble enough to realize the restrictions on their own powers and abilities. Thus, they will see that it would be unrealistic for the United States to promise to retaliate for another state's misstep when such retaliation is militarily, logistically, and economically impractical. Common sense also dictates an appreciation for the perspective of the "other guys," who will feel just as patriotic about their nation-state, as Americans feel about theirs.<sup>31</sup> Finally, national leaders

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<sup>29</sup> Anatol Lieven and John Hulsman. *Ethical Realism: A Vision for America's Role in the World* (New York: Random House, 2006), 66-83.

<sup>30</sup> Lieven and Hulsman, 67-70.

<sup>31</sup> Lieven and Hulsman, 70-73; 80-83.

must be willing to study and learn about those nations with which they negotiate. This includes being knowledgeable about the culture, the people, and the history of those regions that fall within their areas of responsibility. To act without such knowledge is to act in a foolhardy and immoral way.<sup>32</sup>

So what does happen when American *Realpolitik* is applied to the international order? To answer this question we will first look at the consequences of ignoring or denying that *Realpolitik* is the way that nation-states actually work. The proposition on the table here is, quite simply, that all other theories, especially those that place their faith in international organizations like the United Nations, are wishful thinking. Despite high sounding rhetoric to the contrary, in the real world of international politics, a nation does not help or protect other nations unless that help or protection somehow benefits its own territory, resources, and people. Moreover, international organizations do not solve problems. They simply postpone, defer, ignore, or aggravate them. Nation-states are the real powers on the international scene and until this is admitted by the United States, American leaders will continue to run around bumping into walls as they attempt to build a foreign policy based on Wilson's fantasy of international benevolence. The problem, then, comes not in developing a foreign policy based on *Realpolitik* but in applying *Realpolitik* while pretending not to do so, or, worse yet, in abandoning it altogether. It is to these two fundamental problems that we now turn.

### **Proposition One, Part 3: Dealing with the Effects of a Disconnected Foreign Policy**

Whenever people in general and those in public service in particular do not perceive, or perhaps ignore, this dual morality of the national ethic of responsibility (as exercised by the doctrine of *Realpolitik*) and the individual level of morality (as expressed by the ethic of benevolence), a moral disconnect emerges that interferes with their better judgment resulting in confusion, and hesitation and, at times, a failure of will that can have disastrous consequences. This moral disconnect occurs when the leaders of a nation-state attempt to characterize national actions, especially, but not necessarily limited to military actions, which have been carried out according to the ethic of responsibility, as if they were, instead, motivated by the ethic of benevolence. This situation not only leads to hypocrisy, confusion, and inconsistency, but also to a failure of will on the part of national leaders who must act in the best interests of the nation-state, but who have tied their own hands by openly declaring that they are doing otherwise.

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<sup>32</sup> Lieven and Hulsman 73-77. It is interesting to note that Lieven and Hulsman devote three plus pages to the value of study, but never once indicate what should be studied about a nation-state before Western intervention. The authors do spend a lot of time criticizing American and British diplomats and intelligence officers for being ignorant about foreign cultures, especially Iraq and Vietnam, and they do accuse them of being prejudiced. However, they do not indicate what they want those diplomats and intelligence officers to study. Of course, this is probably self evident, which is why the factors listed here have been included, but, still, it would have been helpful to find some mention of those things.

This situation represents the road that most American leaders have taken over the last two decades. That road involves restructuring foreign policy to ignore that the primary motivation of the nation-state is to protect its own self-interests and to assume, instead, that the real purpose is to provide collective security, humanitarian support, and political liberation for the international community. Such a strategy is doomed to failure. When any nation-state, but especially one with the power of the United States, attempts to police, feed, and liberate the world, it is, in a very real sense, violating its own nature. It is trying to do something that nations are not designed or motivated to do. Such a course of action is doomed to complete failure. Paul Tillich makes this argument quite convincingly in his book, *Love, Power, and Justice* when he writes:

Of course, no thing can be forced into something which contradicts its nature. If this is attempted, the thing in question is destroyed and, perhaps, remade into something else. In this sense there is an ultimate limit to any application of force. That which is forced must preserve its identity. Otherwise it is not forced but destroyed.<sup>33</sup>

