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ARTICLE

Kōsaka Masataka and the Repercussions of the Kyoto School on Postwar Japan: The Anti-Anglo-Saxon Origin of the Pro-American Liberal Leviathan

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Kōsaka Masataka (1934–96) was a prominent and self-described realist IR theorist in Japan whose thought shared several key tenets with contemporary liberal internationalism. This article argues that a significant strand of IR theory—one that ultimately supported the US-led international order—originated from an anti-Anglo-Saxon vision articulated by four Kyoto school scholars, including Kōsaka's father, during wartime debates. These thinkers proposed a new world order grounded in the concepts of a "pluralistic world" and moralische Energie. *Kōsaka transformed these ideas into a framework of plural civilizations, each driven by its own underlying "energy." In postwar Japan, he pursued what William James termed "the moral equivalent of war," envisioning a "pluralistic world" sustained by liberal internationalism and led by the US, which he interpreted as inherently pluralistic. By examining the ambivalent relationship between the Kyoto school and Kōsaka Masataka, this article challenges the simplistic Western–non-Western binary in contemporary IR theory.*

Introduction

All students of the theory of international relations (IR) at Japanese universities encounter the name Kōsaka Masataka (1934–1996) in syllabi, references, and reading lists. The second son of Kōsaka Masaaki, a prominent figure of the Kyoto school of philosophy, Masataka engaged with international relations from theoretical and historical perspectives for over thirty-five years, from the late 1950s until his death. As an active public intellectual, he regularly appeared on television, in magazines, and at public lectures to discuss domestic and global issues. Kōsaka defined realism as an approach that "tries to deal with existing conflicts among states as if they were simply power struggles," adopting it as his own stance.[1] Like his predecessors (e.g. E. H. Carr

[1]Kōsaka Masataka, *International Politics and the Search for Peace*, trans. Carl Freire, ed. Tadokoro Masayuki (Tokyo, 2023), 199.

and Hans Morgenthau), however, he was not solely preoccupied with military power. His ideas encompass much of what is today referred to as liberal internationalism.[2] Despite his relatively early death, his students and the subsequent generation came to constitute an important part of the Japanese IR tradition. If one were to identify a Japanese IR scholar to contribute to advancing non-Western IR theory, Kōsaka would be a strong candidate. In the words of Hattori Ryūji, the author of his biography, "I do not know if he was the number one [international theorist], but he was certainly the only one."[3]

What made Kōsaka "the only one"—and what made more systematic and scientific IR scholars perplexed—was his sustained interest in civilizations. Although previous research has generally left this point ambiguous,[4] the idea of civilization and the "energy" that sustains it were integral to his overarching argument, just as Morgenthau's pessimistic view of human nature and Reinhold Niebuhr's concept of "original sin" were integral to their respective notions of realism. As an expert in politics and diplomacy, he described his "mission" as "to ensure that Japan is not defeated again," connecting it to the preservation of the country's moral quality rather than, for example, to the development of the country's foreign policy or defense strategy.[5] The catalyst behind this seemingly strange link between politics and morality was his concept of "civilization." Agreeing with Arnold J. Toynbee, Kōsaka observed that "the rise and fall of a civilization is ultimately determined by its interior."[6] In his view, then, analyzing politics alone could not fulfill the mission of IR theorists; they also had to preserve moral excellence and vitality. His international political theory thus served as an art aimed at upholding civilization. Although Samuel Huntington is often credited with reviving the civilization debate in international political theory,[7] Kōsaka's earlier work calls that narrative into question, revealing that civilizational debates had never disappeared in the first place.

By examining Kōsaka's IR theory, with a particular focus on his discourse about civilization, we demonstrate how intellectual history can enrich our understanding of

[2]This approach to "realism" probably influenced his relatively minor assignment of political "decision," despite its frequent emphasis among other realists. For more on the implications of "decision" for IR theory and political science see Daniel Bessner and Nicolas Guilhot, eds., *The Decisionist Imagination: Sovereignty, Social Science and Democracy in the 20th Century* (New York, 2018).

[3]Hattori Ryūji, *Kōsaka Masataka: Sengo nihon to genjitsu shugi* (Kōsaka Masataka: Postwar Japan and Realism) (Tokyo, 2018), 380.

[4]Hattori and Iokibe Makoto aptly highlighted his lifelong preoccupation with "civilization." However, they still left unclear the relationship between international politics and civilization studies in his overall thinking. Hattori, *Kōsaka Masataka*, 241; Iokibe Makoto, "Ima naze Kōsaka Masataka o yomi naosu no ka" (Why We Re-read Kōsaka Masataka Now?), *Gaikō fōram* 23/2 (2010), 8–13, at 13.

[5]Kōsaka Masataka, "Nihon no shukumei o mitsumeta me" (Eyes Gazing into the Fate of Japan) (1982), in *Kōsaka Masataka chōsaku shū*, ed. Kōsaka Masataka chōsaku shū kankō kai, 8 vols. (Tokyo, 1998–2000) (hereafter *KMC*), 8: 401–29, at 429.

[6]Kōsaka Masataka, *Heiwa to kiki no kōzō: Posto reisen no kokusai seiji* (Structures of Peace and Crisis: International Politics in the Post-Cold War Era) (Tokyo, 1995), 319, 326.

[7]Richard Crockatt, *After 9/11: Cultural Dimensions of American Global Power* (London, 2009), 10; Brett Bowden, *The Empire of Civilization: The Evolution of an Imperial Idea* (Chicago, 2009), 25.

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contemporary non-Western IR (and, more broadly, global IR). In an era of "rapprochement" between IR theory and intellectual history, this approach complicates the very notion of "non-Western."[8] To do so, this article places Kōsaka within the Kyoto school lineage going back to Nishida Kitarō—likely the most important modern Japanese philosopher—who continually made fixed dichotomies fluid, such as subject/object, to make/to be made, and being/nothing. Although he did not write extensively about politics, many of his disciples widely discussed—and often actively engaged with—politics across a broad ideological spectrum. The most notorious example of this engagement was the wartime effort by four Kyoto school scholars, including Masataka's father, Kōsaka Masaaki, to justify the Second Sino-Japanese War and the Asia-Pacific War (the Pacific theatre of World War II). The four collectively proposed a pluralistic worldview to replace the Wilsonian international order (which they rejected as the Anglo-Saxon world order), advocating for what Leopold von Ranke called *moralische Energie* as the vital force needed to realize this proposal. Against this intellectual backdrop, Masataka developed his own theory of civilization, appropriating the idea of pluralism and *moralische Energie*. The connection between father and son here has often been blurred, as their arguments have entirely opposing political implications.[9] Nevertheless, we argue that it was precisely their shared intellectual lineage that gave rise to such divergent political implications.

The complex and ambivalent relationship between the wartime Kyoto school and Kōsaka Masataka in the postwar era reveals how an influential IR theory that endorsed the US-led international order originated from an anti-American vision. The Kyoto school invoked the concept of pluralism and *moralische Energie* to counter the "Anglo-Saxon" worldview. Masataka, however, transformed these arguments to support the US-led liberal international order. In a kind of point symmetry, the implications of these ideas were inverted between the wartime and postwar eras.[10] In other words, this article reveals a profound shift in the political implications of the two concepts

[8]The term "rapprochement" comes from Claire Vergerio, "Context, Reception, and the Study of Great Thinkers in International Relations," *International Theory* 11/1 (2019), 110–37, at 111. On this theme see, for example, David Armitage, "The Fifty Years' Rift: Intellectual History and International Relations," *Modern Intellectual History* 1/1 (2004), 97–109; Cris Brown, "Political Thought, International Relations Theory and International Political Theory: An Interpretation," *International Relations* 31/3 (2017), 227–40; Duncan Bell, "International Relations and Intellectual History," in Mlada Bukovansky, Edward Keene, Christian Reus-Smit, and Maja Spanu, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of History and International Relations* (Oxford, 2023), 94–110.

[9]Nakanishi Hiroshi is one of the most significant exceptions, tracing some of the connections between Kōsaka and the Kyoto school. However, he did not explore the link between Kōsaka's moral argument and *moralische Energie*. Nakanishi Hiroshi, "Kenryoku seiji no anchinomī" (The Antinomy of Power Politics), in Iokibe Makoto and Nakanishi Hiroshi, eds., *Kōsaka Masataka to sengo nihon* (Tokyo, 2016), 189–225, at 211–12.

[10]Bruce Cumings and Thomas J. McCormick have suggested that the Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere and the American postwar order were not opposites but rather a continuation of domination—or that the US effectively established a co-prosperity sphere for Japan, not in name but in substance. Bruce Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War*, vol. 2 (Princeton, 1981), 177, 468; Thomas J. McCormick, *America's Half-Century: United States Foreign Policy in the Cold War* (Baltimore, 1989), 116. If we adopt this viewpoint, Masataka's argument becomes not an inversion but a mere transposition. This article does not deny the usefulness of this perspective—indeed it offers certain explanatory advantages. Yet adopting this perspective obscures Masataka's ambivalent feelings toward his father and shared theoretical background—precisely the

of pluralism and moral energy across two different generations—the transition from an era seeking the morality of war to an era seeking what William James termed "the moral equivalent of war."[11] This paradoxical trajectory of ideas demonstrates how the Western/non-Western IR binary can lose analytical traction. The four Kyoto school scholars—all experts in Western philosophy or history—criticized the alleged Anglo-Saxon global domination in a manner informed by both Western and non-Western intellectual resources: namely the German concept of *moralische Energie* and the Chinese and Japanese concept of *qi* (vital energy). Kōsaka the son endorsed a liberal international order (often criticized as Western-centric) by drawing on the Kyoto school's criticism of Anglo-Saxon hegemony. "Western" and "non-Western" are thus intertwined at multiple levels, their arguments eluding straightforward either/or categorization.

In the following sections, we first briefly outline Kōsaka Masataka's life and vision of IR, including his theory of civilization, and highlight how he viewed "energy" or "vitality" (*katsuryoku*) as the key to strengthening civilization. This section also aims to provide a general introduction to Kōsaka for readers who may not have expertise in Japanese international relations. We then trace the origin of this pivotal, yet ambiguous, concept back to *moralische Energie*, a concept discussed by the four Kyoto school scholars at the Standpoint of World History and Japan roundtable as they articulated their stance on war. Kōsaka later appropriated this concept in the context of postwar pacifism, seeking to maintain "energy" through the structure of "pluralism," another Kyoto school theme; in doing so, he attempted to position Japan as a pillar of the liberal international order. Finally, in the Conclusion, we explore the implications of this conceptual genealogy spanning two generations for non-Western IR theory.

