

# Forum

GEORGETOWN JOURNAL OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS



## *Ethics in Conflict*

In the early 1990s, the dynamic that had shaped international relations for four decades crumbled with the last pieces of the Berlin Wall. As a result, foreign-policy makers fumbled to orient themselves in an increasingly unfamiliar world. A key force that has shaped international politics after the Cold War is globalization. Driven by incredible leaps in technology, globalization has, in the words of Thomas Friedman, “enabled each of us to reach around the world farther, faster, deeper, and cheaper than ever before.”<sup>1</sup> New and improved technologies have broadened the world stage and lowered the barriers of entry to all kinds of players. Through the Internet and related technologies, for example, individuals and private groups—not just states—have the

**7** *Morality Matters: Ethics and Power Politics in the War on Terrorism*  
MARYANN CUSIMANO LOVE

**17** *International Politics, Ethics, and the Use of Force*  
BRYAN HEHIR

**25** *Ethics and Interests*  
RICHARD NED LEBOW

**35** *America’s Role in the World*  
MADELEINE ALBRIGHT

power to mobilize people and resources en masse. Combined with a breakdown of order in many parts of the world in the last decade, technological change and other aspects of globalization have enabled non-state actors to pose real threats in the international political arena. This newly-empowered set of players does not always abide by the “rules of the game”—the rules of a world dominated by nation-states.

States still seem confounded by such players as the al Qaeda terrorist network. In many respects, leaders lack a coherent framework for dealing with problems that fall outside of the traditional state-to-state schematic with which they are comfortable. They face a quandary: Old rules, particularly those informal axioms on how and when to intervene in conflict situations, have come into conflict with new realities.

Just as new international actors have challenged nation-state-oriented conceptions of the international system, states themselves have come under scrutiny in recent years. The definitions of what constitutes a state and the responsibilities a state must take for its people have become contentious. What do foreign-policy makers do when not just hyper-powered individuals but also states refuse to play by the rules of the game? Respect for sovereignty has always been the number one precept in foreign-policy making protocol. Yet, how should a state deal with a government like the Taliban? Indecision and the lack of an ethical framework may have led the West to stay out of Afghanistan for so long—a choice whose consequences we are witnessing today.

The September 11 attacks threw a wildcard into the deck, exemplifying the power and potential threat of certain

non-state actors. In their aftermath, the dangers of turning a blind eye to human rights abuses and failed states seem undeniable. As violence erupts around the world among myriad actors in myriad contexts, the ethical framework that has for so long defined international relations—one based on respect for state sovereignty—may no longer suffice.

This Forum is about ethics in conflict. Where do ethics fit into our considerations of international conflict and intervention—both in terms of justification and execution? How can we reconcile the conflicts between old and emerging ethical perspectives on world affairs? Conclusions do not come easily, but our authors attempt to build a base from which to start.

Maryann Cusimano Love argues that morality matters in combating terrorism. Moral judgements—about rights, injustice, and the legitimate and illegitimate use of force—underpin both the claims of terrorists and the responses of the rest of the world. States determined to control international terrorism must factor morality into their strategies, and must buttress their guns and bombs with the power of global norms.

Bryan Hehir examines the three strands of thought regarding ethical constraints on warfare. He highlights three political-moral problems that policymakers will likely face in the coming years: decisions regarding nuclear policy, humanitarian intervention, and terrorism.

Although recent events have highlighted the role of ethical issues in world politics, Richard Ned Lebow reminds us that ethics have been essential at least since the days of the Greeks. Lebow contends that maintaining ethical principles—and doing so through dialogue among actors in a community—is in the primary inter-

est of states. Without ethics, states lack the means with which to cohere and determine their interests.

Finally, in an interview with the *Journal*, former U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright reflects on her experience as a key policymaker at a critical juncture in world affairs. She focuses especially on two ethical issues of continuing relevance: humanitarian intervention and

the promotion of democracy and U.S. values abroad. Leaders confront debilitating dilemmas when trying to decide whether and how to help in other parts of the world; Albright offers insights from her own experiences, and proposes some important steps for the future.

**Notes:** 1 Thomas Friedman, "Interview: Farther, Faster, Deeper, Cheaper," *The Georgetown Journal of International Affairs*, 1, no. 2, (Summer/Fall 2000): 88.

---

# Morality Matters

## *Ethics and Power Politics in the War on Terrorism*

Maryann Cusimano Love

Since the September 11 terrorist attacks in the United States, many argue that in war the United States must not let moral considerations over means constrain its pursuit of foreign policy ends. Al Qaeda fights dirty, so the United States must be willing and able to respond in kind to defeat networks of global terrorism and protect U.S. citizens and institutions. As Thomas Friedman put it, "We have to fight the terrorists as if there were no rules."<sup>1</sup>

This line of argumentation fundamentally misunderstands the nature of war against terrorism in an era of globalization. Ethical norms, including the constraints of just war theory, are not an obstacle but an integral and powerful tool in fighting the war on terrorism. Al Qaeda is fighting for its own moral ideas, against what its members perceive as the violation of the sanctity of Islamic holy sites by the presence of U.S. troops. Terrorism itself is a tactic that violates the moral prohibition against killing noncombatants in order to generate a psychological reaction disproportionate to the physical damage it causes. Osama bin Laden and his network astutely use the tools of global media to broadcast their ideas, attract members, and generate sympathy for their cause. In response, the Bush administration attempts to build an international coalition around an antiterrorism norm.

**Maryann Cusimano Love** is Associate Professor, Catholic University of America, Washington, D.C. Department of Politics and Center for International Social Development.

The war on terrorism is an attempt to construct a global prohibitory norm against nonstate actors tactically killing noncombatants. The war on terrorism is thus similar to the International Coali-

tion to Ban Landmines (although the administration has clearly not presented its case in this light) in that both are efforts to build an international coalition to delegitimize tactics that kill innocent noncombatants in international politics.

continue to “misunderestimate” the nature of the war on terrorism. The terrorist attacks of September 11 were a direct result of the military superiority of U.S. armed forces. The lower

## Ethics are not opposed to power politics, but are an important and underutilized tool of power in the war on terrorism, and must be embraced as such.

tion to Ban Landmines (although the administration has clearly not presented its case in this light) in that both are efforts to build an international coalition to delegitimize tactics that kill innocent noncombatants in international politics.

Ethics are not opposed to power politics, but are an important and underutilized tool of power in the war on terrorism, and must be embraced as such. Ethics and just war theory (JWT) are power politics assets in helping to discredit the terrorists, assuage negative public opinion of the United States in the Arab and Muslim world, build international support for the war on terrorism, and construct a global prohibitory norm against terrorism.<sup>2</sup>

**“Misunderestimating” the Nature of the War.** In a speech to the intelligence community after the September 11 attacks, President George W. Bush noted in his idiosyncratic way that the terrorists had “misunderestimated” the United States, had underestimated the U.S. public, and had underestimated him.<sup>3</sup> However, even after September 11, many in the administration, the media, the punditry, and the public

the possibility that an enemy can strike the United States conventionally on the battlefield, the higher the probability that opponents will pursue asymmetric warfare tactics, striking at targets of opportunity—from unprotected civilians, trade and transportation infrastructure, to other critical infrastructure. In responding to the terrorist strikes, the United States faces a target-poor environment, not knowing who or where the terrorists are.

The terrorists, in contrast, face a target-rich environment. In the information age, the United States and its developed democratic allies have increasingly open societies, economies, and technologies. Through globalization, these open economic, technological, and societal infrastructures are actively accessible abroad. Homeland security and critical infrastructure protection are thus necessary but insufficient methods of curtailing terrorist attacks. The United States cannot prevent all terrorist attacks—instead it must seek to curtail the number and lethality of such attacks, as there will always be more potential targets than resources to protect them. The United States can seek to deter large scale attacks by protecting major targets so well that

[8] Georgetown Journal of International Affairs

terrorists will be compelled to go after softer targets, such as public buses or restaurants, as is the case in Israel. This is the new face of U.S. containment policy against asymmetric threats. Because asymmetric warfare is cheap and its means are easily available to a wide variety of individuals and groups, success against al Qaeda would not make the United States safe from global terrorism. While U.S. military strength can lead groups to choose asymmetric terrorist tactics rather than direct military confrontation, U.S. military actions alone cannot protect noncombatants from acts of terror.

