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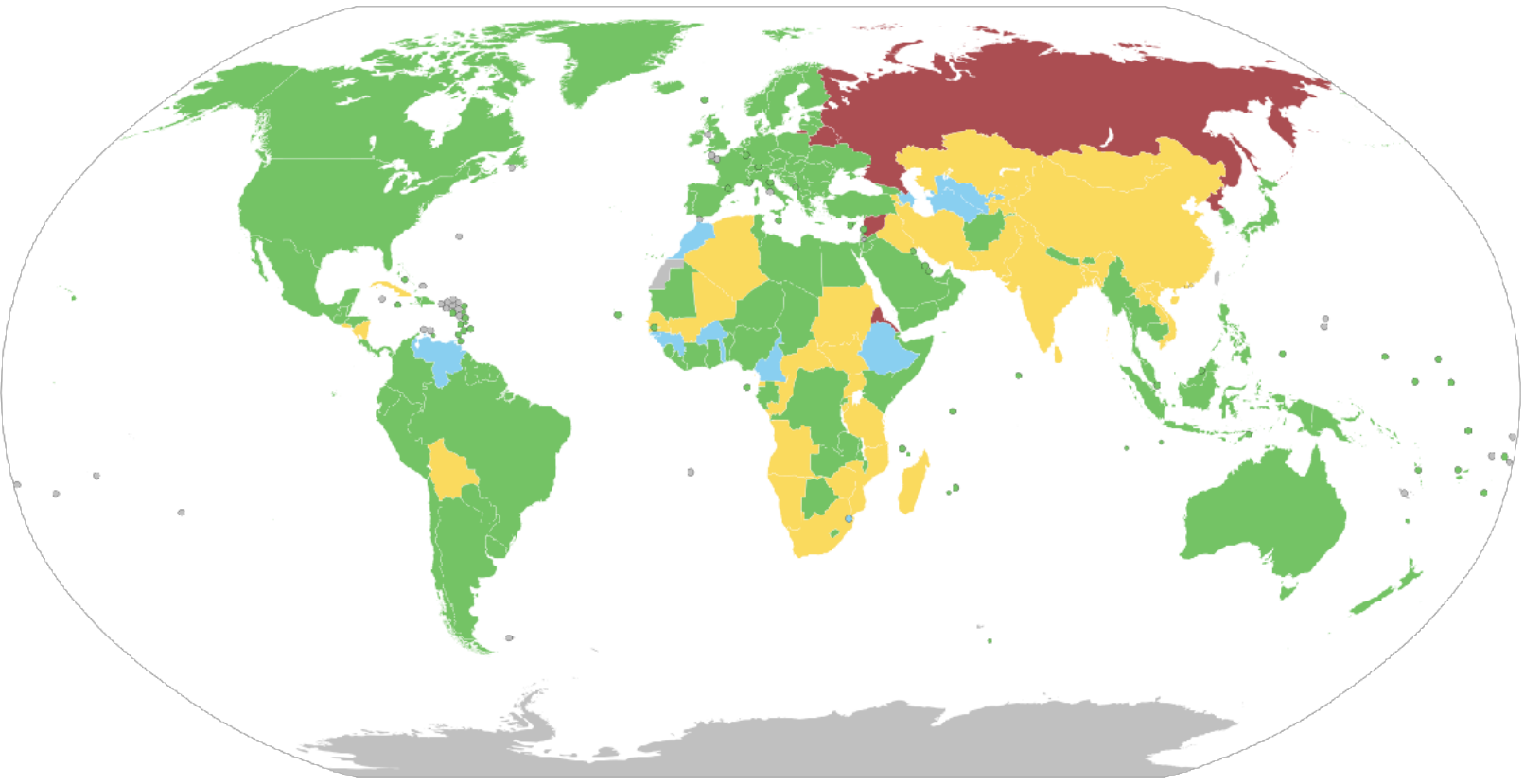
A NEWSLETTER FOR THE CAUX ROUND TABLE FOR MORAL CAPITALISM
NETWORK LOOKING AT BUSINESS ABOVE THE CLUTTER AND CONFETTI



Pegasus

Introduction

In this issue of *Pegasus*, we respond to the great challenge of world government in our time, a challenge mostly overlooked by foreign policy "experts," but one which goes to the heart of the work of the Caux Round Table – asking what is just, right and moral for our kind?

The new standard proposed by Presidents Vladimir Putin and Xi Jinping is "civilization state." Their proposal begs the question of what makes a state "civilized?" In February 2022, a joint agreement of the two great power leaders positioned traditional cultures, what in the 1930s the German National Socialists called a volksgemeinschaft or volk, national, racial, people's community, as in Russia and China today.

In this issue, we include a very important article by Ivan Timofeev, a colleague of mine in Moscow. Ivan is the director general of the Russian International Affairs Council. Since 2015, he has been program director of the Valdai Discussion Club. He has been an associate professor at MGIMO University since 2009 and was awarded a doctoral degree in political science at MGIMO University in 2006. Ivan is an author and co-author of more than 100 publications, published in Russian and by foreign journals. He is a member of the editorial board at "Comparative Politics" – an academic journal on foreign policy and political science.

Our associate editor, Michael Hartoonian, asks hard questions on what makes a civilization worthy of that name.

Lastly, we include excerpts from the September 13 statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China proposing a new regime for global governance.

If the post-World War II international order of international law, human rights and the United Nations is behind us, then what lies ahead of us? There is war now in Ukraine and in Gaza.

Stephen B. Young
Global Executive Director
Caux Round Table for Moral Capitalism

A State as Civilization and Political Theory

Ivan Timofeev

The new concept of Russia's foreign policy, unexpectedly for many, introduced the concept of a state-civilization in official use. Its appearance may be the beginning of a change in the conceptual framework of Russian foreign policy thinking. Moreover, the changes may both be compared with post-Soviet doctrinal documents and with the basic guidelines of the Soviet period. The new conceptual framework faces serious competition with three major political theories. Here we are talking about the "big three" — liberalism, socialism and conservatism. Each such theory has its own concepts (interpretations) of international relations and foreign policy. A shift towards the notion of civilization can be an alternative line of thought, which, however, will require careful intellectual elaboration. However, until such a study is completed, realism retains its relevance as the basis of foreign policy.

What is Political Theory?

Plato and Aristotle

Political theory is how we understand the system of normative views and ideas and the proper arrangement of power relations; the goals, values and means of domestic and foreign policy. What distinguishes political theory from ideology is the presence of arguments which are open to being criticized and contested. Ideology claims a single and undeniable view. Every theory requires scientific reflection and constant re-examination. An ideology can be derived from a theory, feeding on its concepts and assumptions. However, it cannot replace theory. In the case of such a substitution, the theory becomes unviable. Each political theory is a system of concepts, that is, interpretations of individual key concepts— power, authority, good, freedom, justice, interest, etc. Major political theories offer their interpretations of foreign policy and international relations. They can directly or indirectly set the paradigm of foreign policy and the contours of foreign policy thinking. Three basic political theories have developed in modern political thought: liberalism, socialism and conservatism. They have many variations and branches, which does not prevent their fundamental assumptions from being preserved.

