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GRAND STRATEGY ANALYSIS: A PROTO-THEORETICAL APPROACH

by

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A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of Old Dominion University
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May 2005

Approved by:

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ABSTRACT

GRAND STRATEGY ANALYSIS: A PROTO-THEORETICAL APPROACH

Patrick Magee
Old Dominion University, 2005
Director: Dr. Simon Serfaty

International relations scholarship begins and ends with assumptions – about human nature; about human interaction; about starting points, relative information, and outcomes. Such assumptions are necessary to further the intellectual coherence and development of scholarly work. However, they restrict the applicability of scholarly research to those situations that parallel the work's underlying assumptions.

This work argues the body of international relations scholarship as a whole would benefit from the development of a pre-theory state, absent any assumptions about international relations, from which observers can identify those works of scholarship that are most effective in explaining perceptive states and the strategic decisions taken in light of them. Such a state of thinking acts as a proto-theory of international relations.

Proto-theory embraces the full realm of international relations scholarship, other fields, and any other area of human thought that provides insight into the manner in which strategic thinkers perceive themselves, their nations, and their situations. By expressing no initial preference for a particular model of decision-making or theory of international relations, it offers a means of transcending debates regarding the "correctness" of any particular view. Rather, proto-theory allows observers to focus on the explanatory power of any particular concept regarding the context under investigation.

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This work tests the feasibility of a proto-theoretical approach to international relations by employing it in an examination of the United States' abandonment of its longstanding strategy of containment. It identifies the views prevalent in the United States prior to and at the time of its decision to alter its grand strategy in general and its approach to its competition with the Soviet Union in particular. It then compares the scholarly approaches most relevant to those views to determine if the behavioral indicators identified by them are accurate in their description of subsequent grand strategy.

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To intemperate intellects who will see my deepest understandings as childishly simplified and most diligent efforts as insufficient

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Any written work is a collaborative effort between authors and those good souls who guide, assist, and sustain them through the process. My first and highest gratitude is for my parents, Kenneth and Judy Magee. Their unfaltering belief in my abilities and confidence in my choices sustained me in times and ways no writer has sufficient skill to tell. This doctoral dissertation is as much a testament of their faith and investment in my efforts as it is proof of my own dedication to the subject matter.

I want to thank also those who encouraged me to embrace the vision behind the work and find the knowledge and understanding that support it. Primary among these is Dr. Simon Serfaty, whose patient direction as my chair and mentor inspired my grasping at professionalism. Any thematic coherence and logical structure in my writings are the result of his gentle, but firm hand through my years as a graduate student. I would also like to thank Dr. Regina Karp, who took a chance on an overconfident and unsuspecting 22-year old by letting him into her Ph.D. program. My hope is she will find the results of her gamble worth the risks and efforts. Also important to the creation of this work has been Dr. Chandra de Silva, who graciously agreed to lend his philosophical inquiry and historical perspective to the process. I owe much appreciation to the Cold War International History Project, which translated and published online the documents of the former Soviet Union and thereby provided me with first-source material. I would like to thank Charles Doran, whose patient explanation of his power cycle theory clarified my own understandings of the uses and limitations of theoretical models.

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Never forgotten will be the support of the people whom I have been fortunate to consider close to me. Laura Cole brought her scientific inclinations, good humor, infinite patience, and endless cups of coffee to this struggling author as he sought to put these thoughts to paper. Andrew Deligiannis, Andrew Haug, Brook Rolka, Bryon Sutherland, James Medler, and countless other good friends offered the faith in my talents and support for my efforts that is indispensable for an author's perspective and enthusiasm. Finally, I would like to thank my grandmother, Eleanor Magee, who, like my folks, aided my efforts to finish by making a place in her home for my piles of books, papers, and computer equipment, so that I had a place to live, research, and write in the mode of a full-time scholar.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In matters of business and affairs of state there is never any need to avail oneself of the work of academics [dottori] since with their excessive subtleties they are more likely to ruin them than bring them to a good conclusion.

Pope Clement VIII, *La Legazione di Roma di Paolo Paruta (1592-1595)*

What is grand strategy analysis and why is it important? Grand strategy can be understood to be any national strategy "in which all factors bearing on the evolving situation – including economic, political, and psychological factors as well as military – are taken into account over long periods of time, including times both of peace and war."[1] It is an attempt to unify national policies to achieve long-term goals. Few considerations have the power to trump its importance to a nation's leaders and citizenry. How does one understand and anticipate grand strategy, as well as the foreign policy behavior that flows from it, or more precisely, how does one do grand strategy analysis?

The short answer is that it takes a dedicated and sustained effort by some of the best minds a society produces. Today scholars, analysts, and strategists collaborate in think tanks, research institutes, and policy groups to share information, insight, and

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This paper follows the format requirements of Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, 6th ed., rev. John Grossman and Alice Bennett (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

[1] Paul H. Nitze, "Strategy in the Decade of the 1980s," *Foreign Affairs* 59, no. 1 (Fall 1980), 82. This work uses the term "grand strategy" the way Nitze described it.

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expectations about the way the world works in an attempt to deepen their understanding of strategic situations. This effort, as well as this study, flows from the assumptions that 1) more accurate strategic analysis leads to better-informed strategists and 2) better-informed strategists make better grand strategies.[2] The demand for compelling analysis and effective grand strategies is always very high. Political leaders have sought reliable forewarning of international events since time immemorial. Their governments must have some sense of the future so they can develop effective strategies to meet it. Will neighboring tribes appear suddenly with goods for trade or rocks in their hands? How long until Athens feels powerful enough to attack Sparta? Will a declining Soviet empire rain ICBMs on American cities in the night rather than accept its fate as a collapsing superpower? The future, and indeed often the present, is difficult to discern and very rarely what it appears to be, especially in the field of politics.

The nature of any field of academic research is nonstop investigation and opinionated contentiousness; international relations scholarship is no different. Experts investigate, identify, and debate influences at work throughout events that are yet to occur, happening at the moment, or long since absorbed by history. How important were various structural pressures in the Japanese decision to attack at Pearl Harbor? How

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[2] Sun Tzu first formalized this assumption when he stated, "Know the other and know yourself: Fight one hundred battles without danger; Know not the other and yet know yourself: One victory for one defeat; Know not the other and know not yourself: Every fight is certain defeat." International relations, of course, will always contain an element of danger. Grand strategy analysis is an attempt to provide decision makers with the knowledge wisdom necessary to make the most successful strategic decisions possible, usually defined in terms of security and prosperity. Available at http://www.chionline.com/war/Chap-3.html, accessed 30 January 2005.

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justified were Western fears of a Russian plot to expand toward the Persian Gulf? Will China rise to become the next superpower? Unlike the "hard sciences," international affairs never offers definitive answers, for, human opinions being highly individualized, it is usually impossible to find two scholars who say anything is certain to happen, is happening, or happened in precisely the same way, or for the same reasons.

This fog of uncertainty is unsatisfying to intellectuals, of whom are demanded omniscience, and unacceptable to professionals, of whom are demanded prescience. Those who deal in international relations have long been compelled to find means of penetrating its murkiness. Caesars sought auguries in animal entrails. Incan priests studied the stars from mathematically astounding architecture. Military institutions and think tanks simulate countless possible and impossible scenarios. One observer noted, "This was a very natural way of trying to solve a very old problem – decision-making under conditions of uncertainty."[3]

Decision makers and their advisors gain their required confidence in the decisions that must be made in political life through the belief that they are using the best available means of understanding the forces guiding the future. Techniques vary from age to age, but the methodology of international relations forecasting and strategy formulation remains the same – seek portents of events by the best available methods, then use the best knowledge and wisdom available to analyze their meanings. From these a leader can devise an appropriate grand strategy.

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[3] Shlomo Gazit, "Estimates and Fortune-Telling in Intelligence Work," *International Security* 4, no. 4 (Spring 1980), 36.

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Confidence in any particular method or combination of methods for achieving a measure of foreign policy prescience comes from a combination of methodical analysis of available data and informed intuition. Ultimately, foreign policy predictions and the decisions made in the light of them will always be informed guesses. They vary in accuracy according to the relevance of the techniques employed, the ability of those involved to acquire, synthesize, and use the information at hand, and plain dumb luck.

The rewards of a successful quest for reliable predictors of international political behavior, whether pursued by mysticism or political mathematics, are great. They include such gains as national survival, prosperity, and security. Yet no single approach to understanding international relations has lasted the twin scrutiny of informed criticism and time.[4] An important reason for this is that no expert or group of experts has or can have an understanding of the entire discipline. While seemingly obvious, this is often a pitfall of theoretical analysis, in which one can mistakenly attribute one particularly sophisticated or novel worldview to all political actors.[5] In actuality, each actor learns his or her own lines best of all. This skews their understanding of the play toward the importance of their own scenes. Positional views will be influenced further by their own

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[4] The closest approach to hegemony has been political realism, founded in the United States and Great Britain on Renaissance methodologies, German writings about power, and Western experiences in the aftermath of the First World War. It has lasted longer than any other approach, yet can hardly claim sustenance as universal, since it has an impressive array of detractors.

[5] An assumption of worldview homogeneity is a necessary technique of game theory. However, when the context of game situations translates into analysis of real world behavior, this assumption must be discarded in favor of individuality. The reasons for doing so will be addressed throughout this work.

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beliefs. It matters that Marlon Brando played the Godfather and Winston Churchill led Britain through the Second World War. Complex, thorough, descriptive, and useful analysis of international relations requires understanding of all levels of analysis, from international structures to individual persons.

Within the complexities of international relations are identifiable trends in behavior that can be seen throughout all models and belief systems. They are born of human strengths and frailties, common to individuals and political entities. These include such well-known phenomena as arms spirals, policy oversteers, and the insecurities inherent in projecting unfavorable power differentials. The identification of such behaviors and the circumstances often surrounding them is the reason for theoretical research.

Yet the problem remains that in the study of grand strategy it is not enough to build models and identify similarities. Every situation brings forth a very different set of players *and* circumstances. Indeed, it cannot always be simplified even this much.[6] Typically prevalent beliefs and goals in a situation are reliable but not infallible indicators of behavior. For example, self-interest and security are overwhelmingly dominant considerations in most foreign policy decisions. However some goals, such as

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6 Barry Buzan and Gerald Segal argued, "All human beings carry multiple identities, and these identities are all defined in relation to the surrounding society . . . sets of identities carried by individuals can range from quite simple (self, family, clan) to extremely complicated (self, family, gender, profession, interest group, nation, religion, civilisation, humankind) . . .This double-edged quality of identity – unifying on the one hand, dividing on the other – has been central to the making and breaking of human civilisation throughout history, and seems certain to remain so." Barry Buzan and Gerald Segal, *Anticipating the Future* (London: Simon & Schuster, 1998) 117.

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the maintenance of honor or the protection of the powerless, sometimes override broader goals of security, power acquisition, or international peace.

Bernard Brodie noted, "Whether with respect to arms control or otherwise, good strategy presumes good anthropology and sociology. Some of the greatest military blunders of all time have resulted from juvenile evaluations in this department."[7] It is not merely that "irrational" pursuit of such "extraneous" purposes eventually affects the overall calculus of power – it often does – but that the degree to which these purposes are either vital or extraneous varies widely depending on who is making the judgment.

Several examples illustrate the veracity of this frustrating inconvenience for the pursuit of general and unified theories of international relations. Recapture of Christian holy lands on several occasions became more important considerations than the usually bitter rivalries among European chivalric states. German leaders believed achieving domestic racial purity outweighed the immense costs of their persecution of Jews. They pursued this goal at a time during which all available resources might have been more efficiently mobilized for their exhausting attempt at German mastery over Europe. These kinds of decisions cannot be understood without an approach to analyzing them that embraces precisely the scholarship that parallels the thinking of those who made them.

This work presents a thorough examination of American grand strategies from 1977 to 2001 as a means of describing a proto-theoretical methodology for applying theoretical concepts and knowledge of situational specificities in the same study. There

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[7] Bernard Brodie, *War and Politics* (New York: Macmillan, 1973), 332.

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are, understandably, two components to the analysis presented in this work. One delves into the traditions and values that informed the making of American grand strategies and foreign policies in the era under investigation. This requires examination of philosophical and historical traditions and values most common to American grand strategists and ways in which these ideas form an American worldview at this period in history. The second component selects theoretical models and insights that parallel the American worldview and helps illustrate identifiable trends in American strategic choices. Taken together these steps create a powerful tool of grand strategy analysis that creates a clear and accurate understanding of American strategic choices in the latter years of the Cold War.

Purpose

This approach to grand strategy is a work of international relations analysis, rather than international relations theory or international history. Its purpose is to find new and more efficient ways for international relations scholarship to assist understanding and projection of grand strategy. It is therefore a work designed to create a reliable, proto-theoretical approach to the study of grand strategy. This is regardless of whether those strategies are static or fluctuating, explicit or unrecognized, successful or failed.

Hans Morgenthau noted all great contributions to political science, from Plato and Aristotle to *The Federalist Papers* and Niebuhr, were responses to challenges arising

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from political reality.[8] Modern political reality is that people and their political entities have become so interconnected that grand strategy analysis has become more important and more difficult than at any point in human history. Very few uses of power in one situation do not resonate with great effect elsewhere. Pakistan's assistance in the Afghan War contributes to the decline of Soviet military strength (and diminishes a formerly steady supply of weaponry and parts to its areas of interest, such as India). This induces India to surprise Pakistan, and the world, by testing a nuclear weapon. A boycott of French products by American consumers hopes to punish the recalcitrant ally by lowering the value of French stocks. Many of these are in the portfolios of American investors. Contributors to international events, large and small, often do foresee that their efforts would have such unexpected and profound consequences, especially for themselves.

Interconnectedness enhances the reach and importance of most foreign policy decisions and actions. Yet vast differences in the way policy makers and analysts view the ways in which events affect the international situation persist. These views are important factors of behavior and cannot be ignored by any analyst seeking a true understanding of the situation. Western values, for example, dominate theoretical models and Western policy-making circles, largely because this body of work resides largely in the West. Indeed, Western policy makers can often be classified according to the

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[8] Hans J. Morgenthau, "Power as a Political Concept," in *Power*, ed. John R. Champlin (New York: Atherton Press, 1971), 30.

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scholarly terms of "realist" or "liberal institutionalist" as easily as their academic counterparts. However, as R.B.J. Walker reminds us, "The West is not the world."[9]

These differences in view and approach are increasingly important as events, decisions, and people integrate ever more tightly. Grand strategy itself has changed with the times. Whereas a long term approach to international relations was once understood to last fifty to one hundred years, today a grand strategy of ten to twenty years can be considered to have completed a full life cycle. As a result, grand strategy analysis is becoming more complex at a time when decision makers seek more urgently to increase the accuracy of their projections. If political reality is that foreknowledge has become simultaneously more difficult to achieve and more imperative, then the challenge arising is to find more effective and more efficient ways of applying the best international relations scholarship to the conduct of international relations.

The task of this paper is to present a way to make international relations scholarship more beneficial to analysts. John Nash's theories on manifolds would note have earned him a Nobel Prize if they had not been applicable to game theory. It is only when discoveries become useful that they receive recognition for their importance. Today many of the best insights of international relations scholars lay dormant in journals

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[9] "European philosophy is not the only discourse attempting to give meaning to human experience. The problems confronting modern industrial societies are not entirely the same as those facing most of humanity, *although they are undoubtedly structurally related* (emphasis added)." R.B.J. Walker, "East Wind, West Wind: Civilizations, Hegemonies, and World Orders," in *Culture, Ideology, and World Order*, ed. R.B.J. Walker (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1984), 6.

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because no methodology has shown how they are useful for understanding real world problems.

The lack of a methodology for approaching grand strategy analysis has become increasingly insupportable as the world has grown more complex. Non-methodological application of scholarly insights and area knowledge was more effective when the world's great powers were few and fundamentally similar. This is no longer the case. To understand, for example, a terrorist attack by suicide bombers requires more than an understanding of international power differentials. The analyst must first identify the worldview of those involved in making strategic decisions. This requires investigation of traditions of martyrdom, the wide variance in interpretation of Islamic concepts of just war, and other situation-specific concepts. Then the analyst identifies works of scholarship that help explain the ways in which this worldview informs their perceptions.

This puts the analyst as close as possible to the position of the decision maker and allows the most informed and accurate projection possible of the grand strategy that will take shape. Until recently documentation of many beliefs and views was not comprehensive enough to make such an approach to analysis very useful. There was simply not sufficient information and experience available to allow for accurate representation of specific strategic viewpoints. Individuals with expertise in area studies were fewer and access to them was limited. Information technology was not up to the task of gathering and disseminating information about views in sufficient volume and with sufficient accuracy for to be useful for textured analysis in a reasonable amount of time.

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Recent advances in documentation and information technology are changing this. At this moment in human civilization it has become possible for researchers to gain sufficient insight into situations to begin to address more comprehensively the milieu of situational peculiarities, belief systems, and divergent goals. Today years of delving through endless shelves of dusty books and reams of forgotten paper can be accomplished in minutes or hours in computerized books and electronic document collections. While complete mastery of an era or even a single event remains impossible, it is becoming possible for such efforts to be effective. International relations scholarship requires new approaches no longer constrained by the limitations of previous research methods and offering a richer type of analysis that takes advantage of the rising tide of information available.

Drawing from seemingly disparate disciplines, this work examines differences in human perception and the ways in which they factor into the formation of grand strategies. It seeks to take the best ideas of international relations theory and combine them with the unprecedented ability of the modern era, with its massive documentation and dissemination of information, to move closer than ever to an understanding of the people, places, and events specific to any given situation. It offers a means for using international relations scholarship effectively for grand strategy analysis.

Structure

This work describes a methodology for applying scholarly insights to international behavior. It describes the merits and elements of a proto-theoretical approach and then uses this approach to explain a major historical change in grand

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strategy. Traditional international relations methodology consists of arguing the merits of a particular theory and then testing it against the facts of history. Apart from its logical shortcomings, this is not very useful for the policy maker, who usually knows only a fraction of the information about any given situation. This does not necessarily mean that grand strategy is the result of short-term crisis control thinking. However, historical accounts of grand strategy are written with the benefits of leisurely research and can often lend uncharacteristic coherence to periods that were in actuality highly chaotic. It often seems the grand conspiracies of history are the creations of historians.

Historical accounts contain as many relevant facts as the historian can gather in a reasonable amount of time. National strategy must be made from current perceptions, which are almost always based on less data than is made available to historians. Therefore it makes sense to examine grand strategies in such a way that they account for available knowledge and prevalent modes thinking at the time grand strategy is made.[10] This is often very difficult to do.[11] Thinking in these terms is very much like an actor's speaking his lines in such a way that he does not show awareness of the events that will take place in the next scene. A proto-theoretical approach requires this kind of process to reflect the available information and intellectual predispositions of the day.

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[10] Jerel A. Rosati discusses the difficulties and procedures for doing so in *The Carter Administration's Quest for Global Community: Beliefs and Their Impact on Behavior* (Charleston: University of South Carolina Press, 1987), esp. Appendix "B: Research Method."

[11] For an example of a methodology of information categorization and decision making, see Richard E. Neustadt and Ernest R. May, *Thinking in Time: The Uses of History for Decision Makers* (London: Free Press), 1986.

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This paper describes how to apply scholarly insights continuously throughout a long-term grand strategic situation. For this reason this methodology will be applied to a period that the international relations community at present understands most widely and comprehensively, the latter days of the Cold War. Examining this period in history requires an understanding of what American strategists knew and believed. The nature of the strategists involved dictates that the analysis will also be generally consistent with the most well-known and prominent theories of international relations today. If done successfully, this study can serve as an impetus to retrieve less widely known, but still quite valuable theories from the depths of research libraries and place their insights in the hands of policy makers.

The main body of the study is a demonstration of a proto-theoretical approach that brings international relations theory to bear on the grand strategy of the United States during the last years of the Cold War. It describes the evolving situation in strategic terms, identifies the understandings brought by the application of relevant scholarly insights, and then demonstrates how the analysis applies in specific situations.[12] Just as a combination of bureaucracy and adhocracy provide a powerful means for coping with emerging issues of business, structured theorizing and on-the-fly application of theoretical understandings can create a highly efficient way of advancing knowledge of international affairs. This work uses international relations theory in this way to show the

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[12] For more information on the purposes of case studies in political science research, see John Gerring, "What Is a Case Study and What is It Good for?" *American Political Science Review* 98, no. 2 (May 2004), 341-54.

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effectiveness of a proto-theoretical approach for producing insights into American strategic behavior. Its success rests on two areas: the ability of a proto-theoretical approach to identify scholarship with considerable explanatory power and the degree to which this fosters understanding of grand strategy.

Elements of a Proto-Theoretical Approach

What is the relationship between theory and practice in international relations? Quite simply, scholars and policy makers can and should work together to produce relevant research and informed strategies. Knowledge of when and how to apply scholarly insights can help practitioners visualize patterns, tendencies, decisions, and outcomes in international politics. Deeper comprehension of generalities in political behavior aids those trying to understand its specifics, and vice versa. Paul Nitze, an architect of American containment strategy, argued strenuously for a strong partnership between academia and government. "The two are inseparable; theory and practice being complementary, they constitute harmonic aspects of one whole."[13]

An example of successful collaboration can be seen in the development of the American intelligence community. In 1941 Japan surprised the United States with a devastating sneak attack on its naval installation in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. The American national security apparatus was deeply embarrassed at its inability to foresee Japanese

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[13] Paul H. Nitze, *Tension between Opposites: Reflections on the Practice and Theory of Politics* (New York: Scribner's, 1993), 15. Quoted in Joseph Lepgold and Miroslav Nincic, *Beyond the Ivory Tower: International Relations Theory and the Issue of Policy Relevance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 1.

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strategy, and few things cause more action in Washington, D.C. than embarrassment. President Franklin Roosevelt sought William Donovan, a noted policy maverick, and offered him wide latitude to fix the situation.

Donovan's search for ways of improving analysis took him directly to Archibald MacLeish, Librarian of Congress. MacLeish told Donovan what intelligence experts have been saying ever since, that the best sources of foreign intelligence were books, magazines, newspapers, and maps. The volume of data contained therein is so vast that only professional researchers, with general ideas about the structure of international relations, could prioritize the information and develop coherent analysis of it. The best people for the job, therefore, would be scholars.

Systematic academic research did not play much of a part in American foreign policy until Donovan's professors began turning out their estimates in the 1940s.[14] The Institute for International Studies at Yale had been running intelligence seminars with the state department since the mid-1930s, tackling problems sent up from Washington in small study groups and forwarding the results back every couple weeks. These groups engaged in strategic analysis in its purest form—Arnold Wolfers examined British and French inter-war foreign policy, A. Whitney Griswold weighed American policy toward the Far East, Samuel Flagg Bemis judged American efforts in Latin America.[15]

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[14] Ray S. Cline, *Secrets, Spies, and Scholars: Blueprint of the Essential CIA* (Washington, DC: Acropolis, 1976), 42.

[15] Robin W. Winks, *Cloak & Gown: Scholars in the Secret War, 1939-1961*, 2nd ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 42.

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Their studies circulated in the state department, but most officials viewed the Institute as a somewhat superfluous organization that only occasionally provided something interesting or useful for policy makers. Donovan's group of professors initially drew similar derision from State, which believed the experience and intuition of Foreign Service officers were the only reliable indicators of foreign relations. Charles Lindbergh scoffed the group of academics was nothing but a group of Ivy League types, "full of politics, ballyhoo, and controversy."[16]

One of the starkest contrasts between the military mindset and that of academia can be seen in performance requirements. Whereas services and bureaucracies rely on clear chains of command and performance of duty to the letter, academia favors the idiosyncratic individual, the person of odd curiosity and distinctive knowledge. The freewheeling thinker who transcends tradition and conventional wisdom receives the highest accolades. In any academic community there are scholars of whom it is said that they have twenty fresh ideas a day, ten of them quite mad, five naïve or stupid, three without point, and two exciting and potentially of great value.[17] Most bureaucracies, seeking to homogenize their members, produce fewer ideas, almost all spoken in whispers until men of rank endorse them. A state department official who proposed two ideas that are dismissed as madness over the course of a year would be cleaning out his desk.

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[16] R. Harris Smith, *OSS: The Secret History of America's First Central Intelligence Agency* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972), 1.

[17] Winks, *Cloak & Gown*, 23.

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Spurred by MacLeish's advice, Donovan built an analysis apparatus of academics that were specialists in the field of foreign affairs.[18] Many of them kept offices in the Library of Congress, spending their days reading the vast amount of material the library contained dealing with their respective specialties. Gathering information from their field offices around the globe, the scholars would hammer out a picture of events and present a range of policy options and recommendations to be given to policy makers.

This system of consultation and cooperation evolved from these early efforts at collaboration into the modern intelligence and foreign policy communities. Comprised of research institutions, think tanks, policy institutes, and government organs, this set of top minds in international relations scholarship and practice meets continuously to inject academic research into policymaking and political reality into scholarly research. The group of individuals involved fashions an epistemic community of top experts in international relations.

Despite the development of a modern foreign policy community comprised of academics, analysts, and policy makers, within all three groups is a tendency to criticize their colleagues for a lack of cooperation. Joseph Lepgold and Miroslav Nincic noted in their 2001 study of the relationship that academics and policy makers often do not make

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[18] One of Donovan's first recruits was Dr. William Langer, Professor of European History at Harvard. Langer became Chief of the Research and Analysis Branch and brought a number of notable scholars to assist him, including Dr. Sherman Kent from Yale (later Director of the CIA's Office of National Estimates). For a time the group of scholars set up shop in the Library of Congress and around Washington, DC and comprised the bulk of Donovan's staff. Professional research scholars would do the vast majority of research and analysis under the COI, as well as the OSS and early CIA.

