



The European Legacy

Toward New Paradigms

ISSN: (Print) (Online) Journal homepage: www.tandfonline.com/journals/cele20

Isaiah Berlin and International Relations

George Crowder

To cite this article: George Crowder (2024) Isaiah Berlin and International Relations, The European Legacy, 29:1, 1-21, DOI: [10.1080/10848770.2023.2262826](https://doi.org/10.1080/10848770.2023.2262826)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/10848770.2023.2262826>



© 2023 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group.



Published online: 02 Feb 2024.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 344



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)



OPEN ACCESS



Isaiah Berlin and International Relations

George Crowder

College of Business, Government and Law, Flinders University, Adelaide, SA 5001, Australia

ABSTRACT

Isaiah Berlin is a classic name in political theory, but does he have anything to teach us about international relations? In the Cold War he was a realist disciple of the containment doctrine, indeed a more hawkish container than his friend George Kennan, at least until he saw what was happening in Vietnam. In the aftermath of the Cold War, confronted with an outburst of resurgent nationalism, he seemed more like a utopian idealist, dreaming with Herder of a world of cultural harmony. But that dream is undermined by his own value pluralism, which points towards something more rigorous and interesting, a case for liberal internationalism in tension with its realist rival. From a value-pluralist point of view, realism tends towards moral monism, and liberal internationalism is normatively the more balanced view. However, liberals should still take seriously the central realist insight that security is an especially important value in the anarchic international context.

KEYWORDS

Isaiah Berlin; international relations; pluralism; liberalism; realism

Isaiah Berlin is a classic name in political theory, but does he have anything to teach us about international relations? We might expect him to have something significant to say, since he had substantial experience as a British government official and diplomat in the United States and the Soviet Union during and just after the Second World War. In this period he made personal contacts with prominent U.S. officials, such as George Kennan and Charles (Chip) Bohlen, who were influential in constructing U.S. foreign policy in the Cold War era. Later, in the Vietnam years, he was a frequent visitor to Washington, where he dined at the Kennedy White House and became friends with members of Kennedy's team of advisors, and later with important figures in the Johnson administration.¹

Yet Berlin published almost nothing about international relations, and he had no general theory. Only very occasionally does he bring to bear on international issues the positions he develops in political theory and the history of ideas. His most substantial public statements consist of a brief and highly ambivalent comment on Vietnam and an interview about the outburst of nationalism following the end of the Cold War.² Apart from these rare nuggets lying on the surface, Berlin's thoughts about international relations lie deeply buried, in scattered seams, in his letters.

Still, it is worth mining this material because we do have something to learn from it. For a start, Berlin's comments mobilise two of his great themes: liberty and pluralism. In the

CONTACT George Crowder  George.Crowder@flinders.edu.au

© 2023 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group.

This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>), which permits non-commercial re-use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited, and is not altered, transformed, or built upon in any way. The terms on which this article has been published allow the posting of the Accepted Manuscript in a repository by the author(s) or with their consent.

Cold War he stands four-square for the defence of liberal democracy against Soviet totalitarianism, in this context approving of the containment policy initiated by his friend Kennan. When the Cold War ends, he supports cultural pluralism in the face of the liberal triumphalism typified by Francis Fukuyama's "end of history" thesis.³

It has to be admitted that both of these phases in Berlin's international thinking have serious problems. The Cold War containment favoured by Berlin is more hawkish than Kennan's, and he supports the worldwide application of that view that leads to Vietnam by way of the "domino" theory. Later he expresses horror at the real-world results of this policy. Then, at the end of the Cold War, he swings to the opposite extreme, commending a vaguely utopian cultural pluralism and rejecting all global formulas. This leaves him without any way of defending liberalism in international relations or of indicating the kind of liberalism that is worth promoting. At this point it might be concluded that Berlin's chief contribution to international theory is a demonstration of what not to think.

I argue, however, that a more valuable strain of Berlin's thought can be found in his notion of pluralism not so much in the sense of cultural pluralism but of value pluralism—the deep plurality of fundamental values. Berlin does not apply this idea to international relations himself, but it has potential nevertheless. Although I can offer no more than a brief sketch, I suggest that value pluralism can ground a case for liberal internationalism in contrast with realism, but a case that also learns from realism and incorporates its central concern for security given the anarchic nature of the international environment.

The article is structured in three main parts. In the first, I focus on Berlin's Cold War defence of individual liberty against Soviet communism. In his international thinking during the Cold War Berlin supports the doctrine of containment, indeed in a more vigorous form than that favoured by Kennan. On the other hand, he seems to get cold feet when he sees the real-world implications of the doctrine in Vietnam; indeed, as a monolithic approach to international affairs, anti-communist containment does not fit well with Berlin's stated concern for cultural pluralism and nationalism.

These latter themes come to the fore in the second phase of Berlin's international thinking, after the end of the Cold War. In the new conditions, global containment of communism is superseded in Berlin's thinking by an insistence on the autonomy of national cultures and the repudiation of any global principles, even those of liberalism. In a period of liberal triumphalism this is admirable to a degree, but it also undervalues the harm caused by competing nationalisms and the need for a global framework to manage that harm.

In the third part I argue that, beyond Berlin's own views, a more coherent approach to international relations can be grounded in his notion of value pluralism (as distinct from cultural pluralism). I interpret value pluralism in liberal terms, make a case for linking liberal pluralism with liberal internationalism in general, and then argue that liberal pluralists should for the most part resist the challenge of realism in international relations but also learn from that challenge.

Liberty, Cold War and Containment

Berlin is best known as a defender of liberal democracy against communism in the context of the Cold War.⁴ In the classic "Two Concepts of Liberty" (1958), he argues that political theory is needed to "understand the dominant issues of our own

world,” and that “the greatest of these is the open war that is being fought between two systems of ideas which return different and conflicting answers to what has long been the central question of politics—the question of obedience and coercion.”⁵ Famously, he distinguishes between negative and positive liberty, associating the former with liberal-democratic politics and the latter with authoritarianism.

Within this Cold War context, Berlin’s international thinking can be approached through his relationship with Kennan, the originator of the American Cold War policy of “containment.”⁶ Berlin was influenced by Kennan, but to what extent is not a straightforward question. They were personal friends for almost five decades, and there is no doubt that they agreed strongly about the evil of the Soviet Union.⁷ Moreover, in 1992 Berlin acknowledges explicitly that “I believed, with the then doctrines of George Kennan, that the proper policy [towards the Soviet Union] was ‘containment’, i.e. resistance to Soviet ambition wherever necessary.”⁸ However, Berlin also had reservations about Kennan’s views that seemed to increase over time.

The precise nature and extent of Berlin’s reservations, and the degree to which they were justified, is complex and uncertain. Sometimes Berlin seems to complain that, although he agreed with what Kennan was saying in the 1940s and 1950s, Kennan changed his position later on—hence the reference to “the then doctrines of George Kennan”—becoming increasingly critical of U.S. policy and soft on international communism. An alternative possibility is that Kennan’s supposed changes were only developments of a nuanced position that Berlin never fully appreciated in the first place. All of this is thrown into doubt by Berlin’s comment, in a letter in 1978, that, “[s]ecretly I have never thought [Kennan’s] ideas on Russia bore on reality: it was, in all its shynings to & fro, half a private fantasy.”⁹ I think there is likely some truth in all of these possibilities—that is, that Berlin always had reservations about Kennan’s views on Russia, but that their positions, initially close in their shared preoccupation with the Soviet threat, diverged increasingly over the years when it came to the nature of that threat and how to deal with it.

