

International Peace: One Hundred Years On

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The bequest for the Church Peace Union—the predecessor of today’s Carnegie Council for Ethics in International Affairs (and the publisher of this journal)—was given by Andrew Carnegie in February 1914. The Church Peace Union subsequently sponsored the first worldwide gathering of religious leaders, which was held in Constance, Germany, on August 2, 1914. Convened under the shadow of an impending war, not all delegates made it to the gathering. Six months previously, Carnegie had stipulated that the Church Peace Union devote its funds to the deserving poor “after the arbitration of international disputes is established and war abolished, as it certainly will be some day.” This could happen, he noted, “sooner than expected, probably by the Teutonic nations, Germany, Britain, and the United States first deciding to act in unison, the others joining later.”¹ The outbreak of war was a catastrophic blow to such hopes, as the very nations expected to be at the core of this civilized project descended into an orgy of destruction the likes of which the world had never seen.

The poignant clash between idealism and realism, between hopes for international peace and the sordid reality of war, symbolized by the meeting at Constance, suggests the problem for this essay. If the grand search remains, as it was a hundred years ago, one of how to achieve an international system that pushes war to the margins, it is useful to inquire what we have learned over the past century. We are undoubtedly sadder, but are we wiser? The question is particularly insistent for Americans. The United States, which in 1914 barely figured in the military calculations of Europe’s Great Powers, emerged in the course of the century as the world’s leading military power. Even today, amid fears of national decline and economic distress, the country retains its military dominance. Leaders of both major American political parties pledge to “maintain [U.S.] military

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superiority in all areas: air, land, sea, space, and cyber.”² There is, moreover, a national consensus that such progress as has been made regarding international peace is owing to the role that the United States has played in international affairs. While the historian wants to say that the lessons of history are multiple, with rival judgments accompanying the march of events in every particular case, in the United States the popular narrative of the twentieth century is far simpler. It stresses the historic accomplishments of American power and the necessity, if peace is to be achieved, of a continued U.S. willingness to play a vital role as the enforcer of global norms.

I want to question this self-satisfied account. Americans have registered one set of lessons too well—those deriving from the seventy-five year war against German imperialism and Soviet communism. They have forgotten, or want to forget, another set of lessons—those deriving from the history of U.S. involvement in the Philippines and Vietnam, in Nicaragua and Panama, and on to Afghanistan and Iraq. Alongside the existence of the world’s most powerful military establishment, which employs a method of war that allows it to deliver death and destruction with precision even from a great distance, we have witnessed an extraordinary expansion of the justifications for using force. Over the past generation alone, the United States has intervened to defeat aggression, to relieve humanitarian suffering, to secure the secession of disgruntled provinces, to prevent other states from acquiring weapons of mass destruction, to promote human rights, to expand democracy, and to fight terrorism. Many of these interventions have proved controversial, but none has shaken America’s glorification of war and warriors. To its advocates, American military power is the solution to the world’s ills, the primary ingredient in any recipe for the achievement of international peace. A far more critical appraisal is required.

A MOVEMENT FOR PEACE

In the first decade of the twentieth century an organized peace movement grew up in the United States, of which Andrew Carnegie was one of the foremost leaders. Its sensibility is not easy to recapture today; it has labored long under the historical judgment that it was made up of “utopian idealists” whose ideas for how peace might be achieved were other-worldly and decidedly impractical. But public opinion suddenly seemed seized with the issue: “A rub-a-dub agitation once carried on in holes-in-walls,” as Charles Beard later recalled, “became a national

sensation which the most scornful politicians, even Theodore Roosevelt, could scarcely ignore.”³ Among its adherents were pacifists who believed the use of force to be inconsistent with Christian injunction and contrary to America’s purpose. But there were others who took a more activist stance, broaching the possibility of military sanctions by a “league of peace” were a nation to refuse arbitration. The peace movement was very much conflicted over whether an international force comparable to that which existed in domestic society would be required, and even most “sanctionists” inclined to the hopeful view that the opinion of the civilized world or economic reprisals would render such appeals unnecessary in nearly all cases. But the movement, though uncertain of the remedy, saw presciently that the world was turning into one global social system and had formed an unprecedented web of interconnection in communication, trade, and technology. Such interdependence made the need for a new peace system—and new multilateral institutions—all the more evident.⁴

As Carnegie’s bequest to the Church Peace Union indicates, the idea of international arbitration was the leading idea of the peace movement, but the idea itself was not new. “For more than half a century,” former Secretary of State Elihu Root recalled in 1919, “the American government has been urging upon the world” the settlement of international questions by arbitration. “Presidents Grant, Arthur, Harrison, Cleveland, McKinley, Roosevelt, and Taft strongly approved the establishment of a system of arbitration in their messages to Congress.”⁵ As Root well knew, however, the United States Senate had repeatedly insisted on carving out broad exceptions or reservations in matters concerning national honor or sovereignty during the treaty ratification process—involving anything, in fact, that might actually cause a war—so progress on this score had been slight. Nor was there significant progress toward an international court that would handle justiciable disputes between nations. Disappointment over these setbacks, however, did not seem to be cause for great pessimism for most peace advocates. “Leg over leg the dog went to Dover,” emphasized Root. It was in keeping with the gradualist and meliorist character of the American philosophy that progress would take time. The important thing was to start walking along the road.⁶

