

The West Is Not the World

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There is an unseen connection between the social justice debates in Western societies and the fate of the West and the liberal international order. There has been much soul searching in the West about new challenges to global order and democratic decline globally and in the West. Western dominance is waning, and what will follow is unclear. At the same time, within Western countries, old orders and habits are also being challenged. Received histories and heroes are being reconsidered in a reckoning with the racial injustices that have been a central feature of European and U.S. history.

Western proponents of a rules-based, cooperative order—in order to further it—need to learn from domestic debates and better understand how history and the West’s liberal rhetoric is viewed by others. The liberal order and rhetoric of freedom and equality long co-existed with blatant betrayal by the West of “Western” values. A more honest evaluation of the West’s sins and failings will help policymakers find the right balance between confidence and humility. A new equilibrium should include confidence in values, humility in judgement.

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“America is back. The transatlantic alliance is back,” announced President Joe Biden five weeks into his administration, warming the hearts of his (virtual) European audience. Yet he and his foreign policy team know this is not exactly true. As with the rest of Biden’s policy agenda, there is no simple building back as the ground has shifted. The United States’ role in the world, the transatlantic alliance, and the West’s place in the world need to be reconceived in a new and different way. This will prove a trying endeavor for U.S. and European leaders.

Even before the management of the coronavirus pandemic by Asian democracies left Europe and the United States looking tired and disorganized, there was reason to reconsider the West and the order it created. There was much contemplation around the 30-year anniversary of 1989 as the victorious “free world” found itself not triumphant and freed from history but struggling and embattled. The United States and Europe were losing their competitive edge against rivals such as China and saw their moral high ground crack beneath them as their democracies faltered and fractured, with populist nationalists gaining in most elections and governments stumbling from crisis to crisis and often failing to cooperate among themselves. As rich as these reassessments have been, they have also been blind to a parallel reckoning. A new level of reckoning with histories and structures of racial injustice in North America and many countries in Europe has been underway. Heroes and received histories have been challenged. Yet, like Rudyard Kipling’s East and West, though they occur in parallel, never do the twain reevaluations meet.

The reckoning over racial injustice has been particularly strong, appropriately, in the United States and, like many social movements of the modern era, it has spread from there to Europe and beyond. Concepts and insights from critical race and gender theory that just ten years ago were confined to the radical left and academia have permeated the mainstream. Kimberlé Crenshaw’s intersectionality concept of overlapping or interacting discrimination forms, an obscure legal concept from 1989, went

viral on U.S. college campuses and then beyond. The center-left and even the center-right have begun to reflect more deeply upon the bigotry of the country’s systems (from policing to housing policies, banking, and education) and to acknowledge that injustice has not been a peripheral note but a core feature of U.S. history.

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The change just in the past five years has been tectonic. When Hillary Clinton used the term “systemic racism” in 2016, it was a first from a major presidential candidate. According to a September 2020 poll, 74 percent of Biden’s supporters said it is a lot more difficult to be Black than White, up almost 20 points from the 56 percent of Clinton supporters who agreed with this statement in 2016 (in the same survey, 11 percent of Trump supporters agreed in 2016 and 9 percent in 2020).¹ The share of white Americans who say there is a problem with how Blacks are treated in the United States increased from 34 percent in 2001 to 59 percent in 2020.² The heroes and great architects of U.S. history are being examined anew—their righteousness and sometimes even worthiness are challenged; their statues are occasionally defaced or toppled and their names removed from buildings. So it came for President Woodrow Wilson in June 2020, when Princeton University, which he once ran, removed his name from its school of public and international affairs.

1 Pew Research Center, [Voters’ Attitudes About Race and Gender Are Even More Divided Than in 2016](#), September 10, 2020.

2 Gallup, [Race Relations](#), undated. In June–July 2020, 41 percent of white people said they were very or somewhat satisfied with the treatment of Black people and 59 percent somewhat or very dissatisfied. In contrast, in June 2001, 64 percent said they were very or somewhat satisfied and 34 percent said they were very or somewhat dissatisfied.

Wilson, with his fierce advocacy for the League of Nations at the peace conference following the First World War, the failed precursor to the United Nations, is the originator of the U.S. liberal interventionist tradition, sometimes called Wilsonianism. To redress the fatal flaws of the balance-of-power global order, which viewed war as legitimate tool and had led to almost ceaseless conflict, Wilson envisioned an order in which states would accept enforceable legal restrictions on their conduct at home and abroad.

This tradition has become a core feature, indeed often the dominant approach, of U.S. and Western politics since the end of the Second World War. Today's liberal international order, a world where international relations are constrained by U.N. rules and guided by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and where trade rules are global and adjudicated by the World Trade Organization is fundamentally a "Wilsonian order," albeit imperfectly so. The Wilsonianism of its time was also legalistic liberal internationalism, promoting rules that should apply to the conduct of all, in contrast to the civilizational liberalism of empire, which justified the domination of "uncivilized" people by "civilized" European powers.³ Because of his role in shaping the current world order and the tradition that succeeded him, Wilson is the figure where a reckoning of racism and a reevaluation of the liberal international order must meet.

The Uncritical West

Yet a discussion on global racism is not part of the mainstream debate on international order. Outside academia, foreign policy debates are still barely influ-

enced by critical perspectives.⁴ There has been much soul-searching in the West, especially since Brexit and Donald Trump's presidency. And there has been much handwringing about the rules of the world and the liberal international order as a result of Russia's invasion of Crimea and China's rise. But, unlike in the domestic sphere, post-colonial perspectives have not been part of the reflection process.⁵

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Many now concede that perhaps the geopolitical West (the "free world" around the U.S. axis in the Cold War) bears some responsibility for the challenges it faces from within and without. There are essentially two broad lines of criticism. Realists blame a naïve hubris for the West's mistakes and false assumptions of the past decades. Liberal and especially progressives diagnose a more muscular form of hubris and mistakes driven by neoliberal economic and military policies. But neither approach seriously engages with a post-colonial critique and the idea that systemic inequities and Western dominance are part of the problem.

Realists like Stephen Walt accuse Western elites of having eschewed restraint and realism for a "liberal hegemony" that sought to spread markets

3 The distinction is more grey than black and white. Wilson was also a man of his era and influenced by civilizational ideas that some people need to be "taught" to be able to be free. As he said in 1900: "Freedom is not giving the same government to all people, but wisely discriminating and dispensing laws according to the advancement of the people." From a newspaper report of a public address at an alumni meeting in Pennsylvania, February 24, 1900, quoted in Erez Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment*, Oxford University Press, 2007, p. 28.