Kennan advocated the containing of the Soviet Union by quite specific means. Above all, he believed in defeating the Soviets by influence and example rather than force—by the use of what would now be called “soft power.”¹⁰ In particular, he favoured the use of economic power. In this way, he thought that the Soviet Union would eventually collapse because of its inherent defects, both economic and political. Behind these views lay an assumption that the Soviet mindset, although apparently aggressive, was really defensive because fearful of the West. By simply holding the Soviets at bay with soft power, the West could avoid open war and ultimately win by outlasting them: “To avoid destruction the United States need only measure up to its own best traditions and prove itself worthy of preservation as a great nation.”¹¹

Berlin disagreed with all of these more specific points. First, he believed that the Soviet Union was inherently aggressive. “I thought that on the whole the Soviet Union was expansionist and would take over as much territory as it could, provided there was no strong resistance—as, indeed, it did in Eastern Europe.”¹² Second, unlike Kennan, Berlin did not expect the Soviet Union to collapse. In 1951 he writes that there is no reason “for supposing that its intrinsic wickedness must bring it down (as our friend Mr X [Kennan] seems to me too obstinately to believe).”¹³ Third, Berlin consequently did not agree with Kennan that soft power would be enough to deal with the Soviets; even a stronger form of

containment might not work in the long run. "How long a tension of that kind could last I could not tell. No, I was not too optimistic."¹⁴

Overall, then, Berlin, although agreeing with Kennan that the Soviets had to be contained, was more hawkish about how this was to be achieved, and also less optimistic about the ultimate prospects for a Western victory or even for the maintenance of peace. Over the years Berlin became increasingly impatient with Kennan and, at least in private, critical of his views.¹⁵

Between Berlin and Kennan, who is right, or more right? It is hard to say because there is merit on both sides. On Soviet intentions, Berlin was probably correct that they were expansionist, but Soviet expansionism could be explained by Kennan's defensive hypothesis if defence includes pre-emptive attack. On the collapse of the Soviet Union, this did eventually happen, as Kennan predicted, but that collapse has been attributed variously to the flaws in the Soviet system, to Ronald Reagan's increased military spending in the 1980s, to Reagan's skill in negotiation, and to Mikhail Gorbachev's willingness to transform the Soviet Union.¹⁶ Finally, the question of whether containment required hard as well as soft power is difficult to answer because of the uncertainties just mentioned about Soviet intentions and flaws.

The difficulties on Berlin's side of the argument are brought out vividly by his anguish over the Vietnam War. Identifying his position on this great issue of the day is, again, not a straightforward matter. Christopher Hitchens presents a hostile picture. According to Hitchens, Berlin served as a kind of tame intellectual in support of those American officials and journalists who did most to encourage and sustain the Vietnam War. Referring to the "Three of Hearts" that consisted of McGeorge (Mac) Bundy, his brother William, and the conservative journalist Joe Alsop, Hitchens remarks that "Isaiah Berlin was happy, at least when Charles (Chip) Bohlen was unavailable, to furnish an urbane ditto to their ruthlessness."¹⁷ In Hitchens's view, Berlin had real influence "in post-Camelot Washington," and he used it for ill.

He used it in particular, Hitchens argues, to propagate the standard defence of U.S. intervention in Vietnam, the "domino theory": if one country was allowed to fall to communism, others in the region would follow. Mac Bundy reports Berlin as declaring, "I'm a terrific domino man."¹⁸ For Hitchens, the policies based on the domino theory were paid for by "many thousands of conscripted Americans, and uncountable numbers of Vietnamese, and not the intellectuals at the elbow of power." As for Berlin, Hitchens asks, "What of the sceptical humanist who warned incessantly about the sacrifice of living people to abstract ends, or totemic dogmas?"¹⁹

Hitchens's view stands at one extreme. Opposing it are Henry Hardy and Mark Pottle, the editors of *Building*, Berlin's selected letters from 1960 to 1975, who complain that Hitchens bases his case against Berlin on manipulation of the text from his letters and that Hitchens ignores the fact of Berlin's "publicly stated opposition to the war."²⁰

Was Berlin a flippant and callous sycophant who was happy to sing for his supper in Washington by supporting the Vietnam War, or was he an independent and dignified public opponent of it? As so often with Berlin, the truth lies in a complex field of ambivalence and ambiguity between these poles.

The evidence adduced by Hardy and Pottle for Berlin's public opposition to the war comes solely from his contribution to *Authors Take Sides on Vietnam* (1967). This is a set of statements by prominent intellectuals based on the model of *Authors Take Sides on the*

Spanish War (1937). Berlin writes that he had been clear about his support for the Spanish republic in the 1930s, but he is much less certain about Vietnam. He does state as his main theme that “I think it was probably a terrible mistake on the part of the Americans to have sent troops there in the first place. I wish the Vietnamese had originally been left to settle the issue by and for themselves; unlike the Spanish situation Vietnam seems to me to have called for genuine non-intervention.”²¹

But then he enters a string of qualifications. First, now that the Americans are in fact in Vietnam, it is not obvious that they should leave, at any rate precipitately, because that would endanger their allies who are left behind. Second, an excessively rapid U.S. withdrawal might “cause other South-east Asian governments to be intimidated into knuckling under to regimes which many of their citizens would surely hate”—the domino argument. On this point Berlin thinks that there may be a parallel with what happened in Central Europe in the late 1930s when a row of states and regions fell to the Nazis one after that other. “I do not know whether this parallel is valid; but I need convincing that it is not.” Third, there may be alternative courses of action, such as phased withdrawal or the creation of enclaves, but “I simply do not know enough about the situation in Vietnam” to assess their prospects.²²

Overall, Berlin favours “whatever solution is likely to cause least destruction and oppression.”²³ Unlike the case of Spain (he also mentions Korea, South Africa, Rhodesia, and Hungary in 1956), he can find no definite response to the Vietnam problem. “I am not for some *ruat caelum* stand on some absolute principle: least of all for an ideological crusade, or arrogant or simpleminded insistence on importing our own methods or institutions into countries which have their own, perhaps quite different, traditions and aspirations.” In the end, “I cannot help feeling far closer to those who wish the war stopped at any price, than to their adversaries.”²⁴

So much for Hitchens’s picture of Berlin as an outright enthusiast for the Vietnam War, but the evidence is that Berlin is not clearly opposed to it either. Does he, in fact, have a coherent position? How can it be true both that the U.S. intervention “was probably a terrible mistake” and that there is a real danger that, if the Americans leave, the dominos will fall? If a withdrawal is likely to set off a fall of dominos, then would the dominos not have fallen without the original U.S. intervention? In that case, on Berlin’s own reasoning, perhaps the intervention was not mistaken.

Indeed, the American policy in Vietnam seems to be in line with the version of containment favoured by Berlin in opposition to Kennan. Berlin wants containment of the Soviet Union, and of communism more broadly, with a harder edge, and this surely means being prepared to use not merely the force of superior example or of economic power but military force. The American adventure in Vietnam is precisely an example of containment in this harder-edged form. Yet when it comes to the point, Berlin is unable fully to endorse in practice what he apparently supports in theory.

It is striking that in his thinking about Vietnam, Berlin gives less weight than might be expected to nationalism and cultural diversity. His general view is well known that nationalism is an important cultural and political force that has been unwisely neglected by cosmopolitan thinkers, including both liberals and Marxists.²⁵ Behind this is his personal commitment to Zionism.²⁶ Yet he hardly mentions nationalism when it comes to Vietnam. He does refer to it obliquely in the reference, quoted above, to “countries which have their own, perhaps quite different, traditions and aspirations,” but he draws

no definite lesson from this for Vietnam. While some commentators see the Vietnam conflict as a civil war between rival visions of national identity, Berlin generally views it within the context of the Cold-War threat of world communism.²⁷ This is all the more odd because in the 1950s and 1960s Berlin is expressly sympathetic to decolonisation, allowing that it is reasonable in that context for people to place national feeling before personal liberty.²⁸ He must have been aware of a similar issue in relation to Vietnam, but in that case nationalism is trumped for him by anti-communism.