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very good use of each other's work. "Many scholars no longer try to reach beyond the Ivory Tower, and officials seem increasingly content to ignore it."[19] They point out that these sentiments have become much more common in the last few decades. Arthur Stein points to two other reasons collaboration is not always the rule: "Scholars focus narrowly, with the consequence that what a policymaker needs to know is to be found across disciplines and fields. Moreover, scholars focus on the general and generic, and policymakers are interested in the particular."[20]

One reason the academic and policy communities do not choose to work more closely in all areas is that international relations scholarship is not designed exclusively for use in the policy-making world. The academic world is a protected enclave in which scholars can conduct pure research. Although not quite Jonathan Swift's flying island of Laputa, Academy at Lagado or, mystical island of Glubbdubdrib, research institutions can appear to be incomprehensible and forbidding for those not familiar with them.[21] At first blush many scholars and much of today's scholarship may seem either irrelevant or inaccessible to policy makers.

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[19] Lepgold and Nincic, *Beyond the Ivory Tower*, 2-3.

[20] Arthur A. Stein, "Counselors, Kings, and International Relations: From Revelation to Reason, and Still No Policy-Relevant Theory," in *Being Useful: Policy Relevance and International Relations Theory*, ed. Miroslav Nincic and Joseph Lepgold (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000), 57.

[21] Jonathan Swift's satirical novel, *Gulliver's Travels* (New York: Penguin Books, 1986 reprint) contains three archetypes of academicians. The mathematical philosophers of Laputa spend their lives in contemplation and only emerge when flapped about the face by servants; the scientists of the Grand Academy at Lagado conduct endless and completely inapplicable research, such as trying to extract sunbeams from cucumbers; Glubbdubdrib is the home of a sorcerer-historian who has the power to summon great figures from the dead and quiz them about their times.

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David Newsome relates, "From a practitioner's perspective, it often seems as if university scholars are increasingly withdrawing . . . behind a curtain of theory and models that only insiders can penetrate."[22] Practitioners either do not know about many scholarly advances or cannot understand how such progress affects their work. It is here that the work of the analyst is most important – bringing together the work of both fields and making them relevant to each other. Think tanks, policy institutes, round table discussions, and speaker series of scholars and policy makers are very important to the process of bringing their work together and have done much to bridge the gap. Nonetheless, more remains to be done.

Some theorists, in turn, insist international relations theory is not supposed to be relevant to those investigating foreign policy. An area of intense debate among international relations scholars, this line of reasoning seeks to exclude theoretical models from criticism that they are inapplicable. One of the field's most influential theorists, Kenneth Waltz, argues research efforts into theory should remain separate from the world of policy.[23] Yet even Waltz and his fellows cannot avoid making policy statements from

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[22] David D. Newsome, *The Public Dimension of Foreign Policy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), 138.

[23] See Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1979), 69-73, 122-23; Kenneth Waltz, "Reflections on Theory of International Politics: A Response to My Critics," in *Neorealism and Its Critics*, ed. Robert O. Keohane (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 330-34, 343-44; and Kenneth Waltz, "The Origins of War in Neorealist Theory," in *The Origin and Prevention of Major Wars*, ed. Robert I. Royberg and Theodore K. Rabb (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 42-3.

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time to time.[24] Colin Elman criticizes Waltz and other neorealists for their incongruity: "Neorealists who believe that their theories are unable to make foreign-policy predictions, should stop making them . . . In addition, neorealists who believe that they are unable to make foreign policy predictions should start criticizing neorealists who do."[25]

What this debate eclipses is the unspoken consensus that pure research has an important role in international relations scholarship. It is the role of the analyst to bring the results of scholarship to policy making, while providing feedback from policy to academic investigations. Just as policy makers benefit from schooling in theory, many theorists benefit from the practical experience of politics. Lepgold and Nincic concluded, "Unlike literature, pure mathematics, or formal logic, the study of international relations may be valued largely for its practical implications and insights."[26] Paul Nitze agreed, "It is by action – in my terms, by the practice of politics – that theory . . . can be kept in touch with reality"[27]

A strong working relationship between academics, analysts, and policy makers is essential to scholarly progress, informed analysis, and effective strategy. Those who make grand strategies get their ideas from somewhere – philosophy, faith, education –

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[24] Colin Elman, "Horses for Courses: Why Not Neorealist Theories of Foreign Policy," *Security Studies* 6, no. 1 (Autumn 1996), in particular 10-1 and notes on pages 10, 12-4.

[25] Colin Elman, "Cause, Effect, and Consistency: A Response to Kenneth Waltz," *Security Studies* 6, no. 1 (Autumn 1996), esp. 61.

[26] Lepgold and Nincic, *Beyond the Ivory Tower*, 6.

[27] Paul H. Nitze, *Tension between Opposites*, 15. Quoted in Lepgold and Nincic, *Beyond the Ivory Tower*, 1.

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regardless of whether their intellectual sources are explicit. Often obscured through filters of practical experience, the elements comprising their worldviews nevertheless are almost always found in the writings of academe. And very few academic ideas cannot find expression in contemporary or historical situations.

Theoretical models are reliable for discovering the commonalities of international political behavior, but they cannot be employed effectively for grand strategy analysis without identification and understanding of relevant assumptions and differences – in individuals, in cultures, in beliefs, in histories, in worldviews. Only through an understanding of the specifics of a given situation can an analyst begin to understand international behavior and make generalized statements about such elements as grand strategy.[28]At the level of grand strategy analysis one must start from a position of theoretical neutrality. An analyst cannot express a preference for a favorite model and apply it to all of recorded history. The way to achieve this is for the analyst to suspend theoretical preferences and personal beliefs in favor of a pre-theory state. [29] This pre-theory state, or proto-theory, permits the analytical mind no presuppositions about human

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[28] Whittle Johnston, professor of Government Foreign Affairs at the University of Virginia, used to say to the author repeatedly during his lectures, "Foreign affairs are in the details, and if you don't know the details you don't know anything." This statement can be disheartening to any student devoted to broad international relations concepts, which are supposed to abstract from details, but remains true.

[29] "Proto" refers to the primordial state from which descendants arise, a proto-theory being a pre-theory state from which any theory can arise. Proto-theory is a concept that applies across many fields of inquiry. See the collaborative study by James Mahoney, Department of Sociology at Brown University, and Gary Goertz, Department of Political Science at University of Arizona, "The Possibility Principle and Case Selection: Choosing Negative Cases in Comparative Analysis," July 2003, available at http://www.compasss.org/mahoney_goertz2003.pdf, accessed 7 November 2004.

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political interaction. All theories and models from which the analyst may choose are equally valid in that they – and their assumptions – do not yet exist in the analyst's mind.

The first information, that which disrupts the proto-theoretical state and catalyzes analysis, is an examination of the fundamental beliefs and views held by the entities involved – such as nations, non-state entities, individuals. These views include political ideology, religious obligation, cultural norms, and national style. From these the analyst can distill an aggregated appreciation for "the national view." National views quite often have counterparts in international relations theory.

The informed analyst can recognize parallels between the foundations of a national view and the assumptions of international relations theories and models. Selecting those academic understandings that "fit" the scenario allows the analyst to bring to bear on the situation the tremendous power of academic insight. The stunningly diverse nature of theoretical inquiry and modeling dictates that, at the level of grand strategy analysis, theoretical insights should be working together. Each approach chosen is modified with specificities of the situation and combined with other applicable approaches. Thus academic insights function as component parts of a single approach that appreciates as many characteristics as possible without applying those insights in ways and to areas that do not fit.

This can be a difficult task. Each analyst is encumbered by his or her own beliefs about international relations and human behavior. In most situations this body of knowledge, wisdom, and assumption serves the analyst very well. It is, in fact, the type of expertise one seeks to develop prior to and during one's term in office as a policy maker. However, this same set of beliefs can be detrimental – even fatal – to attempts to

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understand international behavior if it contaminates the first stage of analysis. It prejudices the choice of insights and models used to illustrate a situation. This can cause mistakes ranging from decreased explanatory power (if the differences between the analyst's assumptions and those in play are minor) to a complete lack of correlation between expectation and outcome. In the absence of unified field theory (which remains unlikely), a proto-theoretical approach to grand strategy analysis is not only the best that can be achieved at the moment, but perhaps the closest approach to one that can be considered valid. But before this can happen, it is appropriate to express five cautions regarding strategic analysis.

1. Accepting Limitations of Theoretical Work

George Santayana advised, "Scepticism is the chastity of the intellect, and it is shameful to surrender it too soon or to the first comer."[30] It is important to uphold traditions of scientific skepticism when approaching the study of international phenomena. An analyst should be cautious about embracing too enthusiastically and too often one particular approach to international relations. A healthy reserve of caution can only strengthen a field in which there often appears to be sufficient evidence to support nearly any claim about the workings of the international system. E.H. Carr noted, "No

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[30] George Santayana, *Scepticism and Animal Faith* (New York: Scribner, 1923), 69-70. Santayana's approach to philosophy analysis parallels closely a proto-theoretical approach to grand strategy analysis.

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science deserves the name until it has acquired sufficient humility not to consider itself omnipotent."[31]

Three common potential missteps in this area limit the scientific validity of international relations research. They are the result of a lack of scientific training among professionals. This is hardly surprising; diplomats, policy makers, and international relations scholars tend to come from backgrounds of politics, history, business, and law. Yet as strategic analysis grows and develops into a mature field, it must accept the responsibilities of validity and falsifiable output that are the hallmarks of good research.

The first possible misstep is a propensity for theoretical misapplication. During their examination of the fundamental forces of international politics theorists can often fall to the temptation of applying their work to situations that do not parallel their theoretical assumptions. It is tempting to make logical connections and speculations that are quite often correct and very useful, but nonetheless unsupported by their research foundations. Doing so is akin to abandoning mathematics for numerology; an international relations theorist seeking to convince colleagues of a model's explanatory power and utility can devolve accidentally into a historical conspiracy theorist.

The second potential misstep is more common to academic research, but especially probable in the creation and application of international relations theory. It is what Stephen Brooks dubbed rather fittingly "the pathology of zero-sum paradigm

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[31] E.H. Carr, *The Twenty Years' Crisis: An Introduction to the Study of International Relations*, 2nd ed. (New York: Harper & Row, 1964 reprint), 9.

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wars."[32] William Wohlforth, investigating the use of newly available documents from the Cold War era, noted:

> There is no documented case of a noted scholar of international relations (IR) who has changed his or her view of any theory in response to fresh historical evidence. There are, however, cases of scholars who have abandoned theories whole hog in response to other sorts of evidence, such as statistical findings, events, or failed predictions.[33]

He argued that lost in the competitive atmosphere is any concept of how degrees of confidence might be revised to accommodate new data. "It is international versus domestic influences, power versus ideas, or institutions versus interests. Historical researchers find this sort of language off-putting, naive, and obviously wrongheaded."[34] In a case involving theoretical debate that becomes an all-or-nothing methodology dispute, the possibility of advance by interactive scholarship is excluded because each side dismisses the findings of the other on methodological grounds. In the few situations where this occurs, the possibility for effective strategic analysis evaporates.

Rather than deny the limits of theorizing, why not embrace them? Proficiency with a large variety of analytical tools and appropriate situational selectivity are not only

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[32] Stephen G. Brooks, "Dueling Realisms," *International Organization* 51, no. 3 (Spring 1997), 445-77.

[33] In one of the best examples, a founder of regional integration theory abandoned it in part because it failed to anticipate one perturbing variable: Charles de Gaulle. See Ernst Haas, *The Obsolescence of Regional Integration Theory*, Research Series no. 25 (Institute of International Studies, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975). This is similar to Isaac Asimov's concept of "The Mule," a man whose extraordinary political abilities invalidate mathematical predictions of historical trends. Isaac Asimov, *Foundation* (New York: Gnome Press, 1951).

[34] William C. Wohlforth, "A Certain Idea of Science: How International Relations Theory Avoids the New Cold War History," *Journal of Cold War Studies* 1, no. 2 (Spring 1999), 47.

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signs of a well-rounded theorist, but denote also an effective analyst of grand strategy. Describing the forces underlying international events requires a flexible methodology that allows for updates, changes, and reversals of modes of thought. This should include the use of theoretical knowledge in its appropriate context, taking into account the dynamic nature of the situations to which they are applied.

Doing otherwise is akin to choosing to complete all tasks by using only the hammer in one's hand. No tool is appropriate for every chore. In fact, the more jobs a tool does, so the axiom goes, the less effectively that tool does each one of them. Therefore it makes sense to carry a toolbox filled with different devices for different aspects of the overall work. When all nails have been driven and only screws are left, the best thing to do is put down that hammer and pick up a screwdriver. Likewise, when a group of strategists stops behaving like internationalists and starts acting like realists, it is appropriate to adjust analyses of their motivations, tendencies, and projections accordingly.

A third common misstep is a more extreme version of a zero-sum debate: striving for universality. Advances in theoretical understanding demonstrate very effectively many of the salient features of various international systems and behaviors.[35] The nature of theoretical investigation, however, is that the more situations a general theory

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[35] Examples of these attempts include Samuel Huntington's civilization theory, Paul Kennedy's study of great power rises and declines, and various studies of arms spirals, deterrence, and interest balancing. See Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1986) and Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers, Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000* (New York: Random House, 1987).

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describes, the more poorly it describes specific expressions of them. The closer any theory gets to universalism, the less it useful it becomes. A unified theory of international behavior, therefore, is self-defeating.[36] While universalism remains the Holy Grail of international relations theory and, like the venerable object itself, will most likely never be found, it nonetheless has proven an irresistible quest.

Theories of international relations are built on rules – rules such as the drive for security. But these rules are not universal; every actor has the capacity to define an individualized set. While some rules are commonly held, none are universal – there will always be actors for whom assumptions of a theoretical model do not apply. Structural realist analysis, for example, pursued at all times and through power calculus alone becomes impossible. The variables that comprise power can never be truly distinguished in any objective sense. For pure structural realism to work it would have to be based on universally accepted philosophies of power and identical perceptions of comparative strength. Such homogeneities of opinion and perception are not a characteristic of humanity. Differing philosophies of the nation-state and differences of opinion over the quantity and quality of power held by one's self and one's neighbors have marked every

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[36] Harry Eckstein noted, "International relations theories are written to explain relations among states in all times and places. As a consequence, the degree to which their validity hinges on the explanation of any one episode is always unclear. For this reason, "critical cases"–that is, events that must conform to a theory's expectations if the theory is true–never occur in international relations." Harry Eckstein, "Case Study and Theory in Political Science," in *Strategies of Inquiry, Handbook of Political Science* 7, ed. Fred I. Greenstein and Nelson Polsby (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1975), 79-137.

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conflict in recorded history. Were this not the case then actual contests of power would be unnecessary—anyone could do the math and know the outcome beforehand.

Theories of international behavior can never fully embrace the complexity of understanding the individual goals and situations of a fixed set of over seven billion souls at any particular moment, much less a constantly regenerating and evolving world population over a significant period of time. No method for understanding how individual perceptions of even one common influence on behavior, such as power, can even justifiably claim widespread and enduring acceptance of academic or policy-making circles. 'Ends' being individual and disparate, 'means' always will be defined and weighed differently.

Faced with the inconvenience of its impossibility, the pursuit of universality seeks inexorably to avoid admitting its fate by one of two ways: complexification or oversimplification. Complexification places theory in the position of attempting to model the entirety of international relations by inclusion of as much data and as many models as possible. The eventual end of this attempt must be a model so saturated with information that is indistinguishable from the world itself and therefore not very useful. Oversimplification, the more common error, begets a tendency to attempt an explanation of the entire milieu of international politics as the result of one or a few tangible causes. Unfortunately human perceptions, desires, and actions are never that simple. Oversimplification, a necessity for theorizing, leads to some useful abstractions but not very useful models.

Humanity has a nasty habit of invalidating even the most advanced predictive techniques. The reality of international political behavior is that, while historical

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tendencies can be demonstrated, specific behavior cannot be predicted with absolute certainty. There is no universal theory of international relations because people and situations are fundamentally different from one another in ways that disrupt all attempts at certainty.[37] The conditions of history and politics fluctuate from satisfying the conditions of one theory to another, or none at all. Rather than seek a "theory of everything," proto-theory seeks to make every theory potentially useful.

2. Broadening Theoretical Concepts to Examine International Behavior

Abstraction from reality is vital to good research. It is the means by which scholars discern patterns amid the swirling clouds of data. Grand strategy analysis, however, occupies the space between theorizing and perception and requires both to be effective. Scholarly insight combines with situational peculiarity to create a picture of both individual perception and likely method of response. These are the driving factors of international behavior and cannot be considered extraneous to grand strategy analysis. Only when international relations scholars ask broader questions of how the influences they identify relate to international behavior as a whole does their work move from the fringes to the center of debates over grand strategy.

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[37] Edward Lorenz demonstrated the ways in which very small, almost imperceptible changes in initial conditions can cause significant changes for expected outcomes in complex systems. His equations described what came to be known as the "butterfly effect," a metaphor in which a butterfly flapping its wings in Brazil causes a snowstorm in Japan. See Edward N. Lorenz, *The Essence of Chaos* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1993).

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The overwhelming majority of competition transpires outside the realm of any particular expression of behavior, such as war, and affects national power far more profoundly than a series of skirmishes or even decisive battles. Turnover of British Hong Kong to communist China, development of a European identity, and the sudden emergence of industrial powerhouses in previously unremarkable places are examples of developments altering dramatically the perceptions, calculations, and foreign policies of the world's nations. Limiting analysis, therefore, to any particular variable removes the majority of history from the data set and is therefore not very useful for the study of grand strategy. It forces evaluation of broad generalities based on uncommon occurrences.

William Wohlforth, commenting on the developments in international relations scholarship, concluded that writings in the field show an increased preoccupation with the special problems inherent in the study of world politics. "Not only is international politics a "complex, path-dependent system" in Robert Jervis's words, but the phenomena we seek to explain tend to be extremely rare events: wars, crises, alliance changes, extended rivalries, and arms races."[38] International relations theorists act, albeit correctly, from their belief that such spheres can be studied separately. Studies of war initiation, economic patterns, trade policies, and other international phenomenon yield valuable insights into the foundations of particular policies.

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[38] Robert Jervis, *System Effects: Complexity in Social and Political Life* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997). Quoted in Wohlforth, "A Certain Idea of Science," 42.

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This research agenda, however, can become entrenched in one particular aspect of international behavior and ignore the fact that, for grand strategists, all these seemingly separate spheres are part of the larger picture. An adversary in one sphere cannot be an ally in another at this comprehensive level of analysis, for linkage occurs far too often in political maneuvering to be ignored. Aggressive political maneuvers bring about grain embargos. Human rights concerns affect trading preferences. By separating what is, in the minds of policy makers, inseparable, international relations theorists create their own theoretical conundrums and render their work less useful to those trying to understand behavior.

Broadening examination from one particular concept to international behavior as a whole allows an analysis to call upon the entire realm of scholarly work on international relations. A model examining major war initiation, for example, becomes a model for the severity of change in overall strategy when its conceptualization expands beyond the decision for war. It then becomes useful for identifying systemic influences that could lead a nation to join OPEC or request Soviet military advisors. Studying the whole of behavior, rather than a specific expression of it, can provide early warning of evolving grand strategies.

A proto-theoretical approach should not be misunderstood as a comprehensive treatment of concepts and traditions that inform the making of *all* grand strategies and foreign policies. Such a generalization would be self-defeating, for it violates the central assumption of the approach – namely, that the concepts and traditions in the minds of decision makers at the times of decision making, rather than general concepts or universal theoretical models, are the most reliable guides to understanding international behavior.

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Development of theoretical models remains an important pursuit in the vocation of international affairs and plays an important role in the work presented herein, but the development of models is not the goal of this work. It demonstrates instead a means of fitting these models to international events more effectively by describing ways of choosing them appropriately and making adjustments to theories to help them apply to reality. This work seeks not to advance theory itself, but the application of it.

It is important to note that, when examining grand strategies of the past, the theoretical models one selects need not have existed during the time under examination. The views prevalent at the time can and usually are most effectively described by theories and models devised after the fact. A true picture of the strategists' worldviews must be limited to the theories and models available at the time, but analysis of the behavior that flowed from these views should not be. History is frozen in time, but analysis can and must be responsive to progress.

The task here is not to criticize the policy maker for missing something that appears obvious to modern eyes; it does little good to upbraid Franklin Roosevelt for being oblivious to an insight of dynamic differentials theory.[39] Instead modern tools of analysis can be used to identify important influences at play in historical situations, much

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[39] Bernard Mennis writes, "Of course, an especially knowledgeable person, through introspection, may ...become cognizant of the fact that the beliefs he holds are not isolated entities. The relatively few individuals who have achieved this level of sophistication are aware of the systemic nature of their political thinking." Bernard Mennis, *American Foreign Policy Officials: Who They Are and What They Believe Regarding International Politics* (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 1971), 149.

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in the way modern theories of evolution and genetics offer a better understanding of species long extinct. Illustrating influences that could not have been understood at the time is instructive for those using those same theoretical tools to analyze present and future scenarios.

3. Choosing Applicable Scholarship

Expanding the area of inquiry to international behavior has two important effects for the use of theoretical models. The first is that it makes the choice of model dependent upon the situation. This opposes the traditional scholarship of testing of a model by choosing case studies that fit its assumptions. In practical international relations preset behavioral rules do not always define the progression of situations—situations often define behavior in unexpected ways. Incorporating this feature into analysis prevents the observer from influencing results prematurely with analytical frameworks.

If the situation is one in which a state's decision makers believe their military strength can be used to secure economic stability through conquest, then analysts would do well to select scholarship that incorporates these views. If the situational parameters are different – for example, if they are leaders of a theocracy that maintains the consequences of declining relative power position are less severe than the disfavor of the Supreme Being – then theoretical assumptions made about goals, beliefs, and rationality must be different as well. This calls for an altogether different set of theories and models to describe it.

The second effect of broadening the area of inquiry is the type of strategic response indicated by theoretical models may vary drastically from the expectations of

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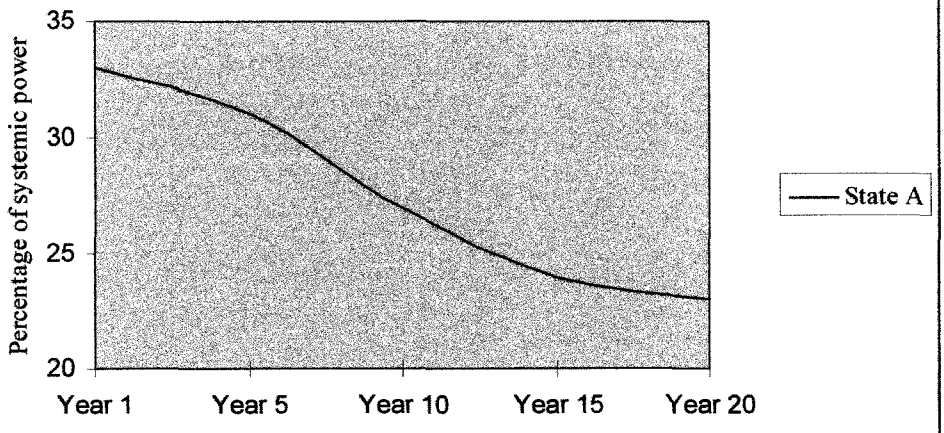
those model's original designers. For example, in an illustration of relative power trends State A perceives itself about to undergo certain and inevitable decline (Ill. 1). How will its leaders respond? A theory of war initiation indicates the time is ripe for violence. A theory of trade policy indicates the state will deny trade of strategic resources to its competitors. But threat and response need not flow from the same set of theoretical assumptions. A state feeling threatened economically can respond militarily, and vice versa. Proto-theory accounts for the likelihood those scholarly insights best describing the way a nation perceives its situation may not be the same ones that best describe its strategic response.

Ill. 1. State A's Long Term Power Trends



Information about a state's perceived capabilities and situational peculiarities, therefore, is vital for understanding grand strategy. Does a state have temporary

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offensive military superiority and leaders who believe it can be used successfully? Or does it have instead abundant natural resources and little domestic industrial capability? A threat indicated by realist analysis of relative power levels, for example, might be met by a response flowing from idealist belief in the influence of international institutions.

In his investigations into Soviet worldviews, for example, Wohlforth found that perceptions of power could be more dynamic than measurements of material relationships. "Rapid shifts in behavior may be related to perceived shifts in the distribution of power which are not captures by typical measures of capabilities."[40] Even during periods in which actual power did not appear to change, he has found perceptions of power that shifted and demonstrated how those shifts influenced behavior.[41]

Theoretical examination of grand strategy begins with a series of questions. Who are those who make grand strategy and how do they view the world and their place in it?[42] What do they want for themselves and their nation? What traditions, values, and

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[40] William C. Wohlforth, *Elusive Balance: Power and Perceptions during the Cold War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), 294.

[41] "All policies are future-oriented . . . A decision to reform, retrench, or go to war reflects expectations about future trends and assessments of the likely effect of today's policies on tomorrow's distribution of power resources." William C. Wohlforth, "Realism and the End of the Cold War," *International Security* 19, no. 3 (Winter 1994/95), 98.

[42] There are two important areas that fall under the concept of "worldview." The first is the worldview of the individual policy maker. This view is difficult to determine beyond a reasonable level of precision. For one attempt to build models of individual worldviews in an administration, see Rosati, *Carter Administration's Quest*. The worldviews of individual policymakers often have determinate effects on specific policy. The second is the aggregate national worldview taken from the multitude of individual views, which typically align themselves into several recognizable viewpoints and wrestle

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events influence their decision-making? Are their policy circles thinking about the lessons of Munich, Vietnam, or 9-11? Once a picture of how a state sees itself and its goals emerges, it is time to look at that state's options and capabilities. What does the state have at its disposal? On which battlegrounds are its leaders most familiar and most comfortable—international institutions, military campaigns, business practices? A nation run by its business elite tends to maneuver better in the more familiar fields of trade and finance than armed conflict and can be expected to steer conflict toward financial areas where they have a comparative skill advantage.

