

NEXUS INSTITUTE

Nexus Conference 2022

The War and the Future



Saturday 19 November | 10.30 AM — 4.00 PM

National Opera & Ballet, Amsterdam

Nicolas Baverez — Donatella Di Cesare — Admiral William Fallon

Oksana Forostyna — Jean-Marie Guéhenno — Zena Hitz

László Krasznahorkai — Mary Beth Long — Bruno Maçães

Kishore Mahbubani — Achille Mbembe — Ray Monk

Radek Sikorski — Leon Wieseltier — Sean Wilentz — Lea Ypi

Programme Nexus Conference

Saturday 19 November 2022

National Opera & Ballet, Amsterdam

10.30 AM Welcome *Rob Riemen*

10.45 AM A WAR FOR THE FUTURE

Roundtable conversation with *Admiral William Fallon*,
Jean-Marie Guéhenno, *László Krasznahorkai*, *Mary Beth Long*,
Bruno Maçães, *Kishore Mahbubani*, *Ray Monk*, *Radek Sikorski*,
moderated by *Rob Riemen*

1.00 PM Lunch with complimentary refreshments

1.45 PM A FUTURE WITHOUT WAR?

Roundtable conversation with *Nicolas Baverez*,
Donatella Di Cesare, *Oksana Forostyna*, *Zena Hitz*,
Achille Mbembe, *Leon Wieseltier*, *Sean Wilentz*, *Lea Ypi*,
moderated by *Rob Riemen*

4.00 PM Book signing

The conference will be held in English.

The programme may be subject to change. For the latest information on the conference and its speakers and for terms and conditions, please see our website www.nexus-institute.com.

Nexus Conference 2022

The War and the Future

Washington DC, 13 October 1943

Standing in the wings, Archibald MacLeish watches with satisfaction as an audience fills the Coolidge Auditorium of the Library of Congress. The people arriving are aware they are in the privileged position this Wednesday evening of being able to attend a reading by a man regarded in America as ‘the greatest living man of letters’, of whom the whole of Washington knows that he has the ear of President Roosevelt and who will speak this evening on a subject that is occupying the minds of everybody here almost daily: *The War and the Future*. In the front rows are therefore several senators, waiting in eager anticipation, including the leader of the Democrats in the Senate, Alben Barkley, members of the Supreme Court of Justice, and, with his wife Agnes, Eugene Meyer, the fabulously wealthy owner of the *The Washington Post*, who is sponsoring this talk.

As the Librarian of Congress, MacLeish is the host this evening and it is his job to welcome the public at 8.30 pm precisely and introduce the famous speaker. It is also the ideal opportunity for him to ask the more than seven hundred people present, all of them equally prominent and influential, to give their attention and support to a mission of his own, a mission he regards as complementary to that of President Roosevelt and the reason why in 1939, as a poet and essayist lacking any experience as a librarian, he was willing to respond to the urgent request of his president to take over the leadership of the Library of Congress.

Just as Roosevelt believes that America must be the world’s *arsenal of democracy*, MacLeish believes that his library must be a *fortress of freedom* in America, the leading educational institution for the values and ideals of democracy. Why that is, he explained in a barnstorming speech six weeks after the Second World War broke out and less than two weeks before he took up his post as librarian, on 19 October 1939 in a speech to the Carnegie Institute in Pittsburgh. That speech was called ‘Libraries in the Contemporary Crisis’ and in it MacLeish argued there could be no doubting the fact that the fascist spirit that was destroying free culture and democracy in Europe was also haunting the United States. America therefore faced a fundamental choice:

We can either educate the people of this Republic to know and therefore to value and therefore to preserve their own democratic culture, or we can watch the people of this Republic trade their democratic culture for the ignorance and prejudice and the hate of which the just and proper name is fascism. [...] This education cannot fall upon the schools. There is no longer time to await the education of a new generation which will come in due course to a more enlightened maturity. It cannot be left to newspapers, moving pictures or the radio. The libraries alone are capable of acting directly upon the present adult generation. The libraries, in brief, are the only institutions in the United States capable of dealing with the contemporary crisis in American life in terms and under conditions which give promise of success. They are the only institutions in American life capable of opening to the citizens of the Republic a knowledge of the wealth and richness of the culture which a century and a half of democratic life has produced.

Maintaining libraries and providing access to their collections costs money, however. A great deal of money. In the four years in which he has now been in charge of the Library of Congress, the biggest library in America, MacLeish has experienced for himself how difficult it is to obtain from the politicians across the street on Capitol Hill sufficient resources to fund their own library, which, now that democracy is in more danger than ever, needs to be a fortress of freedom. Often enough he has found it impossible to repress the cynical thought that you probably could not win elections by sustaining a culture of books. Which is why this evening, in front of this select audience made up of the elite of Washington DC, as they sit waiting to hear what the famous guest has to say about *The War and the Future*, he wants to remind them in his welcoming remarks of what Thucydides observed centuries ago in his epic about the Peloponnesian War: 'War, which takes away the comfortable provision of daily life, is a hard master.'

It is 8.30 pm, time to start. With a quick glance at his short word of welcome he walks onto the stage, greets those present and tells them the following:

Ten years ago in May, the political party which controls Germany and had intended to control the world burned in the streets of Berlin 25 thousand books written by men they feared and hated, and had good reason to fear and hate. [...] A few days ago, the army let loose upon the world by these same men destroyed in Naples two libraries with over 200 thousand volumes. They destroyed a collection, a tool of mind, an instrument of learning, something that men had built up and put together over many generations, and that had great value.

With Thucydides in mind, he went on by observing:

In times of peace, in ordinary times, we take libraries, and the men who write the books in the libraries, the scholars who work in them, the artists of our time, for granted. To speak quite truthfully, they bore us. Libraries are boring. But acts of bestiality, curiously enough, have a certain virtue of their own: they revive the meaning and the quality of things. We owe it to the bestiality of the Nazis that we have recovered a certain sense of the meaning of simple, common human decency; and we owe it to the Nazis that we have recovered a sense of what it is to have put together a great collection of books, and what it is to surround those books with scholars, with men of learning.

In the hope that his message, worded diplomatically but clear enough nonetheless, has got through to the audience in front of him, the moment has now come to introduce, with justifiable pride, the speaker for the evening, ‘the greatest living man of letters’, not just the pre-eminent representative of the world of the book but a man who, through his fame, his tireless struggle against the fascist spirit and his defence of democratic values and ideals all over America, is also known as Hitler’s greatest intellectual enemy: Thomas Mann!



While MacLeish was standing in the wings observing members of the public arriving, Thomas Mann was sitting not far away at a table behind the stage, calmly reading through what he was about to say. His thoughts wandered to August, the month in which he started working on this lecture, which would need to be translated into English as well. The choice of the subject *The War and the Future* was inspired by all the good news about military progress by Allied troops in Europe that was being reported in detail each day by the American newspapers, which, in Los Angeles, where Mann had been living since April 1941, the exiled European read avidly.

The Sixth Army led by General Paulus, after the long siege of Stalingrad, had been annihilated by the Red Army in February and so the city had been liberated. Leningrad was still besieged, but Kyiv in Ukraine had now been taken back from the Germans by the Russians. Operation Husky, the invasion of Sicily in July led by General Eisenhower, had met with great success.

Aside from all these positive developments on the military front, for his lecture ‘The War and the Future’ that he was about to deliver, Thomas Mann had been inspired mainly by a speech that President Roosevelt gave on Wednesday 25 August in the Canadian capital Ottawa and that was broadcast live on American radio.

Nine days earlier, on 16 August, Roosevelt had travelled by train from Washington to Canada for what soon became known as the Quebec Conference. He was there, in Château Frontenac, along with Winston Churchill and the Canadian prime minister William Lyon Mackenzie King, to take major decisions about strategy for the next phase of the war. Three days before that, the British Army high command under the leadership of General Alan Brooke and the American Army high command led by General George Marshall had come together in the Château to formulate military advice to give to their political leaders. Opinions were divided, deeply divided in fact. The Americans had set their sights on Operation Overlord, the invasion of Normandy, as the most efficient operation for defeating, first of all, Hitler's Germany. The British, however, had little faith in an invasion in Normandy and believed that southern Europe had to be liberated first. It could be done without too many casualties, and they were also conscious of the fact that Stalin's Soviet Union would not be able to occupy Europe's southern flank.

In the days leading up to his arrival in Quebec, President Roosevelt had informed Churchill what the outcome of the Quebec Conference needed to be: absolute priority for Operation Overlord with an American general as commander-in-chief for the invasion of Normandy. Now it was important to get all those present in Château Frontenac on the same page and maintain a united front among the Western Allies.

Churchill had already resigned himself to Roosevelt's decision and General Brooke (despite disappointment at not being given leadership of the invasion of Normandy) reconciled himself to it as well. So it was decided that Operation Overlord would begin on 1 May 1944. It was eventually moved back to 6 June 1944, but the decision about what was to be the most important military operation for the future of Europe had now been taken.

During his visit to Canada, President Roosevelt also wanted to talk about the future of Europe, the future of the world, and he agreed with the Canadian prime minister that after the Quebec Conference, Roosevelt would deliver a speech in public on 25 August in Ottawa. A speech in which he would outline his *moral vision* of the future.



