

WHY AMERICA MUST REJECT ISOLATIONISM AND ITS DANGERS

As the present liberal order crumbles, many are proposing alternatives that call for major changes to the flawed, globalized structures that now shape the world. Some sectors of the public are turning to nationalist and populist movements that turn inward and call for walking away from world commitments and focusing solely on local problems. In today's dangerous world scene, such solutions fail to consider the broader picture.

In the face of these developments, the American Society for the Defense of Tradition, Family and Property (TFP) presents the following reflections on isolationism and its dangers. We limit ourselves to isolationism and do not discuss other important themes. As lay Catholics, we draw upon the rich treasury of the Church's social teachings to contribute to this urgent debate.

Introduction

There are those who claim that America must withdraw from her leading role in the world. The time for power projection, if ever there was one, is over. A new populist and nationalist wave is entering the scene, which requires America to turn the world over to a system of independent, nonintervening nation-states.

Indeed, they continue, the world no longer needs strong nations that protect weaker ones, exert a good influence and help defend international trade, the Christian faith and culture, or the rule of law. Instead, each country should ruthlessly pursue its own self-interest. A policy of nationalist sovereignty will replace unrestrained globalism. The world's problems begin when strong nations arise and succumb to the temptations of empire.

This nationalist perspective further affirms that the Cold War is long over, and its power politics no longer apply. In its place is a postmodern multipolar world scene where nations interact and chart their independent courses. America can continue to be an influential and prosperous nation. However, the determining factor of international relationships should be based on how policies will directly benefit the citizens of the countries involved.

If some nations need protection or aid, they should pay for it. If others prefer not to interact, they should be allowed to sink into a comfortable isolationism—an invitation extended to America as well.

History Disproves Isolationism

History conspires against this vision. Wherever human societies form, relationships and difficulties always arise between neighboring communities. Harmonizing these relationships requires

mutual trust, cooperation and effort, which can demand the sacrifice of some self-interest for the sake of a greater good.

In addition, dramatic events like the 1941 attack on Pearl Harbor can quickly sweep away the isolationist option. The real world is full of adversaries motivated by ambition, greed or ideological malice. They are intent on breaking the peace if it helps advance their agendas. Thus, when threatened by unjust attacks, weaker nations must seek strong defense alliances. Stronger countries act beyond their immediate interests by coming to their aid.

Both situations call for the coalescing efforts of a community of nations that can confront threats and act together to safeguard international peace. These mutual agreements and defense alliances must be based on moral principles that obey a higher law and transcend self-interest, lest they descend into brutal power schemes harmful to the general welfare of the nations.

Thus, real solutions must be rooted in a proper understanding of human nature and its social dimension and how this shared nature binds peoples together. They also require a correct notion of the principles of justice and charity shaping the functioning of a community of nations and how one or more countries can intervene in others.¹

The Catholic Church's traditional Magisterium, as well as the teaching of Catholic theologians and philosophers, provides powerful insights into the social order and natural law and how to see and assess these problems properly. They offer much-needed and true guidance on how to navigate these uncertain times.

Isolationism from Two Perspectives

A discussion of isolationism and its dangers must resolve the artificial tension between idealism and realism in foreign affairs. It involves two perspectives.

The first perspective is a theoretical discussion of a healthy idealism, which can define the principles that should govern the proper relationship between nations. It should explain the ideal role of dominant powers and the universal moral obligation of nations to aid each other in times of distress.

The second perspective would discuss the realism of foreign policies in the face of the ideal. It would explain

1. See Victor Cathrein S.J., *Philosophia moralis*, ed. John Schuster, 11th ed. (Barcelona: Herder, 1945), no. 745, 506–507, <https://archive.org/details/philosophiamoral0000cath/mode/2up>. All translations from non-English sources are ours.



when and how nations should prudently intervene in world affairs as a means of keeping the peace. This practical outlook, which is especially pertinent to America, must further define the conditions for exercising principled policies toward other nations. It must avoid the temptation of political expediency.

Thus, a Catholic perspective strikes a wise balance between the right ideals and the prudent demands of realism in foreign policy. It proposes a road to travel.

These matters must be addressed with some urgency, given the chaotic state of the world.

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A – Proper Foreign Policy Ideals and the Isolationist Temptation

1. Isolationism by Individuals

To understand better how isolationism affects nations, one can first analyze its effect on individuals.

Individuals can face the temptation of isolationism. It consists in renouncing their social instincts to resolve their problems, relying solely on themselves. Being social requires dependence upon others. It also implies humility, complications and effort, which selfish souls prefer not to employ.

