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# Introduction: The Normative Dimension Is Indispensable

*Muqtedar Khan*

For nearly a century, the international system has experienced challenges that were existential and radical in nature. These challenges were primarily ideological: Fascism in the early twentieth century, Communism in the second half, global terrorism after that, and now we are experiencing an uneasy lull in systemic challenges of human origin, but threats do loom over the horizon. The first two challenges came from a coalition of countries that sought to transform the norms and values that dominated the international order underwritten by Western nations, specially under the hegemony of English-speaking nations — first the United Kingdom and then the United States. These challenges did not alter the balance of power or undermine the norms that have governed the global order. They both failed. Fascism was defeated in

World War II (1939–45) and Communism via the Cold War (1945–89). One reason for the endurance of the current global order is its value system. Even though this value system gradually emerged as a system of multilateral global governance that privileged democracy and democratic processes, it has since remained at the core of the ideologies that have united, empowered, and kept Western nations hegemonic for such a long time.

These values are respect for human dignity through the human rights discourse, respect for democracy, multilateralism, freedom of religion (all through a plethora of international organizations), and a premium on prosperity through free markets (globalization) and technological innovation. Critics and cynics may point to many cases when the underwriters of the



global order themselves violated these values that they claim to uphold and promote. And they will be correct. But there are also many more examples of the international order upholding and promoting these norms and, whether fully realized or not, they have become the gold standard for judging state behavior and for developing visions for a more peaceful, cooperative, and fair global system. Today, key nations of the Western alliance, the United States and France, do not even qualify as full democracies, yet President Biden has cast the Chinese challenge to Western hegemony as a contest between democracy and autocracy. Advocating democracy, a multilateral order, and respect for human rights may be far from reality, but their cache as desirable values still makes them the cornerstones of global discourses of legitimacy.

The most important global issue that dominates foreign policy thinking and geopolitical analysis everywhere is how U.S.-China relations unfold going forward. What will dominate U.S.-China relations – selective cooperation on planetary issues like pandemics and climate change, competition in the economic and technological arena, or geopolitical conflicts in East Asia? Already the Biden administration is framing U.S.-China relations as a contest between governing models – democracy versus authoritarianism. Essentially what is at stake is the future of the universal values that undergird the current international order. It is in this global political environment that we present this book on the continuing relevance and desirability of universal values in foreign policy. We are very fortunate to be able to assemble such an illustrious and diverse group of scholars who have the highest experience in policy making, in international organizations, and in academia.

Professor Joseph Nye, who is one of the most prominent scholars of international relations and American foreign policy, discusses the relevance of universal values to a nation's soft power. He reminds us that most foreign policy decisions that nations make are not existential, and hence, leaders do have the opportunity on most foreign policy matters to define national interests more broadly to include universal values. He argues that soft power is an

important element of a nation's power, and it comes from, among other things, legitimacy. International legitimacy comes from democratic governance and from respect for universal human rights. He points out that on the soft power index "Soft Power 30,"<sup>1</sup> it is not accidental that the top nations are democracies. He makes an important argument that even nondemocratic nations (like China) are beginning to pay attention to the importance of soft power, and this raises the hope that universal values will receive more attention.

Michael Doyle, who is a very important voice on the role of ethics in international affairs, traces the origins of the powerful international norm RtoP (Responsibility to Protect), even as it challenges the U.N. charter, which frowns upon interventionism. Professor Doyle makes the nuanced argument that RtoP is both a *license* for and a *leash upon* use of force for interventions. He makes the case for RtoP as a responsible policy option that balances the need to protect vulnerable populations and preserve national sovereignty. Professor Doyle discusses both international legal and ethical debates, as RtoP becomes a serious international norm. He shows how, in a world where nations guard their sovereignty jealously, a new universal value that vulnerable communities must be protected by the international society of nations can rapidly become policy relevant globally. If RtoP does not send the message that universal values matter and are policy relevant and realizable, then nothing can.

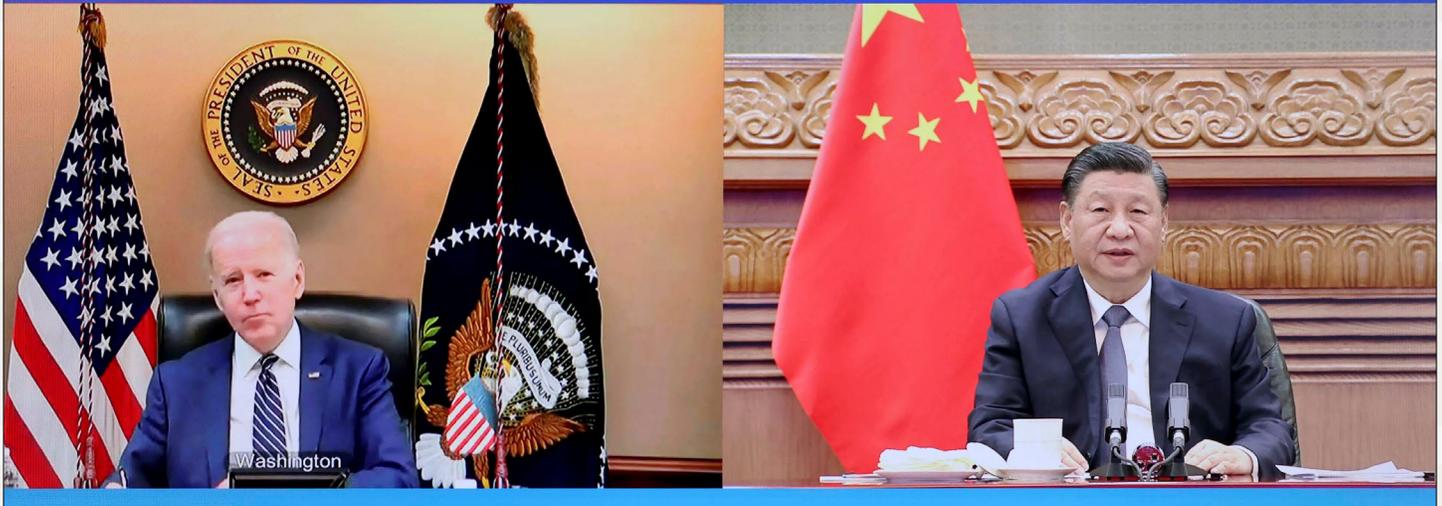
Stuart Kaufman is a prominent international relations theorist whose work on symbolic politics is well known. He examines the impact of norms and values on war and violence. He presents a mixed picture. In his assessment, we have witnessed a significant decline in interstate wars as well as civil wars, and he argues that while values are not the only cause for the decline, international norms and humanitarian values have indeed played an important role in reducing war and civil wars. He also, however, points to a troubling reality. When wars do break out, there is less respect and adherence to values by states, especially with regard to protecting civilian lives. He also warns that with the rise of populist tendencies worldwide and

