

Why Washington Keeps Choosing War | D. Klein & C. Coyne

We want peace and multipolarity! And we want it now! That's what every sensible politician SHOULD be striving for. But well, as usually, the West does not follow what makes good sense. Profs. Daniel Klein and Christopher Coyne join Pascal to discuss their statement for peace and multipolarity. They challenge American primacy, examine the incentives behind militarism and regime change, and explore how trade, diplomacy, and everyday cooperation can sustain peace. The conversation considers corporate interests, government power, Adam Smith, and Western and non-Western intellectual traditions. Rather than demanding ideological agreement, the guests call for a broad coalition committed to sovereignty, restraint, tolerance, and peaceful coexistence among different societies and political orders. Daniel and Chris's Links: Daniel Klein's website: <https://cjdje.org/> Christopher Coyne's website: <https://www.ccoyne.com/> For the Peace and Multipolarity statement: https://neutralitystudies.com/files/f77c5d77-4269-4baf-830e-a5e2e982280e-peace-and-multipolarity-statement_v12b.pdf Signatures so far: <https://neutralitystudies.com/files/f341f174-3c7b-493a-ad5c-11325353e7d4-signatures-so-far.pdf> Neutrality Studies Links: Neutrality Studies Substack: <https://pascallottaz.substack.com> Support Neutrality Studies: <https://neutralitystudies.com/donate> Neutrality Studies shop: <https://neutralitystudies.com/shop> Time Stamps 00:00 A statement for peace and multipolarity 04:33 US primacy and the multipolar world 11:04 The incentives behind the war machine 15:31 The regime-change playbook 18:37 Building peace through everyday cooperation 24:13 Capitalism, corporate interests, and state power 36:58 Grotius, Adam Smith, and traditions of peace 48:00 Tolerance, coexistence, and a broad peace coalition

#Pascal

Welcome back, everybody, to Neutrality Studies today with Dr. Daniel Klein and Dr. Christopher Coyne, both of them professors of economics at George Mason University. Dan, Chris, welcome.

#Christopher Coyne

Hello. Thank you so much for having us.

#Pascal

Thank you for coming online, because you are actually the authors of a manifesto, or a general letter statement, for peace and multipolarity. And I signed that one as well. And we want to talk about this one. What is your manifesto, your statement, and why do we need multipolarity?

#Christopher Coyne

Well, thank you. You know, the statement is titled "For Peace and Multipolarity." That's the overarching title of the statement. And we'll delve into the details in a moment. But what motivated Dan and I to get together and draft this up, and then share it amongst colleagues and friends and members of a broader network, is twofold. First, we wanted to reorient the conversation around foreign policy, international relations, and what is required for peace in the world.

And the purpose of a statement, in the broadest sense, is to delineate what is socially and intellectually legitimate and acceptable to discuss and talk about. And so the statement is an attempt to say, look, there are these ideas, concepts, and principles which deserve to have a voice within the legitimate range of political discourse. We believe that those ideas are currently underemphasized and underrepresented. And we are trying to bring together a large coalition of intellectuals and thinkers from across the ideological spectrum who share a presumption and commitment to peace.

#Pascal

Dan, could you maybe tell us the main points that you're trying to make in that statement? And then maybe later, why does that even need to be said? Why is it not self-evident? But let's go into the points first.

#Daniel Klein

Yeah, I would say the big theme is that Chris and I affirm that we live in a moral universe, that there is higher law, and that there is another way forward that, you know, many of our leaders are systematically avoiding, foregoing, and [unclear] for all of us. And that is a system of peaceful multipolarity, which existed and worked to a great extent for centuries and can work again. And it's an option that's out there, and they are trying to almost deny its existence. But we believe it's a reality. It's a focal reality, whether you want to take a theistic view of it, or a natural law view, or an allegorical view.

It's a reality. There's a lot of truth Chris and I will admit to the principle that might makes right. But there's also a lot of truth to the principle that right makes might, and that there's a focalness to equality of sovereignty, to peaceful coexistence, to getting along with your neighbors, essentially. In fact, the whole idea of sovereigns getting along is naturally parallel to neighbors getting along and respecting each other's stuff. So I'd say that's the broad thing, is there's a reality, there's an option that's being systematically foregone.

And almost eclipsed by the media, by the governments, you know, by the warmongers, and, of course, you and your guests. And, you know, I'm a big fanboy of these guys. I'm not officially associated with them, but I also have a hat, by the way. The Duran, The Duran. Chris studies this stuff. Chris is a real scholar of militarism and the political economy of war. I'm an intellectual history guy, but I've turned my interest in Adam Smith and others. But I follow all of you guys so much. So

Chris and I got together and kind of worked out a kind of statement that we're learning from all of you, really.