The heavy burden of fallen human nature moves people to greed and self-indulgence that are often pursued by disregarding the legitimate interests of others. The isolationist spurns social interactions in favor of cold contracts.

However, this isolation is not a choice without consequences. It harms both individuals and society. Indeed, the Church's teaching is that individuals generally cannot perfect themselves in isolation. Individuals are contingent social beings and depend on society—especially the family, the local community, intermediary associations, the State and the Church—to overcome shortcomings. People need each other to give and receive the aid they need to reach the perfection of their essentially social nature.²

So important is the need for community that Catholic social and political philosopher Heinrich A. Rommen emphatically writes, “Any kind of seclusion from the fullness of community life ultimately means for the individual a personal loss, a self-mutilation, an atrophy, a defect in self-realization.”³

Thus, any move to isolation works contrary to the individual's progress and perfection.⁴ It also harms society. An individual's isolation deprives others of that person's qualities. It

2. “A social life is necessary for the practice of perfection” - St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, II–II, q. 188, a. 8. <https://www.newadvent.org/summa/3188.htm#article8>.

3. Heinrich A. Rommen, *The State in Catholic Thought: A Treatise in Political Philosophy* (St. Louis: B. Herder Book Co., 1945), 136–37, <https://archive.org/details/stateincatholic00rommrich/mode/2up>.

4. Rommen observes that anchorites and hermits are exceptions to this rule, although they also are not isolated since they live in close community with God and the saints. See Rommen, *The State in Catholic Thought*, 137n4.

has an impact on the common good since society needs and benefits from the contribution of all.

2. Nations also Depend on Others

The isolated individual's aversion to dependence and social interaction can be transposed to the isolationist policy of some nations. When closed in on themselves, these nations suffer from a stifling autarky and cannot develop their full potential.

Just as individuals find plenitude by being in community with others, nations also need other nations. From this need, a community of nations naturally forms.⁵

This is especially true of Christian nations that find in each other a true brotherhood in Christ, motivated by charity and grace. This bond was seen for centuries in the notion of Christendom.⁶

3. The Right to Trade Between Nations

An example of the need for a community of nations is international commerce. Natural law doctrine defends the need for trade because the insufficiency of the resources of nations compels them to seek the help of others through the interchange of goods and services.⁷

God has given the earth to humanity as a whole, and thus, all enjoy certain rights to the earth by virtue of their shared human nature. However, these goods are distributed un-

5. “To these societies belong in the first place the family, the State and also the Society of States, because the common good, the essential end of each of them, can neither exist, nor be conceived, without their intrinsic relation to the unity of the human race. In this respect, the indissoluble union of states is a natural postulate, it is a fact that imposes itself on them and to which they, though sometimes hesitant, submit as if to the voice of nature, striving also to give their union a stable external regulation, an organization. The State, the Society of States with its organization are thus—by their very nature, according to the social nature of man, and despite all shadows, as historical experience attests—forms of unity and order among men, necessary to human life and cooperating in its perfection. Their very concept says tranquility in order, that ‘tranquillitas ordinis’ which is St. Augustine's definition of peace: they are essentially an ordering of peace.”

Pius XII, “Christmas Radio Message” (Dec. 24, 1951), no. II, Vatican.va, https://www.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/it/speeches/1951/documents/hf_p-xii_spe_19511224_natale.html.

6. “Christian peoples form a true family, in the truest sense of the word. A family is, above all, the result of a certain community of life among its members, received from the same source, from the same genealogical trunk. Christendom also has a community of life, the life of grace, the supernatural life that makes every Christian an adopted child of God. The community of life creates obligations both in the family and in Christendom. In the family, the defense of ancestors, from whom all have received their natural life, the defense of relatives, in whose veins the same blood flows. In Christendom, the defense of Our Lord Jesus Christ and His Mystical Body. In the family, everyone must work toward the common ideal. In Christendom, everyone must cooperate to expand Christ's Kingdom. The concept of Christendom is a projection, in the temporal order, of the great supernatural reality that is the Mystical Body of Our Lord Jesus Christ.” Plínio Corrêa de Oliveira, “Cristandade,” *Legionário*, Aug. 18, 1946, no. 732, https://www.pliniocorreadeoliveira.info/LEG%20460818_Cristandade.htm.

7. “The law of nations (*ius gentium*) is clearly that travelers may carry on trade so long as they do no harm to the citizens; and . . . in the same way it can be proved that this is lawful in divine law. Therefore any human enactment (*lex*) which prohibited such trade would indubitably be unreasonable.” Francisco de Vitoria *Political Writings*, ed. Anthony Pagden and Jeremy Lawrance (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1991 [2001]), 279–80.

equally throughout the nations. Some countries will always have goods and resources that others need, from which arises the right to international trade.

