Pitirim Sorokin and the Modern World: *Power and Morality Revisited.*

Sorokin, Pitirim A. and Lunden, Walter A. *Power and Morality, Who Shall Guard the Guardians?*  
Boston, Porter Sargent Publisher, 1959

**Abstract.** *Power and Morality* was written as the Cold War was building toward its height, at a time when the world was dominated by two great nuclear powers, the United States and the Soviet Union, both of which Pitirim Sorokin knew well. Collapse of the Soviet system in Russia brought with it a big change in the familiar world order. The United States was left alone on the top, and smaller states were abandoned largely to their own devices. The result has been the welter of vicious local and regional conflicts and the widespread sense of instability so familiar to all of us today. The present situation is now further complicated by the increasing unwillingness of states large and small to accept US hegemony and over all, of course, hangs the continuing threat of nuclear Armageddon.

Sorokin’s analysis was substantially based on earlier studies showing that the sociocultural world we inhabit reflects the set of values we accept, whether predominantly materialistic (Sensate order) or predominantly other-worldly (Ideational order), and more rarely an ideal mixture of both worldly and otherworldly values mediated by reason (Integral order). Use of the “partial truths” from all three orders together yields the closest approximation of “true reality” accessible to humankind. When the “creative spring”of the accepted order is over, a period of instability sets in marked by sociocultural disorder and political strife until mankind adopts a new set of values, and with its accession, reassurance returns and a new creative period begins. Sorokin concluded that political instability during much of the 20th century marked passage through the declining phase of the Sensate order, and a glance at recent political events shows little amelioration, with mankind still adrift and our “guardian” governments still in a Machiavellian mode but now highly dependent on technology for their operation. *Who shall guard the guardians?* Science and technology being morally neutral, governments should be reconfigured to authorize persons of high moral and ethical standards to weigh in on important political decisions.

If broad understanding and mutual trust could only be achieved among the US and emerging (China, India) and re-emergent (Russia, European Union) powers, then a new stable global order will evolve, and many of the world’s pressing problems, including conflicts between the smaller states, might be more easily resolved. In looking at today’s world, therefore it seems that Sorokin’s analyses and many of his proposed corrective measures are as valid now as when he first advanced them in the middle of the last century.

**High criminality of ruling groups.** First published in 1959 during the Cold War, Pitirim Sorokin and Walter Lunden’s work took a disparaging look at the way nations had been ruled over long stretches of history. Based on Sorokin’s expertise in the sociocultural analysis of humanity and Lunden’s comprehensive knowledge about a wide range of criminal classes, (ref. 1) the book allots considerable space to an examination of mankind’s rulers from many nations.
and historical periods, to characterize them with regard to their physical and mental abilities, moral character, personality traits and other skills needed to govern, as well as, somewhat anecdotally, to judge how well they have succeeded in their role as “guardians of the people.” Heading the list are the absolute rulers—the kings, emperors, despots, dictators, secular heads of great religious organizations, and perhaps ruling oligarchs—following down the scale to the presidents of democracies and republics, to heads of state and city governments, to great business or labor leaders, and below that to various legislators, bureaucrats, and others including political ward bosses and the “godfathers” of criminal gangs, all of whom have aimed to hold people in subjection, respectively the entire population of a nation down to smaller numbers in the lesser domains. The survey mainly speaks in general terms but includes tables of relevant data and specifics about historical figures belonging to these groups. It is generous in its mention of politicians active in Sorokin’s lifetime.

Compared to standards in their subject populations, absolute rulers have included proportionately more bright individuals—exceeding the percentage of “A” students in a college class—but in their number a higher proportion of mentally or morally deficient persons as well, counting feeble-minded heirs in lines of succession. Most of these “guardians” have domineering, highly aggressive, selfish and manipulative personalities compared to those of their subjects. Some ruling activities can be morally uplifting, although a larger number of governing tasks tend to demean. And while the former traits may enoble a part of the the ruler’s makeup, preponderance of the latter tends to pull it down. (ref. 2) “No man preoccupied with war activities for years and years can escape the demoralizing and criminalizing effects of this murderous business.” (ref. 3) The greater the power of the rulers and the less freely this is tolerated by the people, the tougher and more corrupt the rulers tend to become; but if their power be progressively limited, their criminality tends to diminish as well; and where the populace is well integrated and its moral opinion unified, this may fall to the level prevailing in the population.

In the 16th century Niccolo Machiavelli (1469-1527) wrote approvingly of princes “who have had little regard for good faith, and have been able by astuteness to confuse men’s brains, and who have ultimately overcome those who have made loyalty their foundation.” With their
belief that the ends justify the means, they were to rule taking full advantage of a double standard that exempted them from obeying legal and moral codes that were still applied to ordinary citizens. (ref. 4) At the time it was still possible to govern a principality in this way provided the ruler understood all the workings of his realm and held a firm grip over them. This no longer is possible because management of nations in our contemporary world requires so much input from the natural and social sciences that our rulers no longer are able to master all the information needed to run them. Quoting Sorokin, “Such a trend portends the eventual withering of the hitherto existing ‘governments of politicians, by politicians, and for politicians’ and their replacement by ‘governments of scientists and experts’.” (ref. 5) For example, proposals for a government to apply a scientific process or device nowadays require expert testimony by physical or biological advisory committees as to their usefulness. Science is morally neutral, however, and because this attitude is shared by many of its investigators, it would be much better if persons with high ethical and moral standards were authorized to pass on the wisdom of applying scientific discoveries. A person with high moral authority can also affect politicians directly: On the day after hearing Pope Francis address the Congress of the United States on September 24, 2015, a beleaguered John Boehner, then Speaker of the House of Representatives, abruptly vacated his leadership position, gave up his seat as representative from Ohio, and withdrew from politics.

