The Emerging Global Normative Synthesis*

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I. BASIC CONTOURS

OUT OF discordant, often strident, conflicting voices that emanate from the East and the West, a new composition is slowly arising. The synthesized tune has a limited register and on many issues divergent voices will continue to be heard. It is sure to be accorded divergent interpretations in various parts of the world and over time. Yet the new tune might well suffice to provide stronger support for global institution building than was available in recent decades. The metaphorical “voices” referred to are expressions of basic normative positions, worldviews, and ideologies. They concern values rather than power relations or economic resources; they define what people consider as legitimate, a major foundation of social order and good government.

Two major themes underlie much recent foreign policy thinking in the West; both claim to predict the direction in which the world is moving and to prescribe the ways it ought to progress. One theme holds that the world is proceeding to (and needs to be encouraged to) embrace several core values, and the institutions that embody them, all of which the West possesses—individual rights, democratic government, and free markets. This position has been advanced by Francis Fukuyama, Michael Mandelbaum and Fareed Zakaria, among others.1 It has been embraced by the Bush Administration, whose 2002 strategic document states:

The great struggles of the twentieth century between liberty and totalitarianism ended with a decisive victory for the forces of freedom—and a single sustainable model for national success: freedom, democracy, and free enterprise.... People everywhere want to be able to speak freely; choose who will govern them; worship as they please; educate their children—male and female; own property; and enjoy the benefits of their labor. These values of freedom are right and true for every person, in every society.2


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The other theme holds that the world outside the West is largely governed by religious fundamentalists or some other alien set of values, incompatible with the Western ones, and, hence, these antithetical civilizations are bound to clash (as argued by, for example, Bernard Lewis and Samuel Huntington). To provide but one quote:

At a superficial level much of Western culture has indeed permeated the rest of the world. At a more basic level, however, Western concepts differ fundamentally from those prevalent in other civilizations. Western ideas of individualism, liberalism, constitutionalism, human rights, equality, liberty, the rule of law, democracy, free markets, the separation of church and state, often have little resonance in Islamic, Confucian, Japanese, Hindu, Buddhist or Orthodox cultures.

*Both* viewpoints imply that non-Western nations have little to contribute to the global development of political and economic institutions and to the values they embody. Rights, liberty, and capitalism are, after all, Western contributions to the world. (In Thomas Friedman's succinct journalistic lingo, the West has the slick, modern Lexus; the East old and dusty olive trees.)

Actually, there are significant matters concerning both the development of domestic polities and economies, as well as international relations and the design of new global architectures, that the world can and should learn from non-Western nations. This is especially true in matters concerning respect for authority, obligations to the common good, and the nurturing of communal bonds, although only if these features are greatly moderated. Moreover, evidence will be shortly presented to suggest that the world is actually moving toward a new synthesis between the West's great respect for individual rights and choices and the East's (in rather different ways, of course) respect for social obligations; between the West's preoccupation with autonomy and the East's preoccupation with social order; between Western legal and political egalitarianism and Eastern authoritarianism; between the West's rejection of grand ideologies, of utopianism, and the East's extensive normative characterization of dos and don'ts, thick visions of an afterlife, and transcendental sets of meanings. The synthesizing process, to reiterate, entails modifying the elements that go into it; it is not a mechanical change of Eastern and Western elements, rather it is akin to a chemical reaction. For reasons that will become evident shortly, the emerging synthesis might be referred to as "soft communitarianism."

A. A WESTERN EXCLUSIVE?

Francis Fukuyama advanced the thesis that the whole world is in the process of embracing liberal democratic regimes and capitalism, what he famously called

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the “end of history.” He recognizes that many nations are still “in history,” but since the collapse of the communist bloc, the trend he sees is toward an increasing and worldwide dominance of individualism. (Because the values and institutions involved are all centered around the respect for individual dignity and liberty of the person—protected from the state—to make his or her own political and economic choices, it is accurate, as a form of shorthand, to refer to these concepts jointly as individualism.)

Fukuyama’s thesis (and others who developed related lines of argument such as Michael Mandelbaum and Fareed Zakaria) is that the whole world is in the process of embracing Western values; although they tend to see these individualistic values as “universal” ones which non-Western societies were slow to recognize, but now are discovering compelling in nature. (“The liberty we prize is not America’s gift to the world; it is God’s gift to humanity,” is the way President George W. Bush voiced this idea.) One also should note that reference is to a global trend of intra-national developments and not to the development of some global society and government. Thus, China and India are said to be gradually liberalizing and opening their markets; the United Nations, World Health Organization, or international non-governmental agencies are not said to be undergoing such changes.

On closer examination, one finds that the argument that individualism is gaining a growing worldwide following is both valid and only half right. It is valid because despite some setbacks (for instance, in Latin America), there is considerable and accumulating evidence that numerous nations are gradually inching (some even rushing) in the said direction. It is only half true because the East (despite the fact that it is even more varied than the West) does bring several key values of its own to the global dialogue.

The normative positions championed by the East might be called “authoritarian communitarianism.” While the Western position is centered around the individual, the focus of the Eastern one might be said, as a crude first approximation, to be a strongly ordered community. Its core tenets are not individual rights, but social obligations (toward a very extensive set of shared common goods); not liberty, but submission to a higher purpose and authority, whether religious or secular; not maximization of consumer goods, but service to one or more Gods or to common goods articulated by a secular state. Thus, Bilahari Kausikan, Singapore’s former ambassador to the United Nations, stated that “Asians placed a greater value on honesty, self-discipline, and order, while Americans were more concerned about personal achievement, helping others, and personal freedom.”

These values are at the heart of Islam, at the core of several Eastern religions, and play a central role in Judaism. (To give but one example, in Judaism the

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poor are not entitled to welfare, have no right to charity, but members of the community have a responsibility to attend to the poor.) Similar notions—although based on radically different normative schemes—are found in various forms of state socialism, including the kind China used to practice and, to some extent, still does. From these viewpoints, the West is anarchic, materialistic, hedonistic, and lascivious; its citizens are self-centered and woefully bereft of community and authority.

When these criticisms are leveled at the West, its representatives and spokespersons often react as defensively as those in the East do when their lack of respect for rights and liberty is pointed out. The West has a point, to the extent that it responds, that Western society is not without a sense of responsibility, community, common good, and authority. But as sociologists, such as Ferdinand Tonnies, Emile Durkheim, Robert Park, Robert Nisbet, Robert Bellah and his associates, Alan Ehrenhalt and I, have pointed out—backed up by more data presented recently by Robert Putnam and Francis Fukuyama—the trend in the West since the 1960s has been to delegitimate authority, to weaken communal bonds, and to diminish a sense of obligation to the common good, in favor of individualism of both the expressive (psychological) and instrumental (economic) kind. That is, to put it very simply, what the East has in great excess, the West is lacking, and not merely the other way around.

Because the United States has been leading the individualism parade (followed by other nations of Anglo-Saxon ancestry, the United Kingdom, Canada, and Australia, and trailed by the rest of the West) its history is particularly relevant to the point at hand. Some historians have depicted the United States as a society centered around Lockean values, those of rights and liberty. Actually, it is now widely agreed that the United States had from its inception both a strong communitarian and an individualistic strand, a synthesis of republican virtues and liberal values. However, because communal institutions and authority, as well as a sense of obligation to the society, were strong and well-entrenched (indeed, the nation was added as an imagined community to the local and regional ones) during the first 190 years of the republic, the main focus of attention in those many years was on expanding the realm of individual rights, democratic governance, and market forces. This attention was reflected in developments such as allowing people without property to run for office; extending voting rights to women, to minorities (and much later, a measure of social and economic rights), and to younger adults; expanding de jure and de facto rights of disabled persons, immigrants, and people of divergent sexual orientations; providing for the direct election of United States senators; and curbing corruption in government and deregulating markets. However, as has been often observed, over the last decades—roughly since the 1960s—the United

9Bruce Ackerman, We The People (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1991).
States, and increasingly Europe, developed what might be called a “community deficit” (or a social capital shortfall). The same holds for authority, as is shown by a growing distrust of leaders—from school teachers to elected officials, from generals to clergy. Hence, when the East observes high rates of crime, drug addiction, teen pregnancy, alcoholism, and other indicators of antisocial behavior in the United States, and increasingly in other parts of the West, and it sees those same kinds of behavior spreading in Eastern societies as they open to Western influence, the East attributes them to a rising social disorder and moral vacuum. It follows that the East has contributions to make in the design of a good society—but not by adopting its state imposition of values on a broad scale, its authoritarian communitarianism, but instead by adapting these contributions to make a much softer form of communitarianism, whose characterization must be briefly deferred.