Thus, all nations have the right to some degree of access to the wealth of the earth, which international trade facilitates. A strict isolationism denies this universal right and prevents others from exercising it to the detriment of all nations involved.

This right to trade facilitates connections that extend beyond supplying just material goods. Spiritual and cultural interactions also play a role in the development of nations. These links help peoples broaden their horizons, cultures, artistic talents, scientific knowledge and technologies. The role of leading nations is especially effective in this regard. Above all, this interchange can provide conditions for the Gospel to become known and accepted throughout the world.

Yet another aspect of this right to trade is that it naturally leads to the establishment of rules and stable mechanisms to facilitate commerce and the military strength needed to protect it.⁸

4. Conditions for International Trade to Flourish

This commerce between nations should be both ample and common. However, it must also have reasonable limits. Such trade must respect rules, private property and national sovereignty. International trade should not dominate or destroy local culture and economy. It should not impede the domestic production of strategically important goods. Just as nations must respect the rights of other nations, they also have the right to defend themselves against unfair trade practices.

If the proper conditions are observed, international trade benefits all. It gives rise to international “guardrail” institutions that can help the community of nations trade fairly and with mutual respect. It prepares the groundwork for setting up common standards for mail delivery, copyright protections, claims settlements, contracts and numerous other means to help international relations and trade flourish.

On the other hand, rigid isolationism jeopardizes the normal development of individual countries and harms the common good of the community of nations. It cuts nations off from foreign aid in times of crisis and deprives citizens of the goods and services they need for their legitimate development.

5. Going Beyond Trade—Foreign Interventions

Many isolationists accept the need for international trade and its accompanying rules and institutions agreed upon by the community of nations. Commerce, they argue, serves the nation’s self-interest; therefore, such links do not conflict with nationalist

or populist thought that puts national self-interest first.

However, these isolationists have problems with those who would place ideals before interests. They do not understand those international interventions that go beyond mere trade, especially those that involve conflict, sacrifice and expense. For them, noninterventionism represents the best interests of the nation and its citizens.

Thus, isolationists oppose getting involved in stopping the unjust aggression of one nation against another if there is no immediate danger to their own country. They might oppose the forming of world powers. They consider the hegemony exercised by these heavyweights as an abuse of influence and power and think the world would be a better place without it so that nations might operate as they see fit.

The nationalist misguided ideal favoring isolationism and noninterventionism sees international relations only as an exercise of a nation’s sovereign will, not the application of universal moral principles. For nationalists, international law is a mere concession the sovereign nation grants based on pragmatic policies determined by national needs.

English statesman Lord Palmerston (1784–1865) famously said, “We have no eternal allies, and we have no perpetual enemies. Our interests are eternal and perpetual, and those interests it is our duty to follow.”⁹

In the minds of isolationists, there is no true community of nations, only the interests of a commercial order guaranteed by political strategies and contracts. International ties are shaped by a mercantile outlook that chases after advantage and profit.

6. The True Nature of a Community of Nations

While self-interest is important, it cannot be the sole determinant of how nations interact. The true nature of a community of nations transcends economy and Lord Palmerston’s “eternal interests.”

The vibrant social nature of man manifests itself differently at each level of community. The family is the most intimate of relationships whereby individuals identify as members bound by blood ties and governed by familial love.

Beyond the family, man finds fulfillment in political society, with the nation being its perfect expression. He identifies himself as a citizen and is governed by the nation’s laws.

A community of nations is the remote consequence of man’s social nature and constitutes the broadest and least intimate circle of man’s connections. It encompasses the smaller communities of the family and the nation and extends, finally, to humanity in general. Like the family and the nation, it is also subject to natural law, which compels man to do good and avoid evil, when dealing with others, whether individually or internationally.

8. By the same notion that the earth belongs to everyone, individuals have the right to migrate to other nations. However, these individuals must respect similar norms and the rights of their host countries. This right to migrate has nothing to do with today’s unfettered, illegal mass migration that subverts the laws, customs and sovereignty of host nations.

9. Viscount Palmerston, Intervention in Parliamentary Debate, “Treaty of Adrianople—Charges Against Viscount Palmerston,” House of Commons, Debates, Mar. 1, 1848, vol. 97 cc 66–123, <https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/commons/1848/mar/01/treaty-of-adrianople-charges-against>.

