

Ennobling Encounters

Chapter 10

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Chapter 10

Angelo Codevilla

In September, 1965, Gerhart Niemeyer, Professor of Government at the University of Notre Dame, mentioned to me that a new graduate student from Rutgers University in New Jersey had arrived and that I had seen him the day before as Niemeyer and he had passed me walking on campus.

I told Niemeyer that the person that was walking beside him couldn't be the same person. "The person you were with was a European."

That young graduate student was Angelo Maria Codevilla.

Codevilla was, like me, a Goldwater conservative and was attracted to Notre Dame because he had been introduced to the university by Richard V. Allen at an Intercollegiate Studies Institute (ISI) Summer School in 1963. Fr. Stanley Parry, CSC, and Professor Gerhart Niemeyer were both a great influence on Richard Allen.

Another graduate student, Robert McDonough, was a political conservative who had taken some courses from

Willmoore Kendall. Kendall had also taught Fr. Parry when Fr. Parry was a graduate student at Yale.

In addition to Codevilla, McDonough, and me, two others, namely Howard Segermark, a Catholic graduate of John Carroll University, and William Gangi, a very conservative student of Con Law from St. John's College in Queens, New York, made up a core group of five graduate students who would later contribute ideas to a growing conservative movement.

We five politically-conscious conservatives in the Graduate School of Government class of '64-'65 were the ingredients of an identifiable "brand" of conservatives who sought graduate degrees from Notre Dame immediately after the '64 Presidential election.

If the Department Chairman, Fr. Stanley Parry, CSC, had been drinking less and not facing a mid-life crisis questioning his having become a Catholic priest, the Department would have been filled with "Goldwater conservative" graduate students.

The five of us who did enroll got there on our own, not because we were recruited.

Two other distinctly different types of graduate students were graduates of Assumption College in Worcester, Mass. At that time, classes at Assumption were taught in French, and two of our fellow students, Patrick Powers and William Murphy, were the epitome of what we understand as an

American “Catholic” intellectual with continental French views and values.

In our own way, we five Goldwater conservatives, like the Assumptionists of 19th-century France, had reacted negatively to the secularization of America that was apparent in the 1960s, the difference being that I was a Missouri Synod Lutheran and Angelo Codevilla was an Italian from Italy with typical Italian attitudes toward the “-ism” of “Catholicism”—and a Lutheran.

Our professors, Niemeyer and Voegelin, were not Catholics and were not Thomists. In other words, the graduate school where we were students was the opposite of what most Catholic Americans thought a Catholic institution was and should be. The religious order that had founded the University of Notre Dame had become very much a post-Vatican II institution: Notre Dame’s “Catholicism” was theologically and politically “Liberal,” directed at achieving “Social Justice” and idolizing President John F. Kennedy.

This was the University of Notre Dame led by Fr. Theodore Hesburgh, CSC, better known for its football team. Codevilla, McDonough, Gangi, Segermark, and I liked “the fighting Irish” and its head coach, Ara Parseghian, but we would have none of that “JFK idolatry,” and each of us would act as a corrective to ’60s Liberalism of those times throughout our professional careers. But let me permit Dr. Codevilla to tell his story.

I arrived in America at age thirteen in 1956 without knowledge of English but with an excellent Italian education that put me ahead of my American cohort. I also came with some set attitudes: a disposition to love America, commitment to academic excellence, anti-communism (my gang used to fight a gang of commie kids, and our family—which worshiped work—despised the commies as lazy and violent.)

Like many Lombards, I was a devout Christian but aggressively anti-clerical. The Lutheran pastor next to whom we lived had no trouble convincing me that Luther was more Catholic than the Pope.

By 1958, after “Sputnik,” Fort Lee High School decided to graduate me in three years instead of four because of my love for and performance in Physics.