4 Here and in many instances in this paper the term "critical" refers not simply to criticism, but to the specific sense of "critical theories" in academia, referring to a variant reading of international relations theory. Marxist readings of foreign policy are well established in academia, but much less established in the mainstream international relations debates, including in foreign policy think tanks.

5 There are of course other relevant critical approaches, Marxist and feminist, to name just two. Post-colonial approaches are the central focus here as they pertain quite centrally to an inside/outside view of the West and are the nearest international relations equivalent to critical race theory. Furthermore, a post-colonial view seems particularly crucial in a world where Western dominance is waning, but capitalism is not.

and democracy across the globe.⁶ Western policymakers, especially in Washington, developed after 1989 “a dangerous overconfidence ... believ[ing] they had the right, the responsibility, and the wisdom to shape political arrangements in every corner of the world.” The mistake was thinking that the rest wanted to become like the West, that liberal democracy was inevitable, and that the systems of governance in Russia and China would eventually converge with that of the West.

More progressive analysts of the “liberal” school argue that the overconfidence and folly of neoliberalism and neoconservatism took the West off track. Secretary of State Antony Blinken’s address in March 2021 is a perfect example of this:

Some of us previously argued for free trade agreements because we believed Americans would broadly share in the economic gains that those—and that those deals would shape the global economy in ways that we wanted. We had good reasons to think those things. But we didn’t do enough to understand who would be negatively affected and what would be needed to adequately offset their pain.⁷

He offered a similar critique of neoconservative hubris, promising to “not promote democracy through costly military interventions or by attempting to overthrow authoritarian regimes by force.”

Some, especially in Europe where the division between foreign policy schools of thought is often blurred, draw from both critiques. As Thomas Kleine-Brockhoff has argued,

liberal overreach emerged: a belief in a glorious democratic future and a tremendous sense of entitlement promulgated throughout the West. At the same time, the will and the means to implement

the necessary policies remained limited. The liberal world no longer knew adversaries (apart from some terrorists), only partners who were on the course to become like-minded friends.⁸

All of these observations are insightful, but they miss something.

The American academic Walter Russell Mead offered a case in point on foreign policy and critical discourses almost, but not quite, meeting. Writing about the end of the Wilsonian era, Mead shares the realist critique: The “most important fact in world politics,” he writes, is that Wilson’s noble effort to remake global politics “has failed.”⁹ The next stage in world history will not unfold along Wilsonian lines. The idea of this order has been the dominant vision of U.S. and Western politics since the Second World War (with some exceptions, notably the Nixon/Kissinger administration) but no longer.

According to Mead,

The nations of the earth will continue to seek some kind of political order, because they must. And human rights activists and others will continue to work toward their goals. But the dream of a universal order, grounded in law, that secures peace between countries and democracy inside them will figure less and less in the work of world leaders.

The effect of the racial-justice movement on the conservative Mead is clear. It is unlikely that ten years ago he would have so unequivocally supported Wilson’s condemnation. Today, however, he concedes that “[a]s ‘cancelations’ go, this one is at least arguably deserved. Wilson was an egregious racist even by the standards of this time.” But Mead keeps Wilson’s “personal views and domestic policies” distinct from

6 Stephen M. Walt, “[The End of Hubris](#),” *Foreign Affairs*, May/June 2019.

7 Antony J. Blinken, “[A Foreign Policy for the American People](#),” speech at the U.S. Department of State, March 3, 2021.

8 Thomas Kleine-Brockhoff, “[Liberal Overreach and the Misinterpretation of 1989](#),” Reassessing 1989, *German Marshall Fund*, September 13, 2019.

9 Walter Mead, “[The End of the Wilsonian Era](#),” *Foreign Affairs*, January/February 2021.

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his influence as an “ideologist” and “among the most influential makers of the modern world.” The only link between the two is temporal. Wilson’s devaluation along racial-justice lines coincides with the failure of a Wilsonian vision for foreign policy. Yet is it possible that Wilson the man was racist but the world he created was not?

Mead, like most of his peers, is not particularly interested in this question. He concedes that “Western” values have not been uniformly upheld or enforced, as it was “chiefly weak countries whose oppressive behavior attracted the most attention.” U.S. government crimes against Native Americans or Black Americans, or Russian crimes against Jews or Muslims in the Caucasus went largely unmentioned while Ottoman crimes against Christians drew censure.¹⁰

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Yet, as in many other writings, these critical observations are asides, brief nods at complications that cannot be ignored and yet are. A few years ago, I attended a conference hosted by my organization with top foreign policy analysts and practitioners from Europe, the United States, and China. At one point a Chinese analyst argued that China could be part of the global liberal order without necessarily fulfilling all the liberal-democratic criteria at home. One American participant replied that they had no idea how this could ever be possible. This expert was certainly aware that in the heyday of the United States’ global moral leadership and support for European democracy, the first two decades after the Second World War, Black Americans were systematically denied their basic rights and protections, and regularly murdered with impunity by their fellow white citizens. Similarly, in European countries’ vast foreign territories, the rights of citizenship they espoused were only enjoyed by

European residents while colonial natives remained subjects. Yet the American speaker was not challenged on this statement, and I suspect very few, if any, of the Americans or Europeans in the room even noticed the obliviousness it revealed.

Similarly, a former French diplomat, Jean-David Levitte, said in 2019:

During the triumphant decade of 1991–2001, we Westerners had the conviction, or at least the hope, that gradually all emerging market countries would adopt not only the rules of the market economy, but also the values that underpin it and that underlie the Western order. Today, this illusion has disappeared.

So far, so reasonable. But he continued:

China has never shared and still does not share our vision of a world order as enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and those of the other major International organizations. The idea of equality of states before the law is foreign to it. For millennia, China has seen itself as THE civilization, surrounded by barbarian kingdoms and whose role is to send emissaries to the Emperor’s court to kow-tow, pay tribute, and leave, illuminated by Chinese wisdom! The Sinicized world, that is to say the proper “Han” region and its immediate neighbors (Japanese, Koreans, Manchus, Mongols, Uyghurs, Tibetans, Vietnamese), did not constitute a nation-state based on the “Westphalian” model.¹¹

Surely Levitte knew that European countries were guilty of the same disregard for the “Westphalian model” for all those “barbarian kingdoms” beyond the boundaries of Europe for centuries and until quite recently. And that Europe has equally viewed itself as “the” civilization. And that China itself was forced by

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Jean-David Levitte, “[With the end of four centuries of Western dominance, what will the world order be in the 21st century?](#),” address to the Academy of Moral and Political Sciences in France, January 7, 2019.