It was a sun-drenched day when an estimated thirty thousand Canadians gathered on Parliament Hill to listen to what the American president, standing on a high stage next to the gothic architecture of the Canadian parliament building, had to say in his speech, which was broadcast by radio to a worldwide audience.

Roosevelt told his listeners that constructive talks had taken place in Quebec about how the war could be won in the shortest possible time. He went on:

And we have arrived, harmoniously, at certain definite conclusions. Of course, I am not at liberty to disclose just what these conclusions are. But, in due time, we shall communicate the secret information of the Quebec Conference to Germany, Italy, and Japan. We will communicate this information to our enemies in the only language their twisted minds seem capable of understanding. [...] If Hitler and his generals had known our plans they would have realized that discretion is still the better part of valor and that surrender would pay them better now than later.

However, the Nazis, Roosevelt was convinced, would rather fight to the death than surrender:

The evil characteristic that makes a Nazi a Nazi is his utter inability to understand and therefore to respect the qualities or the rights of his fellow men. His only method of dealing with his neighbor is first to delude him with lies, and then either kill him or enslave him. And the same thing is true of the fanatical militarists of Japan.

He impressed upon his audience that the Allies were 'going to be rid of outlaws this time', before moving on to address his most important subject: the post-war world:

There is a longing in the air. It is not a longing to go back to what they call 'the good old days'. I have distinct reservations as to how good 'the good old days' were. I would rather believe that we can achieve new and better days.

'A greater freedom', Roosevelt stressed, was what the future must bring the world. And it could. He raised his voice:

I am everlastingly angry only at those who assert vociferously that the Four Freedoms and the Atlantic Charter are nonsense because they are unattainable. If these people had lived a century and a half ago, they would have sneered and said that the Declaration of Independence was utter piffle. If they had lived nearly a thousand years ago they would have laughed uproariously at the ideals of Magna Carta. And if they had lived several thousand years ago they would have derided Moses when he came from the Mountain with the Ten Commandments. We concede that these great teachings are not perfectly lived up to today, but I would rather be a builder than a wrecker, hoping always that the structure of life is growing — not dying. May the destroyers who still persist in our midst decrease. They, like some of our enemies, have a long road to travel before they accept the ethics of humanity. Some day, in the distant future

perhaps — but some day, it is certain — all of them will remember with the Master: ‘Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.’

While in Ottawa the crowd that had stood on Parliament Hill listening to the speech by the American president was greeting his vision of the future of the world with loud applause and a standing ovation that lasted for several minutes, in Los Angeles Thomas Mann, who had listened attentively, glued to the radio, quickly made a few notes. Then he turned off the radio and first took a long walk along Santa Monica Boulevard. Looking out over the endless undulating blue of the Pacific Ocean, he was able to gather his thoughts about what he wanted to say in his lecture in October.

After everything he had just heard, Mann realized once again the extent to which Roosevelt’s vision of a humane world was based on a vision of humanity and the wider world that he shared with the American president. He smiled as he recalled how in January 1941 he had listened to Roosevelt’s Inaugural Address and was pleasantly surprised to hear that the president had been largely inspired by the lively conversation between the two men six days earlier in the White House and by his two talks he had then given the president in printed form: ‘The Coming Victory of Democracy’ and ‘War and Democracy’.

‘I gave him my ideas for his Inaugural Address, and now he has given me his ideas for my talk. *Danke schön*, Mr. President! *The War and the Future* will be my theme too, when in October I put in an appearance again in the Library of Congress.’



As Archibald MacLeish is making his way to his seat in the front row of the Coolidge Auditorium, Mann takes up position at the lectern and opens his lecture with the remark that for an artist it is always strange to express a political vision, because an artist by nature wants to present a total picture, including all different visions, whether or not with appropriate irony, because one point of view cannot capture the truth. However, he goes on, we are now living in a time when even the artist has to recognize a responsibility to defend fundamental values publicly. He has little time for ‘the intellectual snob’ who looks down on ‘middle-class ideas’, since those ideas, Mann claims, are nothing other than:

The liberal tradition. It is the complex of ideas of freedom and progress, of humanitarianism, of civilization — in short, the claim of reason to dominate the dynamics of nature, of instinct, of blood, of the unconscious, the primitive spontaneity of life.

the imaginary, the instinctive. However:

It is a terrible spectacle when irrationalism becomes popular. One feels that disaster is imminent, a disaster such as the one-sided overvaluation of reason could never bring about. The over-valuation of reason can be comical in its optimistic pedantry and can be made to look ridiculous by the deeper powers of life. But it does not evoke catastrophe. That is brought about only by the enthronement of anti-reason. At a certain period when fascism took over politically in Germany and Italy, when nationalism became the focus and universal expression of all these tendencies, I was convinced that nothing but war and general destruction could be the final outcome of the irrationalistic orgy, and that in short order. What seemed necessary was the memory of other values, of the idea of democracy, of humanity, of peace, and of human freedom and dignity. It was this side of human nature that needed our help. [...] Freedom and justice are vital; and to think of them as boring, simply means an acceptance of the fascistic pseudo-revolutionary fraud that violence and mass-deception are the last word and most up-to-date. The better mind knows that the really new thing in the world which the living spirit is called upon to serve is something totally different, namely, a social democracy and a humanism which, instead of being caught in a cowardly relativism, have the courage once more to distinguish between good and evil.

The European peoples, Mann goes on, refuse to subject themselves to the evil of Hitler's New World Order, but what is the responsibility of the German people for the crimes of the Nazi regime? He examines this crucial question in detail and tries to make clear to his American audience that German culture has never really had much interest in the political and social domain, instead it has had too strong a focus on the primal being, the mystical, the sublime. As a consequence, when the Germans were faced with immense social problems — such as poverty and mass unemployment after defeat in the First World War — they preferred a mythical substitute to practical social politics. Mann:

It is not difficult to recognize in so-called national socialism, a mythical substitute of this sort. Translated from political terminology into the psychological, national socialism means: 'I do not want the social at all. I want the folk fairy-tale.' But in the political realm, the fairy-tale becomes a murderous lie.

Mann adds that there is nothing wrong with German Romanticism as such, that its ideal of beauty is of universal value, but,

National socialism is a shameful aberration and Hitler is the corrupter of Germany and Europe. Power politics corrupted this universalism and turned into evil, for whenever universalism becomes power politics then humanity must arise and defend its liberty.

Now that victory in Europe and the liberation of the continent are assured, even if it takes another year or a year and a half, what wisdom is necessary for the time after the war? Mann stresses that we should never forget that:

Fascism, of which national socialism is a peculiar variation, is not a specialty of Germany. It is a sickness of the times, which is everywhere at home, and from which no country is free!

He therefore thinks it all the more important that people are conscious of what constitutes the essence of democracy.

Democracy is of course in the first line a claim, a demand for justice and equal rights. It is a justified demand from below. But in my eyes it is even more beautiful if it is good will, generosity and love coming from the top down. I do not consider it very democratic if little Mr. Smith or little Mr. Jones slaps Beethoven on the back and shouts: 'How are you, old man!' That is not democracy but tactlessness and a lack of feeling for differences. But when Beethoven sings: 'Be embraced, ye millions, this kiss to all the world' — that is democracy. For he could say: 'I am a great genius and something quite special, but the people are a mob; I am much too proud and particular to embrace them.' Instead he calls them all his brothers and children of one Father in Heaven, who is also his own. That is democracy in its highest form, far removed from demagoguery and a flattering wooing of the masses. I have always subscribed to this kind of democracy; but that is exactly the reason why I feel deeply that there is nothing more abominable than deception of the masses and betrayal of the people.

Up to this point Mann could be assured of many nods of agreement, but familiar as he is with the American psyche, he is not surprised to see countless worried faces in the audience as soon as he names communism as a second ideal that must be cherished in order to allow a civilized world to survive. He therefore explains that social change is comparable to developments in music. New music may sound like uncontrolled noise to a layman's ears, but people then become used to it.

Today it is scarcely believable that Mozart at first seemed turgid, and harmonically extravagant, that Verdi in comparison with Donizetti was terribly difficult, Beethoven unendurably bizarre, Wagner crazily futuristic, Mahler an incomprehensible noise.

We will have to get used to social change in a similar way, Mann argues. Private property is something fundamentally human, yet we have accepted inheritance laws that impose taxes on the wealthy. Similarly, we will have to have more regard for the common good, growing mutual dependence and responsibility for all earthly things. These are all 'communitistic' ideas, yet as old as the ideas of the Church Fathers. To reassure his audience, Mann tells them that he doesn't want to advocate only those things that are new:

Never is the artist only the protagonist and prophet of the new but also the heir and repository of the old. Always he brings forth the new out of tradition. [...] The need to reestablish is as imperative as the demand for renewal.

With the end of President Roosevelt's speech of 25 August in Ottawa in mind, Mann formulates a similar vision of the future.