Liberal Theory: From the Rational Individual to the Nation State

Liberal theory can be called rationalistic. It proceeds from the assumption of the power of the human mind, which is capable of taming the manifestations of the worst aspects of human nature - aggression, prejudice, ignorance, selfishness and, as a consequence, the Hobbesian "war of all against all." By analogy with the taming of the elements of nature with the help of rational technical inventions, the elements of war, violence and other social vices can be brought under control by a rational political order. In liberal political theory, the social contract, embodied in the system of legal institutions of the state, has become a cornerstone concept (although the very concept of a social contract has deeper roots and is not ignored by other theories). Institutions, on the one hand, serve the public good, that is, the reduction of disasters and the growth of wealth. On the other hand, they act in the name of freedom from despotism. Justice is understood in terms of legal norms common to everyone. Accordingly, the source of state sovereignty is the nation as a political community of equal citizens of the state. The nation-state is in many ways a liberal concept that has gradually become the "world standard" for conceptualizing the state as such. The nation, as the source of sovereignty and legitimacy of power, delegates power to elected representatives who exercise it in accordance with legal norms. The latter, in turn, are determined through rational procedures that are transparent to citizens. The rational order of the rule of law is a means of controlling internal anarchy and serves to establish a community of citizens with equal rights. Liberation from class boundaries and prejudices is the value and goal of the nation state. Historically, all these provisions had a direct connection with political practice. They became the doctrinal basis of a number of bourgeois revolutions of the 18th and 19th centuries, leading to tectonic changes in the nature of states. Huge masses of the population were emancipated, and the usual monarchical and imperial orders collapsed. The liberal doctrine of the nation state retained its influence during the process of decolonization. The overwhelming majority of new states became republics, adopted constitutions, and declared their peoples to be the source of sovereignty. Often the transition to the nation-state was bloody. It commonly failed to lead, properly, to the achievement of liberal ideals. The energy of revolutionary chaos sometimes gave rise to ugly political forms, nominally called republics, which in fact they were modernized despotisms with formal democratic attributes.

The liberal interpretation of international relations was also rationalistic. International relations are anarchic. There is a "war of all against all" going on within them, which cannot be stopped due to the lack of a monopoly on power and the use of force by one specific country or a community of such countries. This means that anarchy must also be taken under the control of a rational order in the form of international institutions. They must be supported by economic interdependence, which makes wars unprofitable. In addition, the guarantee of peace between peoples is their democratization. From the liberal perspective, wars are the result of the arbitrariness of elites, which are not controlled by citizens. If they are brought under control by democratic institutions, then there will be fewer wars, or they will disappear altogether. By default, the liberal theory of international relations implies that individual countries can take the lead in solving the problem of anarchy and war. They must

be democracies themselves, promote democratization to others, guarantee the stability of world trade, organize the international community in the form of institutions, and, if necessary, use force against violators of the new order. Liberal political theory has become the framework of US foreign policy thinking, although it has not completely absorbed it. The period of the unipolar moment after the end of the Cold War can be considered the pinnacle of the practical implementation of this doctrine: the United States was the leader of the victorious democratic world, its former rivals, the USSR and the Soviet bloc, sought to join the "world community", the American-centric globalization of the economy was gaining momentum, and the United States was the key military power, intervening in conflicts and the affairs of individual states at its own will, while simultaneously playing a crucial role in international institutions, including the UN.

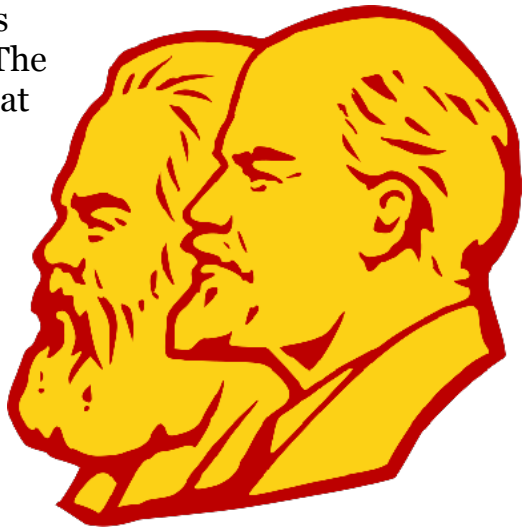
Socialist Theory: Reason vs. Alienation

Socialist theory, like liberal theory, also proceeds from the limitless possibilities of the human mind. However, if liberalism was forged in the struggle against obsolete imperial and monarchical forms, socialism challenged both the old order and liberalism itself. Just like liberalism, socialism postulates the idea of liberation (emancipation) of a person from class orders, religious prejudices and despotic rulers. Socialism is also based on the Enlightenment ideas of rational progress. It would seem that both theories are compatible. But socialism takes aim at an important aspect of the liberal model—the capitalist economy. The bourgeoisie is the engine of liberal revolutions. Properly, it freed the citizens from the oppression of classes and prejudices. Free labour is the basis of the capitalist economy. A citizen is limited only by laws that are adopted on his behalf and on behalf of his equal fellow citizens. Free labour is an atom of the capitalist economy, selling its own labour or buying someone else's labour at its own discretion, while alienating part of the cost of such labour in its favor. It is either an employee or a capitalist. The difference between the two is that the worker receives stability in the form of a predictable income, but alienates part of his labour to the capitalist. The latter, on the other hand, appropriates the added value, but at the same time takes on the risks of the failure of the capitalist enterprise, because the success of the business model is far from guaranteed.

It was the problem of alienation that became the basis of the socialist critique of liberalism. Not without reason, the socialists pointed to the growth of monopoly capital and its concentration, to the alienation of the labour of huge masses of working people, to the social problems generated by such alienation, to the many crises of the capitalist economies, which left millions unemployed and living in the streets. In international relations, the socialists saw the main problem in the acceleration of imperialism. Big capital merged with state institutions. The developed industrial powers were actively expanding, using, among other things, military force. Capitalism gave a powerful impetus to colonialism. While gradually and unevenly forming democratic institutions at home, the capitalist powers at the same time pursued aggressive policies in

their colonies. Like the liberals, the socialists offered a rationalist solution though revolutionary changes to put an end, on the one hand, to the old and obsolete monarchical and class order. On the other hand, they sought to crush the capitalist economy to free the broad masses from the trap of alienation. For international relations, the destruction of capitalism would also mean a solution to the problem of imperialism. The working people have no reason to fight with each other and nothing to share. The solidarity of workers is the basis of peace. The economy would be organized in the form of rational planning and distribution, and the state, amid such conditions, would change its nature to embrace true democracy, or even wither away.