Ultimately, terrorism is a battle of ideas more than a battle of competing militaries. Groups choose terrorism specifically to try to compensate for their small numbers and their military inferiority with the power of ideas. Terrorism is a tactic used by groups with varying ideological agendas, but it is always a tactic of asymmetrical conflict used by militarily weaker parties. As noted above, terrorism is the illegitimate use of force against noncombatants in order to cause a psychological reaction (fear, shock, panic) out of proportion to the magnitude of the attack in order to perpetuate political or other goals.<sup>4</sup> The reactions that terrorists are trying to provoke—fear, shock, panic, and attention to the terrorists' views or goals—are the real weapons, regardless of whether guns, bombs, or airplanes are employed. Surprise magnifies the psychological reaction to a terrorist attack, and the media amplify the message. The value of terrorists' victims depends on the symbolism of the target and the esteem society has for the victims. If the larger population empathizes with the victims of the terrorist attack, the attacks will produce a disproportionate psychological reaction

compared to the actual damage done. After the September 11 attacks, the real-estate market for Manhattan skyscrapers plummeted. The idea that it could have been anyone in a plane, on their way to work, or in or near a skyscraper, did more damage to the U.S. economy and society than the initial damage done by the planes on the buildings. Homeland security efforts to protect the United States at home and military efforts abroad address the physical damage terrorists can do. These efforts largely do not engage the terrorists on their real battlefield, the war of ideas. "Misunderestimating" the nature of the war on terrorism leads the United States to turn its back on some of the most powerful tools at its disposal: ideas, moral persuasion, and the ability to effectively craft a message and disseminate it abroad.

**Just War Theory versus a Pagan Ethos.** Frustration leads many to sympathize with Thomas Friedman's position, "We have to fight the terrorists as if there were no rules."<sup>5</sup>

Journalist and author Robert D. Kaplan makes a similar argument. The barbarians are at the gate, and we must adjust our thinking about ethics and foreign policy accordingly. The twenty-first century is marked by anarchy eroding the islands of peace and prosperity of developed democracies. Growing, violent, populist movements of the poor are disenfranchised from the benefits of the global economy. These angry groups exploit open democratic societies and global technology to inflict great cruelty from a distance. "The post-Industrial Revolution empowers anyone with a cellular phone and a bag of explosives. America's military superiority guarantees that such new adversaries will not fight

according to our notions of fairness: they will come at us by surprise, asymmetrical-ly and at our weakest points, as they often have in the past. Asymmetry gives terrorists and cyber criminals their strength, since such adversaries operate beyond accepted international norms and value systems on a plane where atrocity is a legitimate form of war.”<sup>6</sup> Kaplan con-

resort in self-defense to protect life, never aggressively for mere military or political advantage, nor for vengeance or retribution. “Every military response must be in accord with sound moral principles, notably such norms of the just war tradition as non-combatant immunity, proportionality, right intention, and probability of success.”<sup>9</sup>

## Ultimately, terrorism is a battle of ideas more than a battle of competing militaries.

cludes that in warrior politics “leadership demands a pagan ethos,” motivated by the pursuit of valorous, patriotic ends, and unconstrained by Judeo-Christian principles (including JWT) that the means of statecraft must respect the fundamental dignity of all human life.<sup>7</sup>

Not everyone agrees with this conclusion. As a member of the International Policy Committee, I helped advise the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops in producing their statement “A Pastoral Message: Living With Faith and Hope After September 11th.” The bishops note, “In our response to attacks on innocent civilians, we must be sure that we do not violate the norms of civilian immunity and proportionality. We believe every life is precious whether a person works at the World Trade Center or lives in Afghanistan. The traditional moral norms governing the use of force still apply, even in the face of terrorism on this scale.”<sup>8</sup> They conclude that while military action may regrettably be necessary in response to the September 11 attacks, it is not sufficient. Too often, force addresses the violent symptoms of conflict without addressing the underlying roots. Force may only be used as a last

Unfortunately, many in the Bush administration and the U.S. public are not sympathetic to the bishops’ arguments concerning moral constraints on the range of U.S. policy options. While the initial stages of the war in Afghanistan were conducted with attention to minimizing civilian casualties, this may not be the case in future engagements. If the United States expands its military conflict with Iraq, civilian casualties would be extensive. The battle for Baghdad would be nothing like Tora Bora; the Taliban and al Qaeda battles in the Afghan mountains were far removed from large civilian population centers, whereas tens of thousands of Iraqi civilians would be caught in the middle of attempts to oust Saddam Hussein and could be used deliberately as civilian shields by Iraqi forces. JWT raises other concerns in taking the war on terrorism to Iraq: just cause and the lack of evidence linking Iraq to the September 11 attacks, the problem of anticipatory self-defense, right intention, legitimate authority, comparative justice, last resort, probability of success, and proportionality. But concern for noncombatant immu-

nity is more than a moral or legal nicety. The United States argues that terrorism, intentionally targeting noncombatants, is wrong and demands an international coalition to curtail the practice. We cannot effectively lead or credibly persuade others to join an international coalition against terrorist killing of noncombatants while intentionally putting the lives of noncombatants at risk ourselves.

**Morality Matters.** The “ends justify the means/pagan ethos” calculus is wrong because morality matters in combating terrorism and especially in curtailing al Qaeda.

More than ten times as many Americans died in automobile accidents last year than died in the September 11 attacks.<sup>10</sup> Why do we spend billions to respond to the September 11 attacks, while barely acknowledging other innocents who died before their time? It is not just the number of victims that affronts us, but the way in which they died: characterizing an act of violence as terrorism is inherently a moral judgment about the legitimate and illegitimate uses of force.

Moral arguments are also the basis of al Qaeda’s case against the United States. They argue that the U.S. military presence in Saudi Arabia desecrates the land of Mecca and Medina, despite the facts that Muslims serve in the U.S. military, and that U.S. troops were invited in to protect Saudi Arabia from invasion, and are stationed far from these holy sites. Bin Laden believes that ideas matter, and has conducted an active global media campaign to promote al Qaeda’s norms through video tapes, town hall meetings, and active outreach to the Arab and Muslim press. Polls show these efforts are succeeding. A troublingly high percentage of the Muslim world believes al Qae-

da’s representation of events. In hour-long polling interviews of 10,000 people in nine mainly Muslim countries that together account for half of all Muslims worldwide (Indonesia, Iran, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey), only 18 percent of those polled believed Arab men carried out the September 11 attacks; 61 percent did not believe Arabs were responsible.<sup>11</sup>

Osama bin Laden and his followers attempt to act as moral entrepreneurs, agents who act as reformers or crusaders to change rules, out of an ethical concern to curtail a great evil.

Al Qaeda’s campaign shares many characteristics of a transnational advocacy network, except of course that the terrorist network embraces violent and illicit tactics.

While governments have legal authority, advocacy groups rely on moral authority. Generally, while states have greater military power... transnational advocacy networks’ strength lies in their idea power. They seek to occupy the only high ground available to them, the moral high ground. If they can succeed in redefining a problem as a moral issue, they will have a greater chance of prevailing, because states ... may not be able to speak credibly as bastions or brokers of morality. Religious organizations in particular often have well-developed ethics and rich institutions, resources which are useful to transnational advocacy networks... Morally, religious organizations have legitimacy speaking on moral issues and a treasure chest of well-developed ideas available for use by transnational advocacy networks. Tactically, religious organizations can pool their power with other religious and civil society groups, and use their direct pulpit access to citizens (who may be business or government decision makers) as well as their ability to attract media. Transnational advocacy networks,



like others who can persuade but not compel, must be good salespeople as well as good preachers in order to mobilize their ideas.<sup>12</sup>

By attacking the United States, al Qaeda has attempted to open a new forum for politics blocked by the local Arab governments. Margaret Keck and Kathryn Sikkink refer to this as the “boomerang pattern.” “When channels between the state and its domestic actors are blocked, the boomerang pattern of influence characteristic of transnational networks may occur: domestic [groups] bypass their state and directly search out international allies to try to bring pressure on their states from outside.” Al Qaeda, which considers the Egyptian and Saudi governments to be hypocrites who collaborate with infidels in the desecration of Islam, seeks to overthrow these governments and replace them with a fundamentalist Wahhabi Islamic theocracy that rules by its interpretation of Islamic law. But it does so by attacking the United States, believing the United States is a better target than Saudi Arabia or Egypt. Since Saudi Arabia is a closed society, attempts to attack the Saudi regime might be brutally put down, and al Qaeda’s message would likely not make it past the heavily state-censored Saudi media to the outside world. More importantly, the killing of Muslims through its means would appear illegitimate and immoral to the audience al Qaeda addresses. Knowing that morality matters in what they pose as a moral crusade, al Qaeda uses means which are morally acceptable within the context of its brand of Wahhabi Islam. For example, a leading high school textbook used in Wahhabi schools warns, “It is compulsory for Muslims to be loyal to each other and to consider the infidels their enemy.”<sup>13</sup>

Finally, al Qaeda also seeks to spread its moral norms, and thereby its revolution, by establishing a network of Wahhabi schools globally. Some of these are used as recruitment channels to identify and train terrorists. Many poor Muslim states such as Pakistan, unable to provide basic public education, welcomed the Saudi-financed *madrassas* (schools educating students in Wahhabi fundamentalist Islam).<sup>14</sup> Later, many regretted giving a forum for an exclusive, fundamentalist version of Wahhabi Islam that warns of the danger of fraternizing with Christians and Jews, often foments violence in their countries, and facilitates or sympathizes with terrorism. But by losing control of schools and primary education, the government had already suffered significant setbacks in the battle to define morality and the battle of ideas. The leaders of al Qaeda understand that morality matters, and have launched a global public diplomacy and information politics battle against the United States and U.S. allies—a battle that has largely gone unanswered.

