Power and Purpose in American Foreign Policy

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The American Mission in World Politics

More than two hundred years ago, at the close of that period of American history which has been felicitously designated "the seedtime of the Republic," John Adams set down his thoughts on the historical significance of the American experience with republican government. "I always consider the settlement of America with reverence and wonder," he wrote, "as the opening of a grand scene and design in Providence for the illumination of the ignorant and the emancipation of the slavish part of mankind all over the earth."[1] Adams was by no means alone in the view that the United States, as an almost-unique embodiment of social and civic virtue, was destined to make a major contribution to the political reformation of mankind. Such convictions have been prominent throughout the nation's history: statesmen with political outlooks as divergent as those of Hamilton and Wilson have beguiled themselves with the belief that the American system would become the political model for the entire world, and that American power might be the instrument for the establishment of representative government on the widest possible scale.[2] The crusading spirit perhaps most fulsomely expressed in John Kennedy's inaugural address thus appears to have deep roots indeed in the nation's political character.[3]

To such beliefs about the unique nature of the American polity can also be traced the origins of what George Kennan has called the "legalistic-moralistic" approach to foreign policy, in which American values and interests broadly interpreted become the primary standard for judging the behavior of other nations.[4] As Kennan has emphasized, the United States has been particularly prone to judge international events from its own special perspective, and commonly has failed to consider adequately the legitimate views of other nations in the process. We have thus frequently been accused of exhibiting a narrow "absolutism" and a hypocritical moralism in our foreign relations.

These criticisms are not totally without foundation. Throughout its history the American nation has pursued foreign policy goals indistinguishable from those of other nations. Like others it has sought security, economic advantage, prestige, and influence in the international arena. Like others it has sought to protect advantage and influence once attained. And as they advanced the nation's interests American statesmen have often ignored or violated the canons of international law and morality. But so consistent and pervasive have been the assertions of higher purpose that most students of American diplomacy have concluded both that these claims have been more than mere rationalizations for other drives, and that they have had a significant impact upon the selection of ends and

means in American foreign policy as well. To that extent, American diplomacy does exhibit a pattern different from that of other nations.

In recent years many critics have come to consider the belief that the United States has a distinctive role to play in world politics to be deleterious to the development of a successful foreign policy. Even before the Vietnam War, there existed an ample literature urging a scaling down of American pretentions and a redefinition of the goals of American policy in more modest and prudent terms.[5] As the nation's involvement in Vietnam deepened, that view became a consensus; and although even the academic critics of America's "crusading interventionism" by no means abandoned the view that the United States should play a large role in world politics,[6] it became virtually *de rigueur* in the scholarly community to espouse the so-called "limitationist" viewpoint concerning the goals of American policy.

But it was not only in the intellectual community that opinion concerning the goals appropriate for American diplomacy began to change. Discontent with the seemingly endless war in Southeast Asia among the public at large clearly undermined the consensus over the means and ends of American foreign policy which had existed since the outbreak of World War II, and reawakened the urge toward withdrawal from an activist role in world affairs which had been dormant for nearly three decades.

Even after the withdrawal of the 500,000 American troops from Vietnam, however, the United States remains very much involved with the external world. Today America has 492,000 troops in some twenty-nine countries around the world. It is associated with four regional defense alliances and has contracted mutual assistance treaties with over forty nations. More than 900 additional treaties and agreements of every conceivable type bind us to dozens more, and to a host of international organizations and agencies as well. In 1975 the United States is furnishing military and/or economic assistance to approximately one hundred countries. Inadvertently and with the best intentions, Ronald Steel has pointed out, the United States has acquired an "accidental empire," one that embraces much of the world in a network of military pacts, economic ties, and political commitments.[7] That "empire," it is now clear, cannot be readily abandoned, for the United States, like other great powers before it, has learned that it can no more ignore the obligations and commitments that have been both assumed and thrust upon it in the twentieth century than it could declare itself a great power by decree, as it attempted to do early in the nineteenth. Thus the debate engendered by the Vietnam War continues, now encompassing the broadest possible questions concerning America's role in world politics in the final decades of the twentieth century.

American Foreign Policy Prior to World War II

The current debate centering upon the extent, the methods and the purpose of American involvment in international politics is the inevitable culmination of the post-World War II revolution in America's relations with the outside world. Prior to the twentieth century, the internationalist and interventionist thrust implicit in the American self-vision from the nation's earliest days lay concealed behind a hardheaded realism in the choice of foreign policy objectives and in the actual conduct of diplomatic relations with other nations. Moreover, a fortuitous geographic position and the exigencies of international history had made possible a policy of isolationism or, more accurately, of non-alignment, which concealed from the American people the importance of an effective foreign policy.