The early peace movement, often seen as Pollyannaish, was in fact divided with respect to the prospects for international peace. While some expressed unreserved optimism about the world’s progress toward the nonviolent settlement of disputes, others saw that the armaments race was threatening disaster.⁷ Benjamin Trueblood, the head of the American Peace Society, noted in 1899 that the “utterly

inhuman system of militarism” had continued to grow “until it stands to-day, in appalling magnitude, fortified to heaven in the very heart of civilization. There is no tyranny of our time greater than that which it exercises. . . . Year after year the armies grow and the fleets expand. Year after year the war debts rise and the screw of taxation is turned down mercilessly another thread. Science is incessantly tortured in the hope of wringing from her some new death-dealing instrument, which will give one nation advantage over others.”⁸ Carnegie agreed with that perspective, which put him in opposition to his sometime friend Theodore Roosevelt. Also writing in 1899, Roosevelt expressed optimism that war among civilized nations was becoming “rarer and rarer.” Roosevelt made a career in declaiming against the “peace at any price” men. He believed devoutly that the way to prevent war was to make potential enemies “think twice, thrice, ten times” before resorting to force.⁹ Trueblood, the visionary utopian, saw the dangers more accurately than Roosevelt, the archnationalist and supposed realist, but our collective memory chooses to remember the dashed optimism of the peace advocates rather than their prescient warnings about the armaments race.¹⁰

The outlook of Carnegie’s generation of peace advocates that is most difficult to recapture today is their belief in the historical role and meaning of the United States. Today, the old Left and the new Right are as one in viewing the United States, from its origins, as an aggressively expansionist and imperial power—a “dangerous nation” whose recent behavior, especially in Iraq, reflects a long tradition.¹¹ Far otherwise was the view of the peace advocates. They believed, with Charles Eliot, president of Harvard from 1869 to 1909, that the greatest contribution the United States had made to civilization was in showing a practical way to the abandonment of war as a means of settling international disputes.¹² They celebrated America’s long record in utilizing arbitration as a method of diplomacy and pointed proudly to a series of negotiations with the British government, dating from the Jay Treaty of 1794, in which arbitration had figured prominently.¹³ With Herbert Spencer, they saw America as the leading representative of an industrial civilization that would sweep away the atavistic remnants of militarism. As historian John Fiske had written in the mid-1880s, in a Spencerian projection that Carnegie shared:

The disparity between the United States, with a standing army of only twenty-five thousand men withdrawn from industrial pursuits, and the states of Europe, with their standing armies amounting to four millions of men, is something that cannot possibly

be kept up. The economic competition will become so keen that European armies will have to be disbanded, the swords will have to be turned into ploughshares, and *thus* the victory of the industrial over the military type of civilization will at last become complete.¹⁴

These views were registered in the revulsion that anti-imperialists felt toward the United States' war in the Philippines. Carnegie and his anti-imperialist friends were astonished at the ease with which America could "puke up its ancient soul," as William James put it. They recoiled at the gushing tributes toward war indulged in by men such as Roosevelt, who, wrote James, treated "peace as a condition of blubberlike and swollen ignobility, fit only for huckstering weaklings, dwelling in the gray twilight and heedless of the higher life."¹⁵ They saw grave danger to constitutional principles and the national character in the adoption by America of an imperialist ethos. With Massachusetts Senator Charles Sumner, a storied though controversial figure in the American peace movement, the anti-imperialists believed that empire obtained by force "is un-republican, and offensive to the first principle of our Union, according to which all just government stands only on the consent of the governed. Our country needs no such ally as war. Its destiny is mightier than war. Through peace it will have everything."¹⁶

A significant number of thinkers were attracted to the intriguing notion that the United States Constitution pointed the way toward the federation of the world, though only a handful sketched out plans of international government. According to William Hull, a professor at Swarthmore who served on the board of the Church Peace Union, "the great peaceful republic of the western hemisphere" was well fitted to take the lead in forming "a fraternal union between all the members of the family of nations." Such a union—"in which law and justice shall take the place of force and warfare, in which the smallest and the largest nation shall be on the same terms of equality before the law of nations, as are mighty Texas and 'Little Rhody' in the presence of the American Constitution"—would make "doubly dear to us the dear old flag." The accomplishments of the American federal system gave the present generation "great hope and a great incentive" to realize this precious international ideal.¹⁷

One did not have to believe in the idea of a world state to find the parallel between the old American union and a new international union highly instructive, and it seemed to capture the imagination of even Roosevelt himself. In his 1910 speech accepting the Nobel Peace Prize (awarded in 1906), Roosevelt noted