A nation-state that tries to be something a nation-state cannot be, such as a global police force, a world-wide social service organization, or an international liberator, will either lose its sense of direction and purpose or completely destroy itself. A nation-state may start down the road as enforcer, social worker, or liberator with good intentions. However, it will soon discover that good intentions will not sustain it. Thus, the nation-state in question may begin such a campaign with a self-righteous (and deluded) dedication to a glorious mission designed to promote some new vision of global security (“making the world safe for democracy” or “liberating the people of this or that country”). However, as the campaign continues, the strategy will fail. As the “war” (the “police action,” the “liberation,” the “outreach effort,” or the “conflict,” call it what you will) continues, soldiers, diplomats, medics, and civilians will be killed and wounded, property will be destroyed, billions (trillions?) of dollars will be wasted, and the people will begin to ask what their nation-state is doing there in the first place. The leadership will then begin to falter as the nation-state’s true self-interest reasserts itself. Eventually, a policy reversal will occur and, as the nation-state pulls out of the situation, everyone confesses that it should never have entered that crisis in the first place. The situation left in its wake is much worse than when it started. This is followed by hand wringing, finger pointing, moral admonitions, McCarthy-like government investigations, and so on, all because the nation-state tried to do something against its nature.

At this point, it would be fashionable to examine the failed U.S. strategy in Iraq as an example of this ethical disconnect. At the risk of sounding flip, however, pointing to Iraq is too easy and too obvious. In truth, the war in Iraq represents only the latest problem in a long line of incidents that have erupted from the flawed moral strategy that has characterized American foreign policy recently. It will, therefore,

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Paul Tillich, *Love, Power, and Justice: Ontological Analyses and Ethical Applications* (London: Oxford UP, 1954)

be more instructive to see that these problems are not peculiar to a Republican administration or a neoconservative president but, instead, are ingrained within the wrongheaded thinking of most American politicians, Republicans and Democrats alike.<sup>34</sup> For that reason we will not focus on President Bush's mistakes in Iraq, but on Clinton's debacle in Somalia in 1993. President Clinton's foreign policy was crafted by two idealists, his National Security Adviser, Anthony Lake, and his Ambassador to the United Nations, Madeleine Albright. Both Lake and Albright were idealistic liberal internationalists in the tradition of Wilson, who believed the U.S. government could disregard the ethic of responsibility and, instead, operate according to the ethic of benevolence. Neither Lake nor Albright expressed the strategy in exactly those terms, but this is what they did, with disastrous results.<sup>35</sup>

The main feature of the new Clinton strategy was an *assertive multilateral policy* that would (1) commit the president to assertive action whenever aggression appeared any where on the globe and (2) would obligate American military forces to carry out UN policy decisions. This strategy was crystallized in an official document written by Lake and Albright and referred to as Presidential Review Directive 13 (PRD-13).<sup>36</sup> Clinton's entire multilateral strategy is a textbook example of what happens when a nation-state falsely attempts to characterize its national self-interest as motivated by benevolence and compassion, when in actuality a nation-state's global strategy should always be defined in terms of power, self-preservation, and the protection of its own people. Or to put it another way, this is what happens when a nation-state rejects or ignores the ethic of responsibility and opts, instead, for the ethic of benevolence. Nation-states cannot follow this road without endangering their own existence. This was, nevertheless, the road that Clinton, Albright, and Lake had decided to follow.

Under the strategy of assertive multilateralism the United States would take on three roles. It would act (1) as the United Nations police force, (2) as an international social services organization, and (3) as the defender of American national interests. This position was made clear by Albright in a speech delivered to the Council on Foreign Relations. In that speech Albright emphasized that the new shift in strategy had been made because "the time has come to commit the political, intellectual and financial capital that U.N. peace keeping and our security deserve."<sup>37</sup> Moreover, a close look at the language of

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<sup>34</sup> In truth, there is little difference between the neoconservatives of the Republican Party, such as Wolfowitz and Bolton, and the liberal hawks of the Democratic Party, such as Lake, Albright, and Clinton. Both groups support American interventionism with the intent of dislodging rogue regimes and setting up democratic states. The difference is that the liberal hawks prefer to obtain allied support and international backing from such organizations as NATO and the UN, while the neoconservatives are willing to go it alone. See Barry Gewen, "Why Are We in Iraq: A Realpolitik Perspective," *World Policy Journal* 24, no. 3 (Fall 2007): 8-22.