Further, even setting culture and nationalism aside and assuming a Cold War lens, Berlin has a choice that he does not face squarely. On the one hand he can stick to his guns, supporting the Vietnam intervention as an instance of the hard containment that is, regrettably, necessary in the face of communist expansion. Alternatively, if he is not willing to live with the consequences of such a policy, he should revise his commitment to hard containment. In the event, he makes neither choice, adopting a vague position that regrets the intervention while still clinging to the thinking that justifies it.

Perhaps this puts the issue too crudely and there are also intermediate positions or compromises to consider in addition. The matter is certainly complex, and navigating it is a genuine cause for anguish. However, the fact remains that Berlin does not offer us, or himself, much guidance. The thinker who tells us that hard choices have to be made, both in personal life and public policy, makes no such choice and does not use his own philosophical tools to frame the issue at a theoretical level. Instead, he bobs back and forth between competing intuitions, unable to reach a definite conclusion. This difficulty suggests a link to the problem of value pluralism, but I shall come to that in due course.

Cultural Pluralism and the Bent Twigs of Nationalism

Berlin's final years, before his death in 1997, coincided with a vastly changed international environment. The Cold War ended with the defeat of the Soviet Union, ushering in a "new world order" with two principal features: the undisputed hegemony of the United States, and an upsurge of nationalism. New states emerged from the wreckage of the Soviet empire, and old enmities were expressed in new and astonishingly savage ways, most spectacularly in the dismembering of Yugoslavia. Observing these developments in the early 1990s, Berlin changed the focus of his international thinking away from his hitherto dominant theme of the world-wide defence of individual liberty and towards pluralism in its cultural dimension, and the plurality of national cultures in particular.

Cultural pluralism is the second of Berlin's great political themes after individual liberty. For Berlin, every human culture is legitimate to a degree because it exhibits significant values. In this connection he is especially interested in national cultures. He sometimes seems to approve of a view he attributes to J. G. Herder, that each national culture has its own unique "centre of gravity" such that cultures are valuable incommensurably—they are equally unique and cannot be compared critically or ranked.²⁹ In addition, he stresses the resilience of national cultures and the way in which they answer to the deep human need for belonging and recognition. But he also sees their dark side, captured by his image of "the bent twig," where nations become aggressive and messianic out of resentment at actual or perceived slights and humiliations inflicted by other nations in the past. The story of German nationalism, emerging in reaction to the humiliations of the Napoleonic period, is the classic instance.³⁰

In the early to mid-1990s Berlin witnessed the violent release of several bent twigs in Yugoslavia, Rwanda, Palestine and elsewhere. The key text is an interview Berlin gave to Nathan Gardels in 1991. In the context of the Soviet breakup and the “open ethnic warfare” in Yugoslavia, Gardels asks Berlin to explain this “ingathering storm of nations.” Berlin responds that “in our age, nationalism is not resurgent, it never died”; along with racism it is “the most powerful [of] movements in the world today, cutting across many social systems.”³¹ He proceeds to give his familiar account of the origins of nationalism in the human need for belonging and recognition, and of the potential for its corruption through the bent-twig process. Berlin then goes further, painting a picture of the contemporary world as characterised by deep cultural diversity and political fragmentation, in which no overarching political framework is either possible or desirable. Gardels asks him whether “the explosion of the Soviet system may be the last act of destruction of the Enlightenment ideals of unity, universality and liberal rationalism. That’s all finito now.” “I think that that is true,” Berlin replies. “Russia is an appropriate place to illuminate the misapprehension of the *lumières*.” The Soviet empire went furthest in attempting to create a perfect society along Enlightenment lines, basing itself on a supposedly scientific understanding of history and society. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, that vision has been discredited.³²

In place of the failed Enlightenment project, Berlin sees the kind of cultural diversity championed by his heroes, Vico and Herder. The harm caused by excessive universalism was pointed out by another of his heroes, Alexander Herzen, who railed against the sacrifice of individuals to abstractions. But in Berlin’s view it was Vico and Herder who showed that the Enlightenment project was ultimately futile because cultures and historical epochs are incommensurable. No social system can maximise all human goods or eliminate fundamental value conflicts. Vico and Herder rejected the Enlightenment doctrine of the universality of basic values because “the plurality of cultures is irreversible.”³³ Berlin’s emphasis at this point is firmly on the evil and futility of universality and the virtues and inevitability of cultural and national diversity.

Gardels then points to a problem. Doesn’t all this cultural and political diversity amount to a new form of Balkanisation, in which case is that altogether desirable? Berlin concedes that this is a serious problem: “Balkanisation means many small nations filled with national pride and hatreds and jealousies, egged on by demagogues, marching against each other as they did in the Balkans around 1912. That is a very bleak prospect.” In that case, Gardels asks, is there some “common thread” of universal morality or overarching political framework that can regulate and minimise such conflict: a “political structure [that] can ... accommodate this new age of cultural self-determination, preserve liberty, and perhaps stem some of the impending bloodshed?”³⁴ Berlin agrees that this is the issue but, having taken such a strong stand against any kind of universality, he has difficulty explaining what the structure might be. In a meandering discussion he considers three different possibilities.

The first is something like a world government, which he clearly rejects. Gardels suggests the image of the Tower of Babel, and Berlin seizes on this as an apt metaphor for the Soviet Union: “The Tower of Babel was meant to be unitary in character, a single great building, reaching to the skies, with one language for everybody.” The problem was that it crushed diversity, which inevitably reasserted itself. Consequently, “we can be

happy to have seen the Soviet Tower of Babel collapse into ruin, dangerous as some of the consequences may turn out to be—I mean, a bitter clash of nationalisms.”³⁵

Second, he imagines a world in which a strong set of universal norms is not needed. Repeatedly he returns to Herder’s notion of a cultural rather than political form of nationalism—that is, of the world as a series of national cultures, each expressing its own character but without asserting itself politically against its neighbours. Each “society could develop peacefully and nonviolently along its own internal lines, not jealous of or hostile to others who do the same—on the contrary, positively sympathetic to each other.” Gardels asks whether such a “universe of autonomous cultural worlds” does not need “a sun that keeps the various planets from careening out of orbit and colliding with the others.” Berlin replies, “that can lead to cultural imperialism” and goes on to say that “in Herder’s universe, you didn’t need a sun. His cultures were not planets, but stars that didn’t collide.”³⁶ Berlin eventually concedes that this is not a realistic prospect. “I admit that at the end of the twentieth century there is little historical evidence for the realizability of such a vision.”³⁷ Indeed, it is questionable whether the Herderian vision is even logically consistent with the fundamentals of Berlin’s own value pluralism, which emphasise the potential for conflict among basic values, hence among those individuals and cultures that endorse different interpretations, selections and priorities among those values.³⁸ So it seems that we do need international institutions to manage conflicts among different cultural and national groups. Such institutions would presumably be based on some set of universal values, but Berlin is not optimistic that these can be identified and agreed upon: “at present there don’t seem to be accepted minimum values that can keep the world straight.”³⁹ Not even the idea of human rights is enough, since its content is so widely disputed.