Thus it was, as Charles Burton Marshall has noted, that the United States "came to maturity without having, in Whitman's phrase, to 'learn to chant the cold dirges of the baffled and sullen hymns of defeat.'"[8] Neither did the various international ad-

ventures of the early twentieth century or even Wilson's "great crusade" of 1917 mark any significant departure from the earlier tradition. There is little evidence to suggest that the nation as a whole fully appreciated the significance of the Spanish-American War, especially of the territorial acquisitions which followed in its wake; and surely neither Mr. Wilson nor his constituents viewed World War I as marking a permanent commitment by the United States to active participation in international politics. Indeed, for Wilson himself, as his critics are fond of noting, America fought the Great War out of a conviction that "the world must be made safe for democracy,"[9] and in order to usher in a new era in world history in which an institutionalized rule of law would replace war as the final arbiter of disputes among nations.[10] The rapidity and fervor with which the nation reembraced isolationism when it became apparent that Wilson's dream bore little relationship to reality is fitting testimony to the twentieth-century strength of the tradition of nonalignment, however transmogrified in inspiration that tradition may have become since its origins.

From World War II to Vietnam

It was not until after World War II that the United States came to believe that its own vital interests, not to mention its ultimate hopes and expectations for mankind, demanded an active role in world affairs. This was the ultimate significance of the much-discussed "revolution in American foreign policy" during which the vistas of United States policy expanded to encompass the entire globe.[11] The contrast with the decade of the thirties was particularly sharp, as more than one commentator has observed:

> In the 1930's the United States had retracted into a pathological isolation: Americans had rejected even the non-compulsory jurisdiction of World Court, made the decision to retire from the Philippines, refused to build up fortifications on Guam, and abandoned their neutral rights at sea. . . . Yet during the following decade Americans fought a global war, led the mightiest coalition in history, became deeply involved politically in all parts of the earth, made the pivotal decisions that affected the future everywhere, and an American President bestrode the world like Caesar Augustus of old. In the light of its traditional foreign policy this sudden stupendous global influence of America constituted a veritable revolution, one of the most dramatic in history.[12]

The consequences of this notable change in the operational pattern of America's relations with the external world have been many, and in fact are only beginning to be understood. But surely among the most important is one which until recently has been little observed: for the first time in its history, the United States has been compelled to act on the basis of its traditional, imperfectly examined and inadequately articulated understanding of international politics, and for the first time as well it has been forced to confront the consequences and implications of its classic definition of national purpose. Is the United States in its principles and behavior fundamentally different from the other national units which participate in international relations? Is the American political system the embodiment of the natural rights of man, and thus of a set of political values felt to be the legitimate political inheritance of all mankind? Is the United States destined to help other men to achieve that inheritance? And if so, by what means is it to accomplish this end?

Needless to say, this confrontation, which ultimately involves nothing less than the self-vision of the nation itself and the relationship between that vision and the nation's behavior in world affairs, would inevitably lead to errors at the level of design and reverses at the level of execution; and

it was no less inevitable that these errors and reverses would stimulate a reaction at home. From the beginning of the nation's postwar involvement in international relations there have arisen frequent charges that our policy-makers have acted unwisely in one way or another, and dissatisfaction with the results of policy has also led from time to time to a questioning of the general sweep of the nation's global strategy itself.

Resistance to the postwar "revolution" in American policy, it is worth remembering, came from both ends of the political spectrum.[13] The Henry Wallace Democrats of the middle and late '40's, rejecting the mounting evidence that Roosevelt's "grand design" for postwar cooperation with the Soviet Union was doomed to failure, bitterly denounced the gradual development of the containment policy, and anticipated as well the central thesis of later New Left critics in insisting that the United States bore the principal responsibility for the onset of the Cold War. Taft Republicans, on the other hand, although harboring few illusions concerning the goals of Soviet foreign policy, strongly opposed any advance military guarantees to the nations of Western Europe, while appearing to suggest at the same time that the United States ought to have done much more to prevent Mao's accession to power in China.[14] The discontent in both camps was fed by the rather ambiguous outcome of the Korean War, and by public dissatisfaction with our initial efforts to "contain" communism in Asia during the Eisenhower-Dulles Administration.[15] If American foreign policy during the Eisenhower years seemed to suffer—as critics of all political persuasions have charged—from a severe case of muscle paralysis, it is not only the faulty understanding of the nation's leaders which must be blamed: that faulty understanding clearly mirrored the state of mind of the nation at large. Indeed, there is little indication that matters have improved much in the interim.