### Constructing Global Norms.

Just as al Qaeda attempts to build a global base for its ideals, the Bush administration is also attempting to spread global norms. The Bush administration, however, is attempting to construct a global norm against terrorism with its hands tied. The administration has placed great emphasis on the military prosecution of the war in Afghanistan at the cost of a billion dollars a month.<sup>15</sup> It is also actively courting international support for expanding the war to remove Saddam Hussein from power in Iraq. U.S. military support has also been extended to fight terrorists in the Philip-

piners, Georgia, and Yemen. Political negotiations with government decision makers and international elites accompany these military efforts, along with economic diplomacy to curtail the financing of terrorism. But by emphasizing the military, political, and economic tools to prosecute the war, with little attention to the public diplomacy and moral tools, the United States tries to construct global norms with a muzzle on the means to establish such norms. According to Edward S. Walker, former assistant secretary of state for the Near East, "public diplomacy . . . has been a critical missing link" in U.S. policy toward the Islamic world. "The basic reason we're not very effective," Walker said in an interview, "is we don't even try."<sup>16</sup>

The ideas war has been a poor stepchild to the military conduct of the war, in part because the U.S. public diplomacy infrastructure has been so badly degraded over the years. Weakened by budget cuts throughout the 1980s and 1990s, the U.S. Information Agency was disbanded as a separate agency in 1999 (after a concerted campaign by Senator Jesse Helms, who called the Voice of America "a rogue agency").<sup>17</sup> Public diplomacy functions were folded into the State Department, and were allocated fewer staff and resources. While bin Laden routinely has media access in the Arab world, the Broadcasting Board of Governors discovered in its study of media in the Arab world that "there certainly was a media war going on in the region, and that U.S. international broadcasting played absolutely no role" in it.<sup>18</sup>

In response to criticisms that the United States was failing in the image war, weeks after military operations were underway in Afghanistan, the White House opened the Coalition Informa-

tion Centers to combat misinformation and disseminate the coalition's views of the war. However, as one senior administration official said, "One of the things that became clear to us as we began this campaign is that we had a real deficit in the Arab world to fight against. For so long, our basic, fundamental viewpoints have been absent. [There is] an incredible deficit of understanding."<sup>19</sup> Even within the Pentagon, where funding flows more freely, the information campaign has not gone much better. The Office of Strategic Influence, created after September 11 to drop leaflets and broadcast information in foreign countries, was disbanded after news leaks in February 2002 created controversy over whether the office intended to spread misinformation along with its propaganda efforts.<sup>20</sup>

The effort to establish a global prohibitory norm against terrorism requires the United States to effectively disseminate ideas, information, and moral messages. How have other global norms been established? Scholar Ethan A. Nadelmann studied the creation of global prohibitory regimes. How did powerful global norms and international laws develop against slavery, piracy, and trafficking in women and children for the purposes of prostitution? The inadequacy of existing law enforcement measures against problems that moved easily over sovereign borders was a powerful incentive in the above cases as well as in the current war on terrorism. However, equally important "is the role of moral proselytism. The compulsion to convert others to one's beliefs and to remake the world in one's own image has long played an important role in international politics."<sup>21</sup> The proselytizing efforts of governments, acting in coalition with nongovernmental transna-

tional organizations, function as “transnational moral entrepreneurs.”<sup>22</sup> Moral arguments augment international adherence to a regime, giving it greater “moral and symbolic force...that cannot be defied lightly.”<sup>23</sup>

Drawing insights from the successful efforts to create global prohibitions against slavery and antipersonnel landmines, Judeo-Christian moral arguments about the fundamental dignity of all human life are not a constraint on effective action in the war on terrorism, but rather the very means to motivate, legitimate, explain, and justify the effort to establish a global prohibition on terrorism. The opponent of the United States shrewdly understands and uses the power of moral ideas, while the United States itself oddly attempts to construct a global moral norm against terrorism while keeping morality at arm’s length from power politics.

Rather than eschew our moral codes as a hindrance that the enemy also avoids, we must embrace them as a strategic weapon of power politics. Ideas compel more completely than military force. When the arms are withdrawn, ideas remain. Long after the empires fall, their ideas continue. The fledgling U.S. republic yielded far more power than its nearly nonexistent armed forces could project due to the force of U.S. moral claims—that all are created equal, with inalienable rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Rather than distancing ourselves from this code, the war on terrorism would be much more effective if it drew on this touchstone to make the case why the tactic of terrorism is wrong and should be curtailed.

The United States does not need to adopt a pagan ethos to win the war on

terrorism. To effectively prosecute this war, the United States must embrace, not turn away from, our founding moral principles. These moral ideas, more than our smart bombs and special forces, are the sources of U.S. power. The United States must not “misunderestimate” the nature of the war on terrorism, but realize that it is fundamentally a war of ideas. The United States must engage the ideas war by strengthening the institutional infrastructure of U.S. public diplomacy, degraded from years of neglect and anemic funding. Private sector U.S. actors are masters of communications, marketing, advertising, and diverse cross-cultural exchanges. U.S. government efforts to effectively communicate and build a coalition abroad would be enhanced by regular, sustained cooperation, advice, and partnership with the private sector. Finally, the United States must pay sustained attention to just war theory in the war on terrorism. Noncombatant casualties caused by U.S. forces undermine the important U.S. attempt to build a global norm against terrorist activities and noncombatant targeting. Given the nature of global terrorism, unilateralism and primarily military responses will not effectively combat the threat, so the United States must enlist the support of others. Prohibitions against slavery and piracy took decades, but eventually succeeded. So might the war on terrorism, if the United States does not squander international support by engaging in morally questionable behavior while attempting to create a global moral norm.

**Editor’s Note:**

Copyright 2002. Maryann Cusimano Love.

## NOTES

1 Thomas Friedman, "World War III," *New York Times*, 13 September 2001.

2 While earlier versions of the JWT began with the Greeks and Romans, the Christian Augustinian tradition of JWT was developed in the fourth century. (Saint Augustine, *City of God*, translated by Thomas Merton. New York: Modern Library Paperback Classics, 2000). JWT constrains the use of force both ad bellum and in bello via several criteria, such as just cause; right intention; legitimate authority; comparative justice; last resort; probability of success; proportionality; and protection of noncombatants. For more on JWT and the war on terrorism, see Maryann Cusimano Love, "Globalization, Ethics and the War on Terrorism," *Notre Dame Journal of Law, Ethics, and Public Policy*, 16 (May 2002): 101-115.

3 President George W. Bush, "Remarks to the CIA Workforce," September 26, 2001, online at <[http://www.cia.gov/cia/public-affairs/speeches/archives/2001/bush\\_speech\\_09262001.html](http://www.cia.gov/cia/public-affairs/speeches/archives/2001/bush_speech_09262001.html)>

4 Maryann Cusimano Love and Martha Crenshaw, "Networked Terror," in *Beyond Sovereignty: Issues for a Global Agenda*, 2d ed., (Wadsworth: forthcoming July 2002).