In 1960, by the time I started Rutgers at age seventeen, I had become an American and picked up the standard American bad habits—plus the disastrous impression that, always having gotten “A’s” and praise without working, I could continue to do so. I learned otherwise the hard way. After graduation from high school, I worked as a Chemistry lab assistant for a year while going to college at night, and returned to Rutgers in 1962 having lost my lust for lab work and picked up the notion that I should be a diplomat.

I fell in love with French literature, took political science courses and quickly gained contempt for political science and its “Professor” with whom I very much loved arguing.

At Rutgers I met “Jim,” whose last name I have forgotten, who headed the local Conservative Club, affiliated with ISI. Jim had no more trouble taking me in than the Lutheran pastor had.

In February 1963, I met Ann. Everything I’ve done and not done ever since has flowed from my love of her. God may punish me for violating the First Commandment.

In April 1963, I took up an invitation from ISI to attend a conference in Philadelphia on U.S./ Soviet relations, featuring all manner of eminent scholars. Harvard’s Robert Osgood stood out. But to me he sounded as stupid as my poli sci Profs. So, I stood up and asked a series of questions that reduced him to babble, and the audience began cheering me on. Thereafter, another participant in the ISI seminar, Dick Allen, introduced himself. We talked at length and then [he] took me to lunch with Robert Strausz-Hupé and Eleanor Lansing Dulles, sister of John Foster Dulles and Allen Dulles. I kept in touch with Dick Allen who [had] talked to me about Gerhart Niemeyer. I had read Niemeyer in ISI pamphlets, but

Dick Allen told me of the intellectual windows Niemeyer could open for me.

In 1963 and 1964—very political years—I naturally campaigned for Goldwater on campus and as part of the NJ Young Republicans. Our gang delighted in rising up against and defeating the Rockefeller forces.

At the time, my major intellectual influence was Clarence Turner, professor of Romance Languages at Rutgers, who had studied with the great Charles Hall Grandgent in the 1910s, and from whom I took a memorable course on Dante and another almost as memorable on Montaigne—all in the original, with 5 students in each class.

In 1964-1965, my academic attention was diminished because Ann had been shipped off to Berlin. I managed to get to Europe and spirit her off to Italy.

I went to Notre Dame on scholarship in September 1965 where I never worked harder than I did for Niemeyer. His course on Modern Political Ideology remains a pillar of my mind. But South Bend is 753 miles from New Brunswick, which is where Ann was doing her senior year. So, after 3+ weeks of work, I would get into the car on Thursday at 4:00 am and arrive in time to meet her as she got out of class at 3:15. I would return the following Monday. This occa-

sioned the following conversation, repeated to me by Dick Bishirjian.

Niemeyer: Vere is mister Codevilla.

Bishirjian: He's in New York, Prof. Niemeyer

Niemeyer: Und vot is he doing in New York?

Bishirjian: His girlfriend is there.

This is an accurate account, except for the German accent of our professor whom Angelo Codevilla memorialized in a May 2013 essay entitled “Thank you, Gerhart Niemeyer.”¹

Leaving undergraduate or graduate school—even briefly—during the Vietnam War placed you at risk to “the Draft.” When I left Notre Dame to study Latin at Loyola of Chicago and classical Greek at Hunter College, I had to stay in those programs or be shipped off to Boot Camp and a land war in Asia. With his future wife, Ann, more than 700 miles distant in New Jersey, South Bend, Indiana was not the place Codevilla wanted to be. Leaving the graduate program at Notre Dame put him at risk, however, and he was drafted!

I shall pick up this “Ennobling Encounter” with Dr. Angelo Codevilla by reference to an interview that he gave to

¹ Angelo Codevilla, “Thank you, Gerhart Niemeyer,” *University Bookman* (May 5, 2013). <https://kirkcenter.org/best/thank-you-gerhart-niemeyer>

David Samuels at “The Tablet”² and share my encounter with him by reference to some of his important and influential books and essays.

David Samuels writes of being “an attentive reader of Codevilla’s book *Informing Statecraft*, which together with Norman Mailer’s novel *Harlot’s Ghost* offers a fair guide to the karmic evolution of the U.S. intelligence community.” The interview is worth reading because it reveals Codevilla’s deeply rooted commitments and his willingness to offend, even David Samuels.