Beliefs define perceptions.[43] It should be clear that, strictly speaking, an individual does not usually express a "belief system." Rather, policy makers express preferences regarding the issues on his or her desk. It is up to the analyst to detect patterns and impose structure to their beliefs.[44] Understanding grand strategies requires that events be described according to the viewpoints of those perceiving them prior to application of theoretical models. A volcanic eruption may seem an unambiguous event,

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for prominence as "the aggregate worldview." It is this emergent "mainstream" worldview that determines a nation's grand strategy.

[43] The interaction of beliefs and perceptions was the subject of a study headed by social psychologist Milton Rokeach. His group conducted the Great American Values Test in 1979, an experiment in which the researchers broadcast a television program of the same name designed to influence viewers to adopt or strengthen support for a specific set of values, attitudes, and behaviors. The study then sampled for viewers and tracked its effects on their beliefs. Sandra J. Ball-Rokeach, Milton Rokeach, and Joel W. Grube, *The Great American Values Test: Influencing Behavior and Belief through Television* (New York: The Free Press, 1984). In his earlier writings, Rokeach pointed out that belief systems serve two powerful and conflicting sets of motives: "the need for a cognitive framework to know and to understand and the need to ward off threatening aspects of reality." Milton Rokeach, *The Open and Closed Mind; Investigations into the Nature of Belief Systems and Personality Systems* (New York: Basic Books, 1960), 67. See also Milton Rokeach, *Beliefs, Attitudes, and Values: A Theory of Organization and Change* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Inc., 1969).

[44] Mennis, *American Foreign Policy Officials*, 149.

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but viewpoints, defined according to belief systems, matter a great deal. Someone who believes gods reside in underground may define volcanic activity as outbursts of a god dissatisfied. Someone who believes gods do not exist at all may perceive the activity as a dangerous geologic event. These viewpoints have profound consequences for the strategies that a state will follow.

In many situations an understanding of deep-seated beliefs can help define choices far more profoundly than an understanding of relevant experiences. Christian tenants against suicide hold firmer for someone who truly believes that God watches, ready to inflict terrible punishment for taking one's own life. On the other hand, the good graces of Allah and an eternity of bliss with seventy virgins can be a powerful incentive for a young Islamic man considering martyrdom. And death means something much different to one who believes good works are rewarded by reincarnation onto a higher path of life, encouraging a strategy of nonviolence by Buddhist monks that utterly confuses Chinese soldiers in Tibet. Analysis that begins with proto-theory and then selects those works of scholarship that parallel the views and assumptions of the strategists involved can account for these differences.

4. Reducing Reluctance to Use Mathematical Representation

A primary obstacle to effective use of international relations scholarship is a prevailing reluctance among policy makers and analysts to use mathematics to examine and display long-term trends. "The attitude of mainstream scholars of world politics

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toward the relationship between science and history is much like the Bolshevik's attitude toward the relationship between socialism and capitalism."[45] This is not surprising, given the non-scientific backgrounds of most practitioners and scholars. However, this reluctance to embrace such a powerful set of analytical tools is inappropriate, given the numerous pressures for clarity and precision. Verbal depictions of a nation's relative power, for example, are often quite useful, but far more effective are visual illustrations of the approximate scope and velocity of perceived long-term trends.[46]

While a certain areas of international relations scholarship lend themselves easily to scientific descriptions and have done so (i.e. international economics, population growth), mainstream approaches rarely chose to use them for grand strategy analysis. One reason for this is lingering confusion about the scientific method. Initial attempts to imbue the field of international relations with scientific credibility brought about nearly universal embrace of the scientific method in works of or involving theory. Researchers specify theories (hypotheses), lay out variables, make predictions, and compare them to historical situations (evidence) in the case studies (tests) that follow theoretical writings. While useful for many fields of scientific research, this method does not make sense for

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[45] Wohlforth, "A Certain Idea of Science," 39.

[46] This is not to say that all international relations scholars eschew mathematical representation. Several journals of international relations, such as *American Political Science Review* and *American Journal of Political Science*, can be considered to concern themselves primarily with mathematical representation. Yet the field as a whole tends to shy away from the technique. For a list of authors that work in this area, see Claudio A. Cioffi-Revilla, *Mathematical Models in International Relations: A Bibliography*, Institute for Research and Social Science Technical Papers no. 4 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1979).

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the study of international affairs. Why not? Simply put, the scientific method rests on a set of preconditions that international relations cannot satisfy.

First, the conditions of international relations situations are never repeatable. While laboratories can be functionally alike, nations cannot. Similarly the date on a calendar can be eliminated when studying the behavior of molecules, but a border conflict between India and Pakistan after they tested nuclear weapons looks very different than it might have in 1983. People and events in history are stochastic; no two sets of conditions in international relations have ever been alike in any scientifically absolute way.

Second, grand strategists are never equivalent. Two hydrogen atoms may be expected to behave exactly the same under the same circumstances, but two leaders cannot. Neville Chamberlain was not Winston Churchill and certainly not Adolph Hitler. Third, results, even in similar situations with similar decisions, do not occur in exactly the same way or to the same degree. Facing a rising colossus on its eastern border, the German general staff twice enacted the grand strategy underlying the Schliffin Plan – defeat the West and turn to face Russia. It failed both times, but came a great deal closer to succeeding in the 1930s than it did in the 1910s. The study of international political behavior simply cannot meet the criteria under which the scientific method is valid, for nothing in international relations is truly repeatable.

While the dynamic nature of the international environment precludes use of the scientific method, this need not deter completely use of quantitative techniques for the study of international behavior. Scholars often encounter situations in which a foreign word or phrase conveys the overall conceptions or minor subtleties of a situation far

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better than the language in which one is writing. Similarly, there are certain nuances in analyzing international relations, such as changing power differentials over time, that offer their insights more readily through mathematical representation than through the written word.

John Gillespie noted, "The inconvenience of clumsy language becomes a hazard when constructing complex arguments."[47] In many cases, the "picture" produced by demonstrating graphically various elements of behavioral logic, here most often in the language of differential calculus, is worth a thousand written words of explanation. James Rosenau explained, "While mathematical tools are not inherently superior to any others, and while their use does not necessarily preclude reliance on other modes of inquiry, they are distinctive . . . They require explicit premises and procedures that clearly differentiate them from historical, case-study, quantitative, and journalistic forms of investigation."[48]

It is important to note one should not believe everything that flows from quantitative analysis, nor should it be considered *a priori* "scientific" because it has an identifiable result. The greatest utility of quantitative analysis lies in its ability to illustrate trends in situations that may have gone unnoticed otherwise. Numerical outputs

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[47] John V. Gillespie, "Why Mathematical Models?" in *Mathematical Models in International Relations*, ed. Dina A. Zinnes and John V. Gillespie (New York: Praeger, 1976), 47.

[48] James N. Rosenau, "Intellectual Identity and the Study of International Relations, or Coming to Terms with Mathematics as a Tool of Inquiry," in *Mathematical Models in International Relations*, ed. Dina A. Zinnes and John V. Gillespie (New York: Praeger, 1976), 5.

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do not "prove" ideas of international relations any more thoroughly than any other logical argument. If there is one great lesson of international relations scholarship, it is that there are no immutable laws dictating human behavior, only general tendencies identified by historical expertise and contextual similarities.

It is important for grand strategy analyses to avoid discussions of exactitude. Theoretical works examine perceptions, trend lines, and critical points, none of which correspond precisely with objective reality. The "wooly" quality of international relations scholarship—such as the inevitable inexactitude of measuring perceived power -- make exact numbers or percentages impossible, and the promulgation of such figures inherently misleading. International relations theories and models, properly conceived, are imprecise and do not provide predictions. They illustrate tendencies and probabilities in international behavior.

While Rosenau stated correctly the potential utility of quantitative analysis, everyone who studies political science discovers the truth in Mark Twain's quip that there were "lies, damn lies, and statistics." The use of mathematical techniques such as differential calculus can be highly misleading to both practitioners and observers, especially when done incorrectly. Special care must be taken to define variables when possible, describe the limitations of representing intangibles, such as relative power, and above all ensure the end results of using these techniques are relevant and understood properly in the context of that which they describe. Rosenau cautioned of the possibilities of misusing advanced mathematics:

> All of this [mathematical descriptiveness] is the case, of course, only if the axioms and model are sound, creative, and relevant and the analyst knowledgeable and skillful as a mathematician. As in everything else, mathematical analysis is no more cogent than the creativity with which it

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> is used. There can be poor mathematics, just as there can be poor history or poor quantitative interpretation. In addition to mastering the discipline of mathematics, the analysts must have a feel for the substantive problems to which the discipline is applied, if the full power of the mathematical tools is to be realized.[49]

Recognition of the possibility of inaccuracy and misrepresentation should not deter international relations analysts from examining work that uses such techniques. They need not be suspicious of the results of such studies solely because they are untrained in and insecure about the methodologies involved. The test is not whether one can follow the progression from one equation to the next, but whether one is impressed with the insights application of mathematical reasoning yields.

The largest obstacle to the use of advanced mathematical techniques in the study of geopolitics remains lingering bashfulness on the part of scholars, policy experts, and policy makers. Gillespie described the question as follows: "Why mathematical models? Because of the precision of the language for handling difficult and complex questions. Why not mathematical models? Because it is a language not shared by many international relations scholars."[50] This justification is hardly sufficient, for it is unconscionable for the study of international phenomena to be hobbled by unwillingness on the part of international relations scholars to learn a new language.

Rosenau echoes these arguments powerfully with his own views on the matter:

> Few would dismiss an analysis written in German or Arabic because they lack knowledge of these languages. On the contrary, the tendency is to assume it is sound and valuable (why else would it be available?) And to

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[49] Ibid, 7.

[50] Gillespie, "Why Mathematical Models?" 59.

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> seek help in getting a translation of its essential thrust. Why should we take any less constructive an attitude toward mathematics! It too is a language.[51]

Not only is mathematics a language; it is the most widespread language in the world. All those with at least a rudimentary education speak its basics. Indeed, mathematical representation can be considered humanity's only truly universal dialect.

5. Altering Analysis for Each Significant Change in Perception

National viewpoint and strategists' choices of best grand strategy available are both the result of a collection of ideas and beliefs that must be understood prior to choosing the theoretical concepts that will help better understand international behavior. A static picture of perceptions, however, is insufficient for a full understanding of the way grand strategy forms, evolves, and changes. To be truly effective for the policy maker this kind of analysis must be dynamic and respond to the acquisition and development of new information.

Relative power analyses tend to remove the first level of analysis on the misconception that the vicissitudes inherent to individual perceptions contaminate scientific results. In many fields this can be the case, but in international behavior this is not so. It is rather like studying how hard a pitcher can throw a baseball without taking into account how motivated the pitcher is to do so at that moment; intangibles such as anger and resolve are 'scientifically' excised, leaving one with a pure but highly

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[51] Rosenau, "Intellectual Identity," 8.

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inaccurate projection of what will happen. Factoring in the way perceptions influence beliefs about the future is an important step toward accuracy.

Emerging events and situations will alter perceptions of future trends. This, however, is only half the battle, for the concept of constantly variable perceptions must be applied to all moments leading up to the point of analysis. Perceptions of the past alter as easily and often as perceptions of the future. How effective was the Monroe Doctrine at keeping European Powers out of the western hemisphere? Why did Japan attack the United States? How significant was détente in American efforts to rein in Soviet adventurism? As the answer to these and similar questions changes with each news item, journal article, or book, perceptions of long-term trends change as well.

A nation whose policy makers have an understanding of a situation in the past that differs significantly from the understanding of that situation held in earlier days has its own particular understanding of present trends and projections of their nation's course in the future. Analysis of grand strategy must be changed each time decision makers' historical perceptions change, regardless of whether that change is the result of shifting opinions among a group of decision makers or changes in that group's composition.

History abounds with examples of individual behaviors that do not fit any prediction made by pure theorizing. The Mongol general Mongke brought his unstoppable horde to the gates of Vienna twice, but on both occasions reversed course and marched back to Karakorum, first to avoid missing a meeting of the grand council and a second time to attend the Great Khan's funeral. Would any other general in his position have done the same? Charles de Gaulle refused to employ tactics brutal enough to quell the revolt of the *pied noirs* in Algeria, allowing instead a sizable and valuable

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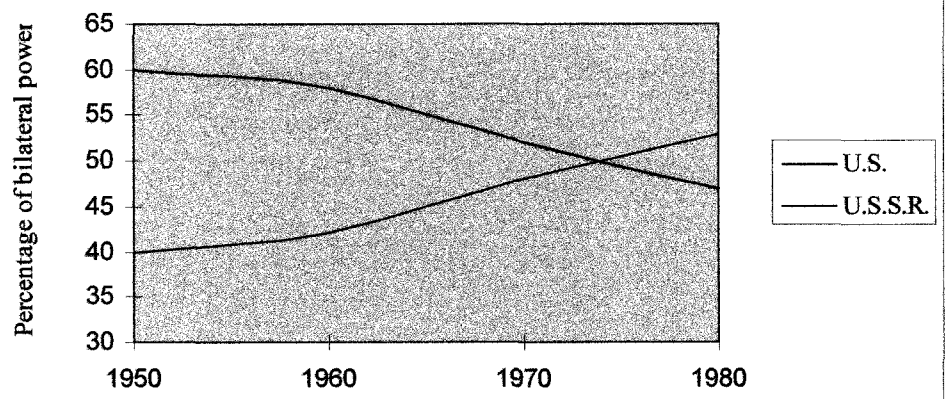
portion of France to declare independence. The Truman administration refused to use the American nuclear monopoly to establish its dominance over a rising and increasingly belligerent Soviet empire, a decision that seemed incomprehensible to Saudi king Abdul Aziz.[52]

Ill. 2. Bilateral Relative Power (1st viewpoint)



Belief and circumstance affect the way people perceive past, present, and future trends. Analysis of grand strategy must not be blind to new information that may alter drastically the insights that are useful. Perhaps in the latter half of the Cold War much of the U.S. policy community believed they had been in a state of power parity with the

[52] An account of his reaction can be found in Robert Lacey, *The Kingdom: Arabia and the House of Sa'ud* (New York: Avon Books, 1981), 281.

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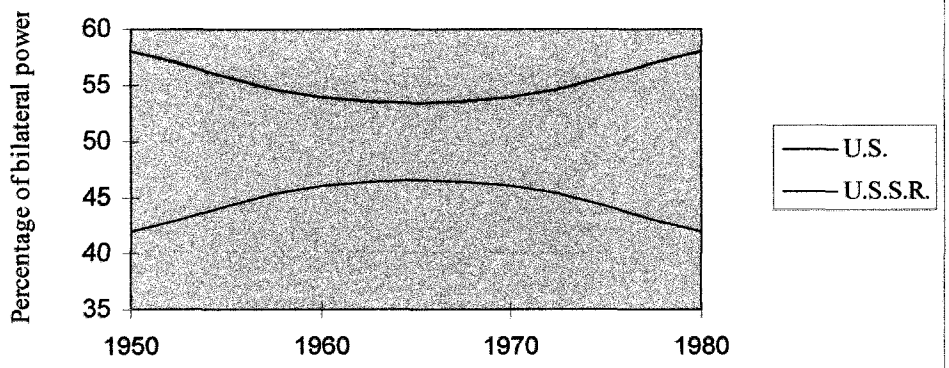
Soviet Union since 1950 (Ill. 2). If the waning years of the Cold War brought about the view that the United States had always been the stronger of the two adversaries and destined to win the struggle, that revision in historical viewpoint makes the long-term trend look very different (Ill. 3). Subsequent policy in the waning years will be reflective of this shift in view.

Ill. 3. Bilateral Relative Power (2nd Viewpoint)



Recognizing a change in the way history informs understanding is an important step in understanding how policy makers perceived long-term relative power trends throughout the period studied. Only when this information is incorporated in a continuous fashion can the grand strategies chosen at the time begin to reflect perceptions accurately and be useful for understanding current and future grand strategies.

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Conclusions

The knowledge and experience of a master poker player are required to grasp fully the relationships between a few people holding small portions of a 52-card deck and seated in a tight circle. How, then, is an analyst to grasp fully the relationships of seven billion people holding a wide range of interests and residing in nearly two hundred nations? The unsatisfactory answer is that such a task is, of course, impossible. Like poker, grand strategy forecasting remains an art, a game of calculated risks. International affairs professionals, bearing responsibilities of national security and increasing demands for prosperity, engage in this unending search for a competitive edge. What are the other players' tells?[53] Are true intentions any easier to read across national borders than a baize-covered table? Are bluffs more visible in a stirring national address than a highly raised bet?

What this study offers is a way of counting cards, a methodology for using the most relevant international relations scholarship to analyze state behavior. A proto-theoretical approach to grand strategy analysis is by no means infallible, but it provides a reliable guide to understanding a wide range of international behavior. The analytical techniques seek to give scholars, analysts, and statesmen a way of pooling their efforts for the betterment of all three fields of endeavor.

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[53] In poker a player's tell is an action, usually unconscious, that lets other players gain insights into that player's cards. Twisting a wedding ring, holding one's breath, and darting one's eyes around are common tells associated with bluffing. Nations often exhibit similar "tells," such as troop movements or aggressive posturing, that experienced diplomats recognize as giveaways of that nation's unseen objectives.

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Ultimately, the study and exercise of international political power require an instinct and talent for the field that cannot be replaced by scholarship and analysis – a truth largely obfuscated as mathematical understanding and computing power have become increasingly potent. The technological and methodological advances of the twenty-first century provide an endless series of new and powerful tools of analysis. These can augment greatly the descriptive power of an idea, but can never replace the intangibles of talent, creativity, and imagination that impart quality to the work produced. Applying the methodology described in this section will yield new, different, and hopefully more accurate understanding of grand strategies, specific developments, and the course of human events. Misapplied, this approach can produce outright falsehoods and also, more dangerous, the most pernicious and misleading of truths. Combined with the inherent abilities of a strong analyst, it can be a powerful addition to the field of international relations, both for scholars and practitioners.

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CHAPTER II

UNDERSTANDING AMERICAN WORLDVIEWS

Introduction

Abstracting from details is supposed to allow one to grasp larger forces at work. Theorizing elbows aside the minutia of politics and provides "the big picture" of international relations. Recognizing the structure of politics provide a framework for discovering many forces and trends that would remain otherwise hidden. The inability of theorists to predict specific outcomes and events has always been excused because their role is not explanation of day-to-day politics, but common trends in international relations. Undertaken in the sense of "teach a man to fish," this body of research seeks general explanations, based on the idea that comprehension of the logic underlying political behavior is an effective means of foreshadowing future events and the most efficient research agenda possible.

When the mantle of leadership passed to the Soviet Union and the United States, so passed the opportunity and responsibility of increasing knowledge of international affairs. Each nation created a worldview that was unique to its culture.[1] The United States drew inspiration from the revered political and philosophical figures of the Old World, most especially Brits, Franks, Germans, Greeks, and Italians. These influences were the foundations of American strategic views and will be addressed more fully in the

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[1] For an early study of how this process occurs, see Ernest Barker, *National Character and the Factors in Its Formation* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1927).

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literature review. Soviet political thought combined the Europeanization of its most cosmopolitan historical figure, Peter the Great, a Chinese bureaucratic model left behind by the Mongol Golden Horde that had occupied Russian soil for hundreds of years, and a new ideology of class struggle that sprang from the writings of Karl Marx and actions of Vladimir Lenin.

These two competing views of the world clashed frequently and virulently throughout the Cold War. Informed by very different traditions and values, neither superpower seemed capable of truly understanding the objectives and concerns of the other. Neither side predicted the long-term strategies and intentions of the other with accuracy, for Cold War history is strewn with accounts of surprise at the behavior of the actors' adversaries. Neither side accepted any work of the other in its attempt to better understand international relations. And neither side foresaw the end of their conflict.

What was most surprising about these limitations was that scholars proved ultimately unable to provide a comprehensive picture of the earth-shattering developments about to occur within their own turf. The end of the Cold War caught nearly everyone, including the milieu of American scholars myopically preoccupied with it, unanimously unaware and unprepared. The best scholarship in the field provided little warning of the most important shift in the structure of international relations in the latter half of the twentieth century: the fall of the Soviet empire and the world's subsequent transition from bipolar confrontation to American hegemony. This spectacular failure shook up international relations scholars, especially those of the United States. Adherence to the dominant model of international relations scholarship, political realism,

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became suddenly unfashionable. Its assumptions were shown to be inadequate for describing the world as it existed and transformed.

This kind of awakening is good for the fields of international relations theory and American foreign policy. Unrecognized weaknesses in theorizing, such as inappropriate assumptions and flawed causal logic, are heaved from their hidden depths by such intellectual tremors and exposed bare for all to contemplate. Ignorance of patterns and blindness to signs and portents of change shocked those who studied the making of foreign policy into realizing they needed better theories, better models, and better methodologies for applying them. Collective humility stimulates new modes of thinking, new questions about old assumptions, and provides increasing confidence in those tenets that remain valid after the dust settles.

This work demonstrates the effectiveness of a proto-theoretical approach by suspending assumptions about international relations. It begins with a review of the intellectual traditions and philosophical foundations of the American approach to international relations. This identifies the assumptions about politics, power, morality, and other factors that underlie American worldviews during the time to be studied. The section immediately following this review identifies and explores the set of scholarly writings that parallel American assumptions and views. These scholarly works will be designated as the body of scholarship that will be most useful for identifying salient features of American grand strategy.

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Literature Review: Foundations of American Grand Strategy

A proto-theoretical approach begins with discovery of the philosophic traditions most influential on the nation's approach to international relations. Only by understanding how grand strategists view themselves, their world, and their place in it can one begin to understand their foreign policy choices. The study begins with identification of the foundations of its international relations thought. Woven throughout American history have been many traditions and ideals unique to the character of the United States, but realism and exceptionalism have been the most omnipresent. Therefore the study begins with a review of Western approaches to those concepts underlying these two traditions: power and morality.

Philosophic Foundations of American Power and Morality

Systematic exploration of the sources of American foreign policy behavior, as with much of modern philosophic inquiry, begins with the Greeks. One of the most oft-quoted examples of early international relations thought is the historical account of a retired Greek general, Thucydides. Characterized by his contemporaries as a "humourless man, pessimistic, sceptical, highly intelligent, cold, and reserved," his personal manner appears to befit the image that comes to mind when many observers view his realist descendents: cold, calculating, and impersonal.[2] For Thucydides, and

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[2] See the introduction to Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, trans. M.I. Finley (London: Penguin, 1972) 9; Peter R. Pouncey, *The Necessities of War: A Study of Thucydides' Pessimism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), 1-8.

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the scholars who have stood upon his shoulders, power was of necessity the paramount consideration in matters of politics. His seminal declaration, ". . . what made war inevitable was the growth of Athenian power and the fear this caused in Sparta . . ." has become, like his persona, permanently associated with grand strategy.[3]

Thucydides opened his investigation into the great events of his lifetime, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, with a sometimes implicit, but more often overt focus on the primacy of power. Yet his famous statement, which inexorably finds its way into nearly every major realist work on the nature of political relations, represented only one of his many observations regarding the primacy of power. Thucydides realized that power can be understood as arising from a variety of sources and could be defined in many ways, depending on the orator or strategist of the moment. Perceptions and beliefs about power were the paramount determinants of behavior. In his conception of international order, his notions of state honor and interest, and his view of the radically circumscribed place of morality in foreign policy, the well-known historian effectively defined an early paradigm of international relations.[4]

Thucydides achieved this with his analysis of the first major Athenian foreign policy event recorded in the study: the dispute over Corcyra. Unprepared for what its leaders perceived to be an imminent attack by superior Corinthian forces, the minor state of Corcyra sent representatives to Athens to apply for membership in the powerful

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[3] Thucydides, *Peloponnesian War*, 49.

[4] Michael Joseph Smith, *Realist Thought from Weber to Kissinger* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1986), 4.

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Athenian league. Corinthian ambassadors made the journey as well, framing a public debate in which each set of representatives tried to sway the Athenian assembly. The Corinthians attempted to persuade their audience with arguments of legality and fair treatment of other powers, while the Corcyraean orators sagely began and ended their arguments in terms of Athenian interest:

> We have come to ask you for help, but cannot claim that this help is due to us because of any great services we have done to you in the past or on the basis of any existing alliance. We must therefore convince you first that by giving us this help you will be acting in your *own interests* (emphasis added) . . . but some of you may think that there is no immediate danger of war. Those who think along those lines are deceiving themselves; they do not see the facts that Sparta is frightened of you and wants war.[5]

Such arguments can be very effective. Faced with a choice between upholding customary law and following prurient self-interest, the Athenian assembly chose the latter and formed a defensive alliance with the Corcyraeans. Thucydides' account of the debate illustrated the manner in which the opportunities offered by alliance with a power on the coastal route to Italy and Sicily, combined with the negative consequences of allowing an enemy's ally to strengthen its positions, were overriding interests and foreshadowed the Athenian decision.

Thucydides' interpretation displayed his understanding of the role of power in politics. Faced with a choice between a substantial increase in power and the moral stature derived by a reputation for fidelity to existing agreements, even states as

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[5] Thucydides, *Peloponnesian War*, 53-62.

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"enlightened" as Athens invariably choose the short path to power.[6] He noted differences in national character are important, but the anarchic nature of the international system and subsequent concerns for security dictate overwhelmingly a state's grand strategy and foreign policy decisions. Considerations of legality and notions of 'right' reign paramount only in the absence of immediately vital interests.

