

THE COMING ANARCHY; SHATTERING THE DREAMS OF THE POST-COLD WAR

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Our *pro forma* geopolitical worldview that served for fifty years of the Cold War was thoroughly shattered with the fall of the Berlin Wall and the subsequent collapse of the Soviet Union in 1990. While there is political and ideological discourse about its nature and purpose, it is arguable that the bipolar Cold War world has been replaced by a “new world order.” This term is used here descriptively, not prescriptively as some foreign policy gurus might in advocating a particular configuration of power with the United States, or some other power, at its center.

To describe is not to advocate, and my use of the “new world order,” as is Kaplan’s use of the term “coming anarchy,” is purely descriptive. Following my presentation on “the new world order” for faculty at an East African university in the mid-1990s, a faculty member from the university responded. He began by stating, “I will have to argue that the current world situation is neither ‘new’ nor ‘worldly’ nor ‘orderly.’ Otherwise, I agree with you completely.” He went on to suggest that from his East African perspective domination of the international political system by major powers persisted as it had throughout the previous world order, the post-World War II era. Change was not “worldly,” i.e. global, because his part of the world had not seen the profound changes that had transformed first world-second world relationships. Finally, with the current disorder in Africa, he concluded that the situation was hardly “orderly.”

Into this implicit discussion of the nature of the post-Cold War international system have come several bold descriptions of the nature of the evolving system. Three explicit examples were first put forward in journal or magazine articles followed by books that expanded upon the theme (and capitalized upon the substantial intellectual excitement generated by the original publication). First came Francis Fukuyama, formerly of the Reagan State Department and now at James Mason University, with his reassuring

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“The End of History?” in *The National Interest*,¹ followed by the book.² Samuel Huntington, of Harvard, followed in 1993 with “The Clash of Civilizations?” in *Foreign Affairs*³ and a book in 1996.⁴ Finally, the journalist Robert Kaplan appeared with his series of articles in *The Atlantic Monthly*⁵ followed by the current book.⁶

It is not the intention of this review to compare and contrast these various descriptions. It is not inconceivable to simultaneously subscribe to all hypotheses without intellectual dyspepsia. The pressing question is to assess which should hold the dominant position in a realistic worldview in the first years of the new millennium. While I hold with Huntington (and Gaddis to the extent that he is comparable), Kaplan’s disturbing descriptions of the collapse of civilization in several parts of the world cannot be dismissed; the evidence is too compelling. There are two questions which must be asked. First, how important are his examples? Secondly, does his implicit realist prescription for U.S. foreign policy conform to reality?

In his opening paragraphs, Kaplan challenges Fukuyama’s Hegelian view that history has ended and that everyone (with a few insignificant anachronisms like Cuba or North Korea) now openly seeks liberal capitalist systems in imitation of the United States.⁷ Without mention of any current perspective, Kaplan dismisses idealistic perspectives for being Wilsonian in their unrealism, and thus not plausible. The anarchy he sees is not “civilizational” in Huntington’s sense; it is the consequence of a societal breakdown of stupendous proportions, in effect a failure of the Fukuyama hypothesis: The world has distinctly repudiated liberal democracy in favor of warlordism.

¹ Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History?*, 16 NAT’L. INT. 3 (1989).

² FRANCIS FUKUYAMA, *THE END OF HISTORY AND THE LAST MAN* (1992).

³ Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations?*, FOREIGN AFFAIRS, Summer 1993, at 22.

⁴ SAMUEL P. HUNTINGTON, *THE CLASH OF CIVILIZATIONS AND THE REMAKING OF WORLD ORDER* (1996).

⁵ Robert D. Kaplan, *The Coming Anarchy*, THE ATLANTIC MONTHLY, Feb. 1994, at 44; Robert D. Kaplan, *And Now for the News*, THE ATLANTIC MONTHLY, Mar. 1997, at 16; Robert D. Kaplan, *Was Democracy Just a Moment?*, THE ATLANTIC MONTHLY, Dec. 1997, at 55; Robert D. Kaplan, *Kissinger, Metternich, and Realism*, THE ATLANTIC MONTHLY, June 1999, at 72.

⁶ ROBERT D. KAPLAN, *THE COMING ANARCHY* (2000).

⁷ See *id.* at xi–xiii; see also FUKUYAMA, *supra* note 3, at xi (setting forth Fukuyama’s contentions that liberal democracy is the ideal form of human government).