What needs to be reestablished more than anything else are the commandments of religion, of Christianity, which have been trod underfoot by a false revolution. From these commandments must be derived the fundamental law under which the peoples of the future will live together and to which all will have to pay reverence. No real pacification of the world, no cooperation of the people for the common good and for human progress will be possible unless such a basic law is established, which notwithstanding national diversity and liberty must be valid for all and recognized by all as a Magna Carta of human rights, guaranteeing the individual his security in justice, his inviolability, his right to work and the enjoyment of life. For such a universal basis, may the American Bill of Rights serve as a model.

Mann ends his lecture 'The War and the Future' after an hour and twenty minutes by saying that this vision of the future can be made a reality only if a new humanism first awakens in people's hearts.

This new humanism will have a different character, a different color and tone than the earlier related movements. This new humanism will have endured too much to be satisfied with an optimistic naiveté and the desire to see human life through rosy glasses. It will lack all bombast. It will be aware of the tragedy of all human life without letting that awareness

destroy its courage and will. It will not disavow its religious traits, for in the idea of human dignity, of the value of the individual soul, humanism transcends into the religious. Concepts like freedom, truth, justice, belong to a trans-biological sphere, the sphere of the Absolute, to the religious sphere. Optimism and pessimism are empty words to this humanism. They cancel each other in the determination to preserve the honor of man, in the paths of sympathy and duty. It seems to me that without such a pathos as the basis of all thinking and doing, the structure of a better, happier world, the world community that we wish to achieve out of the present struggle, will be impossible. The defense of reason against blood and instinct does not imply that its creative power should be overestimated. Creative alone is feeling guided by reason, is an ever active love.

After those closing words, spoken with true conviction, Thomas Mann received a standing ovation just as President Roosevelt had two months earlier. He was to deliver his lecture several more times in the weeks that followed, in cities in Canada and the United States. Again and again it was received with such enthusiasm that it felt to him as if everyone who came to listen wanted to become part of the ideal future he had sketched.

It was not until July 1944 that Mann published his talk in the language in which it was written, his native German. Operation Overlord, the invasion of Normandy, which happened to coincide with his 69th birthday, was by then a success. Almost all the conversations that went on at dinner parties concerned just one subject: what would the future, the post-war world order, look like? The title under which Mann published the German version of his lecture was not ‘*Der Krieg und die Zukunft*’, however, but ‘*Schicksal und Aufgabe* – Fate and Mission’, convinced as he was that such was the essence of the ideal of the future that he shared with President Roosevelt: a mission.

1989

In the 1989 summer edition of *The National Interest*, a 36-year-old political scientist called Francis Fukuyama published an essay entitled ‘The End of History and the Last Man’. His most important proposition was that with the end of the twentieth century in sight, it was obvious that the Western idea of a liberal capitalist democracy had triumphed over all other ideologies. With the fall of the Berlin Wall just a few months later, on 9 November, Fukuyama became world-famous overnight. The collapse of the Soviet Union, and with it a communist world order, was seen by the whole world as confirmation that Fukuyama was right: the Cold War was over, the end of history was near. The vision shared by Roosevelt and Mann, of a world order of democratic states, in which every individual was given the chance to live a dignified life in freedom, was emerging on the horizon.

1992–1993

In 1992 Fukuyama adapted his 1989 essay into a book that became a best-seller worldwide and quickly acquired the status of a classic. The enormous success of *The End of History and the Last Man* is attributable in part to the fact that it is a brilliantly written and well-considered work, but perhaps more importantly, the author was expressing what almost everyone — in the Western world at any rate — wanted to believe.

Almost, but not quite everyone. Some intellectuals were sceptical or even pessimistic about the future that now awaited the world. But amid all the euphoria those voices were not heard for the time being.

One of the sceptics was Ken Jowitt. A generation older than Fukuyama, he had been teaching political sciences at the University of California in Berkeley since 1968. He too published a book in 1992: *New World Disorder*. It included an essay in which he presents a radically different picture of what was in store for the world.

We must temper our Enlightenment optimism with the recognition that a crisis is not automatically a developmental opportunity. Today and for the near future, crises, not developmental opportunities, may be the rule. [...] In the next decade and beyond, an unusual number of leaders and movements will appear making claims about a new way of life or the restoration of a former period of glory. [...] Their appearance and actions will reflect and contribute to a world marked by increasing national and international disorder. [...] As long as the West retains its partisan liberal capitalist democratic identity, it will regularly generate movements — internally and externally — opposing or attacking, attempting to reform or destroy it; movements that in one form or another will emphasize the value of group membership, expressive behavior, collective solidarity, and heroic action. [...] Like individualism, democracy is a historically rare and deviant phenomenon, requiring not only a certain level of economic and social development, talented leadership, and a dash of ‘fortuna’, but also *intense cultural trauma* — as was the experience of West Germany and Japan. [...] In the near future the most extraordinary development within the ‘Third World’ may be the emergence and victory of movements of rage. [...] Movements of Rage are violent nativist responses to failure, frustration, and perplexity. [...] Should the United States continue to cast itself primarily as military leader of the West, the domestic results will be increasingly economic disorder, and consequent racial violence that will make the 1960s look benign.

On 8 March 1992 *The New York Times* published on its front page a lengthy article showing that — brushing aside Ken Jowitt’s warning — the America of President George W. Bush wanted to do all it could to be military leader

not just of the West but of the whole world. The newspaper quoted at length from a confidential Pentagon document compiled by the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, Paul Wolfowitz.

In the document, which has gone down in history as the ‘Wolfowitz Doctrine’, the author argues that after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the 1991 Gulf War, America is now the only ‘global power’ and must remain so. America must ensure that no other, rival superpower can ever arise again. The integration of European states is welcome, but America must prevent Europe from developing its own security force independently of NATO. It is now the job and the responsibility of America to see to it that international legislation is respected everywhere, and that democratic movements in countries ruled by authoritarian regimes are supported. But in order to do so, America must first safeguard its own vital geopolitical interests, such as access to oil in the Persian Gulf, the prevention of the proliferation of nuclear weapons and action against regional powers that strive for superpower status, wherever they may be.

Right away there was much criticism of this doctrine, by Senator Edward Kennedy for example, the younger brother of the murdered John F. Kennedy and Robert Kennedy. After familiarizing himself with the document, he came to the conclusion that the political doctrine contained in it was nothing other than ‘a call for 21st century American imperialism that no other country can or should accept.’ His criticism, however, was countered with the following question. If America does not ensure the continued existence of a world order in which democracy, with its rule of law, individual freedom and human rights, is defended, what power will do so?

Meanwhile, in Europe, an as yet unknown French diplomat called Jean-Marie Guéhenno (who later became Kofi Annan’s right hand as Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations at the UN) was saying that he did not believe we were approaching the end of history, nor that America as a world power could safeguard democracy. In 1993 he published an essay entitled *La Fin de la démocratie* (published in English as *The End of the Nation-State*), in which he argued that the Cold War had meant that a range of political ideas was preserved for us in a frozen state. Now, however, with the end of the Cold War, that mental ice had melted and we would become conscious of the fact that there was no longer any real relationship between the ideas of our political order and everyday reality: ‘...The words *democracy*, *politics*, *liberty* define our mental horizon, but we are no longer sure that we know them in a real sense, and our attachment to them has more to do with reflex than with reflection.’ The world of power was changing, society was increasingly fragmented, politics had become the maidservant of power, and in a society in which money represented the ultimate form of power, corruption would become lord and master — that was the pessimistic analysis of the diplomat, and it made the vision of Roosevelt and Mann seem further away than ever.

11 September 2001

The attacks by Osama bin Laden on the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center in New York and on the Pentagon near Washington D C marked the end of the end of history.

25 April 2005

In a speech to the Russian parliament that lasted two hours, President Putin impressed upon representatives of the Russian people that the collapse of the Soviet Union was ‘the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the century’. It was his first public warning that a world order dominated by America would not be accepted by him.

18 November 2017

In Amsterdam the annual Nexus Conference took place with as its theme ‘The Last Revolution’, a reference to Trotsky’s belief that the Russian Revolution, a hundred years ago by this point, would be the last. For the afternoon debate on the subject ‘the world of freedom’, Aleksandr Dugin and Antony Blinken sat together at a round table, along with other speakers. Dugin, famous as Putin’s philosopher and whisperer, said the following.

Russia has a civilization of its own, which you could call Eurasian. Among us the people, the collective identity with its own history, traditional values and religion, is paramount. God, Church and soul determine our human dignity and we detest Western individualism and materialism, the spiritual emptiness that is filled with technology and science. We practise the conservative revolution to guard our own identity, and our greatest enemies are liberalism and globalism. To defend our civilization, Greater Russia must be restored and as a first step towards that we will incorporate the Ukraine once more. The Ukraine is not a country in its own right, it has no culture of its own, Kiev has always been part of Russia. With China and Islam we resist the unipolar world with the global West as its centre and with the United States as its core. This kind of unipolarity has geopolitical and ideological characteristics. Geopolitically, it is the strategic dominance of the earth by the North American hyperpower and the effort of Washington to organize the balance of forces on the planet in such a manner as to be able to rule the whole world in accordance with its own national, imperialistic interests. It is bad because it deprives other states and nations of their real sovereignty. When there is only one power that decides who is right and who is wrong, and who should be punished and who not, we have a form of global dictatorship. This is not acceptable. The American Empire should be destroyed. There will be war, but our war will be a civilizing mission, just as the European crusades in the Middle Ages.