Europeans powers to forfeit much sovereignty into the 20th century. To be fair to Levitte, he is not an outlier—not at all. I could just as easily have quoted a hundred other Europeans or Americans.

Indeed, Americans and Europeans have a tendency to recognize a right as fundamental and universal ten minutes after having finally accepted it, following decades of persecution and protests (women’s rights, minority rights, gay rights). It is not wrong that they should champion these rights internationally, especially by supporting advocates on the ground, but this is often accompanied with a seeming sense of unwarranted superiority, as if these rights have always been part of the wise and modern West.

The blind spot of white-supremacy thinking fundamental to the worldview of Wilson (and most of his contemporaries) are deemed irrelevant—or at most side notes—to the Wilsonian order.

The Wilsonian order was only ever partially realized, as Mead concedes. The problem, in the mainstream foreign policy reading, is that values and political systems around the world did not converge as Wilson and his ideological descendants expected. The fact that this order coexisted for many decades with blatant betrayal by the West of “Western” values, and more than occasional disregard for legal restrictions is apparently not worth considering. The blind spot of white-supremacy thinking fundamental to the worldview of Wilson (and most of his contemporaries) are deemed irrelevant—or at most side notes—to the Wilsonian order.

But this is only true in the West. For others, the crimes and hypocrisies of the West have always been too present. As the Indian public intellectual and post-colonial critic Pankaj Mishra points out,

neither hard-headed politicians nor their intellectual dupes fully understood ... how the rhetoric of

liberalism and democracy had gone down in the colonized world. Certainly, Wilson, working deep in a world run by and for white men could have little sense of the bitterness and disillusionment felt by this “darkie” admirers.¹²

What West?

The definition of the West can depend on the position of the beholder. It can be a vague and shifting creature. “Confusingly,” as the historian Michael Kimmage writes, “the West is a place, and idea, a value—or places, ideas and values.” It can be a geopolitical, historically shifting entity, but it can also “indicate a range of cultural and philosophical constellations.”¹³ Kleine-Brockhoff identifies four different Wests—the cultural and Christian West, the white West, the civilizational industrial West, and the political Enlightenment West.

The West as a geopolitical entity is not fixed but has shifted over time. It was, in Kimmage’s retelling of the West as a foreign policy concept, the Athens “West” against the Persian East, and later, after the Ottoman victory in Constantinople in 1453, “the Christian Europe versus the East of Islam.”¹⁴ Later still “World War I was fought along an East-West axis, a clash of authoritarian (Prussian) East and liberty-loving (Franco-Anglo-American) West.”¹⁵ The Cold War featured perhaps the cleanest East-West division. There is also a common history of Western thought and civilization (exported with Europe’s white settlers to North America and Australia) and a history of alliances against different “non-Westerners” (the Persians, the Arabs, the Russians)—with Germany sometimes in the “East” and Russia sometimes aligned with Western powers. From the perspective of the others beyond Europe (such as the East of Islam or China in the Far

12 Panka Mishra, *Blind Fanatics: Liberals, Race and Empire*, Verso, 2020, p. 84.

13 Michael Kimmage, *The Abandonment of the West*, Basic Books, 2020, p. 13.

14 *Ibid.*, pp. 9–10.

15 *Ibid.*, p. 10.

East) the West they encountered was all of the above. It was the geopolitical but also the cultural or Christian West, the white West, the civilizational industrial West.

The definition of West used here is geopolitical but also ideational: the liberal geopolitical West that was formed by Enlightenment thought and liberalism from the late 18th century.¹⁶ During the First World War it consisted chiefly of the United States, Britain, France (but also Canada, Denmark, the Netherlands, Belgium) with Germany and Italy joining later, and Spain and other European countries later still. It is in the presidency of Wilson that was born a new vision of Western liberal foreign policy—the pursuit of a “Wilsonian order”—even if did not materialize significantly until later. To separate the Enlightenment West from the realities of the geopolitical West is to make an academic distinction. Especially during that long and formative period where colonialism and liberalism overlapped, the two are inextricable, particularly when considering a non-Western perspective.

The Critics of the West

A critical appraisal of the West after 1989 echoes the West’s own self-diagnosis of hubris, but with a crucial difference. Again Mishra:

The victories of the Cold War ... revived illusions of omnipotence among an Anglo-American political and media elite that has always known very little about the modern world it claims to have made. Consequentially, almost every event since the end of the Cold War—the rise of radical Islam, of India and China; the assertiveness of oil-rich Russia, Iran and Venezuela—has come as a shock, a rude reminder that the natives of Delhi, Cairo and Beijing have geopolitical ambitions of their own, not to mention a sense of history marked by resentment and suspicious of the metropolitan West.¹⁷

The Western assessment is that the West misunderstood actors like Russia or China or was naïve about their certain march toward democracy, aided by market forces. But perhaps policymakers in the West did not try very hard to understand these actors in the first place. In the world made by the West, others were expected to want to fall in line. To the Western mind, used to centuries of global domination, the only path forward is the Western-forged one.

It is easy, once one takes another perspective, to be cynical and to dismiss the lofty rhetoric of Wilson and those who followed as “an especially aggressive form of hypocrisy.” As Mishra writes,

Wilson’s rhetorical achievement—which distinguished him sharply from traditional European practitioners of *realpolitik*—was to present America’s strategic and political interest as moral imperatives, and its foreign interventions as necessary acts of international responsibility. European leaders periodically stressed their civilizing mission, but no one before Wilson endowed national exceptionalism with such a modern and unimpeachably noble aspiration as “democracy.”¹⁸

Of course, the contradiction predates Wilson significantly. Already in 1742 the Scottish Enlightenment philosopher David Hume observed that “free governments have been commonly the most happy for those who partake of their freedom; yet are they the most ruinous and oppressive to their provinces.”¹⁹

Where the Western view tends to brush past the critical, the post-colonial one rejects the charitable. In the latter, the genuine progress that Wilson’s rhetoric of democracy and rights may have brought are sidenotes to the West’s imperialist sins. If for those like Mead the Wilsonian order is failing because of its democratic determinism and it presumes a convergence of all nations, for post-colonial critics like Mishra the

16 The championing of liberalism and liberal values has varied from leader to leader and place to place significantly between then and now.