Any careful observer of the international scene can recognize the dichotomous forces at work. On the one hand there is the process of regionalization, manifested in its most successful form by the European Union where states which had spent decades as bitter enemies decided to embark upon a less deadly path through the elimination of borders and commitment to a shared future. This path has been imitated less convincingly in Southeast Asia, Eastern Africa, and Central and South America. These are institutional forces of globalization.

The dichotomous force is fragmentation, most recently seen in an extreme form in the former Yugoslavia, but also evident in varying degrees in Quebec, Brittany, Eritrea, and Chechnya. While the economists rave about economies of scale and diminishing externalities that bring lower-cost goods to consumers through regionalism; others summon old loyalties and assert an identity that is at odds with the prevailing political power in a region. In broad terms, these can be seen as forces of order and disorder. Can it be that Kaplan is simply arguing that the glass is half empty when in actuality the level of water today is incrementally higher than it has been before and on balance is increasing? Or, is the water leaking or evaporating faster than it can be replenished?

Is it possible that Kaplan is subverted by his excellent journalist's eye that focuses in the first instance on capturing the reader's attention or imagination rather than on distancing himself academically from episodes and seeking a larger theory into which to fit specific behaviors?⁸ Certainly neither of the other authors is so melodramatic. Perhaps, as a true representative of a society notorious for media-induced historicity, Kaplan has captured tragedies of the moment, even of the decade, but not necessarily events that are accurate portents of the new age evolving out of the redistribution of power following the Cold War. Conceptually, Kaplan belies his journalist's eye in proclaiming that "the meaning of [realism] is less clear than it seems."⁹ Realism is abundantly clear, if complex. In contradistinction to idealism, realism defines a perspective of description or prescription in which tangible power is the determining feature of policy, not

⁸ Indicating Kaplan's appeal to the reader's imagination, the book opens with the phrase "[t]he minister's eyes were like egg yolks..." *Id.* at 3.

⁹ *Id.* at 129 (observing that Henry Kissinger's realism is a product of his experience as a Jewish teenager in Nazi Germany).

some conception of a better, or perfect world. Finally, Kaplan elucidates his perspective: “Realists . . . run foreign policy; idealists [comment] from the sidelines.”¹⁰ He is certainly not to be confused with a pointy-headed intellectual idealistic sideline commentator.

In the concluding essay Kaplan proposes the ultimate realism: The U.S. should pay its UN dues and then take over the body!¹¹ This proposes the ultimate foreign policy hypocrisy for the United States; we will be resolving a conflict through institutionalized order (the status quo of which Kaplan should approve) while subverting that order to our own devices. Here is a commonplace conflict between the idealist sitting on the sidelines and the realist at work in the fields of foreign policy. Can we do both? Is compromise, the realist mode for which he argues, possible in such a situation?

By giving greater credence to the perspective of Kissinger than to that of Elie Wiesel, a concentration camp survivor and humanitarian of the first order, Kaplan reinforces his need to have a “straw man” to rail against rather than advocate a nuanced social transformation to be managed and even confronted, as in Nazi Germany.¹² Kaplan repeatedly demonstrates that he sees a world of half-full glasses demanding militaristic responses¹³ rather than the glass being filled, as we adapt to evolving views (such as the post-Cold War emergence of institutionalized human rights tribunals). Kaplan argues that the lawlessness of Abidjan in West Africa, for example, might be a foretaste of what U.S. cities might become.¹⁴ My current data tells me that crime is declining yearly in the U.S. . . . not the sign of an anarchic trend. Whose episodic evidence should we believe? Should we recall the book from several years ago, *Japan as Number*

¹⁰ *Id.* at 139 (noting further that the important national security positions are occupied by realists, and that administrations that initially embraced idealism were forced to defer to realism in foreign policy).

¹¹ *Id.* at 181 (arguing that the United Nations has been most efficacious when it served the aims of U.S. foreign policy goals, and citing examples such as the Korean and Gulf Wars, and the Iraqi weapons inspection program).

¹² *See id.* at 134–135 (detailing Kissinger’s principle that “[d]isorder is worse than injustice” and distinguishing Kissinger’s experience with Nazi Germany from that of Elie Wiesel).

¹³ *See id.* at 100–101, 139 (listing instances of mass murder and advocating the use of force to stop state sponsored killing machines).

¹⁴ *See id.* at 5.

*One?*¹⁵ That proposition has been submerged in the Asian financial collapse of the late 1990s. Distance, Mr. Kaplan. Distance.