**Today’s Sensate sociocultural super-system in decline.** Turning to the present, much of the Modern World is still in the last throes of a decline in the Sensate order of civilization that has dominated Europe and rest of the Western world for close to 700 years. Already clearly apparent to Pitirim Sorokin during the 1930s and continuing through the ‘50s and ‘60s, its sociocultural value system—which claims the only reality is that mediated by the senses—has been breaking down, accompanied by a large increase in wars, revolutions, and civil unrest. Sorokin concluded that “the crisis involves all compartments of this Sensate culture and society and is, therefore, the greatest of all the crises of the Western world’s history.” (ref. 6) With little evidence that conditions prevailing in his day have materially improved since 1959, his thesis remains valid for the present.
Critical evidence for the decline of the Sensate order was fully laid out in the 4-volume edition of *Social and Cultural Dynamics* (1937-41) as well as in a more popular but still comprehensive form, *The Crisis of Our Age.* (1941). Aspects of this decline and its consequences were singled out for further discussion in several shorter books written later but also based on the Dynamics. These include *Social Philosophies of an Age of Crisis* (1950), *S.O.S: The Meaning of Our Crisis* (1951), *The American Sex Revolution* (1956), *Power and Morality* (1959), and *The Basic Trends of Our Times* (1964). All of these writings include critiques, prognoses, and advice germane to any discussion of major problems affecting our modern world.

**Three main sociocultural super-systems as alternate choices for humanity.** Sorokin’s studies showed that the sociocultural world we inhabit reflects the set of values our culture lives by, whether predominantly materialistic (*Sensate super-system*) or predominantly other-worldly (*Ideational super-system*), or more rarely an ideal mixture of both worldly and otherworldly values mediated by reason (*Integral super-system*). With the twilight of Sensate culture” clearly apparent in our time, we may begin to look for signposts indicating to which new value system humanity is trending, and the change in the character of civilization that will result, whether an *Integral order* with its more collected and rational posture, or in a strong turn away from Sensate materialism, an *Ideational order* with its profoundly religious outlook. Collectively the mentioned books argue that a lasting solution to our present crisis can only be obtained after a new order takes hold, provided human beings do not destroy themselves in the interim. Its arrival will bring promise for a more meaningful life because uncertainties of the transition would have passed, and mankind would be entering the initial, most creative phase of the new order.

Sorokin preferred that the succeeding order be an *Integral* one (initially called *Idealistic* in the *Dynamics*) whose stabilizing influence tends to lower the level of interpersonal and international conflicts and to open our lives and those of nations to more altruistic behavior. He considered that its “true reality-value is an Infinite Manifold in which the super sensory, rational and sensory forms are inseparable.” (ref. 7) The “total reality” it aims for integrates “partial truths” obtained by the senses, by reasoning, and by super-sensory input. The super-sensory component of this total is the most difficult of the three to conceptualize, but some associate it
with “intuition,” others with “divine inspiration,” and still others with “a flash of enlightenment” that many of mankind’s creative geniuses credit with setting them on the paths to their greatest achievements. At present no one can be sure whether or not this “inspiration” can come from outside or results from activity in circuits of the brain even while conscious thought is not taking place. (ref. 8)

Old Cold War worries with 21st century “emoluments”  