#Pascal

So that's kind of what the statement is. You know, something that I'm realizing at the moment is that we do have a—we are coalescing around social media and around places where people with ideas actually gather, and also the peaceful part, I would say, of the West. And that's maybe my next question: where are we in that process of trying to form the post-unipolar foreign policy of the collective West, the West or collective West or whatever you want to call it, this kind of agglomeration of Euro-American Atlantic states that seem to be running toward more and more war? Where are we in that process? And what do you think that this kind of working together can help achieve in the medium and long run? Maybe Chris.

#Christopher Coyne

Well, I'm not sure where we are in the process exactly, but I do know there are powerful forces. The political elite, certainly in the United States and elsewhere, are actively pushing back against efforts to extend neighborly ties and bonds with countries around the world, their leaders and their people. And you see this both through a militaristic foreign policy. You see it through trade policy, which I would suggest is an extension of military policy, the way it is used by political leaders in the West. And so, from that standpoint, I think you can make an argument that certainly the present, but you can go back decades, I think, certainly the United States and other countries as well.

But I'll emphasize the United States government here is taking active steps to attempt to maintain primacy. That is the stated goal of their foreign policy. So it frames the world as a not zero-sum, negative-sum situation where it's not just that we win and they lose, but it's actually the world's going to be even worse off if the United States does not maintain its standing of primacy. And one of the things Dan and I are trying to highlight, as he mentioned, is that a hegemon, the kind of striving to remain a hegemon, actually breeds chaos and disorder in contrast to the promise of harmony and order. And so, unfortunately, if based on my estimation, where we are in the process is not close to a world of multipolar cooperation in terms of accepting that reality.

And that's one of the interesting things about the statement, to complement what Dan was saying. You know, we start from the premise that we live in a multipolar world. So it's not, for us, a fact that needs establishment. It is a reality of the world. And then we can choose how to deal with that. And one way, of course, which I would argue is the current dominant view in the U.S. government, is that it's something that needs to be pushed back through coercion. We're trying to get people to think about this alternative that Dan was mentioning, that actually we can embrace that reality, and it doesn't have to mean chaos and disorder.

#Pascal

Hey, just a very quick note. The best way to support this channel is by signing up for my free Substack. You can also help with a paid subscription there, or you can get some of our new merch on neutralitystudies.com. Links below. See you there. I think that sounds very sensible to anyone who would like to live in a peaceful world. Now, the other side is arguing, as you're saying, that, you know, primacy is needed for the United States to be safe. And there are two very different arguments. One is, of course, the Mearsheimer argument, kind of offensive realism. Oh, we need, you know, in order to maximize security, we need to be forceful. Yes, but he would never go the way where he would say that, you know, war is inevitable.

He would go to the point where he says, like, security competition is inevitable, but that can remain peaceful. But then there's another vision, which is like, oh no, how about the West just joins the rest of the world in the BRICS approach of saying, like, yeah, managed and balanced international relations, right, where you work together in order to create more than a zero-sum outcome, but benefits for everybody, especially benefits for the population. Why do you think it is that the current discourse, mainstream media discourse in the West, but especially in the United States, but also, you know, think tank discourse and so on, is just so far removed from this idea of peaceful coexistence and dominated so much by security and deterrence and the threat and weapons in order to be safe? Why not cooperation to be safe?

#Daniel Klein

Let me jump in. So as far as, like, what is being foregone, you know, I'm a little bit maybe in between Mearsheimer and a more Jeffrey Sachs kind of cooperatist hope. I mean, I love the hope, you know, of course. And all of the realism has to be—I mean, hope, and like we say, we live in a moral universe, so that is part of reality, actually. But I think there's going to be, of course, security competition all the time. It's always going to be great powers. We just want them to be better, like they had been in the past when there was, when there was, you know, fairly peaceful periods of balance of power, coexistence, Westphalia, and so forth. Yeah.

To go to your question about why the current actors are so far from either of these more peaceful approaches, you know, that's like the psychology of vice. I don't know. I don't know what, you know. You know, you can go to a layer and say it's vanity. You can go to a layer and say it's power. You can go to a layer and say it's greed. And then you ask, like, well, why are you so greedy? Like, what are you going to do with another million dollars? You know, like, what's it going to buy you? Or, you know, so I don't know what it is. I kind of remain mystified by what to think of what these people are doing or why they're doing it. I always ask myself that. So I don't have great answers for that. I just go in circles over that.

#Pascal

Chris, what's your approach there? I mean, to understand where these people are coming from—the ones who are driving us toward war and not this peace.