17 Mishra, *Blind Fanatics*, pp. 85–86.

18 *Ibid.*, p. 84.

19 David Hume, “Politics a Science,” in T.H. Greene and T.H. Grose (eds), David Hume, *Essays, Moral, Political, and Literary (Philosophical Works volume 3)*, A. Millar and A. Kincaid & A. Donaldson, London 1882.

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order is failing because it was false and insincere. This critical perspective of Wilsonianism or liberal internationalism as practiced by European powers and the United States is as perceptive and intellectually consistent as the mainstream Western view—but it is also incomplete.

Many of the facts are established and unquestioned. Civilizational liberal rhetoric was applied to extractive and often brutal colonial realities—from slave labor in the Congo with a death toll in the millions or the Opium Wars and oppression of the Chinese to the brutal suppression of rebellions, the harvests requisitioned, and all the more mundane indignities of being a subject, unequal and vulnerable to execution without trial by Western colonizers rhapsodizing about liberty.

One does not have to agree that the perceptions of Mishra and other post-colonialists are the full and simple truth—but one should know what these perceptions are and consider them. It is hard to disagree with the conclusion that the West knows too little about the rest of the world.

And yet is it possible that the Wilsonian order, like the man himself, was imperfect, racist, unjust, and also genuinely lofty? Could it be that, though it did not live up to its promises, it was radically progressive and more just than anything that had come before? Can the Wilsonian order be hypocritical and guilty of White supremacy and yet also constitute a genuine step toward a better world?

The Civilizing Force of Hypocrisy

The issue of self-determination can be enlightening on the question of Western hypocrisy. On January 8, 1918, Wilson outlined the United States' war aims and peace terms in a statement of principles known as the Fourteen Points. In many ways these constituted a radically progressive and idealistic vision of global politics, as well as including specific territorial terms for the peace. In his fifth point, Wilson promised:

[a] free, open-minded, and absolutely impartial adjustment of all colonial claims, based upon a strict observance of the principle that in deter-

mining all such questions of sovereignty the interests of the populations concerned must have equal weight with the equitable government whose title is to be determined.

About a month later he elaborated on this point before a joint session of Congress, defining the principle of “self-determination” in the following terms: “National aspirations must be respected; people may now be dominated and governed only by their own consent. ‘Self-determination’ is not a mere phrase; it is an imperative principle of action.”²⁰ (It has been noted by many Marxist and post-colonial critics that Wilson was not alone and not the first to talk about self-determination. The Bolshevik leaders Lenin and Trotsky had preceded him in advocating it as a part of the peace.)

The issue of self-determination can be enlightening on the question of Western hypocrisy.

However, the Paris Peace Conference of 1919–1920 failed to achieve the imperative of self-determination for non-European peoples, leaving the Chinese, who were represented, and many others who were not invited (Vietnamese, Egyptians, Indians) crestfallen. Muhammad Haykal, an Egyptian journalist, describes the sense of betrayal:

Here was the man of the 14 points, among them the right to self-determination, denying the Egyptian people its right to self-determination. ... And doing all that before the delegation on behalf of the Egyptian people had arrived in Paris to defend its claim, and before President Wilson had heard one word from them! Is this not the ugliest of treacheries?! Is it not the most profound repudiation of principles?!

20 Woodrow Wilson, [Address to Congress](#), February 11, 1918.

21 Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment*, p. 148.

A cynical interpretation of this failure is that Wilson, as Mishra writes, “had little interest in persuading Britain and France to relinquish their colonial possessions.”²² But perhaps this is too severe. There can be no doubt that Wilson failed to persuade Britain and France, and that he prioritized an agreement on the League of Nations. Furthermore, his white-supremacist views led him to believe that some peoples were not immediately capable of self-rule.²³ Yet other historians of the conference are more generous regarding Wilson’s intentions, if not the results.²⁴ He may not have been able to win out against imperialists like Prime Ministers David Lloyd George of Britain and Georges Clemenceau of France, but he did try. Even Mao Zedong, who was not yet leader of the Chinese revolutionary movement, seems to have been less skeptical. Mao wrote that “Poor Wilson!” was in Paris “like an ant on a hot skillet ... He was surrounded by thieves like Clemenceau, Lloyd George, [Japanese representative] Makino [Nobuaki] and [Italian Prime Minister Vittorio] Orlando.”²⁵

Furthermore, regardless of intentions, rhetoric matters. Wilson’s rhetoric “presented a major challenge to the legitimacy and permanence of the imperial order in the international arena,” the historian Erez Manela notes.²⁶ These progressive ideas, voiced by perhaps the most powerful global leader of his time, advocating a new and more equitable model of international relations “took on a life of their own, independent of Wilson and his intentions.” The acceptance of the principle of self-determination as a central tenet of the peace settlement gave nationalists active in independence movements reason to “expect great changes in their own positions in international affairs.”²⁷

Thus, although Wilson failed and Lloyd George and Clemenceau prevailed in 1919, it was a short-term victory.²⁸ As Menela writes, “They could offer no substitute either domestically or internationally to the principle of self-determination ... Rather than bolster or expand the imperial order, the events of 1919 in fact laid the groundwork for its demise.”²⁹ The age of self-determination had begun, but it would come with a fight.

Though often betrayed, even by their fervent supporters, the ideals of individual rights, tolerance, and equality motivate powerful forces.

As the social and political theorist Jon Elster has argued, there can be a “civilizing force” to hypocrisy.³⁰ Even if stated ideals are imperfectly realized or even partially dishonest, they can push speakers toward less self-interested outcomes. Something similar has been at play with liberal ideals. Though often betrayed, even by their fervent supporters, the ideals of individual rights, tolerance, and equality motivate powerful forces. For all its imperfections, it would be a shame to discard or discount the ideals of the Wilsonian liberal order wholly.

Like Barack Obama’s invocation of the history of the United States as an ongoing struggle toward a “more perfect union,” for the political scientists John

22 Mishra, *Blind Fanatics*, p. 78

23 Margaret MacMillan, *Peacemakers*, John Murray, 2001, pp. 107–8, and Mishra, *Blind Fanatics*, p. 78.

24 See for example, John Milton Cooper, Jr., *Woodrow Wilson*, Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2011.

25 Mishra, *Blind Fanatics*, p. 79.

26 Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment*, p. 11.

27 *Ibid.* p. 11.