5 Thomas Friedman, "World War III," *New York Times*, 13 September 2001.

6 Robert D. Kaplan, *Warrior Politics: Why Leadership Demands a Pagan Ethos* (New York: Random House, 2001), 9-10.

7 Respect for the fundamental dignity of all human life and the Just War Tradition are more than Judeo-Christian values. All the major world religions profess respect for human life, and most embrace some parallel to JWT. However, while the U.S. population today draws from diverse religious and cultural traditions, the founders of the United States embraced Judeo-Christian values, which is why I single these out, as well as to contrast Kaplan's endorsement of an ends-oriented pagan ethos.

8 The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, "A Pastoral Message: Living with Faith and Hope After September 11," November 14, 2001, online at <<http://www.nccbuscc.org/sdwp/sept11.html>>

9 The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, "A Pastoral Message: Living with Faith and Hope After September 11," November 14, 2001, <http://www.nccbuscc.org/sdwp/sept11.html>

10 *U.S. auto fatalities total over 37,000 deaths a year*. U.S. Department of Safety, National Highway Transportation Safety Administration, <<http://www.fars.nhtsa.dot.gov/>>.

11 "Improving Our Image," *The Montreal Gazette*, 4 March 2002, B2; Howard S. Becker, *Outsiders: Studies in the Sociology of Deviance* (New York: The Free Press, 1963), 148; Ethan A. Nadelmann, "Global prohibition regimes: the evolution of norms in international society," *International Organization* 44, no. 4, (Autumn 1990): 482; Richard E. Neustadt, *Presidential Power and the Modern Presidents: The Politics of Leadership from Roosevelt to Reagan* (New York: Free Press, 1990).

12 Maryann Cusimano Love, "NGOs: People Power," in *Beyond Sovereignty: Issues for a Global Agenda*, 2d ed., (Wadsworth: forthcoming July 2002).

13 Margaret E. Keck and Kathryn Sikkink, *Activists Beyond Borders* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998), 12; Wahhabi high school textbook quoted in Martin Smith and Lowell Bergman, "Saudi Time Bomb," PBS Frontline, November 15, 2001, transcript online at [www.pbs.org](http://www.pbs.org).

14 Maryann Cusimano Love, "NGOs: People Power"; Martin Smith and Lowell Bergman, "Saudi Time Bomb," PBS Frontline, 15 November, 2001, transcript on-line at <[www.pbs.org](http://www.pbs.org)>

15 Mike Allen and Amy Goldstein, "Security Funding Tops New Budget," *The Washington Post*, 20 January 2002, A1.

16 Edward S. Walker quoted in Robert G. Kaiser, "U.S. Message Lost Overseas: Officials See Immediate Need for Public Diplomacy," *The Washington Post*, 15 October 2001, A1.

17 Senator Jesse Helms quoted in Robert G. Kaiser, "U.S. Message Lost Overseas: Officials See Immediate Need for Public Diplomacy," *The Washington Post*, 15 October 2001, A1.

18 Robert G. Kaiser, "U.S. Message Lost Overseas: Officials See Immediate Need for Public Diplomacy," *The Washington Post*, 15 October 2001, A1.

19 Mike Allen, "Fighting the Image War to Gain Muslim Support," *The Washington Post*, 15 November 2001, A32.

20 Eric Schmitt, "Rumsfeld Formally Disbands Office of Strategic Influence," *The Washington Post*, 26 February 2002.

21 Ethan A. Nadelmann, "Global prohibition regimes: the evolution of norms in international society," *International Organization* 44, no. 4, (Autumn 1990): 481.

22 *Ibid.*, 482-3.

23 *Ibid.*, 483.

---

# International Politics, Ethics, and the Use of Force

---

Bryan Hehir

I would like to sketch the architecture of an old argument, but it is an argument that must be made anew every day. It is as old as this city, Washington, D.C., indeed as old as the Peloponnesian War. Yet, it is still as current as the present set of questions facing the United States, the United Nations, and other nations of the world when addressing the decision to employ force.

The question is: Is war something that is only fought and won or lost, or is war itself also something morally measurable? I would argue that from Thucydides until today, despite some resistance, people have always tried to measure the use of force as well as simply declare winners and losers. At the same time, the argument must be made anew because there is persistent skepticism about whether ethics and moral restraint have any role when the issue is the possibility of the use of force. In short, is ethics possible in war?

As someone who has taught ethics and international relations for thirty years at Georgetown and Harvard, I have always begun my courses by saying that anyone who investigates these issues must remember what Gandhi said. After his first tour through the West, when asked, "What do you think of Western civilization?" Gandhi replied, "It would be a good idea." That is the way I think most people think about ethics and interna-

**Bryan Hehir** is  
President of Catholic  
Charities USA and  
former Dean of Har-  
vard Divinity School.

tional relations—specifically ethics and war. While it would be a good idea, it is probably not possible. I will argue that it is both possible and necessary to think about the moral dimensions of the use of force. At the same time, this particular quandary raises sharply one of the difficulties in thinking about ethics and war.

When I taught the course on international theory and practice in the Georgetown School of Foreign Service, I would always begin the course by asking students:

Essentially, I will examine this question in three steps: first, by looking at how one thinks about ethics and war—investigating what the options are; second, by developing an argumentative framework for measuring war, at least in a rough sense; and finally, by looking at three challenges to this ethic that have arisen over the last fifty years.

There are three classical positions on the ethics of war. The first is one that many people instinctively come to when

---

## The instinctive reaction of many is to argue that there is no way to view war within the moral universe.

---

What makes the study of foreign policy and international politics different than the study of domestic politics? Generally, their answer to this question was “the lack of a central authority in the international system”—since there is only a fragile set of international laws, and the international system is characterized by deep cultural and religious pluralism. So, when one talks about ethics in the international sphere, the question remains, “Whose ethics?” Is it possible to articulate a set of normative standards that can cut across the deep and powerful pluralism of the international community?

How does one approach this question? I am going to articulate an ethic that clearly has had a long history in Western thought, but that I believe is not confined to Western philosophy. Among the many reasons it is not unique to Western thought is that this ethic has had a fair amount of influence in shaping international law, a law that many nations ascribe to, and is at least implicitly embedded in the UN charter.

they think about the topic of morality and war, and that is the belief that they are totally separate. In other words, the instinctive reaction of many is to argue that there is no way to view war within the moral universe. The moral response is to resist war on all counts—resist it personally by refusing to participate, and resist it in principle on the policy level by arguing that those who decide to go to war should acknowledge that they are involved in a terribly immoral act. Those who subscribe to this view are often criticized by those who argue that if you hold this first position, you are willing to turn the world over to unscrupulous people and that those who are willing to go to war will in every case ultimately govern those who are not. But the nonviolent position is not that simple. People who hold to the principles of nonviolence argue that they are prepared to resist injustice, but are only prepared to resist it up to the point where they must take another’s life. Despite the near inevitability that nonviolence is the

minority position, it still retains a long and distinguished heritage.

The second option is, in a sense, the mirror image of nonviolence—what some have labeled the classical realist position. Now, not everyone who is a realist is going to hold to my characterization of the position. Still, there has been a variant of the realist position—both philosophical and political—that holds to what I am going to say. It is embodied in Thucydides's account of the Peloponnesian War; Michael Walzer identifies it in his widely read book, *Just and Unjust War*. In this extensive moral treatise, when the Athenians come to their much weaker adversaries who they are about to engage in battle, the Athenian generals come for one last conversation and essentially say, "Come now. Let us have no talk about justice. Let us talk about the world as it is." In short, they advocated realism, purporting that in this world, the strong do what they will and the weak what they must. This is the realist position. Now the implicit argument here is that there is room for moral restraint in life, but there is no room for moral restraint in war. The nature of war, the stakes of war, and the dynamic of war are such that moral restraint does not belong in this context. While the implicit moral condition for realism allows for morality in life, morality in war is different. Like the nonviolent position, the position of classical realism as one finds it in the Athenians' argument places war outside the moral universe.

We now have two positions that place war outside of moral rules. The first says that war is never to be justified, and the second that we should not even try to justify war, as it is an impossible task.

The third option argues that some uses of force are morally acceptable, but not

all wars are morally exempt. This condition says that the phenomenon of war, which involves large-scale systematic killing of human beings, can fit into a moral framework. It contrasts with the nonviolent position, which says it is impossible to find moral justification for any conflict, and is also distinguished from the realist position, which argues that it is too simple to say that war is normal state behavior. How can one argue that some use of force is morally acceptable, but not all? The essence of this argument is that the morally acceptable use of force must always be limited. It must be limited in purpose, as not all purposes are justifiable; limited in methods, as not all means are morally acceptable; and limited in its intent, as warfare must be animated by justice, not hatred.