It is symptomatic that among the great powers of the early twentieth century, socialism won its first major victory precisely in Russia. On the one hand, by the beginning of the 20th century, Russia retained political forms that were backward for those times. The demand for political change in favor of greater representation of the people and the rule of law was gathering momentum for most of the 19th century. The authorities understood the threat, but the reforms threatened to cost them control, leading to the complete collapse of the political system. Time after time, reforms were incomplete and episodic. Gaining momentum, capitalism exerted a growing pressure on the political system. At the same time, capitalism itself in Russia was largely peripheral in nature. Russia's place in the international division of labour was far from optimal. The country remained backward, although the pace of its development at the beginning of the 20th century was amazing. This development, however, was extremely uneven, giving rise to new and potentially dangerous social movements. In the 19th century, the key challenge to power was the small intelligentsia, liberal or socialist in orientation. With all its activity (from the coup attempts by the Decembrists and the opposing nobility to the Narodnaya Volya terrorists), the government successfully suppressed the protests. At the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, the urban proletariat became a revolutionary force. Moreover, its domestic version differed from the Western European one. It was more marginal and socially vulnerable. At the same time, it was more developed in comparison with the overwhelming majority of the peasant population and was receptive to revolutionary ideas. The "labour aristocracy" and the middle class were too small compared to the larger and poorer masses of the proletariat. The number of such masses was constantly growing due to unprecedented population growth, the scarcity of land suitable for efficient agriculture, and the attractiveness of a few industrial cities as a source of income. While remaining a small social group across the country, the concentration of the proletariat in the cities acquired an important political significance. The revolution of 1905 was the first harbinger of the catastrophe awaiting the old order. The revolution of February 1917 brought it down. The revolution of October 1917 put an end to liberal throwing forces by a small, but at the same time organized and motivated group that seized power in the country via a coup. At the same time, the victorious Bolsheviks managed to retain power, relying on the attractiveness and innovation of the ideas of socialism at the time. Vladimir Lenin was undoubtedly its most prominent theoretician. Without their political doctrine, the Bolsheviks would hardly have been able to retain power in the country and make it legitimate. Socialism became a powerful tool for maintaining their control and fundamentally modernizing the state. The countries of the capitalist world acquired in the eyes of Russia a most dangerous



rival, whose strength was based not only on the power of the resources and demographic base, but also on the advanced political theory and ideology.

Moreover, socialism promised to turn Russia into a modern, and therefore much more powerful state. The danger of Soviet Russia was of an ideological and, as it would turn out, quite material nature.

Conservative Answer

The victorious march of liberalism and socialism in the 19th and 20th centuries naturally gave rise to a conservative response. The key thought of the conservatives was that the human mind is far from being as perfect as it seemed to liberals and socialists. Rational schemes simply don't work. The price of social experiments manifesting in a series of revolutions and subsequent wars is millions of lost human lives. Institutions must change evolutionarily, not revolutionary. It is impossible to destroy traditions mindlessly, to refuse authorities. Too much freedom is dangerous. Besides, it only exists on paper. In reality, power is seized by bureaucrats, who manipulate the masses at their discretion, on their own behalf. It is simply impossible to manage complex social systems with relying on planning methods - they are too complex. Changes must occur, but very carefully and without excesses. Justice cannot be understood as a rational clockwork.

In foreign policy thinking, conservatism manifested itself in the theoretical doctrine that is commonly called realism. The main thesis is that the anarchic nature of international relations cannot be brought under control by any rational scheme like a general international organization. It simply will not withstand the pressure of contradictions between the great powers. Controlled anarchy is a harmful delusion. What matters is national interests, which are determined by common sense, not by rational abstraction. The optimal strategy for a state is to prepare for the worst-case scenario, be powerful enough not to be the prey of its neighbors, to negotiate and to compromise if necessary. At the same time, the political structure of states is not taken into account by realists. Both democracies and autocracies have the same predatory instincts in the international arena. To say that democracies do not fight is both duplicitous and hypocritical.

Realism emerged as an influential doctrine between the world wars and especially during the Cold War. In the US, it was bizarrely combined with liberal political theory. Liberalism manifested itself in the form of an ideological canvas, but political decisions were often dictated by the logic of realism. Behind the velvet glove of liberalism was an iron conservative hand. A similar model, albeit with its own characteristics, has developed in the USSR. The Soviet leadership quite quickly, by historical standards, cooled down on the idea of a global revolution and the abandonment of the state system. State interests in the field of security have become a significant driver of policy despite external ideologisation. The Soviet Union built a community of socialist states, but their solidarity also concealed very pragmatic interests.

During the Cold War, realism turned into an unofficial, but at the same time significant conceptual framework for Soviet foreign policy. As the resources of socialist ideology were exhausted, realism objectively became more and more in demand. The crisis of socialist theory in the Soviet Union at the late stage of its existence can be explained by many factors. Among them were the excessive ideologisation of theory, cynicism and growing corruption among the political elite, fear of reforming the political and economic system, its reasonable democratization and emancipation, the actual replacement of the power of the Soviets by the power of an overly centralized and less effective bureaucracy, and growing frustration and cynicism within society. All this took place against the backdrop of colossal achievements in science, technology, industry, and the solution of many development problems. At the same time, the socialist challenge became a powerful stimulus for the renewal of liberalism. Western countries, including the United States, have introduced a number of elements that are commonly associated with the socialist Soviet experience. Among them are major state social programs, the planning of certain areas of economic development, and the fight against poverty. The collapse of the Soviet Union briefly made ideas of integration into the liberal community the central thought process governing Russia's foreign policy. This was reflected in Mikhail Gorbachev's "new thinking" and doctrinal documents of the early 1990s. During the presidency of Boris Yeltsin, Russia moved away from liberal idealism. Foreign policy thinking was based increasingly on the principles of realism, which were finally consolidated in the Munich speech of Russian President Vladimir Putin in 2007.

Mikhail Gorbachev

Nationalism and the Big Three

Speaking of the "big three" political theories, the question arises about the place of nationalism. Is it an independent doctrine? Can nationalism be considered a political theory comparable to the Big Three? We should start with the fact that nationalism is a powerful ideological construction that has manifested itself in the political development of the vast majority of modern states. In some cases, it was based on political principles. In particular, it can be considered a derivative of the liberal idea of the nation as a political community. Nationalismcoexisted quite well with socialism through the idea of political representation. The Soviet version of socialism added an ethnic component to the concept of a nation. The Soviet republics were a political representation of large ethnic groups united by common socialist principles. Nationalism also found common ground with conservatism. Historical and cultural traditions became an important source for constructing the identity of many modern nation states; more precisely, they constructed modern interpretations of such traditions. The key difference is that any nationalism is local, while the "big three" political theories are universal. The locality of nationalism does not prevent it from being quietly present even in those states that promote universal ideas. American liberal messianism goes

well with American patriotism and a specific local identity. Modern Chinese socialism is also combined with Chinese nationalism, giving rise to socialism with Chinese characteristics. The same could be said about the Soviet Union, which combined the state-sponsored nationalisms of the republics and all-Soviet patriotism. With the Soviet Union, this approach played a cruel joke. The national identities of the new states of the post-Soviet space were carefully prepared by the Soviet leadership itself. In some cases, nationalism has degenerated into ugly forms like fascism or national socialism. The defeat of fascism and Nazism by the Soviet Union and its Western allies was the most important event of the twentieth century, but it did not completely solve the problem. Neo-Nazism makes itself known in the 21st century.