Another, and more often discussed, example of Thucydides insights into the primacy of power is his careful examination of the Athenian reaction to a revolt by the citizens of Mytiline. As a means of deterring its other smaller allies from following suit, the Athenians responded by ordering their adult male population put to death and their women and children sold into slavery. A crisis of conscience arose among the Athenian populace after the message had been sent to the regional commander, prompting a hasty public assembly to reconsider this course of action.[7] Perceiving that moral arguments do not usually overcome arguments presented in terms of interest, especially regarding matters of grand strategy, the Athenian leader Diodotus did not pursue arguments that would draw upon popular sentiment against the cruel verdict. He chose instead to appeal to Athenian interest in terms of power and presented his case for leniency as an early form of cost-benefit analysis:

> If we are sensible people, we shall see that the question is not so much whether they are guilty as whether we are making the right decision for ourselves. I might prove that they are the most guilty people in the world, but it does not follow that I shall propose the death penalty, unless that is

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[6] Michael Joseph Smith, *Realist Thought*, 6.

[7] See J. Talboys Wheeler, *An Analysis of Thucydides* (London: George Bell and Sons, 1895), 107.

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> in your interests; I might argue that they deserve to be forgiven, but should not recommend forgiveness unless that seemed to me the best thing for the state.[8]

Diodotus stayed the cruel punishment by presenting his policy as the most prudent for Athenian interests, rather than appealing to the same kinds of moral arguments that failed to sway the assembly in other matters of importance.

Thucydides' understanding of the primacy of considerations of interest and relative power in foreign policy was most evident in his next chronicle, that of the Melian debate. Here, he recorded how the Athenians believed in the critical importance of superior relative power in their relations in the larger world of foreign relations. During their presentations the Athenians did not bother to make even surface arguments regarding the morality of their foreign policies. Instead they presented their demands for Melian compliance with their demands entirely as a matter of their overwhelming capacity to compel the Melians to accept their desired terms:

> We on our side will use no fine phrases . . . we recommend that you should try to get what it is possible for you to get, taking into consideration what we both really do think; since you know as well as we do that, when these matters are discussed by practical people, the standard of justice depends on the equality of power to compel and that in fact *the strong do what they have the power to do and the weak accept what they have to accept* [emphasis added].[9]

The Athenian belief that strength allows freedom of action remained a strong theme throughout Thucydides' work and is most evident in the policy speeches of the greatest orator of the time, Pericles. Pericles often praised Athenian honor and virtue in

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[8] Thucydides, *Peloponnesian War*, 219.

[9] Ibid, 401-02.

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the abstract, usually in times of despair, but chose the cool language of interest to discuss strategy. Thucydides made it clear that he preferred Pericles in the latter mode, as did the Athenians.[10]

Thucydides intentionally moved his work beyond that of either objective history or subjective history to the realm of political analysis by chronicling the effectiveness of naked power in decisions regarding strategy and foreign policy. He described his work as non-traditional scholarship, in the sense that it was "not a piece of writing designed to meet the taste of an immediate public, but was done to last for ever."[11] Rather than retell the history of the Peloponnesian War according to the heroic conceptions of its winning protagonist or as a vindication of Athenian political philosophy, he examined the several means by which contemporary political figures attempted formulate grand strategies. In this sense Thucydides anticipated modern American international relations scholarship in much more than prioritizing a set of considerations and preferences regarding the meaning of power. [12] *History of the Peloponnesian War* was the first major treatment of the role of power perceptions in grand strategy and became required reading in the political education of American strategists.

While it was an aged Athenian general, relaxing in exile and chronicling the wars of his youth, who laid the foundations of modern grand strategy, it was a middle-aged

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[10] Michael Joseph Smith, *Realist Thought*, 7.

[11] Thucydides, *Peloponnesian War*, 48.

[12] For a fascinating recent study of Thucydides and his influence on realism, see Thomas Heilke, "Realism, Narrative, and Happenstance: Thucydides' Tale of Brasidas," *American Political Science Review* 98, no. 1 (February 2004), 121-38. Heilke argues realism cannot be communicated by a set of axioms alone; it requires narrative.

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diplomat, wearing the robes of former offices and reminiscing of the intrigues from his political career, who first codified the heretofore unspeakable justifications for the behavior of those who designed it.[13] Many centuries after the death of Thucydides, as Europe rediscovered the wisdom of the Greeks, Niccolò Machiavelli proposed the key to understanding international political behavior was a calculation of power, interest, and consequence. He regarded this as a simple fact of politics, observable to all but the most abstract moralist. Unlike Thucydides, however, this Florentine strategist did not appear to be disturbed by this knowledge.

Machiavelli argued the pursuit of power over neighboring states by a sovereign is neither amoral nor immoral; rather it is the manifestation of a separate realm of morality. A statesman's worth as an authority figure derives entirely from his effectiveness in gaining and maintaining relative power for his state. Thus a reputation for morality and possession of moral authority are important only insofar as they affect considerations of power.

Machiavelli, who did not always distinguish between foreign and domestic policy the way modern international relations scholars attempt to do, made clear in *The Prince* that a reputation for moral authority was more important and even preferable to the possession of it. He stressed,

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[13] Machiavelli has become, in popular terms, the quintessential realist. R.B.J. Walker noted, "He has become the most privileged icon, the most resonant, symbol, the name (almost) at the top of the list of names, the writer of the text that more than any other has become synonymous with 'the tradition'." R.B.J. Walker, *Inside/Outside: International Relations as Political Theory* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 33.

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> A prince, therefore, need not necessarily have all the good qualities I mention above, but he should certainly appear to have them. I would even go so far as to say that if he has these qualities and always behaves accordingly he will find them harmful; if he only appears to have them they will render his service. He should appear to be compassionate, faithful to his word, kind, guileless, and devout. And indeed he should be so. But his disposition should be such that, if he needs to be the opposite, he knows how.[14]

Power was a morality unto itself; the civic responsibility of princes required it.

Among Machiavelli's many contributions to political thought was a practical conception of the utility of power that caused his contemporaries to vilify his name so vehemently that it became a long-standing synonym for the Christian devil. Machiavelli's controversial idea was that the unique responsibilities of political authority create a separate ethic for those who wield it. Set clearly in *The Prince* and rather inconsistently expanded in *The Discourses*, Machiavelli's breathtakingly original worldview provides a compelling argument for the morality of the power-minded ruler.

Machiavelli's differentiated model of specific spheres of morality, one personal and one political, arises from the vesture of communal authority in the person of the sovereign. His political ethic differed from that of private life in several important conceptual and practical areas. Statesmen would, from time to time, face situations in which, to safeguard the state, they must act in ways deemed abhorrent for the average man. Machiavelli believed leaders in such situations should not hesitate to design any

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[14] Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*, trans. George Bull (London: Penguin, 1981), 100-01. There remains, however, a vigorous semiotic debate over the true meaning of Machiavelli's use of the word virtù to describe this character trait. See Harvey C. Mansfield, Jr., *Machiavelli's Virtue* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), Ch. 1.

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policies and enact any measures necessary for the strength and integrity of the states for which they were responsible.

Machiavelli argued that a ruler, imbued with leadership and burdened with responsibility, cannot and should not be constrained by personal ethics, for the stakes of politics are higher than the honor and integrity than one person. When a prince must act to safeguard the state, "no considerations of justice or injustice, humanity or cruelty, nor of glory or of shame, should be allowed to prevail. But putting all other considerations aside, the only question should be, What course will save the life and liberty of the country?"[15] Machiavelli's bold declaration of the primacy of power and interest proclaimed his belief that the only way for a statesman to be moral was to be an effective formulator and practitioner of grand strategy.

Machiavelli did not eschew the idea of honorable behavior by political leaders.[16] Rather, he included a reputation for personal integrity and trustworthiness in the calculus

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[15] See Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Discourses of Niccolò Machiavelli*, trans. Leslie J. Walker (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1950), book 3, Ch. 41 and Harvey C. Mansfield, Jr., *Machiavelli's New Models and Orders: A Study of the Discourses on Livy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1979), 425-27.

[16] R.B.J. Walker described the problem facing international relations scholarship when it comes to the study of Machiavelli: "Read as the paradigmatic realist, he is immediately reduced to instant formulas – about the priority of power over ethics, about the necessity of violence and intrigue in the affairs of state, about ends justifying means and *raison d'état*. All of which is clearly not to read Machiavelli at all, but to endorse a caricature, a product of a long, complex, and particularly suspicious interpretative history . . . Although there may be continuing controversies about and conflicting interpretations of the meaning and significance of Machiavelli's texts, the received caricature cannot survive even a moderately attentive first reading." Nevertheless, this 'caricature' has enormous influence on modern political thought, both by scholars and policy makers, most of whom do not, for whatever reasons, study Machiavelli in sufficient depth to go beyond the caricature. See Walker, *Inside/Outside*, 33-4.

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of a prince's, and therefore a state's, overall power. It was the reputation for, rather than the possession of, morality that Machiavelli found valuable, at least insofar as foreign rulers may be induced to behave in ways that he defined as irrational, such as accepting that the gentlemen's agreements of various princes are a better determinant of foreign policy than considerations of interest.

Machiavelli's ideal statesmen were ethically suspect in all their political maneuvers, yet held unquestioned dedication to the safety and security of their states. To be certain this concept would not be overlooked, he reiterated this position several times throughout *The Prince* and *The Discourses*, holding remarkable consistency in the ideas underlying his several formulations of his view of the ethic of responsible statesmanship.

> You must realize this: that a prince, and especially a new prince, cannot observe all those things which give men a reputation for virtue, because in order to maintain his state he is often forced to act in defiance of good faith, of charity, of kindness, of religion. As I said above, he should not deviate from what is good, if that is possible, but he should know how to do evil, if that is necessary.[17]

He continued, "So it follows that a prudent ruler cannot, and must not, honour his word when it places him at a disadvantage and when the reasons for which he made his promise no longer exist." The prince has an undeniable obligation to set aside his personal standards when acting in a sovereign capacity.

Machiavelli should not be viewed as a blunt realist, for he shows an appreciation for the intricacies and delicacies of his advice. Sir Herbert Butterfield, in his 1960 examination of the Florentine advisor's stances, noted Machiavelli wrote most

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[17] Machiavelli, *The Prince*, 100-01.

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extensively about dealing with periods of crisis.[18] His basic philosophy reflected his understanding of the effects of repeated acts of untrustworthiness. One study concluded:

> His awareness of long-term drawbacks of faithlessness made Machiavelli's advice on this point cautious; while his urgings on the advantages reflected shrewd insight that acceptance of faithlessness in some circumstances was, in a world of sovereign princes, a condition of extending faith in others."[19]

In this sense the "Machiavellian problem" of statecraft remains with us through the present day, and as we shall see, each of his successors attempted to deal with it in his own way.[20]

Throughout his treatment of the sources and uses of power Machiavelli made the first transition, in the words of Michael Joseph Smith, from political scientist to "policy scientist," eager to urge particular policies on those in power.[21] He was the first to write down general principles of international relations with the idea that they be read and employed by current policy makers. That he would be tempted to apply scientific principles and methods to his field, politics, is hardly surprising, given his professional and personal relationship with Leonardo da Vinci.[22] It is hardly surprising later

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[18] Herbert Butterfield, *The Statecraft of Machiavelli* (London: Faber & Faber, 1960), 92.

[19] G.R. Berridge, Maurice Keens-Soper, and T.G. Otte, *Diplomatic Theory from Machiavelli to Kissinger* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 13.

[20] Michael Joseph Smith, *Realist Thought*, 12. See also Howard Williams, *International Relations in Political Theory* (Philadelphia: Open University Press, 1992), 51-4.

[21] Michael Joseph Smith, *Realist Thought*, 11.

[22] Roger D. Master, *Machiavelli, Leonardo, and the Science of Power* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1996). The degree to which da Vinci influenced Machiavelli has never been established by direct evidence. See the review of Master's

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American scholars would begin formal efforts to create a science of international politics with notions of the primacy of power and the differentiated morality regarding uses of it taken from Thucydides and Machiavelli.

Following these two towering influences on the American philosophy of international relations were other important refinements and insights on the two themes. Thomas Hobbes wrote extensively of the underlying causes of the pursuit of power and was well versed in the ideational underpinnings of international relations thought. Enamored of Thucydides, he produced a well-received translation of *History of the Peloponnesian War* while in his thirties. Hobbes recalled in his own short third-person autobiography, *A Prose Life*, that, "Of all the Greek historians, Thucydides was a source of particular delight . . . In it the weaknesses and eventual failures of the Athenian democrats, together with those of their city state, were made clear."[23]

Hobbes reasoned that people do not seek power for its own sake. Rather, they seek power because it represents a means of acquiring those other things that make life worthwhile: prestige, opportunity, comfort, and enjoyment. It also provides for their protection from enemies, who view the weak as irresistible targets and have little regard for the good of any but their own.

> But though there had never been any time wherein particular men were in a condition of warre one against another; yet in all times Kings, and Persons of Soveraigne authority, because of their Independency, are in continual jealousies, and in the state and posture of Gladiators; having

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book by Albert Somit in the March 1988 issue of *American Political Science Review*. However close the personal relationship between the two had been, the influence of da Vinci's contributions to scholarship would have been hard to avoid for a scholar living in exile near Florence during the early sixteenth century.

[23] Thomas Hobbes, *A Prose Life*, available at http://art.supereva.it/hobbes.freeweb/texts.htm, accessed 7 November 2004.

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> their weapons pointing, and their eyes fixed on one another; that is, their Forts, Garrisons, and Guns, upon the Frontiers of their Kingdomes; and continual Spyes upon their neighbours; which is a posture of warre.[24]

For Hobbes the desirability of power is self-evident: power enables a contented life.[25] His writings influenced American thinking by laying the foundation for a society highly preoccupied with the purposes of power.

The degree to which one subscribes to the view that power is always preferable to the lack of it is highly illustrative of how closely one's assumptions parallel those of realism. Is power really beneficial? Is it desirable? For Hobbes and many of his intellectual descendents in the United States this is clearly the case. Hobbes's writings, much like those of Machiavelli, offer practical justification for the pursuit of power by arguing that it is useful to acquire power regardless of whether one finds having power intrinsically satisfying. Together with Machiavelli's differentiation it forms the basis of the American belief that its leaders have a moral requirement to pursue international power for the sake of their nations and themselves. The United States will always, therefore, be sensitive to changes in international power and intolerant of unfavorable trends in this area.

Hobbes's stance provoked scrutiny of individual and collective purpose in the conduct of international relations. That leaders sought power and should be expected to do so was obvious. "In the first place, I put for a general inclination of all mankind, a

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[24] Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1996), Ch. 13.

[25] Williams, *International Relations*, 57.

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perpetual and restless desire of power after power, that ceaseth only in death."[26] Why mankind wanted power made the issue immeasurably more complicated. Hobbes' explanation provoked much investigation of means and ends in international relations, a theme that would fuel later searches for ways of achieving individual and national security by means other than increases in relative power.[27]

Alone among his contemporaries, Hobbes accepted Machiavelli's differentiation between the moral requirements of a man and those of a leader of men. In fact, he approached with a novel combination of the differentiated political requirements of those in authority with his own concepts of Christian duty, defining distinct political roles for authority figures and citizens. Hobbes concluded the sovereign's guiding purpose is to ensure the safety and prosperity of his people; therefore, the sovereign is obliged to God to promote this end successfully. "But by Safety here, is not meant a bare Preservation, but also all other Contentments of life, which every man by lawfull industry, without danger, or hurt to the Common-wealth, shall acquire to himselfe."[28]

At the same time, citizenries were obligated to ensure the safety, well-being, and authority of their sovereigns, for "the good of the sovereign and of the members are inseparable."[29] The resources of the state being necessary to the formulation of credible

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[26] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 123.

[27] At times this search has included the crusade for peace, creation of local balance of power systems, creation of an international society, founding of international institutions, and democratization. Realists stress that these means were, for reasons rooted in human nature, temporary at best and ultimately unreliable.

[28] Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 268.

[29] Ibid, 144.

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foreign policy, citizenries must submit their own interests to that of the state when called upon to do so. "The strength and wealth of the sovereign are derived from, and dependent upon, the strength and wealth of the members. Conversely, a society is weak if the sovereign cannot command its wealth and power."[30]

Machiavelli and Hobbes provided one final philosophical challenge that continues to influence modern American strategy: the difference between a view that centers an understanding of an ever-changing world, as proposed by Machiavelli, and a view that begins with the metaphysics of being, such as that of Hobbes. In this sense American worldviews have a fundamentally combative tradition rooted in one of the deepest rifts within Western thought since the classical period. It underlies many of the contrasts to be found in recent literature on realism and structural realism. R.B.J. Walker noted the appropriate response to this continuing rift is "to begin unpacking the assumptions and contradictions which lie buried in the claim to political realism itself."[31]

The assumption of universal seeking for power, central to modern American realism, has been questioned by many of the scholars most often cited to buttress realist logic. Max Weber argued persuasively that the acquisition of power in international politics is ultimately self-defeating:

> Every political structure naturally prefers to have weak rather than strong neighbors. Furthermore, as every big political community is a potential aspirant to prestige, it is also a potential threat to all its neighbors; hence the big political community, simply because it is big and strong, is latently

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[30] M.M. Goldsmith, *Hobbes's Science of Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1966), 207.

[31] Walker, *Inside/Outside*, 112.

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> and constantly endangered. Finally, by virtue of an unavoidable "dynamic of power," wherever claims to prestige flare up–and this normally results from an acute political danger to peace–they challenge and call forth the competition of all other possible bearers of prestige.

Weber made these observations in the context of general theorizing about power in political relations, but also substantiated his view with by referencing the profound events of his own experience, noting in 1922, "The history of the last decade [1900-1910], especially the relations between Germany and France, shows the prominent effect of this irrational element in all political foreign relations."[32]

One could hardly argue that Weber sought to discourage anyone from specifying power as the goal of politics. Indeed, his definitions of both politics and the state emphasized the centrality of the struggle for power. For Weber the domestic realm is the place in which statesmen competed for power against each other; at the level of international relations they worked together to vie for power against their counterparts in other nations.[33] Weber understood the term "politics" to mean the struggle for power among either statesmen or states.[34]

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[32] Max Weber, *Economy and Society*, trans. Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich (New York: Bedminster Press, 1968 reprint).

[33] The influence of Weber's dualist approach to the struggle for power is starkly evident in the civic polities of those foreign policy circles influenced by realist thought; foreign policy has been debated from party lines, but its ultimate goals are traditionally regarded as bipartisan.

[34] "A state is a human territory which successfully claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory . . . The state is considered the sole source of the "right" to use force. Hence "politics" for us means striving to share power or striving to influence the distribution of power either among states or among groups within a state. . . . When a question is said to be apolitical question . . . what is always meant is that interests in the distribution, maintenance, or transfer of power are

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The power component of Weber's conception of politics dominated his approach to international relations and had profound effects upon the development of realist, and ultimately American, views. Weber began his analysis in "Politics as Vocation" by noting the only definition of the state that made any sense was one formulated according its relative capabilities. In this conception, Weber influenced heavily the later writings of American realist scholars, echoing noticeably in Morgenthau's later declaration, "International politics, like all politics, is a struggle for power."[35]

The other great contribution of Weber to later American views that deserves note here is his conception of power in the international arena as being most clearly expressed in terms of the capability of nations to use violence. He proclaimed,

> Sociologically, the state cannot be defined in terms of what it does. There is scarcely any task that some political association has not taken in hand, and there is no task that one could say has always been exclusive and peculiar to those institutions which are designated as political . . . Ultimately one can give a sociological definition of the modern state only in terms of the specific means peculiar to it, as to every political association: namely, the use of physical force.[36]

Weber did not draw distinctions between the exercise of power and the threat of physical force – to him, whether implicit or explicit, all exercises of power were backed by potential violence.

Unlike many of his German contemporaries, Weber's worldview and the role of power in determining its winners and losers did not arise from then-fashionable racial or

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decisive for answering the questions and determining the decisions." See Max Weber, "Politics as Vocation," *From Max Weber: Essay in Sociology*, ed. and trans. Hans H. Gerth and C. Wright Mill (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946), 494.

[35] Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, 6th ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1948), 31.

[36] Max Weber, "Politics as Vocation," 494.

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Social Darwinist concepts.[37] Weber rejected the notion that history condemned barbarism; indeed, he feared that advanced civilizations that did not express their power by building and maintaining superior military capabilities would not survive the rigors of a competitive international environment.[38] At the same time these advanced civilizations must show an appreciation for purposes of power or lose their way.

Weber's arguments, taken together with events of the early twentieth century, fostered a preoccupation with military force by the theoretical school that emerged in their wake. This had profound consequences for the subsequent development of American views about international relations by fostering a concentration among American scholars on creating models primarily concerned with measuring relative state capacity for violence.

In sum, the philosophic traditions of American foreign policy created an American approach to international relations that is characterized by an unending search for the meaning of power and the role of morality in the pursuit and exercise of it. Many other philosophic traditions informed American worldviews, including French malaise about the drive for hegemony, British conceptions of the responsibilities of a Great Power, and German methods of achieving and preserving Great Power status. Taken together they formed the core of what would become the twin pillars of American international relations thought.

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[37] David Beetham, *Max Weber and the Theory of Modern Politics* (London: Polity Press, 1947), 43.

[38] Michael Joseph Smith, *Realist Thought*, 27.

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American Exceptionalism and Political Realism

The American experience was born from a combination of idealism and realism. A variety of motivations spurred the colonization of the North American continent by European powers and their peoples – social and political escape, economic opportunity, religious experiment – but the most common themes to their aspirations were newness and opportunity. America was a new venture for some and a new life for others.[39] The unifying characteristic of early settlement objectives is that they each contained an element of improving the old ways of doing things through freedom from conventional strictures, be they trade without traditional business structures, worship without Anglican oversight, or politics without the direct supervision of Great Power bureaucracies.[40]

The reason they came to America to accomplish their ambitions was a deep-seated sense of realism about the limitations of their own existence under their previous systems. This frustration extended across many diverse backgrounds and found expression in their approach to building a new life. For example, the second sons of European nobility, restrained from achieving their full potential at home by laws of primogeniture, often agreed to manage their family's interests in America and become lords of their own domains. Remote from direct family and state control, they built their own empires, especially in the rural south, and grew distant from European ideas and

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[39] See Jon Butler, *Becoming America: The Revolution before 1776* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000).

[40] An account of the diverse groups settling the United States and their influence on the development of colonial mentalities can be found in Daniel J. Boorstein, *The Americans: The Colonial Experience* (New York: Random House, 1958).

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conventions. The same held true in many cases for merchants, shipwrights, traders, trappers, and other tradesmen.

The United States was thus built in large measure from its citizens' conglomerated ambitions and subsequently prone to youthful idealisms. As it matured from colony to territory to country to world power, its people retained their sense of being a model of political evolution, the idea that their existence as a nation could and should be a newer and better model for political life than those that spawned it.[41] The American government itself was an experiment in the most philosophically advanced form of government yet devised, representative democracy. Its people took great pride in their success and emerging role as an example for civilizing political life, especially after the French revolution appeared to validate their belief in historical trends toward freedom and democracy.

As American domestic politics were to be very different, so would U.S. foreign behavior. Early American intellectuals viewed states system left behind as corrupt and power-hungry. Europe would not draw the United States back into its cesspools of intrigue and strife, a conviction expressed by successive American presidents from the very first administration onward. Its combination of geographic seclusion and political isolation permitted the United States a rare opportunity to pursue a grand strategy based on its commitment to idealism long past its adolescence and into early adulthood. Eager

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[41] Bernard Bailyn is considered one of the most influential scholars on this aspect of early American history. His most celebrated work on the subject is *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1967).

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to prove their difference and worthiness, the American people and their government embraced and pursued the doctrine of idealism assiduously.

Rooted in the experiences of nineteenth century Europe and America, the doctrine of idealism originated in a period of unbridled optimism over highly successful application of Enlightenment principles and methods to nearly every field of scientific inquiry. Encouraged by the advances of their counterparts in other fields, many scholars assumed a similarly scientific investigation of individual and collective human behavior would yield a solution to the problem of peace. The idealist view held faith in the perfectibility of man, or more precisely, the belief that, through education, reform, and regulation, man would realize the truth of his essential goodness, an assumption whose roots lay in contemporary religious doctrines regarding man's fall from original grace and struggle for redemption.

Echoing the findings of natural and physical sciences, the idealist vision rested on the assumption that objective and knowable laws that have their roots in logic in general must govern politics and society. Following quickly upon a mechanistic view of humanity is the conclusion that such a creature, if he desires it, must be capable of manufacturing a stable, peaceful international order through the application of reason and science. War, in the conception of these scholars, was a scourge of humanity. Violent conflict could never be anything but a dishonorable method of statecraft, exacting a high toll on the collective good and sullying indiscriminately all who used it. It followed from this view that all causes of war were imperfections to be identified and corrected through moral, rational, legal, or, if required, military means.

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The roots of this worldview lay in nineteenth century liberalism and borrowed heavily from Adam Smith's theories of economics to describe its state of international affairs and predict an eventual end to international conflict. Economics demonstrated that beneath the competitive behavior of self-interested consumers was an inner logic of the free market that worked to benefit all.[42] Similarly, the underlying state of international relations came to be understood as a harmony of state interests disrupted by the imperfect machinations of power politics. Seemingly intractable problems could be explained to be the result of misinformation, misperception, and a few evil men, for peace must be preferable to war. Perfect competition among each nation's interests could be expected to bring about to international harmony, in much the same way perfect competition in economics could be expected to bring about maximum prosperity for all.

The First World War tested the validity of scientific utopianism. Unprecedented devastation wrought by worldwide conflict lent a sense of urgency to a host of idealistic goals, including the end of war as a means of solving disputes. Accordingly, national governments, private associations, and the nascent League of Nations each tried to outdo each other in the organization of international conferences to solve the problem of peace. Statesmen became somewhat obsessed over finding what Hans Morgenthau later derided as a simple, rational, mechanical solution to something complicated, irrational, and incalculable.[43]

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[42] Adam Smith, *Wealth of Nations* (1976), available at http://www.bibliomania.com, accessed 7 November 2004.

[43] Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*, 47.