One of Codevilla’s commitments is to “meritocracy” by which persons are advanced based on merit, not whom you know or your parentage. Gifted in mastery of language (Italian, French, English), Codevilla “tests well” and when given the opportunity to advance by testing he is at the “top of his class.”

Drafted after leaving Notre Dame, Codevilla became a naval officer and tested upward into the ranks of the foreign service. Sheer ability enabled Codevilla to serve as an intelligence specialist under Malcolm Wallace (R-WY), for whom he served on the professional staff of the U.S. Senate’s Select Committee on Intelligence. Serving as Sen. Wallace’s designee saved him from being removed from the Committee’s

² David Samuels, “The Codevilla Tapes,” *The Tablet* (October 24, 2019).

staff by Sen. Barry Goldwater who fired him only to have him reinstated within a day.

To David Samuels, Codevilla comments on merit and how what he calls the Ruling Class subverts advancement on merit:

In living memory, and I'm an example of that, it was for a time possible for nonliberal Democrats to get into the American foreign service, and if they did as I did, and scored number one in their class, they would have their choice of assignments. But now, you have all sorts of new criteria for admission into the foreign service, which have supposedly ensured greater diversity. In fact, what they had done was to eliminate the possibility that the joint might be invaded by lesser beings of superior intelligence.

Another of Codevilla's commitments that he reveals to David Samuels is his commitment to limited government and anger that the Constitution has been subverted by the growth of an administrative state:

You are describing, and the textbooks describe, what used to be the American system of government, which has not existed since the late 1930s. The last attempt to revive that system, to make it rise up out of the overlay of administrative agencies that the New Deal built, was

the Supreme Court of *Schechter Poultry vs. the United States*, 1935, the essence of which decision was to say that a legislative power cannot be delegated. Were that maxim to be enforced, the FAA, the FCC, and on and on, all of these agencies would cease to exist because they are, quite literally, unconstitutional. Now the Supreme Court has held them to be constitutional under the fiction that they are in fact merely filling in the interstices of laws.

However, your average law passed by Congress these days consists almost exclusively of grants to these agencies to do whatever it is they wish.

Codevilla's fascination with higher education's connection to the Ruling Class is also revealed:

the defining feature of the ruling class is a certain attitude. And that attitude developed in the academy, and that attitude became uniform throughout the country because of the uniform academy. The uniformity of the academy transformed itself into the uniformity of the ruling class.

Though his reputation as a political philosopher commands our attention, he is the author of several studies on U.S. Intelligence and a critic of the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency. Two studies were published under the auspices of the National Strategy Information Center. NSIC was led by

Frank Barnett, who favored tough-minded experts in such fields as U.S. national security policy, strategic studies, Soviet studies, and arms control.³ Angelo Codevilla was one of Barnett's "tough-minded experts." Underlying his studies of "Intelligence," though, is his awareness of the intelligence community's prejudices:

[A] whole bunch of prejudices.

So, the straightforward political prejudices are, in no particular order: liberalism, prejudice in favor of the Arabs. You probably are not aware of the corporate prejudices that existed in the favor of the Soviet Union. And they were very, very powerful at CIA, as opposed to DIA or NSA.

In an essay Codevilla published in *The Tablet* for March 24, 2021, entitled "American Exodus,"⁴ he expresses his disdain for "Cancel Culture."

³ Jeffrey H. Michaels, "Waging 'Protracted Conflict' Behind the Scenes: The Cold War Activism of Frank R. Barnett," *Cold War Studies*, Vol. 19, Issue 1 (Winter 2017).