The argument begins with a presumption against the use of force. It begins to fit war within the moral universe by placing a burden of proof on anyone who says, "I will now take life as a political option." The burden of proof is on the person, institution, or state that chooses to act in this manner. Beginning with a presumption against the use of force means that in the normal understanding of life, war and force are not to be used as instruments of the political processes. A presumption, however, does not carry the same force as an absolute moral rule. Absolute moral rules say, "never, in any circumstances." A presumption is less than an absolute moral rule—presumptions admit exceptions. An exception is a defined set of circumstances where the normal mode of behavior is overridden by another higher moral argument or principle. So, while you will begin with a presumption against force, you do not have an absolute rule. Why? Because under certain circumstances it becomes

clear that you cannot preserve fundamental human rights and basic justice, unless you are prepared to use force. These circumstances define the exceptions to the presumption.

The second step in the argument requires defining the exception that allows you to override the presumption against the use of force. Three questions must be answered: Why can you use force? When can you use force? And how can you use force—under which circumstances and by which methods can you use it? The “why” question addresses the purposes that are morally acceptable and argues that the use of force must be limited only to the achievement of those justifiable purposes. Traditionally, these purposes have been that you can go to war to protect life that is under attack, and more recently that you can go to war to correct systematic, large-scale abuse of human rights. A still more complicated argument can be made that you can go to war to overcome any regime that makes it impossible to live in human dignity. So, you can go to war to protect life, to prevent systematic violation of human rights, and to overcome regimes that perpetuate massive injustice against their own citizens.

The “when” question warns that even when you have a justification that would merit the use of force, you still need to answer other questions such as: “Who has the right to say now is the time to go to war?”; “Who has proper authority to declare war?”; “What is the inner logic or intent of the policy?”; and “Is the logic of the policy really to end the killing and the violation of human rights, or is the logic of the policy something else?”

Finally, there is the “how” question. Even with a justifiable moral reason, and even if you can satisfy the conditions of

the when question, in the modern era, it is the means question that is so hard to answer. If war is to be morally acceptable, you must adhere to certain criteria. The first criterion is that you may go to war against an aggressor, but you may not go to war against a whole society. The distinction here is that not everyone in society is guilty of aggression even if the state itself is. Therefore, not everyone is open to attack. Some raise the objection that modern war does not allow this distinction, because when the state goes to war, everyone within that state is at war as well, and thus everyone is a target. In every society, however, there are always groups such as the very young and the very old who make it impossible to justify attacking a whole society because these populations are clearly not aggressors. So, that is the first question: How do you preserve the rule of civilian immunity? The second criterion of means, which arises only after the first is being observed, holds that the use of force must be proportionate—here again a sense of limits holds.

It still must be demonstrated that this ethical framework is acceptable across time and space for determining the purpose and methods of war. It is my argument that this ethic is a framework that has taken flesh in every age. However, this is an ethic that is 1,600 years old, and during those 1,600 years the world has moved through very different political systems: empires; medieval versions of politics; the rise of the sovereign state in seventeenth century; and very particularly in the world of the late twentieth century, the charter of the United Nations and its regime of law.

This ethic has faced three main challenges over the last fifty years: the challenge of ethical constraints in a nuclear



age, questions of humanitarian military intervention, and the rise of terrorism.

The challenge posed by the advent of the nuclear age was literally a revolution. For an ethic that says the only morally acceptable use of force is one that is limited, the nuclear age ushered in the threat of unlimited use of force. By definition, the overall impact of nuclear weapons is unlimited. The revolutionary character of the nuclear age can be summarized as follows: After 1,500 years of debate, there was a certain consensus—at least in the Western world—regarding

fifteen weeks addressing these arguments in my Georgetown classes. The challenge was to rule out the use of nuclear weapons in every possible way without eroding the function of deterrence. How could one reconcile morally defensible targeting and effective deterrence? Deterrence remained the overarching concern for twenty-five years, and then all of a sudden the Cold War ended. We went through a period of what I would call the “relativization of nuclear weapons”—nuclear weapons moved toward the edge, rather than being the

---

## **Nuclear strategy** has deliberately made civilians the targets of war via the theory of deterrence.

---

how one thought about war, politics, and ethics. A consensus was formed by two unlikely allies, one a fifth century African saint and the other a nineteenth century Prussian general. The Prussian general was Clausewitz; he argued that war was an extension of politics by other means, and as such was rationally defensible. The fifth century African saint, Augustine, said war was a morally defensible activity. Together they framed an argument about limited war.

The nuclear age has threatened to blow apart what Augustine and Clausewitz argued many years ago. The ethical response to the use of force in the nuclear age has had to respond to both a qualitative increase in destructive capabilities of weaponry and the challenge of constructing nuclear strategy. Nuclear strategy has deliberately made civilians the targets of war via the theory of deterrence. This has resulted in a great debate over the last thirty years. I used to spend

center, of the strategic agenda. In this first decade of the new century, however, the nuclear debate is reviving. Proliferation is now a big question—not only proliferation by states, but also proliferation by non-state actors. There is also the debate about the new policy regarding the U.S. nuclear posture; proposals are being made which could blur the line drawn over four decades between nuclear weapons and all other conventional uses of force.

The prevailing humanitarian military intervention debate in the 1990s was radically different from the debate that took place during the Cold War. Throughout the nuclear age, there was a belief in the need to sign as many agreements as possible limiting the use of force. In the 1990s, however, many of us who had spent substantial time articulating limits on the use of force found ourselves pressuring states to endorse the possibility of using it. This brought us back to the classical argument

about morality and war: that there are situations when all other means have failed and when the failure to use force would result in a vast human cost. In the 1990s, we moved from setting limits on war to attempting to push states to accept their responsibilities regarding the need to use force. This was dramatically different from the nuclear age, whose challenge was to prevent catastrophic violence. For humanitarian military intervention, the challenge is how to prevent chaos inside the boundaries of a state where massive human rights violations are occurring. The new debate forced us to become familiar with such names as Bosnia, Somalia, Rwanda, East Timor, and Kosovo. In each of these cases, concerned states faced a major characteristic of international politics—the principle and rule against intervention.

In the 1990s, we found ourselves grappling with the fundamental problem of jurisprudence. The problem was that while you can make a moral argument that something should be done to prevent massive violence or genocide, the legal argument ruled out intervention in almost all cases, unless authorized by the UN Security Council. This problem of international jurisprudence has not gone away. I believe that the answer to the problem requires a recasting of the non-intervention rule. We need to maintain it against great power intervention, since it is a principle of order that is necessary for world powers, but humanitarian military intervention is not a great power problem. The presumption against intervention should still be respected, even in questions of humanitarian military intervention, but there are times when it should be overridden by exceptions. The primary exception is genocide. However, we have seen killing that would be classi-

fied as less than genocide that still justifies humanitarian military intervention; for example, ethnic cleansing is not genocide, but it still warrants action. So ethnic cleansing, genocide, and also responding to failed states qualify as cases where there is an international responsibility to intervene. It would certainly take a longer argument to play out each of these exceptions, but these are the basic caveats I would draw out. Ultimately, I would relativize the nonintervention principle while maintaining the presumption against great power intervention.

That brings us to the third challenge: terrorism. Terrorism is a product of this decade; however, like intervention, it is hardly new in international politics. These days, it is a larger problem and an especially serious one because of failed states. Terrorism is often carried out today by transnational actors rather than states. International politics and ethics have primarily focused on states. While it is possible to talk about a terrorist state, the predominant problem is transnationality rather than state sponsorship.

In the end, I believe that it is important to look at questions of cause, authority, and means. I would make a distinction between terrorism occurring within a state and terrorism that is transnational in character. Terrorism within a state is a complicated problem for the state involved. In these cases, other states should adhere to the nonintervention rule. In other words, I do not argue that all forms of terrorism justify international action. Transnational terrorism takes on the character of aggression, however, which makes it distinct. So, in the case of the September 11 attacks, there was cause to respond—not cause to respond in order to avenge the past, but cause to respond to deter future acts.

There is also the notion of authority. In responding to a transnational issue, one must think beyond national authority. Once again, there is an ethical argument that says one has the right to defend oneself against attack. There is Article 51 of the UN Charter that gives the states this right. On the means question, in responding to terrorism, you have to distinguish three things: the terrorist group, which is transnational in nature; the state in which terrorists reside; and the civil society of the state. To say that you have the right to respond to transnational terrorist groups that penetrated a state does not necessarily mean you have the right to respond against the state in question with force—and in no case can you justify a reaction against or an attack on the civil society surrounding it. So, in the present campaign in Afghanistan, the United States needs to consider the means question. I

would also draw very clear lines regarding the argument for any further action beyond Afghanistan. Intervening elsewhere requires a new debate from the ground up; this is particularly the case in deciding upon action in Iraq. There may be a case for intervention precisely to address weapons of mass destruction, but the implications of the case go far beyond Iraq, setting precedents in world politics that could be very difficult to control.