Moment of Unipolarity

After the end of the Cold War, the United States reached the height of its power. It would seem that liberal theory had no alternatives left. Russia had withdrawn from the competition, quickly shedding its liberal illusions and focusing on its pragmatic interests and a realist foreign policy paradigm. China has retained its commitment to socialism with its own national characteristics, but at the same time successfully integrated into the Western-centric global economy. The European Union, despite its economic strength, remained in the liberal paradigm and its variations. India concentrated on its development, relying on its self-sufficient national and cultural bonds. The Islamic world, one way or another, had a religious community, but was not politically consolidated. There was no political consolidation in Latin America, Africa, or Asia. The post-Cold War world seemed unshakable in its unipolarity.

However, the moment of unipolarity did not last long. In the United States itself, an understanding of a possible weakening of their role in the international arena began to take shape as early as the 1990s. There were material factors driving such a weakening. Among them was the economic growth of new centers of power, which sooner or later could be transformed into military power and qualitatively new political ambitions. The limits of US influence on internal processes in a number of states have been outlined. It was possible to turn a blind eye to "rogue states" such as the DPRK or Iran, but the obvious course towards autonomous policymaking in China and Russia could only be met with alarm. At the same time, both China and Russia remained an important part of the US-centric global economy. The big question was what would prevail - the benefits of globalization or the desire to maintain autonomy and independence, including on fundamental issues of foreign policy? Ultimately, it was China and Russia that emerged as the most dangerous threats to American leadership. Moreover, the threats are not only material, but also ideological.

The growing economic and military power of China, independence in political decision-making, persistence in matters of principle in world politics, and the gradual exit of Chinese diplomacy outside the Asia-Pacific region are only part of the problem for the United States, and not the biggest one. After all, the US remains a major military and technological power with a large pool of allies and the ability to contain China. More importantly, China has adapted its own version of socialist theory to the new realities of international relations.

Beijing has formulated a systematic and deeply developed doctrine. It is based on the idea of universal gain, the common destiny of mankind, and overcoming dividing lines and conflicts. China reinforces its ideas with a willingness to promote the development of other countries in the common interest, based on its own experience of successful and comprehensive modernization. Whether willingly or not, China has created a powerful ideological platform based on socialist theory and its own modernization experience, which is quite capable of becoming an alternative to the liberal vision of the modern world order.

Russia for a long time avoided formulating such ideas, relying on the principles of realism in foreign policy. However, the very fact that Russia has thrown an open challenge to the United States and its allies in the situation around Ukraine is a significant precedent. If the "Russian rebellion" is not suppressed, the blow to US prestige could be extremely painful. Such a blow would not necessarily bring down the US leadership. However, it can become a factor in its erosion. Combined with other factors, the risks for the US are growing.

At the same time, there are signs Russia is going beyond the usual realism and attempts to find new conceptual foundations of foreign policy. A significant indicator is the appearance in the new Foreign Policy Concept of a state-civilization. It has the potential to develop further into a more systemic paradigm that is not reducible to the "big three" political theories. However, the path promises to be quite difficult.

Civilizational Approaches

The concept of civilization has long appeared on the "radar" of political theory. For liberalism and socialism, civilization is determined by the measure of the dominance of the human mind. The more civilized a society is, the more rationality and progress it has. Such a linear picture divides the world into developed civilized societies and undeveloped uncivilized ones, with a large grey area between them.

There was another approach, considering civilizations as large communities, united within themselves by spiritual and material culture and by no means always reduced to separate states. Civilization can go far beyond the history of a particular state, and also spatially cover a large number of them. On the other hand, we can also talk about the existence of states-civilizations, such as China or India. But even in this case, their civilizational boundaries are wider than national ones, taking into account the large Chinese and Indian diasporas abroad. In addition, in the bosom of one civilization there may be different ethnic groups that have similar tribal, civilizational features. This approach assumes the coexistence of several civilizations at once. In their development, they can go through the stages of birth, flourishing, breaking, decline and death, although such a scenario is not necessarily predetermined. The concept of civilizations was developed by such prominent scientists as Nikolay Danilevsky, Oswald Spengler, Pitirim Sorokin, Arnold Toynbee and many others, and their developments went in parallel with the rapid conceptual development of the Big Three theories, forming, as it were, a parallel intellectual reality.

Civilizational Approach: Benefits

What is the advantage of this approach to international relations? First, the historical depth. Liberalism, socialism and conservatism often operate within a relatively narrow range of historical experience. At best, we are talking about several centuries, although their intellectual roots are much deeper. For civilizational studies, the depth of analysis is hundreds and even thousands of years. The system-forming cultural nodes of individual civilizations were laid long before the era of modernity and still retain their relevance. Second, this approach allows us to go beyond the usual scheme in which the players are nation-states. Obviously, cultural and civilizational motives can act as a factor in international politics, where not only interests but also identities collide. In addition, quite specific civilizational components are used in the national ideology of a number of states. A striking example is the states of the Islamic world. Third, the civilizational view covers both spiritual and material aspects of culture. The nation state is but one of the possible political forms born of the Western civilization and, in a relatively short period of time, became ubiquitous, but not necessarily definitive.

Civilizational Approach: Disadvantages

There are also obvious disadvantages. First of all, historical depth does not always allow the real influence of distant history on modern politics to be revealed. The political identities of modern states are often artificially constructed. That is, political and intellectual elites choose certain civilizational aspects that correspond to their vision of identity, but just as successfully ignore others. In the same way, the process of constructing the image of a “significant other”, that is, an idea of key rivals or competitors on the world stage, takes place. Such constructs are also biased and do not solve practical and ideological problems. In other words, it would be incorrect to perceive civilization only from the point of view of culture and history, while losing sight of the construction of culture and history by the elites of modern states. The modern idea of civilization is not an idea of objectively existing civilizations, which are often politically conditioned.

Another shortcoming is that the civilizational factor plays an extremely contradictory role in explaining peace and war. So, for example, the "Anglo-Saxons" today are united by allied relations and common political interests. But at the beginning of the 20th century, Great Britain seriously considered the scenario of a naval war against the United States. Within the United States itself, in 1861, a civil war broke out between the "Anglo-Saxons", which claimed more than half a million lives. In 1814, the British burned the White House

White House Burning, 1814

and many other government buildings in Washington, and a few decades earlier, cultural and civilizational proximity did not help them keep 13 colonies obedient. What can we say about continental Europe, which at the beginning of the 18th century was called a single Christian community, but at the same time stood on the bones of the victims of hundreds of wars between European states, the apotheosis of which were two world wars? The powerful civilizational backlog of the Russian Empire in the form of a common cultural, political and material space did not prevent its collapse. The same is true of the Soviet Union, in which local nationalism at a critical moment in history turned out to be stronger than shared cultural, linguistic, ideological, infrastructural and many other bonds. In the current conflict in Ukraine, the opposing sides facing each other across the front lines are mentally almost the same people. They have similar habits, faith, language, and way of life. However, such proximity does not prevent the interference of nationalism, external forces and specific security interests. There are many such examples.