⁴ Angelo M. Codevilla, "American Exodus," *The Tablet* (March 24, 2021). Available online <https://www.tabletmag.com/sections/news/articles/american-exodus-angelo-codevilla-oligarchy>

[I]solating and alienating anybody, let alone half the country, is the proverbial two-edged sword. Anytime you isolate and alienate someone else, you do the same to yourself. The boundaries that the oligarchs have drawn, are drawing, separate them from the American people's vast majority, whose consciousness of powerlessness and defenselessness clarifies their choice between utter subjection and doing whatever it might take to exit a system that no longer seems to allow for the prospect of republican self-government.

On education he observes:

[T]he schools are teaching their children less than they had been taught. They have been mortgaging the house to pay for college. Their children's student loans mortgage their future. But the colleges have produced mostly worthless degrees while credentialing a generation of oligarchs who pretend to control other people's lives.

Around the country, Americans are fleeing public K-12 schools as fast as they can. This exodus accelerated during the COVID affair as parents observed online the poor quality if not outright dysfunctionality of much that the schools teach. The teachers' unions stimulated it by showing their prior-

ity for their material and ideological interests. Only because most Smiths don't have the resources for private education or for home schooling is that exodus not accelerating faster.

Simply "search" for the name "Angelo Codevilla" at *Law & Liberty*, the *American Spectator*, the *Claremont Review of Books*, the *Hoover Institute Working Group on Military History*, *National Review*, the *Washington Times* and *American Greatness*, and you will appreciate why I am ennobled by his friendship.

In order to get to the pinnacle of his successful career, Codevilla had to leave Lombard, Italy, at a young age and emigrate to "the New World." If you've been to Milan, Italy, you can appreciate the difference between Milanese and southern Italians. As a colleague once remarked, "Codevilla is a Goth." Indeed, Codevilla is as tall as I imagine some Goths were, much like Alaric who was compelled by invading Normans to abandon his traditional homeland and invade Rome.

Codevilla's fluent Italian, French, and English assured his growth as a scholar and point to a serious deficiency in American higher education that can be traced to our isolation from non-English speaking cultures and especially to the limits of the American system of "public" education. Into this cauldron of declining culture, Codevilla quickly sized up what was happening and, like a good Goth, began to attack!

Codevilla attacks the stupid, incompetent, self-serving, and delusional among us, but not with abandon. In each phase of his career: a) as an intelligence authority and during service on the Congressional staff of the Select Committee on Intelligence, b) as a member of the professional staff at the Hoover Institution, c) as a professor of International Relations at Boston University, and d) as an essayist on every area of professional expertise he has mastered, Codevilla conveys fear and admiration.

So great was the Central Intelligence Agency's fear of his criticism that the CIA gave a one million dollar "grant" to stop publication of Codevilla's last volume on the CIA's intelligence failures. That view of CIA incompetence and bureaucratic self-interest is expressed in Codevilla's review of two books about the CIA where he writes:

Former CIA Director "George Tenet's *At the Center of the Storm* and John Prados's *Safe for Democracy* show, each in its own way, that the CIA serves not the national interest of the United States but its own corporate interests and its partisan vision. It will continue to do so until a president who understands this remakes U.S. intelligence from the ground up."⁵

⁵ "Intelligence Failures," *Claremont Review of Books*, Vol. VII, Number 3 (Summer 2007). Available online at <https://claremontreviewofbooks.com/intelligence-failures/>

The elite journal *The Atlantic* also came under criticism in an essay entitled “The Ever Shallower Atlantic.”⁶ One need not ask what *The Atlantic*’s Editor in chief, Jeffery Goldberg, thought when he read that “*The Atlantic*, treats ordinary Americans’ religiosity as a problem, and calls all who do not share its worldview racist, sexist, homophobic, any affected by whatever psychosocial disease the class happens to in-vent.”