Ultimately, in this first decade of the twenty-first century, the old argument of the ethics of the use of force must be examined anew amidst the three distinct political-moral problems of war that we face: nuclear policy, humanitarian intervention, and terrorism. All three must be addressed, and presently none are settled questions.

**Editor's Note:** This piece is an edited transcript of Father Hehir's remarks before the Georgetown Leadership Seminar on March 19, 2002.

---

# Ethics and Interests

---

Richard Ned Lebow

In the Western world, there is a widely accepted distinction between public and private morality. We consider it wrong to lie, but commonly acknowledge that a diplomat is an honest man who lies in the interest of his country. But how do we feel about leaders who lie to their own people in the name of national security, or actively support murderous dictatorships because they are anti-communist or protect American interests? Is every action defensible if it enhances national security or the national interest? How do we know what these actions are? Is the distinction between public and private morality a necessary one in a world where hostile forces plot our destruction? Or is it merely a convenient rationalization for unscrupulous and self-serving behavior?

Realism purports to answer these questions, or at least provide a framework for thinking intelligently about them.<sup>1</sup> While the realist school has multiple strands, its adherents generally acknowledge a core set of assumptions. First and foremost, realists believe that the anarchic character of the international environment makes international relations a self-help system in which survival ultimately depends on a state's material capabilities and alliances with other states.<sup>2</sup> This does not imply a world of constant warfare, but only the recognition, according to Robert Gilpin, that "there is no higher authority to which a state can appeal for succor in times of trouble."<sup>3</sup>

**Richard Ned Lebow** is Director of the Mershon Center and Professor of Political Science, History, and Psychology at Ohio State University.

## There is nothing natural about people acting on the basis of individual self-interest.

Most dismiss ethics as a form of weak sentimentality that has no business in the affairs of states. Formulated this way, there is no way to adjudicate between competing claims of ethics and security. The demand for ethical foreign policies is rebuffed by the assertion that physical security is the essential precondition for the kind of society that allows the pursuit of the ethical life.<sup>4</sup> The counterargument that one cannot produce or sustain an ethical society by immoral means provokes realists to retort that international politics does not allow this kind of luxury. The controversy quickly returns to its starting point.

But are the imperatives of security really at odds with the canons of ethics? Is hard-nosed self-interest the most efficient way of protecting one's interest in an intensely competitive world? If ethical behavior is found to be more conducive—or perhaps even essential—to national security, the advocates of *realpolitik* would find their logic challenged from within. In this article, I contend, *pace* Thucydides, that interests of individuals and states presuppose identities, and that actors can only develop identities through membership in societies. All functioning societies in turn rest on some ethical foundation. Accordingly, ethics enables identities and interests. It follows that maintenance of the principles of justice that sustain societies is a primary interest of all actors, including states. Thus, ethics do play an essential role in international politics.

### Such a Thing as an Individual Actor?

There is nothing natural about people acting on the basis of individual self-interest. Individual identity is historically conditioned, took millennia to emerge, and has been regarded as unnatural by most people for most of its existence.<sup>5</sup> In traditional societies, individuals have always been tightly integrated into communities, defining their identities in communal terms. Individuals do not lack a concept of self, but the concept of self is relationally defined as the sum of socially assigned roles. *Persona* is the Latin word for mask, and describes the outer face that one presents to the community. The face defines the self in others' eyes and in one's own mind's eye. During the heroic age of Greece, the *oikos* (household) was considered the natural social unit; it was gradually replaced by the *polis* (city). With this shift, identity also came to be defined in terms of the city. Until the end of the fifth century, Greeks had no conception of individual self-interest.

Emile Durkheim astutely observed that the individual replaces the collectivity as the object of ritual attention in the course of transitions from traditional to modern societies. And indeed, from Rousseau on, Enlightenment and romantic ideologies tend to emphasize the uniqueness and autonomy of the inner self.<sup>6</sup> The Enlightenment created a vocabulary that, while recognizing tensions between inner selves and social roles, nevertheless encourages people to cultivate and express their inner selves and original ways of being. As products

of this ideology, we tend to take for granted that our desires, feelings, and choices are spontaneous and self-generated, but there is good reason to believe that they are, in large part, socially constituted.

These limitations are most visible in traditional societies where identities are not differentiated from social roles and identities, but they affect modern society as well. In the *Iliad*, Achilles must choose between an early death with honor or a long, peaceful life—his choice of a hero's death reflected the values of his culture. We, too, model ourselves on "heroes" who personify our cultural values—for example, those who are affluent, important, or athletic. Our inner selves and associated desires may be just as socially determined as were Achilles's.

This argument finds resonance at the international level. The realist model of society holds that the anarchy of the international system creates a state of nature. Thus, states must maximize power to enhance their security. Other realists consider security only one of the ends of foreign policy. In an influential book, Robert Osgood defined the national interest and the goals of statecraft as security, standing, and wealth.<sup>7</sup> All of these goals are empty categories that must be filled in by concrete concepts.

Even over the course of the last century, great powers have conceptualized security quite differently.<sup>8</sup> Their conceptions have reflected the understandings and practices common in the community of nations at the time. A state's "standing" is a relational concept by definition, and depends on outside validation. A state whose leaders assert it is "numero uno" because it has the highest gross domestic product, wins the

most gold medals in the Olympic games, or controls the military use of space is really asking other states to accept those criteria as the appropriate determinants of status.

Standing and wealth can enhance security, but they can also be pursued at its expense, just as the single-minded pursuit of security can bankrupt a country (e.g., the Soviet Union) or undermine its standing among its allies and key third parties (e.g., the United States). Throughout history, political units have devoted at least as much effort and resources to standing as they have to security.<sup>9</sup> Much of the competition among the European great powers from the very beginning of the modern state system was a struggle for rank that was a continuation and outgrowth of dynastic rivalries. During the Cold War, the Soviet Union and the United States engaged in an acute and often dangerous competition for influence in Europe and the Third World. Initially part of their respective quests for security, seeking influence eventually became a game of its own played for reasons of status.

Modern society's emphasis on individualism and free choice creates an entrenched predisposition to exaggerate the uniqueness of the inner self. But uniqueness can only exist as distinction, so identity is relational by definition. Modern people need each other as benchmarks against which to define themselves and to acknowledge, praise, or vilify their individuality and achievements. Kant captured this tension nicely when he observed that each person seeks "to achieve a rank among his fellows, whom he cannot stand, but also cannot stand to leave alone."<sup>10</sup> Inner selves and individual identities cannot exist distinct from society because membership and

participation in society—or its rejection—are essential to the constitution of the self.

The conventional description of modern society as a collection of individuals is mistaken. The U.S. Bill of Rights and Constitution, quintessential Enlightenment projects, take the individual as their unit, as does the American legal system. The courts have even extended this concept to corporations and other groups like trade unions who, for legal purposes, are treated as individuals. As an important reflection of how we see ourselves, our laws and legal decisions expose a gap between self-image and reality. In practice, neither the United States nor any other developed country has ever been anything close to a society of autonomous, egoistic individuals. Sociopaths aside, all of us are embedded in a web of relationships that start with families, friends, and personal and business partnerships. These relationships extend out to include some mix of social, sporting, civic, and professional groups, and may go beyond this to religious, ethnic, and national identifications. Relationships and the loyalties they generate give our lives meaning and direction. They not only constitute the cement of community, but they also teach us who we are. As psychologists have documented well, we have multiple identities, and many of these identities are collective in the sense that we equate our well-being with that of others.<sup>11</sup>

The most compelling proof that the world is not composed of autonomous actors is the behavior of people who actually separate themselves from social ties. For Greek playwrights, the individual freed from the bonds of family and community was something of a consuming trope. These individuals all behaved in ways that were destructive to themselves, their families, and the societies of

which they were once part. Thucydides casts the city of Athens as a tragic hero whose power and hubris led it to break free from the traditional web of relationships and reciprocal obligations that bound cities to one another and restrained their foreign policy goals. Having severed these ties, Athens pursued a policy of unlimited expansion that led to loss of empire, defeat, and near *stasis* at home.