This leads Berlin to a third vision of global structure, which is of two parallel worlds, one ruled by liberal-democratic values, including liberal interpretations of human rights, the other by non-liberal norms of various kinds. In the former case, “The only nations about which one need not wring one’s hands are the sated nations, unwounded or healed, such as the liberal democracies of North America, Western Europe, Australia, New Zealand, and, one hopes, Japan.” In the case of the non-sated nations, one can at best hope for their peaceful coexistence with the sated and with each other. “That is what I ultimately visualize,” Berlin says, “a degree of uniformity [i.e., the acceptance of universal human rights] in the ‘sated’ nations, combined with a pleasing degree of peaceful variety in the rest of the world.”⁴⁰

What should we make of Berlin’s views in the Gardels interview? It is only fair to note that this is a recorded conversation rather than a carefully formulated piece of writing, and that Berlin’s extempore comments may not always capture his best or most considered view. In spite of this, a strength of Berlin’s position has to be his opposition to excessive universalism in morals and politics. In particular, there can be little argument with his rejection of the unlamented Soviet Tower of Babel. Moreover, his championing of diversity against uniformity suggests a potential criticism not only of state communism but also of certain kinds of liberalism—in particular the liberal triumphalism of Fukuyama and President George H. W. Bush. Gardels broaches this possibility when he refers to “the new world order built from the rubble of the Berlin Wall” as having “gone the way of the Tower of Babel.”⁴¹ Berlin does not take this cue, but he could have done so consistently

with his own distaste for the more fanatical, McCarthyite kind of Cold-War anti-communism.⁴²

However, there are also serious problems with Berlin's comments to Gardels. One set of difficulties concerns his distinction between the sated nations and the rest. There is some truth to this as the empirical claim that liberal-democratic norms are currently observed in some parts of the world but not others. This observation has many precedents in the literature of international relations theory, including the distinction between "core and periphery" and "zones of peace and war."⁴³

Even viewed as wholly empirical, Berlin's version of the two-worlds claim needs qualification, since the so-called sated nations are not wholly sated. For example, Berlin's label reckons without the political conflicts over multiculturalism and the claims of first-nations people that have been a feature of many liberal democracies over the last thirty years. Although much of this has developed since Berlin's death, the early stages of its trajectory were visible well before the Gardels interview.⁴⁴ In addition, there is also the more recent phenomenon of right-wing populism that has achieved a foothold almost everywhere.

Moreover, the various versions of the two-worlds thesis tend to have normative aspects that are highly questionable, and Berlin's distinction between the sated and the rest is no exception. The implication in Berlin's case is that liberals should rest content with a world in which liberal values—human rights, the rule of law, toleration—are enjoyed by some nations, while others exist to provide liberals with the spectacle of "a pleasing degree of peaceful variety." On this view, liberal societies should be complemented by illiberal societies, whose members have few rights and liberties, for aesthetic reasons.⁴⁵

This normative version of Berlin's distinction is objectionable for two reasons. First, the problems of the unsated are likely to spill over into the happy realm of the sated. Second, Berlin's view smacks of the outlook that Martin Hollis wittily labels, "'liberalism for the liberals!' and 'cannibalism for the cannibals!'"⁴⁶ Such a position is dubious for liberals, since their most fundamental principles demand concern for the welfare of all human beings, not just of those living within the privileged realm of the supposedly sated.

Behind Berlin's two-worlds remarks, there is a deeper problem. Although he is right to question the uses of universalism in thought and politics, in the Gardels interview he takes this to an extreme. Perhaps in reaction against his own Cold War rigidity, he now places far too much weight on the value of cultural diversity and far too little on the moral and political norms needed to limit and manage that diversity. Berlin is happy to contemplate the pleasing variety of the non-sated world because he is apt to regard cultural diversity as valuable for its own sake. At the level of theory, he backs this up with the idea, attributed to Vico and Herder, that not only fundamental values but whole cultures are incommensurable with one another. If whole cultures are incommensurable, then each is morally indefeasible and we are in the territory of cultural relativism where cultures and their practices are beyond external criticism. If that is true, then different cultures do indeed exhibit a legitimate variety regardless of their content.

There are strong objections to all of this. Not all cultural diversity is desirable: some cultural practices are harmful to those living under them—for example, sexist practices such as the withholding of education from women, and, at an extreme, female genital mutilation.⁴⁷ At the theoretical level Berlin's occasional insistence that whole cultures are

incommensurable is mistaken in terms of his own deeper conception of value pluralism. I shall discuss value pluralism in greater detail shortly, but it should be emphasised straight away that one of its vital components is the claim that there are universal values. Berlin calls these “the Great Goods” and defines them as “the primary goods pursued by human beings through many centuries.”⁴⁸ It is these values that are said to be deeply plural. If that is so, then such values are common to different cultures, which therefore cannot be incommensurable. On the value-pluralist view, it is fundamental values that are incommensurable, not whole cultures.⁴⁹

Berlin’s tendency to venerate cultural diversity uncritically is not consistent. From time to time he corrects it and reasserts his acceptance of a framework or shared “horizon” of human values.⁵⁰ But on other occasions he slips back into his more uncritical delight in cultural difference, even to the point of denigrating the most plausible and urgent universals, such as human rights. The Gardels interview is such an occasion. When Gardels suggests that the end of the Soviet Union shows that “the Enlightenment ideals of unity, universality and liberal rationalism” are “all finito now,” Berlin is happy to agree, giving the impression that he thinks that the Enlightenment is wholly mistaken. This is at odds with his more carefully reflective moments, in which he objects only to the positivist or scientific strain in the Enlightenment, hence the claims of Marxism, while accepting basic Enlightenment values such as individual rights and liberties, and toleration.⁵¹

The values of the Enlightenment are the fundamental values of liberalism, and Berlin’s better view is that they are important universals. Yet he ends the Gardels interview by once again seeming to reject all ethical and political universalism. He prophesies that in the twenty-fifth century Aldous Huxley’s *Brave New World* “could perhaps be established, in part as an irresistible response to the endless ethnic violence and nationalist rivalry at the turn of the millennium. Under this system everyone would be clothed and fed. All would live under one roof, following one single pattern of existence.” We are back in the Tower of Babel, which will not last: “people must sooner or later rebel against uniformity and attempts at global solutions of any sort.”⁵²

Can there be no “global solutions of any sort,” not even a liberal solution that attempts to accommodate diversity? Perhaps it depends what kind of liberal globalism we are talking about. I consider this issue next.

Value Pluralism, Liberal Internationalism and Realism

At this point I conclude that Berlin’s explicit comments on international relations are fragmented, inadequate and contradictory. In the Cold War they are too universalist, imposing a hard version of anti-communist containment on a culturally complex case like Vietnam; later he veers to the opposite extreme, denying all universalism and leaving us with no global guidance at all. However, progress can be made towards identifying a framework for world politics by looking at Berlin’s idea of value pluralism.⁵³ Berlin himself says nothing about how value-pluralist ideas may apply to international relations, but it is possible to construct such an account nonetheless. In international relations value-pluralist thinking has in general been neglected, but it respects both the universality and the diversity of ethics in a way that makes its potential worth exploring.⁵⁴

Note that value pluralism should be distinguished from the sense in which “pluralism” is sometimes used in international relations theory to mean the

incommensurability of explanatory paradigms or worldviews such as liberalism, realism, constructivism and so forth, such that there can be no critical comparison between them. In the words of Martin Griffiths, they represent “a mere Babel of global voices” (shades of the Gardels interview) talking past one another.⁵⁵ I cannot discuss this issue at length, but in my view the idea of a pluralism of disciplinary paradigms has much in common with the cultural pluralism I distinguish from value pluralism. Like cultures, disciplinary paradigms are not truly incommensurable because (on the value-pluralist view) all such paradigms (like all cultures) have in common the fundamental values, or Great Goods, that inform shared human experience. Value pluralism concerns the incommensurability of fundamental values, not of cultures, worldviews, conceptions of the good, or explanatory paradigms.

Berlin’s main account of value pluralism appears in the final section of “Two Concepts of Liberty.” This begins with an attack on moral monism, which is declared to be the deepest foundation of authoritarian and ultimately totalitarian politics. Moral monism is the ancient idea that human morality can be reduced to a single coherent system dominated by a single value or narrow set of values. In theory such a system yields a uniquely correct answer to all moral questions, hence to all issues of social and political organisation. Monistic thinking goes back at least as far as Plato and is represented in modernity by thinkers such as Kant, Hegel, Marx and the Utilitarians. In Marx, it promises utopia but delivers the tyranny of the Soviet Union.