7. Defending Rights Beyond the Family and Nation

Thus, man as man identifies with all humanity. Since all men have the same rational and free nature, they have certain rights and duties that have individual and social implications.

Among the rights every man has are the right to life, honor, constituting a family and the ownership of private property. Solidarity and the practice of justice are among the duties that oblige all.¹⁰

The highest temporal recognition of these universal rights and obligations is found in a loose community of nations. The universal Catholic Church is the spiritual counterpart of this community.

Because these fundamental rights and obligations apply to all humanity, they transcend national borders. All states are obliged to recognize them. The common condition of being human gives rise to a family of nations bound together by ties of solidarity to seek justice, peace, security and the general welfare of all nations.

8. The Case for Intervention

This true solidarity uniting humanity invites nations to intervene individually or collectively during times of need. This action might involve material, diplomatic or military aid.

The occasions for intervention include natural disasters, piracy, slavery, genocide, religious persecution or ideological oppression. Wherever the basic tenet of natural law, “do good and avoid evil,” is shockingly violated, nations must speak out and, if possible, take action.

A natural disaster is a case of need, for example, that calls upon the community of nations to put aside differences and aid the afflicted nation to the degree possible. The humanity of the devastated population calls on others to make sacrifices to help them, not for any monetary gain but because it is the right thing to do.

Similarly, nations must help defend other nations against the unjust aggression of others. To do this, they can enter into long-term defense treaties to help deter adversaries from violating the member nations’ rights. They can also provide the victim nation with moral support, direct humanitarian aid, diplomatic reinforcement and even intervene economically and militarily on their behalf.

Depending on their means and circumstances, nations

10. “Human solidarity . . . is dictated and imposed by our common origin and by the equality of rational nature in all men, to whatever people they belong, and by the redeeming Sacrifice offered by Jesus Christ on the Altar of the Cross to His Heavenly Father on behalf of sinful mankind. . . .”

“In the light of this unity of all mankind, which exists in law and in fact, individuals do not feel themselves isolated units, like grains of sand, but united by the very force of their nature and by their internal destiny, into an organic, harmonious mutual relationship which varies with the changing of times.” Pius XII, encyclical *Summi pontificatus* (Oct. 20, 1939), nos. 35, 42, https://www.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xii_enc_20101939_summi-pontificatus.html.

are morally obliged to support the just causes of other nations even when this assistance has no direct financial benefit for them.

Thus, it is fitting that there be great and dominant powers that can extend their protection and aid to weaker nations. When natural disaster strikes, powerful nations are not overwhelmed by the challenge of the rescue effort and can respond with largesse. In the case of an unjust attack, they can oppose powerful aggressor nations with proportional means lest there be no one to oppose such actions.

9. A Guarantee for International Peace

Such interventions against aggressor nations benefit all by contributing to the general peace.

Pope Pius XII stated, “By solidarity, all nations are obliged to participate in this defense and must not abandon the attacked nation. The assurance that this collective duty will not be neglected serves as a deterrent to the aggressor, and therefore, helps prevent war, or at least, in the worst scenario, to shorten the sufferings.”¹¹

Thus, a community of nations bound by mutual solidarity assures the preservation of the whole. The freedom and independence of any member state threatened by unjust aggression become everyone’s concern. Catholic philosopher Luigi Taparelli d’Azeglio, S.J. (1793–1862) affirms, “The defense of the oppressed nation is not only a duty of benevolence for neighboring peoples. It is also a matter of public salvation and national interest for them.”¹²

The greater the resources of a nation, the less it can withdraw from its moral duty of upholding justice and peace among the community of nations, especially in the face of strong adversaries.

Those who desire peace must intervene, deploying the options they deem necessary—including diplomatic and economic means. Failure to do so becomes an invitation for the bullying nation to attack weaker ones with impunity. “When bad men combine, the good must associate, wrote Edmund Burke, “else they will fall, one by one, an unpitied sacrifice in a contemptible struggle.”¹³

10. Rejecting a Noninterventionist Foreign Policy

Thus, a foreign policy of nonintervention must be rejected. It represents a lack of moral character in failing to denounce and crush injustice. It erodes and destroys the bonds of solidarity, which dispose nations to sacrifice

11. Pius XII, “Christmas Radio Message” (Dec. 24, 1948), https://www.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/it/speeches/1948/documents/hf_p-xii_spe_19481224_un-tempo.html.

12. Luigi Taparelli d’Azeglio, S.J., *Essai theorique de droit naturel: Basé sur les faits*, 2nd ed. (Tournai, France: Vve. H. Casterman, 1875), no. 1263, 2:13, <https://archive.org/details/essaithorique02tapa/page/13/mode/1up>.