In short, both West and East can contribute to a new synthesis that would move their respective societies, their polities, and, we shall see, their economies toward a better design than either individualism or authoritarian communitarianism provides. To introduce the term “better” immediately raises the question, what makes for a good society?

B. THE GOOD SOCIETY

One may suggest that the very introduction of the concept of a good society is biasing the discussion. Indeed, according to the individualistic viewpoint, the formulation of what is good should be left to each individual and decisions as to what is right versus wrong should be left to the private realm. It is further argued that the very notion of shared formulations of the good is a communitarian position—not a liberal one. However, such arguments tend to overlook the difference between society and state. Individualists oppose government imposition of the good because of its coercive nature; however, social fostering—through informal controls—of the good is not coercive. No force is exercised to impose the shared norms. They are fostered by people encouraging one another to do what ought to be done, and by chiding those who do not. Indeed, if one takes into account that not all people will, out of self-interest, refrain from antisocial behavior all of the time, one realizes that there are only two ways to undergird pro-social conduct—coercion or informal social controls. Indeed, as we know from communities as different as the kibbutzim and American suburbs, when these informal normative controls are intact, state interventions can be minimized. (True, in earlier periods and still in some parts of the world, communities can become oppressive; but in modern societies, with a high rate of mobility and freedom of association in which people

choose which communities to join and are often members of two or more, such as at work and at one's place of residence, communities' normative controls tend to be quite mild.) Jonathan Rauch, a libertarian, who wrote in support of community controls, called this position "soft communitarianism." He explained: "A soft communitarian is a person who maintains a deep respect for what I call 'hidden law': the norms, conventions, implicit bargains, and folk wisdoms that organize social expectations, regulate everyday behavior, and manage interpersonal conflicts." He goes on to point out that the shaming often involved is not attractive, but vastly superior to what he correctly calls "real world" alternatives—either social anarchy and anomie or government impositions.

With these considerations in mind, I draw here on a communitarian conception of the good society. As its features have been spelled out in my book entitled The New Golden Rule, I here mention only three essential characteristics of the good society. First, it is a society based on a carefully crafted balance between autonomy and social order. ("Autonomy" is used to encompass individual rights, a democratic form of government, and free markets. "Social order" is used to encompass both order based on government enforcement and informal, social, normative controls, so-called hard and soft power.) That is, it is a society that both vigilantly safeguards basic rights and liberty and one that nurtures a set of shared commitments to the common good, such as homeland security and the protection of the environment. (It does so even if this entails placing some obligations on the members of the society, ones that they might not wish to honor if left to their own devices. Hence, the inherent tension between autonomy and social order.) Second, good societies continuously act to re-examine the balances they have reached between autonomy and order. In order to maintain the balance, they tend to tilt in one direction or the other, and to adjust it as the historical context changes (for example, as it did for the United States following the September 11 terrorist attack). Finally, the more the social order is based on moral suasion and informal social controls (on normative controls for short), and the less on the state, and the more limited the scope of behaviors encompassed in the state's control, the closer the society is to a good one. In the United States, for instance, the ban on smoking in public, which relies almost completely on moral suasion and informal social controls, is vastly superior to bans which rely heavily on state imposition, as Prohibition did. Indeed, in many societies a very great deal of social business is carried because people have internalized certain duties—from taking care of their children to minding the environment, from giving to charity to helping the elderly and the sick—they consider their moral duties. That is, the social order of a good, communitarian society is largely a soft one, both in the sense that it is respectful

11Jonathan Rauch, "Confessions of an alleged libertarian (and the virtues of 'soft' communitarianism)," The Responsive Community 10 (#3), (Summer 2000), 23.
of its members’ rights and preferences and in that it relies largely on moral and social ways to ensure that members will live up to their obligations to one another and to the common good rather than relying on state policing.

Specific societies, in particular historical periods, tend to overshoot this balance in one direction or another. Hence, in their quest to better themselves they may well have to move in the mirror opposite direction—to move toward the same basic societal design. Thus, from the viewpoint of the good society design, the United States in the 1980s needed to restore the bonds of community and trust in authority, while in the same era China had to make much more room for autonomy, both from those in power and from one another.

C. FROM “EXPORTING” HALVES TO SERVICE LEARNING

The basic contours of the slowly evolving global synthesis are discernible if one draws on the good society design just outlined. As a very crude first approximation, it might be said that the West promotes one core element of the evolving set of shared values and global architecture, namely autonomy, and the East promotes social order. Thus, the State Department, the National Endowment for Democracy, the Voice of America, and other champions of the Western way of life naturally do not concern themselves with the high crime rates in the West, the widespread drug and alcohol abuse, and numerous other forms of anti-social behavior, all reflecting a weakened social order. At the same time, the champions of social order, based on a rigid interpretation of Islam, the Ayatollahs of Iran, the moral squads in Saudi Arabia, and the promoters of strict interpretation of the sharia elsewhere, have little to say about the massive abuses of human rights, large scale oppressions and violations of human dignity, and the economic costs involved. Thus, each side extolls the beauty of the two legs of the elephant dear to it, on which their societies lean, in order to maintain their precarious balance.

Further development of the normative synthesis would be best served if both sides adopted what might be called a “service learning” approach. Service learning is a term heretofore used for domestic policies. It calls on those who bring educational programs, religious teachings, and social services to the poor or minorities to recognize that these groups have contributions of their own to make; that we ought to refrain from approaching people of different subcultures as if we were bringing light to the heathens, but instead as if we are keen to learn from them—as well as share with them what we hold to be true.

One may suggest that such a service learning approach is merely a tactical move; people are more likely to accept whatever the staff of Peace Corps, Vista, AmeriCorps, and such dish out if they would show respect to those they reach out to by indicating that they have something to learn from them, rather than treat them as merely people in need. This may well be true; service learning may well provide a more productive posture than most, if not all, others. But it is far
from being merely a posture. For instance, middle-class youngsters often are exceedingly naive about worlds other than their own. Learning from people of different backgrounds than their own can both provide them with considerable reality testing and help prepare them for dealing with people from other parts of the society—and the world—than their own.

As already suggested, both the end of history and the clash of civilizations arguments approach the non-Western parts of the world as if they have little, if anything, to offer to the conception of a good society—at least to its political and economic design—or the evolving new global architecture. Indeed, there has been a tendency to urge the East to pursue purer forms of individualism than exist in the West, for instance in deregulating the markets and opening them to outsiders. Also, both before and after the collapse of communism, the West has actively sought to export recognition of individual rights and a democratic form of government to countries all over the world. It tended to overlook that autonomy (rights, liberty, and democratic government) cannot be nurtured in a vacuum, that they rest, in part, on foundations of cultures and mentalities, and, above all, on moral and social commitments, succinctly referred to as republican virtues. Thus, when state controls were relaxed or collapsed in the former Soviet Union and China—and no new, informal, social, normative controls were introduced—these countries experienced an explosion of anti-social behavior, especially in those former communist societies that had not previously developed the necessary moral and social foundations.\(^\text{12}\) (Differences in the successes of transitions to freer societies and markets of most of the former Soviet republics as compared to the Baltic ones, and Romania as compared to the Czech Republic highlight the differences in communitarian foundations.) To push the point, the West has been exporting a model that reflects its weaknesses—its community and authority deficits. (Similar points have been made with great force and much documentation by Thomas Carothers and Robert Kaplan, among others.\(^\text{13}\) In addition to the points made here, they stressed the absence of other non-communitarian elements, such as a middle class, and the necessary levels of income and education.)