In Berlin’s view the truth is that human values are deeply plural. “The world that we encounter in ordinary experience is one in which we are faced with choices between ends equally ultimate, and claims equally absolute, the realisation of some of which must inevitably involve the sacrifice of others.”⁵⁶ Basic human values such as liberty, equality, justice, and security are irreducibly plural and incommensurable. When values are incommensurable there is no common measure according to which they can be weighed against one another. Rather, each speaks with its own unique voice. Consequently, there is no absolute hierarchy among such values and no ranking that applies in all cases. If that is so, then there is no single monist formula that indicates the shape of the perfect society. So value pluralism rules out as incoherent the utopianism that is used by some to justify modern authoritarianism and totalitarianism.

However, this also leads to what may be called “the problem of value pluralism,” which is a problem not only for authoritarianism but for liberalism too. When incommensurable values conflict—for example, liberty and equality—we have to choose between them or trade them off against one another. How can we, or should we, make such choices or trades? In particular, why should we follow Berlin in emphasising the negative liberty that he associates with liberalism? Why should we not stress the positive liberty, equality and solidarity characteristic of socialism, or the fidelity to tradition that identifies conservatives, or even the ultranationalism and bellicose values of fascism?

Berlin admits that there is no simple answer to this question; he offers various suggestions without developing any of them in detail.⁵⁷ The value-pluralist literature that has built on his work contains two main responses. First, when incommensurable values collide we can seek guidance by examining the context in which the issue arises. For pluralists, it is impossible to choose for good reason between fundamental values, like justice and loyalty, when these confront one another in the abstract, but attention to the details of the concrete situation often (although not always) yields good reasons to

choose or trade in one direction rather than another.⁵⁸ Impartial justice comes first for the trial judge but not for the parent barracking at her child's football match.⁵⁹

Alternatively, we might approach conflicts among incommensurable values by reflecting on the concept of value pluralism itself. Respect for value plurality implies that the most desirable society will be one in which, roughly speaking, people have real opportunities to pursue more rather than fewer goods. "If there are many and competing genuine values," writes Bernard Williams, "then the greater the extent to which a society tends to be single-valued, the more genuine values it neglects or suppresses. More, to this extent, must mean better."⁶⁰ It will not be possible to maximise all goods simultaneously, but all must be taken seriously. In practice, this means promoting as wide a range of goods as possible.⁶¹

Diversity of values implies a case for liberalism because the freedoms characteristic of liberal societies open up paths to the pursuit of many different values. On this point liberal pluralism is consistent with J. S. Mill's celebration of "individuality" and of those "experiments of living" that nourish it.⁶² This is especially true of those societies animated by social or egalitarian forms of liberalism in which the state supplements market methods of economic distribution, so that more people have a genuine opportunity to pursue the values that inspire them. I refer to this position as "liberal pluralism."

With this liberal reading of value pluralism in place, I can begin to consider its implications for international relations theory. First, there are prospects of a link with liberal internationalism.⁶³ This may seem obvious: given the liberal pluralism outlined above, it may be thought that this should simply be projected globally. Liberal pluralism in domestic politics would then become international liberal pluralism: the norm of value diversity would be globalised in a straightforward way. In practical terms, this would mean that liberal rights and liberties would be promoted all over the world just as they are promoted domestically. International liberal pluralism would be domestic liberal pluralism writ large.

This formula fits the model of liberal internationalism to some extent. At its most general, liberal internationalism is precisely the view that liberal values ought to be promoted globally, aiming, in Stanley Hoffmann's words, "at expanding democracy and free trade, at defending democracy from its foes, at quarantining repressive and pariah states, and at protecting and promoting human rights."⁶⁴ However, there is a complication in liberal internationalism that distinguishes it from the domestic politics of liberalism. Liberal internationalism is committed not only to the promotion of individual rights and liberties but also to respect for the sovereignty of existing states. From this follows the principle of non-intervention by each state in the affairs of others.⁶⁵

Within liberal internationalism the dual principles of individual rights and state sovereignty are both connected and potentially in conflict. The connection concerns the need for security. Individual rights and liberties flourish best under conditions of social peace and order. In domestic politics order is secured by government—at the birth of liberalism, Locke's social contract trades off the licence and uncertainty of the state of nature against the security that government guarantees.⁶⁶ But at the international level there is no world government to provide order; the realm of international politics is one of anarchy, meaning the absence of an overarching government. International anarchy is not necessarily chaotic but it is a dangerous situation in which states may threaten each other, hence threatening the social and political order on which liberal rights depend. This is

why liberal internationalists uphold the principle of respect for the sovereignty of existing states, which brings with it a basic commitment to non-interference.

However, like everything else in politics and in human life more broadly, this commitment has a price. Individual rights and liberties can conflict with state sovereignty because states vary in their capacity and willingness to respect such rights. The United Nations is based on both of these principles, and they often collide.⁶⁷ Consequently, the global cause of human rights is often obstructed when violations are protected by state sovereignty. Overall, then, liberal internationalism cannot simply be the global projection of domestic liberal values; rather, it represents the qualification of those values by the principle of state sovereignty, which is necessitated by the anarchic context of international relations. The relation between these principles is ambiguous, mutually supportive to a degree but often conflictual.

These tensions are comprehensible in the terms of liberal pluralism. On the one hand, the basic individual rights and liberties of domestic liberalism are most obviously justified by value diversity (assuming the historical context of modernity). On the other hand, value diversity also commends state sovereignty, since individual rights and liberties need protection and this is most plausibly provided by the state.

How should we respond to conflicts between individual rights and state sovereignty? The broad answer offered by both liberal pluralism and liberal internationalism is that both individual rights and state sovereignty should be taken seriously and that to do so we need to seek a balance between them. What should that balance be? Should it tend strongly in the direction of respecting rights and liberties, with only a weak qualification in favour of state sovereignty, or should sovereignty be prioritised?

The liberal-pluralist answer will be, in part, that the desirable balance depends on concrete circumstances—this is in line with the pluralist emphasis on contextual thinking. For example, it may be possible to argue that in the exceptionally dangerous circumstances of the Cold War, it made sense to tilt the liberal-internationalist balance more towards respect for state sovereignty in order to preserve the delicate status quo. Once the Cold War was over, it became safer for liberals to pursue the global promotion of rights and liberties more freely.⁶⁸

It may also be possible to obtain more general guidance by looking at the contest between liberal internationalism and its arch-rival, realism.⁶⁹ At its broadest, realism in international relations holds that global politics is a realm in which states pursue their own interests regardless of liberal or other moral values. This is a permanent reality and there is no prospect of changing it. Many realists are influenced by a positivist outlook according to which international relations should be approached as a strictly empirical field of study with a view to formulating law-like regularities on the model of the natural sciences—as in Hans Morgenthau’s claim that politics “is governed by objective laws that have their roots in human nature.”⁷⁰ However, even ostensibly positivist realists tend to make normative assumptions in favour of values such as peace, order, security and prudence.⁷¹ Some realists make these values explicit, urging foreign policy makers to pursue them in preference to more “idealistic” or “utopian” or “liberal” goals.⁷²

What response to the contest between realism and liberal internationalism is indicated by liberal pluralism? The more positivist kind of realism has to be rejected by liberal pluralists, who, along with all value pluralists, see human affairs as deeply driven by values, in particular by the Great Goods. In this they will follow the lead of Berlin, who

rejects positivism or scientism in general. For Berlin, the coolly objective, impersonal methods of the natural sciences are appropriate to the study of natural phenomena but not of human actions, which can only be understood by looking at the purposes, values and worldviews of the actors themselves.⁷³ Similarly, liberal pluralists will emphasise the role of values in politics, public policy and international relations.