“that the Constitution of the United States, notably in the establishment of the Supreme Court and in the methods adopted for securing peace and good relations among and between the different States, offers certain valuable analogies to what should be striven for in order to secure, through the Hague courts and conferences, a species of world federation for international peace and justice.”¹⁸ Roosevelt was angling for a handsome subvention from Carnegie when he allowed himself such forward-looking sentiments—how else to cover the arrears of his post-presidential expedition to Africa?—but President Taft cannot be suspected of insincerity on this score.¹⁹ Taft was a devoted supporter of arbitration and came to believe that America’s wars of 1812, 1846, and 1898 had been unnecessary. In his words: “In very few cases, if any, can the historian say that the good of war was worth the awful sacrifice.”²⁰ His secretary of state, Philander C. Knox, observed in a prewar commencement address that “we have reached a point when it is evident that the future holds in store a time when war shall cease: when the nations of the world shall realize a federation as real and vital as that now subsisting between the component parts of a single state.”²¹ Only a few years later, as the catastrophe of world war signaled the breakdown of civilization, Woodrow Wilson (whom Carnegie came to adore in his last years) took up such hopes in his plans for the League of Nations.

DISILLUSION AND PROGRESS

A century later, what are we to make of the expectations of Carnegie and his generation of peace-mongers? An immediate temptation would be to regard them as fossilized remnants of prehistoric creatures, or perhaps as one of those species that have suffered near-extinction in the course of the last century’s relentless industrialization. The “war to end all wars,” as World War I was styled, gave way, two decades later, to an even more devastating conflict. Science continued to be tortured to wring from it yet more destructive weapons, culminating in the development of the atomic and hydrogen bombs. The experience of total war also gave birth to totalitarian states; the accession to power of the Bolshevik regime in Russia and the Nazi regime in Germany could never have occurred in the absence of the dislocations and rage spawned by World War I. To be sure, we have developed a species of world confederation in both the League of Nations and the United Nations, but the League was universally regarded as a failure and the UN, though it continues to play a role in world politics, has scarcely lived up

to the vision of its founders. Even friends of the UN typically warn of the danger of inflated expectations, whereas its critics regard it with a mixture of bemusement and contempt—and it is the critical voices that dominate American political discourse. Arbitration, though it is a central feature of the World Trade Organization’s approach to trade disputes and still a valuable tool in certain settings, has played at best a modest role in the maintenance of international peace. The same goes for judicial settlement, from which so much was expected by “legalists” in the pre-1914 period. The United States championed the creation of the International Court of Justice in 1946 but withdrew from its compulsory jurisdiction in 1986, after having grown increasingly disenchanted with the constraints of international law.

Yet despite these crushed expectations, there is a good case for progress, if not exactly optimism, regarding international peace. The recent record of international relations has not been one of ever increasing violence. On the contrary, as several scholars have noted, the incidence and destructiveness of war has declined.²² There have been no wars among the great powers since 1945, and no use of nuclear weapons after Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Once the epicenter and the cauldron of international conflict, the European system was pacified, and the renunciation of war among European nations was not only written into their formal charters of union but also engraved, so to speak, onto their very hearts. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the possibility of great power conflict has generally been regarded as slight. But even the cold war is part of this narrative of progress; out of the wreckage of World War II and amid the development of a costly and dangerous arms race, the great power peace was preserved. One hesitates to call this period “The Long Peace”—it was attended by too much violence on the periphery of the international system—but it makes a favorable contrast to the preceding years of total war. Even in the global South the incidence of organized conflicts of all kinds—civil wars, genocides, governmental repression, and terrorist attacks—has declined over the last two decades. In his magisterial study of the decline of violence, Steven Pinker calls our era “the New Peace.” Believe it or not, writes Pinker, “from a global, historical, and quantitative perspective, the dream of the 1960s folk songs has come true: the world has (almost) put an end to war.”²³

Scholars attribute this change to multiple factors, many of which Carnegie’s generation would have recognized as inclining the world toward peace: the increase in the number of democratic states; their growing interdependence in

trade and other forms of peaceful interaction; the recognition that force is an illegitimate and, invariably, distinctly unprofitable means for the resolution of interstate differences; the recognition that the attainment of wealth—what the modern world terms economic development—is the central object and legitimating element for governments nearly everywhere; and the emergence of a coalition of liberal democracies within which the expectation of peaceful conduct and the observance of the “standards of civilization” is deeply entrenched. Pinker draws attention to the importance of “feminization,” both in the greater political empowerment of women and in the greater importance given to the classic “feminine” virtue of nurturing, as opposed to the “male” attributes of glory-seeking, competition, and bloodletting. As Pinker comments, the parts of the world that lag in feminization—much of the Muslim world, especially—“are the parts that lag in the decline of violence.”²⁴ Related to these changes, though also owing to the global village created by technological revolution, is the extension of human sympathy outside the narrow core of the nation.