<sup>35</sup> Nicholas Guyatt, *Another American Century? The United States and the World After 2000* (London and New York: Zed, 2000), 75-76.

<sup>36</sup> Guyatt, 75-76.

R. Jeffrey Smith and Julia Preston, "United States Plans Wider Role in U.N. Peace Keeping," *The Washington Post*, June 18, 1993, [http://www.fas.org/irp/off\\_docs/pdd13.htm](http://www.fas.org/irp/off_docs/pdd13.htm).

PRD-13 demonstrates that the new directive clearly committed the United States to an assertive multilateral strategy designed to promote “humanitarian needs such as those caused by civil strife or natural disasters; threats to democratically elected governments; a high risk that local strife could expand into regional conflict; and threats to international security.”<sup>38</sup> In other words, the U.S. military would be used to enforce the ethic of benevolence, rather than the ethic of responsibility, and would, therefore, become, in effect, the United Nations' police force.

The very next U.N. peacekeeping mission would put PRD-13, assertive multilateralism, and the ethic of benevolence to the test. That test would come in Somalia. The previous administration had already moved American troops into Somalia at the request of United Nations Secretary General Boutros-Ghali. However, there were distinct differences between the policy of the United States under Bush I and the PRD-13 policy under Clinton. For one thing, Clinton's policy would permit American troops to be under the direct command of United Nations forces, something that a former military man like Bush I, would not have permitted under any circumstances. Moreover, and more to the point, any plan to place the United States military under control of the United Nations would be unthinkable under principles of *Realpolitik* and the ethic of responsibility. In effect, the Clinton doctrine of assertive multilateralism and the ethic of benevolence placed the United States in the position of having to choose between the UN strategy of disarmament in Somalia, and the American strategy of negotiating with factional warlords.<sup>39</sup>

Predictably, in the face of these contradictions, American dedication to multilateralism began to falter almost immediately. In a nod to American power, Boutros-Ghali had selected American Admiral Jonathan Howe to lead the UN operation, which was dominated by American military forces.<sup>40</sup> In effect then, at this point, strategy in Somalia was under the control of the American military planners and the political decision making process was under the control of American politicians. However, both the military men and the politicians were in a situation in Somalia that did not involve vital American security interests. By training and disposition the military planners and the politicians were predisposed to act according to the ethic of responsibility, which would mean preserving American interests, which in this case, meant negotiating with the warlords. After all, since there were no American interests at stake, the best strategy was to negotiate a settlement. Oddly, the United Nations, in the person of Boutros-Ghali, opposed negotiation, preferring instead to attack and disarm the warlords, an action that might preserve the security of the region, but would also demand military action that could result in the loss of American lives, the destruction of American property, and the loss of American prestige.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Smith and Preston.

<sup>39</sup> Guyatt, 76-77.

<sup>40</sup> Guyatt, 77.

<sup>41</sup> Guyatt, 77.

Caught in this untenable position, the Americans froze. Instead of following the ethic of responsibility and opting for the *Realpolitik* solution, which would have been to bide their time in a slow negotiating process, or the multilateral UN solution, which would have been to attack and disarm the warlords, they did neither and, instead, pursued the untenable approach of fixating on one particular warlord, Mohammed Farrah Aideed, the leader of the Habir Gedir tribe. President Clinton made the situation even worse by slashing troop levels and ordering the remaining troops to escalate the military campaign against Aideed. In effect, this action made it appear, at least to the Somalis, that the UN peacekeeping forces, which in effect meant the U.S. military, had sided with the other warlords against Aideed and, as a result, against the Somalis themselves.<sup>42</sup> It was inevitable that the situation would end badly. This is what happened on October 3, 1993, when, during a raid in Mogadishu, American Rangers and Delta Force commandos were caught in a battle with Aideed's forces. Perhaps the most telling aspect of the fight was that the Americans were attacked by both Aideed's men and some of the civilian inhabitants of the city. As the battle deteriorated, the death toll reached 18 Americans and hundreds, perhaps even thousands, of Somalis in the worst disaster of the entire conflict.<sup>43</sup>