Since the end of the Cold War, the United States has gone part way down the same perilous path in that it has increasingly indulged in narrow and often self-destructive self-interests at the expense of the community that enables its identity and ultimately sustains its influence. The Clinton and Bush administrations have refracted almost every important foreign policy decision through the prism of narrow self-interest. In its first year in office, the Bush administration acted against the coordinated efforts of many of its closest allies, and often a sizeable portion of the world community, on fourteen issues ranging from its unilateral withdrawal from the Anti-Ballistic Missile treaty to its scuttling of the 1997 Kyoto Protocol intended to forestall global warming.<sup>12</sup> In Spring 2002, the United States imposed steel quotas to the anger of its principal economic partners; and the White House has begun talking about using limited-yield nuclear weapons in future combat situations. The United States has the power to “go it alone,” and its leaders, with the apparent backing of Congress and the electorate, have no compunction about doing so even on issues where no serious national interests appear to be at risk.

A culture of selfishness seems to have become more pronounced in the United States. Many Americans see no reason for

taxes, and oppose programs that may benefit society but do not have any immediate payoff to themselves. Americans tend to justify selfishness by placing the individual and his or her narrowly constructed self-interest at the center of

national relations. First, one must define "ethics." In modern discourse, we distinguish between morality and ethics. Morality derives from *moralis*, Cicero's rendering in *De Fato* of the Greek word *ethikos*. For fifth and fourth century

## A culture of selfishness seems to have become more pronounced in the United States.

the analytical world. It makes this type of selfish behavior appear to be a reflection of the natural order. By doing so, this atomistic orientation becomes partly self-fulfilling.

### Interests, Order, and Ethics.

For the Greeks and many modern philosophers, cooperation and *koinonnia* (the civic project) are an expression of our *innate* sense of sociability. Humans are political animals, as Aristotle so aptly put it, and we are driven by our instincts to associate with others in order to realize our own needs and potential.<sup>13</sup> Relationships and the commitments they entail are not simply instrumental means to selfish ends, but important ends in their own right. Rational and instinctive processes are mutually reinforcing. We become who we are through close association with others. Our interests depend on identity, and identity in turn depends on community. Deprived of an identity—Hobbes's purpose for the state of nature—we become more or less identical, and our only interests are the fundamental requisites of survival: food, clothing, shelter, and sex. Identity confers interests because it gives us social purpose and allows for differentiation.

This argument has important implications for the dilemma of ethics in inter-

Greeks, *ethikos* was the set of character traits that inclined people to behave as they did.<sup>14</sup> Today, we think of ethics as an external code to which people should conform independent of their dispositions. We distinguish ethics from law, since law may not always represent ethics. The modern usage of ethics transforms it from an expression of our identities into an objective and often formally constituted set of rules. For the most part, I use the term in the Greek sense—restoring the connection between ourselves and our ethics helps to finesse an otherwise unresolvable metaphysical problem of understanding the source of ethics.

My above critique of rational choice suggests a strategy for addressing this central problem of moral philosophy. Enlightenment scholars rejected the Aristotelian conception of *telos* (ultimate end by design). Without *telos*, the accepted benchmark for assessing good in empirical terms disappeared. Philosophers from Kant on have struggled to build an alternative, metaphysical, foundation for ethics, but have failed because there are no incontrovertible "first principles" from which to start. Attempts to base such systems on feeling and customs can all be challenged for being arbitrary and culturally biased. It may be possible,



however, to root ethics in observable empirical regularities. This was the approach of the pre-Aristotelian Greeks for whom primordial world experience, mediated by language, was the foundation for all philosophy.

Having discussed the definition of ethics, we can address my key proposition: Because of the connections among interests, identity, and community, ethics must underlie interests. The argument is ontological. Interests require identity, because the latter confers social purpose. But identity is a form of differentiation, without which people would not have particular social interests. Identity in turn is impossible in the absence of community. Here, a double process is at work. Communities construct identities through their values and social discourses, but they also establish the hierarchies on which individual differentiation depends. Almost by definition, community must rest on some conception of justice that establishes at least a theoretical equality among its members, without which hierarchy would be unacceptable—in other words, community requires an ethical foundation. Most of the world's religions and ethical traditions describe this equality as an outgrowth of *philia* (affection) that people develop toward each other. Such affection appears to be both a natural attribute of our species but also something that results from our rational faculties. Reasoning in reverse, it follows that all of us—states as well as individuals—have a strong, even primary, interest in maintaining community and the principles of justice on which it is based.

### **Developing Ethical Orders through Dialogue.** Bridging from

these empirical-philosophical foundations to the specific ethical order of societies is an altogether different matter. It has proved impossible to establish first principles on which ethical systems can be based. Ethical orders must develop within societies and become legitimized through practice over the course of time. There is nothing organic, natural, or mystical about ethical orders, but at any given time they represent the culmination of a complicated historical process. They are the result of a multitude of decisions by people, acting unilaterally or collectively, with consequences that none may have intended or envisaged. These orders sanction certain pathways for attaining or justifying one's goals, and by doing so create incentives for people to use them. Well-trod paths give the appearance of being natural, and in turn help to legitimize and maintain the orders that created them.

Classical realists recognized this truth. Thucydides, Machiavelli, Hobbes, Clausewitz, and Morgenthau believed that ethical orders and the pattern of social relations they sustain must be open to renegotiation, and that such renegotiations are essential from time to time—especially in the aftermath of destructive wars associated with processes of modernization. After upheavals of this kind, it is often impossible to turn the clock back and restore the old order. Rather, components of that order must be fused with new elements and legitimated through a consultative political process. Thucydides was fully aware that the political system of Athens was the result of a long history of constitutional engineering, and that the reforms of Solon, Cleisthenes, and Pericles had

all been efforts to adapt the political systems to changing circumstances.<sup>15</sup>

None of the classical realists said very much, at least directly, about the *process* by which social orders should be renegotiated. For this, we must turn to their contemporaries. Socrates considered dialogue the appropriate method for constructing social and political orders, and he saw benefits in it that went beyond the prospect of reaching a consensual decision. The free exchange of ideas among friends and the give-and-take of dialogue strengthened the bonds of friendship and respect that were the foundation of community. Such a process might even be possible—indeed, all the more essential—in a society in which individuals had become increasingly autonomous. Plato’s depiction of Socrates encourages us to understand his life as a dialogue with his *polis*, and his acceptance of its death sentence as his final commitment to maintain the coherence and principle of that dialogue.

The emphasis on dialogue has been revived in the twentieth century, and is central to the thought and writings of Hans-Georg Gadamer and Jürgen Habermas. Habermas’s “critique of ideology” leads him to propose a coercion-free discourse that departs from human praxis.<sup>16</sup> For Gadamer, dialogue “is the art of having a conversation, and that includes the art of having a conversation with oneself and fervently seeking and understanding oneself.”<sup>17</sup> It is not so much a method as it is a philosophical enterprise that puts people in touch with themselves and others and reveals to them the prior determinations, anticipations, and imprints that reside in their concepts. It enables people who start with different understand-

ings to reach a binding philosophical or political consensus.

Community for Gadamer—as for Thucydides, the Greek playwrights, and others—is based on the play of shared language.<sup>18</sup> Charles Taylor associates “the genesis of the human mind” with language and communication of all kinds. The development of our critical faculties and all wisdom come therefore through dialogue.<sup>19</sup> Mikhail Bakhtin reminds us that even solitary reflection most often involves imaginary, albeit sometimes unconscious, dialogues with others in which we struggle to establish ourselves and our ideas.<sup>20</sup>

Nevertheless, dialogue in international affairs—and cooperation in turn—is possible only once people recognize that it is in their interest. This recognition is not brought about so much by external constraints and opportunities, as some realists might argue, as it is by introspection and inductive learning. Reason and experience bring some of us—some individuals and states—to a deeper understanding of our interests. At every level of interaction, from personal relationships to civic participation, we become willing to forego short-term gains to sustain these relationships and the longer-term and more important rewards they make possible. Viewed in this light, the cooperation seen in the emergence of the European community, the end of the Cold War, and the survival of NATO represents a triumph of higher-order learning. American foreign policy in the Clinton and Bush administrations, by contrast, represents a retrogression to an earlier, less sophisticated, and largely counterproductive way of thinking about ourselves and the world.