#Christopher Coyne

Certainly. Well, I think Dan hit the nail on the head. I think it's a mix of factors, so it is hard to pin down. But I think at the end of the day, it is a function of vision. So it is one of your vision of the world. If you view the world as a kind of Hobbesian jungle, that the only way out is to have a Leviathan ruling over everyone and imposing order, then that's going to be what you foreground in terms of your vision of the world. And then a lot of things spill out of that. Likewise, if you view, as Dan said, you recognize that there are security threats. That's a part of life, both domestically and internationally. But you also recognize that there are numerous different ways to navigate those threats. Then that opens up a whole host of different alternatives. And then that leads, I think, then to a deeper issue. Dan called it, I think, power.

He talked about greed, just straight-up incentives. I mean, look, I'll call it the U.S. war machine. We can point—let's point to World War II and then the Cold War, even though perhaps you can go back before that in its origins. The very nature of that structure is set up to prepare for total war. And there is a dramatic shift in policy, in mentality among policymakers, among the public even, who were either accepting or indoctrinated into a view that the U.S. government had to be the world's protector, that that world police role was necessary for domestic safety, and that instead of waiting for a war to occur and then ramp up security responses, the U.S. government had to continually prepare to combat not just existing threats, but future threats, to combat ideologies and so on around the world.

And so the war machine is self-perpetuating in a way, and that just reinforces the vision. And, you know, it's not good politics oftentimes to say, "I don't want to have a strong military," which is typically measured by resource expenditures and flexing. And so I might be slightly more hopeful than my colleague and friend, but I have great hope in humankind to navigate this. There's a security dilemma, but there's also a perceptual dilemma: how you are perceived by other people. And that is within your agency. So if you take a strong posture, that is going to be met likely with a strong posture.

And that is something I think is underestimated. And that's one of the reasons Dan and I point to the quote by Washington at the end, that morality is the right, makes my point that Dan was making. Morality and peace might point in the same direction, where oftentimes doing what is right is viewed as naive, and that you have to put that by the wayside in order to flex, get peace and order, and then maybe we can talk about morality after. But Dan and I are trying to emphasize that there's a different way that we can envision that relationship.

#Daniel Klein

We also cite Pew Research Center results showing that most human beings on Earth view the United States negatively, and that since 2023, the opinion has sunk precipitously. So in doing what they're doing, they're totally blowing the soft power which the West, and especially the U.S., had enjoyed for generations. There was more of a faith in, like, the U.S. could be fair and could be just. And they're just, they're blowing that. And that's actually blowing power. That's blowing might. Wrong makes weak, in a sense, which is the inverse of right makes might. Right. Yeah. Pascal, can I read another couple—just a couple of a section here? Sure.

#Pascal

Sure.

#Daniel Klein

We say here in the statement, unlike the territorial empires of the past, modern governments in the West project power not through formal annexation of land, but through networks of political and military influence. Regime change operations represent perhaps the clearest expression of this strategy. The aim of regime changers is to get our people or our friends in control of the country targeted for regime change.

The regime of the regime change country often maintains a nominal independence and sovereignty while becoming politically, militarily, and economically dependent on outside powers. The means range widely from carrots in the form of largesse and careers to propaganda and election interference to the vast array of sticks: weaponized trade policy, intimidation, censorship, persecution, assassination, terrorism, sabotage, false flag operations, and full-blown war. Through these and other means, democracy is now routinely despoiled by political actors wrapped in “democracy,” in quotes.

#Pascal

Very, very, very well put. I mean, this is what's going on at the moment, right? And in a sense, I interpret your statement as this political demand: we politically demand peace the way that people have political demands, like we want health, we want housing, we want fresh water, right? All of those are needs that people have, and peace is actually one of them. So we demand peace. Then the question is, how do we get there? In the domestic realm, we usually then try to look at how to build an institution that can deliver that, right? Water supply, water distribution systems, or a healthcare system with insurances and so on, and hospitals distributed. All of that is very difficult. These are difficult enterprises.

But when it comes to peace, the question is probably how to deconstruct the systems that are put in place to make war, because war itself is a human effort. So there are systems in place that produce war. Peace itself, at least to me, is the absence of war. So what is it that we need to configure anew

within the West in order to disable the war-making powers? And I know that's not your statement, the demand for peace. But if we go now to, like, where do you think we should start working in order to get there? Where do you think is the single most important point where we can exert leverage? And I know this is a big question, but I throw this first to Chris and then to Dan.

#Christopher Coyne

Yeah, so one way of viewing peace, as you put it, is the absence of violence. Another way of viewing it is on a more positive side, of a set of actions that... So there's the absence of something, but then there's a process that contributes to that outcome. And so I would focus on the process, which is what I take you to be pushing us to think about now. Okay, you want this thing, so how can then we go about bringing about...? What are the means? And my own view on this is that we don't need any kind of grand design or top-down control. In fact, I think that's the root of the problem. So I certainly wouldn't turn to the people I view as responsible for the situation we're in to somehow design peace. I think that's a wrong vision of peace.