28 Lloyd George and Clemenceau are somewhat unfairly treated in this short depiction. In many ways they, especially Clemenceau, are not less complicated than Wilson. Margaret MacMillan refers to Lloyd George as “a Liberal turned land-grabber” (MacMillan, *Peacemakers*, p. 393) and Clemenceau was a central figure in the rehabilitation of Captain Alfred Dreyfus and is widely considered (especially in France) to be anti-racist and anti-colonialist. Yet, both men fought hard to resist Wilson’s attempts to push self-determination and to hold on to the pieces of the defeated Ottoman empire. Clemenceau was also openly skeptical of Wilson’s legalistic League of Nations and announced his support for that “old system of alliances called the Balance of Power” (MacMillan, *Peacemakers*, p. 31).

29 *Ibid.*

30 Jon Elster, “[Reason and Rationality](#),” Lauener Foundation for Analytical Philosophy, 2006.

Ikenberry and Daniel Deudney, the robustness of the liberal order builds on its ability to improve and is grounded in commitment to the dignity and freedom of individuals and tolerance:

Although the ideology emerged in the West, its values have become universal, and its champions have extended to encompass Mahatma Gandhi, Mikhail Gorbachev, and Nelson Mandela. And even though imperialism, slavery, and racism have marred Western history, liberalism has always been at the forefront of efforts—both peaceful and militant—to reform and end these practices. To the extent that the long arc of history does bend toward justice, it does so thanks to the activism and moral commitment of liberals and their allies.³¹

Their telling is, to use a quote from Dean Acheson, guilty of being “clearer than the truth.” Mahatma Gandhi and Nelson Mandela had to fight against avowed liberals in Western capitals on behalf of a more universal and less racist vision of dignity and freedom. If they today are read as liberals, it is also because they cleverly instrumentalized their oppressors’ liberal language against them. National liberation movements of the 20th century in Asia and the Middle East were not only inspired by liberalism but also inspired by pan-Asianism, pan-Islamism, Third Worldism, and communism.³²

The Westerners supporting them were, at the time, more likely to be considered radical progressives than liberals (and were often Marxists). And yet, there is truth in Ikenberry and Deudney’s telling. What most deserves protecting and maintaining in the liberal cause is the ability—if usually slowly and reluctantly, and never without a fight—to accommodate dissent and stumble toward reform.

According to President Biden’s national security advisor, Jake Sullivan, the capacity for self-correction is what the United States brings to the liberal order it aspires to lead:

This capacity for self-appraisal, self-correction, and self-renewal separates the United States from past superpowers. It is what President Obama—elected in part because of popular opposition to the Iraq War—meant when he said, on the 50th anniversary of the march to Montgomery, Alabama: “Each successive generation can look upon our imperfections and decide that it is in our power to remake this nation to more closely align with our highest ideals.”³³

Since at least the Wisconsin School of the 1950s there has been in the United States a strong academic tradition of critical assessment of U.S. foreign policy. Authors from this school have offered a revisionist history, accusing the country of economically motivated imperialism. Starting with the publication of Edward Said’s *Orientalism* in 1978, post-colonial theory and discourse offered a new revision to Western history. These debates have not left recent U.S. policies and presidents untouched.³⁴ Despite often messianic language about the War on Terror following the 9/11 attacks, George W. Bush consciously tried not to stigmatize Islam. Barack Obama won election in part because he had called out the folly of the Iraq war.

Similar critical debates may have begun more slowly in a Europe that was still engaged in colonialism and recovering from fascism, and they were often entangled with Marxism. But in Europe’s imperial capitals too prominent critics and activists challenged their governments’ foreign policy in a similar manner, including left-wing philosopher and Algerian freedom activist Francis Jeanson, who supported Franz Fanon

31 Daniel Deudney and G. John Ikenberry, “[Liberal World](#),” *Foreign Affairs*, July/August 2018.

32 See C. Raja Mohan, “[A New China and Asia Strategy for Biden](#),” *Foreign Policy*, 2021.

33 Jake Sullivan, “[What Donald Trump and Dick Cheney Got Wrong About America](#),” *The Atlantic*, January/February 2019.

34 See Kimmage, *The Abandonment of the West*, especially chapters 5 and 6.

and penned the original epilogue to his seminal 1952 book *Black Skin, White Faces* (considered a precursor to post-colonial theory). Nonetheless, in Western Europe revisionist history has remained even further from the foreign policy mainstream than in the United States. As the policy analyst Rosa Balfour writes, activists and academics in Europe are just beginning to “timidly embark on uncovering the untold stories of migration and colonialism.”³⁵

Part of the challenge is that Europe, and Western Europe especially, has always been at the very center of its own telling of history. This results in what the foreign policy analyst Hans Kundnani diagnoses as “a Eurocentric tendency to mistake Europe for the world.”³⁶ If not sufficiency corrected by critical self-appraisal, U.S. exceptionalism and Eurocentrism together can form a heady, blinkered West. Their liberal traditions can help them correct that, but a proper appraisal of their foreign policy must also include looking into a mirror held up by others.

Ceding Control

What then is the self-correction due today? Central is the high ideal of equality among nations. Already in 2008, the Singaporean diplomat and academic Kishore Mahbubani pointed to a problem “in the West’s stewardship of the international order” and a basic strategic error that “Western minds are reluctant to analyze or confront openly.”³⁷ Twelve years later it is still true that in assessing global challenges “the West assumes that it is the source of the solutions to the world’s key problems. In fact, however, the West is also a major source of these problems.” This is certainly true for climate change, but also for global corruption and inequitable trading practices.

After having enjoyed centuries of global domination, the West has to learn to share power and responsibility for the management of global issues with the rest of the world. ... It was always unnatural for the 12 percent of the world population that lived in the West to enjoy so much global power. Understandably, the other 88 percent of the world population increasingly wants also to drive the bus of world history.³⁸

Surely one cannot fail to understand that 89 percent of global population (the share living outside G7 countries), who in the meantime also represent about 69 percent of the global economy, want to shape the order that rules them.

In the end the handwringing in the West about the liberal international order is about China. Secretary of State Blinken stated as much as he outlined the major foreign policy challenges facing the United States: “China is the only country with the economic, diplomatic, military, and technological power to seriously challenge the stable and open international system—all the rules, values, and relationships that make the world work the way we want it to.”³⁹

A genuine competitor has risen within the system—and the West finds that the rules (and their loopholes) are no longer working to their advantage. The current crisis is about the debility of Western democracies and economies—and the competition China represents, which grows more daunting the less Europe and North America excel. But in the West it is often framed as a black-and-white contest of values, as if power and advantage were not at play. Perhaps because many do not like to admit that they are interested in power (this may be especially true for “normative power” Europe). Or perhaps because too many in Europe and North America unconsciously assume that Western dominance is simply the natural and correct state of affairs and anything else is dangerous.