13. Edmund Burke, *Thoughts on the Cause of the Present Discontents*, 3rd ed. (London: J. Dodsley, 1770), 106, <https://archive.org/details/thoughtsoncause00burkgoog/page/n120/mode/2up>.

for the common good of the community of nations. It en-thrones self-interest.

Presenting the Catholic perspective, Pope Pius IX (1846–1878) condemned the policy of nonintervention: “We cannot refrain from deploring . . . that baleful and pernicious principle, which they call nonintervention, proclaimed by certain governments a short time ago, tolerated by others, and used even when it comes to the unjust aggression of some government against another. This principle seems intended to approve impunity and license to assault and tamper with the rights of others, their property, and even nations themselves, against divine and human laws. This is precisely what we see happening in these mournful times.”¹⁴

Heinrich Rommen observes: “Strict adherence to the principle of nonintervention puts the principle of might makes right first in international life because it puts a material premium on the violation of the international order.”¹⁵

Indeed, noninterventionism dangerously limits the options of statecraft since it deprives diplomacy of the strength of military action, which, at times, must be used to negotiate and secure international peace.

11. The Community of Nations Is Not an Artificial Construct

Isolationists often object to the notion of a community of nations because they feel it threatens national sovereignty. However, they forget that the social nature of man calls forth this community of nations. It is consonant with and regulated by natural law. It is not an artificial creation of treaties like the United Nations or similar bodies that tend to claim powers of world governance.

The community of nations is a natural framework of coordination, not subordination. It does not absorb the liberty and independence of its member countries but reinforces them. It is an organic development that relies not on an administrative system but on the member states’ cooperative acceptance of international obligations stemming from natural law. It is born of benevolence, by which like-minded nations naturally want the political existence and good of all friendly societies.

This community of nations may manifest itself in legal, diplomatic and commercial ways; it may be written or unwritten, formal or informal. Its foundations rest on human nature. It is defined and governed by natural law and perfected by Christian moral principles.

14. Pius IX, allocution “Novos et ante” (Sept. 28, 1860), Vatican.va, accessed Aug. 6, 2024, <https://www.vatican.va/content/pius-ix/it/documents/allocuzione-novos-et-ante-28-settembre-1860.html>. Pius IX reiterated this teaching in his 1864 Syllabus of Errors, attached to the encyclical *Quanta cura*. In section 7, he condemned error no. 62, rendered as follows, “The principle of nonintervention, as it is called, ought to be proclaimed and observed.” Pius IX, *Syllabus of Errors* (Dec. 8, 1864), accessed Aug. 6, 2024, https://maryourhelp.org/e-books/papal-encyclicals/pius_ix_pope_quanta_cura_and_the_syllabus_of_errors.pdf.

15. Rommen, *The State in Catholic Thought*, 639–40.

12. Christian Norms Enrich the Solidarity of Nations

The solidarity of nations is especially enriched when informed by Christian norms. In his 1902 apostolic letter, *Annum ingressi sumus*, Pope Leo XIII lamented that modern international law theory excluded Christian norms, which had the marvelous power of uniting the nations to form one family, as seen in Christendom.¹⁶

This ability to unite the nations comes from the Christian notion of human nature that overturned the distorted and dark concepts of humanity found in paganism, full of superstition and slavery.

Christianity changed things fundamentally by teaching that all men, in all nations, are made in the image and likeness of God and were redeemed by Christ on the Cross. Thus, all must be treated with respect and dignity. Christ further called upon all to extend disinterested charity toward one’s neighbor.¹⁷

The triumph of this Christian outlook, so foreign to the pagan world, still endures today despite everything. It especially survives in what is loosely described as the West. Its legal systems still contain the strong influence of Christian norms despite all modern attempts to erase them.

All nations that still respect the rule of law reflect this enduring influence of Western policies based on the Christian vision of the dignity of a redeemed humanity and rights stemming from human nature. This outlook serves as the glue that unites nations in solidarity. It is also the target of aggressor nations with a special hatred for the West and the Catholic norms that informed it.

To the extent that nations abandon the remnants of these Christian norms, the international stage is dominated by the power politics of a brutal Hobbesian order where self-interest pits nation against nation, and society becomes “a war of every man against every man.”¹⁸

13. Conclusion: Isolationism Frustrates Man’s Social Nature

To summarize this first section, the danger of isolationism is that it frustrates man’s vibrant need to perfect his essentially social nature and to follow the natural law written on the human heart to “do good and avoid evil” (See Rom. 2:15).