The incident came as a jolt to many Americans at home who had been told that their soldiers were on a United Nations peacekeeping mission designed to protect the people of Somalia from rampaging warlords. However, this is the price that is often paid by the schizophrenic political strategy of multi-nationalists like Clinton, Albright, and Lake. They presented the American people with an impossible contradiction. They professed to be leading the nation-state on a purely humanitarian mission, when, in fact, such purely humanitarian missions are not within the capability of the nation-state, at least not in military situations. Inevitably, as Paul Tillich had predicted, the true mission of the nation-state reasserted itself. In Somalia, political and military leaders, despite their outward announcements and careful explanations to the contrary, did what military leaders and politicians are supposed to do. They planned a mission primarily designed to protect American soldiers and to pursue American interests in violation of United Nations orders, which demanded immediate action against every warlord in the region. The American military had pledged to uphold the orders from the United Nations, but when the time came to make good on that promise, they could not do so. This strategy endangered the Somalis, doomed the mission, and ultimately incurred the wrath of all constituencies, the Somalis, the Americans, and the United Nations. This result, however, is inevitable when the leaders of a nation-state force that nation-state to pursue an agenda that contradicts the ethic of responsibility.

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<sup>42</sup> Guyatt, 77-78.

<sup>43</sup> Guyatt, 78-79.

**Proposition Two, Part 1: *Realpolitik* and the Ethic of Responsibility: Huntington's Strategy**

The solution proposed here is that the leadership of the United States must stop pretending that it can be the moral guardian, social advocate, and military protector of the world and adopt a new American Prime Directive in foreign affairs that operates according to principles of *Realpolitik* based on the ethic of responsibility and its corollaries of prudence, common sense, and study. The Prime Directive asserts that the primary duty of the United States is to protect its own people, while continuing to respect the decisions made by other nations-states that do not directly threaten the well being of American citizens or impede American vital interests. Reworded as a proposition this sentiment has been expressed like this:

*Proposition Two: To deal with this disconnect, American foreign policy makers must adopt a new American Prime Directive that recognizes that certain irreconcilable differences exist now (and will always exist) between and among different civilizations, and that, Western Civilization, in general, and the United States, in particular, should adopt a strategy of noninterventionism (or limited engagement or, perhaps, disengagement) that empowers it to protect its own citizens, to develop energy independence, and to build a network of diplomatic, economic, and military alliances with those nation-states that are culturally compatible and willing to operate within the established rules of global cooperation.*

The jump from Niebuhr, Weber, and the doctrine of *Realpolitik* to Samuel Huntington may seem somewhat abrupt, and so it is best at this point in the development of this proposition to reacquaint ourselves with Huntington and his work. Huntington's thesis represents the most quoted, the most controversial, and the least understood theory in political philosophy today. He first proposed his theory of diverse civilizations in a 1993 article printed in the journal *Foreign Affairs*. The theory was then expanded to a book length manuscript published by Simon and Schuster in 1996. Despite its relative age, the theory is just as fresh, and perhaps much more relevant, than when it was first delivered over a decade ago. The theory itself is relatively easy to articulate in the broad essentials.

Huntington defines "civilization" as a social-cultural unit that cultivates a distinct value system that is manifested in its art, science, religion, literature, technology, and so on.<sup>44</sup> A number of characteristics must be present to connect several independent social systems into a single cultural unit before that unit can be called a *civilization*. Ironically, Huntington is not altogether certain what those characteristics might be. He does, however, suggest that we look to the ancient Greek criteria for distinguishing between civilized and uncivilized cultural units. He argues, for instance, that we might

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<sup>44</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996), 40-41. The distinctions drawn by Huntington between singular and plural definitions of civilization are not the same, though they sound similar, to the variations between static and dynamic definitions of civilization noted by Lecomte du Nouy in his book, *Human Destiny* (New York: Longmans, 1947), 145-46.

consider the common ties of “(b)lood, language, religion, (and) way of life”<sup>45</sup> as an approach to making this distinction. Despite this, Huntington points out that the most important factors binding people together into a civilization are not the way people look, talk, or sound, but what they believe. Thus, religion, principles, values, institutions, customs, and traditions will tie people together much more effectively than physique, skin color, facial features and so on. Finally, Huntington suggests a civilization is the highest cultural grouping possible<sup>46</sup>