What I would contend is that we should look for low-hanging fruit. Peace exists in the world today. We take it for granted because we don't talk about it. Peace exists all around us. It exists domestically. It exists internationally. For all the tensions and violence in the world, there are a multitude of peaceful interactions, these little micro-level peaceful interactions between millions and millions of people around the world. That is a real resource, if you will, or collection of resources, plural, that we should be able to think about how to leverage. So rather than thinking about some kind of wholesale, well, we need to solve the problem of violence and figure out how to create peace.

It is perhaps figuring out ways to get out of the way of people who already have it figured out. And so, what then might that look like? Well, a couple of things that come to mind. One, as I mentioned earlier, which I know sounds perhaps to many people to be kind of ordinary and not proactive enough, but language—how you talk about and to people. When political leaders use threats and bullying and violence, and language of violence just in the way they talk to people, that frames human relationships in a way that is likely going to spiral into the very outcome that you purport to want to avoid.

And so that seems like a good starting point. Then figuring out ways to sit down and speak with people rather than elevating and going straight for the gun, if you will, in terms of how we interact with people. Again, it seems like a lot of the political rhetoric in Washington, D.C. and elsewhere, but especially in Washington, D.C., is to put violence and the tools of violence on a pedestal. That is the way that we deal with other people. Then I would look for other low-hanging fruit. So there's language, there's relationship building, and I put this in the same category as that, although perhaps a different set of policies: trade and interaction.

And by trade and association, I mean both economic goods, but also human interaction. Blocking people off from associating and interacting with other people is a surefire way to create divisions

between people, because that is what you are literally doing through the policy itself. And so one of the things that always drives me a little bit mad is that there are policies that actively divide people. And then when divisions happen and conflicts happen, that then is used as evidence for the need for more policies, where the root cause of it often, not always, but often the root cause of it are prior policies which drove those divisions and added fuel to the fire.

#Daniel Klein

Like Chris, I don't see any specific or particular central major way forward. And I don't pretend to know how to help and what people can do. And I wish everybody would throw whatever efforts and creative abilities that I couldn't imagine into it. Broadly, like Chris and, well, like you, Pascal, we're academics. We do culture. I mean, like I said, we live in a moral universe, which means we live in culture. And so, you know, all I can say is there's politics, which is still somewhat contestable. And we can maybe hope that some other political attitudes get more... We might be seeing some of that in Europe in some places. Of course, there's media and, you know, there's, like, disillusionment with the legacy media and the rise of the alternative media, like your channel, Pascal. So, yeah, you know, let's add to that. I mean, keep doing what you're doing, Pascal. You know, you're the answer to your question.

#Pascal

No, I mean, like, what we are doing, because, you know, one of the problems, actually, and I see that a lot at my university, is that our students, they think we know the answers. They think we know. And it's like, no, no, we're also just trying to figure it out. We wouldn't do research if we had all the answers, right? But, I mean, it's hard to wrap your head around the fact that even professors at universities do not have the answers, right? We're all looking for them. But we can do this collective kind of searching thingy, which we do at conferences and so on.

And I was just wondering, what do you make of the economic argument of the Marxists, the scholarly Marxists, you know, like Radhika Desai and so on, that, you know, the root of the drive toward imperial expansion is actually inside capitalism, in the way that capitalism itself works? Is that something that you think is an avenue to pursue, since you're also economists? Or would you say, like, no, we need to look for it outside. We need to look for it maybe in psychology and so on? Chris?

#Christopher Coyne

Sure. So this might be an issue of terminology, perhaps, but here's how I would view this type of argument, which of course Lenin made, and many others have made as well. And that is that I do not view capitalism as an economic system in general as having an inherent feature of imperialism abroad. Okay, now, of course, capitalism is a theoretical system. So now we go to the actual world. And what do we observe? Well, we've certainly observed systems that have markets, where private

interests have intervened in foreign countries, oftentimes, certainly not always, but often and perhaps in most instances, it is through the apparatus of government. So we have firms that partner and lobby with government to intervene abroad to feather their own nest at the expense of both domestic taxpayers and foreigners as well.

