

# Editors' Note

The Carnegie Council for Ethics in International Affairs will turn one hundred years old in February 2014. Andrew Carnegie founded the Council in 1914 with a specific purpose in mind: he thought it was possible to avoid the Great War that he and many others believed was on the horizon. In fact, he approached the project with considerable optimism, confident that the barbarity of industrial war would become a thing of the past. Humanity was evolving, becoming more civilized with each passing decade. Common interests and common sense would surely make large-scale war a relic of bygone days, similar to other uncivilized practices, such as slavery and dueling. Sadly, it was not to be.

The twentieth century brought many horrors, including three world wars (if we count the cold war), the Holocaust, genocides, famines, ethnic cleansing, and terrorism. Yet it also brought amazing normative shifts. Standards have risen, expectations have changed. Universal education, the right to vote, social security, civil rights, women's rights, the rights of minorities, environmental awareness—all were once thought to be unrealizable, if thought of at all, and yet today they are largely considered basic and fundamental.

Despite the many intractable conflicts we see in today's world and despite the vast inequalities and unfair circumstances that persist, there are common interests we can build upon. In a globalizing world, we have many opportunities to work toward harmonizing norms and standards to make our planet a more peaceful place. It now seems reasonable to think that the days of large-scale industrial war may be numbered. And perhaps the concept of war itself might evolve into something that looks more like cooperative policing than the "total-war" scenarios we have seen over the past hundred years. We have a lot of work to do here—especially in the area of reducing nuclear weapons—but it is feasible, especially if we base it on a common global ethic.

The following symposium is a product of the inaugural meeting of the Carnegie Council's Global Ethics Network in November 2011 at the Council's headquarters in New York City. Over the next two years a network of participants, led by a talented group of Global Ethics Fellows—some of whom have contributed

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responses to this symposium—will help establish a new framework for debating a global ethic, and produce interactive pedagogical tools, original university-level curricula, and lasting cross-border partnerships. *Ethics & International Affairs* will collaborate closely with the Fellows and others involved in this ambitious project, publishing innovative work on the role of changing values and norms in international relations today.

In the following essay, Michael Ignatieff takes a global ethic to mean “a morality whose object is ‘one world’ in which all human beings are entitled to equal moral concern and in which we have common responsibilities to our habitat,” and which “seeks to defend all human beings and our common habitat against partialities and interests grounded in family, community, ethnicity, economic position, and nation.” The idea comes to life in applying it to specific cases where claims of universality and particularity compete.

We agree: life on earth is fast becoming a shared destiny. Reimagining a global ethic—with all of its possibilities and limitations—is no longer a luxury. It is a practical necessity. As the Council looks toward its centennial and beyond, we invite you to join us in this challenging but critical task.