Power and Morality was written in 1958 when the Cold War and other conflicts made the threat of thermonuclear war seem very real. In today’s world as then we face very unsettled times. All too frequently national leaders respond to them in mostly belligerent ways with hostility, threats of violence and actual military ventures. They feel reassured by their ample stocks of “conventional” atom and hydrogen bombs and other destructive military ordnance from the earlier time, while continuing to add new and improved hardware, such as heat-seeking missiles to carry conventional or nuclear warheads, greatly improved piloted aircraft, unmanned drones intended for reconnaissance or combat, and so on. The large nations, especially the United States, Russia, and China, have enriched their nuclear arsenals by including a new range of much smaller tactical weapons for use in limited field engagements, as well as for dispersal from above to whatever lies below. They have added specialized artillery capable of launching these missiles from aircraft carriers or silent (nuclear) submarines, as well as from comparable units mounted on special railroad cars where they can be moved quickly once fired, to avoid being targeted themselves. Sophisticated computer-mediated strategies have been developed to intercept e-mail messages, disrupt internet communications, confuse battle orders, or to wreak havoc on electric power grids and other infrastructure in the lands of perceived enemies. Even newer strategies are being planned that will greatly increase the effectiveness of computer-targeting schemes, to the extent that it has been said that those who develop the most sophisticated techniques for informational and cyber-warfare will ultimately rule the world. (ref. 9) For localized attacks on places where people gather, such as bazaars, schools, churches, or mosques, suicide bombers are frequently sent out to infiltrate and surprise the mostly civilian population gathered there, detonating the explosives strapped on their bodies, killing or maiming their victims, and spreading fear and devastation all around.
All these things have notably added to warlike capability, but they have also decreased the freedom for large numbers of the world’s population, even those in so-called free countries, because many now live under surveillance in a tense atmosphere of uncertainty and increased separation from the real decision makers of their lands. Libya became a major disaster area in 2011 after Muammar Gaddafi’s dictatorship was overthrown by attacks from a consortium of Western powers. The “Arab Spring” with its disheartening consequences in Egypt, Iraq, Syria, and Yemen, and the incessant altercations in many parts of Africa have made matters worse by their destructiveness and their generation of a Refugee Crisis caused by the sheer numbers of displaced persons trying to escape the war zones. African migrants trying to reach Europe through Libya have been placed in detention camps after they arrive, and very recently slave markets were discovered at several of the camps where more able-bodied detainees unable to pay ransom fees have been auctioned off into slavery. (ref. 10) Nothing new of pacific value is being offered at present, nor is there any light to be seen “at the end of the tunnel.” The updates mentioned serve only to heighten and not lower the chances for conflagration because an increase in one side’s military might brings compensatory measures by the opponents as long as they can afford them. But large nations usually can. Short of the horrendous destruction of civilian lives that took place during sustained bombing raids in World War II and the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, today’s regional wars have tended to center on sites housing large civilian populations and use no effective restraint to check the maiming or utter destruction of them. Indeed today’s styles of warfare have only enormously increased the proportion of civilian victims killed as compared to the numbers in the military. And so present-day conflicts continue as transition away from our tired Sensate era drags on. Meanwhile serious common threats like climate change come to the fore and do not receive the attention they deserve.

One consequence of the increased globalization of our world, the expansion of trade, instantaneous intercommunication, and so on, is that trading partners share common business practices for their deals regardless of whatever differences in value systems these trading nations may hold. But since the West has been under a dying Sensate cloud for at least a century, this cloud will have spread nearly everywhere by now and suffused the world. In ancient times when
countries were oceans apart and travel slow and arduous, it was possible for one nation to retain its Ideational mentality while a distant neighbor adhered to the Sensate. Beyond the Himalayas, Tibet survived as an Ideational theocracy until 1950 when the Chinese army invaded and eventually drove out the ruling Dalai Lama in 1959. In more recent years other dissenters from the Sensate world have managed, either by withdrawing to some remote jungle, or like the Amish by negotiating a separation from surrounding secular neighbors in order to live a more pastoral life in communities where they can conduct themselves in closer keeping with their own more religious and Ideational precepts. However, most of today’s belligerents continue to operate under the more-worldly conventions they know.

In the case of The Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIS, ISIL, or Daesh) now nearly vanquished, there may have been a difference in that their rebellion and their fighting supposedly were aimed at establishing a theocratic Caliphate based on Ideational values and that one of its guiding principles was to reject the Sensate values still persisting in the West. Of course their forces have shown no hesitancy over using the latest Western technology to pursue their war with vengeance and enormous cruelty, as journalist videos have shown. Its youthful fighters, drawn from many parts of the world besides the Middle East and North Africa abhor many values now present in our overripe Western culture; but many escaping to join ISIS from crowded and now crumbling suburban ghettos in France may well have based their resentment more on their apartheid existence than from adherence to Ideational values, having been given a poor education with dim prospects for economic betterment, and excluded from society by a secular nation intolerant of public religious display. They would have made easy prey to ISIS agents. At least a few among these recruits, but possibly more among the better educated and truly devout, might have regarded the Caliphate’s emergence favorably as the dawn of a new Ideational era. And as in the first periods of the French or Russian Revolutions (respectively “La Terreur” and Militant Communism), some might have expected that its initial phase would prove as inhuman and destructive as in the earlier upheavals. Now that the Caliphate’s territorial realm has virtually disappeared, a resumption of widely scattered guerilla attacks seems likely as the combatants return to the countries of their birth and the unhappy lives they had hoped to leave behind. Thus, events in the Modern World plausibly reflect serious tensions over competing value systems. We
should remember that this revolution is being pursued in Africa as well as in the Middle East and perhaps has taken somewhat different forms under different circumstances, being more of a struggle between ISIS Muslims against Christians in Africa whereas in the Middle East it seems principally to be directed against Muslims adhering to different divisions or sects, as well as against Christians, Yazidis, and other religious minorities living there.

The current Rohingya insurgency in the northern part of the Rakhine State of Myanmar (bordering Bangladesh) has little to do with Isis. It grew out of tensions between the majority Buddhist population and minority Muslim Rohingyas that were already apparent in the British-colony of Burma before World War II. These heightened into more serious conflicts after the Japanese army invaded Burma, when the Rohingyas took sides with the British, after being promised self-rule as a Muslim state, while the majority of Rakhine Buddhists aligned themselves with the Japanese; and ever since Myanmar gained its own independence in 1948, the struggle has continued off and on for some 70 years. Severe clashes broke out in 2016-2017 after some provocations, and these led to concerted efforts by Myanmar militias to drive the Rohingyas out of the country as well as to commit many other inexcusable human rights abuses. By the end of October, 2017, the humanitarian crisis had become extreme with something more than a half-million refugees forced to take flight into Bangladesh. (ref. 11) This appalling story provides more evidence that in the 70 years since Power and Morality was written, humanity has found little reason to place overmuch confidence in the political actions of nations.