This danger is contained in the cry of individualists who make their desires the measure of all things. Isolationists make similar determinations by not acknowledging the solidarity of nations and limiting all concerns to Lord Palmerston’s “eternal and perpetual interests.”

Thus, all nations, especially those that observe the rule of law, have a moral obligation of solidarity to look

16. See Leo XIII, apostolic letter “Annum ingressi sumus” (Mar. 19, 1902), *The American Catholic Quarterly Review* 27, no. 107 (July 1902): 589, <https://archive.org/details/americancatholic27philuoft/page/589/mode/1up>.

17. See, for example, the parable of The Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25–37).

18. Thomas Hobbes, “Leviathan,” ed. Nelle Fuller, in *Machiavelli, Hobbes*, vol. 23 of *Great Books of the Western World*, 86.

beyond self-interest and help nations in need. Such nations also have the right to expect external aid in the hour of their own peril.

This obligation includes the right and duty of intervention, depending on the means and circumstances of each nation. World powers can be particularly helpful in providing sufficient support to help avoid the might-makes-right scenarios of history. The solidarity of nations is perfected by Christian norms that elevate the debate to consider the inherent dignity of a redeemed humanity and rights stemming from human nature.

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B – Foreign Policy Realism and America’s Historic Mission

Based on these universal Christian ideals that should inform a nation’s foreign policy, the next considerations must deal with the realism of applying them to the present situation in America and the world. There must be an analysis of the means and conditions to implement a prudent policy of interaction with other nations.

Practical wisdom must always prevail. Above all, the means must include more than just military action. Diplomacy, economic sanctions and the influencing of world public opinion are often enough to obtain excellent results.

There must also be a clear understanding of the conditions that determine when to act and intervene. Any action must be proportional to the occasion since not every injustice can or should be addressed.

America’s efforts must not be exercised indiscriminately and unconditionally. Past errors must not be repeated.

Above all, this vision must address America’s role in the world in the face of the pressure to subscribe to isolationist and noninterventionist policies.

The following guidelines offer some direction for the future.

1. The Reality of America’s Role in the World Contradicts Isolationism

America’s economic and military power gives her a leading role in the world. The nation’s vast trade networks and defense of the rule of law make her participation in the world economy essential for the protection of all commerce. Most nations rely upon this trade and benefit from its protection—and should contribute to it.

A significant diminishing of American leadership would represent a major disruption to world trade.

America’s vast resources and political resolve make her the only nation still able to respond proportionally to the grave threats of those who would disrupt this international order, especially by attacking weaker nations. America’s powerful position also makes her essential to anchor and form coalitions with other nations willing to oppose these threats. Any

major retreat from this leadership role will also have immediate and serious consequences.

America has a similar role in fulfilling her natural law obligation of solidarity with the other nations of the world. America must use the vast resources God gave her to oppose the injustices perpetrated by aggressor nations.¹⁹ She is an example that inspires others to help. America must share, not assume, the burden of defending those universal human rights and duties common to all. Thus, a failure to intervene would negatively impact world security.

Were the Founders Isolationists? History Says No

One argument given to support isolationism is to cite the American Founders saying they insisted that America not get involved in foreign entanglements. However, a careful reading of the history of the young American Republic tells a different story. A world full of dangers awakened early American administrations to see that there is no substitute for a strong defense, active diplomacy and willingness to intervene to secure the peace.

A 2013 study by Marion Smith tracks the first seventy years of American foreign policy and shows beyond a doubt that America’s early political leaders struck a balance between the idealism of American principles and the realism of situations that demanded action and intervention.

“America’s constitutional principles do not demand isolationism,” Smith concludes, “and the Founders did not practice a noninterventionist foreign policy.” Marion Smith, “The Myth of American Isolationism: Commerce, Diplomacy, and Military Affairs in the Early Republic,” Heritage.org, Sept. 9, 2013, www.heritage.org/political-process/report/the-myth-american-isolationism-commerce-diplomacy-and-military-affairs-the.

From a realist perspective, America’s embrace of isolationism would leave an unfilled void that would only benefit aggressor nations. Should America absent herself from the world scene, it would open the way to a might-makes-right scenario where rogue nations can act with impunity.

2. Conditions for Realist Solidarity

To assure the effectiveness of any extension of aid to other nations, America should follow certain conditions that reflect a

19. That duty is further clarified by Christ’s teaching, “Unto whomsoever much is given, of him much shall be required: and to whom they have committed much, of him they will demand the more” (Luke 12:48).

realist world perspective.