To be sure, the Kennedy era was to have changed all this. The torch of leadership, we were told, had been passed to a new generation, more wise and more able than that which it had succeeded, and we could thenceforth anticipate a foreign policy at once relevant and efficacious. The rhetorical seeds of the 1961 Inaugural rather quickly fell on the stony ground of Cuba, Laos, and Vietnam, however; and it soon became apparent to most interested observers that the seemingly-vast military and economic power of the United States was succeeding neither in enhancing American security nor in promoting international order and stability. There was little if any improvement under Johnson. Much more comfortable with domestic than with foreign policy in any event, he quickly became totally immersed in the Vietnam conflict, and in the last analysis he proved unable to imbue American diplomacy with direction or coherence. Increasingly as the Johnson years wore on, a new kind of challenge to American foreign policy was heard. A growing body of criticism began to call into question the motives and intentions of our policy-makers, and professed to discern a widening gap between the desires of the national leadership and those of the people at large—or, at least, of the more informed and intelligent among them.[16] The Vietnam adventure, it was said, represented still another manifestation of the "arrogance of power"; some opponents of the war directly asserted that the United States has assumed the imperial mantle recently laid aside by Britain and France. According to these critics, American foreign policy required a substantial redirection, and that could be only accomplished by altering the nation's political system itself. While there is no evidence that these views were ever accepted by more than a tiny minority of the American people, it does appear that the steady denunciation of our Asian policy which emanated from the political Left both fed popular dissatisfaction with the Vietnam War and contributed to a growing disenchantment among the public with our foreign policy generally.

The Nixon Years

Both President Nixon and his National-Security-Advisor-become-Secretary-of-State believed (even before 1969) that popular discontent with Vietnam had undermined the consensus concerning America's role in the world which had sustained United States foreign policy since the 1940's. Both Nixon and Kissinger, in fact, believed that virtually all of the forces and factors which had shaped world politics during the first two postwar decades had ceased to be operative.

The principal changes were said to be six in number. First, Japan and the nations of Western Europe, the latter gradually drawing closer together economically and politically, have recovered from the ravages of World War II, and are capable once again of assuming major roles in the world political system. Second, the new nations of Africa and Asia have substantially matured since the early post-independence period, and now appear able to resist external aggression and hold their own in relations with bigger powers. Third, the one-time communist monolith has been shattered, replaced by a loosely organized bloc whose members quarrel as often as they cooperate. Fourth, U.S. military preeminence has given way to a condition of strategic parity between the U.S.S.R. and the United States, reducing American freedom of maneuver in crisis situations but simultaneously creating new possibilities for detente based on a "stable balance of terror." Fifth, the old "isms"—the once-vibrant ideologies which for twenty years animated the foreign policies of the great powers—have lost their vitality, and more traditional national goals such as security and economic progress have become the primary concerns both of the United States and the Soviet Union. Finally, our own foreign policy is now inhibited by serious internal constraints, one of the several aftermaths of the Vietnam War. Our citizens' "psychological resources" have been exhausted, their "moral strength" has been undermined, and the nation's ability to play a major role in world politics is therefore considerably diminished.

Mr. Nixon's world view thus combined both pessimism and optimism. Although the power of the United States is in decline, especially relative to that of the Soviet Union, other changes which are occurring in the world are more favorable to American interests, especially if the latter are more restrictively defined than in the past. A substantially reduced role for America in maintaining world security, Mr. Nixon believed, was both desirable and possible; moreover, for the first time since the end of World War II, there existed an opportunity to create a "new structure of relations" with our traditional adversaries and thereby achieve a "durable peace" which will survive at least until the end of this century. Particularly if the economies of the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. could be bound together through a series of interlocking agreements, the Soviets would have a "vested interest" in continually-improving relations with the West. Somewhat later, as events in the Middle East and the massive post-SALT Soviet military build-up aroused doubts about the assumed Soviet desire for a constructive relationship with the United States, administration spokesmen began to stress the necessity of avoiding nuclear war as the primary rationale for the policy of detente.

Mr. Nixon's efforts to redirect American foreign policy, of course, were considerably reinforced by the views of Mr. Kissinger. At least since 1965 Kissinger has believed that the Soviet Union and Communist China are basically satisfied and status-quo powers, increasingly anxious for cooperative relationships with the United States. His views on defense policy also strongly buttressed Mr. Nixon's new approach to American foreign policy. Since virtually the start of his academic career in the mid-fifties Kissinger has believed that the maintenance of a strategic balance between the two major powers is relatively easy when both sides possess invulnerable

second-strike forces. He is also convinced that, beyond their deterrent effect, strategic nuclear weapons have very little operational significance for foreign policy. Precisely because of the awesome power of nuclear weapons, he has insisted, once a "stable" nuclear balance has been achieved no rational leader would be tempted either to launch an all-out war or to try to utilize strategic weapons to advance his nation's political interests. Hence, he has been relatively uninterested in the niceties of the nuclear balance and in the significance of numerical disparities in numbers of missiles deployed by the major powers. Finally, he has long argued that under conditions of nuclear stability thus defined the prospects for significant arms control agreements between the superpowers improve substantially. It was the combination of Mr. Kissinger's views on detente and on military strategy and Mr. Nixon's convictions concerning the possibilities of improved relations with the U.S.S.R. which constituted the driving force behind the Nixon Administration's national security policy.[17]