With all of this in mind, Huntington fashions the following list of major civilizations: (1) the Sinic Civilization (sometimes divided into the Buddhist (Vietnam, etc.) and the Confucian (China, etc.); (2) the Japanese Civilization (sometimes included in the Buddhist Civilization); (3) the Hindu Civilization; (4) the Islamic Civilization; (5) the Orthodox Civilization; (6) the Western Civilization; (7) the Latin American Civilization; and (8) the Subsaharan African Civilization.<sup>47</sup> Many of these civilizations are organized around a key core state. A core state is generally the most powerful and most influential nation-state within a given civilization. Core states act as a sort of big brother state within the civilizational family, thus providing the sibling states with order and support.<sup>48</sup> The key core states in the civilizations listed above are China in the Sinic Civilization, India in the Hindu Civilization, Japan in the Japanese Civilization, Russia in the Orthodox Civilization, and the United States in Western Civilization. Civilizations without core states include the Islamic Civilization, the Subsaharan African Civilization, and the Latin American Civilization.<sup>49</sup>

Perhaps more to the point, Huntington also proposes a strategy for dealing with inter-civilizational relationships. This strategy can be referred to as the Four Rules of Engagement. Taken together they represent a *Realpolitik* strategy that promotes non-interventionism as a way to deal with global conflicts. The rules of non-interventionism are as follow: (1) The Rule of Abstention (AKA the “Hands-Off” Rule and the Rule of Noninterference and The Prime Directive) which declares that each core state and all sibling states within each civilization must refrain from any involvement in the internal disputes of other civilizations; (2) The Rule of Joint Mediation (AKA The “Let’s Talk Rule”) which says that core states must maintain constant contact with one another to make certain that intercivilizational wars are stopped before they begin or, failing that, are settled as soon as possible by the direct intervention of the core states; (3) the Rule of Nuclear Weapons, which says that each core state will be the only state permitted to have nuclear weapons within each civilization and that those core states will do everything within their power to (a) disarm their own siblings and (b) prevent nuclear technology from

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<sup>45</sup> Huntington, 42.

<sup>46</sup> Huntington, 42-43.

<sup>47</sup> Huntington, 43-48.

<sup>48</sup> Huntington, 156.

<sup>49</sup> Huntington, 208-9.

leaving their civilization and falling into the hands of the siblings of other civilizations or into the hands of non-state actors such as al Qaeda; and (4) the Commonalities Rule, which says that each civilization will seek to promote the commonalities that they share with other civilizations.<sup>50</sup>

Basically Huntington proposes nonintervention (AKA disengagement) as an international strategy of *Realpolitik* that compels civilizations to keep out of the affairs of other civilizations and, when that is not possible, to settle disputes or disagreements under the auspices of the core states, because the core states represent the most powerful, the most stable, and, therefore, the most accountable states. He also encourages the core states in each civilization to seek out culturally similar civilizations and to make alliances whenever possible with those culturally similar civilizations. He even goes so far as to provide a table that charts the relationships among the eight civilizations based on the degree of conflict that Huntington sees existing among them.<sup>51</sup> Thus, for instance, he maps out an extremely close relationship between the West and Latin America, based predominantly on the close cultural ties between the two; the entry of immigrants from Mexico, Central America, and South America into the United States; the common Christian heritage of the two civilizations; the economic connection between the United States and Mexico; and the military protection provided by the United States.<sup>52</sup> In addition, Huntington envisions a relatively close relationship between the West and the Hindu Civilization, based primarily on a common strategic interest in limiting the power of China and the Sinic Civilization.<sup>53</sup>

It is within Huntington's four rules, but especially within the Rule of Abstention, that we can see a solution to the disconnect between American rhetoric and American action. Recall that this disconnect was created when American policy makers (remember Wilson, Lake, Albright, and Clinton here) abandoned the ethic of responsibility (recall Niebuhr and Weber here) in favor of the ethic of benevolence, a principle that we have seen belongs more properly to individuals rather than nation-states (or civilizations). If, for the sake of argument, we assume that Huntington is correct, and civilizations are as different as he imagines, then the duty of each civilization and each nation-state within that civilization is to stay out of all other civilizations and to instead focus on preserving their own culture and their own people. The principle is especially applicable to Western Civilization because the West has interfered in

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<sup>50</sup> Huntington, 316-21.