Kaplan claims that the anarchy and chaos of West Africa “provide an appropriate introduction to the issues . . . that will soon confront our civilization.”¹⁶ He continues by asserting that “[t]here is no other place on the planet where political maps are so deceptive.”¹⁷ Which is it? Is Sierra Leone unique or a prototype? If anarchy is coming, Kaplan’s evidence must presage a changing political environment. Or is it possible that Kaplan has just noticed this wretchedness and it has been a characteristic of urban life in developing states for a long time? In true journalistic style, the book is devoid of supporting data (e.g. how has life expectancy changed since independence and what is the literacy rate now compared to then). In addition, Kaplan draws great generalities from specific data that do not sustain them. For example, he credits Loy Henderson with foresight in predicting that the Iranians would come to hate the Americans, ignoring both the subtlety of leaders’ devices of a common enemy and a possible reaction to U.S. excesses in pursuing a Cold War policy leading to the assassination of Prime Minister Mossadegh in 1951.¹⁸

Kaplan explains the individual impulse to anarchy as the untamed male propensity to “impulsive physical action.”¹⁹ With the decline of standing armies in peacetime, Kaplan argues, there will be more impulsive action, and hence more anarchy.²⁰ He fails to consider (1) the contention that smaller families in the industrialized states are less inclined to part

¹⁵ EZRA F. VOGEL, *JAPAN AS NUMBER ONE: LESSONS FOR AMERICA* (1979) (describing certain aspects of the Japanese national system that are so effective that America should follow Japan’s example for future prosperity).

¹⁶ KAPLAN, *supra* note 7, at 7.

¹⁷ *Id.* (using Sierra Leone as an example, Kaplan points out that numerous factions outside the official Sierra Leonian government exert control within the country’s political boundaries).

¹⁸ *See id.* at 144 (contrasting Kissinger’s lack of clairvoyance with the insightful observations of his contemporaries).

¹⁹ *Id.* at 175 (adopting the argument advanced by Mosca that standing armies are an effective means for controlling innately violent young men). *See* GAETANO MOSCA, *THE RULING CLASS* 222–223 (Hannah D. Kahn, trans., Arthur Livingston, ed., McGraw-Hill 1st ed. 1939).

²⁰ KAPLAN, *supra* note 7, at 175 (concluding that the peace envisioned by many is only attainable through some form of tyranny).

with their one son to military action;²¹ (2) that one consequence of “civilization” is the social channeling of impulse into more socially acceptable behaviors, e.g., sports;²² and (3) the restraint through balance of power in the nuclear age.²³

The ethnic divisions and other miseries cited by Kaplan are characteristic of impoverished states.²⁴ Those who have nothing else to occupy their minds become narcissists. Dynamic states think about the future, and their life is perhaps less orderly (even revolutionary?) but more dynamic. The Africans actually need an economic activity to distract them from their misery. After all, how much different, in the larger scheme of things, is Kaplan’s description of a beach full of rusting autos and dead animals from a toxic waste site in a developed state as an indicator of decline? If the environment is a national security issue, perhaps Kaplan should look at the real source of pollution—the industrial West which produces the vast majority of pollution in the process of consuming the lion’s share of resources. It is not a poor African state that threatens the global climate.

His case for a disenchanting Islamic Turkey hangs in large part upon the failure of the West to support Muslims in Bosnia.²⁵ What about Kosovo where the U.S. came to the assistance of Muslim Albanians? My example can trump your example—this is the problem with argumentation based upon episodes. The U.S. disinterest in Bosnia was not primarily a Muslim issue rather, it is a matter of perceived national interest, or disinterest. We changed our collective mind by the time of Kosovo. This is not evidence of a slide into anarchy but rather evidence (along with the International Criminal Court established by the UN in 1997 and the war crimes tribunals dealing with Serbia and

²¹ Diana Priest, *Fear of Casualties Drives Bosnia Debate; After Recent Troop Missions, Americans Expect Almost Bloodless Battles*, WASH. POST, Dec. 2, 1995, at A1.

²² Paul N. Cox, *The Public, The Private and the Corporation*, 80 MARQ. L. REV. 391, 480–81 (1964)

²³ Leonard G. Ratner, *The Utilitarian Imperative: Autonomy, Reciprocity, and Evolution*, 12 HOFSTRA L. REV. 723, 747 (1884).

²⁴ See KAPLAN, *supra* note 7, at 3–7, 16–18 (describing a number of demographic, environmental and societal stresses, including disease, overpopulation, crime, refugee migrations, and the instability of national borders).