All these developments are real, and we are obliged to give the requisite two cheers. But we are also obliged to observe some serious caution about their significance and permanence. Pinker, somewhat perversely, considers even the two great world wars of the twentieth century, the latter of which spawned 55 million deaths, as comparatively better than some epochs in the past—if we consider “comparative badness” in relation to the number of deaths as a percentage of population. The statistics lie, however, because there was a degeneration in moral quality; nothing in Europe’s civilized past, with its frequent and destructive wars, was comparable to the nihilistic worship of the power state that was embodied in the regimes of Hitler and Stalin. That experience was especially grim because it took place in reaction to many of the same progressive trends that, in the pre-1914 era, had prompted men like Carnegie to be resolutely optimistic. History, we learned, could be a study in degeneration as well as progress. There are too many unresolved predicaments in the human prospect, many of which retain the capacity to foment tremendous violence, for us to take much solace from the statistical evidence.

The most interesting question this peaceful transformation raises, but one that Pinker leaves curiously unaddressed, concerns the degree to which it is owing to the role of the United States. Americans are certainly disposed to accept the narrative, reiterated by all recent presidents, that the United States has been the key agent of a more peaceful world. Some have gone further and have insisted that the

United States has emerged as the globe's de facto government—providing an array of public goods that other nations would have been incapable of securing on their own.²⁵ The United States has been, apparently, the inspiration, midwife, architect, and practical builder of a more secure and peaceful planet.

A MIXED RECORD

How convincing is this judgment? There are partisans on either side of the ideological wars who would answer this question wholly in the positive, or wholly in the negative, but neither is convincing. The picture is mixed. It surely cannot be denied that the American-led world order has positive accomplishments to its credit. The post-World War II reconstruction of Europe, to which the United States made an important contribution, was undoubtedly the grandest achievement. In Asia, especially in the years since the end of the Vietnam War, the willingness of the United States to open its market to exports resolved what would otherwise have been an impossible contradiction for Japan and the neo-mercantilist developing countries that followed in Japan's wake. In both regions, American military power allowed Germany and Japan to marginalize their once dominant military sectors, solving the riddle of the previous generation and conferring benefits that have lasted to this day. Though military power was undoubtedly important in providing an essential shield, "soft power" also counted greatly in the democratic advance. Regimes committed to constitutional democracy enjoy a far better record in delivering human betterment than the available alternatives, and this intrinsic appeal explains part of the expansion of democracy—in Latin America, Asia, Eastern Europe, and Africa—that has occurred since the 1980s. But surely such advancement is also owed in part to the diplomatic pressures exerted by the United States and its allies.

While there have been positive accomplishments, however, there have also been grave drawbacks. The Vietnam War was the most dramatic U.S. failure of the cold war period, but there were a litany of other interventions scarred by hubris and militarism during that long twilight struggle. The collapse of the Soviet Union then created an imbalance of power and, for the United States, a new set of imperial temptations. The victory over Iraq in the first Gulf War in 1991 is invariably celebrated as a "good war," but the extremity of force employed in the war helped spawn the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. The blowback was yet more

severe for being unrecognized—to bow to this particular reality meant putting yourself in the “blame America first” camp.

Undoubtedly, the most egregious use of force over the past two decades was the Iraq War launched by President George W. Bush in 2003. The invasion of Iraq struck directly at the prohibition against preventive war that had been the centerpiece of the twentieth century movement to outlaw war. In word and deed, the United States strayed far from the sentiments with which the American century was launched—that aggressive war was the crime of crimes. On the contrary, the United States seemed to have imbibed the spirit of revolutionary France, which, as Alexander Hamilton wrote two hundred years ago, had “betrayed a spirit of universal domination; an opinion that she had a right to be the legislatrix of nations; that they are all bound to submit to her mandates, to take from her their moral, political, and religious creeds; that her plastic and regenerating hand is to mould them into whatever shape she thinks fit; and that her interest is to be the sole measure of the rights of the rest of the world.”²⁶ That spirit has moderated from its high-water mark under the first George W. Bush administration, but has not disappeared.

From the perspective of one hundred years ago, perhaps the most astonishing development has been the emergence of a powerful military establishment in the United States. An aversion to standing armies was long part of the American heritage. “On the smallest scale,” observed James Madison of a standing force, “it has its inconveniences. On an extensive scale its consequences may be fatal. On any scale it is an object of laudable circumspection and precaution.”²⁷ The experience of World War II and then the cold war made the United States throw such precautions to the winds. A large and permanent military establishment became part of the accepted order of things. Though the dreadful experience of Vietnam checked the growth of this vast apparatus, the effect was temporary. Since the end of the cold war the United States has been without any “peer competitor,” with U.S. military spending reaching to nearly half of total military spending worldwide. The 2001 attacks then gave a powerful boost to the growth of the military establishment and national security state.