<sup>51</sup> Huntington, 250; 318-21.

Huntington, 240. The proposition that the United States and Canada ought to join forces with the entire Latin American Civilization to create “an economic and political citadel within the borders of the Western Hemisphere” did not originate with Huntington. In fact, it was suggested as early as 1954 in a political treatise entitled *A New Pattern for a Tired World* written by Louis Bromfield. In that treatise, Bromfield writes, “North and South America together extend almost from one pole to the other, bisected by the equator. No other great land mass in the world contains such a wide variety of climates, of soils, of mineral resources, of lakes and mountains and potential water power all in combination and well distributed. No other single area of comparable size, indeed perhaps not the rest of the world taken together, contains such immense reservoirs of natural wealth or so much actual and potential agricultural land capable of high production.” Louis Bromfield, *A New Pattern for a Tired World* (New York: Harper, 1954), 93.

<sup>53</sup> Huntington, 244.

the internal affairs of others more than all other civilizations combined. It is, therefore, time for Western Civilization to simply "mind its own business." However, the idea of the West "minding its own business," does not only involve staying out of everyone else's business but also preserving its own culture. Moreover, and this is a key point for our purposes, the need to preserve one's own culture translates nicely into the ethic of responsibility.

Thus, in Huntington's world, the value of enforcing the Niebuhr-Weberian ethic of responsibility becomes obvious, and the futility of trying to enforce the ethic of benevolence becomes painfully clear. At first this may seem like a small shift in policy, but in reality the change is extremely important. In fact, it is critical to the preservation of Western Civilization because it reintroduces the principle of *Realpolitik* into Western policy making. Up until now, one of the main obstacles to accepting *Realpolitik* as political philosophy and non-interventionism as a diplomatic strategy has been the uncomfortable sense that both principles amount to a selfish preservation of internal interests. Moreover, and perhaps more accurately, this self-interest seems to demand that Western civilization abandon all other civilizations. This is a difficult concept to accept unless it is seen within the context of Huntington's world view. Within Huntington's worldview, the Niebuhr-Weberian ethic of responsibility says, "There is no abandonment here. In fact, the opposite is true." Should the West continue to interfere, it would be guilty of an even bigger sin, the sin of trying to tell the rest of the world how to live. Thus, the Huntington vision, the strategy of *Realpolitik*, and the Niebuhr-Weberian ethic of responsibility do not just suggest that the West might want to leave the other civilizations alone, they demand it.

This does not mean that Western Civilization will never be involved with other civilizations. On the contrary, Huntington recognizes that inter-civilizational contact is unavoidable, and in fact, under the right circumstances, can be mutually beneficial. However, such contact is generally best made between civilizations that share close commonalities, and that meet one another either as equals or with a clear understanding of the objectives and the duration of the interaction. This approach eliminates the disconnect between American rhetoric and American actions because it demands that American policy-makers, in dealing with other nation-states and with their civilizational siblings, admit that their primary goal is to protect the best interests of the people of Western civilization, in general, and of the United States, in particular. In turn the others at the bargaining table will be compelled to admit the same thing, and it will then become possible to deal with one another in reasonable and predictable ways. This strategy will not eliminate disagreements among nations and among civilizations, but it will cure the problem of the American disconnect. The question before us now is whether such a step is practical, and that is the subject we will now explore.

**Proposition Two, Part 4: *Realpolitik*, Noninterventionism, and the Japanese Experience**

So far we have examined only the abstract philosophical implications of a shift in Western foreign policy from idealism, assertive multilateralism, and the ethic of benevolence to *Realpolitik*, noninterventionism, and the ethic of responsibility. Before completing our study, it will be instructive to explore the implementation of *Realpolitik*, noninterventionism, and the ethic of responsibility, from the perspective of the people. Or to put it another way, how can the leaders of Western Civilization convince the people to accept the changes outlined above? It is at this point that we can turn to the example of the Japanese people. The Japanese model does not provide an all-purpose blueprint that must be followed exactly for success. On the contrary, the Japanese people operate within a different cultural context that demands that they plan strategic offenses that are quite different from those of the West, in general and the United States, in particular. For instance, the Japanese home islands lack the natural resources of the United States, and the West, and the Japanese people must, therefore, depend more heavily on outside international markets. This means that the Japanese must solve their economic and political problems in ways that are quite different from those solutions that are available to the United States and the West. For this reason, we cannot simply copy what the Japanese have done. Instead, we can learn how, by adopting the political strategy of *Realpolitik* supported as it is by the Niebuhr-Weberian ethic of responsibility, the Japanese people and their leaders have frequently avoided the political paralysis that results from the moral disconnect between national and individual morality.