²⁵ See *id.* at 29 (noting that the author’s experience in Turkey revealed a dichotomy between the Turkic distrust for Muslim Iran and the increase in Turks’ empathy for the oppressed Muslims in Bosnia and Germany).

Rwanda and the impending trial of General Pinochet) of a growing body of international human rights precedents.

Dismayingly, Kaplan dismisses international law as no more than a constraint on behavior, relying upon episodic rather than historical evidence to draw a conclusion about the role of law in a dynamic society.²⁶ Kaplan writes approvingly of Soviet support for the totalitarian regime of Mengistu in Ethiopia, and criticizes the U.S. for its refusal to have contact because of human rights violations.²⁷ The Mengistu regime, orderly as it was, is gone and Ethiopia is currently in a state of anarchy where its citizens cry for a return to the *status quo ante*, a theocracy of sorts in which freedom was repressed and “progress” limited to a small elite.²⁸ There are competing foreign policy objectives, and stability is only one of them.

In mentioning U.S.-Middle East interests, Kaplan defines them as “obsessions” compared to relative disinterest in Turkey.²⁹ He goes on to suggest that the Kurdish-Turkish conflict is more complex than simply drawing a boundary³⁰ as if the same is not true with the Israelis and Palestinians. Our “obsession,” as he notes has a domestic political element that simply cannot be dismissed.³¹ These two examples are illustrative of situations for which there is no easy solution, certainly not a geographic one. Such situations require management by the states involved, along with major international powers—just as the U.S. has been doing persistently in the Middle East ever since the creation of Israel half a century ago. Kaplan’s fixation on cartography leads to a misleading perspective on the underlying nature of political realities. While one can rail against the unfortunate

²⁶ See *id.* at 99–100 (contending that “[I]nstitutionalizing war-crimes tribunals will have as much effect on future war crimes as Geneva Conventions have had on the Iraqi and Serbian military forces” because highly centralized modern states “won’t be influenced by outside pressure”).

²⁷ See *id.* at 103 (arguing that more human rights violations occurred because the U.S. decided to stand on principle and not intervene in Ethiopia).

²⁸ See John W. Harbeson, *Elections and Democratization in Post-Mengistu Ethiopia*, in POSTCONFLICT ELECTIONS, DEMOCRATIZATION & INTERNATIONAL ASSISTANCE 111, 117–26 (Krishna Kumar, ed., 1998) (discussing the events following the overthrow of the military dictatorship of Mengistu Haile Mariam in 1991).

²⁹ See KAPLAN, *supra* note 7, at 41 (asserting that the outcome of the Turkish-Kurdish dispute will have a greater impact in the Middle East than the outcome of the Israeli-Palestinian dispute).

³⁰ See *id.* at 43.

³¹ See *id.* at 41.

drawing of boundaries by colonial powers, that is a *fait accompli*, and the global placement of boundaries has conformed to the European pattern confirmed in the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648. We must move on.

Even though “power is leaking out of sovereignty” as one observer has suggested, there is more than one alternative to breakdown. The European Union over a period of fifty years has demonstrated that we can move beyond the nation-state without degenerating into chaos. The level and intensity of organization is far less important than the recognition of both interdependence and the need for sustaining order. Society is sustained through a balance between freedom and order (not possibly, as Kaplan suggests, but surely), and Kaplan is certainly correct when he praises those places that have achieved progress through order, not freedom.³² To read Kaplan’s pessimistic prediction of descent into primitive tribal conflict, one would have to conclude that the entire history of “Western civilization” has been a fantasy, that humankind has learned nothing, and that we are all animals in the guises of violinists, poets, or computer programmers. Kaplan virtually ignores globalization, seeing it ultimately as a vehicle for entertainment while the demons produce micro-miniaturized weapons with which to wreak future havoc.³³ The attendant interdependence that lead, incredibly for those who recall repeated wars in Europe, to a joint French-German military force stands for something in this rush to anarchy.

Kaplan’s implicit criticism of multicultural education in the U.S. belies a conservative, even partisan posture which is not far removed from advocacy of U.S. hegemony. Richard Perle, Assistant Secretary of Defense in the Reagan administration, observed that the only way citizens in a democracy will bear the high price of defense (as stipulated by the decision making elite, I would add) is to be kept in a state of fear.³⁴ Kaplan comes to this position in his last

³² See KAPLAN, *supra* note 7, at 76–77 (praising Singapore for extreme growth and stability in a non-democratic society).