Antony Blinken responded as follows.

President Roosevelt provided the American people with a rationale for abandoning isolationism. He argued that our own democracy and the freedoms it guaranteed were at risk: ‘The future and safety of our country and of our democracy are overwhelmingly involved in events far beyond our borders.’ And he looked to a world founded on four essential human freedoms — of speech and religion, and from want and fear — that could only be guaranteed by an engaged America. President Roosevelt laid the foundation for an open, connected America in an open, connected world. Now, the failure to convince of its benefits and address its downsides — and the fears and frustrations of those left out or left behind — risks a fatal crisis of legitimacy for the world that America built.

As we build new economic ties — through trade, automation, digitization — how do we ensure that creative disruption does not become destruction of people’s livelihoods and sense of self? As we form new cultural connections — through migration and the adoption of universal norms — how do we preserve traditional values and identities? As we bridge physical borders — accelerating even more the free movement of people, products, ideas and information — how do we simultaneously secure them and our sense of personal safety? As we increase cooperation and coordination among nations — through alliances and international institutions and shared rules — how do we hold onto a sense of national sovereignty?

At the heart of these challenges is one of the most powerful human yearnings: for dignity. It informs who we are as individuals, what we are as a nation and where we go as a community of nations. It is an article of faith among democrats that free societies best promote and defend human dignity.

Five years later...

The crusade against Antony Blinken’s world of faith whispered into Putin’s ear by Dugin began on 24 February 2022 and Ukraine is its first battleground. A war has begun for the future of the world. Will there ever be a future without war?

Washington DC, 22 October 1962.

Exactly nine years after Thomas Mann, in the Library of Congress, painted a picture of the future of humanity in a world order in which there was no longer any place for war, a short walk away, in the White House, President John F. Kennedy was confronted with the fact that for the first time in history there might be no future for humanity at all.

The Soviets had secretly deployed nuclear missiles in Cuba that could destroy the whole of the United States within seven minutes of being launched. Kennedy now threatened Khrushchev with activation of the American nuclear arsenal. A nuclear holocaust was in prospect. This became clear to the world when, in a radio address of 22 October 1962, President Kennedy informed his fellow citizens about what the Soviets had done. The world held its breath.

By means of a combination of negotiations, threats, a compromise (the removal of American nuclear missiles from Turkey) and the realization by both Kennedy and Khrushchev that the future of humanity was at stake, the crisis was averted a week later.

Various things make clear just how close humanity came to the point of total self-destruction and they include a comment made years later by Nikolai Leonov, who in 1962 was head of the KGB for Cuban Affairs.

A single error at the wrong moment in October 1962 and everything might have been lost. I can hardly believe that we are here today to discuss that crisis. It is almost as though there had been divine intervention to save us from ourselves, but with this warning: you must never again come so close to catastrophe. Next time we won't be so lucky.

In that same year, 1962, the brilliant French intellectual and European humanist Raymond Aron published his magnum opus *Paix et Guerre entre les nations* (published in English as *Peace and War: A Theory of International Relations*). His study of almost eight hundred pages was an attempt by Aron to investigate whether and how, with what diplomatic strategy, war between two nuclear powers, the Soviet Union and the United States, could be prevented, and with it the end of the world. The Cuban Missile Crisis, which took place after the publication of his book, confirmed the urgency of his work. Four years later, in the foreword to the American edition of the book, this was the lesson he had learned:

It is reasonable for the great powers not to wage a war to the death, but if the philosophers have often defined man as a reasonable being, they have rarely asserted with the same assurance that human history deserved the same epithet.

Now that it has become clear Reason does not rule the world, and doubt exists everywhere as to whether God does, there is every cause to give heed to the observation, as wise as it is sober, with which Raymond Aron begins his substantial work. *‘Les Temps de trouble incitent à la méditation – Troubled times encourage meditation.’*

Sixty years after the leader of the Soviet Union pushed the world to the edge of the abyss by stationing nuclear missiles in Cuba, his successor Vladimir Putin has openly threatened to deploy nuclear weapons. The first question we need to ask in these troubled times is: how could it have come to this?

Next comes the no less urgent question: why must we now take seriously the prospect of a Third World War?

‘Inconceivable’, people mumble to the left and right, but does the danger that a Third World War might come about not lurk in precisely the fact that it is inconceivable? Is our inability to imagine a new war in Europe not one of the reasons why a new war has in fact come?

In the sixth century BCE, Greek philosopher Heraclitus noted that *‘Polemos pantoön men pater esti, pantoön de basileus – War is the father of all; the king of all.’*

A hundred years later, Greek historian Thucydides expressed the hope that his epic about the Peloponnesian War would be a ‘useful and lasting possession’, since the war he has reported on as truthfully as possible, ‘given the nature of humankind, will occur again, or something very like it’. And to ensure there was no misunderstanding as to what human nature is like, Aron describes it in his book as follows.

War has roots that are simultaneously biological, psychological and social. The aggressive primate man is prompt to respond with violence to pain or frustration. Always deprived of the satisfactions to which he aspires, and in permanent competition with his kind, he is physically and morally combative, tending to resent those, whether familiar or remote, who keep him from money, glory or love. As a member of a collectivity, he shares the tribal coherence which creates the distance between compatriots and foreigners, and forbids the members of one group to ascribe an equal dignity to those belonging to another. Starting from animal aggression, human vanity and tribal coherence, societies develop both production tools and combat weapons; they elaborate the diplomatic strategic relations which they cannot avoid and which none can lastingly master. Thus is born, it would appear, the historical fatality of war. As uncertain of their limits as of their inner solidarity, the political units cannot help suspecting

each other constantly and combating each other occasionally. [...] War remains a manifestation of physical brutality. Is this not the essence of the phenomenon of war, the rising to the surface of the death instincts which civilization temporarily manages to suppress?

Human nature, with its death instinct (to quote Freud) and its innate radical evil (to quote Kant) is much more inclined towards war than towards peace. This fact, as old as humanity, is recorded as far back as the biblical creation story, in which the first human born on earth, Cain, kills his brother Abel.

Why has European society continued to believe over recent years that most people are good and therefore that there is no radical evil? Perhaps because more of us watch Walt Disney films with their happy endings than read the works of Dostoyevsky. And should there nonetheless be instances of evil or adversity, why do we want to go on insisting that our universal Enlightenment values, buttressed by the untameable powers of 'science' and 'technology', will spread wealth and prosperity across the whole world? Is Steven Pinker's propaganda so hard to see through?

In any case, made drowsy by the magic potion brewed by Walt Disney and Pinker, we continued to quench our thirst with oil and gas from the tyrant in Moscow and regarded ourselves as richer than ever as a result of the 'peace dividend'. The West fed a war monster with billions, while not wanting to allow its dream of a world without war and the material prosperity that has resulted to be disturbed by the continual acts of war and cyberwar by the tyrant, including the annexation of Crimea in 2014, the shooting down of flight MH17 that killed 298 people (including a much-loved member of the advisory board of our journal *Nexus*, Professor Willem Witteveen, along with his wife Lidwien and daughter Marit), to say nothing of the murder and silencing of political opponents.

What lessons do we have to learn from this? In the knowledge that war is always a possibility, should we live in a militarized society like Sparta in Greek Antiquity? Does it really help to station NATO troops at our border and allow as many countries as possible to join NATO? Is deterrence the only method of preventing war? What will the consequences be if we are faced with a second Cold (for now at least) War? What can we learn from the cause, or rather from what is being fought over in the war in Ukraine?

And why has Putin chosen to turn Ukraine into a battlefield, to shell cities to rubble, put millions of people to flight and kill countless more? Fear of the influence exerted by a more or less prosperous liberal democracy on the Russian people and the consequent undermining of his power? That is indeed possible. Fear of the threat of NATO? Also possible. A desire for the restoration of a 'Greater Russia', an obsession with greatness several countries that regard themselves as 'exceptional' are troubled by? Certainly. Protection of a so-called ideal of civilization with the return of so-called Orthodox Christian values?

Absolutely. Our own European history teaches us that as soon as the 'holy fire' is lit for a crusade, reason evaporates, with all the inevitable consequences.

There is another motive that has a part to play for Putin: the revenge of history — the revenge of a country defeated in the Cold War that feels just as humiliated as Germany felt after the First World War.

What if America, following the collapse of the Soviet Union, had not sent to Moscow the 'Harvard Boys', economists like Jeffrey Sachs, who with their 'shock therapy' of privatization brought an army of corrupt oligarchs into the world and threw Russia into even greater economic and social chaos, but instead, as it did for Western Europe after the Second World War, had established a Marshall Plan for Russia?

Would it have been an idea to involve Boris Yeltsin's Russia more closely with NATO or the European Union? Did his predecessor Gorbachev not speak of 'Our common European home'?

These will be important questions when Putin and his likeminded friends disappear from the political stage.