## NOTES

1 See Frederick L. Schuman, *International Politics: An Introduction to the Western State System* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1933); E. H. Carr, *The Twenty Years' Crisis, 1919-1939: An Introduction to the Study of International Relations* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1952 [1946]); Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1948).

2 Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1979), pp. 103-04; Robert Gilpin, *Global Political Economy: Understanding the International Economic Order* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), p. 16.

3 Gilpin, *Global Political Economy*, p. 17. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, p. 113, offers a more extreme characterization of the differences between domestic and international life: "In international politics force serves, not only as the ultima ratio, but indeed as the first and constant one."

4 Chris Brown, "Ethics, Interests and Foreign Policy," in Karen E. Smith and Margot Light, *Ethics and Foreign Policy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 15-33, correctly points out that all sophisticated variants of realism see states as egoists in the last resort, but recognize that enlightened self-interest is not necessarily incompatible with a concern for principle and the common welfare. It is only what he calls "pop realism" that conceives of interests in terms of narrow *Machtpolitik*. This is an issue to which I shall return.

5 During the fifth century B.C., the individual achieved an identity in Athenian law, but it remained poorly defined.

6 Romantics went a step further and rejected obedience to some general moral law in favor of being "true to oneself." For Hegel, the "authentic" romantic was a "beautiful soul," pure in its inwardness and uncorrupted by modernity's divisiveness. *Phenomenology*, (BB): C: (c); Robert E. Norton, *The Beautiful Soul: Aesthetic Morality in the Eighteenth Century* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995).

7 Robert E. Osgood, *Ideals and Self-Interest in America's Foreign Relations* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953), pp. 5-6.

8 All the great powers have been concerned with preventing foreign attack and occupation, but at different times in their history have sought to achieve that goal by means of military alliances (France from 1870 to 1940), isolation (the United States between the wars), autarchy (Japan and Germany in the 1930s), and economic, political and military integration (France and Germany after 1949).

9 Oran Young, "International Regimes: Toward a New Theory of Institutions," *World Politics* 39 (October 1986), pp. 104-22, also contends that states are status maximizers.

10 Immanuel Kant, *Ideal Toward a Universal History*, I 8:20-21.

11 Henri Tajfel, *Human Groups and Social Categories*.

(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981); Henri Tajfel and John Turner, "The Social Identity Theory of Intergroup Behavior," in S. Worchel and W. Austin, (eds.) *Psychology of Intergroup Relations* (Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1986), pp. 7-24. Marilynn Brewer, "The Social Self: On being the Same and Different at the Same Time," *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 17, (1991), pp. 475-482; Marilynn Brewer and Norman Miller, *Intergroup Relations* (Pacific Grove: Brooks-Cole, 1996); Stuart Kaufman, *Modern Hatreds: The Symbolic Politics of Ethnic War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001); Richard Herrmann, Thomas Risse and Marilynn Brewer, *Identities in Europe and the Institutions of the European Union*, forthcoming.

12 In December 2001, the United States officially withdrew from the 1972 Antiballistic Missile Treaty, gutting the landmark agreement. This is the first time in the nuclear era that the United States renounced a major arms control accord; In July 2001 the U.S. walked out of a London conference to discuss a 1994 protocol designed to strengthen the 1972 Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (ratified by 144 nations including the United States) by providing for on-site inspections. At Geneva in November 2001, U.S. Undersecretary of State John Bolton stated that "the protocol is dead," at the same time accusing Iraq, Iran, North Korea, Libya, Sudan, and Syria of violating the Convention but offering no specific allegations or supporting evidence; In July 2001, the United States was the only nation to oppose the UN Agreement to Curb the International Flow of Illicit Small Arms. In April 2001, the United States was not reelected to the UN Human Rights Commission, after years of withholding dues to the UN (including current dues of \$244 million) and after having forced the UN to lower its share of the UN budget from 25 to 22 percent. In the Human Rights Commission, the United States stood virtually alone in opposing resolutions supporting lower-cost access to HIV/AIDS drugs, acknowledging a basic human right to adequate food, and calling for a moratorium on the death penalty. The International Criminal Court (ICC) Treaty was signed in Rome in July 1998, and approved by 120 countries, with 7 opposed (including the United States). It set up a court in The Hague to try political leaders and military personnel charged with war crimes and crimes against humanity. In October 2001 Great Britain became the 42nd nation to sign. In December 2001, the U.S. Senate again added an amendment to a military appropriations bill that would keep U.S. military personnel from obeying the jurisdiction of the proposed ICC; The Land Mine Treaty, banning land mines, was signed in Ottawa in December 1997 by 122 nations. The United States refused to sign, along with Russia, China, India, Pakistan, Iran, Iraq, Vietnam, Egypt, and Turkey. President Clinton rejected the Treaty, claiming that mines were needed to protect South Korea against North Korea's "overwhelming military advantage." He stated

that the U.S. would "eventually" comply, in 2006; this promise was disavowed by President Bush in August 2001. The Kyoto Protocol of 1997, for controlling global warming was declared "dead" by President Bush in March 2001. In November 2001, the Bush administration shunned negotiations in Marrakech (Morocco) to revise the accord, mainly by watering it down in a vain attempt to gain U.S. approval. In May 2001, The United States refused to meet with European Union nations to discuss, even at lower levels of government, economic espionage and electronic surveillance of phone calls, e-mail, and faxes (the U.S. "Echelon" program). The United States refused to participate in talks sponsored by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD in Paris, May 2001) on ways to crack down on off-shore and other tax and money-laundering havens. In February 2001, the United States refused to join 123 nations pledging to ban the use and production of anti-personnel bombs and mines. In September 2001, the United States withdrew from the International Conference on Racism, bringing together 163 countries in Durban, South Africa. In July 2001, the United States was the only country to oppose the International Plan for Cleaner Energy, sponsored by the G-8 group of industrial nations (United States, Canada, Japan, Russia, Germany, France, Italy, UK). In October 2001, the UN General Assembly passed a resolution, for the tenth consecutive year, calling for an end to the illegal U.S. embargo of Cuba, by a vote of 167 to 3 (the United States, Israel, and the Marshall Islands in opposition). The United States refused to comply. In November 2001, the United States forced a vote in the UN Committee on Disarmament and Security to demonstrate its opposition to the Comprehensive [Nuclear] Test Ban Treaty. Signed by 164 nations and ratified by 89 including France, Great Britain, and Russia; signed by President Clinton in 1996 but rejected by the Senate in 1999. The United States is one of thirteen countries that have nuclear weapons or nuclear power programs that have not ratified the Treaty. Also in November, the United States scuttled the negotiations sponsored by the World Health Organization to reduce worldwide use of tobacco.

13 Aristotle, *Politics*, 1253a30 contrasts human

beings to other gregarious animals, and 1252b28-1253a39 on the city (*politeia*) as being necessary to allow people to fulfill their purposes as human beings.

14 MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 38.

15 Solon's reforms (c. 594-93 B.C.) and those of Cleisthenes (510-500 B.C.) made every Athenian a freeman and citizen. The restriction of the powers of the Areopagus Council in 462 had the effect of vesting political authority in the assembly (*ecclesia*). By 431, large numbers of citizens took an active role in government through participation in the assembly and the courts (*dikasteria*) where they served as judge and jury.

16 Jürgen Habermas, *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action*, trans. Christian Lenhardt and Shierry Weber Nicholsen (Cambridge: M. I. T. Press, 1990); J. Donald Moon, "Practical Discourse and Communicative Ethics," in Stephen K. White, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Habermas* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 143-66.

17 Hans-Georg Gadamer, "Reflections on My Philosophical Journey," in Lewis Edwin Hahn, ed., *The Philosophy of Hans-Georg Gadamer* (Chicago: Open Court, 1997), pp. 3-63. Quote on 33.

18 On Gadamer and dialogue, see Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 2nd ed. rev., trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (New York: Crossroad, 1989 [1960]), and "Plato and the Poets," in *Dialogue and Dialectic*, trans. P. Christopher Smith (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980), 39-72; Robert Sullivan, *Political Hermeneutics: The Early Thinking of Hans-Georg Gadamer* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1990); Georgia Warnke, *Gadamer: Hermeneutics, Tradition, and Reason* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1987); Hans Herbert K. Gler, *The Power of Dialogue: Critical Hermeneutics after Gadamer and Foucault*, trans. Paul Henrickson (Cambridge: M. I. T. University Press, 1999 [1992]).

19 Charles Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991)

20 Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984); Michael Holquist and Katerina Clark, *Mikhail Bakhtin* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984); James Wertsch, *Voices of the Mind* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991).