When it comes to normative realism, liberal pluralists will argue that this is too monistic. Its concern for peace, security, order, stability, balance of power and prudence is valid, but realists make this relatively narrow range of values overriding when, on the pluralist view, no value system is overriding. Consequently, the normative language of realists, when it reveals itself, tends to be strongly hierarchical, ignoring or downgrading the fundamental values represented by liberalism in order to exalt those championed by realism. Morgenthau, for example, argues that “the main signpost” in international affairs “is the concept of interest defined in terms of power,” and that, in pursuit of this goal, “prudence” is “the supreme virtue in politics.”⁷⁴ For Kenneth Waltz the “preoccupation” of states in an anarchic international order must be with security: “with identifying dangers and counteracting them.”⁷⁵ The bipolarity of the Cold War can be defended “for the sake of stability, peacefulness, and the management of collective affairs,” even though perpetuating the bipolar system means perpetuating Soviet authoritarianism.⁷⁶ John Mearsheimer writes that “nationalism and realism almost always trump liberalism,” and that in international relations “survival must always take priority.”⁷⁷

Realists would no doubt reply that liberalism, too, advances a hierarchy of values, the only difference being that liberals make their own values—individual rights and liberties, toleration and so forth—overriding. “[Woodrow] Wilson,” Carr writes, “thought that the right was more precious than peace.”⁷⁸ Is it not the case that liberal internationalism, in its pursuit of liberal concerns, fails to do justice to the values of security, order and prudence stressed by realists? Why should these goods not be seen as equal in importance to those of liberalism, or even as trumping them?

Liberal pluralists can respond that liberal internationalism is a more balanced position, normatively speaking, than realism. We have already seen the standard liberal concern in international relations not only for individual rights and liberties but also for state sovereignty. When state sovereignty is brought into the picture this might seem to be an awkward qualification of liberal values. But from a pluralist perspective it becomes a strength because it widens the range of values promoted by the system. In addition, liberals also regard the realist *summum bonum*, security, as an important good, as shown by the Lockean social contract. But liberals acknowledge the importance of security without making it overriding; the general liberal position on the relation between liberty (and other liberal concerns) and security is one of balance.

Admittedly, for liberals the balance tends generally towards liberty, but where there is conflict between liberty and order the typical liberal response is to try to give both values their due. On the one hand, liberals concede that liberty can be enjoyed only under conditions of order: the liberal pluralist William Galston makes this point when he argues that social order is a condition for other goods.⁷⁹ On the other hand, order is not worth having if it is wholly at the expense of liberty. As Rousseau asks, “Tranquillity is found also in dungeons; but is that enough to make them desirable places to live in?”⁸⁰ Similarly, for Bernard Williams, “the securing of order, protection, safety, trust, and the conditions of cooperation” may be “the first political question,” but it is not the only question because

these goods must also be secured in a way that satisfies the “basic legitimacy demand,” so that “the solution . . . should not become part of the problem.”⁸¹ While realism is concerned overwhelmingly with security, liberalism balances security with rights, liberties and other values.

Moreover, compared with realism, liberalism is more in tune with the contextual kind of judgement implicit in value-pluralist thinking. On this score the contrast between realism and liberalism is sharpest when it comes to realism in its most strongly positivist form, where the ambition (as in Morgenthau) is to reduce the complexity of international relations to a set of scientific laws. But normative realism, too, exhibits a degree of rigidity that liberal pluralists should reject when it places so much weight on order and security that concerns for other values, such as human rights and justice, are dismissed altogether. Liberal internationalism, by contrast, leaves more room to shift the weight of consideration between different values in different circumstances, simply because it takes seriously a wider range of values.

Still, the importance of contextual judgement under pluralism also shows that liberal-pluralist internationalists have something to learn from realists. First, realists are right to warn against allowing liberal ideals to become overriding. This is Carr’s message when he condemns interwar liberal internationalism as driven by “absolute and universal principles” that turn out to reflect national prejudice rather than reality.⁸²

Second, realists are also right to stress the uniqueness of the international context, the salient feature of which is that, as already noted, there is no overarching government that can guarantee security. Under these conditions security becomes a greater priority than it often is in domestic politics—at any rate, for most developed societies. The world of international relations is persistently anarchic and dangerous, and in those circumstances we have good reason to accord a high weighting to security concerns as against the values of liberalism. In such circumstances we need to identify a balance that takes realist values very seriously indeed. But this will still be a balance rather than an exclusive focus on security.

Exactly what balance between liberalism and realism should be endorsed by liberal pluralists is a question I cannot pursue here. One possibility is the modified structural realism (or neoliberal institutionalism) of Robert Keohane.⁸³ Another is the “liberal internationalism 3.0” of John Ikenberry, which is more activist, and more explicitly normative, than Keohane’s position.⁸⁴ The debate between these and other alternatives is complex, and for present purposes it must suffice to say that both options work within the broad paradigm of balance between liberal and realist norms.

Conclusion

I am conscious of having no more than skimmed the surface of the question of value pluralism in international relations theory, but I hope at least to have introduced the topic of Berlin’s contribution to that field and to have advanced the question of how to handle Berlinian ideas in the international context beyond the scattered hints of Berlin himself. In the Cold War he was a realist disciple of the containment doctrine, indeed a more hawkish container than Kennan, at least until he saw what was happening in Vietnam. In the aftermath of the Cold War, confronted with a wave of resurgent nationalism, he seemed more like a utopian idealist, dreaming with Herder of a world of cultural harmony. But that

dream is undermined by his own value pluralism, which points us towards something more rigorous and interesting, a case for liberal internationalism in tension with its realist rival. From a value-pluralist point of view, realism tends towards moral monism, and liberal internationalism is normatively the more balanced view. However, liberals should still take seriously the central realist insight that security is an especially important value in the anarchic international context. The question then becomes one of precisely what balance to strike between liberal and realist values, but that inquiry must wait for another time.⁸⁵

Notes

1. For details of Berlin's life and times, see Ignatieff, *Isaiah Berlin*.
2. Berlin, Contribution to *Authors Take Sides on Vietnam*; Gardels, "Two Concepts of Nationalism."
3. Fukuyama, "The End of History?"
4. Berlin's Cold War context is the focus of Berlin, *The Soviet Mind*; Müller, *Isaiah Berlin's Cold War Liberalism*; Cherniss, *Liberalism in Dark Times*.
5. Berlin, "Two Concepts of Liberty," in *Liberty*, 168.
6. On Kennan's notion of containment, see his "Sources of Soviet Conduct." His views and their influence on U.S. policy have been widely discussed: see, e.g., Mayers, *George Kennan and the Dilemmas of US Foreign Policy*; Miscamble, *George F. Kennan and the Making of American Foreign Policy*; Lukacs, *George Kennan*.
7. See, e.g., the "Letter to Kennan," in Berlin, *Liberty*.
8. Berlin, *Affirming: Letters 1975–1997*, 453.
9. *Ibid.*, 77.
10. Nye, *Soft Power*.
11. Kennan, "Sources of Soviet Conduct," 582.
12. Berlin, *Affirming: Letters 1975–1997*, 453.
13. Berlin, *Enlightening: Letters 1946–1960*, 256.
14. Berlin, *Affirming: Letters 1975–1997*, 453–54.
15. See, e.g., Berlin, *Enlightening: Letters 1946–1960*, 558; Berlin, *Affirming: Letters 1975–1997*, 76.
16. For example, Reagan's policies, including his military buildup, are credited with ending the Cold War by Busch in "Ronald Reagan and the Defeat of the Soviet Empire," but this is denied by Chernoff in "The End of the Cold War." Joseph Nye argues that Reagan's greater contribution was in establishing a personal relationship with Gorbachev that led to successful negotiations, and that Gorbachev's openness to reform was an even more important factor: Nye, *Do Morals Matter*, 119.
17. Hitchens, "Moderation or Death," 3.
18. *Ibid.*, Letter from McGeorge Bundy to Joe Alsop in 1967, quoted by Hitchens.
19. *Ibid.*
20. Berlin, *Building: Letters 1960–1975*, 278 n. 5.
21. Berlin, Contribution to *Authors Take Sides on Vietnam*, 60.
22. *Ibid.*, 60–61.
23. *Ibid.*, 61.
24. *Ibid.*, 62.
25. See Berlin, "Nationalism: Past Neglect and Present Power," in *Against the Current*.
26. See Berlin, "The Origins of Israel" and "Jewish Slavery and Emancipation," in *The Power of Ideas*; and Berlin, "Epilogue," in *Personal Impressions*.
27. In this respect his outlook is similar to that of the U.S. presidents of the Vietnam era who "underestimated the power of nationalism and local culture": Nye, *Do Morals Matter*, 95.
28. Berlin, *Liberty*, 200–208.
29. Berlin, *Three Critics of the Enlightenment*, 286–95.