For now, other questions arise. However much based on textbook examples of the lies of propaganda Putin's talk of 'our own civilization' and 'Christian values' may be, Putin is not the only one to have started a de facto war of resistance to liberal democracy. He is not alone in his abhorrence of it. China, Iran, the Taliban, North Korea, Turkey, Saudi Arabia and all 'movements of rage' (religious fundamentalists, fascists, nationalists) are at his side, both outside and within liberal democratic states. The autocratic and totalitarian spirit is emerging everywhere. Why? Not only that, this spirit is manifesting itself everywhere, taking the shape of the Sparta of Greek Antiquity. Where does this abhorrence of the Western liberal democratic world order come from? A world order that is indebted to what Pericles told the Athenians during his funeral oration in the Peloponnesian War.

Our constitution does not copy the laws of neighbouring states; we are rather a pattern to others than imitators ourselves. Its administration favours the many instead of the few; this is why it is called a democracy. If we look to the laws, they afford equal justice to all in their private differences; if no social standing, advancement in public life falls to reputation for capacity, class considerations not being allowed to interfere with merit; nor again does poverty bar the way, if a man is able to serve the state, he is not hindered by the obscurity of his condition. The freedom which we enjoy in our government extends also to our ordinary life. There, far from exercising a jealous surveillance over each other, we do not feel called upon to be angry with our neighbour for doing what he likes, or even to indulge in those injurious looks which cannot fail to be offensive, although they inflict no positive penalty. But all this ease in our private relations does not make us lawless as citizens. Against this fear

is our chief safeguard, teaching us to obey the magistrates and the laws, particularly such as regard the protection of the injured, whether they are actually on the statute book, or belong to that code which, although unwritten, yet cannot be broken without acknowledged disgrace.

Is this picture of democracy representative of the world order cherished by the West? In Africa, India and countless developing countries, people will probably remark that this is more like the image of the goddess Athena, with her shield, helmet and lance but without clothes — and even naked she does not look particularly attractive. There people see a Western world order of Americanization, globalization, lasting damage from centuries of colonization and plunder, continual pursuit of profit and expansion of power. This is true, but no less true is the fact that the Western democracies know and recognize the rule of law, human rights, the freedom and equality of every individual, and freedom of expression. These institutions and values do not exist in the world of authoritarian regimes.

What will be the outcome of the conflict between the world order of democracy and the world order of authoritarianism? Can a balance of power exist between the two? Or is war (in whatever form) unavoidable? Because it is a feature of all geopolitics (a euphemism for power politics) that the superpower always wants more power: more land, more influence, more safeguards for its ‘vital interests’ such as energy, raw materials and everything that threatens to become even more scarce as a result of the growing climate catastrophe. That is also the strategy behind China’s so far successful Belt and Road Initiative. If, as predicted, China is on course to become the most dominant world power, what does that mean for our world order? And are political scientists of the realist school right that it is wiser to strive for detente, because ‘might is right’? Must power politics always prevail over moral politics? Or must we remain true to the idealism that is inherent in the liberal democratic world order? And if so, how?

The ‘Wolfowitz Doctrine’, strongly advocated in America by the neo-conservatives, had as one of its aims ‘to make the world safe for democracy’. But the list of countries where it was tried (Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya, Egypt, Somalia) is far from encouraging. Neither, for that matter, is the list of countries where the West deliberately chose not to intervene: Rwanda, Syria, Myanmar, North Korea. Thus far (at the end of March 2022), Ukraine has received money, weapons and above all moral support, but it nevertheless has to fight its battle against the Russian armed forces alone.

The war in Ukraine that began on 24 February is at any rate a turning point in history, and history teaches us that the conflict between the democratic world order of Athens and the authoritarian world order of Sparta could all too easily result in a Third World War. What that will mean was described by Lord Byron in his poem ‘Darkness’.

*And War, which for a moment was no more,
Did glut himself again: a meal was bought
With blood, and each sate sullenly apart
Gorging himself in gloom: no love was left;
All earth was but one thought — and that was death
Immediate and inglorious; [...]*

*The world was void,
The populous and the powerful was a lump,
Seasonless, herbless, treeless, manless, lifeless —
A lump of death — a chaos of hard clay.
The rivers, lakes and ocean all stood still,
And nothing stirr'd within their silent depths;
Ships sailorless lay rotting on the sea,
And their masts fell down piecemeal: as they dropp'd
They slept on the abyss without a surge —
The waves were dead; the tides were in their grave,
The moon, their mistress, had expir'd before;
The winds were wither'd in the stagnant air,
And the clouds perish'd; Darkness had no need
Of aid from them — She was the Universe.*

Raymond Aron knew what war is. He had seen a First World War, a Second World War and a Cold War. As a European humanist, however, he also knew the essence of European culture. In his book *The Opium of the Intellectuals* — his fundamental criticism of intellectuals like Sartre who had become propagandists for Stalinism — he writes,

The essence of Western culture, the basis of its success, the secret of its wide influence, is liberty. Not universal suffrage, a belated and disputable institution, not the parliamentary system, which is one democratic procedure among others, but the freedom of research and criticism, gradually won, the freedom whose historical conditions have been the duality of temporal and spiritual power, the limitation of State authority and the autonomy of the universities.

To defend that culture, these values, President Roosevelt was prepared to assume leadership, with America, in the Second World War. Will America be prepared to do that again now? Will Europe be willing to fight for this ideal of civilization? If so, what is the Grand Strategy for winning this war, fought to defend our liberty and human dignity?

For Albert Einstein, human nature was a greater enigma than the secrets of the infinite, awe-inspiring universe. This explains why on 10 July 1932 he wrote a letter to Sigmund Freud, scientist of the human soul, requesting an answer from him to a question that was increasingly tormenting Einstein in the face of all the political developments in Europe. ‘Is there any way of delivering mankind from the menace of war?’

In the final sentence of the letter sent by Freud to Einstein the following September, he formulates his answer as follows. ‘*Alles, was die Kulturentwicklung fördert, arbeitet auch gegen den Krieg* – Whatever makes for cultural development also works against war.’

Thirty years later, in 1962, that was the conclusion adopted by Raymond Aron; only culture can repress the death instincts that lead to war. Seven years after that he was supported in this vision by his old friend André Malraux, who remarked in an interview on 5 May 1969, ‘Our civilization will have to discover its fundamental values, or it will disappear.’

This vision, shared by three European humanists, is identical to the argument of President Roosevelt and Thomas Mann in 1943 about what needs to be the basis of a world order that can offer humanity a future without war: the restoration of the moral values and spiritual heritage of the Jewish and Christian tradition; the culture of freedom and dignity through a new humanism as humankind’s education.

But this too is nothing other than an echo of what Socrates — the teacher of all European humanists — tried to make clear in his dialogues: no world order, no civilization that promises a peaceful future can exist if it is not based on absolute values that transcend humanity. Socrates expresses this most clearly of all in his conversation with Callicles about the meaning of goodness and justice. As far as Callicles is concerned, as an early predecessor to Nietzsche, both ‘values’ only stand in the way of a blissful life. Callicles puts it like this:

For to those whose lot it has been from the beginning to be the sons of kings or whose natural gifts enable them to acquire some office or tyranny or supreme power, what in truth could be worse and more shameful than temperance and justice? For though at liberty without any hindrance to enjoy their blessings, they would themselves invite the laws, the talk, and the censure of the many to be masters over them. And surely this noble justice and temperance of theirs would make miserable wretches of them, if they could bestow no more upon their friends than on their enemies, and that too when they were rulers in their own states. But the truth, Socrates, which you profess to follow, is this. Luxury and intemperance and license, when they have sufficient backing, are virtue and happiness,

and all the rest is tinsel, the unnatural catchwords of mankind, mere nonsense and of no account.

Socrates replies to Callicles as follows:

This I consider to be the mark to which a man should look throughout his life, and all his own endeavors and those of his city he should devote to the single purpose of so acting that justice and temperance shall dwell in him who is to be truly blessed. He should not suffer his appetites to be undisciplined and endeavor to satisfy them by leading the life of a brigand — a mischief without end. For such a man could be dear neither to any other man nor to God, since he is incapable of fellowship, and where there is no fellowship, friendship cannot be. Wise men, Callicles, say that the heavens and the earth, gods and men, are bound together by fellowship and friendship, and order and temperance and justice, and for this reason they call the sum of things the ‘ordered’ universe, my friend, not the world of disorder or riot.

It should not pass unnoticed that in contrast to contemporary thinking in which the primary requirement for peace is to be found in a combination of political and economic powers, in the humanist vision the most important precondition for a peaceful society lies in culture, the cultivation of moral and spiritual values. If that is so, then this could explain why we are living in a world full of wars and conflicts. It may also be a reason to investigate further the state of our own ideal of civilization and the world order advocated by the West. Especially now that Western liberal democracy, because of acts of war by Russia, has suddenly been confronted once again with the fact that peace cannot be taken for granted, nor bought. Let us take heed of Shakespeare’s warning.