Now, then you have to ask yourself, what is the root cause of that? Is the root cause private ownership over the means of production, or is it something else that empowers those who have private ownership over the means of production to project power and force abroad? And so, from that perspective, I'm quite sympathetic to arguments that there can be interests involved that utilize their influence to project force and violence onto other people abroad and that line their own pockets in doing so. I would tend to think of it more in terms of what I would call things like political capitalism, which, again, Dan can talk to. People like Adam Smith were fully aware, when talking about the colonies, of these kinds of pressures, but I don't view them as inherent features of a capitalist system. They don't have to be. Dan, I don't know if you have any thoughts on this.

#Daniel Klein

I also don't see them as inherent features of, shall we say, a free enterprise system. Now, we don't have a free enterprise system. I personally stay away from the word capitalism altogether. Like, I'm not willing to debate, like, what are the features of capitalism? Because I've excluded that word. I've, what's the word, gotten rid of that word from my active vocabulary altogether. It's in my passive vocabulary. I hear other people say it and I kind of know what they mean, but I don't use the word. So, yeah, look, let me take the question and turn it a little bit towards kind of like the cross-political-spectrum kind of theme I'd like us to get to.

#Christopher Coyne

You know, people on the left are absolutely right that—

#Daniel Klein

Material interests, corporate interests, greed are a big part of the problem here, a huge part of the problem here. I think there's no question. And Adam Smith talked about that at great length. For example, when he talked about the East India Company, which he despised. Adam Smith, by the way, was quite systematically anti-hegemonic and anti-colonialist, like really across the board. So there is a big role of the private interests, the companies, the profit-making, the exploiters, in that sense, that I do think drive a lot of this. So maybe it's greed that's behind it. You know, once again, I go back and say, why are you so greedy?

I don't get that. Like, and then, you know, one answer is like maybe I need another million dollars just to feel good about myself. So it's some kind of vanity. So I really don't understand why they're so greedy, bent on all this. But anyway, you need the private interests, but you do need the political

power. You need that special feature of government, which, you know, Exxon by itself doesn't have an army. Exxon by itself doesn't have any authorization to coerce, you know, the little humble person who lives next to the gas station or anyone else. It's only through government. Government is the only agency in society which has institutionalized the initiation of coercion.

They do it overtly. They do it in a wholesale manner. In fact, they're supposed to put up a website where they're going to tell you exactly how much they're going to take or exactly how much they're going to control you and how. No one else does that. And if your neighbor tried it, your neighbor would be deemed criminal. So the government part is absolutely crucial. That's what Chris is getting at about, well, how do they, you know, enrich themselves? And it's only by getting influence with government. So, but the point, I guess what I want to say is, so we, you know, Chris and I come from a Hayekian kind of background.

And so we're used to kind of dumping on government. Marxists and other people on the left are used to dumping on the other part of the equation, which is the greed and the private interests. And, you know, I personally come more and more around to, like, appreciating both sides of this equation, if you like. And we do have names that reflect, so far, we've collected some names for our statement that do reflect, I think, a kind of, you know, a wide political spectrum here. And we're hoping that it doesn't have any particular—because you can have people from across the political spectrum for peace and multipolarity.

#Pascal

Yes, you can. And maybe this is the point where you can also read out, you know, the people that you already managed to reach and who publicly support your statement.

#Daniel Klein

Sure, I'd love to. And this is really thanks to your help and the help of Ivan Kachanovsky and Ben Abelow, people who are active in your space, Pascal. Yes. I personally don't have any contact with these folks that I'm such a fanboy of. You can see I buy their shirts. But, but so this is one reason we're so grateful to you for doing this program, because we're hoping some of these wonderful people, like, you know, reach out to us. But these are people who have: so Ben Abelow, Kyle Anzalone, Chris Coyne, Robert Barnes, Dennis Fritz, Scott Horton, Ivan Kachanovsky, Anatol Lieven, Pascal Lottaz, Jack Matlock, Alexander Mercouris, Mats Nilsson, Ted Postol, Ian Proud, Geoffrey Roberts, Richard Sakwa, Gary Vogler, and Lawrence Wilkerson. That's who we have so far.

#Pascal

There are a lot of people who demand that we finally get to terms in the West with the idea of living in a multipolar world, and that we do it peacefully and not through warfighting. The question is, why is it possible to gaslight so many people? And of course, the answer to that is media, but there are

so many people who are gaslit into believing that force and the security competition—not security competition, but the... and to scare the other one off with as much military power as you can muster—is the way to peace, right? And it's the idea of strength that creates peace, as opposed to cooperation creates peace and deterrence creates peace.

And I always wonder why it is that these people can, for instance, understand that the reason that Germany and France do not go to war anymore is not because they deter each other anymore, but because they rely on each other and they're friends, right? You don't need to deter your friends. So how do we get to the shift from deterrence thinking to, well, let's just make friends kind of thinking, which, to all intents and purposes, if we look at the moment how Russia and China work and even still try to work with the West, should be totally possible, right? And maybe Chris, I don't know if there's a real question in there for you, but maybe you just want to take it over.