The tendency of the West to export only one element of the good society (autonomy), and to be much less attentive to the foundations of the social order, is particularly evident when the virtues of free markets are extolled and urged upon countries that heretofore missed its blessings. Typically, in 1990, Russia


(and other former communist societies) was urged to deregulate, to privatize its industries, banks, and farms, and to open its markets in order to develop successful economies. The same has been the message of the International Monetary Fund, as well as the World Bank and United States Agency for International Development (USAID) for Third World countries. To the extent that one views these measures as calling for much needed corrections to state-controlled economies rather than as actual prescriptions for unfettered markets, they might be justified. For instance, the economies of China and India flourished as they curtailed their very extensive state controls. However, in most of the former Soviet republics—in which the unleashing of the market was much more extensive, and in which the needed social foundations were particularly lacking—the result has been devastating. The exported model failed to take into account that successful economies, presume some legal (for example, state) as well as moral and social underpinnings. Bribery, corruption, and nepotism must be kept at low levels—either by the law or, best, by morally based self-restraint—if capitalism is to work. Respect for the right to own and control private property is not naturally available, nor can it be produced or sustained by the market itself. Citizens and captains of industry must initially be willing to save and invest more than they consume, which—Max Weber has shown in the spirit of capitalism—they are compelled to do more out of moral convictions than promises of higher returns in the remote future. A modern efficient economy cannot function if the parties do not respect the law and do not trust each other. And society must be protected from market excesses or it will lose its legitimacy. All this is often ignored when the likes of Jeffrey Sachs urge countries to “jump” into capitalism, to make the transition as quickly as possible. It is more likely it will take many years. Above all it must be understood that the market does not rest on its own foundations, but must be embedded in a social order. In general, exporting the freedoms without the social order on which they are based is like exporting cars with steering wheels but no chassis.

The East typically has the mirror opposite blinders. The fact that the ideologies and social designs the East “exports” are order-centered and disregard autonomy has so often been depicted and denounced that it hardly needs discussing. The major forms it has taken and some differences among them are merely listed briefly. A major reason communism, which for decades was advanced upon the world as a state-imposed social order and command and control economy, fell apart was because it made little room for autonomy, including both political expressions and economic initiatives and innovations. The expansion of communism often had to rely on troops or armed minorities to force its ideology on other people because—in the communitarian terms employed here—it was so unbalanced; it was basically unexportable, especially to countries that had some experience with autonomy.

The main Eastern-exported societal design recently has been that of religious fundamentalism, in particular Wahhabi Islam. The social order it imposes is particularly encompassing and harsh, leaving next to no room for autonomy. Fundamentalism has an active expansionist agenda; it seeks to bring its extreme model of social order to other nations, ultimately to the world. Like Communism, these attempts take many forms, including that of agitation (for example, imams preaching in Western countries and gaining converts), armed imposition of the sharia by some groups over others (for example, in Nigeria), and armed intervention of agents or troops of one country into another (for example, the support of Muslim forces in Bosnia by Wahhabi fighters and Wahhabi support of Chechen separatists). These unbalanced regimes, in the sense that they tilt heavily on the side of social order and away from autonomy, and in the sense their order is imposed rather than based on informal normative controls, do not seem more sustainable in the longer run than communism, especially in countries that have some measure of previous experience with autonomy. This can be seen in the growing opposition to the mullahs and their regime in Iran, in the joy that greeted those who liberated the Afghani people from the Taliban regime, and in the movement of several republics to forms of Islam that provide more room for autonomy.

In short, both West and East tend to “export” only half of what could make a good society, if the two elements were synthesized (and adapted in the process). Before the discussion turns to show that there is an actual global movement toward the said synthesis and to indicate what the specific contours of the emerging synthesis look like, a few lines on what might seem like an exception, the exportation of civil society by the West, especially the United States.

D. THE CIVIL SOCIETY: AN ELEMENT OF AUTONOMY OR SOCIAL ORDER?

Considerable attempts by the West, especially the United States, to export civil society—voluntary associations, volunteerism, pluralism, and civic education—to the developing world, to former communist societies, and more recently to the domains of religious fundamentalism, especially Islamic ones, are often depicted as essential for ensuring a free, that is West-like, polity. The well-known analysis by Tocqueville is often repeated, namely, that a rich fabric of voluntary associations will protect the individual from state domination; that they serve as training schools for democracy, as people who learn to lead these associations are developing the political skills democracy requires; and that organizing political parties is rather similar to organizing current voluntary associations; and so on. Viewed in this way, civil society is merely one more piece of the Western export of autonomy.

Actually, civil society can also provide a major foundation for social order; indeed, one especially compatible with the good society because the order it fosters is based mainly on normative controls. However, its contributions to
social order can be realized only if it is understood that a civil society entails much more than volunteerism, tax exemptions for donations to good causes, interest in public affairs, and other such autonomy-promoting features. The essence of what is needed for a social order based largely on normative controls is a civil culture. This culture is centered around several communitarian values. First and foremost among them is a commitment to make some sacrifices for the common good. This commitment is essential in order for the members of the society to be willing to avoid the use of violence in dealing with one another, to make compromises, to split the differences, and to tolerate people who pray to different Gods and have divergent subcultures. Individualists may try to explain such conduct by self-interest; say, people make concessions in order to foster social peace. However, if such calculations would suffice, we would not have the kind of mindless civil wars and bloodshed so common in human history and which we now witness in many parts of the world. Such violent attempts to deal with differences among groups of people (as distinct from those among individuals, say a spouse that has been offended) are best avoided when these groups see themselves as members of one overarching community, for whose integrity and good they are willing to make some sacrifices. (Civil culture thus stands in stark contrast to those cultures that give much weight to tribal loyalties, religious or racial purity, or are centered around such concepts as demanding respect for one's honor and approving of revenge when one feels injured.)

Thus, civil society can be exported as merely part of the West's autonomy promotion, or it can also lay the foundations to a social order based largely on normative controls, a key element of the good society. The West has been almost exclusively exporting civil society in the first way; to fit into and foster the evolving global normative synthesis both aspects are best recognized.

E. GLOBAL HARBINGERS

The examination now turns to document that the suggested synthesis is gradually, very gradually, taking place. It has been well established, and hence needs no repeating here, that the “East” is slowly, in a crab-like walk, one step backward for every two forward, moving towards a relaxation of community and authority, slowly making more room for more economic freedoms, and—much more slowly—for some political ones. But this does not necessarily mean that the East is moving toward a Western model or that the West is maintaining its community deficit. Moreover, one cannot stress enough that the movement is not toward one synthesized model, but a variety of societal designs that share merely two profound qualities: a society more balanced than either individualistic or authoritarian ones, and a society whose social order is based more on moral suasion than either. (After all, even the Western model comes in different varieties in terms of the balance between autonomy and order, and the extent to which it relies on moral suasion. Compare, for instance, the United
States to Scandinavian countries. The same holds for the East. For instance, compare Singapore to Japan.)

A major reason it is difficult to discern with assurance where these global trends are leading is that the trend toward synthesis is rather new, and the societies involved are very much in flux. Moreover, many nations, both in the East and in the West, were so far apart in terms of the key values involved (and the institutions that embody them) that each can move light years in the opposite direction before they reach a middle ground. (A simplistic metaphor highlights the synthesis hypothesis: the fact that someone left the West coast and is traveling east does not mean he is going to end up on the East coast, just as someone who travels west from New York may not end up in California. Whether they both shall stop in Omaha, or whether one will choose to stop in the relatively Western city of Denver and the other in the more Eastern city of Chicago is a secondary question to which I shall return.)

Whether the global movement is toward a soft communitarian, synthesized society or toward an individualistic, libertarian model is being sorted out in several societies that lead the change parade. Among communist countries, China is the most important one, but there seems to be no way to predict at this stage whether it will continue to liberalize, especially on the political front, and continue to loosen its social bonds and respect for authority—moving ever more toward a Western societal design—or whether it will evolve into a new Asian–liberal synthesis. Still, over time, it has been moving away from its authoritarian communitarian past.