*There is a tide in the affairs of men
Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune;
Omitted, all the voyage of their life
Is bound in shallows and miseries.
On such a full sea are we now afloat;
And we must take the current when it serve
Or lose our ventures.*

(*Julius Caesar*, Act 4)

If we now, in accordance with Cicero’s adage, allow history to be our teacher in life, what does history teach us? That Europe destroyed its own ideal of civilization in the First World War. That victory over Nazism and fascism in the Second World War is attributable above all to President Roosevelt,

who wanted to make his country, the United States of America, a 'fortress of democracy' and, entirely in accordance with Pericles' conviction, to make his American democracy an example to other nations. On 22 November 1963, President John F. Kennedy was able to express the conviction that 'We are still the keystone in the arch of freedom.' But Hans Morgenthau already had his doubts as to whether America, a country dear to him, was still Roosevelt's 'fortress of democracy'.

As the son of a Jewish family, born in 1904 in southern Germany, in Bavaria, Morgenthau grew up in an environment that was to become a breeding ground of Nazism. Hence his curiosity as to who the *Führer* of the new *Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei* was. On a visit to his grandparents in Munich, he decided to attend a speech by Hitler. What he experienced that evening was something he could never forget, nor did he wish to. He now knew that the hypnotizing charismatic power of a demagogue was a political factor in a mass society that should never be underestimated.

Having no illusions about what it would mean for the Jews if Hitler made his dream of power a reality, Morgenthau left Germany in 1932 and, after some time spent first in Switzerland and then in Spain, settled in the United States in 1938. There, along with two other Jewish exiles from Germany, Leo Strauss and Hannah Arendt, he became one of the twentieth century's most important political thinkers.

America, as Morgenthau knew, has a special place in world history as the only country based by its Founders on an idea and an ideal. The idea is expressed in the Declaration of Independence: 'We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.'

The ideal, 'the purpose of American politics' as defined in Morgenthau's 1960 book of that name, is 'equality in freedom'. Like every ideal, it will have to be investigated anew by each generation and brought up to date if it is to exist in reality. With the United States the largest superpower after the Second World War, it was of the utmost importance that, for the sake of its own future and that of Western civilization, it made its idea and ideal a reality in day-to-day politics. But in 1960 it was clear to Morgenthau that the country was entering a deep existential crisis. It had still not come to terms with its history of slavery but remained a place of unrelenting racism that was irreconcilable with the ideal of 'equality in freedom', and now the population had fallen prey to materialism, hedonism and apathy. The only moral precept that still applied was: grab whatever you can lay your hands on. Freedom had become license. The concept of democracy had been hollowed out to mean whatever the majority wanted. But the majority consisted of a mass that in its ignorance could be manipulated all too easily through the power of commerce and the media, and so was susceptible to the demagogues

that Morgenthau so feared. In this 'democracy', Morgenthau writes, even the concept of quality would be lost as it was increasingly replaced by quantity, the power of numbers. Whatever most people think had suddenly become 'good' and 'true' simply because most people thought it was. The notion that quantity is the measure of all things had repercussions for American education, which in Morgenthau's view had not for a long time been focused on excellence, the quest for knowledge and the shaping of young people into independent, thinking characters. Instead it had degenerated into a social instrument to make young people conform as far as possible to what was expected of them: socially respected behaviour as the royal road to a good career.

Morgenthau saw this decline of American democracy, brought about by the betrayal of its own *raison d'être*, as culminating in the corruption of the academic world.

The cause célèbre of his fierce indictment of corruption in his own academic world was something known as the Van Doren Case.

In the 1950s NBC broadcast the popular television quiz show *Twenty-One*. When one candidate, a prototype of the nerd with thick glasses, kept winning, Charles van Doren, a young and telegenic English teacher at Columbia University, was asked by the producers to take him on. To bring back some excitement into the programme, to increase viewing figures and thereby advertising income, and to satisfy the popular desire to believe that a person who looks attractive is better than a person who doesn't, Van Doren was secretly given the correct answers beforehand. He won, and immediately became famous, so much so that on 11 February 1957, *Time* put him on its front cover.

The other candidate sensed that something fishy was going on. When after two years it became patently obvious that the quiz was fixed, Van Doren initially denied any wrongdoing. That in turn led to his being forced to testify before a congressional committee. He had no choice but to confess that millions of American television viewers had been duped. Hans Morgenthau was deeply shocked when to his utter amazement he saw that despite his confession of deceit, Charles Van Doren was still able to rely on great sympathy among viewers, most of the congressional committee and even his students at Columbia University. Morgenthau was shocked because he had never forgotten his experience of how, as early as 1922, the German people wittingly allowed itself to be seduced into forgetting both the truth and all moral values.

On 22 November 1959 Morgenthau published a long article in *The New York Times Magazine* entitled 'The Great Betrayal', and had no hesitation in beginning with the observation that for America the Van Doren Case was identical to what the Dreyfus Affair had been for France. Both cases concerned a fundamental moral choice that had to be made. And just as in reality not Dreyfus but the French institutions were in the dock, it was not Van Doren but the American people who needed to give an account of its decision as to which values it would allow to prevail.

That in the world of power and money, corruption is present like the snake in paradise is a fact as old as humanity. What was at stake here, Morgenthau said, was far more serious. Van Doren was a teacher at a university and as such he owed a duty to truth, to the search for and knowledge of truth, and to the opposition to lies. Now that he, as a representative of the academic world, had publicly corrupted the truth, only one verdict was possible: guilty! The reality, that the majority of Americans did not blame Van Doren at all and that he was able to pursue an academic career unimpeded, meant that in the United States objective moral values had been forced to give way to public opinion, to that which the masses wanted or would tolerate. In Morgenthau's article, the fact that so many students at Columbia University preferred to carry on defending their good-looking, congenial teacher instead of defending truth and moral values raised the question as to where their moral illiteracy came from. The answer he gave was: the academic world. Instead of remaining faithful to its mission to educate young people in the discovery and dissemination of truth, the academic world had adapted itself to the relativism and instrumentalism that had become dominant in American society. By refusing to condemn Van Doren, Morgenthau concluded, Americans had convicted themselves of the charge of being a people without a moral compass.

When Van Doren was then sacked by Columbia University (only to be given a job as an editor at the renowned *Encyclopaedia Britannica*), many of his students wrote letters to Morgenthau. They felt hurt by his criticism, lamented the loss of a favourite teacher, and said they did not agree with the ageing European that their education must be focused above all on the knowledge of truth. University education, they impressed upon him, must also have a practical focus on the acquisition of all the knowledge a person needs in order to get a good job. Fearful that Morgenthau would now write another article, they asked him to keep their letters private and not to make known either their names or the content of what they had written.

Morgenthau responded exactly a month later, on 22 December 1959, with an open letter in *The New Republic* entitled 'Epistle to the Columbians on the Meaning of Morality'. In it he deplored (without naming them) the students' cowardice in fearing a public debate in which they would be risking nothing, whereas in Nazi Germany there had been people of the same age like Sophie and Hans Scholl who, as leaders of the resistance group *Die Weiße Rose*, had been courageous enough to protest publicly, at the risk of their own lives. Even more importantly, it seemed that for all these students the moral law was relative, something that needed to change with the times, the environment and the circumstances. Morgenthau asked a rhetorical question. If that is the case, then why are the Ten Commandments in the Bible, which really do stem from a very different era, still relevant to morality today? He then attempted to teach these young people something that, after everything he had experienced as a Jew since he saw Hitler speak in 1922, he regarded as his most important lesson in life.

The moral law is not made for the convenience of man, rather it is an indispensable precondition for his civilized existence. It is one of the great paradoxes of civilized existence that — in contrast to the existence of the animals and barbarians — it is not self-contained but requires for its fulfillment transcendent orientations. The moral law provides one of them. That is to say, human existence, not in its animal but in its civilized qualities, cannot find its meaning within itself but must receive it from a transcendent source.

He ended his open letter with the following conclusion.

For since your lives have lost the vital contact with the transcendence of moral law, you find no reliable standard within yourself by which to judge and act. You are frightened by the emptiness within yourself, the insufficiency stemming from a self-contained existence. And so you flee into the protective cover of the anonymous crowd — and judge as it judges and act as it acts. But once you have restored that vital connection with the moral law from which life receives its meaning, you will no longer be afraid of your own shadow and the sound of your voices. You will no longer be afraid of yourself. For you will carry within yourself the measure of yourself and of your fellows and the vital link with things past, future and above.

Whether or not Morgenthau was familiar with the speeches by President Roosevelt and Thomas Mann in 1943, the fact is that the philosopher's vision was identical to that of the statesman and the artist. And his conclusion is the same as that of André Malraux: the fundamental values that are needed to buttress our civilization, our moral order, no longer exist.

That is unmistakably still the case today, and the question is therefore: why not? The humanists continue to point to absolute, transcendent values, and the next question is whether these values can exist in a secular society. That was also the difficult question that another humanist, Albert Camus, asked when he wrote in his notebook, again in 1943, *'L'homme peut-il à lui seul créer ses propres valeurs? C'est tout le problème* — Can man alone create his own values? That is the whole problem.'

Now there is by definition a close relationship between the values that can or cannot be cultivated and the power that influences a society, and therefore a world order. What is the power, or are the powers, in our society?