How must Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., have felt when Codevilla referred to Schlesinger’s *War and the American Presidency* that historian Robert Dallek called “a book for all seasons... an American classic” as “a sad indication of how partisanship has crushed academic standards.”⁷

Of our professional bureaucrats at the U.S. Department of Defense, Codevilla asks, “How and why have latter-day American statesmen and soldiers so fouled the relationship between military means and political ends that ... they have managed to lose wars despite winning battles?”⁸

⁶ Angelo M. Codevilla, “The Ever Shallower Atlantic,” *Claremont Review of Books* (Oct 24, 2016). Available online <https://claremontreviewofbooks.com/digital/the-ever-shallower-atlantic/>

⁷ Angelo M. Codevilla, “Soldiers, Statesmen, and Victory,” *Claremont Review of Books*, Vol. III, Number 2 (Spring 2003). Available online <https://claremontreviewofbooks.com/soldiers-statesmen-and-victory/>

⁸ Ibid.

Of Codevilla's many books, I will comment on three:

1. *Putting America First: John Quincy Adams's Teachings for Our Time*⁹
2. *The Ruling Class: How They Corrupted America and What We Can Do About It*¹⁰
3. *To Make and Keep Peace Among Ourselves and with All Nations*¹¹

Codevilla's *Putting America First* is an encomium to John Quincy Adam's political realism:

Adams believed, practically even more than theoretically, that governments behave as they think suits them at any given time whether or not a treaty exists to enjoin or to forbid. The reality of will, of agreement or disagreement, supersedes documents. Hence, Adams's

⁹ Angelo M. Codevilla, *Putting America First: John Quincy Adams's Teachings for Our Time* (Washington, DC: Republic Book Publishers, 2021).

¹⁰ Angelo M. Codevilla, *The Ruling Class: How They Corrupted America and What We Can Do About It* (New York: Beaufort Books, 2010).

¹¹ Angelo M. Codevilla, *To Make and Keep Peace Among Ourselves and with All Nations* (Palo Alto, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 2014).

diplomacy was about clearly, carefully, defining all sides' interests, aiming less at treaties than at maximizing real, reciprocal, understanding and forbearance.

Maintaining and developing the American people's independent, peculiar, way of life, and its national interests is the paramount objective of all foreign policy.

For foreign relations, that paramountcy means that the U.S. has no substantive objective regarding foreign countries—none. Only the avoidance of trouble with them. Hence, following George Washington's injunction, peace must be America's objective with all nations—interfering with none, brooking no interference from any. Even in commercial relations, America is to “force nothing,” to seek no special advantages, nor to wage economic warfare. Reciprocity is to be U.S. foreign policy's end as well as its means.

Codevilla writes that Adams was guided by the following realities:

- 1) The American people, by the very right by which they asserted their independence are bound to respect that of others. “Who has appointed us judges in their case?”
- 2) “Their business” their quarrels, their objectives really are their own, beyond the American people's right or

powers to shape them. By taking sides in foreign interests we lose sight of our own.

- 3) At the very least, such involvement raises the possibility of wars that are of tangential interest to us – sure to kill some Americans, but unlikely to realize any American’s dreams. ...
- 4) America is solely sovereign over its own business – peacefully and securely to occupy its natural borders, and within them to show of what virtue and of what manner of perfection “free men and Christians” are capable. Focusing on that business means first, as Washington had prescribed, growing America’s power.

And here is the nub of Codevilla’s admiration of John Quincy Adams:

Prior to Progressivism, labeling any proposal or point of view as “America first” would have been meaningless. Statesmen had debated policy within their fiduciary responsibilities’ natural focus: America itself.

But since the Progressives’ paramount premise is precisely that U.S policy’s proper primary concern must be with mankind as a whole, and with America only incidentally and derivatively, the label “America first” became an imputation of narrow-mindedness, selfishness; in short, of illegitimacy.

In 1939-41, FDR used it to smear calls for armed neutrality as pro Nazi.