#Christopher Coyne

Yeah, I don't want to repeat what I said earlier, but I will for a moment. And it's my own approach has been to... So I've spent much of my career studying and critiquing war, the various aspects of the war industry, American foreign policy. That's been my main focus. But more recently, I have shifted focus to the peace side of the equation, which I think is neglected. And I really come down on the position that we, even those of us who are critics of war-making, we don't emphasize enough how prevalent peace already is. Peace is—and it's not headline news—the mundane, ordinary interactions between people on a daily basis, which is really a marvel of social life domestically and internationally, is completely neglected.

You pointed, I think it was to Pascal, to France and Germany, I think you said earlier. Just take that logic and think about it at the individual level up to the national level. And when you think in those terms, the breadth of peacemaking is truly amazing. So the challenge is this issue, I think, of visions that I mentioned earlier, the vision of the world, the way that people view the possibilities of the world. And peace is just a small piece, is viewed as an outcome of war and violence rather than a condition that can exist absent those things. So rather than viewing violence and war-making as something that is an outlier, and peace is the predominant state of the world, that's been inverted.

And what Dan and I are trying to push is that we can invert it back. It's hard. We have the media, as you said. Look, in America, we have the Department of War. We don't have the Department of Peace. What if there was a Department of Peace? What if there were actual people investing in the primacy of peacemaking rather than the primacy of war? That would entirely shift the conversation. It wouldn't solve all the world's ills. It wouldn't end violence for all time, but it would reorient the conversation. Now, those are hard things to do. So what do we do? Again, I'm with Dan. I don't know. And I let many flowers bloom. So one thing that I always try to emphasize when I talk about this to students or the public is that everyone is a peacemaker.

And guess what? You don't need to call yourself a pacifist. You don't need to systematically study peace. If you look at your ordinary life, you are peaceful with an enormous number of diverse people in your own life. And so thinking about scaling that out and then scaling it up is the key, but the resources are already there. And so I think the challenge is a lot less daunting than, again, the view of, well, the world's this violent place and peace doesn't exist. We need to somehow get it, which people have, and figuring out ways to unleash those resources that already exist. And that's kind of where my focus always is. Where that comes down in terms of, like, a list of policies, I think, is very context-specific versus universal, a universal recipe.

#Daniel Klein

Let me just add that when we talked about not really having trouble being peaceful with fellow Americans or fellow Japanese there, I gather that's where you are, Pascal, in Japan. But when we have these nations that we take for granted, when these nations were first coming into being, 15th-, 16th-, 17th-century Europe, they were fighting with each other, and people saw the problem at that level, a huge level. For some reason, it's a special problem at that level, I guess, and especially when these nations were forming. And we allude to Hugo Grotius, Adam Smith, Richard Cobden, and Reinhold Niebuhr, stretching then from the 17th to the 20th century. And...

You know, these guys said how it can work, and they weren't just, you know, inconsequential theorists. They really weren't. Hugo Grotius was a huge influence. Adam Smith was a huge influence. Richard Cobden was a big influence on certain things, but unfortunately he wasn't as influential on foreign policy as we would have hoped. But anyway, let me read a sentence by scholars: "The idea of international society, which Grotius propounded, was given concrete expression in the Peace of Westphalia. And Grotius may be considered the intellectual father of this general peace settlement of modern times." And Glenn Diesen talks quite a lot about Westphalia and the history of when peace has broken out and worked.

Just like you're saying, like, why not? It's more enjoyable and prosperous for us to be friends, actually, rather than turning each other into enemies for some reason. Yeah. And so I think part of the answer is to appreciate and learn from, and kind of remind people of, the intellectual traditions of, if you like, multipolarity, of peaceful coexistence, of balance of power. David Hume embraced that term. But David Hume's a good guy, a great guy in all of this. So, to some extent, it's also about us reconnecting to the intellectual traditions which helped bring us as much peace as we have achieved in the last 500 years, say.

#Pascal

I think it's very relevant, you know, the ways in which intellectual traditions have been trying to form ideas about peace, peacefulness, or, on the other end, war, and how we've followed that over the last four or five hundred years. And I must say, one important caveat here is that what we're talking

about is the Western world, right? The last 500 years were the centuries of the West: the expansion of Europe into North America, the colonization of North America, the colonization of Australia, New Zealand, and large parts of the world, and the subsuming of the rest of the world. Even the parts that were not, you know, replaced, they were basically taken over.