35 Rosa Balfour, “[Against a European Civilization: Narratives About the European Union](#),” Carnegie Europe, 2021.

36 Hans Kundnani, “[What does it mean to be “pro-European” today?](#),” *New Statesman*, February 4, 2021.

37 Kishore Mahbubani, “[The Case Against the West](#),” *Foreign Affairs*, May/June 2008.

38 Ibid.

39 Blinken, “A Foreign Policy for the American People.”

This is not to suggest that China's authoritarian model does not pose a challenge to global democracy. There can be no doubt that China and others are working to undermine liberal democracy and present their authoritarian systems as a better model. Nor is this to suggest that there is any equivalency between current racial injustice in the United States and China's oppression of minorities and political opponents (as the Chinese Communist Party seems to be trying to insinuate by pointing to issues of racism and inequality in response to criticism over its abuses in Xinjiang, Hong Kong, and elsewhere).⁴⁰ But Western policymakers should expect China to play the public diplomacy game, just as their countries always have.

Leaders and policy analysts in the West need to learn from current domestic discourse, and to invite and incorporate critical perspectives on inherited narratives of global politics.

Certainly, the liberal democratic model is better, as minorities and dissidents in Western countries and migrants trying to reach them would concur. And yet, the West exports weapons and bestow its favors on regimes even more repressive than the Chinese Communist Party—and citizens of those countries notice. The West industrialized and got rich at great cost to the environment, which it now belatedly seeks to protect while preserving its economic advantages.

Arrogance will not aid the West in the global propaganda battle, nor will it make Western governments smarter. Only through a more honest evaluation of not only the faults, sins, and hypocrisies of Western leaders and governments, from Wilson and Lloyd George to Obama and Emanuel Macron, but also the inequalities of the order the West created, will it be able to succeed in a global competition with China. For it must be remembered that, even more than in

1919, the world is watching and vantage point can greatly affect perceptions.

Leaders and policy analysts in the West need to learn from current domestic discourse, and to invite and incorporate critical perspectives on inherited narratives of global politics. In the 1950s U.S. democracy appeared vibrant and strong, and the United States met global challenges with vigor. But this was strength built on a consensus created by exclusion and disenfranchisement. The absence of dissenting voices created the appearance of cohesion and stability. This changed in the 1960s and 1970s when minorities demanded basic rights and visibility, and the system was shaken. Part of the democratic disorder in the United States today stems from a further step in this process of democratization. Minorities no longer want basic rights or tolerance. They seek true equality and representation, and others are frightened as their dominance and their traditional narratives are challenged. (To be fair, a good dose of political malpractice has also contributed to the polarization.)

Globally, the situation is comparable. A challenge to dominant powers and narratives creates instability and angst—but sometimes it need be. The formally disenfranchised want not only acceptance, but more power to shape the rules. Western ideals demand support for more rule-making equality, but habits and some interests resist.

A Humble New World

Realists would suggest that governments retrench to a balance of power world. Western countries were wrong to assume that others wanted to become like them, so the idea that there can be rules that constrain power and govern engagement between unlike countries must also be misguided. But that is a view of those who have always placed power and interests above rules and cooperative orders. There is still space for a reformed liberal internationalist and a normative foreign policy.

The early months of the Biden administration are going in the right direction. Biden cabinet will be the most diverse in U.S. history and his team's rhetoric

⁴⁰ Al Jazeera, "[China bashes US over racism, inequality, pandemic response](#)," March 24, 2021.

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and outreach to allies (at least in these early days) may even surpass in its conciliatory tone that of Obama's, such as in the speech delivered in Cairo in 2009 (where he admitted that the United States "sometimes makes mistakes") or at the Summit of the Americas a few months earlier (where he conceded that "at times we sought to dictate our terms").⁴¹ In his March 3 foreign policy address, Secretary of State Blinken said:

We will balance humility with confidence. I have always believed they should be the flip sides of America's leadership coin. Humility because we aren't perfect, we don't have all the answers, and a lot of the world's problems aren't mainly about us, even as they affect us. But confidence because America at its best has a greater ability than any country on Earth to mobilize others for the common good and for the good of our people.

Biden's first solo press conference on March 25 offered an illustration of the fine line between confidence and arrogance. Coming shortly after the tense meeting between U.S. and Chinese officials in Anchorage, Alaska, he was asked about China. Most media outlets reported his comments this way:

They have an overall goal to become the leading country in the world, the wealthiest country in the world and the most powerful country in the world," Biden said. "That's not going to happen on my watch, because the United States is going to continue to grow and expand."⁴²

There is a small but important distinction in what Biden actually said (*italics for emphasis*): "I see stiff competition with China. China has an overall goal, *and I don't criticize them for the goal*, but they have an overall goal to become the leading country in the world." The former version is of a muscular challenge, whereas Biden's full remarks frame it as a competition. China has every right to compete, and if the United States wants to win it will have to outperform Beijing.

The early months of the Biden administration are going in the right direction. Biden cabinet will be the most diverse in U.S. history.

Striking the right balance of humility and confidence is not easy. When Obama attempted to admit that U.S. foreign policy had not always been perfect, his remarks were much maligned by conservatives and some liberal hawks as his "apology" tour. He was accused of weakening American power.⁴³ There will be a similar pushback against too much humility from the Biden administration, especially as primacy remains a core goal of U.S. foreign policy and a consensus has taken hold that China is now a vital threat to the United States.⁴⁴ Furthermore, unlike Obama, whose worldview and biography was genuinely not Western-centric, Biden and most of his team are dyed-in-the-wool transatlanticists. Their habits and instincts may pull them back to a cockier or more Western-centric view of global relations.

How, then, can the West work collectively and with others to be a positive force in the world? How can governments in Europe and North America find the right balance humility and confidence? The formula

41 Barack Obama, "[The President's Speech in Cairo: A New Beginning](#)," [The White House, June 4, 2009](#); and "[Remarks by the President at the Summit of the Americas Opening Ceremony](#)," [The White House, April 17, 2009](#).