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The idealists of the early twentieth century were themselves inheritors of a long legacy of various forms of failed optimism. Development of a flourishing bourgeoisie in eighteenth-century France spawned a new class of intellectuals to define and defend its interests. The political lessons of their day were war-weariness and the futility of territorial expansion, most notably derived from France's recent failed drive for Continental hegemony. The *philosophes* distilled this feeling into harsh criticisms of power-seeking in general and foreign affairs in particular. While this environment fostered great achievements in domestic political philosophy, it led the era's most celebrated thinkers to dismiss international relations as inherently corrupt and ultimately unimportant.[44]

Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Immanuel Kant, among others, argued vainglorious self-interest by princes brought about wars the citizenries did not want. Only a republican form of government could prevent wars from continuing. Their celebration of popular integrity became unfashionable after J.S. Mill observed the majority was a largely uneducated mass capable of barbarous acts of tyranny. Casualties produced by the independence of the United States and revolution in France demonstrated in a very real way the masses were capable of independently organized violence.

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[44] The philosophes' views did not contain themselves to the coffee houses and parlors, but quickly found quiet agreement among government officials. For a contemporary account of popular sentiment and public morality see the writings of the Marquis D'Argenson, French foreign minister from late 1944 to early 1947, especially his memoirs and the posthumously published *Considérations sur le Gouvernement Ancien et Présent de la France* (Amsterdam, 1764), in which he asserts foreign policy is subservient to domestic interests.

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In the nineteenth century the preservation of monarchy against creeping republicanism was supposed to end international conflict.[45] Its later abolition heralded the coming of a more peaceful age, for public opinion, if allowed to make itself an effective determinant of grand strategy and foreign policy, should have sufficed to end war. Similarly, the imperial struggle for overseas possessions became, for a time, the sinister culprit. Treaties to restrict colonial competition, specifically the Treaty of Berlin and Peace of Versailles, proved ineffective at both regulating war and creating conditions for peace. The independence of these colonies fifty years later brought the world no closer to a pacific system of foreign relations.

For a time secret diplomacy was blamed for allowing ignorant citizenries to support war and subsequent futile efforts did not end the practice. Outright renunciation of the use of force failed. Making wars illegal in the 1928 Pact of Paris (Kellogg-Briand Pact) did nothing to abolish them.[46] European scholars proposed monopoly capitalism created internal contradictions and class struggles that were diverted into foreign wars–a socialist peace thesis. Subsequent attempts at various forms of socialism provided

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[45] The Congress of Vienna represented the most extensive attempt to create peace from view. Delegates assumed the preservation of the stability of European monarchies would ensure the stability of Europe and an end to major war. See Edward Vose Gulick, *Europe's Classical Balance of Power* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1967) and Henry A. Kissinger, *A World Restored: Metternich, Castlereagh and the Problems of Peace 1812-22* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1957).

[46] As late as 1936 Alfred Zimmern called the Kellogg-Briand "the most far-reaching engagement so far entered into by the sovereign states of the world" and "practically speaking, irrevocable." Alfred Zimmern, *The League of Nations and the Rule of Law* (London: Macmillan and Company, 1936), 392.

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neither peaceful coexistence nor enough goods and services to prevent their constituencies from overthrowing their socialist governments.[47]

It would be an exaggeration to describe the scholarship of this period as uniformly utopian, for it exhibited substantial variety. During their researches and concrete attempts at finding permanent peace, however, scholars and international elites shared an ethic of snubbing, at least publicly, the power politics that were supposedly the culprit responsible for the outbreak of hostilities that led to the Great War.

Thus the period between the first and second world wars presented the first great challenge to realist thinking. But the common view of this interwar ear as one of idealist legalism versus more pragmatic realism is simplistic and inaccurate, especially when examining the development of American views. The liberal idealism of Woodrow Wilson, codified in the Fourteen Points and expanded in subsequent legal scholarship, represented the apex of willingness on the part of the international community in general and the United States in particular to apply the ethic of exceptionalism to a European system ensnared in the corruption of its realist history. In abandoning its own attempt by rejected its League of Nations, the United States demonstrated it was not made of ideals alone. America's duality would confound itself and other nations in the interwar period and continues to present a lasting snarl of confused behavioral expectations, especially among foreign leaders and international relations scholars, through the present day.

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[47] Current proposals deriving from this view include the pooling of state sovereignties, the disarmament of nations, and universal free trade, none of which appear likely to bring the world closer to perpetual peace.

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Whether one believes they were enwrapped in the nobility of their aspirations or merely enveloped in the horror of the Great War, Americans as a whole came to the position that liberal internationalists failed to appreciate that politics cannot be an abstraction from the essential elements of humanity. They understood that human beings have not always been completely good, rational, or altruistic. Furthermore, human behavior has never conformed precisely to the world of scientific explanation, in which all phenomena and behavior have identifiable sources than can be isolated for experimentation, understanding, and prediction. Minds, hearts, and souls are notoriously indistinct, often nebulous, and do not lend themselves easily to necessities of scientific investigation such as precise categorization and mechanistic repeatability.

Americans were not alone in embracing this view of naked idealism. E.H. Carr's *Twenty Years' Crisis* appeared in 1939 as a reaction to Arnold Toynbee's idealistic commentary in the *Royal Yearbook of International Affairs*.[48] However, it was not in Great Britain that Carr's original work bore fruit.[49] American scholars and policy makers ended the Second World War by championing the seemingly contradictory but overwhelming American themes of idealism and realism. American idealism lay behind

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[48] Stanley Hoffman, "An American Social Science: International Relations," in *International Relations – Still an American Social Science? Toward Diversity in International Thought*, ed. Robert M. A. Crawford and Darryl S. L. Jarvis (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001), 27-52, reference on 31.

[49] Where Carr failed to develop a science of international relations in England he succeeding in sparking one in the United States. International relations theory has been and continues to be dominated by American scholars. This lent a particularly American flavor to the directions of research and purposes of scholarly debate. It is hardly surprising, then, that American research interests, such as bilateral conflict and hegemonic stability, have received the most attention in academic circles.

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American efforts at institution building and its willingness to work with recalcitrant partners such as Soviet Russia and China. American realism informed its growing body of scholarship regarding the acquisition and uses of power and the nature of international relations.

The American international relations thinkers who succeeded the idealists moved toward acceptance of these as unfortunate but inalienable truths and sought instead to temporize by working with, rather than against, the forces giving rise to conflict. They echoed early critics of liberal utopianism, including E.H. Carr, who stated flatly, "No political utopia will achieve even the most limited success unless it grows out of political reality."[50] Their acceptance began to embed itself in international relations scholarship in the early twentieth century, but did not begin to take precedence until disillusion over failed attempts to secure peace forced a reexamination of the task itself.

This was the moment the realist school of thought came to the fore of American foreign policy circles, a position it has yet to relinquish after more than six decades of theoretical challenge. Political realism resurged after the failure of appeasement in the 1930s, the trauma of the Second World War, and the onset of the Cold War. Its growing strength brought a torrent of research that brought the American tradition of realism from a nebulous set of values and perceptions to a formal school of thought, with its own definitions, experts, and research agendas. This intellectual approach seemed on target in

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[50] Carr, *Twenty Years' Crisis*, 10. Carr's work was not a work of international relations theory, but a critique of prevailing wisdom that resonated very strongly with the emerging school of realist thought.

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blaming war on the evil side of human nature and the resulting failure of leaders in the interwar period to balance against the rising power of Germany, Italy, and Japan, along with the widely perceived failure of the League of Nations, discredited alternative approaches toward political practice.[51]

The standard of American foreign relations analysis in the mid-to latter-twentieth century thus shifted from idealism tinged with moments of expediency to a belief in the methods of realism to achieve the goals of liberalism. Realist pragmatism, which provoked a wave of counter-models, was itself largely a reaction to traditional thinking, especially in American foreign policy circles during the first half of the twentieth century.[52] As Raymond Aron observed in 1966, an important characteristic of realists was their attempt to "think against."[53] E.H. Carr, Reinhold Niebuhr, Hans J. Morgenthau, and many of their fellow intellectuals rebelled against the prevailing intellectual standard of their era—theoretical derivations of Wilsonian ideals combined with long-standing American values.

In their rejection of the idealistic approach the realists brought a grudging acceptance that there is no perfectible, scientific explanation of foreign relations, no

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[51] The most prominent treatment of these issues is found in Carr's *Twenty Year's Crisis*, which communicated disapproval of interwar diplomacy from an authoritative, realistic point of view.

[52] See Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962). Kuhn describes the manner in which descriptive models are overthrown by more advanced understandings, which are themselves overthrown in turn.

[53] Raymond Aron, *Peace and War: A Theory of International Relations*, trans. R. and A.B. Fox (Garden City, N.J.: Doubleday, 1966), 596.

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magic formula that would end the phenomenon of international conflict.[54] Carr described the coming era as one in which the idealist will discover "one of the facts whose causes he will have to analyse is the fact that few people do desire a "world-state" or "collective security," and that those who think they desire it mean different and incompatible things by it."[55] As such, there would be no absolute solution to the problem of human conflict until man abandoned his individuality.

The first and most lasting assertion of realism as a formal school of thought arrived with the publication of Hans J Morgenthau's *Politics among Nations* in 1948. Over half a century after its appearance, the work still stands as an exemplar of twentieth-century realism and is the classic text both assigned to first year IR students and referenced by respected IR scholars. Morgenthau's statement of political realism had an immediate influence on every subsequent research agenda in the field. Its adherents included the overwhelming majority of scholars in the early and middle years of the Cold War.

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[54] Realist suspicion about the pursuit of a science of international relations has not faded easily. Many decades after the emergence of political realism, Carr wrote to Stanley Hoffman, "Whatever my share in starting this business (the field of international relations), I do not know that I am particularly proud of it. I suspect that we tried to conjure into existence an international society and a science of international relations. We failed. No international society exists, but an open club without substantive rules. No science of international relations exists. The study of international relations in English-speaking countries is simply the study of the best war to run the world from positions of strength." September 30, 1977. Quoted in Jonathan Haslam, *The Vices of Integrity: E.H. Carr, 1892-1982* (London: Verso, 1999), 252.

[55] Carr, *Twenty Years' Crisis*, 10.

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American political realism's unabashed embrace of human fallibility represented a disavowal not only of the recently dominant ethic of Wilsonian idealism, but liberalism's entire approach to thinking about human behavior. International relations scholars and practitioners in the 1930s and 40s began to recognize, albeit often grudgingly, the fundamental pervasiveness of man's imperfections. They began to agree that politics are still governed by objective laws, yet their roots lie in human nature rather than in immutable and flawless logic. A world of limited resources and competition-driven inhabitants ensures the continuation of opposing interests and periods of conflict. Morgenthau noted all of the successful statesmen of modern times, from Richelieu to Churchill, have made the national interest the ultimate standard of their politics.[56]

As the most dominant school of thought in an age of available and affordable publishing, political realism boasts whole libraries of work attempting to espouse its history, character, and qualities. Complicating the use of the term is the fact that each realist seems to have his own realism. This case study seeks to shun the controversies inherent in exacting definitional exercises by using instead a working definition: political

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[56] Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*, 34. This does not mean, however, that realists believed the nation-state would remain forever dominant and the problem of peace unsolvable. Neither Carr nor Morgenthau believed the nation-state to be the ultimate form of government, nor did they hold the international system would forever endure. Writing in 1970, Morgenthau foresaw that the forces of globalization would leave the nation-state "no longer valid" and soon "obsolete." The advent of "nuclear power, together with modern technologies of transportation and communications, which transcends the ability of the any nation-state to control and harness it and render it both innocuous and beneficial, requires a principle of political organization and structure transcending the nation-state." See Hans J. Morgenthau, "The Intellectual and Political Functions of Theory," in *International Theory: Critical Investigations*, ed. J. Der Derian (New York: New York University Press, 1995), 50.

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realism is a school of political thought whose basic tenants include international anarchy, the dominance of state actors in international politics, and the primacy of power as the currency and goal of their efforts.

Many of the top foreign policy minds at the time of realism's emergence were American, either by birth or immigration, and at first found this new approach extremely distasteful, for the American intellectual establishment had a long and proud heritage of condemning the tactics of what it derided as a corrupt, power-hungry, immoral European system. In doing so these critics upheld a mythology of their intellectual predecessors, many of whom had fled their native European empires to create a republic based on the liberal ideas ascendant at the end of the eighteenth century. This viewpoint's pervasiveness over the first hundred and fifty years of United States history meant that the ideas of liberal idealism and American exceptionalism, while temporarily reduced in stature from the 1920s through 1960s, nonetheless permeated to a remarkable degree American foreign policy conduct and rhetoric.

Coincident with the breakdown of long-standing intellectual traditions was a grudging acceptance of the realities of immediate and long-term American primacy. Distaste for power politics among the world's newly ascendant international relations heavyweights was matched by distaste among those who had once wielded the greatest quantity of power themselves: the foreign policy elite of Europe. While these figures learned to cope with their diminished role in global affairs, the foreign policy elites of the United States, as well as the Soviet Union and China, achieved their newfound influence in power politics at the very moment when they each were trying to promulgate their own particular political system as morally superior to that of their new opponents. Their

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idealist traditions yielded haltingly but definitively to the competitive realities of the international system.

The years 1917-1945 demonstrated conclusively the inescapable fact that the maintenance of a stable international order required more from the world's new Great Powers than their idealism; it required their power. Similarly, these nations grudgingly came to terms with their need for the rest of the world. The United States could not escape the consequences and responsibilities of its growing power, yet had long refused to relinquish the overextended adolescence provided by its geographic isolation. The Soviet Union had yet to perfect its own socialist paradise, yet found a need to remake the rest of the world in its image before it succumbed to the pressure of rising American hegemony and rapid Asian economic growth. Extensive overseas interests required leaders who were deeply engaged in overseas enterprises, as early twentieth century events in Europe and Latin America demonstrated.

These developments were not instantaneous, nor perceived immediately by those who participated in them. The United States, with its free society and rapid economic development, appeared to be the most ideally suited for innovative approaches to the old ideas of power politics. Yet these forces took root slowly, as American foreign policy circles were slow to accept these new realities. It was safer for American academics and politicians to warn against the loss of America's privileged moral ground than to devise a framework for making the world respect the superiority of its power. To counter their position any competing approach to international relations would require solid intellectual grounding.

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Reinhold Niebuhr offered realism a profound theological connection between human nature and political behavior.[57] "Man is insecure and involved in natural contingency; he seeks to overcome his insecurity by a will-to-power which overreaches the limits of human creatureliness." Political behavior is the extension of all human pursuits; therefore man's imperfections will translate to international relations. International peace will never happen until man ceases to be man. Lasting peace is a state of affairs that would not be realized because humanity holds a ceaseless ambition to struggle toward perfection, rather than allow it to happen.

Niebuhr felt man's original sins of inquisitiveness and pride remained with him forever:

> Man is ignorant and involved in the limitations of a finite mind; but he pretends that he is not limited. He assumes that he can gradually transcend finite limitation until his mind becomes identical with the universal mind. All of his intellectual and cultural pursuits, therefore, become infected with the sin of pride. Man's pride and will-to-power disturb the harmony of creation.[58]

Contrasting his understanding of man's pride with his own humble approach, Niebuhr tried to imbue the field with a sense of its own limitations. He warned that intellectual pride leads man to ignore the contingent nature of his knowledge. Because of their intellectual pride, the great philosophers have all made the mistake of imagining themselves "the final thinker."

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[57] See Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Children of Light and the Children of Darkness: A Vindication of Democracy and a Critique of Its Traditional Defense* (New York: Scribner, 1949).

[58] Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man* 1 (New York: Simon & Shuster, 1949), 178-79. The biblical foundation of his belief is found in Genesis, Ch. 3.

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As a fundamentalist country, the United States required more than philosophical justifications for its outlooks and grand strategies. Niebuhr provided American approaches to international relations with a theological foundation, more of a necessity for American acceptance in the early twentieth century than in the early twenty-first. Doing so brought him much praise from his contemporaries. George Kennan, for example, wrote that Niebuhr was the "father of us all." Niebuhr was not so much the father of the realism as its parson. His political and moral guidance sought to prevent others from taking the extremes of credulous idealism and cynical realism. Niebuhr's most distinctive contribution to the idea of realism in the theory of international relations was to fashion a religious foundation for Weber's ethic of responsibility.[59]

Niebuhr's writings, like most ecclesiastical work, are open to interpretation by those seeking to marshal his authority for their individual positions. His aphoristic style invites ambiguous quotation. Niebuhr's legacy remains unclear and his contributions relatively obscure to modern scholars largely because his ambiguity made him difficult to pin down on particular topics. His durability as an eminent figure in international relations thought and willingness to reconsider his positions furthered his intellectual elusiveness.

Niebuhr reflected American uncertainty about the duality of its own approach to grand strategy. It is not hard to quote Niebuhr against Niebuhr. In a debate with Niebuhr on the Vietnam War, Paul Ramsey was once reported to have remarked that Niebuhr

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[59] Michael Joseph Smith, *Realist Thought*, 132-33.

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seemed not to have read Niebuhr.[60] In describing his intellectual relationship with Reinhold Niebuhr, the influential international relations scholar Hans Morgenthau once remarked, "Reinie and I come out about the same on politics, but I do not need all his metaphysics to get where we both get."[61] The differences between the two writers do indeed reflect those between theology and political science. Niebuhr called Morgenthau "the most brilliant and authoritative political realist."[62]

Morgenthau's project was to change realism from a critique of utopianism and a characteristic approach to man and politics into a comprehensive theory that could explain the underlying essence of relations among states, illuminate the moral problem in statecraft, and provide a sound basis for evaluating specific, contemporary problems of national policy. Morgenthau's writings are so voluminous that some abbreviations and selectivity are essential, but the essential thrust of his work is the identification and development of American conceptions of realism and morality in international relations.

Bridging the gap between the unique experiences of American democracy and the responsibilities of growing American power requires a fusion of the two traditions. At critical times in the latter half of the twentieth century the relative prevalence and interplay of the traditions of exceptionalism and realism have been the most salient force

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[60] *Reinhold Niebuhr on Politics*, ed. Harry R. Davis and Robert C. Good (New York: Scribner, 1960), 10. Cited in Michael Joseph Smith, *Realist Thought*, 132-33.

[61] Quoted by Martin E. Marty, "Reappraisals: The Lost Worlds of Reinhold Niebuhr," *American Scholar* 45 (Autumn 1976), 569.

[62] Reinhold Niebuhr, *Man's Nature and his Communities: Essays on the Dynamics and Enigmas of Man's Personal and Social Existence* (New York: Scribner, 1965), 71.

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defining the grand strategy of the United States. This dominant political tradition has resulted in a very specific set of structural beliefs about power – "constructed realism" – unique in world history and salient to examinations of American grand strategy. The theoretical components of constructed realism can be described quite effectively through the use of specific aspects of international relations theory that, taken together, inform the American approach to grand strategy.

Development of American International Relations Scholarship

American writings on international relations theory are the synthesis of two independent components: one logical and one definitional. The first of these consists of behavioral logic and has no reference to the particulars of politics or human nature. The second lies in the specification of systems, variables, and assumptions. Theory groups people and explores the ways in which they relate to one another. In the case of realist thought, theory identifies a system characterized by a lack of overarching authority (anarchy), a set of identifiable actors (states), and a set of assumptions about the nature of humanity.

Commissioned in the 1950s by William Fox to produce a compendium of contributions of Western political thought to current scholarship on the causes of war, American international relations theorist Kenneth Waltz took his investigations further and produced a major work of international relations theory. In this, his doctoral dissertation and first book, Waltz describes the ways in which the fathers of political

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thought influence international relations theorizing and the making of foreign policy.[63] He distinguishes realism's foundations as separable. In his conception of international relations Waltz chose to embrace realism's behavioral logic while rejecting the notion that the insecure nature of humanity drives all international relations.[64] He specifies instead a world in which the insecure nature of the major institutions expressing human political ambitions, states, is the driving force behind international relations. [65]

In his conception of international relations Waltz redefines two assumptions of realism so radically, yet so subtly, that his creation has been credited erroneously as founding a competing school of international relations theory. It is nonetheless somewhat difficult to distinguish from realism. Structural realism represents in fact more of a complement to realism than a rival. Realists view international relations as a broader and somewhat vague expression of the ceaseless struggle for power by individuals; Waltz views them as the ceaseless struggle for security by states. This distinction is not as unambiguous as it may seem, for much confusion exists at all levels of academe about the difference between realism and structural realism. The variables both schools employ, such as security and power, are open to interpretation. The relation that theoretical

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[63] Kenneth Waltz, *Man, the State, and War: A Theoretical Analysis* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1954). The book was Waltz's first and the second volume of the series, *Topical Studies in International Relations*. Fox describes the manner in which Waltz completed much more than requested in the book's forward, iii-iv.

[64] "It is not possible to understand world politics simply by looking inside of states." Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, 65.

[65] Waltz, *Man, the State, and War*, Ch. 1.

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concepts have to one another, therefore, is under vigorous debate both among all realists and among the IR theory community at large.

Waltz accepts that state leaders generally perceive power acquisition as the same thing as security acquisition, as do most realists. He gets there, however, not through extension of the rational and irrational impulses of imperfect beings, but by an explanation of systemic conditions as an irresistible determinant of outcomes. According Waltz's structural realism, the international environment is a self-help system in which states are the main actors and are imbued with a responsibility to provide security for their inhabitants.[66]

The first requirement of security being survival, states must continuously assess their security situations for potential threats to their existence and take steps to meet them. In this concept structural realism rejects traditional realist concepts of human fallibility and echoes the liberal ideal that states are inherently peaceful.[67] Where structural realism differs from the liberal school is its refusal to accept that the international system is a priori peaceful as well. Peaceful states can form very violent international systems if the conditions of relative power so dictate. The structural realist

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[66] Vagaries plague the definitions used in works of structural realism. Waltz preferred to call his own particular brand of structural realism 'neorealism', while most in the field tend to use structural realism and neorealism synonymously. This work will attempt to clarify its own use of the terms by confining itself to using 'structural realism' in general and label specific forms of it with the names of its primary theorists.

[67] "Survival is a prerequisite to achieving any goals that states may have . . . survival motive is taken as the ground of action in a world where the security of states is not assured, rather than as a realistic description of the impulse that lies behind every act of the state." Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, 91-2.

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view of international relations therefore shares traditional realism's pessimism about the prospects of lasting peace.

Structural realism embraces the realist understanding that state leaders believe power acquisition, especially military power, will deter other states from attacking them and their interests. States are thus compelled to engage in Hobbes' ceaseless competition for power, whether they want to or not.[68] The interaction of their efforts creates outcomes of greater insecurity, less stability, and ultimately a world in which even states that remain inherently peaceful after interaction with their unit and state-level variables may yet engage in security competition in ways that sometimes lead to war.

Waltz' was not the first attempt to explain international behavior as the result of systemic pressures. Karl Marx and Immanuel Wallerstein did so with economics.[69] Stanley Hoffman called for a Copernican revolution in the study of international politics and sought signs a new paradigm had arrived.[70] Morton Kaplan explored relations

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[68] Waltz, *Man, the State, and War*, Ch. 6; and *Theory of International Politics*, Ch. 6.

[69] Marx did so with international socialism and the end of class struggle, most famously in *Das Kapital*. Immanuel Wallerstein did so with *The Modern World System: Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World Economy in the Sixteenth Century* (New York: Academic Press, 1974). Neither method of achieving world peace via economic justice enjoys much enthusiasm among modern IR scholars.

[70] "If we were to put primary emphasis in the study of politics on world affairs, and to treat domestic politics in the light of world affairs, instead of the reverse, we might produce a Copernican revolution even bigger than the change that transformed economics when macro-analysis conquered micro-analysis." Stanley Hoffman, "International Relations: The Long Road to Theory," *World Politics* 11, no. 3 (Spring 1959), 347. See also the first two chapters of Stanley Hoffman, *Gulliver's Troubles, or, The Setting of American Foreign Policy* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1968) and chapters four and five of

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between states in terms of geopolitical structural power.[71] Richard Rosecrance sought to explain international politics as a combination of traditional domestic influences and an empirical basis for several recurring models of international relations based on systemic influences.[72] Yet none had the influence on the development of modern IR theory enjoyed by structural realism, nor shows the same promise of better understanding the ways in which American policy makers view the world.

Waltz rejected these theoretical efforts outright as being both repetitious and bland, condemning them "a small gain in explanatory power that has come from the large amount of work done in recent decades."[73] He rejected inquiries into the effects of interdependence and transnationalism with equal vigor, most famously associated with his contemporaries Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye.[74] He argued instead that the configuration of power among states was the determining factor in international relations. Processes occurring above or below the level of state interaction, while important, were of less importance than systemic pressures for behavior and would never fully explain decisions or outcomes.[75]

Structural realism embraces the view that leaders perceive power as the best guarantor of security. States leaders, fearing the effects of being at a disadvantage

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his *The State of War: Essays on the Theory and Practice of International Politics* (New York: Praeger, 1965).

[71] Morton Kaplan, *Systems and Process in International Politics* (New York: John Wiley, 1957).

[72] Richard N. Rosecrance, *Action and Reaction in World Politics: International Systems in Perspective* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1963).

[73] Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, 18.

[74] Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, *Power and Interdependence: World Politics in Transition* (Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1977).

[75] Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, 95.

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relative to other powers, therefore face incentives to increase their power at every turn. Waltz believed, however, that more aggressive maneuvers that seek this end trigger systemic reaction. This reaction had long been understood in terms of balancing, although balancing had been used to refer to a specific grand strategy rather than a systemic effect. Offensive maneuvers, for Waltz, are largely ineffective because other states refuse to accept the increased insecurity inherent in one state's drive for dominance. Waltz argued that successful seeking for power is ultimately futile, for no state will allow a great power to achieve hegemony if it can help it.[76] Yet state leaders fail to appreciate this and continue to grasp for power for fear of being dominated or destroyed.