The often-voiced charge that the Nixon Administration never adequately defined or articulated its foreign policy objectives is thus without merit.[18] Virtually from the outset the administration made the achievement of detente with the U.S.S.R. its primary goal. Vital foreign policy tasks such as repairing strained relations with our European and Asian allies and restructuring the international trade and monetary systems, to say nothing of developing a coherent long-term strategy for dealing with the developing continents, were all sacrificed—and continue to be sacrificed—to the pursuit of improved relations with the Soviet Union. The "shocks" administered to Japan in 1971 and the pronounced deterioration in relations within the NATO Alliance during the first two years of the second Nixon Administration testified clearly to the new pecking order for adversaries and allies within that Administration's policy. At the same time, under the tutelage of Messrs. Nixon and Kissinger the United States renounced, even as an ultimate objective of policy, any intention to effect a fundamental change in the nature of the Soviet regime; indeed, not only great-power status but also a right to "natural expansion" in the Middle East and elsewhere were conceded to the Soviets. Even the much-heralded "opening" to China appears in retrospect to have been primarily designed to goad the Soviets more rapidly down the road to detente.[19]

The Administration's efforts to redefine America's global interests can be similarly understood. Many critics have suggested that the so-called Nixon Doctrine contained no clear standards defining the conditions under which the United States would use force to defend its interests abroad. Hence, they argued, it remained uncertain what policy the U.S. might follow if and when local defense forced proved inadequate in areas of American concern. Both Mr. Nixon and Mr. Kissinger, however, gave ample indication that they expected direct American involvement to be rarely necessary. The reason once again had to do with their views on the emergent relationship with the Soviet Union. If Soviet-American hostility is waning due to changes in Soviet ambitions, and if wise American diplomacy can be expected to lead to further improvements in relations between the two superpowers in the future, then America's fundamental security position is markedly improved. Not only is the danger of a military confrontation with the U.S.S.R. substantially diminished, but there is no longer any need to "contain Communism" through a complex array of treaties and alliances. As the Cold War passes, according to this view, American interests abroad shrink commensurately. Herein may lie the explanation for what was the Nixon Administration's apparent lack of concern over both the relative decline of American military power and the probable political consequences of that decline. In this respect the SALT agreements are the perfect strategic expression of the Nixon Doctrine itself.

The Adequacy of the Kissinger Foreign Policy

The willingness of the Soviet Union to pursue policies of restraint, therefore, is a crucial element in the new grand design for American foreign policy. Unfortunately, thus far there have been few signs of any such willingness on the part of the U.S.S.R., and the argument that Soviet foreign policy objectives in their broadest definition have decisively changed is not a great deal more compelling now than when it was first raised not long after the revolution of 1917. At the very least, Soviet policies in the Middle East and South Asia ought to give one pause. It is worth observing in this connection that great powers do not necessarily require universalist ideologies to sustain policies aimed at global preeminence. As Thucydides taught us long ago, the interests of states tend to expand with their power, and few would quarrel with the proposition that the rise of Soviet power, especially in its military dimension, is one of the salient facts of current international history.

Even the various SALT agreements, frequently cited by the Administration as the principal evidence to date of a favorable trend in Soviet-American relations, contain no Soviet concessions. Although the U.S.S.R. has agreed to halt further anti-ballistic missile (ABM) construction and consented to build no more ballistic missile launchers after specified totals have been reached, there were no signs that they were contemplating extensive ABM construction in any event and no hard evidence—despite Nixon Administration claims to the contrary—that they had previously intended to add to their arsenal large numbers of missile launchers beyond the total permitted by SALT. Indeed, it would be extremely difficult for the U.S.S.R. to acquire more than the permitted number—950—of sea-launched ballistic missiles during the five-year life of the SALT I agreements under the best of circumstances. Overall the 1972 agreement allows the Soviets a 2414-1710 advantage in missile launchers of all types, and a throw-weight advantage of at least 4-1. The payload and launcher advantages guaranteed the Soviets by SALT I afford them a more-than-adequate foundation for progress toward clear strategic superiority over the United States. The United States, on the other hand, surrendered a highly-promising ABM system, accepted a freeze on offensive launcher systems which complicates our efforts to acquire an effective counterforce capability (*i.e.*, an ability to destroy such military targets as protected missile silos), and won no guarantee that our existing qualitative advantages would not be neutralized by future Soviet technological advances.