Americans, too, in so many ways, made their peace with war, became comfortable with war in ways that would have shocked the sensibility of earlier generations. Our leaders today seem to be incapable of discussing the military without employing terms of unadorned praise. Our soldiers, we are endlessly told, “represent what is best in America.” They are “a generation of heroes.”²⁸

Everything they do, it seems, they do for freedom. There is a kind of systematized lying in public about the effects of war. These effects are to be seen not only in the toll of innocent victims, measured in the anodyne terms of “collateral damage,” but also among the agents of destruction—that is, not only among those who are killed but also among those who do the killing.²⁹ This is a far cry from the vision of Andrew Carnegie, one of whose philanthropic endeavors was to establish a fund to honor heroes in walks of life other than the military—growing out of Carnegie’s “intense conviction that it took just as much heroism to save life as it did to take it, whereas the man who took it got most of the recognition.”³⁰ Instead, we are well along a road similar to that which Alexander Hamilton described, by which war leads to frequent infringements on the rights of the people, a condition that in turn weakens “their sense of those rights” and leads them “to consider the soldiery not only as their protectors but as their superiors.”³¹

In classical republican thinking, the danger of a large standing military was that it would disorder republican institutions, leading to the usurpation of civilian rule. The step from considering the military as superiors to thinking of them as masters, as Hamilton wrote, was “neither remote nor difficult.”³² President Dwight Eisenhower was thinking in these classical terms when he famously warned of the acquisition of unwarranted influence by “the military-industrial complex” and the “potential for the disastrous rise of misplaced power.” Oddly, military officers do not seem to be more bellicose than their civilian superiors in our democracy, and sometimes they exercise (as with the prospect of a preventive war with Iran) an institutional restraint against the initiation of war, though their influence also works strongly toward the perpetuation of war once it has been launched. The militarization that we have endured also does not conform to the classic fears of a “garrison state,” which featured a mobilized and regimented population. Rather, civilians today live apart from the military, while elevating this particular 1 percent into icons. But even if America’s militarization does not exactly conform to such older fears, it is still a form of militarization. Instead of a mobilized population, we have gotten the Surveillance State and the Emergency State.³³ Instead of a military caste that has hungered for military solutions to international problems, we have civilian elites who have hungered for those solutions, for whom our new praetorians have proved most dutiful servants.³⁴

There is much that is artificial and unbalanced about the U.S. role in the world. It goes to the very definition of republican government that it should embody a

regime of countervailing powers,³⁵ but there is no international equivalent to the separation of powers, judicial review, popular representation, and all the other devices that the Founders erected to preserve a balanced republican regime in the United States. The mantra of U.S. leaders is that other powers should have a voice, but not a veto, over U.S. decisions regarding the use of force, even uses of force that would otherwise be illegal, whereas the essence of constitutional government is that it should provide not only for the use of power but also for its effective limitation and constraint. Keeping “all options on the table,” as the United States has so often done, legitimizes offensive war in a fashion far removed from classic ideas of constitutional government. The rhetorical U.S. emphasis on partnership and cooperation with other liberal democracies, though appealing to what must be considered as virtues, has frequently not operated as a serious constraint on the use of force and has more than once emboldened “allies” to take provocative stances in the expectation of U.S. support. Georgia did it in 2008 with its invasion of South Ossetia. Britain and France did it in 2011 by agitating for intervention in Libya. China’s neighbors do it over disputed territorial waters. Israel does it repeatedly.³⁶

THE EXPANSION OF FORCE

The past two decades have also witnessed a dramatic expansion of the accepted justifications for the use of force. In the first half of the twentieth century, and even well beyond into the cold war, the United States was committed to the idea of the illegality of aggression. It accepted the framework of a society of states that allowed for a plurality of regime types, and that united them in a framework of law that defended the idea of their mutual independence. That was the central idea informing the UN Charter. It has been seriously impaired. It was essentially injured by the 2003 Iraq War, against which worldwide popular protests were unavailing. The war on terrorism, too, has greatly loosened these constraints. As a war with no apparent end, it has acquired a seemingly permanent character, making enemies of the state the object of drone strikes in a substantial number of countries, including Pakistan, Afghanistan, Yemen, and Somalia. Sometimes these secret operations occur with the consent of the states concerned, sometimes not, but there is no mistaking the development of a permanent apparatus for the waging of secret war. It is based on a primitive calculus that ignores the rage produced in societies that are the recipients of such strikes. Like the drug war, to

which it bears so many disturbing parallels, it purports to be the remedy for things of which it is itself the cause.