Japan not only has moved away from its authoritarian communitarian past, but has provided a distinct societal design following the introduction of Western political institutions after World War II. It has a fairly solid democratic regime (albeit, dominated by one party), and a reasonable measure of individual rights (although women, minorities, and the handicapped were not fully encompassed), as well as a strong measure of economic liberty (although the economy was manipulated by MITI, the Ministry of International Trade and Industry) coupled with a very strong, indeed often overpowering, informal social order based very much on moral suasion, that is on normative controls.

Several Islamic societies are moving away from their versions of authoritarian communitarian regimes. This includes reducing the reliance on the state to impose a religious code and becoming less authoritarian communities. For instance, since 1998 Bahrain made its constitution the supreme source of its laws and legalized nongovernmental organizations. In 2001, the Emir freed political prisoners and granted amnesty to exiles in addition to getting rid of security laws used for punishing political dissidents. October 2002 saw the first Bahraini


national parliamentary elections since 1973, and the very first in which women were allowed to run for office and vote. Similarly, Qatar has freed its press, implemented a "politically daring" satellite television station (al-Jazeera), and held municipal elections in which women were allowed to run for office and vote. In 2003, it undertook a massive reform of its education system with the help of the RAND Corporation—not only rewriting textbooks but also attempting to prepare young people for a more active role in government and economics through elected student councils in schools. In Jordan, women have the right to file for divorce, though they cannot reclaim their dowries. Penalties for "honor crimes" have been increased, and a government committee recently proposed adding eight women's seats to the 104-member, all-male lower house of parliament. In Afghanistan, judges who were fired by the Taliban for their moderate views have been rehired. Instead of extreme punishments handed down under Islamic law (for example, hands being chopped off, adulterers stoned), the current government is operating under its 1964 constitution and 1975 criminal code which uses elements of modern, secular jurisprudence and Islamic law. Also, dramatic changes in the treatment of women are evident: for instance, women are now filling offices and classrooms, and after ten years of being forbidden to drive, Afghani women are once again signing up for driver's education classes and obtaining driver's licenses. Music, once banned, now blares from taxis. And in Saudi Arabia there have been a few modest reforms in recent years: including the appointment of a 60-member consultative body, called the Shura Council, which recently doubled in size and now includes two Shiites as members; as well as efforts to curb anti-Shiite discrimination and provide Shiites with additional funding for their schools. (Lebanon and, arguably, Kuwait are other countries that struggle with this issue.)

The way these trends are often depicted they seem only to verify the trend toward the West, toward granting more and more people in more and more countries greater measures of autonomy—even if in some countries, such as Saudi Arabia, the trend has barely begun. However, in the same countries other developments are taking place that are directly relevant to the normative synthesis thesis: they seem to be struggling to find a religious foundation for their

18“Arabs tiptoe to democracy,” *Economist* (7 August 1999), 33.
23Constable, ibid.
social order—but a “soft” one. They are seeking (not necessarily consciously) to adopt a moderate version of Islam, based on faith and informal controls, rather than on the moral squads and flogging and stoning, differing in their interpretation of sharia even more than, say, reform Judaism differs from its ultra-Orthodox versions, Unitarianism from the more extreme forms of Christian fundamentalism, or today’s American Catholics from those of 50 years ago. Such a soft Islam would have no reason to clash with the West, but also have no reason to become secular, libertarian, or individualistic. Instead, it could offer a form of East–West synthesis. It could combine a strong social and moral order based on religion with much respect for liberty and rights.

The question in this context is not whether Islam can be Westernized, but whether it can provide a synthesis of social order and autonomy, even if in many details it will be different from secular Western regimes. This is a question that is best settled not on the basis of Islam’s past history (for example, Islam is said to have been quite moderate in earlier ages) or examinations of its behavioral tenets and expansionist ambitions, but empirically, within contemporary sociological reality. That is, an examination of the development in various countries which are, in effect, trying to synthesize Islam with much greater measures of autonomy. Attention should be paid to whole societies in which Islam plays a pivotal role in government, instead of drawing conclusions from small Islamic minorities in places such as Europe and the United States, in which the government is not based on Islamic law, and Islamic communities are unable, as a rule, to use the government to enforce their code, whether or not they would prefer to do so.

Developments in Iran are of special interest in this context. There is much evidence that there are mounting pressures in Iran to increase autonomy. But this is not all that is taking place. In 2002, I participated in a dialogue with the reformers in Iran. They left no doubt in my mind that they aspire to a moderate Islam (as defined above) and reject a secular civil society, Western style. The most often repeated theme was that once people are not coerced to heed the sharia, they will want to do so out of their free will. Thus, Iran may well succeed in becoming not only the most liberal and democratic society in the Middle East, but also one with a strong sense of dos and don’ts, morally undergirded, and on a much thicker scope than those in individualistic societies. The Shia argument is widely spread which focuses on “Islam of the spirit” and questions the clergy’s position as the only intermediary between God and the believers.

Of special interest are recent developments in Turkey. For decades it moved significantly in the Western direction, indeed more so than any country in the Middle East, and more than many in Africa and quite a few in Asia. This is evident in its separation of mosque and state and the secularization of the private realm. To a considerable extent, Turkey has been democratizing, although the military continues to play a significant role in domestic politics. Individual rights have been extended, but not very extensively. However, in recent years, millions
of citizens in Turkey have re-embraced Islam. As a result, Turkey has been increasingly depicted as a political battleground between radical Islam and the secular West, and score is kept about which side is gaining versus losing ground. A possible outcome is that a new synthesis will emerge—a moderate, though not a secular, form of Islam in a country in which the majority of citizens are Muslim.

While many see Eastern societies moving either toward a Western society or a soft communitarian middle ground, as suggested here, the United States has been changing as well, moving toward the similar soft communitarian middle ground. The United States experienced decades of growing anti-social behavior and anomie, roughly from 1960 on; Fukuyama called this The Great Disruption. Then, roughly as of 1990, American society began to restore community and shared values and to activate informal controls, such as those used to curb violent crime (for example, via what has been called the Broken Window approach), expand the involvement of faith-based groups in social services, increase character education, and provide some help to families (for example, via a very meager, yet new, Family and Medical Leave Act and a reduction in the marriage penalty in the tax code). At the same time, Americans rejected Christian fundamentalists’ demands for the state to impose religion (for example, by banning abortion and homosexual activities, and requiring prayer in public schools). Above all, there has been a growing sense that individual rights entail the assumption of social responsibilities (an issue flagged by the communitarian movement). As a consequence, most forms of antisocial behavior declined substantially (especially violent crime) and others ceased to grow and began to be rolled back (for example, teen pregnancy and drug abuse). Similarly, after decades of business deregulation, various scandals (for example, the Enron and Anderson accounting scandals) led to several measures of re-regulation and new regulation, that is, reining in the market and subjecting it to a somewhat higher level of political and social guidance. All these steps correct an individualistic tilt by according a somewhat higher weight to social order, largely of the normative kind, for which soft communitarian thinking provides considerable backing. Western European societies, especially Scandinavian ones, provide still other examples of seeking a balance between autonomy and social order, as do India, South Korea, the Philippines, and several Latin American countries.

All this suggests that various societies are moving toward a synthesis. In other words, this is not a an abstract concept, but a reality toward which many societies are evolving, each in their own way and pace. Thus, many very different societies in the East, which had very high levels of social order and very low levels of autonomy, either due to state-imposed ideologies or religion, are moving to provide more room for autonomy. At the same time the United States, the most individualistic society, is moving to gain a stronger measure of social order.

Moreover, societies in both the East and West are seeking a social order that is based more on normative controls than on state controls. Both East and West struggle with the question of what is going to be the normative content of their social order. As previously mentioned, societies that have given up on their “Eastern” sets of beliefs and institutions and have moved sharply in the individualistic direction, but have not formed any new shared sets of beliefs, experience sharp increases in anti-social behavior, anomie, and even a yearning to return to earlier, authoritarian regimes. In many other former communist countries, one finds exploding crime rates, drug abuse, HIV rates, neglect of children, and a sense of powerlessness and ennui. These sharp increases in anti-social behavior and anomie—and what must be done to deal with them beyond more policing—are not often discussed when increasing autonomy is extolled or exported; instead, they are dismissed as the cost one must bear for being free, or simplistically these societal problems are assumed to vanish after a transition period, as the standard of living rises.