Kōsaka Masataka's international political thought and civilization argument

Born in Kyoto in 1934, Kōsaka Masataka spent his childhood during the protracted belligerency that began with the Sino–Japanese War in 1937 and expanded into the Asia-Pacific War, which ended in 1945.[12] Unlike Tokyo and other major cities, Kyoto suffered only minor damage from air raids. This relatively good fortune would later give his opponent, Sakamoto Yoshikazu, the impression that "this person didn't experience the 'wounds of war' to the bone."[13] However, the young Kōsaka was deeply wounded by Japan's defeat, writing to his family that "this is a humiliating thing … I will study hard and make Japan truly strong and great in everything."[14] Although not uninterested in philosophy, he chose to study at Kyoto University's Faculty of Law, where courses in political science are traditionally offered. In the preface to *International Politics*,

issues that this article, grounded in intellectual history, seeks to unravel. For this reason, this paper adopts the discontinuous perspective of the two "empires."

[11]William James, "The Moral Equivalent of War," in *The Works of William James: Essays in Religion and Morality*, ed. Frederic Burkhardt and Fredson Bowers (Cambridge, MA, 1982), 162–73.

[12]On Kōsaka's younger years see Hattori, *Kōsaka Masataka*, 3–33.

[13]Sakamoto Yoshikazu, *Ningen to kokka (ge)* (Humans and States (vol. 2)) (Tokyo, 2011), 192.

[14]Kōsaka Setsuzō, *Shōwa no shukumei o mitsumeta me: Chichi Kōsaka Masaaki to ani Kōsaka Masataka* (Eyes Gazing into the Fate of the Showa Era: My Father Kōsaka Masaaki and My Brother Kōsaka Masataka) (Kyoto, 2000), 178–9.

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he expressed gratitude to two renowned faculty members: international legal theorist Taoka Ryōichi and political scientist Inoki Masamichi.[15] Soon after obtaining his bachelor's degree, he secured an academic post as an assistant at the same university—a common practice at the time for promising students.

Kōsaka's academic talents were recognized not only in Japan but also in the US. In 1960, he received a fellowship from the Rockefeller Foundation, enabling him to spend two years as a visiting researcher at Harvard University. While researching the Vienna system, he turned his attention to US policy toward China, working under the supervision of J. K. Fairbank, an expert in Chinese studies. Fairbank praised Kōsaka to the Rockefeller Foundation as "a first-rate investment."[16] This assessment was shared by K. W. Thompson, the facilitator who steered the organization toward "realism."[17] After interviewing Kōsaka, Thompson "was much impressed with him and with his research interests. K[ōsaka] is sufficiently impressive that KWT wonders if we should not approach him about a possible IRP [individual research project] award at some future date."[18] In contrast, several years later, Thompson felt disappointed with scholars from Tokyo University's International Relations Research Group, which the Rockefeller Foundation supported. "Men like Masataka Kosaka at Kyoto," he noted, "while junior to them, are every bit as creative and able."[19]

Soon after his return from the US, Kōsaka came to be known as a distinguished new-generation IR theorist, with the publication of "A Realist Theory of Peace" in late 1962. He wrote to Gerald Freund, a Rockefeller Foundation fellowship adviser, saying that, while writing it, he had "read again Dr. K. W. Thompson's 'Political Realism and the Crisis of World Politics' and received a great benefit from it."[20] The article was a respectful yet rigorous criticism of the "idealist" Sakamoto Yoshikazu, who had advocated the establishment of United Nations forces and the withdrawal of US troops from Japan, contending that the US–Japan alliance exposed Japan to a perpetual nuclear threat and was therefore fundamentally flawed.[21] Kōsaka countered that Sakamoto's vision would create a power vacuum in the Pacific, upsetting the balance of power in the region.[22] If one were to identify the so-called "First Great Debate" between "realism"

[15]Kōsaka, *International Politics*, 12–13.

[16]"Kosaka, Masataka (Japan), 1917–1970s," Rockefeller Foundation records, Fellowships, RG 10, fellowship recorder cards, SG 10.2, Subgrp 2, Humanities Fellows, Series 5, Japan, Rockefeller Archive Center, available at https://dimes.rockarch.org/objects/k8RKEs6jsNsGW8WLyFPz59 (accessed 15 Sept. 2025).

[17]On Thompson and the "realism" of the Rockefeller Foundation see Nicolas Guilhot, *After the Enlightenment: Political Realism and International Relations in the Mid-Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, 2017), 49–50.

[18]"Kosaka, Masataka (Japan), 1917–1970s."

[19]"Interviews: KWT Tokyo, Japan January 13–15, 1963," 70, in Rockefeller Foundation records, Projects, SG 1.2, Series 300-833, Latin America, Europe, Africa, Asia, Oceania, Box 56, Folder 599–600.

[20]Kōsaka Masataka to Gerald Freund, 12 Dec. 1962, in "Tokyo University—International Relations, 1963–1968," Rockefeller Foundation records, Fellowships, fellowship files, SG 10.1, Fellowships, scholarships, training awards, Subseries 609.E, Box 361, Folder 5357, Kosaka, Masataka, 1957, 1959–64.

[21]Sakamoto Yoshikazu, "Chūritsu nihon no bōei kōsō: Nichibei anpo ni kawaru mono" (A Defence Strategy Vision of Neutral Japan: An Alternative to the Japan–US Security Treaty System) *Sekai* 164 (1959), 31–47.

[22]Kōsaka Masataka, "A Realist Theory of Peace" (1963), trans. Yoneda Asa, *Japan Forum* 24/4 (2012), 397–411, at 399, 403.

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and "idealism" in Japan, this would be the prime candidate. However, much like the actual "First Great Debate,"[23] this conflict was more complicated than this framework suggests. Sakamoto, despite being labeled an "idealist," was a student of Morgenthau at the University of Chicago and considered himself a realist, and Kōsaka never simply abandoned "ideals."[24] In this sense, Kōsaka's paper may best be understood as an illocutionary act intended to enhance the value of "realism" and appropriate it. Some years later, he expanded on the arguments of the "debate" in his still widely read book *International Politics*, where he depicted international politics as a complex composite of power, values, and interests.

While establishing himself as a realist IR theorist, he began writing about a politician who embodied "A Realist Theory of Peace": Yoshida Shigeru, prime minister of Japan from 1946 to 1947 and again from 1948 to 1954. Yoshida, he argued, had crafted Japanese foreign policy around the following principles: strictly limiting military power and its associated costs, compensating for this limitation through the US–Japan alliance, and directing Japan's resources toward economic development and trade.[25] This was precisely the vision that Kōsaka held for Japan's future as a "maritime nation."[26] By aligning his own vision with Yoshida's, he presented postwar Japanese policy as "realist," thereby sharpening his criticism of "idealism."[27] When he wrote extensively about Yoshida and his legacy, Ikeda Hayato and Satō Eisaku (students of the so-called "Yoshida school") were running long-term administrations as prime ministers. Kōsaka's interpretations of Yoshida likely helped reinforce the ideational foundations of the Liberal Democratic Party's contemporary policies. Indeed, Kōsaka frequently served in an advisory role for LDP prime ministers, Satō included.

Despite his active involvement in politics, he devoted considerable effort to exploring the history of international relations. He consistently favored a historical approach over a theoretical one. This preference was evident even before he entered university. On the last page of G. P. Gooch's *From Bacon to Halifax: Political Thought in England*, he wrote, "Gooch's accuracy as a historian fascinated me more than any theory."[28] This

[23]See, for example, Lucian Ashworth, "Did the Realist–Idealist Great Debate Really Happen?", *International Relations* 16/1 (2002), 33–51; Peter Marcus Kristensen and Ole Wæver, "The Realism–Idealism Debate in the International Studies Conference, 1933–1937," *Security Studies* 33/4 (2024), 573–606.

[24]Ōyane Satoshi, "Nihon ni okeru 'Mōgensō to no taiwa': Mō hitotsu no Kōsaka–Sakamoto ronsō" ("Dialogue with Morgenthau" in Japan: Another Kōsak–Sakamoto Debate), in Ōyane Satoshi, ed., *Nihon no kokusai kankei ron* (Tokyo, 2017), 63–91, at 74.

[25]Kōsaka Masataka, *Saishō Yoshida Shigeru* (Prime Minister Yoshida Shigeru) (1968; first published 1967), in *KMC*, 4: 9–240, at 68–70.

[26]Kōsaka Masataka, *Kaiyō kokka nihon no kōsō* (zōho ban) (Envisioning Japan as a Maritime Nation (enlarged edn)) (1969; first published 1965), in *KMC*, 1: 7–209, esp. 130–79.

[27]In his detailed study of Yoshida and his policies, John Dower implicitly criticized Kōsaka's interpretation by describing Yoshida as a less principled and more opportunistic imperialist: "As a good 'realist', Yoshida played to the strongest hand, which after 1945 was unmistakably America." John W. Dower, *Empire and Aftermath: Yoshida Shigeru and the Japanese Experience, 1878–1954* (Cambridge, MA, 1979), 403.

[28]See the last page of the copy of Gooch's *From Bacon to Halifax* in Kōsaka Masataka Collection (*bunko*) at the Library of Shizuoka University of Art and Culture.

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passion reverberated throughout his final book, which emphasized the vital role of history: "we cannot understand the world without theory, but theory without history is dangerous and largely harmful."[29] Kōsaka later confessed a desire to have studied under Herbert Butterfield in Britain rather than the US, and on another occasion he criticized Morgenthau's lectures for having been overly theoretical.[30] For Kōsaka, "history is the great treasury of all lessons, and especially an excellent textbook for suggesting what power is."[31] His research on the Vienna system—perhaps the distillation of "the great treasury of all lessons"—resulted in *The Maturation and Collapse of Classical Diplomacy*, published in 1978.