30. See Berlin, "The Bent Twig: On the Rise of Nationalism," in *The Crooked Timber of Humanity*.
31. Gardels, "Two Concepts of Nationalism," 19.
32. *Ibid.*, 20.
33. *Ibid.*
34. *Ibid.*, 20, 21.
35. *Ibid.*, 19.
36. *Ibid.*, 20, 21.
37. *Ibid.*, 22.
38. Value pluralism is discussed in more detail below. On its conflictual aspect, see Berlin, *Liberty*, 212–17; Berlin, *Crooked Timber of Humanity*, 17–20.
39. Gardels, "Two Concepts of Nationalism," 22.
40. *Ibid.*
41. *Ibid.*, 19.
42. See Berlin, "Political Ideas in the Twentieth Century," in *Liberty*, 92. Nor would Berlin care for another aspect of the dominant U.S.-led liberal internationalism of the 1990s and later: the neoliberalism that seeks to extend the unfettered rule of the market globally. See the case he makes against economic laissez-faire in Berlin, *Liberty*, 37–39.
43. Also, less happily, "civilisation and barbarism" and "global apartheid": see Richardson, *Contending Liberalisms in World Politics*, 11, 75.
44. Multiculturalist policies date from the 1970s in Canada and Australia, and they were soon discussed by political theorists. Early studies include Van Dyke, *Human Rights, Ethnicity and Discrimination*; Kymlicka, *Liberalism, Community, and Culture*.
45. See, similarly, Gray, *Isaiah Berlin: An Interpretation of His Thought*, 186.
46. Hollis, "Is Universalism Ethnocentric?" 36.
47. Nussbaum, *Women and Human Development*, 50–51. Berlin notes "the circumcision of women" as a violation of universal values in *Affirming: Letters 1975–1997*, 413.
48. Berlin, *Crooked Timber of Humanity*, 12.
49. This point is developed in greater detail in Crowder, *The Problem of Value Pluralism*, 18, 24–28.
50. Berlin, "Alleged Relativism in Eighteenth-Century European Thought," in *Crooked Timber of Humanity*.
51. For Berlin's rejection of Enlightenment scientism, see "The Concept of Scientific History," in *Concepts and Categories*, and his treatments of Vico and Herder in *Three Critics of the Enlightenment*. For his commitment to Enlightenment values, see Berlin and Jahanbegloo, *Conversations with Isaiah Berlin*, 70–71.
52. Gardels, "Two Concepts of Nationalism," 22.
53. The following account of Berlin's value pluralism, and of the implications of value pluralism beyond the work of Berlin, is a greatly compressed summary of arguments in Crowder, *Liberalism and Value Pluralism*; Crowder, *Isaiah Berlin: Liberty and Pluralism*; Crowder, *Problem of Value Pluralism*.
54. There are exceptions to the neglect of value pluralism in international relations. A rudimentary list includes Jackson, *The Global Covenant*, 178–81; Crowder and Griffiths, "Postmodernism, Value Pluralism and International Relations"; Galston, *The Practice of Liberal Pluralism*, chap. 12. In addition, significant elements of value pluralism are referred to, without this being made explicit, in Hoffmann, "The Crisis of Liberal Internationalism"; Richardson, *Contending Liberalisms in World Politics*; Griffiths, *Rethinking International Relations Theory*.
55. Griffiths, *Rethinking International Relations Theory*, 6–8.
56. Berlin, "Two Concepts of Liberty," in *Liberty*, 213–14.
57. See, e.g., Berlin, *Liberty*, 42, 47; Berlin, *Crooked Timber of Humanity*, 17–19.
58. Berlin and Williams, "Pluralism and Liberalism," in Berlin, *Concepts and Categories*, 326.
59. A problem with this approach is that what counts as the relevant context is sometimes, perhaps always, contestable. For example, if the context is said to be cultural, it may be replied that in modern societies cultural traditions are multiple and conflicting, and their identity open to interpretation.
60. Williams, "Introduction" to Berlin, *Concepts and Categories*, xxxvii.

61. This is not wholly a matter of multiplicity, since not all values are compatible with one another. There must also be some minimal degree of coherence between the different values pursued in a society, especially within its political system. See Crowder, *Problem of Value Pluralism*, chap. 5.
62. Mill, *On Liberty*, chap. 3.
63. On liberal internationalism in general see, e.g., Hoffmann, "Crisis of Liberal Internationalism"; Burchill, *Theories of International Relations*, chap. 2; Ikenberry, "Liberal Internationalism 3.0."; Ikenberry, "Liberalism in a Realist World"; Jørgensen, *International Relations Theory: A New Introduction*, chap. 3; Griffiths, *Rethinking International Relations Theory*.
64. Hoffmann, "Crisis of Liberal Internationalism," 159.
65. Liberal internationalism also includes a third principle, that of self-determination for nations or "peoples," which is prominent, for example, in Woodrow Wilson's "Fourteen Points." This is distinct from state sovereignty and may conflict with it, and with individual rights and liberties, complicating liberal internationalism still further. But I leave this issue aside in the following discussion.
66. Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*.
67. Hoffmann, "Crisis of Liberal Internationalism," 172; Griffiths, *Rethinking International Relations Theory*, 92–93.
68. Richardson, *Contending Liberalisms in World Politics*, 13–14. Compare Mearsheimer, *The Great Delusion*, who argues that this particular judgement ignores the danger posed to liberal ambitions, even in the absence of bipolar pressures, by nationalism. This position, too, is contextual, since it is bounded by the circumstances of international anarchy.
69. Helpful general accounts of realism include Donnelly, *Realism and International Relations*; Burchill, *Theories of International Relations*, chap. 3; Jørgensen, *International Relations Theory*, chap. 4.
70. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations*, 4.
71. See, e.g., Griffiths, *Realism, Idealism and International Politics*, on the "idealism" implicit in Morgenthau and in Waltz, and Rosenberg, "What's the Matter with Realism?", on realism in general as a "conservative ideology."
72. See, e.g., Carr, *The Twenty Years' Crisis*; Mearsheimer, *The Great Delusion*.
73. Berlin, "The Concept of Scientific History," in *Concepts and Categories*, and his account of Vico and Herder in *Three Critics of the Enlightenment*.
74. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations*, 5, 10.
75. Waltz, "The Origins of War in Neorealist Theory," 619.
76. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, 161.
77. Mearsheimer, *Great Delusion*, 132.
78. Carr, *Twenty Years' Crisis*, 87.
79. Galston, "Pluralist Constitutionalism," 236.
80. Rousseau, *The Social Contract*, 169.
81. Williams, *In the Beginning Was the Deed*, 3–4.
82. Carr, *Twenty Years' Crisis*, 87. Carr also counsels against allowing *realism* to become over-riding, arguing that "realism, though logically overwhelming, does not provide us with the springs of action which are necessary even to the pursuit of thought" (89), and concluding "that any sound political thought must be based on elements of both utopia and reality" (93).
83. Keohane, *After Hegemony*.
84. Ikenberry, "Liberal Internationalism 3.0."
85. Another set of issues concerns the relation between the kind of liberal internationalism indicated by liberal pluralism and the "actually existing" liberal internationalism associated with U.S. foreign policy, which is characterised by a consistent neoliberalism and an inconsistent oscillation between multilateralism and unilateralism. This, too, is a large question I cannot deal with here, although on the subject of neoliberalism I have already indicated

a link between liberal pluralism and egalitarian redistribution at the domestic level, and I expect that this will translate into opposition to neoliberalism globally.