Another problem is determined by the complexity of combining the concepts of sovereignty and civilization. The concept of sovereignty was developed in line with rationalist theories and was closely tied to the concept of the nation state. Its attachment to the concept of civilization is much less obvious. It will work in those cases where the boundaries of civilization and state more or less coincide. In such cases, albeit at a stretch, the sovereignty of a civilization can be identified with the sovereignty of a nation. With certain reservations, we are talking about India, China, Japan (if, of course, we consider it a separate civilization, and not part of the West, which is also undeniable). But what about less obvious cases like Africa, Latin America or the Islamic world? Each of them is home to many states. They have a certain cultural, historical or religious commonality. However, it is not enough for political consolidation. Nation states within such civilizations have different interests, material resources, and local cultures. Since their cultural closeness hardly generates a consolidated and stable political will, one can hardly speak of the sovereignty of civilization in their relations. It will inevitably become attached to the nation state. If a civilization does not have political subjectivity, then it is very difficult to consider it as an actor in international relations.

The Concept of the State-Civilization: The Russian Context

Let's return to Russia. The appearance in the official document of the concept of the state-civilization brings us back to the fundamental questions of our identity. Who are we? What is the nature of our state? What is our vision for the future for ourselves and for the rest of the world? Who are our “significant others”? To what extent are we willing to deny or accept "significant others"? Issues of identity are fundamental to foreign policy thinking. The direction of answers to the posed questions depends on our choice of the concepts we use to define ourselves. The concept of the state-civilization should hardly be underestimated as such a conceptual framework. However, it should be borne in mind that theoretical and practical work in this direction is complicated by several factors.

The first is the track of Russia's identity over the last century and a half. At the end of the 19th century, Westernizers and Slavophiles drew a fairly clear picture of the conflict between our identities. For Westerners, Russia's problem lies in its unfinished Westernization. From the time of Peter the Great and even before him, we adopted certain Western models (organization of the army, bureaucracy and, to some extent, industry), but for various reasons we avoided larger-scale political, economic and social reforms. Accordingly, Westerners saw the task of Russia as completing modernization according to the Western model and achieving the proper level of Western civilization. Slavophiles, on the contrary, saw in the reforms of Peter the Great as the beginning of the distortion of Russia's civilizational identity, the perversion of its culture and way of life, the split of society and the elite, and the "satanisation" of the country. Accordingly, they considered the task of Russia as one of returning to its cultural and civilizational heritage. The victory of the revolution in Russia in 1917 was the unconditional triumph of Westernism. Socialism is of Western origin. The country has made a powerful leap forward. In terms of Westernism, the collapse of the Soviet Union can be seen as the result of the incompleteness of the Soviet modernization project, the replacement of modern institutions with archaic imitations of them, coexisting with unprecedented and progressive achievements. Actually, the reforms of the late 1980s took place precisely under the slogans of modernization, and the desire to integrate with the West also reflected the perception of the causes of the crisis of that time in an unfinished or distorted modernization project. Throughout the 20th century, the West or parts of it were political opponents of Russia. But in terms of views on the organization of society and its institutions, the Soviet Union developed under the influence of Western ideas. Thirty years of the history of post-Soviet Russia have also passed in accordance with the logic of Westernism. The conservative turn that began in the late 1990s fit in well with it. Another thing is that the movement did not remove specific political problems in relations with a number of Western countries, but in some places exacerbated them. The causes of such problems lay mainly in the conflict of interests, and not in the conflict of civilizational identity. Foreign policy thinking in terms of the state-civilization brings us back to the perception of Russia as a separate civilization for which the West is a "significant other." This is a way out of the rut of at least one century. Getting out of this rut will not be easy.

The second factor is determined by the specifics of the development of Russian society. The domestic Slavophiles of the 19th century had a serious and real argument in the form of huge sections of the population retaining a system of traditional culture and values. They had not yet been affected by modernization, had not been distorted by urbanization, industrialization and other attributes of modernity. A century and a half of such modernization has greatly changed Russian society. It has become much less religious. Its traditional way of life was broken. The modern Russian is radically different from his ancestor who lived a century ago. While a number of developing states today have a purely human resource to rely on, offering cultural and civilizational bonds, then such resources, for Russia, are much more modest. The last 30 years somewhat reduced the Soviet excesses, but did not return, and could not return Russia to the past. Moreover, Russia has turned into a full-fledged capitalist state, with all the ensuing consequences for its culture and lifestyle. Of course, Russia has a colossal historical

which can and should be one of the foundations of its identity. A lot has been done in this respect over the past several decades. But the direct connection with tradition has narrowed along with the shrinking of the footprint of traditional society. Russia can be imagined as a state-civilization, but it is much more difficult to place it on a real-life civilizational platform. However, many others face the same challenge.

The third factor is related to the fact that other states-civilizations, and indeed a large number of other states, maintain close ties with the West and are not going to give them up, even if political relations with these countries spark on separate issues. Many are in favor of a multipolar world and constructive relations with Russia, but are in no hurry to give up certain products of Western civilization. China remains a socialist country, albeit with its own specifics. India is cultivating democratic institutions, even if they are not considered liberal by some Western observers. Numerous countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America generally distance themselves from the choice between the West and non-West, pragmatically using those elements of Western spiritual and material culture that they consider acceptable and beneficial for themselves. With the same success, elements of, for example, Chinese culture may be absorbed in the future. Civilizations that are more or less pure become abstractions. Whereas political practice still requires specifics, especially in building a dialogue on individual issues. The need to diversify world finances and move away from the dominance of the dollar is easier to justify by common security interests than in terms of civilizational differences from the West.

All things considered, the concept of a state-civilization makes it possible to construct our political identity, to complete it with new elements. But this will require a lot of theoretical work both on the concept itself and on a wider range of topics. It will not be easy to create a new, full-fledged political theory, an alternative to the Big Three. Russian reality, and international relations themselves, are permeated with the conceptual apparatus of the three "big" theories. Time will tell to what extent the concept of the state-civilization will be developed both in theory and in practice. The new Foreign Policy Concept leaves room for maneuver. In the meantime, the realism of foreign policy remains relevant.

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A New Field Theory

Addressing

The Tensions between Culture and Civilization

Michael Hartoonian

"I like to pay taxes. With them I buy civilization."
-Oliver Wendell Holmes

Introduction

A culture may have great art, large armies, adequate architecture, may even call itself an empire, but that does not make it a civilization. An individual may have political power and material greatness, but that does not mean he or she is civilized. Civilization is something more complex and something more aesthetic and more rational and most of all, it is social harmony, as understood by the Dao or golden mean.

Let's Start with a Metaphor

Imagine an iceberg and think of it as a symbol of civilization and culture. The ice you see above the water represents civilization, while the ice below the water line is culture. Given the laws of nature, this is the way icebergs simply behave in the ocean. Within the laws of human nature and social constructions, however, there is a much more complex relationship between culture and civilization. This relationship is presented here as a new social theory attempting to explain the tensions and synergy between culture and civilization.