This observation brings my attention to the context in which Codevilla wrote *The Ruling Class*. In the interview with David Samuels that Codevilla gave to *The Tablet*, he observes,

[T]here is no such thing as America anymore. In place of the America that is described in history books has arisen something new and vast and yet distinctly un-American that for lack of a better term is often called the American Empire...the Democrats were the senior partners in the ruling class. The Republicans are the junior partners.¹²

Published in 2010, *The Ruling Class: How They Corrupted America and What We Can Do About It* contains an introduction by Rush Limbaugh. As Limbaugh explains, he saw Codevilla's essay on this topic in *The American Spectator* and devoted an entire program to reading passages for his audience.¹³

¹² David Samuels, "The Codevilla Tapes," *The Tablet* (October 24, 2019). Available online at <https://www.tabletmag.com/sections/arts-letters/articles/angelo-codevilla>

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. ix-x.

Few scholars of Classical political philosophy achieve celebrity by endorsement of a dominant Talk Radio host. Codevilla did not go out of his way to become famous. He just attacked in the 20th century AD as a Goth like Alaric attacked in the 5th century AD. That's what Goths do best.

The Ruling Class is an indictment of an oligarchy constituting itself as "Rulers" of others who, though of equal citizenship, pray to God and whose lives may be characterized by devotion to "marriage, children, and religious practice." Believed by the Ruling Class to be less intelligent, these others are the target of a campaign to reduce "American families intellectual and moral subordination to science." Published in 2010 before the Coronavirus pandemic released feelings of negativity toward "experts" whose expertise gives them unelected power to restrict the lives of the great majority, a target of Codevilla are these very "experts" who confuse their own opinion with "science." This Ruling Class has undermined marriage and has taken "as much authority from parents as it can."

Lest we miss what Codevilla intends, early in the introductory pages he proposes that "doing away with the Ruling Class' power and perquisites is the prerequisite for saving America's prosperity, civility and morality."¹⁴ America's rulers have become "a self-contained, self-reverential class." Both "Republican and Democratic office-holders ... share a

¹⁴ Ibid., p. xxi.

similar presumption: to dominate. . . . They think, look, and act as a class, almost a caste.”¹⁵

Codevilla asks, “How did America change from a place where people could expect to live without bowing to privileged classes?”¹⁶ Once upon a time, “America’s upper crust was a mixture . . . who were not predictably of one mind on any given matter.” Back then, our schools and universities “had not imposed a single orthodoxy about the origins of man, about American history, or about how America should be governed.”¹⁷ Our “Founding Fathers” believed in equality due to an understanding that “all men are made in the image and likeness of God” because they yearned for equal treatment under British rule or “because they had read John Locke.”¹⁸

The Progressives rejected that and held that man is “a mere part of evolutionary nature.”¹⁹ Their belief in “progress” gave the early Ruling Class an expectation of peaceful change (under their direction). Today’s Ruling Class, however, is arrogant and condemns what Codevilla calls “the Country Class.” Obama apologized for America’s failing to meet its responsibilities. Clinton apologized to Africans for

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 3.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 8.

¹⁷ Ibid., pp. 8-9.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 16.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 17.

slavery in America, and George H.W. Bush told Gorbachev that Reaganites are “dummies and blockheads.”²⁰

Is there a solution by which “to untangle such a corrupt knot?” Yes, Codevilla believes, “only by mobilizing ... on a principled moral basis ... being willing to dispense with whatever threads of it they hold.”²¹ It won’t be easy, but by taking up the responsibilities of citizens, fathers, and entrepreneurs, the Ruling Class can be deposed.²² At issue is whether the Country Class is “willing to shoulder the responsibilities that their grandparents bore as proud badges of American citizenship.”²³

The answer that Codevilla gives to that question is unfurled in his 2014 study that examines the tenuous existence of domestic and international peace in our time. Published by Hoover Institution Press, with a “Foreword” by Victor Davis Hanson, Codevilla’s *To Make and Keep Peace Among Ourselves and with All Nations* makes the observation that since 1914 war has been absent “only during two brief periods (1919-41, 1992-2001).”²⁴

²⁰ Ibid., pp. 24-25.

²¹ Ibid., p. 69

²² Ibid., p. 81

²³ Ibid., p. 85.