Upsurge and incipient decline of American hegemony? The United States and the Soviet Union emerged from World War II as the two world-dominant powers, and a Cold War soon developed with increasing hostility and ever-expanding military budgets until the Soviet Union no longer could afford the cost and collapsed. The United States then became the world-dominant power and has maintained it primarily by relying on the idea of “might makes right” and a politico-military strategy to support it. In exchange for taking on the responsibility and expense to defend Europe militarily by forces of its own and its NATO creature, the United States in effect had become the master whose approval was needed before independent policy moves by European member nations could be implemented. With the rapid rise of China, new challenges to American hegemony have appeared, and with Russia attempting to restore itself as
a major world power, these moves have further shown that the period of Pax Americana is ending. No longer a matter of the United States versus Russia these days, with China as the most conspicuous challenger, with India rising and political agitation more apparent nearly everywhere—looming threats in the South China Sea, an Arab Spring gone awry, evidence of instability within the European Union still blown up by a Migrant Crisis—several EU nations having to suppress hostile encounters between native citizens and the newcomers, and others like the Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary refusing to take in refugees. (ref. 12), America no longer credibly appears as the great peacemaker, missionary for the spread of democracy, and guardian of human rights that to many past supporters it had appeared to be. At the outset of the 21st century the United States entered wars in Afghanistan, the Middle East, and Libya; these already have gone on for years and seem to have no end, quieting down and then flaring up again. They resemble the wars Great Britain had to fight in imperial days to maintain control over its far-flung empire and in both cases can be seen as evidence of overextension by those nations. Moreover, since “9/11,” when the World Trade Center in New York was destroyed, Americans have been shaken from their feeling of security. The unease continues to increase with each new set of terrorist attacks in Europe and the Middle East, and in the last two years the frequency of these has risen in the United States as well. (ref. 13)

Nuclear disarmament. Power and Morality’s 1959 plea for total nuclear disarmament was just one of many efforts peace activists began to make soon after the end of World War II. These efforts had greatly increased by 1958 when world powers became interested and Ireland took the first formal steps to launch the process that resulted in the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty. (ref. 14) It was opened for signatures in 1968, came into effect in 1970, and was extended indefinitely in 1995. At present 190 nations have signed on. Compared to the nuclear arsenals held by the United States and the Soviet Union in earlier postwar years, a considerable reduction in the number of bombs has since taken place in both countries, although the combined total is still close to 22,000, and the past quarter century has seen a slowdown in efforts to disarm further. (ref.15) Protracted negotiations with Iran came to resolution in October, 2015, with Iran’s agreement not to attempt to build nuclear weapons in exchange for lifting of the
international sanctions against it. One would like to feel confident that the great powers are not beginning to retreat from the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty but some distrust remains. Otherwise questions remain unresolved about regulating the use of bombs possessed by non-signatory countries in India, Israel, Pakistan, as well as North Korea, which withdrew from the treaty in 2003. Other legal issues remain, such as whether NATO or European countries are entitled to use weapons given to them by the United States, or whether Asiatic countries once part of the Soviet Union have the right to retain or to use the nuclear weapons left behind when the Union dissolved. I remember my father saying that historically, criminal and other hostile groups usually take about 25 years to obtain the newest weapons in military arsenals. Organizations other than nations eventually might obtain them and be more willing than the great powers to use them. So the first step, he said, was total nuclear disarmament. Otherwise, and hovering over all, certainty that in the event of war all bets are off. (ref. 16).

Equally important must be agreements to prevent or at least limit the deployment of launchers for ballistic missiles as well as to regulate anti-ballistic missile systems (ABMs) able to defend an area from missiles carrying nuclear warheads. It is very unlikely that any great power would warm to giving up the offensive capability of their artillery, but the United States and Russia actually maintained an ABM treaty for 30 years, reckoning that by severely limiting the number of anti-ballistic systems each country could have, an arms race could be avoided to develop highly sophisticated weapons that could render the missile interceptors ineffective. The United States withdrew from the treaty in 2002, much to the Russians’ dismay. Nevertheless, several bilateral nuclear arms control agreements were signed over the years, including one still in force. (ref. 17)

**What else for peace?** Besides repeating a call for complete disarmament from nuclear and other catastrophic agents of modern warfare, what else must one do and where should one start? The obvious answer to the first question is to reduce tensions that exist between, or among, the antagonistic parties. If indications are that a new cold war is developing, then measures are needed to calm things down. Most steps to bring this about are obvious and scarcely need mentioning because experienced government leaders know just what to do when they are so inclined.
For an example at an *intra-national level*, consider the Congress of the United States: Historically it has enacted many important measures with bipartisan support from the Republican and Democratic legislators, but in recent years passage of many bills has been arrested by parliamentary maneuvers to stall its motion through Congress, or simply by preventing House or Senate members belonging to the party in power from “jumping ship” to add enough votes for a good measure to pass. When angling for power both parties use similar means. The result has been prolonged “grid lock” with very little accomplished by a “do-nothing Congress.”