42 Gavin Bade, "[Biden: U.S. locked in 'battle' with China for global influence](#)," Politico, March 25, 2021. Reuters and four other outlets also ran the quote exactly this way. See Jarrett Renshaw, Andrea Shalal, and Michael Martina, "[Biden says China won't surpass U.S. as global leader on his watch](#)," Reuters, March 25, 2021.

43 Nile Gardiner and Morgan Lorraine Roach, "[Barack Obama's Top 10 Apologies: How the President Has Humiliated a Superpower](#)," [The Heritage Foundation, June 2, 2009](#).

44 See Fareed Zakaria, "[The New China Scare: Why America Shouldn't Panic About Its Latest Challenger](#)," [Foreign Affairs, January/February, 2020](#).

for those leaders interested in maintaining aspirations of a cooperative, rule-based order and strengthening liberal democracy is to show confidence in values, humility in judgement. This is sometimes as much a matter of tone as substance. The following are some basic guidelines toward a humbler, a “woker” West.

Western Dominance Is Not the Natural and Just State of Affairs.

It is not an affront for other countries to aim to surpass U.S. power or rival the advanced economies of the United States or Europe. This may sound obvious but read newspapers and think tank briefs in Europe and the United States and one will see that this is most often not the tone taken. Western countries should, by all means, compete by investing in their societies and devising policies that will make their societies and economies stronger. They should also insist on fair global rules, but this may mean ceding some advantages they have thus far been able to code into the rules (agricultural subsidies and fishing policies, to name just two).

As Fareed Zakaria recently pointed out, as much as the White House and Brussels bemoan China’s bad economic behavior, it is hardly an outlier. “Other countries with similar clout [due to large market size] often get away with similar behavior or worse—none more so than the United States.”⁴⁵ An important impetus for a single European market has been to gain similar clout. The support of Europe and the United States for free-trade policies and the World Trade Organization was bolstered by their competitive trade advantages (having had a significant head start with industrialization) and their ability to control the outcome of negotiations. Now that “free” trade is not working as much for them, they want “fair” trade—trade that does not leave them overly exposed. This is not inherently a problem. It could lead to a more equitable solution; one not unlike what developing countries left vulnerable to powerful Western multinationals have been

demanding for years. As C. Raja Mohan, director of the National University of Singapore’s Institute of South Asian Studies and a former member of India’s National Security Advisory Board suggests, “The Biden administration can help by presenting new ideas for tempering globalization through sovereign decision-making that addresses the need for equitable growth.”⁴⁶

Yes, under Xi Jinping’s leadership China has become more repressive, more ambitious, and more assertive. The first is a challenge to the liberal democratic values championed by the West, and Western governments should not shy away from acknowledging this in order to avoid tensions (or economic costs). But Western governments and analysts must also be honest and thoughtful about why exactly it is a problem that China has become more ambitious and assertive in the foreign policy realm. As Zakaria asks, “What would an acceptable level of influence for China be, given its economic weight in the world?” He continues: “so far, the West’s track record on adapting to China’s rise has been poor.” The core institutions of global economic governance—the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund—“remain Euro-American clubs.” China has long sought a larger role in these institutions as well as in the Asian Development Bank, but the United States has resisted this.⁴⁷

The answer is not, as some Europeans might wish, to pretend that there is no possible security threat emanating from authoritarian China (and in doing so protecting access to the country’s attractive market). China’s actions to suppress dissent globally are deeply troubling and dangerous, also for citizens of Western countries (who risk the fate of Canadian Michael Kovrig, who has been detained and faces a show-trial almost certain to bring a guilty verdict). Researchers

45 Ibid.

46 C. Raja Mohan, “A New China and Asia Strategy for Biden,” *Foreign Policy*, January 15, 2021.

47 Fareed Zakaria, “The New China Scare.”

who are on China's sanctioned list cannot travel to the country safely.⁴⁸

Ambition and assertiveness that directly threaten life and liberty must be steadfastly countered. But not all ambition is that, and thoughtful distinctions need to be made. It is not for the West to determine and define China's—or anyone's—"proper place in the world," to use Secretary of State's Mike Pompeo's 2019 words.⁴⁹

The West's Words Are Only as Good as Its Deeds

The habit of hypocrisy is deeply ingrained—perhaps especially in those parts of Europe where the proud Enlightenment tradition long coexisted with equally bombastic imperial undertakings—but it must be resisted. Europeans cannot bemoan human rights abuses in countries such as Egypt, Libya, and Turkey, and yet expect them to keep refugees and migrants away from their shores (and turn a blind eye to how this is managed). Western governments can and should continue to support the organizations and causes of civil society and human rights across the globe, and not shy away from calling out abuses and offering support to the wrongfully imprisoned or murdered. But this must be followed with deeds, the least of which would be to unstintingly offer asylum to those actors whose engagement for rights and democracy have put them in the crosshairs of their repressive governments or who are persecuted for trying to advocate for the rights Western governments claim to defend. Whatever actions governments take in support of human rights (which could include targeted sanctions against political leaders or very limited humanitarian interventions) must include a willingness to bear a significant burden for these principles; for instance,

by forfeiting lucrative energy deals or taking in more significant numbers of those persecuted by dictators or displaced by conflicts.

Security concerns often necessitate cooperation with oppressive regimes, but these partnerships should be consistently reassessed and be as limited as possible. How can the West claim to champion human rights while courting and awarding honors to brutally repressive leaders? In perhaps the most extreme recent example, in 2020 President Macron awarded France's Grand Cross of the Legion of Honor to Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, who came to power in Egypt in 2014 in a military coup and has since initiated the most brutal crackdown against dissent and political opposition in the country's modern history.⁵⁰ Though he did not bestow him with awards, President Trump made no secret of his admiration for Sisi and others like him. Western leaders can no longer force their will on North African leaders, but they can at least refrain from honoring despotic behavior.

How can the West claim to champion human rights while courting and awarding honors to brutally repressive leaders?

The Biden administration's moves to "recalibrate" the United States' relations with Saudi Arabia by ending support for its operations in Yemen is a small step, but one could have also expected a harsher stance given the murder of U.S. resident and Saudi dissident Jamal Khashoggi in 2018, not to mention the country's decades of exporting radical Wahbahism in the Muslim world and beyond. There is not nearly enough discussion about arms exports to repressive regimes. It is one of the most blatant forms of consistent Western

48 Jonas Parelo-Plesner, "[With Denmark, China Tests the Reach of Its Lawfare into Democracies](#)," German Marshall Fund of the United States, March 31, 2021.