In fact, since SALT I was signed the Soviets have embarked upon a program of military development which is staggering in scope and intensity, and which will nullify any remaining American advantages within several years.[20] First, they have continued to test and deploy missiles in their existing ICBM series, and have developed a new, more effective guidance system to improve the accuracy of all their missile systems. Second, they have developed a new launching system for their land-based missiles—the so-called "cold launch" or "pop-up" technique—which will enable them to install larger missiles in existing launchers and also to deploy more than one missile per silo (thus effectively and legally circumventing the effects of the limitations on missile size and on numbers of launchers contained in the SALT I agreement). Third, since 1972 they have tested no less than five new strategic missiles, four of the land-based and one of the sea-based variety, each possessing a larger throw-weight and greater accuracy than its predecessor. Fourth, the U.S.S.R. is proceeding very rapidly with a multiple warhead program, and should surpass the U.S. in numbers of warheads on land-based missiles later in this decade. These warheads will be larger and more counterforce-effective than our own. Finally, the Soviets are deploying two new types of missile-firing submarines, not to mention other major naval vessels such

as aircraft carriers, missile cruisers, destroyers, and attack submarines for antisubmarine warfare purposes. They are also beginning to deploy a new bomber, the adjustable-wing, intercontinental range "Backfire," and they may be testing a new supersonic heavy bomber as well.

The agreement concluded by Messrs. Ford and Brezhnev at Vladivostok in November of 1974, should it become embodied in a formal SALT II accord, will have little or no constraining effect on the Soviets' drive to achieve military preeminence over the United States. Indeed, by permitting them to place multiple warheads on 1320 of their missiles it ensures that the Soviets will acquire ultimate superiority in numbers of warheads on land-based missiles as well as in other significant indices of strategic power.

It is thus uncertain in the extreme whether "nuclear parity" with the United States is or ever has been a Soviet objective. On the contrary, available evidence indicates that the U.S.S.R. is seeking superiority over the United States in every significant area of military power. The relevant question, of course, is *why*.

No one would suggest that a Soviet nuclear attack "out of the blue" is probable, either now or in the foreseeable future. What is far more likely is an effort by the U.S.S.R. to exploit its growing strategic advantage for political purposes. The historical record indicates that the Soviets aggressively attempted to exploit their military capability for political purposes even when they were substantially inferior to the United States in strategic striking power, especially during the Khrushchev era. Neither have they been reticent in calling attention, before a variety of audiences, to their existing margin of superiority in intercontinental ballistic missile launchers. Were the Soviets directly or tacitly to bring their strategic advantage to bear during an international crisis, the U.S.—or its allies—might readily be intimidated. Given existing strategic realities, any Western leader would hesitate to challenge a direct Soviet military threat when a vital interest of the U.S.S.R. was at stake, much less employ strategic weapons in the event of lower-level Soviet aggression.

It is for this reason that responsible observers, both here and abroad, have begun to question the credibility of the U.S. nuclear commitment to Europe. When the Soviets acquire a counterforce capability sufficient to threaten portions of the American strategic "triad," these doubts could be transformed into convictions. Under such conditions, the U.S. could lose its remaining power to influence the international behavior of the European powers, to say nothing of the course of events in other parts of the globe. Indications that the timing of the American initiative towards a Middle East ceasefire in 1973 was largely determined by Soviet pressure may be an ominous portent of the future.

Thus idle speculation concerning the likelihood of a Soviet military assault on Europe or of a direct intervention by the Soviets in the Middle East largely misses the point. The vital question concerns the political implications of present and probable future strategic states. As many commentators have observed, the precise military balance as measured by experts may be far less significant in this connection than such attention-getting factors as gross numbers of delivery vehicles, popularly regarded as the true index of military power. It is for these reasons that the Nixon Administration's military posture, variously termed "realistic deterrence" and "strategic sufficiency" must be judged seriously deficient.

Mr. Kissinger, however, has long doubted the efficacy of military power as a tool of diplomacy in the nuclear age, and such issues as these interest him far less than his "web of interest" strategy and the establishment of close personal relations between the Ford-Kissinger team and Soviet leadership. The validity of both approaches to the Soviet-American relationship is of course open to challenge. It is by no means certain that the kinds of economic agree-

ments apparently contemplated will act as a constraint on Soviet efforts to expand her global power and influence, nor is there any reason to presume that these agreements will be of permanent duration. Least of all can it be assumed that pleasant personal relations between Ford and Brezhnev, or for that matter between Kissinger and Dobrynin, will be a significant factor in the Kremlin's policy calculations.

In any case, if the course of Soviet military development holds out little hope that detente has become a reality, neither is the political record very promising. While there is not space within the scope of this essay to analyze thoroughly the general course of international politics since SALT, even a capsule review of recent events is sufficient to indicate that the Soviets have no more sought to contribute to the "momentum of detente" within the political sphere than within the military arena.