What captured his historical imagination the most was the collapse of civilizations. Even while at the National Elementary School, he was fascinated by a vivid story about the Punic Wars and the fate of Carthage.[32] This early experience sparked an enduring interest in the fall of political entities, culminating in his distinctive decision to spend an academic sabbatical in Tasmania, where indigenous culture had been irreparably damaged by British colonial policy. As a reader of H. G. Wells's *The War of the Worlds*, he must have been reminded of its opening chapter in which a British writer confesses, "we must remember what ruthless and utter destruction our own species has wrought … upon its inferior races. The Tasmanians."[33] This six-month stay enabled him to develop and refine his perspective on civilization, which led to several of his most popular works, such as *Thinking on a World Map* (1968) and *The Time When Civilizations Decline* (1981). He most likely had plans to write further book-length histories on the declines of Britain and Japan, but his premature death robbed him of the opportunity.[34] Still, as mentioned in the introduction, ideas about civilization were central to his thinking. The remainder of this section outlines his views on civilization and his ambiguous, yet critical, concept of "energy" as the driving force behind civilizations.

When Kōsaka used the term "civilization(s)"—typically without defining it—he was essentially following one of the two interpretive traditions: the idea of civilization in the singular or that of civilizations in the plural.[35] The idea of a singular civilization was almost inseparable from that of progress, in contrast to "barbarism." As clarified in J. S. Mill's justification of benign despotism, civilizational progress often had colonialist implications in modern history. Liberal journalist J. A. Hobson noted that "all interference on the part of civilised white nations with 'lower races' is not *prima facie* illegitimate," while Hans Kohn observed that "inequality in the level of

[29]Kōsaka, *Heiwa to kiki no kōzō*, 6.

[30]Hattori, *Kōsaka Masataka*, 47; Ōyane Satoshi, "Nihon ni okeru 'Mōgensō to no taiwa'," 63–91, 74.

[31]Kōsaka, *Kaiyō kokka nihon no kōsō*, 155.

[32]Kōsaka Masataka, "Kaisetsu" (Postface), in Morimoto Tetsurō, *Aru tsūshō kokka no kōbō: Karutago no isho* (The Rise and Fall of a Merchant State: A Testament of Carthage) (1989) (Kyoto, 1993), 306–11, at 306.

[33]H. G. Wells, *The War of the Worlds* (London, 1898), 4–5.

[34]Hattori, *Kōsaka Masataka*, 236; Kōsaka Setsuzō, *Shōwa no shukumei*, 126.

[35]Krishan Kumar, "The Return of Civilization—and of Arnold Toynbee?", *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 56/ 4 (2014), 815–43, at 820–24.

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civilisation and civilising energy are of the very essence of imperialism."[36] Both passages appeared in A. P. Thornton's *Doctrines of Imperialism* (1965), which Kōsaka read closely, noting down "Hans Kohn's words" and the corresponding page numbers, commenting that "we can see how strong the justification by civilization was at that time."[37] He later quoted these remarks by Kohn and Hobson on civilization in his *International Politics* under "Industrialization and Power Politics," implying that the defining feature of modern, singular "civilization" was the development of industry and technology.

Kōsaka was not an antimodern visionary, but he was deeply concerned about the consequences of modern technological civilization and the unprecedented pace of its development. This led him toward nostalgia, as evident in his assertion that "the Europe of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries may well turn out to be the best era for mankind."[38] Behind this nostalgia lay the twentieth-century shift in international politics brought about by the production of uniquely destructive arms, including nuclear weapons.[39] As a result, diplomacy and war could no longer be regarded as a series of "games."[40] Indeed, like many conservative thinkers, Kōsaka seemingly felt that technological development had deprived humanity of a certain nobility, as reflected in his disappointment with Harold Laski's *The State in Theory and Practice*, which he read in his first year at university. "Mill's political science was sincere," he wrote. "If so, then the faults of this book are those of twentieth-century political science, or perhaps of twentieth-century humanity."[41]

Despite his full recognition of the impact of the singular, modern technological civilization, it was a pluralistic interpretation that formed his theoretical core. One of his inspirations was Toynbee, a creator of the grand panorama of multiple civilizations who was widely read in postwar Japan. More than fifteen of his books have been translated into Japanese, including *Civilization on Trial* and *The World and the West*, as well as his massive twelve-volume work *A Study of History*. Because Toynbee's universal history rejected the privileged status of Western civilization, several Japanese intellectuals—Kōsaka included—perceived it as a means of encouraging the non-Western world to begin a counteroffensive movement against Western expansion.[42] These intellectuals often (incorrectly) believed Toynbee to be describing Japan as an independent civilizational unit, flirting with the idea of Japan bearing a special mission to surpass the West; ironically, Toynbee's efforts to overcome Western

[36]See his handwritten note tucked at the end of the copy of A. P. Thornton's *Doctrines of Imperialism* (New York, 1965) in the Kōsaka Masataka Collection. These quotations are found at 154, 157.

[37]See the copy of Thornton's *Doctrines of Imperialism*, 157, in the Kōsaka Masataka Collection.

[38]Kamo Takehiko and Kōsaka Masataka (dialogue), "'Bunmei no shōtotsu' o koeru michi" (Ways of Overcoming "The Clash of Civilisations"), *Ushio* 416 (1993), 132–43, at 137.

[39]Ibid., 138.

[40]Kōsaka Masataka, *Koten gaikō no seijuku to hōkai* (The Maturity and Collapse of Classical Diplomacy) (1978), in *KMC*, 6: 7–381, at 46.

[41]See the last page of the copy of Harold Laski's *The State in Theory and Practice* (London, 1935) in the Kōsaka Masataka Collection.

[42]Kōsaka Masataka, "Nihon ga suibō shinai tame ni" (To Prevent Japan from Decline) (1996; first published 1993), in *KMC*, 3: 509–28, at 515.

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parochialism became a justification for Japanese parochialism.[43] In stating that "Japan is neither the East nor the West,"[44] Kōsaka was not entirely free from such ethnocentric tendencies. Even so, he managed to restrain this tendency relatively well, emphasizing the transformative potential of communication between "civilizations" rather than advancing a romanticized future mission for Japan based on its alleged uniqueness.

While Kōsaka's view of Japan as an isolated civilization may be reminiscent of Samuel Huntington's later and influential thesis of the "clash of civilizations," there are several notable distinctions. For one, Huntington divided extant civilizations into eight categories, citing Japan as an example of "a society and civilization unique to itself."[45] Moreover, Huntington portrayed the cultural differences between Japan and the US as an obstacle to their mutual understanding.[46] Although his characterization of Japan's civilizational status appeared acceptable to Kōsaka,[47] the emphasis on clashes along fault lines ran counter to his focus on communication and internal change. Despite his acknowledgment of civilizational plurality, he cautioned against assuming that differences between civilizations necessarily lead to hostility or potential warfare.[48] What he must have understood well was that the alleged cultural identification could serve as a justification for forceful expansion. Indeed, the Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere sought to create a comprehensive political and economic order on the pretext of cultural identity. Conversely, Huntington's underestimation of this pretext led him (at least in part) to predict that "the likelihood of violence between Ukrainians and Russians should be low."[49]

If Japan is a civilizational unit that could decline and collapse, then the young nationalist's dream of ensuring that Japan would never lose again hinges on the viability of this civilizational unit. As mentioned in the introduction, Kōsaka found in Toynbee the perspective that civilizations decline as a result of moral decay. He referred to this decisive internal factor as "energy" (*katsuryoku*) in various contexts. For example, he translated the term "going concern," which Halford Mackinder used to describe organizational efficiency, as "energy body" (*katsuryoku tai*). This term "energy body" was used in a more favorable vein to depict Venetian excellence.[50] In another context, he explained that the term "resort" was widely used in eighteenth-century Britain

[43]Tessa Morris-Suzuki, *Re-inventing Japan: Time, Space, Nation* (London, 1997), 160–62; Kasuga Jun'ichi, "A. J. Toinbī no kokka kan o megutte: Dai ichiji sekai taisen shoki o chūshin ni" (On A. J. Toynbee's View of State: Focusing on It in the Early Stages of WWI), *Sōka daigaku kiyō* 27 (2005), 277–96, at 280–82. Toynbee held that there were only five surviving civilizations: Western Christendom, Oxford Christendom, Islam, the Hindu society, and the Far Eastern society (including Japan). See Arnold J. Toynbee, *Civilization on Trial* (Oxford, 1948), 155–6.

[44]Kōsaka, *Kaiyō kokka nihon no kōsō*, 31.

[45]Samuel P. Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations?", *Foreign Affairs* 72/3 (1993), 22–49, at 28.

[46]Samuel P. Huntington, "Japan's Role in Global Politics," *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific* 1/1 (2001), 133–42, at 139–42.

[47]Kōsaka, *Heiwa to kiki no kōzō*, 318.

[48]Ibid., 296.

[49]Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations?", 38.

[50]Kōsaka Masataka, "Chisei gakusha Makkindā ni miru 20 seiki zenhan no kenryoku seiji" (Power Politics in the First Half of the Twentieth Century through the Lens of the Geopolitician Mackinder) (1967), in

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and France to mean "source of energy" (*katsuryoku no gensen*) in the modern sense.[51] Although the Japanese people had been pejoratively labeled "economic animals," this was not necessarily a negative thing, as it implied their possession of "animal energy."[52] His usage indicates that, for him, "energy" was a mixture of moral sincerity, an adventurous spirit, and an animal-like, rugged wilderness[53]—the "heroic" character that Mill believed to be disappearing with civilizational development. However, the term still lacked sufficient descriptive clarity. Kōsaka himself was willing to admit its definitional ambiguity, explaining that "what gives power to civilization is inherently elusive."[54]

This ambiguity, however, was not entirely his own; it resulted from his inheritance of the Kyoto school's argument. In the roundtable discussions examined in the next section, four Kyoto school scholars vigorously promoted *moralische Energie*. Kōsaka paraphrased this concept as "energy" (*katsuryoku*) and, with all its vagueness, placed it at the core of his own IR theory. Therefore tracing this conceptual lineage helps clarify how the Kyoto school's ideals fed into a postwar international political theory.