(a) Help Friends, not Foes

America should help those nations willing to help her promote the peace, security and well-being of the community of nations, especially those helping to defend the West. America should work hard diplomatically, culturally and economically to expand this “coalition of the willing.”

American foreign policy should be oriented toward strengthening alliances against identified threats. America should work smoothly with her allies, sharing resources and assets to the greatest possible degree.

On the other hand, America should never help nations working to undermine and destroy America and the West. It is wrong to treat friend and foe on an equal footing.

Thus, a foreign policy to help friends, not foes, means espousing a wise foreign policy that is the opposite of that followed by both Republican and Democratic administrations for decades. That misguided foreign policy allowed trillions of dollars in business and profits to pour into Red China, helping it become the destabilizing agent and great existential threat it is today for America and the world.

Helping friends should especially highlight the strategic importance of developing ties with Latin American nations. The countries of this Western Hemisphere part of the community of nations should be natural allies since all are neighbors. They are also Christian and naturally share the notions of solidarity that are so much a part of an ideal foreign policy.

(b) Avoid Utopias and Stick with Well-Defined Goals

Isolationists argue that, in the past, America promoted wrong ideals and ill-defined goals that yielded bad results. Any failings—whether true or false—are never a valid excuse for abandoning the solidarity owed under natural law to the community of nations.

The solution is to implement proper ideals and realistic methods and strategies with wise and well-defined goals. Thus, America must avoid wars without clear objectives. The goal of any fight against injustice can only be decisive victory.

The promotion of utopian ideals, such as a vaguely defined notion of “spreading democracy” or “expanding freedom,” especially when not grounded in reality, must also be avoided.

(c) No Woke American Foreign Policy

America must rid her foreign policy of harmful liberal ideas and pursue wholesome ones that will contribute to the common good of the community of nations. The best criteria for judging the justice of causes must be those ideals found in human nature as defined by natural law and perfected by Christian principles.

Thus, America is wrong to pursue a foreign policy that

spreads leftist agendas linking aid to the acceptance of procured abortion and the LGBTQ or “woke” ideologies. Moreover, large sectors of the American public oppose this immoral weaponization of foreign aid.

Aid-receiving nations must reject these subversive threats to the morals of their populations. Indeed, they practice solidarity by being an example to America and other aid-giving nations, showing themselves to be principled peoples who correctly place good moral ideals over financial interests.

(d) A Return to the Roots of Sound Policy

The liberal order is exhausted. When trying to resolve problems, people often find solutions by returning to their roots.

Thus, the more desperate and chaotic the world becomes, the greater the need to adopt foreign policies that return to the roots of a perennial natural law—applicable to all places, times and peoples—and Christian norms. Such a return will perfect the solidarity America must practice.

Until America does so, her efforts will always be found wanting.

3. One Cannot Walk Away from the World’s Problems

It is naïve to think that America can simply walk away from hegemony and concentrate on improving life at home unharassed. Throughout history, rogue nations have always worked against the common good of the community of nations. Evil ideologies like Communism, for example, manifest themselves through aggressive regimes that violate the most basic human rights.

It is said that “nature abhors a vacuum.” Something will always fill voids. When strong nations retreat from leadership, evil empires take their places.

The present time is no exception to this rule. Many are talking about the emergence of a “multipolar” world that is arising to challenge the West and establish a contrary state of affairs. Brazilian Catholic thinker Plinio Corrêa de Oliveira foresaw a “class struggle of nations” between the Global South/Third World and the Industrialized North/First World that would replace the failed Marxist models.²⁰

A realist vision must identify areas of concern and look for the best ways to respond to these threats.

4. Threats that Demand Attention

These areas of concern demand attention since they are now actively involved in actions that violate the security, peace and well-being of the community of nations. They call for the idealism of solidarity and the realism of concrete measures.

(a) Imperial and Communist China

20. See Plinio Corrêa de Oliveira, *Revolution and Counter-Revolution*, 3rd ed. (Spring Grove, Penn.: The American Society for the Defense of Tradition, Family, and Property, 1993), 133–36, https://archive.org/details/rcr_20220702/page/132/mode/2up.

Communist China is especially a threat to world peace and security. It unapologetically still follows its toxic Marxist ideology that is so detrimental to humanity. With the massive transfer of wealth and technology from the West, China now has imperialist ambitions to be a major economic and military power by making commercial, diplomatic and military alliances with all enemies of America and the West. Russia, for example, has become a Chinese vassal state and represents a real threat to the extent it continues to receive help from Red China.