There have been no serious concessions by the Soviets in any of the several ongoing negotiations with the Western powers on political and military issues. The talks on mutual force reductions in Europe are presently deadlocked, apparently awaiting the next American accommodations. The Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe is also deadlocked, in this case over Western European insistence that the Soviets agree to permit more "human contacts" between their people and those of the West. As for other areas of potential political conflict between the two superpowers, the record speaks for itself. Not only were the Soviets intimately involved in the preparations for the Middle East War, but virtually to the day that the oil embargo was lifted they continued to urge the radical Arab states to maintain it in force. There is no evidence to indicate that they have supported Mr. Kissinger's efforts to move the opposing parties towards a mutually satisfactory settlement since the embargo ended. Brezhnev himself has repeatedly stated during the period since SALT I that the ideological and political struggle between the two powers will go on. In fact, at a conference of Eastern European party leaders in mid-1973 he explained that the precise purpose of the Soviet policy of detente with the Western powers was to buy time for the Soviets to acquire total strategic superiority over the West; at that point, he said, the U.S.S.R. would set about to achieve the reorganization of world politics on its terms, which has always been the ultimate objective of Soviet foreign policy.[21]

There is, in short, no evidence whatsoever that there exists at present a true detente between the U.S. and the U.S.S.R., even if we define detente, in a minimum way, to mean acceptance by both the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. of the pre-SALT military balance as a permanent condition of international life. Much less is there a true detente if that word is defined more broadly as a situation in which both superpowers agree to pursue foreign policies which are essentially status-quo in nature.

A belief in the existence of detente between the superpowers has encouraged false hopes and has stimulated wishful thinking in the West. In the resulting euphoria, thoughtful and objective analysis of the military and political threats we confront from the U.S.S.R. in today's world has been rendered extraordinarily difficult. Even among those on the political Left whose enchantment with the U.S.S.R. has recently faded, there is little appreciation of the significance of the Russian military buildup; and in the highest councils of the present Administration the conviction that detente is a reality is deep-seated indeed. There are thus few obstacles in the path of the Soviet drive toward military and political preeminence.

Toward a More Viable Foreign Policy

If there are few signs that a true detente exists between the United States and the Soviet Union, on what basis should the United States attempt to conduct relations with the world's other superpower? Should the purpose of this nation's foreign policy in the 1970's be "victory over commu-

nism," as the then-leading (and still prominent) spokesman for American political conservatism, Senator Barry Goldwater, advocated a decade ago?[22] Or is the mere "containment" of the Soviet Union enough? Alternatively, should we drastically reduce American involvement with the outside world, as the "limitationists" advise, or perhaps even attempt a withdrawal to a Fortress America, relying upon our strategic nuclear forces to ensure our survival?[23] To raise these questions is merely to ask what are the national interests of the United States, and how can they be best protected under contemporary conditions?

As with most issues of public policy, perhaps it is best to return to *what is,* to certain observable facts about the behavior of nations and about the universe of international politics. As the French scholar Raymond Aron has recently reminded us, only "a small power restricts its ambitions to physical survival and the preservation of its legal independence and its institutions."[24] A great power, on the other hand, "over and above physical security, moral survival, and the well-being of its inhabitants, acts to achieve an (often) ill-defined purpose, which I should call the maintenance or creation of a favorable international environment." Isolationism in the United States, he adds, has been largely discredited because five times in the twentieth century in moments of profound crisis the United States has found it necessary to undertake a major military intervention in Europe or Asia. The issue, he suggests, is not what the United States might prefer to do, but what it has done and will continue to do: "The real question is whether nonaligment and the refusal of 'entangling alliances' would not give rise some day to crises from which once again, however much it wished to abstain, the American Republic would be incapable of standing aside."[25]

In arguing that, whatever its formal doctrine, the United States would find a policy of isolationism impossible to maintain in practice, Aron is not succumbing to the determinism of the power realists or the para-Marxists, who also assert—albeit for quite different reasons—that the United States is compelled to play a substantial role in world politics. Neither is he merely arguing, with Thucydides, that the interests of states tend to expand with their power. On the contrary, he is asserting that power is not the sole, and often not even the primary, determinant of human action, and therefore that the behavior of men and nations cannot be explained in terms of power alone:

> Drawing a distinction between physical security and the creation of an environment favorable to the expansion of the national values, though valid analytically, is rather hazardous. No great power defines its national interest simply as its physical security. Diplomats think and act within a world already structured by animosities, principles, or sympathies which cannot be reduced to calculations of strength or considerations of balance.[26]

If this argument is correct—and the historical experience of all great nations goes far toward confirming it—it suggests at least the beginnings of an answer to the questions raised earlier concerning the purpose of American policy. Self-interest and principle are inextricably intertwined as motives for the foreign policies of all nations, although of course the mix will differ in each individual case; moreover, it is when the demands of self-interest and the demands of principle reinforce one another that policy tends to be most consistent and effective.

In the present instance, both principle and self-interest point clearly to a firm United States policy stand toward the Soviet Union. At the level of principle, it is difficult to maintain that the Soviet regime is morally superior to the American. Whatever may be the thrust of the changes which have occurred in the U.S.S.R. since Stalin, the Soviet regime remains a tightly-controlled, one-party dictatorship. All

political dissent in the Soviet Union is carefully circumscribed, and respect for basic human freedom and dignity is virtually nonexistent. The United States, by way of contrast—and, more broadly speaking, the civilization of the West in general—embodies principles of politics which are eminently defensible on ethical grounds, however imperfectly some of those principles may be realized in practice. Thus the Western nations have the right and the obligation to defend their values and principles and the political systems based upon them, and indeed to extend their influence where it is possible and prudent to do so.