The Kyoto school's vision of international politics: pluralism and *moralische Energie*

Between 1941 and 1942, three roundtable discussions were organized by *Chūō kōron*, a renowned Japanese journal. The transcripts of these discussions were later published as a book entitled *The Standpoint of World History and Japan*. The participants included three philosophers—Kōyama Iwao, Nishitani Keiji, and Kōsaka Masaaki—alongside Suzuki Shigetaka, a researcher into Western history. Apart from Suzuki,[55] all participants were students of Nishida Kitarō. Despite Nishida's absence, all four of them accepted his convoluted conception of a legitimate international order: the "particular worlds, each based on a historical foundation, unite to form a world-ly world."[56] Although the terms "particular worlds" and "world-ly world" were conceptually complex, the underlying idea resonates with Amitav Acharya's recent notion of a "multiplex world," which he predicts will arrive following the decline of the liberal international order. He likens this projected order to a multiplex cinema where different films are shown in theatres of various sizes for a diverse range of audiences. In this model, the US-led liberal hegemonic order will be reduced to just one film of many being shown

KMC, 7: 517–52, at 530; Kōsaka Masataka, *Bunmei ga suibō suru toki* (The Time When Civilizations Decline) (1981), in *KMC*, 5: 255–508, at 342.

[51]Kōsaka, *Bunmei ga suibō suru toki*, 505 n. 3.

[52]Kōsaka Masataka, *Taikoku nihon no yowatari gaku: Kokusai masatsu o kangaeru* (How Japan as a Major Power Can Manage to Live in the World: Considering International Friction) (1996; first published 1993), in *KMC*, 3: 219–432, at 279.

[53]Kōsaka, *Koten gaikō no seijuku to hōkai*, 19.

[54]Kōsaka, *Bunmei ga suibō suru toki*, 505 n. 3.

[55]Suzuki attended a private workshop held at Nishida's residence. Suzuki Shigetaka, *Sekai no unmei to kokka no unmei* (The Fate of the World and the Fate of Nations) (Kyoto, 1949), 284–5.

[56]Nishida Kitarō, "The Principle of the New World Order," in "The Nishida Enigma: 'The Principle of the New World Order'," *Monumenta Nipponica* 51/1 (1996), 81–105, at 101. The translator, Arisaka, translated Nishida's *sekaiteki sekai* as "global world," which we have replaced with the more literal translation "world-ly world," as noted by Arisaka herself, in ibid., 101 n. 96.

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at the multiplex.[57] Kyoto school philosophers would argue that each theatre represents a particular world, while the overall multiplex constitutes the world-ly world.

This section focuses on the four Kyoto school debate participants and their worldview and the concept of *moralische Energie* behind it. The implications of their ideas for international politics were clear: the vindication of wider regionalism against Wilsonianism. Many political theorists on both the Axis and Allied sides argued for "Great Space" (or *Großraum*) against liberal internationalism. Having decided to support Nazism, Carl Schmitt articulated a theory of concrete order, thereby criticizing universalism—what he viewed as an Anglo-Saxon world order.[58] Both Walter Lippmann in the US and E. H. Carr in Britain dismissed universalism as an outdated ideal. Some Japanese readers found resonance in Carr's *Conditions of Peace*, which they believed justified Japan's Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere.[59] Carr's own regionalism was not too far removed from an established British vision of international relations. Even Hobson, a fierce critic of imperialism, wrote that "Christendom thus laid out in a few great federal Empires, each with a retinue of uncivilised dependencies, seems to many the most legitimate development of present tendencies, and one which would offer the best hope of permanent peace on an assured basis of inter-Imperialism."[60] The Kyoto school's worldview was one strand within this broader anti-Wilsonian discourse; it did not constitute a "non-Western" theory separated from or merely opposed to Western IR theory.

Although this point has been raised several times, it is worth reiterating the intertwined relationship between "The Standpoint of World History and Japan" and the Second Sino-Japanese War and the Asia-Pacific War, known as the Greater East Asia War at the time. The four participants in the aforementioned roundtable discussions viewed the Wilsonian international order, represented by nation-states and the League of Nations, as mired in outmoded egalitarian formalism. They considered Japan's gargantuan undertaking to radically reconfigure the status quo to be of "world-historical significance." From their own perspectives, they sought to steer the prolonged, devastating war toward a better outcome. They maintained regular, secret contact with the Navy Ministry's Research Section in an attempt to modify the ongoing conduct of the war, the colonial rules, and civilian and military administration. Their overarching goal was to find a rational justification for the war that could, at least in theory, persuade all countries involved rather than relying solely on dogmatic and mystical assertions.[61] Kōyama called it a "war of ideas"—a notion that Quentin Skinner later

[57] Amitav Acharya, *The End of the American World Order* (2014), 2nd edn (Cambridge, 2018), 9.

[58] Matthew Specter, *The Atlantic Realists: Empire and International Political Thought between Germany and the United States* (Stanford, 2022), Ch. 3.

[59] See Anwar Hussain Syed, *Walter Lippmann's Philosophy of International Politics* (Philadelphia, 1964), Ch. 5; Hitomi Yamanaka, "Two Regional Orders in the East and the West: E. H. Carr's 'New Europe' and the Japanese 'Greater East Asian Community'," in Ian Hall, ed., *Radicals and Reactionaries in Twentieth-Century International Thought* (New York, 2015), 171–89.

[60] J. A. Hobson, *Imperialism: A Study* (London, 1902), 351. See also Duncan Bell, *Dreamworlds of Race: Empire and the Utopian Destiny of Anglo-America* (Princeton, 2021), 320–21.

[61] Bret W. Davis, "The Kyoto School," in Edward N. Zalta and Uri Nodelman, eds., *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Winter 2023 edn, section 4.4, at https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2023/entries/kyoto-school (accessed 15 Sept. 2025.)

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characterized as "rhetorical redescription" and Robert Cox simply dubbed "theory."[62] In reality, however, their efforts ended up fueling the war as it unfolded. As Kōsaka Masataka put it (albeit in a different context), this was an instance of "ethically justifying unjust interests generat[ing] several times more harm than simply asserting those unjust interests."[63] Indeed, Harry Harootunian described it as "an elaborate justification of the war in Hegelian philosophic language."[64]

One of the most important sources of inspiration for the roundtable discussions was German historian Leopold von Ranke, whose historiography introduced the Kyoto school to a fruitful philosophy of history and concept of world history. The Kyoto school considered Ranke to be working toward the identification of a dynamically unfolding orientation within specific historical developments, rejecting both Kantian atemporal formalism and Hegelian external determination of history's purpose. The German historian called this orientation the "tendency," likening it to a river continually shaping and reshaping its course under natural conditions; in this orientation, Nishida saw parallels with his own concept of "absolutely contradictory self-identity,"[65] in that Ranke's "tendency" simultaneously captured both the "making" and the "being-made" aspects. Another impulse that Ranke brought to the Kyoto school was the notion of world history. While Nishitani greatly appreciated Ranke's achievement in presenting each national history within the notional framework of an integrated world history, he nevertheless felt that Ranke's "world" was still a European world rather than a truly global one.[66] The twentieth century witnessed the expansion of the world beyond the confines of Europe, marking a decisive departure from Eurocentric captivity. The historical "tendency" demonstrated the validity of deconstructing the Eurocentric worldview and pluralizing the world; thus a Rankean philosophy of history was conscripted to overcome the Rankean (European) world history.

The combination of recognizing the historical "tendency" and being able to realize the anticipated future constituted what the Kyoto school called *moralische Energie*, a term that was also derived from Ranke's work. Toward the end of his short essay "Great Powers," Ranke observed that beneath the turbulent world history lay an undefinable yet intuitive "spiritual, life-giving, creative force"—*moralische Energie*.[67] In "A Dialogue on Politics," Ranke had his spokesman, "Friedrich," confidently assert that if a state were to "rise to universal significance," it would need *moralische Energie* to compete with

[62]David Williams, ed., *The Philosophy of Japanese Wartime Resistance: A Reading, with Commentary, of the Complete Texts of the Kyoto School Discussions of "The Standpoint of World History and Japan"* (London, 2014), 279. Quentin Skinner, *From Humanism to Hobbes: Studies in Rhetoric and Politics* (Cambridge, 2018), 8; Robert Cox, "Forces, States and World Orders: Beyond International Relations Theory," *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 10/ 2 (1981), 126–55, at 128.

[63]Kōsaka, *Saishō Yoshida Shigeru*, 21.

[64]Harry Harootunian, *Overcome by Modernity: History, Culture and Commodity in Interwar Japan* (Princeton, 2000), 43.

[65]Leopold von Ranke, *The Theory and Practice of History*, ed. Georg G. Iggers (London, 2011), 22; Nishida Kitarō, "Chishiki no kyakkansei ni tsuite" (On the Objectivity of Knowledge) (1943), in Nishida, *Tetsugaku ronbun shū*, vol. 5 (Tokyo, 1944), 1–160, at 54.

[66]Nishitani Keiji, "Sekai shi no tetsugaku" (Philosophy of World History), in *Sekai shi no riron* (Tokyo, 1944), 1–42, at 32.

[67]Ranke, *The Theory and Practice*, 52.

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other states.[68] Ranke's utter conviction in this elusive concept was invoked by Nishida to dismiss Kantian moral formalism: "We ourselves have a unique duty in an irreplaceable particular time and place." This energy enables states to fulfill each unique duty, or, in his words, "the individualizing self-forming power of the world."[69]

However, it was the four roundtable participants who displayed remarkable enthusiasm for the term and arguably pushed it beyond what Nishida had initially anticipated.[70] Toward the end of the first roundtable discussion, after Kōyama had introduced *moralische Energie* as the real cause of France's defeat in 1940,[71] the other three began to instrumentalize the concept. Nishitani expressed admiration for it as "a very good term."[72] Kōsaka Masaaki, who had already drawn extensively from Ranke's account of this vibrant energy in *The Historical World*, declared that "the new world-historical center" should be "informed by principles that embody a new worldview and moral energy," adding that the "world-historical necessity itself" obliged Japan to discover such a principle.[73] Conversely, adherents of the existing "Anglo-Saxon world order" were labeled "anti-ethical" and "anti-historical," for they denied both the historical dynamic and *moralische Energie*.[74] Kōyama, in another context, described it as "a wild energy ready to deny and destroy."[75] This is why, as Suzuki passionately put it, "December 8 [the date of the attack on Pearl Harbor] was the day when I think that we, as a nation, felt the power of the *moralische Energy* we possess in a most vigorous and moving way."[76]

Although their *moralische Energy* was inspired by Ranke, it was also drawn from East Asian intellectual traditions. Scholars of Japanese intellectual history such as Sakamoto Takao and Takayama Daiki have noted that their version of it also entailed elements of the concept of "vital energy" (*qi*), which originated in ancient Chinese philosophy and later spread to Japan.[77] Originally referring to cloud vapor, *qi* came to indicate a minute element constituting heaven and earth.[78] According to David Wong, "*qi* constitutes not merely the somatic, bodily dynamics, but also the motivating

[68]Ibid., 65.