A third development that has expanded justifications for the use of force has been the growing acceptance of a “responsibility to protect.” Whereas preventive war was advanced as a justification for U.S. intervention almost furtively, disguised under the label of “preemption,” the idea of intervention to protect imperiled populations has acquired much greater international legitimacy. A 2005 UN General Assembly document recognizing a responsibility to protect was adopted unanimously, though with the proviso that any military action must take place under the auspices of the Security Council. Given the veto power of Russia and China, the international consensus is far less impressive than it may at first seem. But skepticism goes beyond those two powers: in the Security Council resolution authorizing action in Libya in 2011, India, Brazil, and Germany also abstained. Indeed, in some respects a degree of caution is built into the doctrine itself. In the 2001 report of the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, the imperative need to respond to acts that shock the conscience of mankind, but that occur within the confines of an individual state, was hedged with important qualifications. So far as military intervention is concerned, “right authority, just cause, right intention, last resort, proportional means, and reasonable prospects” were all invoked as relevant barriers to the decision to intervene. The Commission conceded that all members of the United Nations have an interest in maintaining a stable international order, and that this interest, save in exceptional circumstances, is best satisfied by abstaining from military intervention.³⁷

Genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity are evil things, and it is proper that the international community should look to ways to mitigate their reach or, in extreme cases, put an end to them. Though realism is generally understood to recognize neither a right nor a duty of humanitarian intervention, and indeed to be essentially uninterested in such appeals, I think the real force of the realist objection lies elsewhere—in questioning the capacity to undertake and sustain interventions that bring about more good than the evil inflicted by the use of force; in doubting the motives that as a practical matter will underlie the action of outside powers; and in deprecating the elasticity with which these just war criteria are sometimes invoked, thus opening a potentially large wedge in the justification of offensive uses of force. Put differently, what I would term constitutional realism does not reject the assumption of humanitarian responsibility, but rather takes seriously the restrictions that advocates of

humanitarian intervention themselves usually place upon it: that force be disinterested and restricted to the humanitarian aim; that its use be proportional in weighing the consequences of intervention; that force should be employed only in the last resort and employ means that discriminate between the guilty and the innocent; that multilateral support is a vital factor in legitimating such enterprises and seeing them through.

These are conditions that are difficult to satisfy. Indeed, it is difficult to think of any intervention of the past two decades that has satisfied them all. As a practical matter, it surely deserves notice that the humanitarian interventions most recently urged upon us—Libya, Syria, Sudan—are those that have arisen within or on the fringes of the Islamic world and are thus connected in subtle ways with the ongoing “war on terror” and an unspoken clash of civilizations. The record of Western intervention shows that, curiously, where oil is present our humanitarian sympathies seem to be more deeply aroused. We may foreswear such selfish connections in theory, but in practice they often seem to govern the case.

Acceptance of a duty of humanitarian intervention also lends a patina of moral justification for the existence of an overweening military establishment, which has been and is likely to be employed for other purposes. If such a duty were widely accepted, it would carry the virtually inevitable consequence of encouraging rebellion in the expectation of outside support, a consequence the more deeply to be feared insofar as uses of force *in anticipation of* humanitarian disaster are championed.³⁸ The method most convenient and therefore favored—bombarding the entrenched redoubts of oppressive regimes with precision weapons—cannot ensure a stable and constructive outcome, powerful though it may be in its capacity for destruction. While UN and regional peacekeeping operations, in which troops are dispatched to preserve a peace already made, have proved their utility in many instances over the last generation, humanitarian interventions that lead with the sword are far more dubious. The older rule forbidding such interventions, which embodied this traditional skepticism about the capacity of outsiders to successfully resolve civil wars, is of greater weight. Given the opposing considerations on either side—the desire to “do something” in the face of humanitarian crisis, the no less imperative lesson of the disutility and unanticipated consequences of outside military intervention—perhaps it is inevitable that we should err. If so, it appears better to this observer to err on the side of caution.

Of all the expansions in justifications for the use of force, the adoption of a preventive war rationale is the least tenable. The norm against it arose from a hard

and bitter experience over the consequences of offensive war in the first half of the twentieth century, an experience that was once again confirmed by the results of the Iraq War. It rests on images of the enemy that are fed by relentless propaganda and that, as also happened during the cold war, unwisely read those enemies out of the human race. The ease with which these ideas are considered in the United States today testifies to the dangers of America's enormous military establishment. Its unprecedented technological capability virtually invites irresponsibility in the use of force.

A CIRCUITOUS PATH

These expansions of the justifications for the use of force show clearly enough that the problem of ensuring peaceful conduct among states is likely to remain a formidable one. It is entirely premature to speak of "winning the war on war." International peace is a great good; its victories ought to be even more renowned than those of war. But the ways of peace are circuitous and not reducible to a simple formula. Consider the following examples:

It may be that a taboo has developed regarding the use of weapons of mass destruction sufficiently powerful that a state would risk its own destruction were it to violate the norm, but that still leaves us with a world in which the use of force is ultimately tamed by the threat of countervailing force. The obstacles confronting nuclear disarmament remain nearly as formidable as they ever were, and an avowed objective to rid the world of nuclear weapons may, by encouraging preventive war, actually make war more likely.