Acknowledgment

My thanks to Martin Griffiths, Henry Hardy, and two anonymous reviewers for their comments and advice on an earlier draft of this article.

Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

Notes on contributor

George Crowder is Emeritus Professor of Political Theory in the College of Business, Government and Law, Flinders University, Adelaide, Australia. His books include *Liberalism and Value Pluralism* (2002), *Isaiah Berlin: Liberty and Pluralism* (2004), *The One and the Many: Reading Isaiah Berlin* (co-edited with Henry Hardy, 2007), *Theories of Multiculturalism* (2013), and *The Problem of Value Pluralism: Isaiah Berlin and Beyond* (2019).

Bibliography

- Berlin, Isaiah. Contribution to *Authors Take Sides on Vietnam*, edited by Cecil Woolf and John Bagguley. London: Peter Owen, 1967.
- Berlin, Isaiah. *Liberty*. Edited by Henry Hardy. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.
- Berlin, Isaiah. *The Soviet Mind: Russian Culture Under Communism*. Edited by Henry Hardy. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 2004.
- Berlin, Isaiah. *Enlightening: Letters 1946–1960*. Edited by Henry Hardy and Jennifer Holmes. London: Chatto & Windus, 2009.
- Berlin, Isaiah. *Against the Current: Essays in the History of Ideas*. Edited by Henry Hardy. 2d ed. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013.
- Berlin, Isaiah. *Building: Letters 1960–1975*. Edited by Henry Hardy and Mark Pottle. London: Chatto & Windus, 2013.
- Berlin, Isaiah. *Concepts and Categories: Philosophical Essays*. Introduction by Bernard Williams. Edited by Henry Hardy. 2d ed. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013.
- Berlin, Isaiah. *The Crooked Timber of Humanity: Chapters in the History of Ideas*. Edited by Henry Hardy. 2d ed. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013.
- Berlin, Isaiah. *Three Critics of the Enlightenment: Vico, Hamann, Herder*. Edited by Henry Hardy. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013.
- Berlin, Isaiah. *Personal Impressions*. Edited by Henry Hardy. 3rd ed. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014.
- Berlin, Isaiah. *Affirming: Letters 1975–1997*. Edited by Henry Hardy and Mark Pottle. London: Chatto & Windus, 2015.
- Berlin, Isaiah, and Ramin Jahanbegloo. *Conversations with Isaiah Berlin*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1992.
- Burchill, Scott, Andrew Linklater, Richard Anthony Devetak, Jack Donnelly, Matthew Paterson, Christian Reus-Smit, and Jacqui True. *Theories of International Relations*. 2d ed. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001.
- Busch, Andrew E. "Ronald Reagan and the Defeat of the Soviet Empire." *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 27 (1997): 451–66.

- Carr, E. H. *The Twenty Years' Crisis, 1919–1939: An Introduction to the Study of International Relations*. 1939. New York: Perennial, 2001.
- Cherniss, Joshua L. *Liberalism in Dark Times: The Liberal Ethos in the Twentieth Century*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2021.
- Chernoff, Fred. "Ending the Cold War: The Soviet Retreat and the US Military Buildup." *International Affairs* 67 (1991): 111–26.
- Crowder, George. *Liberalism and Value Pluralism*. London: Continuum, 2002.
- Crowder, George. *Isaiah Berlin: Liberty and Pluralism*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2004.
- Crowder, George. *The Problem of Value Pluralism: Isaiah Berlin and Beyond*. New York: Routledge, 2019.
- Crowder, George, and Martin Griffiths. "Postmodernism, Value Pluralism and International Relations." In *International Relations and the "Third Debate,"* edited by Darryl S. L. Jarvis. Westport, CT: Praeger, 2002.
- Donnelly, Jack. *Realism and International Relations*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.
- Fukuyama, Francis. "The End of History?" *The National Interest* 16 (1989): 3–18.
- Galston, William. *The Practice of Liberal Pluralism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.
- Galston, William. "Pluralist Constitutionalism." *Social Philosophy and Policy* 28 (2011): 228–41.
- Gardels, Nathan. "Two Concepts of Nationalism: An Interview with Isaiah Berlin." *New York Review of Books*, November 21, 1991.
- Gray, John. *Isaiah Berlin: An Interpretation of His Thought*. 2d ed. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013.
- Griffiths, Martin. *Realism, Idealism and International Politics*. London: Routledge, 1992.
- Griffiths, Martin. *Rethinking International Relations Theory*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011.
- Hitchens, Christopher. "Moderation or Death." *London Review of Books*, November 26, 1998.
- Hoffmann, Stanley. "The Crisis of Liberal Internationalism." *Foreign Policy* 98 (1995): 159–77.
- Hollis, Martin. "Is Universalism Ethnocentric?" In *Multicultural Questions*, edited by Christian Joppke and Steven Lukes. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.
- Ignatieff, Michael. *Isaiah Berlin: A Life*. London: Chatto & Windus, 1998.
- Ikenberry, G. John. "Liberal Internationalism 3.0." *Perspectives on Politics* 7 (2009): 71–87.
- Ikenberry, G. John. "Liberalism in a Realist World." *International Studies* 46 (2009): 203–19.
- Jackson, Robert. *The Global Covenant: Human Conduct in a World of States*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.
- Jørgensen, Knud Erik. *International Relations Theory: A New Introduction*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010.
- Kennan, George F. "The Sources of Soviet Conduct." *Foreign Affairs* 25 (1947): 566–82.
- Keohane, Robert O. *After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984.
- Kymlicka, Will. *Liberalism, Community and Culture*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989.
- Locke, John. *Two Treatises of Government*. 1689. Edited by Peter Laslett. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988.
- Lukacs, John. *George Kennan: A Study of Character*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007.
- Mayers, David. *George Kennan and the Dilemmas of US Foreign Policy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990.
- Mearsheimer, John J. *The Great Delusion: Liberal Dreams and International Realities*. New Haven, CT: Yale, 2018.
- Mill, John Stuart. *On Liberty*. 1859. Edited by Gertrude Himmelfarb. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1974.
- Miscamble, Wilson D. *George F. Kennan and the Making of American Foreign Policy, 1947–50*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992.
- Morgenthau, Hans J. *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*. 3rd ed. New York: Knopf, 1961.
- Müller, Jan-Werner, ed. *Isaiah Berlin's Cold War Liberalism*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019.
- Nussbaum, Martha. *Women and Human Development: The Capabilities Approach*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.
- Nye, Joseph. *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*. New York: Public Affairs Press, 2004.

- Nye, Joseph. *Do Morals Matter? Presidents and Foreign Policy from FDR to Trump*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020.
- Richardson, James L. *Contending Liberalisms in World Politics: Ideology and Power*. London: Lynne Rienner, 2001.
- Rosenberg, Justin. "What's the Matter with Realism?" *Review of International Studies* 16 (1990): 285–303.
- Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. *The Social Contract and Discourses*. 1750–62. Translated by G. D. H. Cole, revised and augmented by J. H. Brumfitt and John C. Hall. London: Dent, 1973.
- Van Dyke, Vernon. *Human Rights, Ethnicity and Discrimination*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1985.
- Waltz, Kenneth. *The Theory of International Politics*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1979.
- Waltz, Kenneth. "The Origins of War in Neorealist Theory." *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 18 (1988): 615–28.
- Williams, Bernard. *In the Beginning Was the Deed*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005.
- Wilson, Woodrow. "The Fourteen Points." 1918. In *Classic Readings of International Relations*, edited by Phil Williams, Donald M. Goldstein, and Jay M. Shafritz. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1994.