Structural realism reinvigorated IR theory by invigorating tired debates about the primacy of states and the security-power dilemma. It also provided new opportunities for empirical and statistical analysis of the international system. Waltz' restatement of realist assumptions and emphasis on behavioral logic brought about a resurgence of realist discussion that ensured the school's domination of international relations theory in general and American international scholarship in particular through the rest of the twentieth century.[77] It had profound effects on the level of sophistication of the American realist approach and its appeal to those who make American grand strategy.

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[76] Ibid, Ch. 6.

[77] Waltz has retained his position as a dominant figure in discussions of international relations theory throughout his six decades of scholarship. Waltz' critique of globalization in the Spring 2000 issue of *The National Interest* and spirited defense of

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A central concept to modern structural realism remains its exploration of balancing behavior.[78] Glen Snyder elaborated on this by specifying two pathologies inherent in balancing behavior: abandonment and entrapment.[79] Thomas Christensen and Jack Snyder incorporated the role of defense dominance into predictions about these types of behavior.[80] Comprehensive descriptions of some alternatives to balancing behavior appeared, including bandwagoning and hiding. Bandwagoning refers to a policy of purposeful realignment with the source of the threat, or, more commonly, "if you can't beat 'em, join 'em."[81] It is associated most often with the behavior of smaller powers.[82] Hiding consists of opting out of the game of international politics. It is generally associated with isolationism, neutrality, assuming a purely defensive position, or purposefully ignoring a threat in the hopes that it will not materialize. These behaviors

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realism in the Summer 2000 issue of *International Security* demonstrate not only the typical longevity of structural realism, but also of realist scholars.

[78] Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, Ch. 6; Kenneth Waltz, "The Emerging Structure of International Politics," *International Security* 18, no. 2 (Fall 1993), 73; Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*, Ch. 11-14; Stephen M. Walt, *The Origins of Alliances* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987).

[79] Glenn Snyder, "The Security Dilemma in Alliance Politics," *World Politics* 36, no. 3 (July 1984), 466-67.

[80] Thomas Christensen and Jack Snyder, "Chain Gangs and Passed Bucks: Predicting Alliance Patterns in Multipolarity," *International Organization* 44, no. 2 (Spring 1990), 137-68.

[81] Walt, *Origins of Alliances*, 17. See also Robert G. Kaufman, "To Balance or Bandwagon? Alignment Decisions in 1930s Europe," *Security Studies* 1, no. 3 (Spring 1992), 417-47; Randall L. Schweller, "Bandwagoning for Profit: Bringing the Revisionist State Back In," *International Security* 19, no. 1 (Summer 1994), 72-107.

[82] Paul Schroeder, "Historical Reality v. Neo-realist Theory," *International Security* 19, no. 1 (Summer 1994), 117; Robert L. Rothstein, *Alliances and Small Powers* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968); and Eric J. Labs, "Do Weak States Bandwagon?" *Security Studies* 1, no. 4 (Spring 1992), 383-416.

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also are generally not considered options for great powers, although from time to time great powers have exhibited hiding behavior.[83]

The other aspect of Waltz' research that held enormous consequences for the development of IR theory literature was his underlying assertion that wars represent irrational outcomes in international politics. Waltz argued the formulation of shortsighted policies and persistent miscalculations of the ease and benefits of aggression drive states into wars they often do not really desire. The idea that international aggression is so difficult and yields so few results grew into a literature on the offense-defense balance that for a while showed bias in favor of the power of defensive positions.

Scholars whose research moved in this direction became known as defensive realists. Defensive realists believe security is plentiful in the international environment.[84] Robert Jervis, Jack Snyder, and Stephen van Evera, among others, write extensively on the virtues of defensive power and the various results of systems that exhibit various offense-defense balances. They argue the balance of power in a struggle

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[83] One example of a great power pursuing the hiding strategy is the United States' reluctance to get involved in the internal and external conflicts of the former Serbian states during the 1990s. In this case the world's preeminent power had a vital interest in ensuring the stability of Europe, but chose not to get involved until after the European Union had demonstrated it was incapable of dealing with the issue.

[84] Robert Jervis and Kenneth Waltz described the underpinnings of defensive realism in, respectively, "Cooperation under the Security Dilemma," *World Politics* 30, no. 2, (January 1978) and *Theory of International Politics*. For examples of defensive realism see Charles L. Glaser, "Correspondence: Current Gains and Future Outcomes," *International Security* 21, no. 4 (Spring 1997), 186-93; Stephen van Evera, "Primed for Peace: Europe after the Cold War," in *The Cold War and After: Prospects for Peace*, ed. Sean Lynn-Jones (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991), 193-245; Walt, *Origins of Alliances*, and Robert Jervis, "Cooperation under the Security Dilemma."

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between offensive forms of power (first-strike capabilities, lightning attack capabilities, etc.) and defensive forms of power (second-strike capabilities, fortifications, etc.) is almost always weighted toward the defense. It thus takes a powerful systemic incentive to force states to choose to mount an attack, for prospects of winning an offensive war and gaining anything of value are usually dim. States want to take these kinds of steps to increase their power only if their actions do not threaten to destabilize the system and thereby their own security.

Defensive realists generally seek to identify the conditions under which security can become scarce. Their efforts can be classified according to the sources of international insecurity they identify, although it is important to note that many IR scholars themselves do not always fit neatly into these categories. Those who examine situations in which misperceptions threaten the peace include Stephen van Evera and Robert Jervis.[85] Those who study the ways in which economic trends influence prospects for peace include Dale Copeland in his theory of trade expectations.[86] Glenn Snyder describes other variables that bring about the same effect.[87]

Defensive realists thus recognize many potential areas in which attack is a plausible course of action. Their work finds, however, that such situations are the exception more often than the rule. They maintain the offense-defense balance usually

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[85] Stephen van Evera, *Causes of War: Power and the Roots of Conflict* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999).

[86] Dale Copeland, "Economic Interdependence and War: A Theory of Trade Expectations," *International Security* 20, no. 4 (Spring 1996), 5-41.

[87] Glenn Snyder, "Process Variables in Neorealist Theory," *Security Studies* 5, no. 3 (Spring 1996), 167-92.

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lies squarely on the defense side of the spectrum.[88] One consequence of this view is that it engenders a widespread belief that potentially destabilizing actions such as the acquisition of military power are not as threatening as generally perceived, for the incentive to begin major power wars is low.[89] Furthermore, changes in overall relative national power and the systemic pressures they exert according to the logic of structural realism are less important to prospects for lasting security.[90] This view surfaces

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[88] The offense-defense literature is voluminous and grows steadily with each innovation on either side and numerous shifts in perceptions regarding the value of existing factors. See Robert Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976); George Quester, *Offense and Defense in the International System* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1977); Thomas Schelling, *Arms and Influence* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966); Bernard Brodie, "Technological Change, Strategic Doctrine, and Political Outcomes," in *Historical Dimensions of National Strategy Problems*, ed. Klaus Knorr (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1975), 262-306; Stephen van Evera, "Offense, Defense, and the Causes of War," *International Security* 22, no. 4 (Spring 1998), 5-43. Many are unsure the value the offense-defense debate contributes to the field. See Jack Levy, "The Offensive/Defensive Balance of Military Technology: A Theoretical and Historical Analysis," *International Studies Quarterly* 28, no. 2 (June 1984), 219-38; Charles L. Glaser and Chaim Kaufmann, "What Is the Offense-Defense Balance and How Can We Measure It?" *International Security* 22, no. 4 (Spring 1998), 44-82; Sean M. Lynn-Jones, "Offense-Defense Theory and Its Critics," *Security Studies* 4, no. 4 (Summer 1995), 660-94; and, for a criticism of the field's focus on the issue, see Stephen van Evera, "Correspondence: Taking Offense at Offense-Defense Theory," *International Security* 23, no. 3 (Winter 1998/1999).

[89] Stephen Walt writes that in such situations, states have "little intrinsic interest in military conquest." Stephen M. Walt, "International Relations: One World, Many Theories," *Foreign Policy*, no. 110 (Spring 1998), 37.

[90] See Joseph Grieco, "Anarchy and the Limits of Cooperation: A Realist Critique of the Newest Liberal Institutionalism," *International Organization* 42, no. 3 (Summer 1998), 485-507; Robert Powell, "Absolute and Relative Gain in International Relations Theory," *American Political Science Review* 85, no. 4 (December 1991), 1303-320; and John Matthews, III, "Current Gains and Future Outcomes: When Cumulative Relative Gains Matter," *International Security* 21, no. 1 (Summer 1996), 112-46.

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periodically in international relations and never fails to draw criticism, yet has shown remarkable lasting power in American views of international relations.[91]

This belief, combined with expectations of systemic balancing to protect states that might not successfully defend themselves, demonstrates that defensive realism describes a very peaceful system of international relations. This drew vehement dissent from scholars who agreed with the logic of structural realism but disagreed with the bias it was showing in favor of defensive power. They eventually formed a competing strain of structural realism, offensive realism.[92]

First specified in 1991 by Jack Snyder, this divide parsed structural realist ideas into two rather indistinct and not very useful camps, based largely on the degree to which their proponents believed power acquisition by one nation translates into potential insecurity for its neighbors.[93] Offensive realists began to argue that there is not much security in the international environment.[94] States must vie for it relentlessly or suffer

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[91] Similar views between the two world wars put great faith in the effectiveness of defensive systems such as radar as deterrents to aggression. Debate over the degree of naïveté informing this view continues today.

[92] See Barry R. Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine: France, Britain, and German between the World Wars* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1984); Benjamin Frankel, "Restating the Realist Case: An Introduction," *Security Studies* 5, no. 3 (Spring 1996), xv-xviii; Eric J. Labs, "Beyond Victory: Offensive Realism and Expansion of War Aims," *Security Studies* 6, no. 4 (Summer 1997), 1-49; Walt, "One World, Many Theories"; Brooks, "Dueling Realisms"; Charles L. Glaser, "Realists as Optimists: Cooperation as Self-Help," *International Security* 19, no. 2 (Winter 1994/95), 50-90.

[93] Jack Snyder, *Myths of Empire: Domestic Politics and International Ambition* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991), 11-2.

[94] For examples of offensive realism see Fareed Zakaria, *From Wealth to Power: The Unusual Origins of America's World Role* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998); Eric J. Labs, "Beyond Victory;" Randall L. Schweller, "Neorealism's Status Quo

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systemic punishment ranging from minor humiliation to complete annihilation. This viewpoint maintains that pervasive uncertainty about the future requires states to engage in an energetic struggle for increases in sources of power. The most sought-after of these are the fungible attributes of physical size, population, industrial output, and military output and less directly fungible sources of power such as international leadership and creditability.

The most succinct statement of offensive realism can be found in the work of longtime American critic of both liberalism and defensive realism John Mearsheimer. His adherence to the logic of systemic pressure and belief in the power it holds over state action came to the fore after the end of the Cold War.[95] Promulgating his brand of offensive realism while most IR scholars were looking for new paradigms and orders after the end of the Cold War, Mearsheimer argued the configuration of power in world politics had changed somewhat after the collapse of the Soviet empire. The system of international politics itself, however, remained entirely intact. Therefore the same forces and rules that influenced behavior in the 1950s and 1970s would continue to do so throughout the 1990s and into the next millennium.

Bias: What Security Dilemma?" *Security Studies* 5, no. 3 (Spring 1996), 90-121; Christopher Layne, "The Unipolar Illusion: Why New Great Powers Will Rise," *International Security* 17, no. 4 (Spring 1993), 5-51; John J. Mearsheimer, "Back to the Future: Instability in Europe after the Cold War," *International Security* 15, no. 1 (Summer 1990), 5-56.

[95] Mearsheimer, "Back to the Future." Mearsheimer's investigation followed hard on the heels of a piece addressing similar questions by Jack Snyder entitled "Averting Anarchy in the New Europe," *International Security* 14, no. 4 (Spring 1990), 5-41.

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Mearsheimer's stalwart defense of realist ideals and systemically driven behavior brought a variety of criticisms and counterarguments.[96] His unapologetic embrace of structural realism and argument that state behavior had not and would not change its nature energized IR scholars. Mearsheimer's offensive realism posed a strong challenge to the field of IR scholarship as a whole and the area defensive realism in particular. He molded his ideas into a general theory of international relations along the lines of the emerging area offensive realism, expressed by his publication of *Tragedy of Great Power Politics*. Beginning with assumptions common to structural realism, Mearsheimer concludes that an anarchical international system is inherently dangerous and the modern world is no exception.[97]

Lacking any overarching emergency rescue mechanism in case of aggression, states, especially great powers, anticipate continuing peril and regard one another with strong suspicion. Mearsheimer elaborates: "States quickly understand that the best way

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[96] Critics of Mearsheimer's approach submitted to the journal almost immediately. See Bruce M. Russett and Thomas Risse-Kappen, "Correspondence, Back to the Future, Part III: Realism and the Realities of European Security," *International Security* 15, no. 3 (Winter 1990/91), 216-18 and 218-19, respectively. Lengthier critiques and alternatives to Mearsheimer's conclusions appeared afterward, including Charles A. Kupchan and Clifford A. Kupchan, "Concerts, Collective Security, and the Future of Europe, *International Security* 16, no. 1 (Summer 1991), 114-61, and Thomas Risse-Kappen, "Did 'Peace through Strength' End the Cold War?" Lessons from INF," *International Security* 16, no. 1 (Summer 1991), 162-88. Robert Jervis addressed this as well in "The Future of World Politics: Will It Resemble the Past?" *International Security* 16, no. 3 (Winter 1991-92), 39-73.

[97] The assumptions are: (1) the international system is anarchic; (2) great powers inherently possess some offensive military capability; (3) states can never be certain about other states' intentions; (4) survival is the primary goal of great powers; and (5) great powers are rational actors.

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to ensure their survival is to be the most powerful state in the system. The stronger a state is relative to its potential rivals, the less likely it is that any of those rivals will attack it and threaten its survival."[98]

One of the most persistent and threatening dangers of international politics is the penchants states develop for monitoring relative power closely and taking action to prevent negative trends. Mearsheimer in particular argues that great powers always pay attention to the power distribution in an anarchical international system and seek to maximize their relative power. Great powers pursue grand strategies that seek to "eliminate any possibility of challenge by another great power" because the best way to ensure their survival is to achieve hegemony as soon as possible.

Mearsheimer's forays into strategy are effective when he argues war, blackmail, bait and bleed, and bloodletting are ways in which states seek to increase power, while balancing and buck-passing are strategies for checking aggressors. Where his work loses some credibility is in his attempt to demonstrate how systemic pressures translate into relative power based not on policy makers' own perceptions, but instead according to his own predefined indices. Mearsheimer believes relative power is based on population size and the level of wealth – the "main building blocks of military power" and what Mearsheimer calls the "sinews of military power."[99] He measures wealth according to a new composite indicator that combines a state's iron and steel production with its energy

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[98] John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2001), 33-5.

[99] Ibid, 43 and 60, respectively.

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consumption until 1970. After 1970, he uses the GNP as the indicator of latent power. Unfortunately for the applicability of Mearsheimer's ideas, there is no recorded instance of a policy maker using his indicators and making decisions based on them. This is the same drawback of other attempts to make theorizing more "scientific" by quantifying power without reference to perception, including the Correlates of War project.

Offensive and defense realists, in general, do not disagree much about the veracity of the traditional realist view that relative power gains influence behavior. Both schools of thought subscribe to the structural realist argument regarding the overriding influence of anarchy in the international system. They identify states as the prime actors in global politics and agree that states are security maximizers. The two competing areas even agree that states have a rationality based on the assumption that acquiring power is the best means of achieving it.

They differ, however, on two very fundamental issues: the severity of relative change that must occur before their influence becomes an overriding factor in decision making and the value of power as a guarantor of security. Offensive realists believe very little change must occur or be predicted to have dramatic effects on behavior, while defensive realists believe the superiority of defenses reduce the opportunities and dangers inherent in relative power trends. They hold similar disagreement over the utility of power acquisition for short and long-term security. These two divergences, however, have not prevented the two strands from producing a unified body of research with tremendous influence on American policy.

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American Realism and Mathematical Approaches

The power of structural realist logic shows most clearly in illustrations of relative power over time. In mathematical terms, the power of the United States according to its own perceptions can be expressed as "x" and the time variable expressed as "y". The change in American international power over time – mathematically speaking, dx/dy – is the *velocity* (speed and direction) of American power. Changes in the velocity of power over time – dx^2/d^2y – display the *acceleration* or *deceleration* of American power, or changes in the velocity of power over time.

These terms are entirely based on perceptions at the moment they examine. Instantaneous perception can best be understood as a hypothetically-taken poll of all figures influential on strategic thinking, to which each view is assigned some sense of relative influence in a nation's strategic apparatus.[100] The sum of all these views, multiplied by their influence, is the aggregate perceived view of a nation. Looking backward provides that nation's view of its past – taken at that moment – and looking forward provides that nation's expectations for its future, unless changes are made to prevent that future from becoming reality.

A nation's perception of its past can change as easily as that of its present or future. Therefore, the most effective means of demonstrating perceived power over time is to use available materials to identify an instantaneous perception, usually at some point

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[100] This is, of course, often highly contentious. Again, it is not meant to be reduced to specific numbers or individuals – there is no objective way of measuring how much influence any particular person has on any national view at any specific time.

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in history at which decisions are made. These sources are culled to find information about what the people involved believe was the past, present, and future level of power held by their nation. The perceptions can vary widely, making illustrations that are very near each other in years look very different in trend. Imagine the vast differences in illustrations of American perceptions of power and security on Decembers 6th and 7th, 1941, or Septembers 10th and 11th, 2001.[101]

Ultimately, there can be no objective standard for measuring the percentage of power any nation holds in any particular system. Human perceptions are so uncertain and fluctuate so quickly that identification of exact numbers at any given moment would be inherently inaccurate and ultimately meaningless. This area of inquiry is not amenable to precision. However, generalized understandings of the level and direction of national power can be assembled into trends in viewpoint that are very useful.[102]

States strive relentlessly for positive power velocities. They are compelled by structural pressures to change their strategies when trends become negative and are seen as correctable. A nation, such as the United States, that perceives itself as undergoing a deep decline is experiencing a negative velocity of perceived power. The start (*a*) and finish (*b*) of the decline are the *level* of overall decline (*b-a*). The slope of a line

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[101] For this reason structural realists use the kind of mathematical analysis described here to examine historical trends, which take place over many years, rather than specific policies. Longer historical timelines smooth out anomalous events that do not influence grand strategy in any significant way, while still allowing consideration of truly momentous events that shake a nation's overall strategic view.

[102] It is for this reason that perceptions of power are illustrated, rather than graphed.

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connecting them across a period of time is the *degree* of decline (*b-a / t*). It is the nation's perception of the velocity of its own decline. Degree is very important and will become important later in the analysis, for it plays a highly effective role in determining the psychology of a nation's viewpoint and the scope of a nation's response.

Two strands deserve particular note in the course of this work. Their assumptions parallel most closely American views during the period being examined. Their insights, therefore, will form the intellectual foundation of the analysis of that period. The first of these began nearly twenty-five years ago when Charles Doran and Wes Parsons used graphical techniques to track the appearance of relative power cycles.[103]

Doran and Parsons began by defining relative capability as being composed of two principal dimensions: 'size,' which is most often indexed by territory, armed forces, military spending, and population, and 'development,' which includes such variables as per capita income, urbanization, and technological sophistication. Plotting these factors over time, they identified historically repetitive power situations and examined them to determine if similarity of situation brought about similarity of outcome. They investigated whether expectations of the members of the system determine a nation's role. Specifically, they examined mathematically defined critical points to discover whether these coincided with initiation of extensive warfare by a major power in the system.

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[103] Charles F. Doran and Wes Parsons, "War and the Cycle of Relative Power," *American Political Science Review* 74, no. 4 (December 1980), 947-65.

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Doran and Parsons' loosely-defined 'theory of relative capability' holds that the propensity for a state to undertake major war should show a strong correlation with that state's proximity to mathematically-important points along a graph of its relative power. A state's total relative power score is the average of its relative power on each of five power indicators. An inevitability of decline in the rate and level of relative power, respectively, often generates a sense of insecurity, defensiveness, and vulnerability to chauvinism as real growth falls below linear projections. Alarmed by its continuing real decline in relative power, the government is subject to foreign policy overreaction and misperception regarding the intent and scope of its adversaries' actions. These tendencies are strongest when the velocity and acceleration of decline is most severe. States undergoing this type of decline may be expected to suffer from feelings of shock, frustration, and impatience, for their futures are at stake. Their leaders can be expected to react aggressively, taking strong measures to prevent their dismal projections of future power position and the threats inherent therein. They often become paranoid, assuming their slippage in relative or absolute power is the result of their adversaries' deliberate attempts to weaken them.[104]

Doran and Parsons understood that the decision to use force in such situations would be the result of many factors beyond structural pressures. They concluded that relative power velocity at critical points in a curve, although highly informative, is not a consistent indicator of the frequency of war initiation. Rather, it is relative power

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[104] Ibid, 952.

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acceleration that, when it changes from positive or negative or vice-versa, that most heavily influences the decision for violence. Furthermore, at certain inflection points forecasting is pointless, for instantaneous linear projection is mathematically impossible. According to the logic of power cycle theory, grand strategy often is as well, for one cannot make traditional linear projection of power trends when the acceleration or deceleration of power cannot be calculated mathematically. Doran and Parsons found a strong correlation between these critical points and the decision for war by major powers. Subsequently they concluded that the view that relative capability is an important factor of major power behavior deserves the widespread acceptance it already enjoyed thanks to the predominance of realism.[105]

The theory of relative capability as presently constituted is subject to two common limitations of theoretical work. The first is in methodology. Doran and Parson subscribed to the fallacy that definition of variables should take place independently of the subjects and situations being studied. They defined power according to their own beliefs, which were largely influenced by the precepts of realism, rather than those of the players involved, which could be influenced by other ideas. The inclusion of players who do not view relative capability as a combination of size and development would have demonstrated this flaw quite starkly.

The second requirement is a limitation of scope. Their study of relative capability never intended to encompass the whole of behavior nor produce a deterministic

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[105] Ibid, 948.

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model.[106] Its application was intended to indicate areas of potential discord and forces driving state action, but discord and state action can take a variety of forms. Major powers seek to overturn unfavorable trends and preserve favorable ones through a variety of means that include but are not limited to war. War being one of the most predominant, there is a statistically significant correlation between unfavorable situations and the initiation of war to overturn them. Yet frequently situations arise in which military confrontation will not be chosen. For example, a state empowered economically but weak militarily might be much more effective using trade embargoes than outright war. It follows that mathematically significant situations should correlate more strongly with drastic changes in grand strategy than with extensive war alone, an assumption that will be tested below. Doran and Parsons limited their field of study to specific, testable segments of international behavior to demonstrate the efficacy of their theory. They recognize the ideas driving their theory can and should be used more broadly.[107]

Equally significant to the development of this understand was Charles Doran's continued study of the effects of changing perceptions of systemic pressures on the decision making process. Doran and Parsons found that major powers are likely to initiate more extensive wars at the critical inflection and turning points on the curve of relative capability where the linear role perception held by government and society

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[106] Charles Doran, interview by author, 14 December 1999, Nitze School of Advanced International Studies, Johns Hopkins University, Washington, DC.

[107] Ibid.

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change pervasively.[108] In other words, while situations may change drastically, it is the drastic change of perceptions that can more easily bring about these broad turns of grand strategy.

Doran noted in his 1971 study that the capacity of a state to influence international politics and to adopt a principal foreign policy role is determined in large part by its position on the relative capability cycle.[109] Developing a favorite them of Clausewitz's writings, Doran asserted significant adjustments are required of government and society as the cycle evolves and the role changes.[110] His and Parsons' theory further asserted that the trauma of role change is most severe for state leaders at each of the four critical points on the cycle where an abrupt and ineluctable inversion occurs within the dynamics.

A suzerain may feel it has the strength to impose its will upon a vassal that does not accept this same view of their power discrepancies. Nations of equal strength may each overestimate the strength of their contemporaries for a variety of reasons. There may be acquiescence for power-building by an uninformed population (e.g. the "missile gap"), the general tendency to give an adversary too much credit for safety's sake (Shakespeare-Henry V), errant calculations of the utility of certain aspects of national

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[108] Doran and Parsons, "War and the Cycle of Relative Power," 947-65.

[109] Charles F. Doran, *The Politics of Assimilation: Hegemony and Its Aftermath* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1971), 193-94, 210.

[110] In times of rapid change, there is often a "fog of peace" in which the absence of precise, reliable information allows fear and insecurity to play a larger role in the making policy. It contributes to miscalculation, misinformation, and poor policy choices. See Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. Anatol Rapoport (London: Penguin, 1982 reprint), Ch. 7.

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power in which an adversary has an advantage (tanks, men in uniform, etc,), or electoral utility. Calculations of relative power are entirely a matter of perception, leaving ample room for dispute, conflict, and war.

An important contribution at this stage of their analysis was the recognition that relative capability is never measured as precisely as many theories expect. Relative capability theory does not require careful power calculations, since the practice of day-to-day diplomacy provides signals regarding the degree of a government's relative ascendancy or decline.[111] The inexactitude of measuring perceived power makes exact percentages or numbers impossible. The promulgation of such figures is inadvertently misleading, for it implies more accuracy than the research could possibly achieve. Rather, the illustrations of these forces show general trends, intuitions, and perceptions for conceptual purposes only.

One of these effects prominent in power cycle theory is the idea of oversteer. Using an analogy of a motorist on a slippery road, Doran argued at such times policy makers are susceptible to "oversteer." Just as a driver will often overcompensate missing the early part of a turn by swinging the steering wheel too sharply, so a nation's policy makers will often implement stronger corrective policies than normally expected. Misperceptions tend to loom larger when power trends change rapidly, leading to corrections that can overshoot the mark in much the same way a vehicle swerves to and fro as its driver attempts to regain control. At this point states are most likely to commit

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[111] Doran and Parsons, "War and the Cycle of Relative Power," 949.