²⁴ Angelo M. Codevilla, *To Make and Keep Peace Among Ourselves and with All Nations* (Palo Alto: Hoover Institution Press, 2014), xvii.

We Americans have come to terms with the absence of peace, yet our living life on a war footing is not what the generation that founded the American nation intended.

Codevilla enshrines with high praise the two leaders who sought peace and gave us advice for the avoidance of war: George Washington and John Quincy Adams.

And Codevilla observes that the two documents on which we should rely if we desire peace are Washington's "Farewell Address" of 1796 and the Declaration of Independence which, for Adams, was pivotal to the enjoyment of peace with other nations and to shaping the character of the American people.

In Adam's address on July 4, 1821, he explained why:

America, in the assembly of nations, since her admission among them, has invariably, though often fruitlessly, held forth to them the hand of honest friendship, of equal freedom, of generous reciprocity. She has uniformly spoken among them, though often to heedless and often to disdainful ears, the language of equal liberty, equal justice, and equal rights. She has, in the lapse of nearly half a century, without a single exception, respected the independence of other nations, while asserting and maintaining her own. She has abstained from interference in the concerns of others, even when the conflict has been for principles to which she clings, as to the last vital drop that visits the heart.

Abstaining “from interference in the concerns of others” was the “Great Rule” asserted by George Washington in his “Farewell.”

. . . in extending our commercial relations to have with them as little political connection as possible. . . even our Commercial Policy should hold an equal and impartial hand neither seeking nor granting exclusive favours or preferences; consulting the natural course of things; diffusing & diversifying by gentle means the streams of Commerce, but forcing nothing.²⁵

Over the course of the book, Codevilla traces how American presidents and statesmen have ignored President Washington and in doing so adversely affected the moral and spiritual character of the American nation.

That, I believe, explains the spirit that moves Codevilla throughout his career: Codevilla is a moralist.

So much harm experienced by the American nation could have been avoided if these later writers and statesmen had heeded President George Washington’s “Great Rule”: Josiah Strong, Albert Beveridge, Theodore Roosevelt, Walt Whitman, Nicholas Murray Butler, David Starr Jordan, Woodrow Wilson, Elihu Root, Andrew Carnegie, and William Howard Taft.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 7.

It is beneficial to remember the names of these men because from 1885 to 1929, Codevilla writes, they reshaped the character of Americans by habituating them to transmutation of “pertinent questions into meaningless generalities.”²⁶ Some examples from my list include the following:

Josiah Strong’s *Our Country: Its possible future and its present crisis* (1885) is “permeated by the sense that the United States is God’s and Darwin’s designee ‘for perfection and domination of the planet.’”²⁷

Senator Albert Beveridge (R-IN), an imperialist, said in a speech in the U.S. Senate on January 9, 1900, that “self-government and internal development have been the dominant notes of our first century; administration and the development of other lands will be the dominant notes of our second century.”²⁸

Codevilla questions the idea that “[t]o impose American rule on others is not to deny them liberty, because we know what liberty is, and they do not. Does imposition violate something fundamental about America? No: ‘The Declaration of Independence does not forbid us to do our part in the re-generation of the world. If it did, the Declaration would

²⁶ Ibid., p. 125.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 90.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 93.

be wrong.’ So much for piety toward America’s foundations.”²⁹

Nicholas Murray Butler, president of Columbia University, and advocate of disarmament. In 1907, Butler wrote “All navies are a bane on the world. And it is high time that the United States . . . reduce its naval building program.”³⁰

David Starr Jordan, president of Stanford University, proposed “eugenically refining the American people to lead the world.”³¹

Woodrow Wilson “had replaced the compass of concrete peace with a utopian creed.”³² And was “always just one enemy’s elimination away from perpetual peace.”³³

Elihu Root supported acquisition of the Philippines as a way “America could show the world a new kind of stewardship.”³⁴ He also advocated for international organizations to

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 93.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 101.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 102.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 118.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 103.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 99.

settle disputes. Root won a Nobel Prize for founding the International Court of Justice.