(b) Putinist/Duginist Russia

The two unjust invasions suffered by Ukraine at the hands of numerically superior Russian forces (in 2014 and 2022) merit the utmost concern. Russia avowedly seeks Ukraine's annihilation as a nation and the eradication of the Catholic Faith from among her citizens.²¹

In addition, Russia is guided by a foreign policy called the "Fourth Political Theory," which advocates multipolarity and unites all parties who are hostile to the West.²²

(c) Communism

In addition, the world still faces the plague of communist ideology. It spreads its errors around the world through Cuba, North Korea, Venezuela, Nicaragua and others. The Free World must oppose this error that has spread so much hatred and misery throughout history.

It must not be forgotten that this ideology is responsible for the deaths of tens of millions. Communist regimes continue to persecute the Church. The sect's expansionist designs in Latin America and to places like Taiwan and South Korea must be opposed by all means possible.

(d) Iran and Islamism

Islamism and its jihad also seek the destruction of the West and the Church. Wars and conflicts in Africa and Asia are leading to the deaths and martyrdom of countless Christians. Their blood calls upon the solidarity of all nations to extinguish this threat.²³

21. See "Statement of the Permanent Synod of the UGCC in Light of the Interview of Pope Francis Conducted by Radio Télévision Suisse," UGCC.ua, Mar. 10, 2024, <https://ugcc.ua/en/data/statement-of-the-permanent-synod-of-the-ugcc-in-light-of-the-interview-of-pope-francis-conducted-by-radio-tlvision-suisse-955/>. See also, James Bascom, "Seven Reasons Why America Must Help Ukraine Defend Itself," TFP.org, Apr. 10, 2024, <https://www.tfp.org/seven-reasons-why-america-must-help-ukraine-defend-itself/>.

22. Russia's unjust war of aggression is guided by the influence of philosopher Aleksandr Dugin, who calls for a "Fourth Political Theory," which consists of building multipolarity and represents the triumph of esoteric philosophies, pagan models, and recycled leftist ideologies that will shape an anti-Western world order. See John Horvat II, "Trying to Explain Alexander Dugin," TFP.org, Feb. 21, 2023, <https://www.tfp.org/trying-to-explain-alexander-dugin/>.

23. See Luiz Sérgio Solimeo, *Islam and the Suicide of the West: The Origin, Doctrine, and Goals of Islam* (Spring Grove, Penn.: The American Society for the Defense of Tradition, Family and Property, 2018), <https://www.tfp.org/islam-and-the-suicide-of-the-west-origins-doctrines-and-goals>

The unifying factor of these four threats is their anti-Western and anti-Catholic focus. Their supposed multipolar character is actually bipolar since the four unite as one against America, the West and the Church.

5. The Price of Failure

America's failure to defend itself and the West against these threats will have drastic consequences, throwing the world into further crises and chaos.

As much as people might want to wish away evil, the world is a very dangerous place today. America faces enemies that cannot be ignored. They must not be appeased. The price of failure is high. The present situation calls for action beyond self-interest, a task for which America is well suited.

6. Embracing Duty with Total Confidence in God's Help

Blessed by Divine Providence with abundance, America has always been a generous nation, willing to succor those in need—even at the cost of great effort and sacrifice of life.

However, America must call upon God for aid and strength to carry this great burden. The present crisis calls to mind the words of Our Lady of Fatima, who warned in 1917 of future wars and persecutions and promised her heavenly aid and final triumph.

Embracing the ideal of the solidarity of nations, the realism of rejecting liberal causes and utopian goals and strategies, and placing her trust in God and His Blessed Mother, America can stop the descent to chaos that now threatens the world.

America's noble disposition to help other nations recalls the words of Pius XII, who wrote after the Second World War, "The American people have a great genius for splendid and unselfish action. Into the hands of America, God has placed the destinies of an afflicted mankind."²⁴

Now is not the time for isolationism but for this unselfish action. This can only be done if America returns to order and puts herself in God's hands with total confidence in His help.

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24. Pius XII, "Wisdom—Not Weapons of War," *Collier's Weekly*, Jan. 5, 1946, 13, accessed Aug. 6, 2024, <https://www.unz.com/print/Colliers-1946jan05-00011>. Speaker Mike Johnson cited Ronald Reagan's 1974 use of this papal quote in a July 8, 2024 foreign policy address at the Hudson Institute. See "Speaker Mike Johnson on the Threats to the US-Led World Order," Hudson Institute, Jul. 8, 2024, <https://www.hudson.org/events/speaker-mike-johnson-threats-us-led-world-order-rebecca-heinrichs>.