During the first term of Barack Obama’s presidency (2008-2012), then Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell and Republican strategists did all they could to block passage of Obama’s Affordable (Health) Care Act, and two years before Obama’s election to a second term (2012-2016), McConnell stated, "the single most important thing we want to achieve is for President Obama to be a one-term president.” (ref. 18) Obstruction continues, tempers have risen at little action on important social legislation or failure to fund repair of the country’s decaying infrastructure; but the huge National Defense budget receives its customary solid endorsement and increased funding. And so a “mini cold war” not unlike the international ones has for some time been waged in the District of Columbia! Washington’s “experienced government leaders” know just what to do, but they are not so inclined. The question is how to convince them to do it. The post election takeover by a new federal administration in January, 2017, has added new controversies to distract the politicians and, as some of them say, *done little to drain the swamp.*

Whether the conflicts are *intra-* or *international*, the point is to reduce tensions. There are many ways to achieve this, beginning with small gestures ranging up to more organized efforts to encourage constructive public activism, or by taking advantage of opportunities at times surprisingly afforded a group of citizens to meet the great leaders and discuss the issues directly with them, or at least try to break the ice. (ref. 19)

**Fluctuation between Totalitarianism and Freedom.** Sorokin explains: (ref. 20) “Each time when in a given society there appears an important emergency in the form of war, or threat of war, or great famine, or great economic depression, or devastating epidemic, or anarchy, unrest and revolution, or other big emergency, the amount and severity of the governmental
regimentation invariably increase, and the society’s economy, political regime, way of life, and ideologies experience a totalitarian conversion; and the greater the emergency the greater the totalitarian conversion. And vice versa: each time when in a society its important emergency decreases, the amount and severity of its governmental regimentation begins to decrease and the society’s economic, political, ideological, and cultural systems undergo a detotalitarian reconversion towards a less regimented and more free way of life, and the greater the decrease of the emergency, the greater the free reconversion.” He adds that “these fluctuations depend little upon the wishes of the government and take place as regularly as mercury fluctuations in a thermometer in accordance with the factor of temperature.” (ref. 21)

**Getting to know one better.** It is an old truth that once people get to know one another and see how much they have in common, especially their humanity, friendships begin to develop. Sorokin’s *Russia and the United States* (1944) and its follow-up from 1961 (ref. 22) teach us that a first step in reducing tensions between two conflicting nations can result from efforts by the people to discover to what degree their institutions and cherished values are shared. A convergence of these institutions and values has indeed been going on between Russia and the United States from the time of the czars. He showed that neither of these two countries, the first one described (after October, 1917) as “Communist” and the second “Capitalist,” can be so categorized today but have been losing their specific features and borrowing from each other since the 1930s, so that many aspects of their culture, social institutions, systems of values, and ways of life are now shared. The survey covered (1) natural sciences and technology, (2) social sciences and the humanities, (3) philosophy, (4) ethics and criminal law, (5) education, (6) sports and recreation, (7) the fine arts, (8) religion, (9) the family and marriage, (10) the economic system, (11) social relationships, and (12) political systems.

Sorokin considered the natural sciences about equally advanced in both countries. He also believed that there no longer existed a clear contrast between the materialistic philosophy advocated during early Communist days and the predominant non-materialistic ones then espoused in the United States and Western Europe, since the former had been retreating from Russia the while it was advancing in the West. The political systems had become more alike, but this meant sharing newly-acquired characteristics, some good and some bad. Regarding the
economy, during the Soviet period when the comparisons were being made, a corporate economy did not exist in Russia, but the nationalized industry was divided into big divisions like steel, oil, construction, and so on, each headed by a board of directors much like those in American corporations, only the directors were appointed by the government and not by shareholders. Since the downfall of the Soviet Union these industries were privatized, and the newly formed corporations became similar to corporations all over the world and like them controlled by an economic elite. As for religion, since that time the Russian Orthodox Church has experienced a remarkable resurgence, most dramatically in the years following the Soviet collapse, with many new churches being built, decrepit old ones meticulously restored, and clear support by a large part of the population plain to see, in contrast to the Western world where overall church attendance has sharply declined.

_Summing up_, Sorokin found that Russia and the United States, and by extension the West, have all been converging to an intermediate type of sociocultural order, “neither Communistic nor Capitalistic, neither Totalitarian nor Democratic, neither Materialistic nor Idealistic, neither totally Religious or Atheistic-Agnostic, neither too criminal nor too saintly.” (ref. 23) In a “Sensate-to-Ideational” continuum this can be understood as a Mixed type, one that supports an eclectic set of values but lacks the perfect unity of the “Integral” order with its blend of cultural, social, and personal values he so admired.