So, too, it is desirable as a general rule that states be ruled according to democratic procedures and the rule of law, but it does not follow that international peace is secured by challenging the legitimacy of autocratic states and making it one's mission to overturn them. While the thesis that democracy leads to peace has gained great traction in recent years, the better argument is that peace leads to democracy—that is, an international environment in which war is strictly confined to defensive purposes holds greater promise for the advance of democracy and human rights than one in which the absence of democratic legitimacy forfeits the right of national independence.

We may lament that emerging great powers such as China give a scope to their national interests that bears adversely on the rights of neighboring peoples, but a diplomacy that pushes aside the claims of Chinese nationalism and refuses to

recognize a Chinese sphere of influence is likely to be more productive of military conflict than peaceful coexistence.

Economic growth and “gentle commerce” are surely incubators of peace, considering the alternatives of autarky and stagnation, but resource constraints and climate change, each of them resulting from growth, also have considerable potential to foment much violence.

Bringing the perpetrators of war crimes to justice, as the International Criminal Court has sought to do, is an understandable aspiration, but it may stand in tension with ensuring a transition to a constitutional regime by depriving war criminals of their incentive to surrender power peacefully.

International cooperation is usually a virtue, and states should always be attentive to the just claims of others in the conduct of their foreign policy, but even cooperation may be carried too far and may test the endurance of nations. The contemporary fate of the European Union, as it is torn apart by the pressures of a common currency, is a classic and altogether tragic illustration of this point.

A tragic predicament closer to home may be seen in the contemporary role of the United States. Its military hegemony, when defensively arrayed, has made and can still make a key contribution to a peaceful world order. At the same time, such a powerful military establishment provides a perpetual temptation to employ it in war. There is no clear way to provide the benefits of the defensive array without making the nation vulnerable to offensive uses, in effect hitching a set of perfectly reasonable aims to a range of patently illegitimate objects.

We learned from the war against Hitler that force must sometimes be used to attain peace; otherwise the peaceful would be ruled by the men of violence. We learned, too, that if you desire peace you must prepare for war. But we have also learned that the United States, the beacon of what were once termed the “peace-loving” states, is not immune to the lure of war, and that the preparations ostensibly made to preserve the peace have more than once led us into wars that conformed to the requirements of neither justice nor interest. That record, all the more impressive for being recent, should induce humility and restraint, not exuberance, over a militarized role for the United States in the maintenance of international peace, and keen disappointment that America has in many instances forsaken the peaceful ideals of the founder of the Carnegie Council.

NOTES

¹ Charles S. Macfarland, *Pioneers for peace through religion based on the records of the Church Peace Union (founded by Andrew Carnegie) 1914–1945* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1946), p. 22.

- ² Barack Obama, cited in Peter Baker, "Military Will Remain Strong With Cuts, Obama Tells Cadets," *New York Times*, May 23, 2012, p. A 23.
- ³ Charles Beard, *A Foreign Policy for America* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1940), pp. 91–92.
- ⁴ For detailed explorations of the heterogeneity of the peace movement and associated ideas of internationalism, see Warren F. Kuehl, *Seeking World Order: The United States and International Organization to 1920* (Nashville, Tenn.: Vanderbilt University Press, 1969); and David S. Patterson, *Toward a Warless World: The Travail of the American Peace Movement, 1887–1914* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1976). For the view, emerging strongly in the pre-1914 period, that a peaceful world might "best be fostered through cross-national cultural communication, understanding, and communication," see Akira Iriye, *Cultural Internationalism and World Order* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), p. 27.
- ⁵ Elihu Root, "Letter of Mr. Root to Mr. Hays, March 29, 1919," in *Men and Policies: Addresses by Elihu Root*, Robert Bacon and James Brown Scott, eds. (Freeport, N.Y.: Books for Libraries Press, 1968 [first published 1924 by Harvard University Press]), p. 254.
- ⁶ Roland N. Stromberg, *Collective Security and American Foreign Policy: From the League of Nations to NATO* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1963), p. 6.
- ⁷ Carnegie himself said both things, as is shown in the excellent biography by David Nasaw, *Andrew Carnegie* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2006).
- ⁸ Benjamin F. Trueblood, *The Federation of the World* (Boston, Mass.: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1899), pp. 16, 46.
- ⁹ H. L. Mencken, "Roosevelt: An Autopsy," in James T. Farrell, ed., *Prejudices: A Selection* (New York: Vintage Books, 1958), p. 53.
- ¹⁰ Theodore Roosevelt, "Expansion and Peace," December 21, 1899, in Hermann Hagedorn, ed., *Works of Theodore Roosevelt, Memorial Edition*, 24 vols. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1923–26), 15: 282–92.
- ¹¹ William Appleman Williams, *Empire as a Way of Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980); Robert Kagan, *Dangerous Nation* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006).
- ¹² Charles W. Eliot, "Five American Contributions to Civilization," *Atlantic Monthly* 78, no. 468 (October 1896), pp. 433–47.
- ¹³ The treaty with Britain in 1794, negotiated by American envoy John Jay, addressed issues arising from the War of American Independence and created mixed arbitral commissions to resolve certain disputes. See Francis Anthony Boyle, *Foundations of World Order: The Legalist Approach to International Relations, 1898–1922* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1999), p. 25.
- ¹⁴ John Fiske, *American Political Ideas Viewed from the Standpoint of Universal History* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1885), pp. 149–50.
- ¹⁵ Robert L. Beisner, *Twelve Against Empire: The Anti-Imperialists 1898–1900* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1968), pp. 48, 43.
- ¹⁶ Charles Sumner, *Prophetic Voices Concerning America. A Monograph*. (Boston: Lee and Shepard, 1874), p. 175.
- ¹⁷ William I. Hull, *The New Peace Movement* (Boston: The World Peace Foundation, 1912), pp. 147–50.
- ¹⁸ Theodore Roosevelt, "International Peace: An Address before the Nobel Prize Committee," *The Outlook* 95, no. 1 (May 7, 1910), pp. 19–20.
- ¹⁹ Nasaw, in *Andrew Carnegie*, gives an amusing account of Roosevelt's maneuvers to extract money from Carnegie, just when Carnegie was attempting to extract a peace speech from Roosevelt. (They both succeeded.) Each man, though appreciating the utility of their friendship, occasionally gave expression to the most bitter aspersions against the other on their respective approaches to the peace problem.
- ²⁰ William Howard Taft, *Peace: Patriotic and Religious Addresses* (New York: International Peace Forum, 1912), p. 67.
- ²¹ Philander C. Knox from June 1910, as quoted by Hamilton Holt in his speech "A League of Peace," in John Whiteclay Chambers II, *The Eagle and the Dove: The American Peace Movement and United States Foreign Policy 1900–1922* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1991), p. 19.
- ²² Steven Pinker, *The Better Angels of Our Nature: Why Violence Has Declined* (New York: Viking, 2011); Joshua S. Goldstein, *Winning the War on War: The Decline of Armed Conflict Worldwide* (New York: Dutton, 2011).
- ²³ Pinker, *Better Angels*, p. 302.
- ²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 688.
- ²⁵ Michael Mandelbaum, *The Case for Goliath: How America Acts as the World's Government in the 21st Century* (New York: Public Affairs, 2005).
- ²⁶ "The Warning I," January 27, 1797, in Henry Cabot Lodge, ed., *Works of Alexander Hamilton* (New York, G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1904), 6:233–34.