It does not follow that a people must either be members of an authoritarian communitarian society, whether governed by religious fundamentalists or communists or some other state-imposed ideology, or a society in which anti-social behavior is rampant. The synthesis of autonomy with social order, a synthesis based largely on moral codes and normative controls, provides a third way. And once the need for some shared beliefs is granted, the question of whether they can be secular or must include spiritual, even soft religious, elements arises both in the East and in the West.

For much of the second half of the twentieth century, leading philosophers and political theorists, who had considerable public voices, such as Hannah Arendt, Isaiah Berlin and Ernest Gellner, focused on the danger of totalitarianism, having lived through the horrors of fascism and communism. They, hence, adamantly opposed thick normative schemes, visions of a good society, which these scholars derided as perfectionist schemes or utopianism. These were said to legitimize large-scale coercion when it came to the question of how to fashion a new societal design. Giving up on any such grand notions, and ensuring that each person will be free to formulate and follow his or her own moral lights, was viewed as the ultimate guarantee against the return of a Hitler or Stalin, of concentration camps and Gulags. However, as these scholars and their myriads of followers were glued to their rear-view mirrors, they did not see the giant schism in front of them: the danger of a moral vacuum, and the need to fill it with some moral content compatible with autonomy, lest it be occupied by one that is not.

Developments concerning the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights provide an interesting case in point for the study of the evolving synthesis. The Universal Declaration has gained considerable following all over

the world, although critics in the East consider it a Western document, given both that it was formulated when the United States dominated the world after World War II and that it is rights-centered. Elie Wiesel called the Universal Declaration of Human Rights a “sacred document.”27 Bilahari Kausikan of Singapore, although supporting the idea of Asian difference, has also embraced the notion that states “can and do legitimately claim a concern” about human rights violations in other states.28 These statements reflect the respect given to the Universal Declaration around the world. Over the last years, several attempts were made to recast the declaration, not by curtailing rights but by adding a declaration of one’s responsibilities. (The thesis that strong rights presume strong responsibilities is a key for soft communitarianism, and directly reflects the overarching idea of balancing autonomy and social order.) The most noticeable of these attempts was the move by 24 former heads of states, many from the East, to draft such an amendment and to seek its adoption by the United Nations. The difficulties the group, which called itself the InterAction Council, encountered were telling.29 First, its members found it difficult to agree on issues in which rights and responsibilities clash. Thus, in early drafts it was suggested that journalists ought to act responsibly, which critics saw as endangering freedom of the press and the public’s right to know, essential to a free society. Moreover, despite several reworkings the group was unable to get enough support to have its planks added to the Declaration. All this comes to show (1) the direction of such a synthesis; (2) the kind of difficulties they run into; and (3) that the evolving combination is in a very early stage.

II. SPECIFIC ELEMENTS OF THE SYNTHESIS

A. PARTICULARISM WITHIN UNIVERSALISM

At first it may seem that the Western commitment to individual rights and liberty and to legal and political equality cannot be reconciled with the Eastern commitment to strong community and authority. This seemingly irreconcilable opposition is encountered in several ways. Political theorists and sociologists refer to the difference between “universalism,” according to which all citizens (or people) are to be treated in the same manner and “particularism,” according to which people are to be treated differently based on the group to which they belong, whether it is racial, ethnic, religious, political, or some kind of a caste. Others refer to the “rule of law” and contrast it with cronyism, nepotism, and various other forms of corruption in which civil servants, judges, law

enforcement agencies, and regulators treat people differently on the bases of irrelevant criteria (say, personal relations rather than merit). The same seemingly polar opposition is said to be faced when people are charged with various forms of racial, age, or some other form of discrimination based on social criteria rather than achievement. This is seen most clearly in the debate about the moral appropriateness of affirmative action and other policies used to combat discrimination. Moreover, for centuries the West regarded the rise of universalism as the key to progress, economic growth, efficiency, and justice, while particularism was associated with traditionalism, tribalism, and so on. The concept that the king, and by implication no one else, was to be above the law was a major tenet of the bourgeoisie rising against feudalism and its estate bound “laws.” Hence, even today, exemptions, say, for immigrant groups from various laws, such as those banning forced marriage, are often opposed in the West.

Nevertheless, the two approaches can be reconciled, although hardly without difficulties or tension. A societal design that accords priority to universal rights over communal bonds and particularistic values and bonds, but legitimates them in areas rights do not govern, provides one form of such a synthesis. Concretely, this means that communities cannot violate people’s rights to free speech, to vote, or to assemble, among other rights. However, other matters—from the amount of taxes levied to the kinds of houses people may build—are proper domain for communities to be the final arbiters (as long as these are not indirect ways of violating rights, for instance, levying higher taxes on people who engage in what the community considers undesirable speech, say a muckraking newspaper).

In addition, if one follows the model of universalism that takes priority over particularism, but leaves ample room for it (in contrast to subsidiarity, defined as decisions to be made at the lowest possible level, and the position known in the United States as states’ rights) on matters not encompassed by rights but subject to democratic political resolutions, the more encompassing bodies (national and supranational) are to trump local ones. However, these bodies can leave considerable room for particularistic preferences and decision-making by the encompassed entities. Indeed, federal systems of government, and constitutions that grant to communities all powers not enumerated to the federal government in the constitution, accommodate a synthesis of universalism and particularism, in the ways flagged here. In contrast, unitary states, such as France, find it more difficult to accommodate such combinations. But even in these states, cities and regions are growing more autonomous.

Having the most encompassing polity take precedent on matters of universal rights and democratic decision-making, but not pre-empting all particularistic rulings, has an additional major design benefit: it helps to ensure that synthesized communities will not be overbearing, as they were in earlier periods, and still are in many parts of the world, including some parts of the West. Synthesized communities cannot prevent people from leaving, from traveling and returning,
from forming associations, including oppositional ones, and so on, making these communities radically different from traditional villages. Amy Guttman once chided communitarians for seeking Salem without witches.\(^{30}\) This is exactly what the synthesis favors, indeed is bringing forth in the West and increasingly in the East.

### B. Soft Power

The East is often correctly characterized as hierarchal and authoritarian, as highly respectful of elders, as well as of religious and secular political leaders. In contrast, the West has been characterized by a legal and political egalitarianism, expressed in such overarching normative tenets as all people are equal before the law, and one person, one vote. Moreover, since the 1960s, the West has faced a multifaceted rebellion against all authority figures, from presidents to labor leaders, from priests to teachers to parents, resulting in an authority deficit, as S. M. Lipset and Alan Ehrenhalt show in their books.\(^{31}\) Despite the aspirations of some Western idealists (most recently among cyberspace enthusiasts and a handful of “human resources” gurus), authority (defined as legitimate use of power) is an essential feature of an ordered life and a good society.\(^{32}\) In contrast, reliance on power, especially if widely and often exercised, has fueled various forms of opposition to authoritarian governments in the East; is feeding the rebellion against religious authorities in Iran, and to lesser extent in several other countries; and is undermining the communist party regime in China. It has also stifled innovation and creativity even in less statist societies such as Japan.

The relevant contours of the global synthesis are relatively evident here. There is a need for application of power, but one that is applied to purposes of which the society approves, in ways it considers morally justified. Relying mainly on this form of legitimate power is compatible with the good society, toward which the global synthesis is ambling. It is found in both camps, but dominant in neither. Sometimes referred to as “soft power,” it encourages people to conduct themselves in pro-social ways and chides them if they do not.\(^{33}\) Societies that rely largely on soft power consider it a demerit, if not a failure, every time they cannot convince their citizens of the merit of the policies they advocate and must instead employ coercion. They treat coercion as a last resort, rather than rely on

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\(^{32}\) This definition of authority starkly contrasts with one provided by Herbert Simon, wherein authority is simply “power to make decisions which guide the actions of another.” See Herbert A Simon, *Administrative Behavior* (New York: Macmillan, 1957), p. 125.

it as the mainstay of social order. Although no society can base its social order merely on soft power, the level of coercion and the range of issues for which it is employed can be greatly curtailed.