The political agency was taken away from these places. And when we talk about these intellectual traditions, we talk about that part of the intellectual tradition. But even within that, the idea of the Peace of Westphalia and then the idea of Grotius and so on was to create a rule book for civilized interactions among states in order to reduce the ravages of war. That's the whole idea of the law of war and international relations—not international law, I want to say. Then we had a break. Then came the war to end all wars, the First World War. And with that was born the idea that war itself is a disease and needs to be eradicated.

It took another world war, but in 1945 we came to the UN Charter, which once and for all outlawed war. Before that, the idea was, war is allowed, but let's keep it as small and as necessary. Let's define everything and make it a law issue. Then came the idea: no, no, no, it's illegal itself. We get rid of it. And ever since, we've actually, in international law, replaced the word war with the term international armed conflict. And civil war became non-international armed conflict. So we got rid of the word. We didn't get rid of the concept. And then we started reintroducing the word, because everything started becoming a war: war on drugs, war on terror, war against COVID, war on whatever it is.

The only thing we haven't re-unpacked is the war on war. But for some reason. But that's the kind of intellectual stream that we're in, right? So we're kind of now at the place where this whole question is, well, we got rid of it, but the phenomenon is still with us. And we recognize war when we see it, actually. That's why we call it such, even though international law hasn't really caught up with that yet. Where do you think that we should push this Western tradition forward? Or should we start actually, like, paying attention to non-Western traditions of coexistence? Because, you know, I think we've ignored that for 500 years.

#Christopher Coyne

Dan, do you want to say something about the Western tradition, what you were talking about, and pushing that forward perhaps, to start? Yeah.

#Daniel Klein

Yeah, sure. I mean, I don't know anything about any other traditions, so I got to work on what I know, basically. But I'm one who tries to highlight and expound the kind of attitudes—the pro-peace, multipolarity, civilizationalist—in rather canonical Western thinkers like Grotius, Hume and Smith, Burke, Tocqueville, Hayek. So, I mean, I do think that a lot of what gets called the Western stream of thought is very untrue to them. And a lot of what, in fact, is called liberal is very untrue to them.

So that's kind of one of the fields that I work in on this, what to do going forward. Smith was very friendly to the world at large. He really was. And so I think, like, what we're saying is very fitting for Adam Smith. And so I like, you know, I work on Smith. Go ahead, go ahead. Give us a Smithian interpretation. That's fine. A Smithian interpretation of all this stuff? Mm-hmm.

#Pascal

I think Smith very much saw that... Well, let me... First of all, he and Hume were very close.

#Daniel Klein

And so I think there's really not much daylight between them. I think Smith develops on Hume, but I don't think there's anything in Smith that Hume wouldn't have been happy about. Hume died about 14 years before Smith died. So Hume said, "Liberty is the perfection of civil society, but it must be admitted that authority is essential to its very existence." So there's a whole presupposition of political stability and, to some extent, functionality, and you need a kind of political community and social cohesion for that. So you need—there's going to be government. It's almost like we're fated to it, and it's going to be something you then deal with.

And it itself is, like I said, the institutionalization of the initiation of coercion, which is like attacking liberty. I mean, taxes are not liberty, but they're going to be there. So you've got this paradox. Smith knew that. And basically, he would look at Russia today or China today, and he'd say, "Hey, look, they got their authority. It's not the way we do it exactly. It's their own traditions. It's their own civilization. You don't want to mess too much with any kind of stable, and you want to make friends with them. And we can then do liberty between us, like Chris was saying: tourism, trade, interaction, you know. Be friends. Be friends. Take yes for an answer." And so that was his attitude, actually. He would have hated Woodrow Wilson.

And I'm very sure he was not one to try to really project, you know, his vision onto others. He wanted to not renew the East India Company charter. He wanted Britain to basically let all of its colonies go. He was for letting the Americans go. He had this whole brilliant paragraph where he says trade is a great source of mutual benefit between peoples. It can be really a great thing. It so happens that when Columbus and da Gama made their discoveries, the Europeans were way ahead in force and arms, and they did just what you said, Pascal. They enslaved them or they exploited them terribly. And he says that. And this has been very bad for them. This is all one big, beautiful paragraph.

And he says, but in time, those people, by virtue of trade, will come to learn how to arm themselves and fight back. And we can then hope that one day we will get back to where there are different authorities in their respective countries. Remember, you need authority, and then you can have liberty. That different authorities can then defend themselves from, basically, kind of an armed society is a polite society. Kind of. You've heard that, for people who don't like gun control: an

armed society is a—well, an armed world is a polite world. That's what Smith was saying. So he was anticipating multipolarity, the day when, you know, the Far East and Africa and so forth, Latin America, would be able to stand up to its hegemons, and then peace might break out.

#Pascal

The multipolar Mexican standoff. I mean, it's kind of depressing, but if it's the case, then, well, we better... Chris, do you want to jump in?