Fascism, the sickness of the times (as Thomas Mann called it), the antidemocratic spirit that can present itself in many forms, has as one of its symptoms the culture of the lie. George Orwell described a culture of lies, the repudiation of objective truth, the continual distortion of the meaning of words, as a phenomenon 'that frightens me much more than bombs', because it is the essence of totalitarianism. The fact that the Dugin/Putin duo justifies

the invasion of Ukraine as a ‘mission for the restoration of Christian values’ is therefore illustrative of their totalitarian spirit. But what does it mean that within a powerful Republican Party in the US there are those who claim that the storming of the Capitol on 6 January 2021 needs to be regarded as no more than a form of ‘legitimate political discourse’?

Of course the United States is not the only country plagued by symptoms of the disease of fascism. The entire democratic world has been infected by it again, with all the inevitable consequences.

Where does the radicalism that is fragmenting our societies come from? Why is the belief in human reason waning and irrationalism gaining force? Why has an awareness of quality been pushed aside by a fixation on quantity? Why is our liberal democracy so weakened that China can present itself as ‘a democracy that works: the Chinese model’?

In *De l'esprit des lois* (*The Spirit of the Laws*), Montesquieu’s magnum opus, published in 1748, he warns that the decline of democracy begins with the corrupting of its principles and the corruption of its elites, who then out of self-interest spur the corruption of the people:

To keep the people from seeing their own ambition, they speak only of the people’s greatness; to keep the people from perceiving their avarice, they constantly encourage that of the people. Corruption will increase among those who are already corrupted. [...] One must not be astonished to see votes given for silver.

It is obvious that this corruption is still rampant, and once again the consequences are inevitable.

Morgenthau was convinced that many of the cracks in the foundations and structure of our world order were attributable to the upbringing and education of children. Nowadays practically all education is focused on what will be useful. But how useful is ‘useful’ if it does not ultimately make humanity any wiser and therefore any better?

Those cracks in the structure of our civilization are also a result of the loss of cement, of the increase in economic and social inequality. Is the ‘Great Reset’ announced by the powerful in Davos, with its innovation, digitalization, cooperation, the Fourth Industrial Revolution, a new business model, etc. etc., sufficient to restore social cohesion in society, or do we need a different economic compass?

How can we restore our ideal of civilization with its spiritual and moral values, with its liberal tradition and with humanism as its educational environment?

If we restore that ideal, will doing so restore a world order that gives us a peaceful future, at least if we have political leaders of the calibre of President Franklin D. Roosevelt who know how to act accordingly?

Is there not always a ‘clash of civilizations’, with completely opposing values that inevitably come into conflict? No. Because fortunately we also have the work of German polymath Karl Jaspers who in his cultural-historical search for world civilization, especially his *Vom Ursprung und Ziel der Geschichte* (1949, published in English as *The Origin and Goal of History*), finds the ‘lost sources’ of a universal spiritual heritage.

Over the centuries between 800 and 200 BCE, in China, helped by the work of scholars including Confucius and Laozi, an advanced civilization flourished. In that period the same happened in India, with the *Upanishads* of Hinduism and the teachings of the Buddha, in Persia thanks to the work of the prophet Zarathustra, in Palestine because of prophets like Elijah, Isaiah and Jeremiah, and in Greece, with figures such as Parmenides, Thucydides, Archimedes and Plato.

Jaspers calls this remarkable period in the history of humanity ‘*die Achsenzeit*’, the Axial Age. Through all the world’s cultures, an axis developed in history upon which the spiritual foundations of humanity were laid. Humans became conscious of themselves as moral beings and started to ask big, radical questions about life, seeking the meaning and purpose of human existence. *Homo sapiens* became aware of human dignity and the connection between all people.

So universal values do exist, and as we attempt to restore Western civilization we may well have quite a lot to learn from other civilizations.



Immanuel Kant, not often to be caught indulging in humour, begins his treatise *Zum ewigen Frieden* (*To Perpetual Peace*) with appropriate irony by pointing out that his title is taken from an inscription on a Dutch innkeeper’s signboard that also features a picture of a graveyard. May it be a comforting thought for the cynics among us that when we are all dead (whether or not as the result of a nuclear bomb) humanity will at least have found perpetual peace. If, however, we wish to be worthy of the freedom given to us, then, bearing in mind the German title under which Thomas Mann published his lecture ‘The War and the Future’, namely ‘*Schicksal und Aufgabe* – Fate and Mission’, we will need to be increasingly aware that a future without war represents a never-ending mission. A mission that begins by making the humanism that Thomas Mann championed the basis of all that we think and do.

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Founder & President Nexus Institute

Speakers

First roundtable conversation: A WAR FOR THE FUTURE

WILLIAM FALLON (USA, 1944) is a four-star admiral, who retired from the US Navy after a distinguished forty-year career of military and strategic leadership, which he started as a combat aviator in Vietnam. He has led US and Allied forces in eight separate commands and played a leadership role in military and diplomatic matters at the highest levels of the government. As head of US Central Command, he directed all military operations in the Middle East, Central Asia and Horn of Africa, focusing on combat efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan. He previously led US Pacific Command for two years, and was serving in the Pentagon as Vice Chief of the Navy on September 11, 2001. After his retirement, Fallon worked as Chair of the Advisory Board at the Center for International Studies at MIT and was a partner in several businesses connected to cyber security. He is currently finishing his memoirs, focusing on the question which lessons can be learned from his military experience.



JEAN-MARIE GUÉHENNO (France, 1949) is a high-placed diplomat, writer and one of the most important contemporary thinkers about the moral consequences of political decision-making and (lack of) political responsibility. Guéhenno is the inaugural Kent Visiting Professor of Conflict Resolution at Columbia University. He served as Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations for Peacekeeping Operations between 2000 and 2008, and worked with Kofi Annan on a joint special envoy for Syria in 2012. For his work as a diplomat, he had to negotiate with Putin and Lavrov among others. Guéhenno is currently a member of the High-Level Advisory Board on Mediation under António Guterres. He wrote several essays on international relations in addition to books like the famous *La Fin de la démocratie* (1993, published in English as *The End of the Nation-State*), *L'Avenir de la liberté. La Démocratie dans la mondialisation* (1999), *The Fog of Peace* (2015) and *Le Premier xxi^e Siècle. De la globalisation à l'émiettement du monde* (2021).





LÁSZLÓ KRASZNAHORKAI (Hungary, 1954) is an author and screenwriter, who grew up in Hungary under communist rule. In 2015, he was awarded the prestigious Man Booker International Prize; in 2019 he received the National Book Award from the US National Book Foundation. Krasznahorkai debuted in 1985 with the novel *Satantango*, which was made into a widely acclaimed seven-hour drama film directed by Béla Tarr in 1994 — in

collaboration with Krasznahorkai himself. From this point onward, Tarr's entire oeuvre was made only from Krasznahorkai's novels with the author's help. Krasznahorkai's work includes books like *The Melancholy of Resistance* (1989), *War & War* (1999), *Destruction and Sorrow Beneath the Heavens* (2004) and *Baron Wenckheim's Homecoming* (2016), as well as many essays and short stories. He has been honored with numerous literary prizes.



MARY BETH LONG (USA, 1963) is a foreign policy expert and former US government official, whose years of experience as a high-placed spy for the CIA warrant a unique geopolitical insight. Long started her career for the CIA in 1986, working as an operations officer against terrorism, nuclear proliferation and drugs and targeting individual foreign adversaries. In 1999, Long left the CIA and became an associate at the law firm Williams & Connolly. In 2004,

she began her career within the Department of Defense as Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Counter Narcoterrorism. In 2005, she became the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs and from 2007 to 2009 she served as Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs — being the first woman on this post. After leaving the government, Long founded her own law and advisory firm MB Long & Associates. In 2021 she was appointed as Professor of Practice at the School of International Affairs at Penn State University.

BRUNO MAÇÃES (Portugal, 1974) is a former politician, author and one of today's most important geopolitical thinkers. After obtaining his PhD in Political Science at Harvard, he taught International Political Economy at Yonsei University in Seoul and Political History at Bard College in Berlin. In 2008, he became a research fellow at the American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research — a (neo)conservative think tank. From 2011 to 2013, Mações was senior advisor to the Prime Minister of Portugal; he then served as the Secretary of State for European Affairs up until 2015. He was decorated by Spain and Romania for his governmental work. Since 2018, Mações has published several books on international affairs: *The Dawn of Eurasia*. *On the Trail of the New World Order* (2018), *Belt and Road. A Chinese World Order* (2018), *History Has Begun: The Birth of a New America* (2020) and *Geopolitics for the End Time. From the Pandemic to the Climate Crisis* (2021). Additionally, he regularly contributes to journals and magazines such as *Foreign Affairs*, *Financial Times*, *Politico*, *Wall Street Journal* and *The Guardian*. In many of his writings, Mações criticizes the naïve attitude of the European West toward contemporary geopolitical developments.



KISHORE MAHBUBANI (Singapore, 1948) is a most influential Asian thinker and former diplomat who worked as a UN ambassador. In this capacity, he served as President of the Security Council in 2001 and 2002. He wrote a number of important books on the increase of the power of Asia and the decline of Western influence in the world, such as *Can Asians Think? Understanding the Divide Between East and West* (2001), *The New Asian Hemisphere: The Irresistible Shift of Global Power to the East* (2008) and his bestseller *Has the West Lost It?* (2018). Mahbubani has been professor and dean at the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy of the National University of Singapore since 2004.