At the level of self-interest, it is clear that the threat to American interests abroad and even to our security and survival is increasing rather than diminishing. What is therefore required in response is a policy toward the U.S.S.R. based on a clear apprehension of current realities rather than on desires and dreams. In the words of Defense Secretary Schlesinger, "unless we are to plan only by intuition, we must continue to build our peace structure on the hard facts of the international environment rather than on gossamer hopes for the eminent perfectability of mankind."[27] And whatever, the professed fears of Mr. Kissinger regarding the danger of nuclear war, there *do* exist options for the United States other than holocaust or the supine acceptance of Soviet political and military supremacy.

To be sure, a realistic policy toward the U.S.S.R. cannot, under current circumstances, advocate a crusade to roll back the Iron Curtain or to bring down the Soviet regime by force. As Burke long ago taught us, prudence is the central virtue of politics, and in the nuclear age such a policy could result only in disaster. By the same token, the time has long since passed when we could attempt an international quarantine of the U.S.S.R., or even refuse to negotiate with the Soviets on the whole range of East-West issues. In any event there can be few objections raised against the concept of detente properly defined, or against a policy of detente properly pursued. What the United States requires is consistent firmness and realism in assessing Soviet intentions and policies and in devising responses to them.

Future arms control agreements, for example, must be based on true equivalence, and must not proceed from the Kissinger assumption that one-sided agreements are satisfactory solely because they contribute to the "momentum of detente." Trade agreements likewise must contain equal economic advantages for both powers, and under no circumstances should strategic materials or military-related technology be transferred to the U.S.S.R. Finally, even arms control and economic agreements limited by these principles must be offered to the U.S.S.R. at a price. That price must be a demonstrated moderation in Soviet behavior, at home and abroad—in Europe and in the Middle East as well as on such issues as submarine deployments in Cuba and the emigration of dissident minority groups from the Soviet Union. Pressure on the U.S.S.R. emanating from Senator Jackson and elsewhere on the latter issue has already led to some modification of Soviet policies. If the Soviets are seriously interested in obtaining access to American technology, a consistent U.S. hard line on the emigration issue—which will serve to demonstrate to others our continuing moral commitment—might well lead to further changes in Soviet behavior. If not, nothing of consequence will have been lost, and an increased knowledge of Soviet intentions and flexibility will have been gained.

The same approach points the way to new directions for American policy elsewhere in the world. Clearly our alliance systems are in a state of disrepair, a consequence of the deliberate subordination of alliance interests to detente under the Nixon Doctrine. A foreign policy rooted in a clear understanding of current political realities would make the revitalization of NATO and the Japanese alliance a first order of business. Both the Europeans and Japan must be persuaded that we have no

intention of "decoupling" American security interests from theirs. Beyond that, the firm United States position in Southeast Asia must be sustained, and efforts should be set in motion to create—under the inspiration of one of the more cogent aspects of the Nixon Doctrine—a NATO-style mutual defense arrangement among the non-communist nations of the region, through which they can assist one another in dealing with local insurgencies and other threats.

It has obviously not been possible within the scope of this essay to specify in detail the kind of foreign policy which we believe necessary for the United States. Enough has been said, we hope, to indicate the nature of the approach. More than a decade ago, in one of his most illustrious books, a well-known professor of international relations wrote cogently of the relationship between power, principle, and world order:

> Whenever peace—conceived as the avoidance of war—has been the primary objective of a power or a group of powers, the international system has been at the mercy of the most ruthless member of the international community. Whenever the international order has acknowledged that certain principles could not be compromised even for the sake of peace, stability based on an equilibrium of forces was at least conceivable.[28]

The professor was Henry A. Kissinger. The hour is now late. But there is still time for the United States to heed his warning, and to substitute for "detente at any price" the difficult decisions and sacrifices dictated by principled realism.

[1]Draft of a speech for a local legal society, Feb. 21, 1765, Charles Francis Adams (ed.), *The Life and Works of John Adams* (10 vols; Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1851) I, p. 66.

[2]See James E. Dornan, Jr., "The Founding Fathers, Conservatism, and American Foreign Policy," *The Intercollegiate Review*, VII (Fall, 1970) pp. 31-43.

[3]For the address see, Department of State Bulletin, Feb. 6, 1961, p. 175.

[4]For Kennan's analysis of the "legalistic-moralistic" approach in foreign policy, see his *American Diplomacy 1900-1950* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), pp. 82-87.

[5]The origins of this position can be traced to Hans J. Morgenthau's *In Defense of the National Interest* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951). For a later but still pre-Viet Nam statement of what is now known as the "limitationist" position see Edmund Stillman and William Pfaff, *The New Politics: America and the End of the Postwar World* (New York: Coward-McCann, Inc., 1961).