**Practical application in “realistic” politics.** An appreciation of the worthiness of Sorokin’s analysis as well as cogent advice from Andrei Sakharov apparently underlay Mikhail Gorbachov’s effort to achieve rapprochement and “perestroika” with the United States and Europe during President Ronald Reagan’s time in office. (ref. 24) The existence of many commonly-shared values between two nearly equal world powers was seen as the basis for reducing international tensions and increasing mutual respect. Sorokin’s recommendations are still being kept in mind in Moscow today. (ref. 25) As yet comparable recognition has not been given them by the State Department in Washington, although his works form part of a course in sociological theory for students at the United States Military Academy at West Point. (ref. 26) Regarding other conflicts, one should search for similar openings where people in opposing camps could appreciate the others as not too different from themselves. If only they’d look!
**Simple remedies.** (1) Recognition of shared basic values serves as a step to pacification. As such this can be broadly applied the many conflicts now occurring all over the world and not just to Russo-American hostilities of the past, or to the current threat of a resurgent Cold War. Regarding present-day cooling of relations between the United States and Russia, I believe that heated rhetoric by either side does little to mitigate matters. From a vantage point in the United States, my personal impression is that most of the American public knows very little about the Russians and the distinctively different nationals that live in the same land. *(ref. 27)* We are assailed by comments from unrepentant Cold War politicians far more than from moderate voices because statements by the former are then picked up and uncritically repeated by leading news media analysts, whereas few alternative views are given much heed, and the greater part of air time is given over to obsessive coverage over a narrow range of sociocultural topics, not unimportant of themselves, but overfamiliar from too much repetition at the expense of other issues. This has taken away from a thoughtful consideration of world affairs and the contributions we as a nation ought to be making to improve the quality of life for all inhabitants of the earth and not just ourselves *(ref. 28)* Accordingly there is an “information gap” to fill here, whatever may exist in Russia.

(2) Stronger voices are needed to address current problems that lead to strife and terrorist attacks. Nearly everyone remembers Mahatma Gandhi whose powerful voice, bolstered by his moral strength and personal example, was used to bring about liberation of India from the colonial British Empire. We also remember Nelson Mandela. Once again, a single strong voice can be enormously effective. But turning to the Middle East, many are still looking for mainstream representatives of the Muslim faith(s) to become more activist in their speech and actions to counteract ISIS and the revulsion that rises from their atrocities. In sum, it is especially important today to have the “good” leaders and people in a so-called “community” speak out courageously against those among them who are doing wrong.

With his activist voice, Pitirim Sorokin rarely hesitated to express his opinion about world affairs. He was always on the lookout for news and information from very wide sources to help him become better informed, even to skimming over publications heavily laced with propaganda to see what was being said there. After all the recent clamor about “fake news” and
with evidently decreasing trust during 2016-2017 in the news media of all nations, it is especially important to persist in seeking widely.

(3) A variety of initiatives aimed at increasing trade, small-scale joint scientific ventures, and cultural exchanges are tried-and-true actions that tend to increase mutual trust, and if relations between nations have soured these may again be relied on to restore them. (ref. 29) Success with these should in turn lead to cooperation in larger-scaled joint enterprises. Epidemics of human disease and other scourges of humanity have often brought responses from many nations and non-governmental organizations. Those interested in the peaceful exploration of space have for years been able to maintain a large-scale program (the International Space Station) that with help from diplomatic channels has brought in many engineers and astronauts from several nations. At present privately funded commercial space programs have begun to appear as well. Cooperative enterprises of these kinds are confidence-building measures for world peace. There is always danger, however, that if shadows of distrust should arise among the partners, funding by one or more of them might be diverted to specifically military space projects and closed to the now-potential enemies.

Threats of truly catastrophic magnitude— of an “Invaders from Mars” type— that awaken the fears of all humankind would naturally provide the most effective incentives for nations to cast aside their customary differences and join all-out efforts to oppose the challenge. Forces that threaten humanity’s survival, such as geophysical events like climate change, or something else from some conceivable outside source, would require mankind to take resolute action to overcome them, which if successful would surely lead to a long stretch for recuperation and world peace.

If progress is made through use of these simple remedies we will have already acquired some of the new values of the coming era and can use these to move closer to the establishment of ideal kinds of government.

**Government by scientists, sages and saints.** *Power and Morality* was not intended to present a completed plan for establishing an ideal type of government, naming all its departments and specifying how each must interact with all the others. Rather it described historical trends as seen by a practiced eye and how these were leading away from the *fin de siècle* remains of
Sensate culture towards a fresher, more settled Integral order where governments largely would reflect its resurgent values. It would have abandoned the Machiavellian character still prevalent in the governments of today, whose familiar slogan, “peace through power” moved Sorokin to remark that “These rulers seem to be still ignorant of the well-tested verities that hate generates hate and love begets love; that aggression and fraud breed aggression and fraud; and that a policy of war is answered by war.” (ref. 30) For him accession of a better form of government was still some years away. Is it any closer today?

Qualifications necessary for the new governments included: “First, a growing requirement for higher intelligence, wisdom, and knowledge among the top-rulers of the governments; second, an increasing requirement for supreme moral integrity, almost saintliness, in the ranks of the governing elite; third a developing pressure for the replacement of their [the present-day governments’] tribal standpoint by the universal standpoint of mankind as a whole.” (ref. 31) The top rulers he saw in 1958 had not been adequately trained for their powerful positions and were executing policies they did not understand. Their successors were being hard pressed to keep abreast of new scientific and technical developments and to try to devise new executive policies and diplomatic moves to take them into account.