As Justice Holmes once made very clear, civilization has a cost. It's an investment in the common good or better, an investment in the common – wealth…what we own together, which is, of course, a benefit. This wealth is far more than commonly held roads and bridges. It is the human and institutional capital of a people claiming moral connections. Without this commonly held wealth, there is no private wealth, no security, no public health, no education, no transportation system, no freedom, little civility, no citizen, no city and only an atomized and lonely existence. While all this may be common sense, I find little of this thinking in today's political, economic or social discussions. There is also little awareness of any trend data, making the future problematic.

We tend to think in words and not in the web of meaning in which words are used. What I do see is confusion between culture and civilization, between culture and markets, between civilization and institutions (like a state), between whether civilization is a virtue or vice or an end or the means to an end. Most of all, there is a deep confusion between words like civilization and morality, primarily because we seem to believe that words have meaning

in themselves. Words, absent language and context, are meaningless. We might assert that a bachelor is an unmarried male, period. But the word is more complex and carries other meanings, like the name of an undergraduate degree from a university.

Let's now go back to our iceberg metaphor. How do the constructs and not simply the words of culture and civilization define each other, as well as provide a synergic tension that keeps one from destroying the other? Without this knowledge, we live from hand-to- mouth.

Culture

Several years ago, I had a discussion with some 9-year-olds in the fourth-grade classroom of a dear friend and wonderful teacher. After a 30-minute discussion about their understanding of culture, we arrived at a list of 2 sets of definitions:

1) Heard in public (or from parents).

    - Culture is what the doctor takes out of your throat.
    - Culture is what you get when you go to the museum.
    - Culture is what other (different) people of the world have.

2) Learned in school.

    - Culture is the food we eat.
    - Culture is what we wear.
    - Culture is the music we play and the language we speak.

After these lists were produced, of which I was dissatisfied, I arranged for us to play a little simulation so we could gather more data about culture. There were 10 students in my group and I suggested that we look at culture as a kind of cocoon we all live within (see Margaret Mead and others). To simulate the cocoon, one boy agreed to be covered with a thin sheet, simulating the cultural cocoon. Next, the other students pinned pictures of cultural items on the sheet – pictures of houses, churches, etc. – any item not found in nature. After about 10 minutes or so, I asked Jim (the boy under the sheet) how he felt. After a short discussion, his answers were listed in this way:

- I can't see so good.
- It's cozy in here.
- I feel alone, wish there were others in here.

Again, after more discussion, the class came up with this list of attributes of culture:

- Culture makes me feel at home and safe.
- Culture blurs our vision of others.

- Culture is something we can destroy.
- Culture is something we can make for all kinds of reasons.
- Culture can hurt us with its language, rules and isolation.

Thus, culture gives us a unique vision. It can be destroyed or created. It can victimize and it can protect us. Above all, it seems to be about our relationships with others or lack thereof. Not bad for a group of 9-year-olds.

Culture and Tradition

One important issue that seems to always come up in discussions about culture is that it is supported by "our" well tested historical traditions. This is largely true. All cultures work, until they don't. The traits of culture are created and passed on because they provide some degree of safety and security to the people therein. Thus, a long string of habits is inherited from one generation to the next, often without notice of the changing social and natural landscapes encasing the culture. Culture is all about limited contexts or horizons and the relationships therein with others, with God and the land, but, for the most part, absent any larger standards of freedom/equality – unity/diversity – law/ethics – and the private and public conceptions of wealth. There is nothing inherent in culture to define and sustain these tensions. Without learning the ability to create and maintain harmony with the dynamics of demographics, technologies and social institutions, culture suffers the vagaries of human hubris. While cultures might address contextual questions of knowledge, conduct and governance, the questions are seen as having already been answered and anyone raising new questions is perceived as a heretic.

Culture incorporates traditions, but it is something more and something different. All people (groups) have traditions. Culture is more complex than a tradition because it synthesizes experiences that seem to work and (reasonably) places hierarchies on personal behavior and identifies needs and makes decisions on how needs are satisfied, primarily through role differentiation and responsibilities. As (common)wealth is created, time and talent are used to create infrastructures, enhance the arts and technology and with it, new knowledge, ideas of conduct and new ideas of governance. The traditional social hierarchies, however, are citadels of power and hubris. The wise would and will understand that something more is needed and that something more is in the domain of ratcheting up perception over perspective, ethics over law, patriotism over ethnic nationalism and moral relationships over static transactions. This is the inflection point where culture (should) takes on the moral essence of civilization, affirming the truth that civilization is an ethical and rational argument between and among the tensions that define and sustain civility, civics, citizen, city and civilization itself (the etymology here is clear and straight forward).

A Necessary Tension

There are many tensions in the personal lives of people and in society, as well. Understanding these tensions is a necessary condition for a community to grow and to move from being only a culture to the added value of being a civilization. That is, to embrace and transcend the ethnic and create the cosmopolite, a civilization is necessary, for it is only civilization that can pose and debate the three essential questions of civil life: *What can I know and continue to learn? How should I conduct my life in civil society? How shall I be governed?* These questions are in continual debate among all civil and rational people. Once the debate stops, civilization fails and crisis, chaos and blood happen.

Culture, by itself, will never be able to raise these questions because everyone within the culture (ethnic) already knows the answers. Norms, roles and relationships are fixed. Gender, class, work, language clues and even notions of insanity, sickness and death are non-questions and unquestionable. There are few identifiable tensions and people are locked into the "normal bias." That is, everything is the way it is and should be. It is, of course, an intellectual rut. And a rut, in this case, is a grave with its ends removed.

The Argument

Civilization gives a dynamic to the traditions of culture and culture gives civilization some time-tested standards for argument and sustainability. Without this tension, argument stops and collapse follows. Throughout recorded history, there has been and persists today the assumption that civilization could correct itself, absent intellectual, moral and aesthetic standards. Of course, this is impossible, as witnessed by the fall of one empire (often called a civilization) after another.

A civilization, by definition, is an idea. It's a verb and a question mark. It is never a noun or a period. It is a series of questions, of tensions and of arguments. It is, at its best, an open system, transcending nationality and ethnicity and above all, nationalism, to embrace the argument. This is far different from a culture. But we need to ask, what's the argument about?

To begin, the idea of civilization is a complex network of multi-dimensional bonds between and among institutions like government, religion, education, law, the military, business, healthcare, etc. and those participants or citizens within institutions who necessarily have agency in all the institutions they can or in which they choose to engage. In this attitude, they are moved and linked together by moral bonds. In fact, the infrastructure of a civilization has two elements: one material and the other moral. When these moral bonds of the infrastructure are broken, institutions become more important than individuals therein. When institutions, including families, take on this different value claim, that is, believing that laws and sanctions or wealth and power apply only to some, a fluctuation point is reached. When this turning of value claims occurs, away from the idea and ideal of civilization, civilization is weakened, citizens become subjects, truth becomes relative to the situation and freedom becomes anarchy. At this point, unless the fundamental questions of knowledge, conduct and governance can be debated with reason and civility, civilization crumples. To me, this looks like today's world.