#Christopher Coyne

I want to go back to your first point. I very much enjoy listening to my colleague speak about Adam Smith, since this is one of his many areas of expertise. You had asked us about Western and non-Western traditions. I want to come back to that for a moment because my own view is that peace requires precisely—embracing, embracing is the wrong word. Let me stand corrected. Being aware of and appreciating insights from other traditions. And so, while I'm not an expert on this in terms of my area of study, I've benefited greatly from reading Eastern traditions: Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, Hinduism. All of these traditions have various aspects which, to my way of thinking, are peace-promoting. Now, of course, different traditions also have resources that can be violence-promoting.

A lot of it is how they are utilized. And this is where I think individual character and commitments come in, because you can take any set of ideas, for the most part, and kind of twist them around. And I think the reason these other perspectives are important is, number one, for appreciating and understanding what they bring to the table. But also, I think more deeply, which is a theme that is in the statement, although it's not central in terms of what we call out, but I think it's important to highlight, tolerance—of tolerating differences between people. Those can be political differences. Those can be ways of living or viewing the world. And the very idea of a multipolar world is that other societies, whether at the government level, at the individual level, they're going to be different than us.

And we need to figure out ways to coexist, given those differences. Of course, to do that, you need some set of shared commitments, one being a respect, which we do talk of in the statement, for other people. But it requires some baseline level of tolerance. And there's, you know, tolerance does not necessarily mean approval. Diplomacy does not mean endorsement of everything that the person you are speaking with stands for. Coexistence, to my way of thinking, does not mean moral equivalence, and restraint does not mean weakness. And that's really one of the key things that Dan and I want to bring to the forefront here and bring together this coalition of thinkers to emphasize and make part of the broader discourse.

#Pascal

I think this is not a bad place to actually ask you for final statements on this, and also explain to people who are listening to this now, where can they sign on to this, well, statement of yours? And then, yeah, maybe I'll start with Dan and we finish up with Chris.

#Daniel Klein

We're hoping that—we want to have maybe 100 people, and we want to have kind of people like I read off, people who are in this space, who are knowledgeable, who are outspoken. So it's kind of by invitation. So, in other words, it's not an open invitation to people. Okay. So we're hoping that your friends—and please lobby Alex Christoforou. I would be especially thrilled if he signed. We have Alexander Mercouris. So I'm just hoping they'll—in terms of, like, a final thought, just on Chris's theme about looking across civilizations.

And again, I don't know anything about other civilizations, really, but I think of C.S. Lewis's appendix to *The Abolition of Man*, where he talks about universals, and he quotes from all the great traditions from all over the world and how much we're the same as human beings, and how much we have the same kind of basic principles, which have to do with treating each other, you know, as you would yourself, the Golden Rule, not messing with other people's stuff, peace and harmony. And so there is a conviction behind this whole thing that we are all human. We're all equally human. We all have certain qualities, very basic similarities, really, in life, in living, and that it shouldn't be so hard for us to find a way to avoid these terrible, terrible things that are happening. It shouldn't.

#Christopher Coyne

Chris, your final words. Well, maybe my final words will be the final words of the statement, which we haven't read out—just two short sentences. But I like them very much. The faith is not specious. The hope is not vain. To peace and multipolarity, conscience calls. And so I view Dan and I as putting forth an invitation to the type of people that he mentioned that we're looking to sign this. And the way we've written this is that you don't need to agree with Dan and I about every single war in the present or historically. You don't need to agree on every single aspect of government, alliance, foreign and domestic policy.

The way I would put it is that the basic question is whether you believe in the possibility of peaceful coexistence among different people in different political orders. And if you believe that that should be the fundamental presumption rather than some background condition that requires violence and coercion, then the statement is relevant for you. And we would love to have you join us. And what we're trying to do by collecting these signatures is to demonstrate that peace, restraint, sovereignty, pluralism, and skepticism towards highly coercive centralized power are not a single ideological tribe, but rather a broad set of people who share a common set of commitments.

#Pascal

And that's a very worthy cause to support. That's why I support it. And I would like this political demand to be heard: that we demand peace the way we demand health, water, and shelter. It's essential. And as some say also about health, you know, peace is not everything, but everything is nothing without it. So I think we should struggle together. Again, to everybody listening, we don't have all the answers. We are not born leaders. We just try to put something together. But the more of us that try, I think the better it will get. I will put links to everything that I can link in the description box below. The rest is work in progress. And we will certainly do updates on this. Chris, Dan, thank you so much for your time today.

#Daniel Klein

Thank you, Patrick. We appreciate it.

#Christopher Coyne

Yes, indeed.