C. "LIMITED," BUT NEITHER "THIN" NOR MERELY "PUBLIC"

The East and West differ greatly in the scope of behavior they seek to regulate one way or the other, by the state or by normative controls. Communist as well as religiously fundamentalist societies seek to regulate, often closely and in great detail, people's work and consumption, the music they listen to (for example, jazz has been banned by the communists, the mullahs and other religious fundamentalists), the movies they watch (banned are Western, X-rated, or English language movies), whether or not they dance, their sexual conduct, and much else. Indeed, they all have tried to shape not merely behavior, but also what people feel and think. In contrast, the individualistic design favors a collective agenda (including shared formulations of the good) as thin as possible. Although no Western society fully implements this design, opposition to even shared, informally enforced, moral norms is much stronger in the West, especially the United States, than in other societies. Two major reasons are given. First, informally fostered shared formulations may lead to state-imposed ones. Second, even if these formulations are merely enforced informally, such normative controls also violate one's autonomy.

In contrast to the notion that the world is or should become Westernized which, in this context, would mean continuous thinning out of the collective moral agenda of societies, the synthesized design calls for a thicker layer of morally defined issues (undergirded by normative informal controls). However, how thick it is going to be, and what is the range of behavior that the shared prescriptions seek to encompass, are questions whose answers are lacking at this early stage in the development of the global synthesis. It seems safe to suggest, though, that the synthesis would not be nearly as thick as that of many Eastern societies, and not as thin as that of the American society.

Indeed, even a cursory examination will show that numerous Eastern societies exempt ever more areas of behavior from their formal and informal controls, including for instance which television stations people watch, what radio programs they listen to, and even which web pages they access via the Internet. At the same time, in the West there is a slow growing recognition that areas that have been exempted from public scrutiny may need some form of public guidance, if not regulation. These include the cultural materials to which children will have access or to which materials they will be exposed, as well as transactions on the Internet, for instance. In other areas, a measure of re-regulation is called for, for instance, the accounting practices of corporations.
D. A HUMBLE APPROACH

The Western, especially American, worldview reflects a combination of optimism and belief in progress and social engineering mixed with a sense of triumphalism. It leads the West to presume that one can readily introduce autonomy (that is, respect for rights, democracy and free markets) into various Eastern societies. It has led to a widely held American belief that just because countries have conducted regular elections, they have democratized, even when, in effect, the press was muzzled, parties were banned, corruption was rampant, the public was poorly educated and ill informed, and not used to expressing itself politically or otherwise. It also has led Western consultants to urge countries to jump from the stone age, or at least very underdeveloped conditions, into an American-like polity and economy. They were advised that they could do so if they would only cut their deficits, open their markets, and carry out a few other such strokes of the pen. Beyond wanton advice, the International Monetary Fund, the United States Department of State (especially USAID), and other such bodies, exerted considerable pressure to the same effect.

Eastern worldviews tend to combine pessimism, even fatalism, with a long sense of history (the Chinese, especially, have a thousand-year outlook). It leads one to expect that social change will be slow, difficult, and full of unanticipated consequences. (Communism, which as an ideology was fashioned in the West, was in this sense especially ambitious, seeking to re-engineer both the society and the personality of its members. When neither yielded, millions were slaughtered in desperate attempts to accelerate change and maintain control. However, at the end of the day, the old fatalistic Eastern foundations prevailed.) In this area, an East-West synthesis best leans in an Eastern direction. It, thus, would prevent disappointment and cynicism, not to mention the massive application of coercion, which all too often arises when hyper-optimistic normative plans yield little social change.

E. CONTAINED CAPITALISM

When one reviews recent developments in the East, for instance in China, one may conclude that, as the East is moving away from command and control economies and toward ever freer economies, it will (and should) allow market forces to go unfettered. Indeed, some Western ideologues speak of a free market as if it functions without state limitations or informal controls. Actually, although many nations in the East may well pass through a period of raw capitalism as the United States did in the 19th century, one must expect this period to be followed by the introduction of new measures of containment of the market if these nations are to move in the direction of the good society. Containment refers to both sets of values and government controls that combine an assurance of considerable free range to market forces with setting clear and enforced limits.
These limits include the protection of the environment, workers, customers, and children, among others. (The fact that larger corporations tend to support some measure of state regulation for their own reasons enhances the political feasibility of such containing developments.) Reference here is not to a return to command and control, planned economies, but to one version or another of a social market, of the kind Western Europe has had for many decades. It might be argued that the Western European model is flawed because the combination of high social costs and high labor costs makes it difficult to sustain. This model may well have to be adjusted to reduce labor costs to some extent (as they are already in Britain) and to trim social costs, that is, changing the mix to include a bit more market and a bit less “social,” without changing the basic formula, even if this means somewhat lower growth rates. Indeed, even in the United States the market was never free and to some extent the market recently has been somewhat re-regulated, following the accounting scandals. Thus, both East and West are moving, from very different parts of the spectrum to be sure, toward a middle ground of contained markets. Some containment of the market should not be viewed as deviation from the Western model, but as an integral part of the global model of a good society; the issue is how tight and in what ways, and not whether it must be contained.

III. IMPLICATIONS FOR AMERICAN (AND WESTERN) FOREIGN POLICY

Normative developments—that is, which values people embrace and which worldviews they hold (which in turn affects the government and actions people hold legitimate and support politically)—are among those least given to foreign policy moves and maneuvers. If hundreds of millions of people embrace a radical version of Islam, there is very little the United States can do about it; the same is true for China if hundreds of millions lose faith in communism and seek a more Westernized way of life. Normative developments differ profoundly in this sense from matters of trade and economic aid, not to mention the deployment of troops, which governments can more or less order about at will. Hence, the following list of relevant foreign policies is a short one and each is far from earth-shaking.

A. A SERVICE LEARNING APPROACH

As has already been suggested, the West should cease implying, in word and deed, that in regard to political and economic institutional designs and core values, the East has little, if anything, to offer. On the contrary, it should openly and readily acknowledge that there is much the East has to contribute, just as the West does. It should highlight the evolving global normative synthesis and recognize that the emerging synthesis is including elements from all parts of the
world, although—as in a chemical reaction rather than a purely mechanical change—the original elements are significantly modified in the process. It is this attitude, rather than the language of superiority or confrontation, that should frame speeches, declarations and presentations by Western leaders, officials and diplomats, as well as the messages of the Voice of America and the public affairs sections of embassies overseas (which replaced the United States Information Agency).

B. RIGHTS-CENTERED AND DEMOCRATIC?

Posturing tempts policymakers to go for quick gains of excessive promises and hyper claims of success, for instance, to first claim that the West will democratize scores of countries (most recently Afghanistan and Iraq\(^{34}\)) and then, when they hold elections, certify them as democratized. Although such posturing provides some short-term public relations gains, it backfires in the longer run. Others truly believe what can be held only if one believes in positive thinking, rather than in the findings of social science, namely, that one can readily reconstruct societies. Given that societal changes are much harder to come by than the West has often claimed or assumed in the past, this raises the important question of whether all the elements of autonomy are best promoted simultaneously in societies in which they long have been in woefully short supply, and in which the necessary prerequisites for introducing them are often missing, or if it is better to introduce elements in some kind of a sequence. And if a gradualist approach is preferred, which elements should lead and which should follow? This issue is often faced by those who argue that economic development should precede political development, and that freer markets should precede the introduction of democracy and greater respect for rights. Others have suggested that the institutionalization of rights should take precedence over democracy.\(^{35}\)

These are complex issues on which many volumes have been written, matters which it is neither possible nor necessary to sort out here. It suffices to point out that if one accepts the severe limits of social engineering, especially by outsiders, the prevailing approach should be pessimistic and gradual; that is, recognizing that even given a large amount of resources and prolonged commitments, there are severe limits on what foreign policy can accomplish in this area. It follows that when facing traditional, authoritarian societies—such as Myanmar, Iran and Saudi Arabia—it would be best if the West would initially promote, most of all, the opening of societies. The same holds for the remaining communist, closed societies—North Korea and Cuba. Opening societies would entail free travel to


and from the countries, a free flow of goods and services, and a free flow of cultural materials, including access to the World Wide Web. Societies that have already opened up to varying degrees should be encouraged, pressured, and given incentives to open up further, for instance, removing limits Singapore and China put on access to the Internet. Opening is essential for all the other elements of autonomy, and promoting autonomy in societies in which it is lacking is essential for the movement toward a synthesized, good society.