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grave mistakes in foreign policy, assuming roles and taking actions that are out of balance with their respective places in the power structure.

Oversteer is largely a phenomenon that affects perception, rather than a force driving the action itself. It falls into the category of misperception, a corruptive influence on the effectiveness of a nation's foreign policy. "It is our belief that most major powers are similarly constrained regarding early identification of critical points, similarly sensitive to their imminent arrival, and similarly subject to abrupt over-reaction."[112] Thus the decision for war is often the result of misperceptions about trends and roles in the international system.

Following upon the work of Doran and Parsons, Doran's former student Dale Copeland pursued the idea that initiation of major power war in mathematically significant situations, while affected by miscalculation and irrationality, remains the result of extensive calculation and assured rationality. Copeland believed the work of his predecessors, while recognizing the primacy of power, rested on the liberal notion that peace is the natural state of the system and war an aberration.

Furthermore while perceptive effects such as oversteer may be a corrupting influence on rationality, they are important insofar as they affect projections of power. Copeland's work coincides nicely with that of Doran and Parsons, for decisions of grand strategic import are made according to perception. While his theory of economic interdependence is associated with defensive realism, in his broader theorizing Copeland

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[112] Ibid, 951.

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purposefully uses insights from both areas of scholarship to build a predictive theory of major war. From offensive realism he takes an emphasis on the use of hard-line policies to maintain relative power as a bulwark against future threats, usually demonstrated in terms of relative decline vis-à-vis another great power or alliance of smaller powers that performs the same function.[113] He combines this with defensive realists' concern for the possibility such policies can be destabilizing and increase the likelihood of inadvertent war.[114]

Copeland's rationale is straightforward: "The rational security-seeking state must constantly grapple with profound least-of-many-evils choices."[115] Another way of putting it would be that states seek continuously to maximize their power positions in as many areas and spheres as possible. Copeland develops his idea, essentially the same as that put forth by Morgenthau, into a model of behavior that attempts to explain the probability of major war over periods of time that explains the severity of state policy, and therefore the likelihood of major war. The treatment of the concept of severity of state policy and its results has varied widely. Those who concentrate on crises argue the

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[113] Copeland clarified the theoretical derivation of the model he put forth in *The Origins of Major War* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2000) in a follow-up piece, "Theory and History in the Study of Major War," *Security Studies* 10, no. 4 (Summer 2001), 212. For reviews of his synthesis of these two logical threads, see also Jeffrey W. Taliaferro, "Realism, Power Shifts, and Major War," *Security Studies* 10, no. 4 (Summer 2001), 145-78 and Robert G. Kaufman, "On the Uses and Abuses of History in International Relations Theory: Dale Copeland's, "The Origins of Major War," *Security Studies* 10, no. 4 (Summer 2001), 179-211.

[114] Copeland, "Theory and History," 212.

[115] Copeland, *Origins of Major War*, 36.

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acceptance of high risks is natural to a state facing certain long-term decline in the absence of drastic changes in policy.[116]

Dynamic differentials theory integrates his perspectives to build a model of war by showing how rational states use both sets of insights in their cost-benefit analysis regarding war. Copeland's theory demonstrates that when relative decline appears both severe and inevitable, enough so to outweigh the risks of inadvertent war inherent in pursuing hard-line policies, a great power will choose the types of grand strategies that could bring about systemic war. His model illustrates the choice for major war by a declining great power, as well as the choice to enact a grand strategy that makes such a war more likely.

The timing of war initiation depends greatly on the state's estimation of the inevitability and extent of the relative decline; the higher the expectation of an inevitable and deep decline, the more the state will be inclined to launch preventative war for purely security reasons. Copeland derived a set of criteria to estimate the "time lag" between perception of such a decline, general acceptance of its certitude in the absence of preventative war, and the relative economic and potential power of each state in the system, particularly the one that is declining.

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[116] See especially Glenn Snyder and Paul Diesing, *Conflict among Nations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977), 11-2, 342-47, 363-68; Richard Ned Lebow, *Between Peace and War* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981), 61-2; and Zeev Maoz, *Paths to Conflict* (Boulder, CO.: Westview, 1982), 2-3, 89-90. See also van Evera, *Causes of War*, 79-80.

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In his investigation of such strategies Copeland wisely chooses not to attempt to build a universal theory of war initiation. He argues instead that when an international system parallels the assumptions of his theory, the system is more likely to move toward major war. This all-too-uncommon admittance of theoretical limitation lends credence to his search for effective explanations of international phenomena through theorizing. Historical cases that demonstrate a theory does not work in all places at all times are easy to find; scholarship that instead seeks explanation of phenomena only when corresponding to the assumptions of the logic rest on more unassailable foundations.

The greatest success of the dynamic differentials approach lay in converting a traditionally dichotomous dependent variable, the occurrence or absence of major war, into a continuous variable describing the probability of major war. Furthermore, by completing the theoretical work prior to the application of history, Copeland avoided the common charge that systemic theory is created by reading certain periods of international history and then tested on those same periods. He also sidestepped neatly the criticism Robert Keohane leveled against Waltz concerning the "smuggling in" of hidden unit-level variables to make systemic theory work.[117] These advances are of great importance to the success of a combined structural and mathematical approach to understanding grand strategy.

However, several criticisms can be leveled at the present use of dynamic differentials as an approach. These debilitate the promise of combining the structural and

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117 Robert O. Keohane, "Theory of World Politics," in *Neo-realism and Its Critics*, ed. Robert O. Keohane (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 158-203.

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mathematical approaches and must be addressed. To begin, current uses of this approach are too often seduced by the power of their own logic into defining variables with more precision than can be justified. Copeland, for example, defines economic power as a state's total relative economic activity, while his potential power includes all the capital and resources, both physical and human, that could be eventually translated into measurable economic output, but have not yet been done for whatever reasons. This includes, but is not limited to, population size, raw material reserves, technological levels, educational development, unused fertile territory, etc.[118]

Such variables are very precise, but also incorrect when one considers that decisions for war are made on perceptions, not facts. The validity of Copeland's theory, like most systemic approaches, was tested against several periods of history to determine not only if it was correct in its prediction of major war. However, Copeland took the extra and vital step of examining whether the individuals involved made such choices for the reasons hypothesized by his model. In this he explicitly rejected the approach most closely associated with Milton Friedman, which argues only the correlation needs to be tested. As Copeland noted, such an approach allows one to be "right," but for the wrong

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[118] Dale Copeland, "Realism and the Origins of Major Power War" (Charlottesville: University of Virginia, [1998]), 7. He noted collection of statistics by the Correlates of War project includes data for "demographic" power, but points out the lack of any realist theory that uses such information for deductively-derived predictions, except one attempt by Charles Doran to consider the difference between "latent" and "manifest" power in his cycle theory. See Charles F. Doran, *Systems in Crisis: New Imperatives of High Politics at Century's End* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), Ch. 2.

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reasons.[119] Only by examining historical documents that reflect the rationale behind the decision for or against major war, as well as the timing of such wars, can the theory be tested for true descriptiveness.

Yet Copeland, and indeed all those who seek this theoretical path, allow for far greater descriptiveness than warranted by data that is speculative at best. Indicators of international power remain precisely that – indicators, not listings. Power remains a wooly concept, fluctuating between and within the minds of individuals. The actual differentials in state power and the actual trends of those differentials are far less useful than the perceptions regarding both held by decision makers. Precise numbers only matter if policy makers use them as the primary source in forming their perceptions.[120]

The unfinished nature of the approach described above displays most clearly when its authors' general models of international behavior are examined side-by-side. Copeland argues the dominant and declining state will be the one most driven to initiate major war to prevent what its leaders believe will be an otherwise inevitable and unacceptable future. Whereas Charles Doran argued uncertainty about the future contributes to the tendency to act irrationally, Copeland believed the greater a state's certainty about future power, the greater the likelihood that it will initiate major war.

Despite its recurrent difficulties, the techniques described by Doran, Parsons, and Copeland describe very well the thought processes of modern realism in American

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[119] Copeland, "Realism and the Origins of Major Power War," 27.

[120] Consider, for example, ongoing disparities between leading economic indicators and consumer confidence, and the roles each play in influencing economic strategy.

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foreign policy circles. Almost without exception its adherents hold sacrosanct the insights of Carl von Clausewitz, most especially his formulation that war is a mere continuation of policy by other means.[121] They argue war should not be viewed as an isolated act and cannot be understood without reference to the aims of larger national interests. Their concern with relative power, in both its bilateral and multilateral sense, fits the model's assumptions. So does their conclusion about the primary motivator for behavior: power tomorrow depends on what one does with power today.

Structural realists who use the mathematical, power differential approach understand that the systemic pressures they identify and the ways in which they govern behavior are not always deterministic. Doran's theory shows very little faith in policy makers. Copeland's theory may show too much. They do believe, however, that they are more important in general than other factors and must not be neglected in explanations of outcomes in international relations.

For structural realists, both offensive and defensive, the concept of opportunity costs plays an important role in the creation of grand strategy and pursuit of national policy. States are opportunistic, but cannot pursue every prospect, for not even a "hyperpower" such as the United States today has unlimited resources. Strategies evolve under constraints of domestic politics, budget and, most importantly, the number and quality of man-hours to invest in national security. The question for grand strategy is not, "Is the cost-benefit analysis of this policy show the venture to increase power?" as often

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[121] von Clausewitz, *On War*, 119 and elsewhere.

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as it is, "Which combination of strategies and policies will yield the greatest power increases?" States weigh their options carefully and choose those situations in which their leaders believe their efforts will yield the greatest gain in relative power. Areas of interest that offer lesser gains are 'nice-to-have's, usually neglected in favor of more profitable enterprises.

The behavioral logic underlying international relations theory can be used to describe many systems beyond the actions of states in the international system. It applies equally well to the behavior of molecules of air inside a balloon, animals in the wilderness, or billiard balls on a table. It even tells us much about the development of the international relations literature itself. If one replaces realist specification of 'states' and 'international system' with specifications of 'theoretical schools' and 'the field of international relations theory', behavioral logic applies equally well. It argues for realism's emergence as a school and depicts very well the subsequent development of international theory. Attempts to debunk the logic of realism have shown a remarkable degree of parallel with the assumptions of realism. Surprisingly, this characteristic of the literature has not been noticed by those most involved in creating it.

Much like states in an international system, theories in a system of scholarly debate exhibit many characteristics similar to those attributed to states by structural realism. Recognition of the presence of a dominant school of thought exerts pressure on other approaches to engage in the intellectual equivalents of systemic response: banding together non-realist theories into a competing school of thought (alliance formation), asserting previously separate ideas fall under the realist umbrella (bandwagoning), or declaring neutrality in the theoretical debates (hiding).

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The first of these behaviors, alliance formation, has been the hallmark of recent scholarly attempts to work outside realist models. This approach tries to balance realist dominance by unifying non-realist theories into a separate and competing school of thought. One such school is constructivism, for it emerged from the start as a critique of structural realism. However, to view constructivist theory is an IR paradigm in the manner of realism and liberalism is misleading – it is more of a methodology than a model.[122] A number of constructivists agree power matters in international relations.[123] Where they part company with realists is in their idea of power as a social rather than a material concept.

Understanding constructivism begins somewhat ironically with the words of realist father-figure Hans Morgenthau, who reminded readers that a "nation as such is obviously not an empirical thing. A nation as such cannot be seen."[124] The term "nation" refers to a group of people and organizations that makes foreign policy.[125] Alexander Wendt used this caution as the starting point for a new way of looking at international relations that did not accept all realist assumptions. What matters, according to Wendt, are not the raw facts of material distributions of one kind or another,

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[122] J. Samuel Barkin, "Realist Constructivism," *International Studies Review* 5, no. 3 (September 2003), 325.

[123] See Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge, NY: New York University Press, 1999), 13-4.

[124] Morgenthau, Politics among Nations, 117.

[125] The set of actors obviously varies among states and ideological systems. In international relations theory in general and rational actor models in particular, the term "nation" refers to those inside a state that affect foreign policy choices. Realist and neorealist models eliminate differences in internal process by using this aggregate term.

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but their interpretation and signification by each state in the international system. He developed Morgenthau's reminder into a school of thought based on the view that actors "act on the basis of the meanings that objects have for them, and meanings are socially constructed."[126] Wendt stated what emerged from this foundation directly, if not entirely clearly:

> Constructivism is a structural theory of the international system that makes the following core claims: (1) states are the principal units of analysis for international political theory; (2) the key structures in the states system are intersubjective, rather than material; and (3) state identities and interests are an important part constructed by these social structures, rather than given exogenously to the system by human nature or domestic politics.[127]

Wendt remains a state-centric scholar of international relations, but he urges us not to take states and their interests for granted. Restated for clarity, Wendt's key assumptions are: (1) realists get it right when they concentrate on the state as the primary actor, but should be careful not to forget that there are a variety of other important actors; (2) it is not 'the real world' that matters in understanding behavior so much as how policy makers define it; and (3) the groups and views that form identity and interest are decided by the actors themselves, not by biology or political processes.

Unfortunately for Wendt's insights, the language of constructivism, rooted in the formidable vocabulary of the philosophy underlying social sciences, can be off-putting to even the most learned scholar. J. Samuel Barkin noted, "Part of the reason so many

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[126] Alexander Wendt, "Identity and Structural Change in International Politics," in *The Return of Culture and Identity in IR Theory*, ed. Yosef Lapid and Friedrick Kratochwil (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1996), 50.

[127] Alexander Wendt, "Collective Identity Formation and the International State," *American Political Science Review* 88, no. 2 (June 1984), 359.

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scholars in the field talk past each other when discussing issues of paradigm and epistemology is terminological confusion."[128] This drawback is especially true of constructivism, for how many scholars can honestly admit they were able to understand the material it has produced? It is little wonder, though, that constructivism has been understood little and misunderstood more. Its grounding in the language of metaphysics condemns constructivist ideas to the periphery of international relations theory, especially among those more likely to create foreign policy than publish scholarly papers.[129]

This is highly unfortunate for both fields, for constructivism confronts structural realism in a novel and sophisticated way by calling into question its underlying assumptions regarding the irresistible nature of anarchy and its profound effects on state behavior. Wendt postulates the violence or peacefulness of a system is not determined by anarchy, but by the members of the system and ways in which they choose to relate to one another. States that do not identify closely will be inherently combative in their relations while those that share culture and goals will be generally peaceful. In other words, as Wendt states, "anarchy is what states make of it."[130]

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[128] Barkin, "Realist Constructivism," 326.

[129] Wendt's major works related to this topic are "The Agent-Structure Problem in International Relations Theory," *International Organization* 41, no. 3 (Spring 1987), 335-70; "Bridging the Theory/Meta-Theory Gap in International Relations," *Review of International Studies* 17, 1991, 383-92; "Anarchy Is What States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics," *International Organization* 46 (Spring 1992), 391-426; and "Constructing International Politics," *International Security* 20, no. 1 (Summer1995), 71-81.

[130] Wendt, "Anarchy Is What States Make of It, 391–425.

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Constructivism brings both interest and condemnation from IR scholars. Structural realists such as Dale Copeland counter that future uncertainty dims the prospect for building trust and cooperation. Wendt's offered possibility of a peaceful outcome based on shared identity and security interests is shattered by the fear and insecurity inherent in an uncertain future.[131] Yet many structural realists show a tendency to explain anomalies in their concept of international relations in ways that look very much like constructivism. The debate between structural realism and constructivism appears to have much to offer the development of American international relations scholarship.

Struggling to deal with their traditions of exceptionalism and realism, American scholarship appears to have closed the twentieth century where it began—with incomplete understandings of both concepts and the ways in which they inform the making of U.S. foreign policy. This attitude would be highly misleading and a discredit to the field. IR scholars confront issues flowing from the implacability of man's nature and the ways in which it infuses the world of international politics. Insecurity, fear, uncertainty, pride, and such have been issues studied by humanity's best thinkers throughout history and will continue to fascinate and confound social sciences.

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[131] Dale Copeland, "The Constructivist Challenge to Structural Realism: A Review Essay," *International Security* 25, no. 2 (Fall 2000), 187–212.

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Conclusion

The study of U.S. grand strategy offers a rich area from which to draw on both IR theory and cultural distinctiveness. While some scholars, such as those developing structural realism, continue to make progress toward understanding the forces that influence state behavior, they will not be able to write a truly comprehensive and predictive model of international relations theory. No model predicts a Napoleon, a Mao, or a Gandhi. Neither does it specify religious belief, political preference, or cultural identification. On the other hand, those who understand the concept of American exceptionalism cannot fully explain American actions. The United States, in pursuit of foreign policy goals, contravenes its fundamental ideals on numerous occasions and often in flagrant manner. Yet the research done is of great importance for those who analyze American behavior in international relations.

Seldom do foreign policy decision makers have quiet, reflective moments in which they may grapple with the larger implications of the world they create. Consequences of foreign behavior that may arise six months later can feel as remote to these harried souls as those arising six decades later. Yet philosophical and ideational beliefs about humanity, goodness, and preferred outcomes underlie even the most mundane decisions. It is these underpinnings that form the most reliable guide to mapping any nation's grand strategies, decisions, and policies. They can and must be found and identified if one wishes to truly understand the decisions made.

In any realm of decision-making there are the things one wants to accomplish and developments to which one must react. A recurring pattern during presidencies is that proactive approaches are overtaken by reactive modes of crisis response. The pursuit of

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larger aims proclaimed so assuredly during campaigns is usually subsumed by a series of calamities that must be addressed, especially in the area of international politics. When one of these types of situations provides decision makers with an opportunity for addressing the other type is the time when the intellectual underpinnings that help us understand grand strategy will beckon scholarly investigation most invitingly. Deeply held desires react with ingrained perceptions of foreign policy requirements and offer many angles from which one may glimpse the thoughts behind the decisions that came afterward.

This kind of moral scrutiny usually generates a fascinating body of speeches, writings, discussions, and memoirs detailing the feelings and discussions of those involved in charting their nation's strategic course. Participants feel a need to set down for posterity their justifications for their positions. These documents provide a solid basis for examining the beliefs underlying national policy. The strategies of the last years of the Cold War are likely the most extensively documented in history and thus some of the most accessible for foreign policy analysts. They are therefore very useful for the demonstration of this work's methodology for bringing theoretical insights to the understanding of grand strategy.

In the 1950s George Kennan provided a realist understanding of the nature of the developing international situation and the mentality required of American strategists to meet it. Paul Nitze modified this strategy by globalizing it. In the 1960s and early 1970s Henry Kissinger modified it again by seeking to increase the number of players and decrease tensions. Their understanding of America's international situation and beliefs about the world shaped their strategic choices in ways that made sense at the time.

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However, by 1976 the United States had become so embroiled in the complexities of its own superpower responsibilities that its people longed for philosophical reassurance.

Americans had become somewhat adept at the uses of power in the two hundred years since the Declaration of Independence set forth American values and resolve. Faced with their first real international threat since 1812, Americans were no longer confident in their ability to remain true to their cherished ideas about the purposes of power. The world had changed, American views had changed, and the United States showed signs of preparing for a shift in its grand strategy. Applying the methodology described above will demonstrate the ways in which using scholarly approaches would have helped foresee the significant strategic reorientation that was about to take place.

Historical Review: American Power Perceptions

Americans are unique in the history of international relations. Their perceptions and beliefs are unlike those belonging to any other nation that assumed great power status. The American military experience by itself, as John Shy illustrated, has been most unusual. [132] Successes from the Seven Years War of 1756-1763 through the Second World War vastly outnumbered failures in both number and memory. Cultural legacies of geographic insularity from the affairs of truly serious world powers, the presence of non-threatening neighbors on all borders, the conquering and integration of its frontier, the pervasiveness of fundamentalist religion, and the strategic meaning of constituting a

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[132] John Shy, "The American Military Experience: History and Learning," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 1, no. 2 (Winter 1971), 205-28.

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nation of immigrants combined to form a most unusual Union.[133] Several dominant beliefs about international relations emerged from the American experience.

First is an enduring preoccupation with good and evil. The United States has a cherished legacy of injecting as much justice in systems of human organization as they can hold. American political culture cannot accept the idea that the United States must act abroad in ways that contravene enduring American ideals of justice. Second, Americans are unremittingly confident. After two centuries of remarkable success in their efforts at creating a new society, Americans had a justifiably optimistic ideology and, in Sir Denis Brogan's phrase, an "illusion of omnipotence."[134] They had survived serious, but not overly dangerous threats from displaced natives and foreign imperial powers. The only serious threat to American security after 1814 had been internal, and the tenacity of the American Confederacy became a source of national pride.[135]

Emerging triumphant and virtually unscathed from two global conflicts in the early twentieth century seemed to further justify American self-assurance. They do not often acknowledge that American military might arrived in Europe after its powers were exhausted from years of relentless struggle. Similarly, the Pacific theater was

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[133] Colin S. Gray, "National Style in Strategy," *International Security* 6, no. 2 (Fall 1981), 23-4. See also Jack P. Greene, *The Intellectual Construction of America: Exceptionalism and Identity from 1492 to 1800* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993) and Robert Dallek, *The American Style of Foreign Policy: Cultural Style and Foreign Affairs* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983).

[134] Sir Denis Brogan, *American Aspects* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), Ch. 2.

[135] Robert E. Lee and "Stonewall" Jackson are regarded today as genuinely national heroes, praised by American historians for their ideals, battlefield tactics, and valor in their defeated cause.

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asymmetrical warfare between a desperate Japanese empire that had little faith in its chances of success and an emerging superpower. The United States had never competed directly with an equivalent nation that had focuses its entire attention on the rivalry, nor faced the ignominy of losing a fair fight.

These "soft" conditions were not advantageous for the development of American strategic thought. Nor were did they challenge the United States to produce strategic thinkers. As Henry Kissinger lamented, Americans do not think geopolitically and tend to be unwilling to sacrifice their nearest and dearest for concepts like international equilibrium – even if American security rests upon the preservation, or restoration of such a balance, or equilibrium. This is not acceptable language in American political culture.[136]

This is not to say the United States never had grand strategies before George Kennan; all nations and their leaders have them, regardless of the degree of sophistication and articulation involved in their formulation and pursuit. Indeed, the earliest American leaders were quite capable analysts of the distribution of international power.[137] However, nearly two centuries of unchallenged growth and success created an environment in which this kind of thinking was not required. The United States did not

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[136] Most notably in Henry A. Kissinger, *Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1957), Ch. 1 and Henry A. Kissinger, *White House Years* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1979), 914. See also Gray, "National Style in Strategy," 33.

[137] See John Lamberton Harper, *American Machiavelli: Alexander Hamilton and the Origins of U.S. Foreign Policy* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2004), esp. Ch. 17, "Hamilton's 'Grand Plan'."

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produce great strategists or sophisticated grand strategies prior to the 1950s because it did not want or need them enough to create them.

After Germany failed to achieve mastery of Europe in the 1940s, American strategists turned to preventing the Soviet Union from doing the same. For thirty years the United States followed a grand strategy dominated by Cold War concerns and hopes for peaceful relations between the two superpowers. To achieve these it implemented a strategy of containment that sought to preserve the status quo of bilateral relations while buttressing its position by building the power of democracies in general and Western allies in particular.

At the conclusion of the Second World War the United States believed it was destined to emerge as the world's most advanced nation in every important realm of power. In the political realm it was the most representative, in military matters it held a monopoly on nuclear devastation, in economic competition it was most productive, and in the moral contest it was the most protective of individual rights and freedoms of any system yet devised. As other recent belligerents rebuilt and reclaimed some of their relative power, the United States expected it would descend gracefully from temporary preponderance to enduring preeminence. The United States' postwar objective was thus deceptively simple: prevent any disruption of this optimistic and expected future.

Postwar settlements were concluded with the understanding that any concessions made by allies would be far outweighed by the benefits of lasting peace and security. Efforts along these lines continued until 1947, at which point the Truman administration ceased its efforts to negotiate a formal end to the Second World War. Disturbingly hostile developments in Europe and the start of war in Korea cultivated a growing

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opinion in the United States that the Soviet Union desired worldwide acceptance of its ideology and, whenever expedient, would threaten international order to get it.[138] American leaders concentrated their efforts on finding ways to prevent Soviet leaders from achieving their ambitions of instability and revolution—goals that threatened to disrupt the optimistic future Americans believed was their just inheritance after rescuing the rest of the world from its self-destructive tendencies.

The security of the United States required both its physical defense from the growing might of the Soviet Union and the frustration of Soviet designs on other strategic areas of the globe. To this end the United States' first truly strategic figure of the twentieth century, George Kennan, argued convincingly that the Soviet Union would benefit more from the psychological malaise that afflicted states bordering the Soviet Union than either the strength of the Soviet military or the appeal of international communism.[139] He viewed these societies as temporarily weakened but essentially healthy. As such his proposed strategy centered on the idea of rebuilding these states into stable and democratic partners in the international order. This would be accomplished by

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[138] Robert Osgood reminded historical observers in 1986, "It took overwhelming evidence that Moscow was the opponent, not the supporter, of this new international order to transform the American post-war role from regional partner and impartial mediator of Soviet-British differences to major antagonist in a bilateral power struggle." Robert E. Osgood, "Reagan's Foreign Policy in a Postwar Perspective," in *Reagan's Leadership and the Atlantic Alliance: Views from Europe and America*, ed. Walter Goldstein (Washington, DC: Pergamon-Brassey's, 1986), 13.

[139] See George Kennan's "Long Telegram," available at http://www2.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/coldwar/documents/episode-1/kennan.htm, accessed 30 January 2005 and John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment: A Critical Appraisal of Postwar American National Security* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 32-3.

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substantial economic assistance and political support, rather than military commitments, to shore up those states in greatest peril of descent into totalitarianism.