- ²⁷ Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, and John Jay, Federalist Paper No. 41, in Clinton Rossiter, ed., *The Federalist Papers*, (New York: Mentor/New American Library, 1961 [first published 1787–1788]), p. 257.
- ²⁸ President Barack Obama, cited in Stacy A. Anderson, “Obama July 4th Speech,” *Huffington Post*, July 4, 2012.
- ²⁹ For an especially grim illustration of this dehumanization in my own community of Colorado Springs, centered on the experience of Fort Carson, see David Philipps, *Lethal Warriors: When the New Band of Brothers Came Home* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010). My outlook on this question is deeply affected by a personal circumstance that is painful to write about, but relevant to the case: the death of my daughter Whitney, then eighteen, in an accident in 2009. She was filling up our car at a neighborhood store when an out-of-control driver careened into the gas pump, trapping her and causing an explosion. We subsequently learned that the driver, who was unhurt in the crash, was the wife of an Army sergeant stationed at Fort Carson who had been repeatedly deployed to Iraq. The family was dysfunctional and falling apart. The wife had recently attempted suicide. She was on her desperate way to the doctor’s office to get new prescriptions for depression when she lost control of her car.
- ³⁰ Frederick Lynch, one of the original commissioners of the Hero Fund, cited in Nasaw, *Carnegie*, p. 666.
- ³¹ Federalist Paper No. 8, Rossiter, p. 70.
- ³² *Ibid.*
- ³³ See Shane Harris, *The Watchers: The Rise of America’s Surveillance State* (New York: Penguin, 2011); and David C. Unger, *The Emergency State: America’s Pursuit of Absolute Security at All Costs* (New York: Penguin, 2012).
- ³⁴ The best study remains Andrew Bacevich, *The New American Militarism: How Americans Are Seduced by War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), a new edition of which has appeared in 2013.
- ³⁵ See Scott Gordon, *Controlling the State: Constitutionalism from Ancient Athens to Today* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2002); and Daniel H. Deudney, *Bounding Power: Republican Security Theory from the Polis to the Global Village* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2007).
- ³⁶ For consideration of these issues, see especially G. John Ikenberry, *Liberal Leviathan: The Origins, Crisis, and Transformation of the American World Order* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2011); and the critical review of Richard K. Betts, “Institutional Imperialism,” *The National Interest*, no. 113 (May/June 2011), pp. 85–96.
- ³⁷ Gareth Evans and Mohamed Sahnoun, co-chairs, *The Responsibility to Protect: Report of the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty* (Ottawa, ON: International Development Research Centre, 2001), pp. 31–32.
- ³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 33.