Once a society is opening up, it is likely to make progress in introducing all three elements of autonomy—the introduction of rights, democracy, and freer markets. Whether one element should be promoted more vigorously than the others, and whether there is one optimal sequence for all societies are questions which require a major study that cannot be undertaken here. However, a foreign policy that is humility-based would focus first on promoting whatever element a given society is leaning toward building up (for example, economic liberties in China), rather than insisting that the society has to make more or less equal progress on all three fronts (for example, boycotting trade with China because of a lack of progress in human rights, as some advocate). The approach advocated here is further supported by the observation that often progress on one front gradually leads to progress on other fronts (for example, China’s respect for rights and democratic development are lagging and, indeed, it occasionally suffers a setback, but still it is progressing significantly beyond what it was when its command and control of the economy was first scaled back).

C. ENGAGE OR ISOLATE? AN EMPIRICAL RESPONSE

Both those who favor isolating authoritarian regimes (North Korea, Cuba, etc.) and those who favor engaging them have similar goals—changing these regimes to make more room for autonomy, especially for human rights, although typically other policy goals are also involved, for instance, efforts to stem the proliferation of weapons of mass desecration. (The term engagement is used to refer to fostering travel, trade, cultural exchanges, visits from leaders, and diplomatic relations, while isolation entails curtailing all of these.) Although neither camp sets out to advance the normative synthesis laid out in this essay, the effect of increasing autonomy in these societies would be to move them in the said direction. Both camps argue for the policy approach they favor in the name of normative principles. For instance, those who favor engagement argue that it is more conducive to peace; those who favor isolation claim that it generates the needed pressures to advance human rights. The debate would benefit by a greater reliance on empirical evidence, which strongly suggests that under most conditions engagement is much more effective than isolation. It is almost enough to list the regimes that have been isolated and those that have been engaged (or compare the periods they were isolated versus engaged) to
document the point, even though there are significant differences among the various societies involved.36

The United States isolated Castro’s Cuba for four decades, banning trade with and travel to and from Cuba, as well as exerting pressure on other societies to follow the same course. However, Cuba resisted for more than a generation, granting its people more rights, democratic reforms, and opening markets. Saddam’s Iraq and North Korea are two other authoritarian regimes that were isolated; still they persisted for decades. China was first isolated and yielded little, but following Nixon’s “opening”, the country gradually changed, making much more room for economic autonomy, as well as for some political autonomy. The same holds for North Vietnam. The fifteen Soviet Republics changed even more, including on the political front, largely after they were engaged rather than when they were isolated. The dramatic change in South Africa from apartheid, in which the overwhelming majority was denied most measures of autonomy, to the current regime also followed a shift from isolation to engagement. However, those who oppose engagement have argued that after years of engagement China is no closer to valuing the freedoms Americans do and that isolation has been effective in wresting concessions out of Beijing.37 Senator Jesse Helms, a strong supporter of the isolation tactic, lists Switzerland, Nigeria, the former Soviet Union, Poland and Guatemala among the countries that have modified their behavior in response to actual or threatened United States sanctions.38 However, a detailed examination of these situations will show that in most cases the isolation measures, and their effects, were limited (for example, getting Switzerland to change its banking laws), while engagement had much more encompassing effects. Moreover, engagement does not mean that no sanctions can be imposed; sanctions are imposed, for instance, by the World Trade Organization when trade agreements are violated.

The reasons engagement is often so much more effective, and that it entails neither a violation of principles (for example, our commitments to human rights) nor endangers our security (as we learn to screen those we let in much better), need not be explored here. The only key point relevant to the present analysis is that engagement has, and one must expect will continue to do so, encouraged

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authoritarian societies to introduce more autonomy—and thus move them toward the global synthesis. The proper measure of progress, though, is not whether they become exact or even close copies of the American regime, but whether they find their own balanced combination of a strong autonomy with social order, largely based on soft power.

D. SUPPORT MODERATE RELIGIOUS GROUPS AND REPUBLICAN VIRTUES, NOT MERELY SECULAR, CIVIL ONES

Americans tend to hold that the separation of church and state is an essential feature of democracy and many doubt that a free society can thrive if these two entities are not kept apart. But such a separation exists in few democracies (mainly France) and many democracies flourish despite various forms of established churches, including Britain and the Scandinavian democracies. United States foreign policy (with some notable exceptions) has supported the development of civil society in former communist countries, developing nations, and Islamic ones, implicitly equating civil society with a secular society, at least until the administration of George W. Bush, the 43rd president. A revealing detail: a World Bank official pointed out that in the 2,000-page history of the bank, which covers its various endeavors and achievements, religion is mentioned only once—in regard to some meeting held in 1962. The reason: many in the bank consider religion to be an obstacle to development and thus to be a negative influence.39

Actually, the best way to face the challenge of religious fundamentalism may well be to encourage moderate Islamic groups (and those of other religions) and not merely secular groups. One example will stand for all the others that could be given. As Saudi Arabia is dominated by an authoritarian regime, critics of United States foreign policy have argued that the United States should support democratic, civic groups in order to change the regime. There may be severe practical limitations to such a policy, including finding such groups, and the fact, often cited, that if the regime is weakened, at least in the short run, vital United States interests may well be severely damaged. What is much less often observed is that the United States might be more successful if it supported the Shiite sect, which encompasses two million of the nineteen million Saudis, and which favors a relatively more moderate interpretation of Islam than the Wahhabi version imposed by the Sunni-dominated government. One reason for such a policy is that it is easier for a true believer to become more moderate than to give up the faith altogether. In earlier periods, this approach led the West to support social democratic parties to compete with communists, instead of supporting only conservative parties, such as the Christian Democratic Union in Germany and others in Southern Europe and Latin America.

More profoundly, nurturing normative controls and republican virtues, essential for soft power and communitarianism, has both religious and secular sources. Therefore, drawing from both wells can better serve to shore up the moral foundations of social order, rather than drawing only from the secular one.

The means of support could be similar to those employed during the Cold War, through the Congress for Cultural Freedom, fostering publications (such as *Encounter*), arranging for exchange programs and financial support for intellectuals and leaders of moderate religious groups and not just secular ones. In the same vein, the West should recognize that although all voluntary associations (or producers of social capital) are created equal from Tocqueville's viewpoint, this is not the case from the viewpoint of the good society. Associations that promote rights and liberty have their place and are especially important in the many nations in which few exist and in which autonomy is lacking. However, to advance the synthesis, one must also nurture those associations that are centered around republican virtues, and especially those that favor the soft communitarian synthesis. Other voluntary associations, such as those that promote nationalism (for example, Hinduism and radical Islam), ethnic conflicts (for example, Irish Republican Army), and values incompatible with basic social values (for example, NAMBLA, dedicated to reducing the consent age to zero, in effect promoting the sexual molestation of children)—all voluntary—should be discouraged. (Only after the September 11 terrorist attack did the United States move to ban raising funds for some such groups.)

Closely related is the need to re-frame many issues that have been characterized in the past as rights issues, and recognize that they also promote republican virtues. For example, a transnational banning of child pornography is not only or even mainly a children's rights issue (especially when dealing with virtual child porn), but a matter that concerns the well-being of children, a major common good. The same holds for protection of the environment, not merely to ensure the rights of this or that group, but of the community as a whole, including generations yet to be born. Changing from trying to either force every normative issue into the procrustean bed of rights talk or considering them illegitimate is incompatible with promoting synthesis; recognizing that there is also a set of shared substantive values favors it.