[6]For a perceptive discussion of this point, see Robert W. Tucker, "The American Outlook: Change and Continunity," in Robert E. Osgood *et. al., Retreat From Empire? The First Nixon Administration* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1973) pp. 31-41.

[7]Ronald Steel offers his interesting "revisionist" view of American foreign policy in *Pax Americana* (New York: Viking Press, 1967); see especially chaps. 1-2.

[8]Marshall, *The Limits of Foreign Policy* (Rev. ed.; Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1968), p. 53.

[9]The phrase is from Wilson's Address to Congress, April 2, 1971. Ray Stannard Baker and William E. Dodd (eds.), *The Public Papers of Woodrow Wilson* (8 Vols.; New York: Doubleday, Page & Co., 1927-1939), V, p. 14.

[10]It should be unnecessary to observe that not all Americans were so naive. Theodore Roosevelt and Alfred T. Mahan on the one hand, and their anti-imperialist critics on the other, were fully aware that the Philippine adventure, at least, presaged something brand new under the sun for the United States. For a perceptive discussion of the "great debate" over the purposes of American foreign policy which occurred during this period, see Robert L. Beisner, *Twelve Against Empire* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1968).

[11]See, *e.g.*, Wm. G. Carleton, *The Revolution in American Foreign Policy* (New York: Random House, Inc., 1963), Chap. 1.

[12]*Ibid.*, p. 17.

[13]For a not-altogether satisfactory analysis of post-World War II isolationist sentiment in the United States, see Selig Adler, *The Isolationist Impulse: Its Twentieth Century Reaction* (New York: The Free Press, 1966), Chaps. 14-16, and Norman A. Graebner, *The New Isolationism: A Study in Politics and Foreign Policy Since 1950* (New York: The Ronald Press Co., 1950), chaps. 2-5.

[14]Taft's own views, by no means as severe as some of his fellow midwestern senators, and thus perhaps for that reason not altogether free from ambiguity, are best found in his *A Foreign Policy for Americans* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1951).

[15]One of the most perceptive studies of U.S. national security policy during the Eisenhower years is found in Warner R. Schilling, Paul Y. Hammond, and Glenn H. Snyder, *Strategy, Politics, and Defense Budgets* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1962), pp. 379-524. Professor Snyder, who is the primary author of this section of the volume, specifically calls attention to the isolationist sentiments which at least partially inspired some of the Administration's thinking. Incidentally, it is remarkable that almost no one has called attention to the similarities between the Eisenhower-Dulles "new look" and the so-called Nixon Doctrine, at least where non-nuclear aspects of national security policy are concerned.

[16]To be sure, some critics of the policies toward the U.S.S.R. and toward Chinese Communism pursued by the United States during and immediately after World War II have attributed the ineffectiveness of those policies in part to the influence of communist agents over the American decision-making apparatus. But the present assault on American policy, even that which emanates from the more moderate elements on the Left, appears far more sweeping both in its assumptions and its conclusions than did that of the old Rightists of the late 1940's. It was only in the mid-fifties and later, after the intellectual maturing of American conservatism, that critics on the Right began to attribute the failures of American foreign policy to the *Weltanschauung* of liberalism itself.

[17]For a full discussion of the Nixon Doctrine and its implications, see James E. Dornan, Jr., "The Nixon Doctrine and the Primacy of Detente," *The Intercollegiate Review*, IX (Spring, 1974), pp. 77-97.

[18]For a recent—and therefore particularly astonishing—assertion that the Administration has failed to make clear its foreign policy purposes, see Zbigniew Brzezinski, "The Deceptive Structure of Peace," *Foreign Policy*, Number 14 (Spring, 1974), pp. 35-55. Brzezinski asserts "the fact is that today no one really knows for sure what the foreign policy of this Administration actually is."

[19]For this point see Dornan, "Nixon's China Initiative," *The Alternative*, VII (February, 1974), pp. 13-17.

[20]For a thorough analysis of the present military balance between the U.S. and the U.S.S.R., see Dornan, *Detente and the Pending Strategic Crisis* (Washington, D.C.: ACU Education and Research Institute, 1974).

[21]*New York Times*, September 17, 1973.

[22]Barry Goldwater's prescriptions for American foreign policy appear astonishingly adventuresome today even to the most hard-core political conservatives—another indication of the mesmerizing effect which the Nixon era has had upon the American Right. See *Why Not Victory?* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1961).

[23]For the Fortress America argument, see Robert W. Tucker, *A New Isolationism: Threat or Promise?* (New York: Universe Books, 1972).

[24]Aron, "Is Isolationism Possible?" *Commentary*, April 1974, p. 41.

[25]*Ibid.*, p. 43.

[26]*Ibid.*, p. 42.

[27]Secretary of Defense James R. Schlesinger, *Annual Defense Department Report, FY 1975* (mimeo), p. 24.

[28]*A World Restored* (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1964), p. 1.