William Howard Taft presided at a convention on June 17, 1915, to form a “League to Enforce Peace,” an organization that foreshadowed Woodrow Wilson’s League of Nations.³⁵ Joining Taft at Independence Hall were Elihu Root, Alexander Graham Bell, Rabbi Stephen S. Wise, James Cardinal Gibbons of Baltimore, and Edward Filene on behalf of the recently founded U.S. Chamber of Commerce. Elected to the Executive Committee were Harvard President Abbott Lawrence Lowell, former Cabinet member and diplomat Oscar S. Straus, and Henry Holt, publisher of *The Independent*, an anti-slavery paper, and president of Rollins College.

What can explain this change in principles governing American statecraft a mere century and a third after President Washington warned against foreign entanglements?

I believe there were three influences: a savage American Civil War, Darwin’s *Origins of the Species*, and the import of German idealism by the Transcendentalists. Americans had exchanged the God of Christianity with a new faith in man’s

³⁵ Ibid., p. 107.

divinity. A belief that man is divine appealed to these powerful men who constituted a “clerisy or power.”³⁶

If they thought their legacy was a world at peace, however, they did not reckon on an ideology like Marxism-Leninism that would overthrow the Russian monarchy and seek world dominion. How “the West” responded to this ideology of Revolution was complicated by the overthrow of Habsburg Germany and the Ottoman Empire while a savage war was being waged in France. An empowered Soviet Union controlled Eastern Europe, the ideology of Mao took control of China, and a Great Depression led the American President Franklin Delano Roosevelt to reconstitute the American government into an administrative state.

Before the Great Depression in 1929 and President Franklin Roosevelt’s election in 1932, America was a world of individual freedom protected by voluntary associations, churches, rights of citizenship, and the rule of law which gave hope for a better life for the vast majority of Americans. A European war from 1914-1918 was fatal to European civilization because it transferred morals and religion to “the nation-state.” The transfer of allegiance from civil society to the State were not felt in America for a decade.

Before that change in grounding occurred, it was furrowed by disconnecting the means of defending peace to

³⁶ Richard Bishirjian, *The Conservative Rebellion* (South Bend, IN: St. Augustine’s Press, 2015), p. 89.

enthusiasm for a “utopian creed.”³⁷ Strong, Wilson, and the distinguished statesmen in their train of followers had divested America of its capacity to protect the peace.³⁸ In turn, America’s character “as defined by the Declaration of Independence,” as John Quincy Adams had believed, was altered.³⁹

Adam’s July 4, 1821, address articulates the connection between the Declaration and the character of the American nation.

From the day of the Declaration, the people of the North American union, and of its constituent states, were associated bodies of civilized men and Christians, in a state of nature, but not of anarchy. They were bound by the laws of God, which they all, and by the laws of the gospel, which they nearly all, acknowledged as the rules of their conduct. They were bound by the principles which they themselves had proclaimed in the declaration. They were bound by all those tender and endearing sympathies, the absence of which, in the British government and nation, toward them, was the primary cause of the distressing conflict in which they had been precipi-

³⁷ Codevilla, *To Make and Keep Peace Among Ourselves and with All Nations*, p. 118.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 109.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 70.

tated by the head-long rashness and unfeeling insolence of their oppressors. They were bound by all the beneficent laws and institutions, which their forefathers had brought with them from their mother country, not as servitudes but as rights. They were bound by habits of hardy industry, by frugal and hospitable manners, by the general sentiments of social equality, by pure and virtuous morals; and lastly they were bound by the grappling-hooks of common suffering under the scourge of oppression. Where then, among such a people, were the materials for anarchy!

The apparatus of the administrative state and a national security establishment that was housed in “that deep State” had eradicated American “*habits of hardy industry, by frugal and hospitable manners.*” Since 1885, a “pseudo technical fog” was developed that has clouded judgment by making it amoral to counter the dogma that reduced thinking to a choice between total peace or annihilation of nuclear war.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 131.