[69]Nishida, "Chishiki," 388.

[70]Christopher Goto-Jones, *Political Philosophy in Japan: Nishida, the Kyoto School, and Co-prosperity* (London, 2005), 113.

[71]Williams, *The Philosophy of Japanese Wartime Resistance*, 166.

[72]Ibid., 168.

[73]Kōsaka Masaaki, *Rekishiteki sekai* (The Historical World) (1937), in *Kōsaka Masaaki chosaku shū*, vol. 1 (Tokyo, 1964), 5–268, at 155–57; Williams, *The Philosophy of Japanese Wartime Resistance*, 178.

[74]Williams, *The Philosophy of Japanese Wartime Resistance*, 232.

[75]Kōyama Iwao, *Nihon no kadai to sekaishi* (The Problems That Japan Has to Solve and World History) (Tokyo, 1943), 266.

[76]Williams, *The Philosophy of Japanese Wartime Resistance*, 185. On the US side, this is 7 December.

[77]Sakamoto Takao, *Nihon wa mizukara no raireki o katari uru ka* (Can Japan Tell Its Own History?) (Tokyo, 1994), 231–2; Takayama Daiki, "'Shin ki' ron e: Mito gakuha to Koga Tōan o tegakari ni" (Toward the "Galvanizing *Qi*" Theory: Using the Mito School and Koga Tōan as Clues), *Seiji shisō kenkyū* 19 (2019), 7–36, at 28.

[78]Yueqing Wang, Qinggang Bao, and Guoxing Guan, "Vital Energy (*Qi*)," in Wang, Bao, and Guan, *History of Chinese Philosophy Through Its Key Terms*, trans. Shuchen Xiang (Singapore, 2020), 177.

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force of thoughts, emotions, and intentions of the individual."[79] In late nineteenth-century Japan, particularly among the advocates of the Freedom and People's Rights Movement, *qi* represented a transformative force capable of altering the status quo; galvanizing this dynamic power would enable people to overthrow domestic autocracy and repel foreign pressure.[80] Yet *qi* was perceived as anything but parochial. Nakae Chōmin, a leading Meiji-era democrat, equated Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *liberté morale* with Mencius' "vast and flowing energy (*qi*)."[81] One of his disciples, the prominent socialist Kōtoku Shūsui, implicitly believed that cultivating *qi* within each individual could shape global trends and catalyze revolution.[82]

Alongside parliamentary debates and educational advancements, war was regarded a means of galvanizing this energy. In 1876, a newspaper editorial titled "War Is of Great Benefit to the Nation" asserted that war served to boost national *qi*.[83] When faced with the imminent Russo-Japanese War, prominent journalist Kuroiwa Ruikō abandoned his former anti-war stance, advocating participation in the conflict from the perspective of "energy-ism" (*Seiryoku shugi*/*Energisum*). "Energy," he asserted, constituted everything in the world, from physical objects to human thought. Humans themselves were simply masses of energy, "constantly driven by the urge [*qi*] to act"; it was the inevitable collision of these energies that resulted in war and, in turn, made human progress possible.[84] Kuroiwa believed in the universality of his own "energy-ism," which "arises evidently from the fundamental nature of matter."[85] In the West, philosophers like Eduard von Hartmann, T. H. Green, and J. H. Muirhead had already articulated this idea; in the East, it manifested as the concept of "the unity of heaven and humanity."[86] Thus, when the Kyoto school invoked "moral energy," behind it stood a tradition—alongside Ranke—that underscored wartime *qi* or vital energy.

The "new world order" that Japan claimed to be creating through its moral energy was not a hegemonic empire dominated by Japan but rather a pluralistic world in which several *Großräume* (or geopolitically and culturally integrated areas) would coexist.[87] Ranke concluded his "Great Powers" with an ode to pluralism: "Out of separation and independent development will emerge true harmony." Ranke, not unlike Michael Oakeshott, used the analogy of conversation to reject imperial domination, instead affirming the diversity of nations within a single world.[88] Kōyama dismissed the existing "universal world" as an overextended projection of the specifically European world. Only when Europe was reduced to its proper place as a particular world—and when

[79]David Wong, "Mind (Heart–Mind) in Chinese Philosophy," in Zalta and Nodelman, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Winter 2023 edn.

[80]Takayama, "'Shin ki' ron e," 8.

[81]Watanabe Hiroshi, *A History of Japanese Political Thought, 1600–1901* (2010), trans. David Noble (Tokyo, 2012), 428–29.

[82]Sakamoto Takao, *Shijō, dōtoku, chitsujo* (Market, Morality, and Order) (1991) (Tokyo, 2007), 273–76.

[83]Takayama, "'Shin ki' ron e," 8.

[84]Kuroiwa Ruikō, *Seiryoku shugi (Energisum)* (Energy-ism) (1904), 3rd edn (Tokyo, 1912), 13.

[85]Kuroiwa, *Seiryoku shugi*, 12.

[86]Ibid., 99, 107–8.

[87]Sakamoto, *Nihon wa mizukara no raireki o katari uru ka*, 207–13.

[88]Ranke, *The Theory and Practice*, 53.

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the "universal world" was filled with a non-Eurocentric philosophy—would the universal be truly universal.[89] Japan's wartime slogan—"Let every nation take its proper place"—paraphrased this idea.[90] As Christopher Goto-Jones noted, for these participants, "Japan, as the ultimate *construction* of the present, and thus the *vanguard of the future*, should *strive* to de-centre Europe."[91] However, while this could be seen as a plea for a pluralistic world against Western hegemony, it was also a blatant justification to compel Asian countries to participate in Japan's alleged world-historical mission—to accept Japanese "direction." Regarding other nations like China resisting this imposed role, the roundtable participants blamed them for lacking *moralische Energie* and failing to grasp the movement of world history.[92]

Although the roundtable participants advocated for the construction of a pluralistic world, believing it to be Japan's epochal mission, they identified precedents for such political structures and ideals in the past. Minutes from the secret meetings revealed that they, along with other intellectuals around them, drew an analogy between the federal structure of the late Roman Empire and the conception of the Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere. They went so far as to suggest that the federal system of the Soviet Union could serve as a model. At another meeting, they struggled to identify an overarching ideal that would underpin the distinctiveness of their co-prosperity sphere against the British Commonwealth.[93] However, as Sakamoto suggested, the US might have provoked the most ambivalent feelings.[94] Kōyama wrote elsewhere that, unlike European countries, the US possessed "a structure like a single world."[95] Suzuki said that the US could be "better understood as a society rather than as a state," cautioning against Japanese intellectuals looking down on it. Kōsaka retorted by explaining that he had "tried to be very careful not to do so," as he liked "Americans such as [William] James very much." Nevertheless, he agreed with Suzuki regarding the distinctiveness of US history, implying that it had not chosen the "imperialist path" prior to acquiring the Philippines. If this is the case, however, might this federal nation, rather than Japan, be better suited as the forerunner of a pluralistic world? This disturbing implication of the first roundtable, held roughly two weeks prior to the attack on Pearl Harbor, was never fully explored. As we will see in the next section, it was not the participants who explored this potential, but rather an intellectual of the next generation: Kōsaka Masataka.

When Kōsaka Masaaki and three other participants were reshaping Ranke's concepts of world history, pluralism, and *moralische Energie* to legitimize Japan's supposedly epoch-making operation, his son Masataka had yet to even reach his teen

[89]Kōyama Iwao, *Sekaishi no tetsugaku* (Philosophy of World History) (1942) (Tokyo, 2001), 71–73, 87–90, 443–8.

[90]Williams, *The Philosophy of Japanese Wartime Resistance*, 222.

[91]Goto-Jones, *Political Philosophy in Japan*, 115, original emphasis.

[92]Williams, *The Philosophy of Japanese Wartime Resistance*, 199, 203.

[93]Ōhashi Ryōsuke, *Kyoto gakuha to nihon kaigun: Shin shiryō "Ōshima memo" o megutte* (The Kyoto School and the Imperial Japanese Navy: On the New Historical Document "Ōshima Memo") (Kyoto, 2001), 187, 196.

[94]Sakamoto Takao, *Nihon wa mizukara no raireki o katari uru ka*, 239–40.

[95]Williams, *The Philosophy of Japanese Wartime Resistance*, 176–7; Kōyama, *Sekaishi no tetsugaku*, 367.

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years. Deeply shaken by Japan's crushing defeat in the war, as discussed in the previous section, the boy resolved to study international politics, sometimes teasing his father for having defended a war he believed had been doomed from the outset.[96] Upon his father's death, however, the international political theorist wrote in a letter to his younger brother that "The Standpoint of World History and Japan" was among his father's greatest achievements, praising him for providing spiritual and moral support to young students departing for the front.[97] Toward the end of his life, he grew worried about the dissipation of Japan's "moral power," the fatal symptom of a declining nation.[98] Here, one can trace a conceptual genealogy from father to son—from *moralische Energie* to "energy." Still, the generational shift posed a significant challenge: in postwar Japan, which embraced pacifism as defined by Article 9 of its Constitution, how could wartime moral energy be reconceived? The answer that this young international theorist proposed was "pluralism," a theme already explored by his father and the three other roundtable participants.