This collapse is manifested by dysfunctions in the state and then the media, education, market and military. The collapse is gradual, then quick. By this time, some self–proclaimed demigod will be placed in power by the few and the very few true believers.

Whether the institution be the state or education or religion, civilization is defined by the storehouse of virtue within its several institutions. Calling the state or education or the media a civilization is a category mistake of the first order. The state, like any major institution, is an attribute of civilization, not a civilization. This means that if the state or education or media turn toward the amoral or immoral, so too will the civilization, as the latter is made-up of the former. Just saying that a state is a civilization is language manipulation, untrue and will stop civic argument. This is like saying that a whole business is corrupt when the CFO is embezzling money. We believe that the CFO is the business. "The system is flawed," we say. The system is flawed because the individual is linked to the system and personally unaccountable and if left in this confusion and unchecked, the whole business or system will blow up. Without the debate about fundamental questions of culture, knowledge, conduct and governance, civilization dies and we are left with tyranny. Signs of this decay will be seen in angry and ignorant talk and deep confusion between value and price; between the one and the many; between perception and perspective; between political and social regions and between patriotism and nationalism. People will also deepen their ignorance by giving

made-up “names” to things like liberal and conservative, beauty and style, civilization and state, without understanding the categorical mistakes therein, thus destroying meaning, while believing they have found the truth. They become increasingly hostile toward reason, contested truth, aesthetics, justice and happiness. At this point, citizens no longer have the intellectual power or social will to tell the CFO or “dictator” that she or he or they are without shame (virtue).

Civilization: A New Theory of Synergistic Tensions

There is great demand today for a new birth of intellectual freedom, attended by the aesthetic will to excel at balancing the fundamental tensions of living in civilization – of creating the Tao, the moral path or the golden mean. But demand is a precise concept, having two attributes: 1) having the desire for something and 2) having the willingness to pay for that something.

Since the synergistic tension theory also requires perception over perspective, we must be clear that orthodoxies, of any kind, will invalidate the claims made here and thus, the theory. Bigotries and ideologies based on religion, political correctness or ethnic superiority will also make the theory unusable. Such is the nature of theory, post-modernists notwithstanding.

This theoretical framework contains the points of information that should be transmitted to those who desire to understand the intellectual foundations of the synergistic tension theory, as well as a more reasoned meaning of civilization. That is, civilization is a continuing experiment and ongoing debate about how well people can balance the four sets of fundamental value tensions listed above. It also demands that we make a conscious decision about whether we want to be citizens or subjects together, with all the attending rights and obligations. While this theory is a logical and systematic inquiry into the birth and growth of civilizations claiming a democratic DNA, it is also a commitment and covenant we have with one another to understand our identity intellectually and passionately as holders of the office of citizen – a public trust. Identity comes first, for if you don’t know who you are, you can’t be responsible. Thus, civilization is, most of all, about developing the identity of citizens who understand their duties and rights, as well as their obligation to carry forward, with both civility and honesty, the enduring civic discourse.

Theory Comments

<u>Historical Background</u>

- Civilizations were (are) almost always born in protest.
- Modern civilizations can trace their roots to Enlightenment thinkers and the belief that people had a natural right to govern themselves.
- As citizens, they would not be told what to do by leaders, rulers, philosopher kings or despots who believe that they rule because God told them to do it.

- Self-government and the ability to make decisions regarding one's life is the essence of a democratic civilization.
- Civilization implies not just the right to debate, but the vital need for civil/civic argument.
- Within written and common metalaw, like the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, there's the demand that the government cannot interfere with citizens' rights to think and speak freely. This freedom is foundational to any democratic republic claiming to be a civilization.

<u>Enduring Arguments Over the Four Value Tensions Sets of Democratic Civilization</u>

Debating issues and problems in a rational, intelligent way requires addressing the balance that should exist between these sets of enduring value tensions:

Freedom versus equality

The balance between freedom and equality is an essential fabric of democracy and civilization.

- When conventional wisdom favors freedom, resources and money flow into the hands of the few. Left unattended, the imbalance of wealth and power hurts the economy and undermines democracy and civilization.
- In contrast, when government acts aggressively to redistribute wealth in the name of fairness or economic justice, personal liberty will suffer and economic incentives are diminished.
- It was/is often assumed that when a person in bondage is given freedom, the work is done. I ask, what good is freedom without equality?

Example: Witness the Roaring Twenties, when nations thought of themselves as individual and unresponsible states. In the U.S. and Europe, businesses had few constraints, banks were unregulated and workers had little bargaining power. Inequality of income distribution was high and the economy crashed. Notice how little attention was given to freedom/equality or ethics/law or unity/diversity. The outcome of this ignorance was the making of the 20th century as the bloodiest in history.

Law versus ethics

We describe civilization as a society based on law, but we also understand that a law may not be just or ethical and we honor people of conscience.

- The rule of law implies that it is the duty of citizens to abide by laws that provide a sense of security and fairness.
- Yet, we understand and debate existing law by ethical standards so as to advance the cause of liberty and justice.

Example: When Rosa Parks, a black woman, refused to give up her seat on a Montgomery, Alabama bus, she was advocating for the ethical claim of civil rights.

Private wealth versus common wealth

Maintaining the common wealth enhances private wealth, but without thriving industries, tax revenues would not be available to adequately support public goods and services.

- People's general quest for private wealth has been a driving force behind civilizations' economic development.
- Yet, investment in the public material and moral infrastructure – schools and universities, streets and highways, electric grids, utilities, parks, hospitals, libraries and museums – help private businesses to carry out their work.

Example: With the onset of industrialization and scientific advances, schooling expanded dramatically, the curriculum changed and increasingly, more students attended high school and college, helping to create remarkable economic growth. Can economic growth enhance civilization absent enlightened debates over the value tension of wealth?

Unity versus diversity

One of the finest achievements of a democratic civilization has been to create a stable, political culture made up of different languages, religious traditions and races.

- But unity has been a persistent struggle. Typically, new immigrants over recent years have faced discrimination, distrust and abuse while occupying the bottom of the nation's job chain.
- Many also are extremely hard-working people and, in time, contributed distinctive cultural influences that enhance diversity and richness.

Example: Waves of immigrants came to the U.S. during the 1800s and early 1900s, initially as German Americans, Irish Americans, Italian Americans, Asian Americans and Mexican Americans. Similar migration patterns are also occurring in Europe and in other places around the world. If immigrants work to embrace civic values of civilization and became industrious and entrepreneurial citizens, can they add to the dynamics of the civilization? Of course, there is the human tendency to want to divide one group from the other. Working for unity and keeping a sense of diversity is the genus of civilization.

Elements of the On-going Argument

Intelligent civic communications require viewing significant social issues through the lens of these enduring value tensions and addressing problems by better balancing the discrepancy between them. Civil debate is necessary to facilitate understanding,

compromise and transformation, rather than a simple-minded focus on winning. It is said that people of the world suffer from a "knowledge deficit," knowing too little about geography, history, religion, science, economics and how to conduct themselves. Moreover, they are losing the ability to think with reason and aesthetic judgement. There is also an accompanying great deskilling that makes it almost impossible for people to care for themselves, as they have lost the ability to prepare meals, fix their tools or even change a light bulb. Giving this condition, is it even possible for people to debate with reason? Perhaps, more important for civilization, have they replaced rational thought with emotional perspectives?