David Landes first offered this model of the Japanese people in an article entitled, “Culture Makes Almost All the Difference.” In this article, Landes refers to an observation made by Bernard Lewers who noted that, when a group of people faces a crisis, that group can ask one of two questions. (1) “What did we do wrong?” or (2) “Who did this to us?”<sup>54</sup> The United States and the West are in danger of avoiding its own problems by focusing on the second question. Such a question shifts responsibility and leads to finger pointing. (“Let’s blame the Republicans.” “Let’s blame the Democrats.” “Let’s blame the Christian fundamentalists.” “Let’s blame the postmodern liberals.” “Let’s blame the Islamic fundamentalists.” “Let’s blame the left wing entertainment industry.” “Let’s blame the French or the Germans, or the Spanish, or the EU in general.” Or, from a European perspective, “Let’s blame the Americans.”) It can also lead to conspiracy theories. (“The Trilateral Commission is to blame for manipulating the world marketplace.”) In short, the question leads to paranoid behavior an unhealthy obsession with explanations that shift responsibility from the leadership of the nation to someone or something outside that nation, generally something powerful, mysterious, and ultimately uncontrollable.<sup>55</sup>

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David Landes, “Culture Makes Almost All the Difference,” *Culture Matters: How Values Shape Human Progress*, eds. Lawrence E. Harrison and Samuel P. Huntington. (New York: Basic Books, 2000), 7.  
<sup>55</sup> Landes, 7.

The other question, “What did we do wrong?” naturally leads to a second question, “What can we do to correct the situation?”<sup>56</sup> This second approach is the one that the Japanese people have taken repeatedly during their long history. It is also an approach that is in line with *Realpolitik* and the ethic of responsibility. In modern times the Japanese people used this strategy first in the 19<sup>th</sup> century when they reacted to the threat of Western domination, by mobilizing a radical reorganization of their entire social structure. This reorganization, which is referred to modestly as the Meiji Restoration, began in 1868 and extended to 1912 when Japan took its rightful place among the major powers of the globe as a democratic nation-state.<sup>57</sup> During this period of time, the power of the Tokugawa regime was broken after 250 years and a centralized governmental system was established, lifting the Japanese people out of their feudal mind-set and taking them into the modern age.<sup>58</sup>

The Japanese had the ability to carry out this mission because they enjoyed the advantages of an almost indestructible national identity. To be sure, that national identity had been submerged for almost three centuries under the Tokugawa regime, but it remained present nevertheless. Moreover, the signs of that identity, focused as they were on the Emperor and his family, were easy enough to resurrect, despite having been buried for so long.<sup>59</sup> This may overstate the situation somewhat and “easy” may not be the correct term. The restoration did have its share of opponents who sometimes resorted to violence. Overall, though, compared to such historical events as the French Revolution, the Russian Revolution, and the American Civil War, the Meiji Restoration was peaceful, and the Japanese people recall the opponents of the restoration today, with as much difficulty as Americans remember the participants who took part in Shay’s Rebellion in the 18<sup>th</sup> century or the New York Draft Riots in the 19<sup>th</sup>.<sup>60</sup>

Second, the Japanese people were confident that they possessed exceptional abilities that would empower them to deal with their own destiny, a talent that allowed them to appreciate the powers and abilities of their Western opponents. This talent also permitted them to borrow those things that the West did right and to improve on their own abilities in ways that could be adapted to changing circumstances.<sup>61</sup> The Meiji campaign of improvement included a number of key elements, not the least of which was a radical reorientation of their entire educational system away from specialization toward a curriculum based on what Landes refers to as “diffused knowledge.”<sup>62</sup> Included in the curriculum were subjects, exercises, and teaching techniques that led to the development of a nation filled with people who were disciplined, obedient, punctual, and imbued with a respect for national symbols, national identity, and the

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<sup>56</sup> Landes, 7

<sup>57</sup> Landes, 7-10; Ozawa, 11.