RAY MONK (United Kingdom, 1957) is Emeritus Professor of Philosophy at the University of Southampton and acclaimed biographer of three intellectual icons from the twentieth century, Ludwig Wittgenstein, Robert Oppenheimer and Bertrand Russell, all of whose lives and thoughts were shaped by war. Monk studied Philosophy at the University of York, then obtained his Master of Letters from Oxford. He debuted in 1991 with his biography of

Wittgenstein, *Ludwig Wittgenstein: The Duty of Genius*, for which he received two literary awards. In 1992 he took up his position at the University of Southampton, where he continued to teach Philosophy for 26 years. His research interests include the history of analytic philosophy, the philosophy of mathematics and the philosophy of biography.



RADEK SIKORSKI (Poland, 1963) is a prominent Polish politician and member of the European Parliament. As such, he is part of the Committee on Foreign Affairs among other committees, and chairs the Delegation for relations with the United States. He served as Poland's Minister of National Defense between 2005 and 2007 and Minister of Foreign Affairs between 2007 and 2014, in which capacity he met with Putin and Lavrov among

others. After completing his master's in Philosophy, Politics and Economics at Oxford — where he studied together with Boris Johnson — Sikorski worked as a freelance journalist for *The Spectator* and *The Observer* among other magazines. In 1986, he bravely went to Afghanistan to be a war correspondent, travelling along the mujahedin while they fought and were bombarded by the Soviets; his experiences during this year form the basis of his book *Dust of the Saints. A Journey to Herat in Time of War* (1989). One of the many captivating photographs he took during the journey, of a family killed and mummified in their home as a result of the bombings, received a World Press Photo first prize in 1988. Sikorski has published various other books — mainly on Polish history and politics — since, and was included in *Foreign Policy*'s list of the Top 100 Global Thinkers in 2012. He has been awarded several more prizes and decorations for his journalistic writings and his political achievements. Together with his wife Anne Applebaum, he has been combatting Putin's regime and aggression against Ukraine for years.

Second roundtable conversation: A FUTURE WITHOUT WAR?

NICOLAS BAVEREZ (France, 1961) is a renowned economist, advocate, historian and a columnist in *Le Point* and *Le Figaro*. He holds a PhD in History and graduated from Sciences Po and the French National School of Administration. From 1993 to 1995, Baverez was a member of the private office of the President of the National Assembly, with responsibilities for economic and social issues. For more than fifteen years, Baverez has been alerting political leaders about the major challenges to be faced in the race toward globalization. Baverez is the author of several books, including the biography on his intellectual teacher Raymond Aron, titled *Raymond Aron, Un Moraliste au temps des ideologies* (1993), and recently *L'Alerte Démocratique* (2020), *Le Monde selon Tocqueville* (2020) and *(Re)construction* (2021). He is a member of the Executive Committee of the journal *Commentaire* and treasurer of the Société des Amis de Raymond Aron. Baverez is also a lawyer of the Paris Court of Appeal and Partner at Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher LLP. He frequently participates in the Bilderberg meetings.



DONATELLA DI CESARE (Italy, 1956) is an Italian-Jewish philosopher and leading thinker about democracy and its contemporary decay in and outside her homeland. She is currently Professor of Theoretical Philosophy at the Sapienza University of Rome, where she also started her study in the Philosophy of Language. Di Cesare obtained her PhD from the University of Tübingen in 1982 and worked with Hans-Georg Gadamer at the University of Heidelberg. She has published multiple books on hermeneutics, theoretical philosophy, political philosophy and Jewish philosophy and has received several prizes for her academic achievements. Within the last few years, Di Cesare has come to direct her thinking and writing to more current political themes such as terrorism, migration and violence. Her recent publications surrounding these topics include *Torture* (2018), *Terror and Modernity*. Polity Press (2019) and *Resident Foreigners. A Philosophy of Migration* (2020). Di Cesare is an outspoken pacifist.





OKSANA FOROSTYNA (Ukraine, 1978) is an influential Ukrainian intellectual, who experiences the war from up close in her hometown of Lviv. She is opinion editor at *Ukraina Moderna*, an international intellectual journal focused on the modern history of Ukraine and Central-Eastern Europe, promoting critical thinking and freedom of thought. Forostyna is a fellow of the *Europe's Future — Ideas for Action* research project at the Institute for Human

Sciences in Vienna. After her study in journalism, she worked as a journalist, reporter and editor for various newspapers, and between 2011 and 2015 as an editor for the journal *Krytyka*, which publishes essays and political reviews. In 2016, Forostyna co-founded Yakaboo Publishing, which she headed until 2019. Since the Russian invasion of Ukraine, Forostyna is involved in *Ukraine! Unmuted* as an editor of a collection of essays on Ukrainian culture.



ZENA HITZ (USA, 1973) is an author, thinker and lecturer. She studied Philosophy at St. John's College in Annapolis, in Chicago and in Cambridge, and obtained her PhD from Princeton University. After teaching at McGill University, Auburn University and the University of Maryland for some years, she converted to Catholicism and spent three years living and working in the Madonna House Apostolate in Ontario, where she came to envision her life mission:

cultivating 'the life of the mind' in society. She returned to teaching at St. John's College in 2015 and founded the Catherine Project, an open learning community. Additionally, she has taught in prison programs and to other non-traditional students. In 2020, Hitz published the instant bestseller *Lost in Thought. The Hidden Pleasures of an Intellectual Life*, in which she explores the value of thinking and learning for its own sake.

ACHILLE MBEMBE (Cameroon, 1957) is one of today's most influential African intellectuals, whose work is read and studied on all continents. He obtained his PhD in History at the Sorbonne in 1989, and currently works as a research professor at the Institute of Social and Economic Research of the University of Witwatersrand in South Africa. Before, he taught History at universities such as Columbia and the University of Pennsylvania. His best-known books are *On the Postcolony* (2001), *Out of the Dark Night* (2001), *Critique of Black Reason* (2015), *Politiques de l'inimitié* (2016) and *Necropolitics* (2019). For this work, he has received numerous literary awards. In the coming years, however, Mbembe plans on leaving his post as an academic and putting his effort into the establishment of an institute to improve democracy in Africa. Thanks to President Macron, France will be assisting him in this effort.



LEON WIESELTIER (USA, 1952) is an American-Jewish public intellectual and editor-in-chief of *Liberties*, a new journal of culture and politics. He advocates liberalism as essential for the survival of a free democracy and society. Wieseltier was educated at the universities of Columbia, Oxford and Harvard where he was selected to the Society of Fellows. From 1983 to 2014 he served as the renowned literary editor of *The New Republic*. He is the author of *Against Identity* (1996) and *Kaddish* (1998), which was translated into many languages and has become a classic about love, death, the accursed questions and the quest for wisdom. His essays on culture, religion, and history have been published in many international journals and magazines. In addition, he has published many translations of Hebrew poetry into English. In 2013 he won the prestigious Dan David Prize for outstanding achievement in the humanities. Since 2001, Wieseltier has been a regular contributor to the publications and events of the Nexus Institute.





SEAN WILENTZ (USA, 1951) is a Professor of American History at Princeton and specialized in modern American politics and society. He studied History at Colombia University and Oxford, and obtained his PhD from Yale. Wilentz wrote a variety of prizewinning books on politics and democracy, such as the monumental *The Rise of American Democracy* (2005) and *The Age of Reagan* (2008). His most recent work, *No Property in Man: Slavery and Antislavery at the Nation's Foundings*, appeared in 2018. As a historian and intellectual Wilentz regularly contributes to public and political debate. In 2020 he caused a stir by criticizing the *New York Times* 1619 Project, and in a recent meeting with President Biden he expressed his concerns about the rise of fascism and decline of democracy in the US.



LEA YPI (Albania, 1979) is the author of the international bestseller *Free. Coming of Age at the End of History* (2021), in which she compellingly describes her experiences growing up within a communist regime that after the fall of the Berlin Wall suddenly came to collapse. She is Professor of Political Theory at the London School of Economics and teaches Philosophy at the Research School of Social Sciences in Canberra, Australia. After graduating in Philosophy and in Literature at the Sapienza University of Rome, Ypi obtained her PhD at the European University Institute in 2008. She then worked as a research fellow at Oxford, at the Italian Institute for Historical Studies and the Institute of Advanced Studies in Berlin. In addition, she has held visiting positions at Stanford, Frankfurt, Tokyo and Brazil among other universities. Ypi has written several books in the field of political theory, on democracy, justice, migration, Marxism, critical theory and on the intellectual history of Southeastern Europe — especially of her home country Albania. She considers herself a democratic socialist, more specifically a Marxist.

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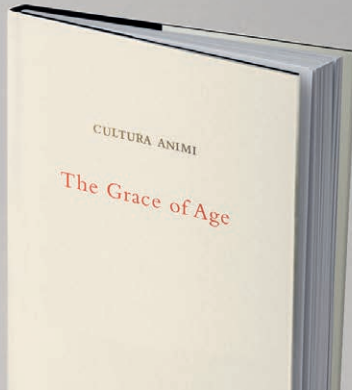
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