- Democratic dialogue, debate and "knowing" virtue is based on the use of objectivity, evidence, inductive (logic) science and a priori intuition.
- In turn, it also rejects or minimizes subjectivity, opinion, feeling and irrationality.

Dialogue and civil debate based on thinking critically is the path to understanding and compromise.

Imperative of the Democratic/Civilized Mind

To participate in civic debates, we must develop and cultivate a distinctive mindset.

- The democratic mind is capable of debating two conflicting values, while noting the assumptions and essential merit of both.
- This is seeing the world from a "both-and" perspective, in contrast to "either-or."

It is tempting for humans to take a more concrete "black and white" or "I-it" view of the world and relations, but this ignores the complexity of most issues – and their integrated or nuanced nature.

It is intellectually easier to take an "either-or" position and many people do, particularly when it is convenient in an age of the internet and mass media that segments visions and virtue, as well as material markets.

- We tend to listen mostly to those with whom we agree.
- This, however, robs the individual of seeing the logic of others and understanding more deeply.
- The either-or mindset tends to reinforce one's biases and prejudices.

Civilization, however, requires people to understand that debate is not sustained for the purpose of establishing absolute rights and wrongs. It is a conversation about the relationship among important values and how to balance them.

- Perception, worldview and bias play an important role in the way people deal with facts and opinions.

- Perception allows people to see and hear best those bits of information that fit into their own, as well as other's views of how the world works.

This dualism is necessarily encountered and challenged by citizens.

- Value tensions are central to debate that help us to understand historic events, analyze current issues and address the problems inherent in civilization.
- One mark of an enlightened citizen is the ability to intelligently use these four sets of values in addressing matters of personal, institutional and public interest:

    1. Law versus ethics.
    2. Private wealth versus common wealth.
    3. Freedom versus equality.
    4. Unity versus diversity.

The theory of synergic tensions and its necessary role in civilization is presented here as a conversation starter for all those leaders and citizens who want to live a life of civility and beauty in community.

Conclusion

In the end, Oliver Wendell Holmes was and is still right: you must pay for civilization. But the payment is far more than just paying taxes. You also pay with responsibility and prudence. That is, within every institution in which one claims membership, citizens of that institution, including the institution of family, will debate and seek to balance the value tensions of freedom and equality, law and ethics, unity and diversity and common and private wealth. This work must be directed by the will to do what is right and the skill to be a rational and aesthetic citizen, capable of debating the value tensions and bringing balance, justice and harmony to community, thus making and sustaining it as a civilization. Without this work, without these payments, there is no civilization, only the musing of ideologues.

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Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China

Proposal of the People's Republic of China on the Reform and Development of Global Governance

09-13-2023

Today, changes in the world, in our times and in history are unfolding in ways like never before. The deficits in peace, development, security and governance are growing. Humanity is once again at a crossroads and facing a consequential choice on its future. Meanwhile, world multi-polarity and economic globalization keep evolving. Peace, development and win-win cooperation are the unstoppable trends of the times. Solidarity, cooperation and progress remain the aspiration of people around the world. ...

China calls on the international community to act on true multilateralism, uphold the international system with the United Nations at its core, support the U.N. in playing a central role in international affairs, further develop and improve the global governance system and jointly build a community with a shared future for mankind.

I. Enhancing global security governance and safeguarding world peace and stability

Security is humanity's most basic need and the most important global public good. As the world faces frequently emerging hotspot issues, rising geopolitical conflicts and rampant unilateral and bullying practices, the international community needs peace, trust, solidarity and cooperation, rather than war, suspicion, division or confrontation.

President Xi Jinping has put forward the Global Security Initiative (GSI). It advocates a commitment to the vision of common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable security; a commitment to respecting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all countries; a commitment to abiding by the purposes and principles of the U.N. Charter; a commitment to taking the legitimate security concerns of all countries seriously; a commitment to peacefully resolving differences and disputes between countries through dialogue and consultation; and a commitment to maintaining security in both traditional and non-traditional domains, with a view to jointly promoting a global community of security for all. ...

China maintains that it is important to preserve peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula, achieve denuclearization and establish a peace mechanism on the Peninsula. The issue needs to be resolved through dialogue and consultation and the legitimate concerns of all sides addressed in a balanced manner.

China calls on the international community to respect the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Afghanistan, follow the "Afghan-led, Afghan-owned" principle and maintain engagement and dialogue with Afghanistan on that basis. …

China firmly supports the Palestinian people's just cause of restoring their legitimate national rights. The fundamental solution to the Palestinian question is to establish an independent state of Palestine that enjoys full sovereignty on the basis of the 1967 border and with east Jerusalem as its capitol. …

China strongly condemns all forms of terrorism and extremism. …

Nuclear weapons must not be used and nuclear wars must never be fought. …

II. Improving global development governance and jointly pursuing global sustainable development

Development is the eternal pursuit of mankind and the shared responsibility of all countries. China supports efforts to make economic globalization more open, inclusive, balanced and beneficial to all. The international community needs to stick to opening up as the overall direction, uphold multilateralism, firmly safeguard free trade and the multilateral trading system, oppose unilateralism and protectionism, promote connectivity and encourage integrated development; stick to equality as the basis, respect the social systems and development paths of different countries and make the global economic governance system more just and equitable; and stick to cooperation as a driving force, pursue extensive consultation and joint contribution for shared benefits and promote mutually beneficial cooperation. …

III. Advancing global human rights and social governance and jointly promoting civilizational exchange and progress

Equal-footed exchange and mutual learning between different civilizations will provide robust spiritual guidance for humanity in resolving the challenges of our times and realizing common development. In proposing the Global Civilization Initiative (GCI), President Xi Jinping aims to promote the exchange and mutual learning between civilizations, enhance mutual understanding and friendship between people of all countries, build international consensus for cooperation and advance the progress of human civilizations. This has injected strong impetus to the modernization of human society and building a community with a shared future for mankind.

We need to respect the diversity of civilizations, uphold the principles of equality, mutual learning, dialogue and inclusiveness among civilizations and let cultural exchange transcend estrangement, mutual learning transcend clashes and coexistence transcend feelings of superiority. We need to jointly advocate humanity's common values of peace, development, equity, justice, democracy and freedom, reject imposing values and models on others and oppose stoking ideological confrontation. We need to attach importance to the inheritance and innovation of civilizations, fully harness the relevance of histories and cultures to the present times and push for creative transformation and innovative development of all fine traditional cultures in the process of modernization. …

There is no one-size-fits-all model for promoting and protecting human rights. All countries' independent choice of their own path of human rights development should be respected. Human rights have historical, specific and practical contexts. Countries vary from one another in historical background, cultural heritage, social systems and levels of socio-economic development. Their paths of human rights advancement can have inevitable differences. They need to combine the principle of universality of human rights and their national conditions and advance human rights in light of national realities and the needs of their people. …

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