The amorality of science and the moral neutrality of many (but not all) scientists are the main reasons why Sorokin believed it was essential to include persons of high moral integrity and great human sympathy in these new governments. The persons he had in mind were not experts in theology, nor those high in religious hierarchies, but rather “apostles of love” who know how to connect with humanity. These leaders would guide governments not only from within but also serve outside like Gandhi as living examples of heroic morality, as educators and creators of new moral values, and as individuals easily able to reach out to people and inspire them to improve their own lives. Indeed, to repeat a point made earlier, the stronger the population holds to higher standards of moral conduct, the more likely the government will follow along.

Sorokin also recommended moving away from a “tribal” outlook to a more “universal” one that reflects the interdependence of humanity today. The tribal outlook, or “my country right or wrong,” he declared had been appropriate when people knew mainly their own group and little
about any others, but this had changed. With a trend toward globalization spread far more widely today than in 1958, there is now all the more reason to consider mankind as “one unified, universal interdependent whole.” (ref. 32)

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Sergei P. Sorokin

Footnotes:

[1] Power and Morality; henceforth cited as P&M. Co-author Walter Lunden (1899-1990) did graduate work at the University of Minnesota during the time Sorokin taught there and received a Ph.D. from Harvard (1934) while Sorokin was Chairman of its Department of Sociology. Lunden was an expert in criminology. Quotations from this work are so characteristic of my father that they have been attributed to him rather than to the two authors.

[2] Bob Woodward, The Last of the President’s Men, New York, Simon & Schuster, 2015. The most imperialistic of US presidents, Richard Nixon’s “finest moment as president was surely the opening to China.” p 92. But “the hating was at Nixon’s center…This hate, the duplicity, the incessant plotting had become the engine of his presidency.” p 177.


[8] It is difficult to reconcile this functional concept with present-day neuroscience, except to say that (1) the classic five senses of sight, hearing, taste, touch, and smell are mediated by specific anatomical structures located on external surfaces of the body, to which may be added certain receptors located on internal surfaces (gastrointestinal tract, lungs) that are also in contact with the outside. (2) The nervous pathways that connect these sensory receptors to circuits in the central nervous system are well known and some of these that carry sensory information to the cerebral cortex are still being deciphered. Most of the efforts to map them are based on experiments using visual or auditory stimuli. Spontaneous activity within the brain “dominates the landscape of brain activity” and far overshadows activation from an external stimulus. Such stimulation conveys information to lower levels of the cortex and can activate neurons there at an unconscious level (subliminal perception) until, after a longer stimulus is applied, the neurons nearest the surface of the cortex become activated. This leads to “global ignition:” the uppermost neurons amplify the input and lead to long-lasting activation, considered to represent conscious perception. (Dehaene C. Consciousness and the Brain. New York, 2014, Viking Penguin.) 3) Reasoning processes take place within the cerebral cortex, but rather than being limited to neuronal elements confined to a specific structure or location, apparently are more widely dispersed to several regions of the cortex. Many complex
phenomena: memory, decision-making, reasoning, and possibly integration of personality are now thought to involve a great many loci in the brain linked by complex circuitry. Such activities are not immediately dependent on sensory input, although they may be influenced by it. This topic currently interests many experimental neuroscientists.

(4) Little is known about how super sensory signals might reach the brain. Many instances of mental telepathy have been recorded, for example, by a sister in England claiming to have heard the voice of her brother in India, only to learn weeks later that he had called out to her from his deathbed at the very moment she heard it. (Gurney, E, Myers, FWH, and Podmore F. *Phantasms of the Living*, 2 vols. London, 1886.) Such claims are difficult to corroborate. Nowadays neuroscientists frequently use *transcranial magnetic stimulation* in experiments to map conduction pathways of neurons in the primary motor cortex, for inducing visual illusions in the occipital (visual) cortex, or to study memory and other cognitive functions in the brain, (O'Shea, J Walsh, V Current Biology 17: 196, 2007.) This may reflect adaptations for scientific use from recognition that certain individuals can be affected by induced magnetic fields surrounding high-tension power lines. Other investigations have shown that both gifted artists and scientists have association cortices that respond similarly to functional magnetic resonance imaging. Both show preponderance of activation in brain circuits involved in higher-order socioaffective processing, with “Random Episodic Silent Thought” the default mode. (Andreasen, NC, Ramchandran K. Dialogues Clin Neurosci. 14(1): 49-54, 2012.) The latter may reflect internal neuronal activation while the subject’s conscious mind wanders into personal thoughts and memories. With 16 billion neurons in its cortex the human brain is a very complex and somewhat autonomous organ. (Herculano-Houzel, S, *The Human Advantage*. Cambridge, 2016, The MIT Press.)

[9]. Murtaza Hussain, *The New Information Warfare.* https://theintercept.com/2017/11/25/information-warfare-social… The internet, smartphones, and stratagems of social media have empowered individual citizens to become agitators aiming to relieve the oppressed and confound their oppressors; but terrorists like Isis have also used the same resources to great effect. Moreover, if nation-states no longer possess monopolistic control over communications, they still have all these and other tools of informational warfare at their disposal. *Information warfare* is hardly new; the term applies to espionage, propaganda, and nowadays, “fake news.” *Cyber warfare* refers to computer-mediated attacks against an enemy’s infrastructure. The best known of these was the attack on the process control network of Iran’s nuclear program using the Stuxnet computer worm. It was directed against the centrifuges at the uranium enrichment facility and destroyed some 984 of them. Kesler, B. The vulnerability of nuclear facilities to cyber attack. Strategic Insights 10:: 15-25, 2017.