"The moral equivalent of war": the fate of *moralische Energie* in postwar Japan

On the opposite side of the Pacific, approximately one year before the wartime collaboration in which the four Kyoto school scholars instrumentalized Nishida's philosophical vocabulary to construct the vision of the "multiplex world," economists at the Council on Foreign Relations were discussing the scale of the American "Grand Area." In the wake of Nazi Germany's astonishing military successes, especially against France, they considered how large the US sphere of influence would need to be to counterbalance Germany's bargaining power, assuming German hegemony over Europe and most of the Middle East and North Africa. Ultimately, they concluded that it would need to encompass the entire world outside the Soviet Union and the projected spheres of influence of Nazi Germany.[99] The "Grand Area" expanded further in the following year, and ceased to be a purely economic concept. As early as 2 September 1940, Assistant Secretary of State Adolf Berle wrote in his diary that, after the war, "the United States would emerge with an imperial power greater than the world had ever seen."[100] The combination of its ambitious economic vision and military supremacy set postwar America fundamentally apart from earlier empires. As argued by John Ikenberry, America's imperium was not exercised to create new exclusive territories or "particular worlds" but rather to destroy them and enforce the Westphalian system, thereby constructing a liberal international order.[101] In this way, the US became a "liberal

[96]Kōsaka Setsuzō, *Shōwa no shukumei*, 5.

[97]Ibid., 4–5.

[98]Kōsaka Masataka, "Nihon no kiken: Kokka moraru no hōkai ni tsuite" (Dangers in Japan: On the Collapse of National Morality) (1991), in *KMC*, 8: 517–37, 530.

[99]Stephen Wertheim, *Tomorrow, the World: The Birth of U.S. Global Supremacy* (Cambridge, MA, 2020), 64–9, 121–2.

[100]Cited in ibid., 76.

[101]John Ikenberry, *A World Safe for Democracy: Liberal Internationalism and the Crises of Global Order* (New Haven: 2020), 235.

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Leviathan,"[102] or perhaps a "Wilsonian empire" that sought to dismantle traditional empires.

This "liberal Leviathan" began overhauling the Empire of Japan following its defeat in the Asia-Pacific War. "It was Japan," Kenneth Pyle noted, where "this imperial reality was most clearly on display."[103] Douglas MacArthur, supreme commander for the Allied Powers (GHQ/SCAP), was well aware of this, having received explicit instructions from the US: "Our relations with Japan do not rest on a contractual basis, but on an unconditional surrender … your authority is supreme."[104] Adopting democratization and demilitarization as the US occupation policy, MacArthur and his staff embarked on far-reaching reforms, including constitutional, social, and economic transformations, sometimes with the cooperation of the Japanese government and sometimes despite its resistance. These measures went far beyond the institutional level. Those deemed to have promoted past "militarization" or to be likely to obstruct future "democratization" were purged from teaching positions, public offices, and private companies, with the number of people ultimately purged reaching approximately 220,000.[105] The occupation policy later shifted, however, seeking to turn Japan into a bulwark against communism, and prioritized economic recovery over "democratization," resulting in the modification or effective withdrawal of many policies implemented early in the occupation. One of Japan's major newspapers, the *Yomiuri Shimbun*, dubbed this shift the "reverse course," introducing a new term to Japanese historiography.[106] The most visible manifestation of this turn was the lifting of purges. By the time the San Francisco Peace Treaty took effect in 1952, most of those affected had already been allowed to return to public activities.[107]

Amid this broad tide of reforms were the four members of the Kyoto school. Although they were purged after the war, they continued to write; once the ban was lifted, Nishitani returned to Kyoto University, while the other three secured new academic positions. Despite the rupture of total war defeat, their vision of overcoming the European world remained intact. They began citing Toynbee, who urged Western readers to accept the "dwarfing of Europe,"[108] as a convenient smokescreen for articulating their wartime ideal of a new world order. No wonder, then, that they did not abandon *moralische Energie* either. For instance, while Kōyama had drawn parallels between energy and *raison d'état* at the roundtables, Suzuki developed this argument further after the war, equating this energy with "national interest" (as one of the first translators of Morgenthau).[109] He claimed that Japan had chosen to wage war imprudently

[102]John Ikenberry, *Liberal Leviathan: The Origins, Crisis, and Transformation of the American World Order* (Princeton, 2012), 10.

[103]Kenneth B. Pyle, *Japan in the American Century* (Cambridge, MA, 2018), 110.

[104]"Memorandum for the President, Subject: Authority of the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers," available at www.ndl.go.jp/constitution/e/shiryo/01/023shoshi.html (accessed 15 Sept. 2025).

[105]Fukunaga Fumio, *The Occupation of Japan 1945–1952: Tokyo, Washington, and Okinawa* (2014), trans. Japan Institute of International Affairs (Tokyo, 2021), 158.

[106]Ibid., 257, 357.

[107]Dower, *Empire and Aftermath*, 333.

[108]See Toynbee, *Civilization on Trial*, Ch. 6.

[109]Williams, *The Philosophy of Japanese Wartime Resistance*, 168; Suzuki Shigetaka, *Sekaishi ni okeru gendai* (The Modern Age in World History) (Tokyo, 1990), 100, 113.

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because the military had monopolized judgments of *raison d'ĕtat*, preventing political leaders from reasonably determining what constituted vital national interests.[110] This functioned as a form of self-justification; if a lack of *moralische Energie*—now interpreted as national interest—had culminated in defeat, then surely his own efforts to boost it must have been correct. Yet he could never find a way to restore that moral power amid postwar depletion, a "symptom of a nation's decline, more pernicious than defeat itself."[111]

The Kyoto school members, Suzuki included, were thus confronted with William James's question of the "moral equivalent of war." James argued that successful pacifism must address how to realize the "military ideals of hardihood and discipline" in peacetime.[112] This essay served as a catalyst for Kōsaka Masaaki's understanding of the core of the postwar problem: "Now that we have renounced war, what we need to argue is not how to rearm, but how to avoid the psychological corruption of society."[113] Kōsaka sought to maintain "the higher ranges of men's spiritual energy" (a phrase he borrowed from James[114]) through education and pedagogy. During the war, he had argued that nations with *moralische Energie* could identify a morality within the historical tendency and develop it to transcend the status quo. He later replaced this philosophy of history with an education-oriented one, believing that the mission of pedagogy—as well as his personal mission—was to create individuals capable of grasping such a morality.[115] He became involved with educational policy and administration, serving as chairman of the council that issued the report on "desirable human beings." Due to its content and his own past, however, the report faced significant criticism for its perceived oppressive and reactionary tenor.[116]

His son Masataka was likewise convinced of the necessity of "men's spiritual energy," regarding its depletion as a crisis for "Japanese civilization." According to him, his father's achievements included not only inspiring students through wartime roundtable discussions but also submitting "the desirable human beings" report, which raised fundamental questions about how people ought to live.[117] The period in which his father contributed to the drafting of the report coincided with the publication of his first essay on Yoshida Shigeru discussed above. Near the end, he asked, almost in a soliloquy, "Do we not have a spiritual vacuum? Indeed, our postwar pursuit of new values has already faltered. In other words, defeat in total war is not easily overcome by diplomatic victory."[118] As Pyle wrote, Kōsaka "admitted that the greatest challenge of

[110]Suzuki, *Sekaishi ni okeru gendai*, 154–8.

[111]Suzuki, *Sekai no unmei*, 19.

[112]James, "The Moral Equivalent of War," 171.

[113]Kōsaka Masaaki, *Kitaru beki jidai no tameni: Kibō to hansei* (For the Coming Age: Hopes and Reflections) (Tokyo, 1952), 17.

[114]James, "The Moral Equivalent of War," 173.

[115]Yamada Mayumi, *Kyōto gakuha no kyōiku shisō* (The Educational Philosophy of the Kyoto School) (Tokyo, 2022), 84.

[116]Ibid., 26–32.

[117]Kōsaka Setsuzō, *Shōwa no shukumei*, 4–5.

[118]Kōsaka, *Saishō Yoshida Shigeru*, 70.

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the Yoshida strategy was maintaining national morale."[119] Yoshida's policies had made Japan wealthy and peaceful, ushering in a "boring era." While peace itself was desirable, the loss of opportunities for people to exhibit wartime virtues—"loyalty, unity, perseverance, heroism, conscience, education, inventiveness, thrift, wealth, physical strength, and energy"—was, in his view, deeply troubling. He then referred to James's "moral equivalents of war," arguing that, without them, any serious consideration of "values more important than life" would be lost.[120] He clearly knew James well; when his father dictated the manuscript for *The Philosophy of Pragmatism*, Masataka (a high-school student at the time) transcribed it.[121]

Faced with postwar pacifism, Masataka—in contrast to his father, who sought a "moral equivalent of war" in education and pedagogy—turned instead to the construction of a "pluralist" system that had been emphasized in the wartime roundtable discussions. In his view, "energy" was not sustained solely by individual effort; it was sustained by pluralistic power configurations and social structures. This systemic focus gave him a consistent perspective on politics and an acute sense of the confrontation between pluralism and monism that permeated his theory of politics and civilization. Addressing idealists who eschewed power politics and confrontation, he insisted, "let us acknowledge that it [confrontation] gives energy to people and brings good to society, and let us take some pleasure in it!"[122] The dialogue he envisioned with the "idealist" was thus based on what William Connolly called "agonistic respect."[123] This conviction was underpinned by the fear of the "tyranny of the majority" in the tradition of Mill and Alexis de Tocqueville,[124] and by a distinctly Machiavellian celebration of conflict. "Read his *Discorsi*," he said, "the theme of which was that Rome developed precisely because of the conflict between patricians and plebeians."[125]

The dialectic of pluralism and energy led him to both conservative and progressive arguments. On the one hand, it served as a warning against monistic political visions, ranging from socialism to the welfare state. Alongside Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* and George Orwell's *1984*, Kōsaka perceived the loathsome power that dominated the inner mind in the Houyhnhnms of *Gulliver's Travels*. What made him shudder was their denial of power and conflict, which epitomized a form of totalitarian perfection in which neither the animal energy nor the transformative development it fostered could exist.[126] For similar reasons, he was a staunch opponent of the welfare

[119]Pyle, *Japan in the American Century*, 248.

[120]Kōsaka Masataka, *Seiji teki shikō no fukken* (Revival of Political Thinking) (1972), in *KMC*, 1: 211–453, at 221.

[121]Kōsaka Masaaki, *Kōsaka Masaaki chosaku shū*, vol. 4 (Tokyo, 1964), 465.