³³ See *id.* at 182–83 (observing that whatever peace Americans are currently experiencing is not a peace at all, but rather a lull preceding the next conflict).

³⁴ See The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, *Proliferation Roundtable, June 26, 2000*, <http://www.ceip.org/programs/npp/Fitzgerald62600.htm> (last visited October 20, 2000) (presenting a roundtable discussion of WAY OUT THERE IN THE BLUE: REAGAN, STAR WARS AND THE END OF THE COLD WAR with author Frances Fitzgerald).

essay.³⁵ Thus, the CIA exaggerations of Soviet military power sustained U.S. military expenditures in the Cold War.³⁶ With the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Cold War, we need an enemy and Kaplan has come forward to provide that enemy.³⁷ Chaos and anarchy threaten us everywhere, and rather than long for the elusive peace dividend that has not appeared, we must gird ourselves against attacks from people unlike ourselves whose loyalties are to primitive ethnicities and who resort to low intensity conflict to pursue their nebulous objectives.³⁸ His praise of centralized capitalism continues this theme, while ignoring the down side of transnational corporations that are subject to no overarching regulation regarding working conditions, the environment, monopolistic practices and the like.

Incidentally, this “corporatization” which Kaplan lauds is not an unmixed blessing.³⁹ When it comes to “corporatizing” the academy, Kaplan completely ignores academic freedom—the intellectual “individualism” that he claims does not exist in the U.S.⁴⁰ Here we have an appreciation for the “button-down mind” of 1960s sociology. If it produces order and even economic expansion, does it produce freedom and human development?

In praising private enterprise for guaranteeing security, as in the mercenary Executive Outcomes stabilizing Sierra

³⁵ See KAPLAN, *supra* note 7, at 172–74 (inferring that respect for government decreases in times of peace when citizens are more likely to take national security for granted).

³⁶ James O. Goldsborough, *The Secrecy Disease*, SAN DIEGO UNION-TRIBUNE, Mar. 14, 1996, at B9 (“By overstating the Soviet military threat, the Reagan administration, as [John Deutch, the CIA Director,] now admits, was able to rally opinion behind its own extravagant military buildup, increasing the military share of the federal budget to 28 percent, a peacetime high . . .” *Id.*).

³⁷ See KAPLAN, *supra* note 7, at 106–07 (listing the need for protection of Caspian oil reserves, increasing problems with drug cartels, kidnapping threats, weather-related catastrophes and rapid urbanization).

³⁸ See *id.* (suggesting that the new enemy requires a new response in the form of “quiet professionals” who can quickly neutralize threats by utilizing a combination of technology and human intelligence).

³⁹ See *id.* at 83–85 (detailing corporate involvement in the development of master planned communities and in the creation of synergies with academic institutions to enhance curriculum and expedite research).

⁴⁰ See *id.* at 85 (quoting Del Weber, chancellor of the Omaha campus of the University of Nebraska, as saying “[u]niversities will have to... [work] with corporations on curriculum and other matters, or they will die.”).

Leone,⁴¹ Kaplan forgets completely his “holographic” geography which justifies a Kurdish state,⁴² coming down in favor of sheer overwhelming, efficient force to sustain order.

The alarmist in me is ready to subscribe to a prediction that the world is indeed going to hell in a handbasket without reading Kaplan. But the scholar in me cries out for hard evidence of an immutable trend, not episodic observations while driving into a West African capital from the airport. Kaplan tells a compelling tale. He does not make a compelling case. Kaplan is accomplished at setting up straw men to be brought to bear upon an otherwise questionable argument. Some of us inevitably see the glass as half full; others see it half empty. Kaplan has lined up an impressive array of glasses, and pronounces them all half empty. There are undoubtedly days when life seems that way, especially for a journalist who prefers Bamako, Mali, to Berlin as the Wall comes down. Kaplan seems to be the quintessential television news reporter—“if it bleeds, it leads.” Significance is to be found in the number of shell casings lying in the street, not in the global environmental treaty; in the child soldiers in Sierra Leone, not in the UN-sponsored International Criminal Court. One of the values of print journalism is the potential for evoking images through the written word as opposed to having to rely upon visually captivating pictures which are the staple of television. One could conclude that Kaplan is a frustrated television reporter consigned to word pictures, not video images.