[12] EU sues Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland over low refugee intake. Deutsche Welle, December 7, 2017. These states were taken to court for failing to take in their required quotas for refugees. The Czechs had taken in two, the others none. In contrast, Germany received 1.2 million asylum seekers during 2015/2016, mostly from Syria, Afghanistan, and Iraq. But by the end of 2016 about 600,000 migrants had been granted protected status as refugees; almost half of the rest were still being processed, about 153,000 had their deportations suspended, and about 54,000 were to be deported. Deutsche Welle, October 10, 2017. Troubles between asylum seekers and native inhabitants have been extensively reported in the press. They include clashes in public places, difficulties over access to housing, social services, and education, as well as opportunities for employment. John Meakin, *European Migration: Crisis and Consequences.* Tomorrow’s World, March-April 2016. The issue over refugee quotas for EU countries is still unresolved.
[13] William Robert Johnston, *Terror attacks and related incidents in the United States.* www.johnston.archive.net/terrorism/wrjp255a.html. Between January, 2016, and the end of October Johnston’s lists 19 terrorist attacks, 10 identified as “islamist.” Worldwide, a total of 8 terrorist incidents resulting in 100+ deaths is recorded by Wikipedia up to December 5th: 3 in Syria, 2 in Afghanistan, and 1 each in Libya, Egypt and Somalia. A planned series of attacks late in December on St. Petersburg’s iconic Kazan Cathedral and other public places by a terrorist cell linked to IS was foiled by the Russian FSB after receiving a tip-off from the CIA. Reuters World News, December 17, 2017. Bill Bratton issues dark warning on looming terror attacks. New York Post, December 17, 2017. The former NYPD commissioner said that the city is the terrorists’ primary target owing to its importance as number 1 US media capital, with Los Angeles as number 2.

[14] Gloss from Wikipedia, 2016. South Sudan was a non-signatory as well but has no bombs.

[15] Over the past 40 years the United States and the Soviet Union/Russia negotiated a number of bilateral agreements and made other arrangements to limit and reduce their arsenals of nuclear bombs and the number of strategic bombers and missiles to deliver them (*SALT I and II, START I, II, III, SORT, and New START.*) The last one went into effect in 2010 and remains in force until February 5, 2021. *U.S.-Russian Nuclear Arms Control Agreements at a Glance.* Arms Control Association, https://www.armscontrol.org


[17] The Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty went into effect in October, 1972, and remained in force for 30 years until the United States withdrew from it (June 13, 2002). After mid-1974 it limited each country to one ground based site with 100 missile receptors, the Russian one in Moscow and the American one in Grand Forks, North Dakota (an ICBM site). The idea was to limit missile defenses in order to make it unnecessary to develop more elaborate and expensive offensive weapons to overcome them. *The Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty at a Glance.* Arms Control Association. Putin: Unilateral US withdrawal from ABM treaty pushing Russia toward new arms race. RT news, 19 Jun, 2015. https://www.rt.com/news/


[19] A group of eleven 2016 graduates of Eton College were given an hour’s private audience by Vladimir Putin at the Kremlin towards the end of August, 2016. The Etonians had initiated the meeting, apparently discussed world affairs with him, and in turn answered Putin’s inquiries about their prestigious school from which 19 British Prime Ministers have graduated. One of the students, David Wei, remarked, “Guys, we truly gave Putin a deep impression of us and he responded by showing us his human face.”


[21] Passage of the U.S.A. Patriot Act, the imposition of a General State of Emergency in France, and the severe curtailing of democracy in Turkey by President Erdogan’s government all represent “totalitarian conversions.”


[25] Lavrov, S. Russia’s Foreign Policy: Historical Background. Russia in Global Affairs magazine, March 3, 2016. “One can say that the 40 years following World War II were a surprisingly good time for Western Europe, which was spared the need to make its own major decisions under the umbrella of the US-Soviet confrontation and enjoyed unique opportunities for steady development. In these circumstances, Western European countries have implemented several ideas regarding conversion of the capitalist and socialist models, which, as a preferred form of socioeconomic progress, were promoted by Pitirim Sorokin and other outstanding thinkers of the 20th century. Over the past 20 years, we have been witnessing the reverse process in Europe and the United States: the reduction of the middle class, increased social inequality, and the dismantling of controls over big business.”

[26] Personal communication from Edward Tiryakian, May 9, 2016. A former student, Capt. Jessica Dawson, teaches the course.

[27] After the terrorist bombings at the Boston Marathon Race on April 15, 2013, however, many suddenly became aware of Chechens from the Caucasus.


[29] Speaking about renewing bilateral relations between Russia and Turkey, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said: “Restoring the trust to its former state is too abstract a category. Everything will depend on our approach to cooperation and contacts…how we are going to trade with each other…build things together, implement joint investment projects and, largely, on how we will cooperate on the Syria peace process.” http://sputniknews.com/politics/20160722/10433468194/lavrov-t…