[122]Kōsaka, *Seiji teki shikō,* 392.

[123]William Connolly, *Pluralism* (Durham, NC, 2005), 123.

[124]Kōsaka, *Seiji teki shikō*, 385.

[125]Ibid., 415.

[126]Kōsaka Masataka, *Kindai bunmei e no hangyaku: Garivā ryokōki kara 21 seiki o yomu* (Rebellion against the Modern Civilization: Reading the Twenty-First Century from the Perspective of *Gulliver's Travels*) (1983), in *KMC*, 5: 509–660, at 650.

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state. The postwar quarter-century had seen "a decline in energy due to growing affluence and an excessive welfare state" in the developed world.[127] On the other hand, the same conviction enabled him to anticipate a progressive agenda on ecological issues. The spectacle of the technological civilization reshaping the Tasmanian environment, he suggested, demonstrated the implicit affinity between monistic politics and the systematic remaking of nature.[128] Kōsaka informed Prime Minister Satō Eisaku that the government must swiftly address the issue of pollution, and his advice contributed to the eventual establishment of the Environment Agency in 1971.[129] A desirable alternative to monistic political vision lay in the pluralistic "patchwork" politics implied by Bernard Crick's argument in *In Defense of Politics* and Oakeshott's notion of "practical knowledge."[130]

Belief in pluralism led Kōsaka to defend the balance of power as a bulwark against imperialism in international politics.[131] He insisted that the balance of power in modern Europe was not simply a de facto policy but a norm to be realized. The idea of a universal empire was anathema to Montesquieu, Hume, and Kant.[132] While an efficient empire could achieve peace, the balance of power would guarantee diversity: "Diversity was a source of energy, a source of creativity," and "diversity, competition, energy, and freedom were inextricably linked."[133] Recognition of pluralism was widespread during the age of classical diplomacy, and its subsequent decline undermined the ideal of the European concert. Even as nuclear weapons diminished traditional balance-of-power politics, a "world-state" remained undesirable. This stood in contrast to classical realists such as Niebuhr and Morgenthau, who recognized the moral value of a world-state while dismissing its immediate feasibility. After the Soviet Union completed its nuclear armament, however, they took this idea more seriously.[134] As Craig Campbell says, for them, "the prospect of thermonuclear war has caused the utopian and realistic approaches to merge."[135] This line of reasoning formed the basis for Japanese "idealists" who advocated for Japan's neutrality during the Cold War.[136] Yet Kōsaka remained unmoved. The idea of a world-state itself was morally unacceptable.

For the pluralist international order to be sustained, a country worthy of leadership must carefully oversee its preservation. In the post-World War II world, Kōsaka argued, the only plausible candidate was the US. Composed of "a great variety of races," the US

[127]Kōsaka Masataka, *Yutakasa no shiren* (Affluence as an Ordeal) (1979), in *KMC*, 2: 7–158, at 96.

[128]Umehara Takeshi and Kōsaka Masataka, "Arashi no naka no bunmei ron" (The Civilization Argument in a Stormy Situation), *Shinjōken* (The Sentiment Sphere), April 1970, 34–5.

[129]Iokibe, "Kōsaka Masataka," 7.

[130]Kōsaka, *Seiji teki shikō*, 453.

[131]Hosoya Yūichi, *Kokusai Chitsujo* (International Order), (Tokyo, 2012), 45–46.

[132]Kōsaka, *Koten gaikō no seijuku to hōkai*, 12–17.

[133]Ibid., 20.

[134]William Scheurman, *The Realist Case for Global Reform* (Cambridge, 2011) 52–3, 64–5.

[135]Craig Campbell, *Glimmer of a New Leviathan: Total War in the Realism of Niebuhr, Morgenthau, and Waltz* (New York, 2003), 109.

[136]Maruyama Masao once wrote, "An atomic war teaches one paradoxical truth: to be most realistic, one must be idealistic." Cited in Oguma Eiji, "'Liberal' and Pacifism in Postwar Japan: Their Given Conditions and Historical Background," *Discuss Japan*, 27 March 2024, first published in Japanese, in *Sekai*, Feb. 2024, available at www.japanpolicyforum.jp/politics/pt20240327134805141 82.html (accessed 15 Sept. 2025).

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possessed the "intrinsic internationalism" that gave it "a more universal character than any other nation." Multinational companies in the US, with their diverse workforces, offered a descriptive representation of the status of the US in world politics. As noted earlier, the Kyoto school may have held a somewhat similar view. If so, the pluralistic world that Japan had once sought to realize was, ironically enough, realized by the US. Kōsaka was particularly impressed by the American people's inherent diversity and willingness to discuss conflicting opinions: "The most remarkable aspect of the process from the Gulf Crisis to the Gulf War was that people openly voiced questions and criticisms of President Bush's policy."[137] He approvingly cited Joseph S. Nye's 1990 book *Bound to Lead*, which concluded that the US would "remain the leading power," since it possessed superior "co-optive power."[138] According to Nye, the prevailing view in Japan was that the country "should not aspire to replace the United States but should work closely with it as a 'vice-president' in the international system."[139] Kōsaka likely found this persuasive. Thus, in his argument, Acharya's multiplex worldview converged with Ikenberry's US-led liberal international order. Using Kyoto school terminology, since the US itself was close to a "world-ly world," other countries and civilizations (including Japan) could have stable "particular worlds."

Although Japan developed economically within this international order, Kōsaka did not allow himself to indulge in optimistic predictions about his country. In 1970, he noted that "no country in history has ever had such enormous economic power and such limited military power as Japan."[140] But soon he came to recognize historical precedents such as Venice, the Netherlands, and Carthage, drawing comparisons between Japan and these flourishing predecessors. This made a profound dilemma apparent: while maritime and commercial nations require adventurous energy, their very economic success causes them to lose it. Trade requires rationality, yet it also depends on passionate, adventurous individuals.[141] Britain's grandeur arose from the combination of the "non-heroic" elite and the "heroic" adventurous merchant, epitomized by Queen Elizabeth and Sir Francis Drake; hence his remark that "Britain was a maritime nation, but Japan was an island nation."[142] Therefore, if Japan were to lose its adventurous spirit through commerce and trade, it would face inevitable decline.

The vicissitudes of Venice and the Netherlands revealed the decisive importance of international circumstances and moral factors in the prosperity of maritime civilizations. A trading nation or civilization would inherently be vulnerable due to its inherent reliance on "others." Its success depended not only on its own domestic politics but also on those of other states or empires. The fate of Venice, for example, was shaken by the internal politics of the Ottoman Empire.[143] Preeminent trading nations could benefit other countries by pursuing "enlightened self-interest." Nevertheless,

[137]Kōsaka Masataka, *Nihon sonbō no toki* (The Time When Japan Faces the Danger of Survival) (1992), in *KMC*, 3: 7–218, at 68–9.

[138]Joseph S. Nye, *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power* (New York, 1990), 5.

[139]Ibid., 241.

[140]Kōsaka, *Seiji teki shikō*, 280.

[141]Kōsaka, *Kaiyō kokka nihon no kōsō*, 168–9.

[142]Ibid., 161–2, 165.

[143]Kōsaka, *Bunmei ga suibō suru toki*, 384.

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they would invite contempt for profiting from an international order maintained by more powerful states. Japan was once dismissively dubbed an "economic animal," in part due to its excessively egoistic conduct. Still, it confirmed the pattern that trading nations were frowned upon.[144] Yet trading nations, aware of this antipathy, have no choice but to continue their vocation—a self-deceptive practice that would give rise to domestic conflict and "a diminution of energy." Reliance on the existing commercial order and the manipulation of various principles would eventually erode their identity, cause "moral confusion," and, ultimately, debilitate their adventurous spirit.[145] Kōsaka approvingly quoted Plato's warning about the moral corruption engendered by commercial activity.[146]

Within this almost Pocockian dialectic of "virtue" and "commerce,"[147] Kōsaka sensed a threat to Japan's moral and cultural achievement. As early as the 1970s, he admired the Netherlands and Venice because, despite their period of decline, they left great artists and universities behind. He feared that Japan would follow a different path, leaving no such moral or cultural legacies.[148] From the 1980s onward, this worry hardened into a conviction that eventually took the form of a melancholic prediction in his "A Memo of 2013." In the future, he projected, Japan would embody the fully realized Saint-Simonian industrial civilization. Japanese people would pursue rational yet selfish interests, sidelining "dreams and spiritedness" and diminishing the public spirit in a way that stifles new and challenging undertakings. Simultaneously, a quarter of the world would be engulfed in civil wars, leading to the spread of protectionist policies and, in turn, the decline of Japanese civilization.[149] In this bleak vision, Japan's cultural contribution to the world was missing. Toward the end of his life, he increasingly drew parallels between the fates of Carthage and Japan.[150] The lesson Kōsaka derived from the ancient trading nation was that "an entity like Carthage cannot attain true success, but fails miserably."[151]

The chance to resist this cold, harsh fate was slipping away, Kōsaka felt, amid the domestic discourse surrounding Japan's participation in the 1991 Gulf War. Japan developed as a trading nation within the order established by the liberal Leviathan. He was convinced that American political culture underpinned this order and doubted that it could persist without the US. As long as Japan benefited from this hegemony, it had sufficient reason to support it. If ever there was an opportunity for Japan to transition from a country dependent on the liberal international order to a voluntary

[144]Kōsaka Masataka, "Tsūshō kokka nihon no unmei" (The Fate of Japan as a Trading Nation) (1975), in *KMC*, 2: 367–421, at 414–16.

[145]Kōsaka, "Tsūshō kokka nihon no unmei," 420.

[146]Kōsaka, *Bunmei ga suibō suru toki*, 504. See Plato, *Laws*, trans. Tom Griffith, ed. Malcolm Schofield (Cambridge, 2016), 704a.

[147]J. G. A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition* (Princeton, 1975), 501–2

[148]For the Netherlands see Komatsu Sakyō, Kōsaka Masataka, and Yamazaki Masakazu, "Kaiyō kokka wa suibō suru (taidan)" (Maritime Civilizations Will Decline (Dialogue)), *Shokun!*, July 1975, 50–63, at 56; for Venice see Kōsaka, *Bunmei ga suibō suru toki*, 388–9, 504–5.