Peace is also a straw man for Kaplan, who warns against making it an all-consuming ideal, lest a society too easily compromises, for its sake alone. In time of conflict, any absolute objective is dangerous, not just peace. Kaplan is practicing political science, despite his disdain, and in doing so raises up a convenient goal, peace, to rail against. And then there is the implicit straw man of permanent peace, which no keen observer of the global scene expects. International politics is the prevention of systemic anarchy and preservation of the conditions for “progress.” Peace may or may not be a concomitant, but the toleration of localized disorder is one of the by-products of a stable, ethnically diverse world.

⁴¹ See *id.* at 81 (crediting Executive Outcomes, a “South African corporate mercenary force,” as having more effective peacemaking capabilities than the U.N. or any other world power).

⁴² See *id.* at 43, 50–51 (describing a map in three dimensions that shows overlapping power centers and ethnic influences rather than mere borders).

Kaplan's assessment of democratic Russia⁴³ and authoritarian China⁴⁴ cannot be faulted. Democracy has brought to Russia crime and civil decay, while authoritarianism has indeed been behind remarkable, if uneven, economic growth in China. The United Nations Development Programme's "quality of life" index foregoes measures of GNP per capita in favor of life expectancy, literacy, and other characteristics which relate to a meaningful life aside from mere materialism (i.e., GNP growth is not the only measure of progress).⁴⁵ Kaplan points out that complex European society led to organic growth of "competing interest groups."⁴⁶ Are not most of the world's societies seeking, and attaining, increasingly complex situations which spawn the completing elements of civil society that Kaplan argues are the keystone of democracy, and hence stability?

While predicting "the coming anarchy," Kaplan heaps praise on Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*,⁴⁷ noting Gibbon's relevance to contemporary times because history does indeed repeat itself.⁴⁸ Kaplan cannot have it both ways: Either history muddles along with order and chaos in persistent and bloody competition, or we are confronting a new era of chaos and disaster. There is either cyclical history or there is not. Kaplan must make a choice. His proposal for "foreign aid" to slow deterioration⁴⁹ refutes his pessimism as well. He puts forth a mechanism for "healthier politics."⁵⁰ Kaplan has read widely and extensively, but not everything he needed to provide the holistic view his

⁴³ *Id.* at 64 (observing that a democratic Russia with ninety nine percent literacy is plagued by crime).

⁴⁴ *Id.* (noticing that authoritarian China is continually improving the quality of life for its citizens).

⁴⁵ See UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME, HUMAN DEVELOPMENT REPORT 2000: HUMAN RIGHTS AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT (2000) available at <http://www.undp.org/hdro/anatools.htm> (explaining that the Human Development Index takes into account longevity, knowledge and standard of living).

⁴⁶ See KAPLAN, *supra* note 7, at 66 (positing that the competition among interest groups was imperative to sustain democracy in Europe).

⁴⁷ EDWARD GIBBON, THE HISTORY OF THE DECLINE AND FALL OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE (1852).

⁴⁸ See KAPLAN, *supra* note 7, at 111.

⁴⁹ *Id.* at 122 (applying the principle of proportionalism to foreign aid).

⁵⁰ *Id.* (arguing that foreign aid programs should be aimed at more basic regional initiatives to foster an environment more accepting of new political systems).

title implies. What he argues is true, but there are other truths to be considered, and, on balance, he does not carry the day for this observer.

As one who has followed the politics of AIDS in Africa very carefully for more than 15 years, I have every reason to subscribe to a pessimistic view of Africa, but Kaplan's argument does not make the case. Perhaps the case cannot be made; perhaps we just need to step back and withhold judgement for some years to come and do our best not to worsen the situation by pronouncing death sentences upon societies that are merely ailing. As a matter of fact, in the few years since these essays were written, one can see that Kaplan has not been batting 1.000. Chicken Little became very excited by an epiphenomenon that had little significance. Some of the phenomena Kaplan highlights are indeed portentous. Others are no more than transitory. He has not provided us with tools to make that distinction, and so his readers must be forewarned to bring some tools along with which to sift through his dire predictions. The book is a collection of recent (middle half of the 1990s) essays. While there is an underlying conservative propensity, there is a lack of coherence. The penultimate chapter, a summary of Joseph Conrad's *Nostromo*,⁵¹ is conceptually consistent, but contextually irrelevant, other than to reiterate that the world is after all a sad and frightening place. As a series for *The Atlantic Monthly*, these essays work. As a device to "shatter our post Cold War dreams," they irritate. Consistency is not a strong point; the essays tend to be episodic and interesting, but not epistemologically instructive.

⁵¹ JOSEPH CONRAD, *NOSTROMO* (1923).