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<sup>1</sup> See the index on the World Wide Web at: <https://softpower30.com/>.



## 习近平主席同美国总统拜登视频通话 Video Call between President Xi Jinping and U.S. President Joe Biden



Chinese President Xi Jinping (R) has a video call with U.S. President Joe Biden on March 18, 2022. (Getty Images)

the decline of democracy, the possibilities of war and violence in the future have increased. Kaufman's essay is important in that it shows that in the past century, the emerging regimes of norms and values have clearly made the world more peaceful. It is incumbent upon us who value peace and eschew war and violence to strengthen and promote universal values with greater commitment.

Jacqueline Anne Braveboy-Wagner is a prominent and recognized scholar of the international relations of the Global South. In her essay, she explores two characteristics of the literature on the Global South. One is the debate about nomenclature and collective shared identity. Is the Global South underdeveloped, developed, or developing? Is it fair to call it the third world anymore? And can China be considered as representative of the Global South, or can it even be included in the Global South? The second issue is, given the vast diversity of the nations that are considered to be part of the Global South, are there really common values that shape their foreign policies? She provides a thoughtful analysis and concludes that there are indeed common values that inform the foreign policies of nations from the Global South.

Opposition to armed intervention and hegemony are enduring principles that unite the Global South. But they are also committed to democracy, good governance, and the responsibility of nations to protect (RtoP) vulnerable populations. On the economic front, the Global South is a strong advocate of equality and fairness. Our takeaway from this essay is that values such as democracy, fairness, and good governance often associated with Western foreign policies are indeed global in their acceptance and desirability.

Deina Abdulkader is an important scholar studying Islam and social justice. In this essay, she focuses on the scholarship of Imam al-Shatibi, whose work on the higher purposes of Islamic law (*maqasid al-shariah*) is playing an important role in how some contemporary Islamic jurists are redefining Islamic law and seeking to apply it to contemporary matters. She identifies the principle of public welfare as one of the key elements of this approach to Islamic law. She examines the foreign policies of Middle Eastern nations and argues that the higher goals of Islamic law do not really inform their foreign policies, which are more influenced by *realpolitik*. Abdulkader's essay continues to strengthen the fundamental premise



that Islamic values are in congruence with emerging universal values of good governance, and Muslim nations too must sincerely seek to realize them in their domestic and foreign policies. For them it will be a win-win situation. They gain the benefits of good governance and also the legitimacy that comes from implementing Islamic values.

Jeffrey Haynes is one of the foremost scholars studying the role of religion in international affairs. In this publication, he explores how religious values influence the foreign policies of states, with particular attention to U.S., India, and Israel. He observes that while some countries may pursue certain policy goals influenced by religious values or identity, he also acknowledges that there are nonstate actors too in the international arena that are motivated by religion. He discusses how religion is also a source of soft power for some nations. While Haynes does not make a positive case for religion in foreign policy, he does succeed in showing that the world is not entirely secular, and even in democracies religion can play an influential role in the making of foreign policy.

Dan Bottomley is a rising star in the field of public diplomacy, with extensive experience in designing and conducting public diplomacy programs for the U.S. State Department. He compares the public diplomacy efforts of the U.S., Germany, and China, and shows how values are at the core of all of these public diplomacy programs. In all three programs – U.S.’

Fulbright program, Germany’s Goethe Institutes, and China’s Confucius Institutes – the goal is to generate strategic influence, but they are all seeking to promote and project values. Bottomley does point out that while Fulbright and Goethe Institutes are in line with democratic values and are open to criticism of sponsoring countries, the Confucius Institutes, however, are developing a reputation for lagging in this particular attribute. From the experience and relative success of these institutes, it appears that nations that incorporate universal values beyond advancing national culture and interests are likely to be more successful.

From the essays in this book, it is amply evident that values matter and are indeed indispensable. Whether a nation is seeking to develop soft power or gain strategic influence through public diplomacy, respect for and adoption of universal values is critical. There is a causal relationship between the decline in number of wars and political violence and humanitarian values. While the role of religious values in foreign relations is observable, it is not clear whether they are necessarily positive or negative. Most importantly, there is global acceptance of emerging international norms and values such as RtoP. Yes, indeed, there are worrisome global trends such as the decline of democracy, rise of populism, and growing economic inequity, but it is also true that values are a factor in foreign policy making of nations everywhere. □



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