[149]Kōsaka Masataka, "2013 nen no aru memo" (A Memo of 2013), *Shinchō 45* 7/5 (1988), 12–17.

[150]Kōsaka Setsuzō, *Shōwa no unmei*, 126.

[151]Kōsaka, "Kaisetsu," 311.

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supporter—from merely enjoying a "particular world" to participating in building a "world-ly world"—it was at the moment of the Gulf War. But neither the government nor the public were seriously debating participation in the Gulf War, invoking pacifism as defined by the country's Constitution.[152] Japan, in contrast to the US, did not determine its national policy through serious debate. In the 1960s, as noted earlier, he had once argued that "idealism" and pacifism brought pluralism and energy to public debate. Now, however, he claimed that they were weakening active debate and diminishing the nation's "moral force."[153] The war would not lead to a direct military crisis for Japan, but the stagnant debate revealed the country's fatal flaw: "A country does not perish by losing a war, but by internal corruption … the richer the people, the deeper their corruption."[154] This anger steeped in despair was likely prompted by his realization that he had failed to uphold the "moral equivalence of war."

Conclusion

Around 1990, Shiono Nanami—a historical novelist whom Kōsaka greatly admired—had a private conversation with him about civilization.

SHIONO: What will Japan be like?
KŌSAKA: I hope it will be like the Byzantine Empire, as, at least, that country survived long enough.
SHIONO: But it didn't create anything.
KŌSAKA: If we could live longer, we should bear with it. The empire even prevented the invasion of the barbarians.
SHIONO: The reason the East [i.e. the Eastern Roman Empire] could, and the West failed to, prevent the invasion was that the Byzantine defense system worked. Will Japan's defense system, given the situation today, be able to work?
KŌSAKA: That, too, will improve with time.[155]

This article has demonstrated that Kōsaka's remark here was far from being a joke. He had a lifelong passion for civilizational inquiry that led him to view international politics through the lenses of "pluralism" and "energy," ideas he shared with his father and the Kyoto school. As wartime and postwar contexts shifted, the political implications of their worldview reversed—from anti-Anglo-Saxon to pro-American liberal hegemony. Within this new world order, Japan faced a constant threat of declining energy posed by prosperity and the inescapable dependence inherent in maritime civilization. In this conversation with Shiono, he appeared to have abandoned hope for the kind of creativity that the Netherlands and Venice had once exhibited. Even worse, he was dissatisfied with the sluggish public discourse following the Gulf War. His anger

[152]Hattori, *Kōsaka Masataka*, 305–9.

[153]Kōsaka Masataka, "Nihon no kiken," 530.

[154]Kōsaka Masataka, "Wangan sensō de rotei sareta kiki" (Crisis Uncovered by the Gulf War), *Seiron*, May 1991, 318, 319.

[155]Shiono Nanami, "Kōsaka-san wa, naze suibō o ronjita no ka" (Why Did Kōsaka-san Discuss Declines and Falls?) (1999), in *KMC*, 5: 723–33, at 733.

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saturated with despair stemmed from his professional conviction as an international political theorist, sparked by his youthful resolution: "I will study hard and make Japan truly strong and great in everything." Thus Japan's domestic response to the Gulf War represented, for him, a failure both as an international political scientist and as the culmination of a two-generation quest for the "moral equivalent of war."

This two-generation intellectual thread offers a perspective that views the two opposing conceptions of global order—the liberal international order and the multiplex world order—as two variations within a single narrative. As already illustrated, the Kyoto school's multiplex worldview and Kōsaka Masataka's liberal international order stemmed from different interpretations of pluralism and energy across different contexts. This narrative suggests that both conceptions are rooted in a shared commitment to pluralism. Indeed, viewed from this angle, the ideological differences between Acharya and Ikenberry cease to appear as a simple opposition. Acharya sharply criticizes the liberal international order, arguing that, far from embodying such ideals, it was "created and dominated by the US and centered around Western interests, values, and institutions."[156] Yet even as he criticizes America's imposition of that order, he affirms its underlying ideals, noting that ASEAN's founders were "recognizing the cultural diversity of their members and fully respecting their sovereignty as nation-states" and that a hierarchical order "is incompatible with Southeast Asia's emphasis on sovereignty and equality."[157] These principles, when expanded globally, closely resemble the premise of the liberal international order for which Ikenberry advocates. This is not to say that there is no conflict; many conceptions clash over the concept of "justice." Rather, it is to say that, recalling how the father and son diverged from a shared foundation, it becomes possible to view these two seemingly incompatible visions as variations of a single concept, namely pluralism.

Moreover, this genealogy clarifies the contributions that intellectual history can make to ongoing debates about non-Western or global IR. Coinciding with intellectual historians' efforts to globalize the history of ideas, IR theorists have called for the "globalization" and "pluralization" of the field,[158] often framing this trend through the metaphor of "dialogue." Steve Smith concluded his International Studies Association presidential address after 9/11 by noting that international-studies researchers have been "virtually never listening out for, nor recognizing, voices or worlds other than our own until they occasionally force us into silence."[159] Although this compelling metaphor effectively captures the aims of global IR, precisely because it is so appealing, its methodological implications often remain vague. As Yong-Soo Eun observes, "those who make a plea for active dialogue and engagement do not generally elaborate on how we could embark on this project."[160] Taken together, the foregoing discussion suggests

[156]Acharya, *The End of the American World Order*, 158.

[157]Amitav Acharya, *From Southeast Asia to Indo-Pacific: Culture, Identity, and the Return to Geopolitics* (London, 2025), 65, 142.

[158]Bell, "International Relations and Intellectual History," 102–3.

[159]Steve Smith, "Singing our World into Existence: International Relations Theory and September 11," *International Studies Quarterly* 48 (2004), 499–515, at 515.

[160]Yong-Soo Eun, *What Is at Stake in Building "Non-Western" International Relations Theory* (London, 2018), 14.

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that a clear but often overlooked aspect of non-Western IR—and of "dialogue" itself—is that it is far from being a recent phenomenon. Attempts by the Kyoto school and Kōsaka Masataka constitute illustrative examples of such dialogue, as is likely true of modern non-Western IR more broadly. Non-Western IR thinkers engaged in transcultural dialogue long before its relevance was accentuated by scholars. Therefore tracing the attempts of past IR thinkers is a promising path toward figuring out how best to engage in dialogue. Intellectual history can play a crucial role in uncovering and articulating these accumulated practices.

The "dialogue" highlighted in this article showcases the risks of relying on an oversimplified Western/non-Western framework when attempting to broaden the scope of global IR. Like other dichotomies, this framework has a certain heuristic value; as Robbie Shilliam notes, its use is "perilous but unavoidable" (indeed, we have employed it here).[161] However, criticism of "Western-centrism" can itself slip into ethnocentrism or even the unintentional reinforcement of Western-centrism.[162] This article has shown that the categorical application of this dichotomy not only contradicts the ideal of global IR but even more directly distorts that which is typically considered non-Western IR. The Kyoto school and Kōsaka Masataka developed their ideas through sustained dialogue with Western theorists. The concept of *moralische Energie* originated with the German historian Ranke and the Chinese concept of *qi*. Kōsaka adopted this concept but integrated insights from figures like Niccolò Machiavelli and William James. When employing the label "non-Western," it is therefore crucial not to obscure the Western interlocutors with whom "non-Western" thinkers engaged in dialogue.

Treating past IR thinkers as participants in the century-long dialogue between Western and non-Western IR (a dichotomy to which we must, once again, reluctantly return) or as a *topos* for said dialogue will likely encourage those who are not necessarily interested in non-Western IR or non-Western intellectual history per se to broaden their horizons. Citing examples like Thucydides and Immanuel Kant, Claire Vergerio emphasized the importance of how "great thinkers" have been received throughout the history of IR theory while lamenting that "the reception of great thinkers in IR still remains a vastly under-researched area in this discipline."[163] Vergerio's argument need not—and should not—be confined to the reception of Western thinkers within the subsequent Western tradition; indeed, she insisted on the need to trace receptions across "time and *space*."[164] Non-Western IR theorists have inevitably engaged in dialogue with Western thinkers, creating a vibrant site in which these thinkers have been dynamically read and reinterpreted. The "pattern" and "phases" of Kant's reception that

[161]Robbie Shilliam, "The Perilous but Unavoidable Intellectual Terrain of 'the Non-West,'" in Shilliam, ed., *International Relations and Non-Western Thought: Imperialism, Colonialism and Investigations of Global Modernity* (London, 2011), 12–26.

[162]Juliette Tolay, "Inadvertent Reproduction of Eurocentrism in IR: The Politics of Critiquing Eurocentrism," *Review of International Studies* 47/5, special issue (2021), 692–713; Ching-Chang Chen, "The absence of non-western IR theory in Asia reconsidered," *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific* 11/1 (2011), 1–23; Michael Barnett and Ayşe Zarakol, "A. Global International Relations and the Essentialism Trap," *International Theory* 15/3 (2023), 428–44.

[163]Vergerio, "Context, Reception, and the Study of Great Thinkers," 131.

[164]Ibid., 112, added emphasis.

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Eric Isley described,[165] for example, may need to be examined in light of the fate of *Perpetual Peace* in Japan, where Kōsaka (the father) prepared one of its most accessible translations.[166] The Kyoto school and Kōsaka (the son) encountered Western thinkers such as Ranke, Toynbee, Carr, James, and Morgenthau. As long as the West maintained hegemonic dominance, such encounters were a global condition. Therefore the global reception history of "great thinkers" opens the way forward for new interpretive and dialogical communities centered on these thinkers, which encompass both Western and non-Western perspectives. This dynamic intellectual history would not only reveal how non-Western IR theorists have engaged in dialogue, but also shed light on new aspects of Western "great thinkers" that have previously been overlooked.

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[165]Eric S. Easley, *The War over Perpetual Peace: An Exploration into the History of a Foundational International Relations Text* (London, 2004), 2–3.

[166]Shibasaki Atsushi, *Kindai Nihon no kokusai kankei ron: Tomonaga Sanjūrō to Kanto no heiwa ron* (Understanding of International Relationships in Modern Japan: Tomonaga Sanjūrō and Kant's Theory of Peace) (Tokyo, 2009), Ch. 3.

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