49 Ankit Panda, "[Pompeo Drops the Niceties on the Quad: What Now?](#)," The Diplomat, October 29, 2019, [Pompeo Drops the Niceties on the Quad: What Now?—The Diplomat](#)

50 The fact that the Élysée Palace attempted to keep the ceremony quiet and that Sisi was preceded by other dubious figures in receiving the honor (including Italy's Benito Mussolini and Spain's General Francisco Franco) rather serves to underscore the point. Chloé Benoist, "[Explained: Sisi, Macron and the dubious history of France's Legion of Honour](#)," Middle East Eye, December 18, 2020.

hypocrisy, and there are other ways to support domestic defense industries, if Western governments were willing to pay a bigger price for their principles.

Finally, deeds at home matter. In the global propaganda war China, Russia, and others will use the failings the West acknowledge to undermine the West and the reputation of liberal democracy. During the Cold War, the mistreatment of Black Americans was a major subject of Soviet propaganda. And it should have been—it was an ugly blot on democracy. Similarly, the truth about the gulags and the invasion of Hungary by Soviet troops undermined the power of Marxism in the West. The only answer is to be better. Western governments risk their reputations more, not to mention their own rectitude, by hiding or ignoring injustices in their societies.

Words Matter Too

The term “Western values” should be reconsidered—“liberal-democratic values or principles” may be more apt. There are certainly particularities about the concept of individual liberty that developed with the Enlightenment in the West, which emphasized rights rather than duties. Furthermore, the achievement of republicanism and liberal democracy is one to be proud of and cherish. But the idea of personal dignity and freedom from oppression are certainly also part of non-Western thought and human struggles.

Even within the West there is some disagreement about the relative importance of positive versus negative freedom. People in the West had the good fortune that these Enlightenment ideals eventually became governing rules, in some places earlier than others, and even if initially only for only some people. It does not mean that the West owns the ideals of freedom or equality uniquely and forever more. It was after all the freemen of Europe who denied liberty and dignity to their subject peoples outside Europe and enlightened U.S. leaders who sanctioned enslavement of their Black compatriots (and yes, there were always some radical humanist Europeans and white Americans who fought for global equality and slavery’s abolition, but these were almost never the men in power). More

recently, Western governments have undermined or overthrown legitimate democratically elected governments in the Global South if these seemed to have communist or socialist sympathies, and they continue to support despots. Furthermore, there has never been a complete consensus among all the people in the West in support of “Western” values. Racism and fascism have been dominant Western values as well, ones that still influence politics today.

The West Is Not the World

The West, as noted above, is not only a geopolitical (shifting) unit; it is an idea. But it is an idea that varies according to vantage point. There are those who argue that the West should be seen as an Enlightenment project, not a geographically confined space (Europe and North America), or historical geopolitical grouping (the “free world” allied against the communist East). In this view, India may be the next big “Western” power. This appears to be an inclusive idea—certainly an improvement on exclusionary concepts of “us” versus “them,” Occident and Orient. But it only works for conversations within the West, and especially in those European countries, such as Germany, that have their own long history between East and West. One cannot assume of the “them” outside of Europe that they are ready to forget what came before.

In the West as idea there are parallels to the concept of the United States as an ideal of democracy and freedom, as well as a country that has always failed to achieve these ideals, captured famously and beautifully by Langston Hughes in 1935:

Let America be America again.
Let it be the dream it used to be.
Let it be the pioneer on the plain
Seeking a home where he himself is free.
(America never was America to me.)
Let America be the dream the dreamers
dreamed—
Let it be that great strong land of love

Where never kings connive nor tyrants scheme
That any man be crushed by one above.
(It never was America to me.)
O, let my land be a land where Liberty
Is crowned with no false patriotic wreath,
But opportunity is real, and life is free,
Equality is in the air we breathe.
(There's never been equality for me,
Nor freedom in this "homeland of the free.")⁵¹

However, while this works in the context of debates among Americans about their country, it does not translate for the West and the world. If the West is an idea, and even if it can be agreed that this idea is the Enlightenment one as opposed to any thought that dominated earlier, Westerners should acknowledge that this idea encompasses not only rational politics, freedom, individual rights, but also superiority, Eurocentrism, and racism.

Moreover, the reality of the West cannot be ignored or minimized. Even the Enlightenment West of the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries almost always meant occupation, exploitation, and oppression for those outside it. The universalism of liberal values, in theory and practice, entails a presumed superiority for those who define what is modern and universal. As Hans Kundnani—a Briton of Dutch/Indian heritage—has written, it can be difficult for Europeans whose family came from former colonies to identify with the pro-European cause. He also identifies “a Eurocentric tendency to mistake Europe for the world.”⁵² A similar tendency brings Westerners to think that their definition of the West (and Western values) is shared by everyone.

One can imagine how impossible it is for Algerians or Egyptians today to identify with a European cause. It is not much easier for them to identify with the West, even though these regions are part of the history of Western civilization and many there today seek (as

they did under European occupation) the freedoms available to citizens in the West.

The achievements of the geopolitical and Enlightenment West—from rule of law and liberal-democratic traditions of tolerance to a belief in non-zero-sum alliances—are worth defending. Worth championing is also the vision of Woodrow Wilson and his successors of a global order that would establish rules for international behavior and a language of interaction besides power, including “freedom of navigation upon the seas” and “mutual guarantees of political independence and territorial integrity to great and small nations alike.”⁵³

A helpful way to prevent confidence in liberal democracy from becoming hubris is to consistently reexamine one's perspective.

Liberal democracies across the globe should cooperate to continue Wilson's work to “make the world safe for democracy,” which includes ensuring that technology is safe for democracy. To frame such projects or goals as Western is not helpful in the global context. In terms of global governance, Western leaders will have to make room for others to shape the rules. Political thinkers outside the West have plenty of suggestions of how this could work. These ideas should be sought out, at least for considered. A helpful way to prevent confidence in liberal democracy from becoming hubris is to consistently reexamine one's perspective. Westerners can start by reading more by critics of the West and the Western order and reexamining their own assumptions.

51 Langston Hughes, “[Let America Be America Again](#).”

52 Point 2 and 14 of Wilson's 14 Points. Woodrow Wilson, [Address to Congress](#), February 11, 1918.

53 Point 2 and 14 of Wilson's 14 Points. Woodrow Wilson, [Address to Congress](#), February 11, 1918.

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