<sup>58</sup> Landes, 7; Ozawa, 30-31.

<sup>59</sup> Landes, 7.

<sup>60</sup> Landes, 7.

<sup>61</sup> Landes, 8.

<sup>62</sup> Landes, 9; Pyle, 86.

hierarchy of national authority. Moreover, the new Japanese leaders believed that, in order to catch the West, Japan had to develop a strong industrial base and in order to build that base their people had to be well educated and highly disciplined. In order to accelerate the process, they made education and military service compulsory.<sup>63</sup> Interestingly enough, universal military service had the added effect of eliminating “distinctions of class and place.”<sup>64</sup> Finally, the Japanese financed the entire project by creating a new land tax that provided funds for the development of education, technology, and the military.<sup>65</sup>

In the West today, the mission is just as clear--the preservation of Western culture. Most Western leaders seem to understand this threat at least intellectually. They can see that the existence of the West is imperiled by several dangers, not the least of which is the threat posed by Islamic fundamentalism. Like the Japanese in 1868, Western leaders in the 21<sup>st</sup> century can clearly see the threat of radical Islam from their vantage points in New York, Washington, Madrid, London, and Paris, all of which have been successfully attacked by Islamic terrorists. This threat is real; it is powerful, and it is close at hand.<sup>66</sup> The Islamic Civilization, however, is not the only force that threatens the West. Another serious danger is posed by the Sinic Civilization, which if unchecked, might commandeer Middle Eastern oil by deception, coercion, or direct military force. The Sinic Civilization is especially dangerous because it is desperate for energy; it is controlled by a political oligarchy that can act quickly and decisively; it has already developed detailed plans for defeating the West; and it has the military and nuclear power to carry out those plans.<sup>67</sup> Whether this understanding of a common enemy will be enough to convince the West to rise above its internal divisions is yet to be seen. Still, the existence of a series of common enemies is a very powerful motivator. It motivated the West during the Cold War and during both World Wars and it may do so again.

## Conclusion

The problems that the United States has experienced in foreign relations can be traced to a wrongheaded strategy that assumes that a nation-state can make decisions in global affairs based on the ethic of benevolence. This ethic of benevolence has been expressed in a number of ways in American foreign adventures, beginning with the idealistic campaign waged by President Woodrow Wilson at the

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<sup>63</sup> Pyle 86

<sup>64</sup> Landes 9.

<sup>65</sup> Pyle 86

<sup>66</sup> Barnett, 284-86; Huntington, 209-18. See also: Anna Simons, “Making Enemies: An Anthropology of Islamist Terror, Part I,” *American Interest* 1, no. 4 (Summer 2006).

<sup>67</sup> Huntington, 218-38. See also: Qiao Liang and Wang Xiangsui, *Unrestricted Warfare: China's Master Plan to Destroy America*, translated by Al Santoli (Panama City, Panama: Pan American Publishing, 2002); Jed Babbin and Edward Timberlake, *Showdown: Why China Wants War with the United States* (Washington: Regnery, 2006); and Ted Galen Carpenter, *America's Coming War with China* (New York: MacMillan, 2005).

beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and culminating in the strategy of assertive multilateralism as practiced by the Clinton administration at the end of that century and the neoconservative campaign for democratic reform launched by the Bush administration in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This paper has proposed that the United States abandon this bankrupt policy and adopt, instead, a course of action based on the ethic of responsibility, the political theory of *Realpolitik*, and the practical strategy of non-interventionism. The proposition finds support in the moral theories of Reinhold Niebuhr, the world order envisioned by Samuel Huntington in *The Clash of Civilizations*, and the diplomatic tactics pursued by the Japanese government. Movement toward this strategy has already begun as people begin to question those policy decisions that led to the Iraq war. The hope is that the people will see that the United States does not need a change in leadership, political parties or candidates. Such changes are cosmetic at best and fatally flawed at worst. Instead what is needed is a complete overhaul of the underlying assumptions upon which all foreign policy decisions are based. Without such a fundamental change, we will see only more of the same.

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