E. MULTILATERALISM AND INSTITUTIONS BUILDING?

Much has been stated and written since the end of the Cold War about a tendency of the United States to act unilaterally, rather than in concert with its allies and other nations; to ignore international institutions, especially the United Nations; and to make short shrift of international law and treaties. These normative arguments have been made so often and extensively, and repeatedly examined, that there is no need to repeat them here. A few comments, relevant to the issue
at hand, are necessary though. The calls on the United States (and other nations, say, North Korea) to respect the evolving values and norms of the evolving global community, and the institutions in which they are being embodied (for example, the International Criminal Court (ICC) or the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)) are, in principle, on the side of the evolving communitarian synthesis and point to a new evolving global architecture, based on it. (“In principle” comes to indicate that they may not be so in every instance and that reference is to the principles evoked rather than to the motives of those who make them.) The basic reason is that the more the goals of the superpower (and all other powers, indeed all transnational actors) of the world are considered legitimate (for example, humanitarian intervention to stop a genocide), the more the means are considered just (for example, drawing on regional forces), and the more the evolving “rules of the game” are followed (for example, United Nations resolutions), the more the developing global order will be based on moral suasion and the less it will be based on force. The main ways to enhance such an order—which is still very weak indeed—are those often cited: acting in accordance with evolving international law and values, via international institutions, based on the consent of and participation by other nations.

This is, of course, not a formula that can be simply employed and followed. Despite some development of a global order, the world, at least for now, is mainly governed by nation-states and they must be expected to put their vital national interests above other international considerations. There is no basis for forming arguments as if all citizens of the world were members of one community, ready to make significant sacrifices for each other or their shared fates and well-being, or as if they were all good citizens of one world government, which—via the United Nations—enacted laws that ought to be observed. Whether or not one believes that ultimately such a development is unavoidable and desired (which the author does), to, in effect, pretend that it is already in place and criticize a nation for being a “bad citizen” is, at best, naive and often hypocritical. Nor is there any sense in denying that there are serious flaws in the ways the United Nations does its business, in the ways several treaties have been formulated, and in the uneven and weak ways international law is enforced.

The main policy differences relevant to the development of the normative synthesis and to the institutions which might be based on it are much more subtle than the differences between outright unilateralism and full-blown multilateralism, however one defines these. (There is a small industry of conceptual differences among various kinds of both policies.) The key

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difference is between policies, often favored by hard-core realists, who view the world through the lenses of military and economic power, and mild idealists (not to be confused with the starry-eyed ones) who see a merit in what might be called a "constructivist argument." This argument essentially holds that a superpower, indeed all international actors, serve their own longer run interests best if they try to act in ways that respect the evolving normative synthesis and global institutions—as long as the required adaptations of foreign policy do not undermine vital national interests and do not seriously set back other interests. (In the terms used in international relations theory, reference is to a synthesis of realism and idealism, seeking both to guard one's basic interests and to move toward a more benign world.)

Here are some examples that illustrate this point: consulting with allies, even if it means some delay in advancing a given policy—as long as such delays have no major deleterious effect; making a yeomanly effort to find legitimacy in international law—even if this entails modifying one's thrust; seeking a supportive resolution from the United Nations; and so on. This approach also entails that a nation works to mend international laws, treaties and institutions if it finds them lacking, rather than dismiss or flaunt them—as realists advocate.41

Two reasons favor such a constructivist approach. One is short-term gains. Even superpowers need the collaboration of other countries, for instance, to fight terrorism, to fly combat jets over their land, and to use their bases. These are more likely to be forthcoming under the constructivist than under the realist approach. It should be noted in this context that not merely is gaining the support of other governments at issue, but also gaining the support of the public. For instance, the United States was able to gain the government of Turkey's permission to place Americans troops in Turkey in 2003 in preparation for the war against Iraq despite the fact that most citizens objected, and the United States gained the collaboration of the Pakistani government in the war against the Taliban despite the fact that most Pakistanis objected. However, realists are deeply mistaken when they presume that public opinion, both at the national level and increasingly at the transnational level, is a minor force, especially in free societies. It made Gerhard Schroder in Germany come out against the war in Iraq and swung the election in his favor in 2002; it forced Blair to change course, from complete support of the United States to insistence on a second


United Nations resolution in 2003. Even more striking is that a practically unknown politician was elected as President of South Korea in 2002 because he was exploiting anti-American sentiments and he changed, quite fundamentally, the relationship between the United States and South Korea and undermined policy toward North Korea. Simplistic notions that one can manipulate such opinion by some broadcasts (as the United States has been trying to do in the Muslim world) are not supported by social science evidence. Gaining public and not just elite support will require a constructivist approach, and one that is in line with the evolving normative synthesis, as it provides the normative foundations for a growing number of people in various parts of the world.

In the longer run, one must anticipate that changes in power relations will occur. No superpower since Rome lasted for a long time, and social change is much more rapid in the twenty-first century than in earlier ones. Moreover, even if the United States continues to be the superpower for generations to come, there are many situations in which it can achieve better results by persuasion rather than by the application of force, and if it follows a constructivist rather than a unilateralist approach. Also, as increasing shared norms, treaties and institutions (in some circles it is fashionable to call these "regimes"\[^{42}\]) bind other countries and not just the United States, the United States is benefitting from the limitations these binds put on unilateral actions. Finally, a point that cannot be documented here, rising transnational problems that no nation—not even the United States—can handle on their own (terrorism, transnational crime, drug abuse, counterfeiting, and cyber attacks, for instance) push the world toward the establishment of some global authorities with gradually growing scope, power and legitimacy.\[^{43}\] Hence, promoting them often may enhance the ability of the United States to cope with problems that plague it. Ultimately, the best way to serve United States citizens is to support the development of such regimes rather than undermine them—as long as, already stated, they do not undermine vital interests nor seriously hamper the service of others.\[^{44}\]

To spell out the specific implications of this approach is a huge task that involves much deliberation and study. But some obvious guidelines can be given. (To reiterate, all presume that no vital interests are involved and that non-vital ones are not seriously injured.) Countries should share action with allies via existing institutions or ad hoc coalitions; if sharing is not possible, consult with them about impending actions before they take place. Countries should respect treaties or seek their modification, but not walk away from them, let alone violate them (but it does not follow that a country must join a treaty which it

\[^{42}\text{Oran R. Young, } Governance in World Affairs (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1999).}\]

\[^{43}\text{Amitai Etzioni, "Implications of the American anti-terror coalition for global architectures," European Journal of Political Theory, 1 (2002), 9-10.}\]

\[^{44}\text{Max Boot, Amitai Etzioni, Morton Halperin and Charles Kupchan, "Bully or partner? a dialogue on the United States' role in the world," The Responsive Community, 13 (#1) (Winter 2002/03), 53-61.}\]
finds seriously defective). Countries should work via the United Nations and other intergovernmental organizations and seek their reform at the same time, rather than circumvent them.

Following these guidelines and the preceding policy suggestions would not merely further advance the global normative synthesis and gradually extend its scope, but also embody its values in existing as well as new global architectures.

IV. CONCLUSION

The observation that more and more nations throughout the world are moving, some very slowly, some more rapidly, to gradually incorporate some elements of autonomy into their regime (including respect for rights, a democratic form of government, and freer markets) should not be considered as proof that they are Westernizing. Because the East has started from such a high level of social order and low level of autonomy, they might well be moving toward a balanced model of both—rather than seeking to make autonomy their central value. The fact that the United States—as the most Westernized society—is moving to shore up its social order provides further support for the thesis that East and West will meet in some middle ground, in which autonomy and social order are carefully balanced. It should be noted that East and West are not merely bringing their respective values to the evolving global normative synthesis, but that these values are being modified in the process. Most important in the process, social order is modified to be based more on soft power and less on coercion. Finally, it draws on both moderate religious sources and secular ones rather than merely relying on the latter. And autonomy is being contained, especially when dealing with the market, rather than allowing for its unlimited range.

The evolving global normative synthesis is not merely happening, but also should be favored as it leads toward what should be considered a good society. Beyond the very general contours of such a society—of a careful balance between autonomy and social order and an order based largely on moral suasion and informal normative controls—such a synthesis favors several specific principles. These include the accommodation of particularism within the context of universalism, the promotion of soft power, limited normative controls, a sense of humility, and appropriate restrictions on the market.

Finally the evolving synthesis has several specific implications for Western, especially United States, foreign policy. These include adopting a service leaning approach to foreign policy; opening societies; engagement; support for not only secular groups, but also moderate religious ones; and a constructivist form of multilateralism.