Of particular value to American grand strategy would be the United States' reputation as an "arsenal of democracy," able and willing to assist those states under threat of Soviet domination. This strategy was based on unswerving American belief in the preference of most of these societies for the American model, rather than that of the Soviet Union. It projected the Soviets would lose influence as the world in general and Europe in particular rebuilt from the devastation of war. By playing the twin roles of shining exemplar of democratic ideals and active sponsor of efforts to secure them elsewhere the United States would achieve its goal of a stable and hospitable international order, comprised largely of democratic states, in which it would be the lasting preeminent power.

According to this view the Soviet Union would amount to no more than a temporary danger. It was destined to hold a power that ranked below the United States and above the restored European states. Soviet leaders, having lost much of their influence and found their desires for expansion frustrated by a string of failures, would discover a need to ease their hostility and negotiate with the United States. Kennan believed containment of Soviet expansionism at vital strong points of democracy would force upon the Soviets acceptance perhaps not of their eventual relegation to a secondary role, but at the very least a peaceful coexistence that is a prerequisite of stable international order.

The purpose of containment was to prevent the Soviet domination of the industrial centers of Eurasia. The goal was not destruction of Soviet power, as it had been against

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Germany, but preventing its growth beyond the abilities of the United States to defeat it, if necessary.[140] Kennan summarized the logic of containment in these terms:

> It [is] essential to us, as it was to Britain, that no single Continental land power should come to dominate the entire Eurasian land mass. Our interest has lain rather in the maintenance of some sort of stable balance among the powers of the interior, in order that none of them should effect the subjugation of the others, conquer the seafaring fringes of the land mass, become a great sea power as well as land power, shatter the position of England, and enter – as in these circumstances it certainly would – on an overseas expansion hostile to ourselves and supported by the immense resources of the interior of Europe and Asia.[141]

Kennan argued this future would come about only if the United States succeeded in forming, strengthening, and maintaining its alliance of democracies to counter the growing strength of the international communist movement. If the United States failed in this, then other possibilities for the course of international relations existed. The establishment and spread of communist ideals throughout Europe would tip the balance, placing the relative power of the United States and its remaining allies below the power of the Soviet Union and its international communist movement. The United States accepted Kennan's view of things. It adopted his strategy of containment and implemented its policy of rebuilding the Western world.

NSC 20/4 and its successor, NSC-68, put forth the goal of producing "A Rapid Build-up of Political, Economic, and Military Strength in the Free World."[142] The basic

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[140] Barry R. Posen and Stephen van Evera, "Defense Policy and the Reagan Administration," *International Security* 8, no. 1 (Summer 1983), 7.

[141] George F. Kennan, *American Diplomacy 1900-1950* (New York: New American Library, 1951), 10.

[142] This phrase is from the table of contents of NSC-68.

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aim of containment, as framed by George F. Kennan, Walter Lippmann, and other strategists in the 1940s was to prevent the industrial power of Eurasia from falling under the control of any single state.[143] Any state controlling this area could threaten the security of the United States, since the total power of Europe and Asia would far exceed that of the United States. The economy of such an area could produce a war potential that the United States could not match. Thus the United States must not allow such a superstate to arise.

Containment was perhaps the United States' first truly geopolitical grand strategy. It opposed the uncontrolled growth of the Soviet state, rather than communism, although the two purposes were often called upon to justify the each other. As Barry R. Posen and Stephen Van Evera noted, the logic of containment would have identified the Soviet Union as America's adversary even if it had abandoned communism for democracy, as long as it remained strong and aggressive.[144]

Ideas, events, and personalities intervened to challenge the sufficiency of Kennan's approach. The Berlin blockade, the Czech coup, the successful test of a Soviet atomic bomb, and Chiang's defeat in China provided support for those in the Truman administration who suspected that the Soviet Union was both a revolutionary state bent on world domination and the director of a unified, international Communist movement.

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[143] See John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment*, 873-87; George F. Kennan, *Realities of American Foreign Policy* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1966); and Walter Lippmann, *The Cold War: A Study in U.S. Foreign Policy* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1947).

[144] Posen and van Evera, "Defense Policy," 7.

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This fear translated quickly to the American public: A Gallup poll taken in 1948 revealed that 77 percent of Americans had become convinced that the Soviet Union sought to be "the ruling power of the world."[145]

Facing a more direct Soviet threat than anticipated, the United States altered Kennan's original plan for containment. Instead of holding back Soviet expansion in vital areas of American interest – Kennan's "strong points" – it sought to repel communism and Soviet influence wherever it appeared in the world. This represented a significant shift in the manner in which this American grand strategy would function, raising considerably the strategy's cost in effort and treasure. Yet its fundamental premise remained constant: the United States would react defensively to Russian attempts to gain power in what columnist Walter Lippmann popularized as a "cold war." Throughout the myriad superpower confrontations of the next three decades the American grand strategy of containment remained one designed to prevent Soviet leaders from gaining the power they needed to threaten the stability of the international order and, in turn, the projected long-term preeminence of American power.[146]

In 1960-61, the United States almost certainly could have won a war against the Soviet Union, under most probable conditions: not a war of *attrition*, with both sides taking comparably damage and then the more resilient side staying the course longer, but

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[145] George H. Gallup, *The Gallup Poll: Public Opinion, 1935-1971*, 3 vols. (New York: Random House, 1972), 1721. Quoted in Ernest R. May, "Introduction: NSC 68: The Theory and Politics of Strategy," in *American Cold War Strategy: Interpreting NSC 68*, ed. Ernest R. May (Boston: Bedford Books, 1993), 2.

[146] Taken from the text of NSC 20/4, 1948, which served as a model for NSC 68 and the containment strategy as a whole.

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a war of *annihilation.*[147] The Soviet Union, unwilling to live with this knowledge, aggressively sought parity. By the late 1960s it became clear that this would be incompatible with long-term American security. American decline, Soviet growth, and the increasingly complex nature of the broader spectrum of international relations convinced American strategists they needed a new approach.

American strategic planners abandoned the strategy of achieving and sustaining meaningful superiority. The American defense community decided it was too expensive, probably impossible, and unnecessary for American security. The sought deterrent sufficiency, rather than equivalence or superiority. What would prevent the steady concession of power to the Soviet Union? At this point Henry Kissinger supplied an answer that sprang from his uniquely complex and historical perspective.

Kissinger, the second major strategic thinker the United States produced in this conflict, brought two major modifications to the strategy of containment. The first was the idea that the United States did not have to do all the heavy lifting of containing Soviet growth. To this end he brought the offshore balancing strategy of nineteenth century Great Britain to twentieth century American grand strategy. Kissinger sought the assistance of other powers, including non-democratic states such as China, to help sustain the balance of power. The second idea was that the risks of the Cold War could be ameliorated by lowering tensions in the bilateral relationship. By making finding areas in which agreements and concessions could ease the adversarial excesses of interaction, the

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[147] Gray, "National Style in Strategy," 36. By "win" the author referred to achieving political objectives.

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danger that the situation would escalate into a war that threatened America's optimistic future would be lessened significantly.

One observer quipped with great insight, "The Cold War went on for half a century because the Americans refused to win and the Russians refused to lose."[148] The Nixon-Kissinger modification of détente was ultimately more a holding operation than a settled strategy.[149] It proved successful but not sufficient. American power continued to decline while the rest of the world – especially the Soviet Union – grew stronger and more assertive. American strategists came to understand what they needed was not further modification of their strategy to make it work better, but replacement of it with a strategy better suited to the situation.

In the three decades following the Second World War the sense of fear and revulsion created by the international behavior of the Soviet Union had given rise to more traditional, power-based American approaches to international politics. It is clear that by 1976 that feeling had been largely supplanted in the hearts of many Americans and others around the world by fear and revulsion at the behavior of the United States.[150] The

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[148] A gentleman from Yugoslavia in the audience at one of Alexander Haig's public lectures made this statement to him. Alexander Haig, Jr., *Inner Circles: How America Changed the World* (New York: Warner Books, 1992), 554.

[149] Robert W. Tucker, "America in Decline: The Foreign Policy of "Maturity," *Foreign Affairs* 58, no. 3 (Spring 1980), 456.

[150] Kissingerian is a term that brings to the minds of foreign policy scholars a milieu of wide-ranging policies, but one central theme of the importance of achieving stability in international relations, whether achieved through nuclear standoff, a balance of conventional forces, or short-term policies of instability to trigger a process that would ultimately become stable. The development of his worldview can be traced by examining his voluminous writings over the course of his career, specifically his doctoral

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retreat from Vietnam was not merely a disavowal of Wilsonianism as a foreign policy, but a disavowal of Wilsonianism as a metaphor.[151]

Deceitful maneuvers such as invasion of the Bay of Pigs in 1961, continuation of a costly and unjust conflict in Southeast Asia to protect interests few believed were strategic, and a multitude of other major and minor choices combined to disillusion and dishearten the American populace. "The anti-war movement of the Vietnam era was a thoroughly American phenomenon. The United States of Lyndon Johnson and Richard Nixon was judged, and found wanting, in terms of American values."[152] After thirty years of a Cold War with no battles, few victories, and no apparent end, the American people were tired of making moral compromises, especially when they so often appeared to bring the United States no closer to peace and security. By the mid-1970s many American citizens felt their nation had sacrificed too much of its exceptionalism in favor of the false expediency of *realpolitik.*

At the same time many observers of international relations had good reasons for believing the balance of power had begun to shift dramatically away from the United States. The American media broadcast almost daily scenes of protest over issues such as the Vietnam War, energy policy, nuclear disarmament, and human rights that indicated the United States suffered internal turmoil and dissatisfaction with the policies of its own

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dissertation, *A World Restored*; *Nuclear Weapons*; *White House Years* (Kissinger's memoirs covering November 1968-January 1973) and his memoirs covering January 1973 to the resignation of President Nixon, *Years of Upheaval* (Boston: Little Brown, 1982). A summary analysis of his worldview can be found in Robert D. Schulzinger, *Henry Kissinger: Doctor of Diplomacy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989).

[151] See William F. Buckley, Jr., "Human Rights and Foreign Policy," *Foreign Affairs* 58, no. 1 (Fall 1979), 781.

[152] Gray, "National Style in Strategy," 26-7.

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government. Of the last three chief executives the first declined to run again, the second left office under threat of removal for his crimes, and the third, having never been elected by the American people, was summarily rejected by the electorate at its first opportunity.

Congress had been uprooted in a similar fashion by an energetic freshman class in 1974 that used its unique mandate from the voters to demand and get shake-ups of traditional power structures and hierarchies, a compelling indicator of the growing storm of popular discontent with the performance of the government.[153] This new class of politician stoked existing discontent with media savvy to make this discontent larger. By the time they completed their first year in office many had taken prominent seats of power and changed the long-standing traditions built by the old order.

All this happened while worrisome trends appeared to be plaguing American economic power. The 1970s opened with a recession, a railway strike, and the first mass work stoppage ever by the U.S. postal service. The following year two strikes by longshoremen on all three coasts shut down shipping. Memories of the Great Depression made policy makers unwilling to risk increasing unemployment by using restrictive monetary and fiscal policy to contain inflation.[154] Instead, wage and price controls were introduced in August 1971. President Nixon had to take the American dollar off the gold standard. The American economy had been shown to be highly vulnerable to the whims

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[153] A tremendously insightful account of the election of and changes by the tumultuous Congressional freshman class of 1974 can be found in Hedrick Smith, *The Power Game: How Washington Works* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1989).

[154] Albert E. Schwent, "Compensation in the 1970s," Bureau of Labor Statistics, January 30, 2003, available at http://www.bls.gov/opub/cwc/cm20030124ar05p1.htm, accessed 7 November 2004.

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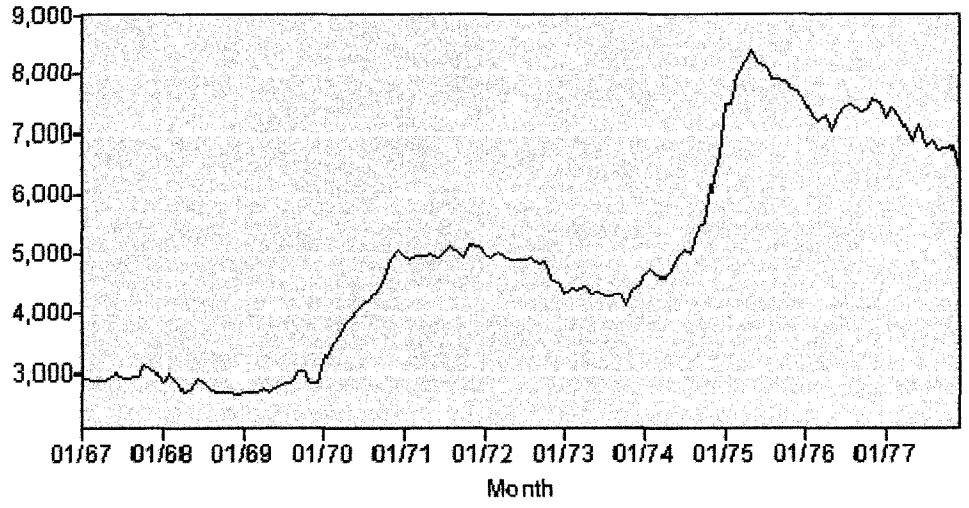
of foreign oil merchants during the Arab oil embargo of 1973, which led to rapid inflation and another recession. In 1975 80,000 employees of the state of Pennsylvania conducted the first legal strike by state workers. Finally unemployment rose dramatically throughout the early 1970s and especially during the year preceding the 1976 campaign (Fig. 1).

Fig. 1. Seasonal Adjusted Unemployment Level, in Thousands, Aged 16 Years and Over



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Series ID: LNS13000000, Public Data Query, available at http://data.bls.gov, accessed 7 November 2004.

Coincident with rising unemployment were rises in the cost of goods. The Consumer Price Index rose steadily during the inflationary cycle of the 1970s, so that by 1977 the American consumer saw prices on goods more than double from what they were just one decade earlier (Fig. 2). American economic woes translated to broader

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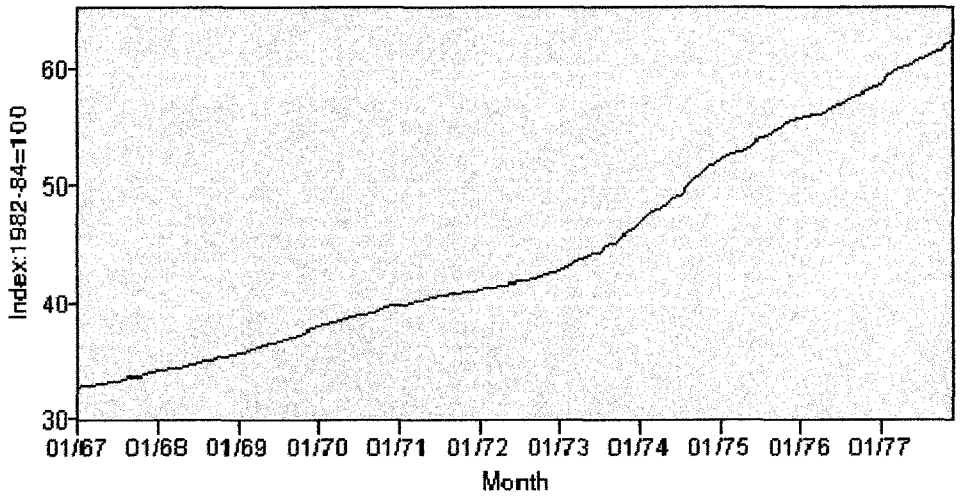
conceptions of American power. The psychological effect of inflation contributed to what Carter would later describe as a crisis of confidence in the American spirit.[155] This crisis of confidence appeared to allies and enemies alike.

Fig. 2. Seasonally Adjusted Consumer Price Index - All Urban Consumers



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Series ID: CUSR0000SA0, Public Data Query, available at http://data.bls.gov, accessed 7 November 2004.

At the same time trends in military power were similarly disheartening. The U.S. military suffered both a lack of strength and maneuverability. Military morale and

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[155] Televised speech delivered July 15, 1979. Text is available in *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Jimmy Carter, 1979*, Book II (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1980), 1235-241.

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preparedness were at unprecedented Cold War lows.[156] The Supreme Allied Commander, Europe (SACEUR) had been warned not to go below decks in one of his own ships for fear of violence from the crewmen.[157] Massive bureaucratic entrenchment prevented research and development in key areas of short and long term strategic competition, specifically high technology such as cruise missile technology and stealth systems. An increasingly common belief among many academics and policy makers held that the Soviet Union had caught the United States in the military sphere of power.

Exacerbating the demoralization of the American military was the fact that it was coming off its first big "loss" since 1812. Americans were embarrassed that their modern soldiers, weapons, strategies, and tactics had proved no match for the medieval methods the Vietnamese had been using since the time of Tran Hung Dao.[158] The American

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[156] In 1974 the SACEUR, Alexander Haig, conducted a personal inspection of American forces in Europe. He later wrote, "I was appalled by what I found among the American units. Alcoholism and drug abuse were serious and widespread, as they were nearly everywhere else in the armed forces in the early post-Vietnam period. The war in Southeast Asia had drained the armed forces of manpower, morale, and matériel. Our state of readiness was way below acceptable standards." Haig, *Inner Circles*, 521-22. On his inspection tour of the Sixth Fleet he found "ill-disciplined, ill-trained, sometimes disoriented sailors operating some of the most sensitive and powerful technology in the American arsenal." Haig concluded, "If the Soviets had attacked, the American force that I found would have been hard-pressed to hold them off."

[157] Haig recalled that he wanted to go below decks during his tour of the Sixth Fleet in 1974. A Navy officer advised him not to do it. "Officers don't go down there, General," he said. "You're likely to get a knife in the ribs." Ibid, 521.

[158] A figure of almost legendary proportions in Vietnamese history, Tran Hung Dao was a brilliant military strategist who defeated two Mongol invasions (in 1284 and 1287) and became a cultural hero among modern Vietnamese. His strategy of national defiance through the tactics of guerrilla warfare enabled the Vietnamese to repel invasions by some of the greatest empires in history, including the Mongolian, Chinese, French, and American.

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public appeared reluctant to send its sons and daughters to areas of minor interest. It was quick to characterize any foreign adventure as being in danger of becoming "another Vietnam." The Church committee investigations into CIA activities were so defamatory and crippling to the foreign intelligence services that President Ford complained openly about them in his State of the Union address:

> The crippling of our foreign intelligence services increases the danger of American involvement in direct armed conflict. Our adversaries are encouraged to attempt new adventures while our own ability to monitor events and to influence events short of military action is undermined. Without effective intelligence capability, the United States stands blindfolded and hobbled.[159]

In contrast, the Soviet defense apparatus appeared to be enjoying a long-term rise vis-à-vis the United States.[160] Andrew Cockburn concluded that by the 1970s, "American strategists' view of the Soviet intentions became progressively gloomier . . . Analyses of both Soviet military literature and intelligence data on the increasing accuracy of Soviet missiles have produced the widespread impression that the Soviets are

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[159] *President Gerald R. Ford's Address before a Joint Session of the Congress Reporting on the State of the Union*, January 19, 1976. The full text of his speech is available at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library, http://www.ford.utexas.edu, accessed 7 November 2004.

[160] Benjamin S. Lambeth wrote in 1979, "There is little doubt in the minds of most observers that whatever their ultimate strategic calculations and goals might be, the Soviets were resolutely bent on catching up with the United States in all significant aspects of strategic power and regarded the attainment of numerical equality as an indispensable precondition for the initial SALT accords that were signed in 1972." See Benjamin S. Lambeth, "The Political Potential of Soviet Equivalence," *International Security* 4, no. 2 (Fall 1979), 22-3.

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indeed thinking of a preemptive first strike that could win a nuclear war."[161] Meanwhile, Americans seemed neither willing nor able to commit forces and accept substantial sacrifices to counter Soviet initiatives and its allies began to question the staying power and resolve of the United States.[162]

These developments point to an American leadership class about to lose power. Internal dissatisfaction ran higher than at any time since the Civil War and Reconstruction. Numerous American students sought contacts with socialist organizations and spoke the language of social revolutionaries, cheering controversial counterculture figures such as Che Guevara and Abbie Hoffmann. In the minds of many who monitored the sources of American power, the moral and historical strength of the United States appeared to be crumbling.

In structural realist terms, the United States was in the midst of unavoidable long-term decline after its post-World War II peak. The military, economic, and reputation relative positions the United States held in 1945 could not be maintained indefinitely.

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[161] Andrew Cockburn, *The Threat: Inside the Soviet Military Machine* (New York: Random House, 1983).

[162] Christopher M. Andrew, *For the President's Eyes Only: Secret Intelligence and the American Presidency from Washington to Bush* (New York: HarperCollins, 1995), 408. Edward A. Koldziej noted in 1980, "Supplementing these images of American loss of power and control is what Europeans perceive to be a strategically ascendant and expansionist Soviet Union." See Edward A. Koldziej, "Europe: The Partial Partner," *International Security* 5, no. 3 (Winter 1980/81), 109. Benjamin S. Lambeth echoed this sentiment: "Whether or not the Soviet Union is indeed engaged in a concerted effort to achieve some form of strategic superiority over the United States within the limits of SALT and détente, its persistently robust force improvement activities have sparked increasing concern in the minds of many observers." Lambeth, "Soviet Equivalence," 23.

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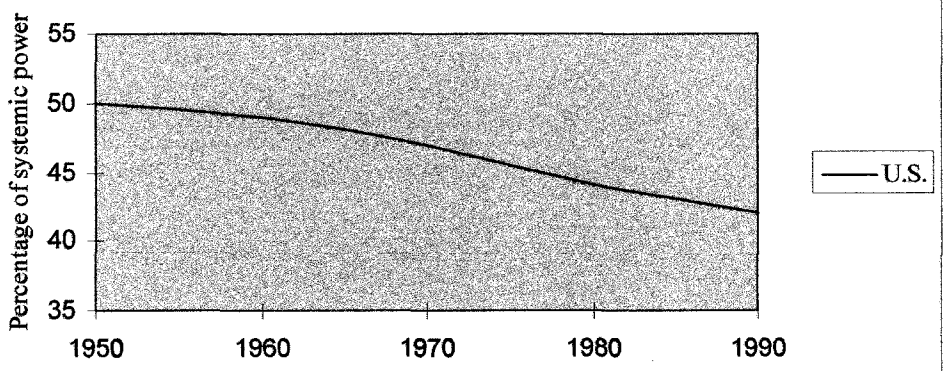
Some sort of decline was to be expected as nations ruined by war recovered from their devastation and began to compete again. From 1945 onward it faced a steady decline in the percentage of total world power, a situation that successive American administrations foresaw easily. This gentle waning seemed inevitable and was accepted by American leaders without overwhelming anxiety (Ill. 4).

Ill. 4. American Long Term Power Trends
(1945-1975 Viewpoint)



The pressure of the bilateral confrontation with the Soviets had been a driving factor in the deterioration of American exceptionalism. As the world had settled into its peacetime structure and the fault lines of postwar conflict became clear, the United States had become increasingly concerned about the rise of its closest possible challenger, the Soviet Union with its growing list of communist allies. The American postwar grand strategy of containment had flowed from a preoccupation with the east-west conflict, a

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viewpoint that once held widespread consensus among foreign policy elites, American political leaders, and the American people generally.

Increasing Soviet military and economic power had been a growing concern since well before the end of the Second World War. No administration could afford to be seen, internally or publicly, as failing to match Soviet expansionism. Vance noted, "The alliance needed a comprehensive effort to strengthen its political cohesion and its defensive capabilities. For a decade there had been disturbing trends in the East-West military balance which could eventually threaten Western security."[163] The Soviets were expanding and modernizing their conventional capabilities in Eastern Europe. They were gaining new allies in Africa, Latin America, and Southeast Asia. Taken together these indicators helped paint a picture of a Soviet bilateral power trend that was about to meet and soon surpass the level of the United States (Ill. 5).[164]

The decline in American international power began long before anyone became seriously alarmed by it. It was only during the late 1960s and 1970s – when many viewed bilateral power trends as intersecting and crossing – that the larger foreign policy

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[163] Cyrus Vance, *Hard Choices: Critical Years in American's Foreign Policy* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983), 64.

[164] Seyom Brown noted a few years later, "The prevailing consensus in the policy community used to be that the Soviets were engaged basically in a drive to pull equal with the United States in the strategic arms race . . . the generally accepted assessment today is that the Russians, having caught up with the United States in gross strategic power, are bent on achieving a sophisticated and highly versatile arsenal. Whether Soviet planners truly expect to achieve strategic dominance over the United States is hotly debated, but only a minority in the Washington policy community now seriously believe that the Russians accept elegant Western views on the desirability of "stable mutual deterrence." See "An End to Grand Strategy," *Foreign Policy*, no. 32 (Fall 1978), 23-4.

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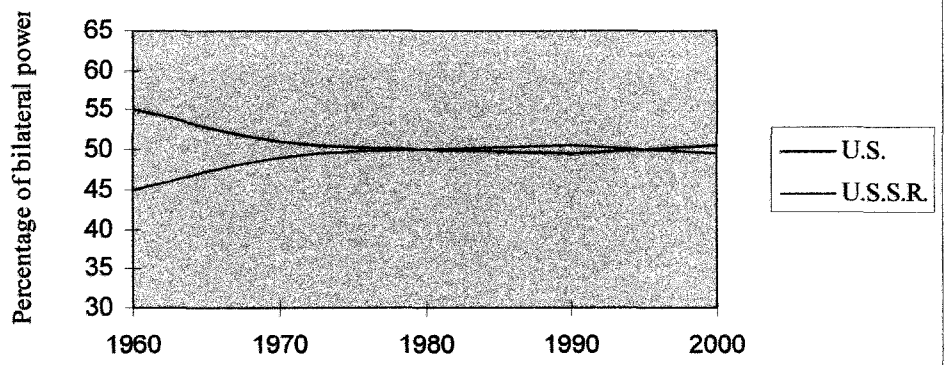
community began to identify the problem as unacceptable. As late as 1980 experts were trying to make the case for what many had already recognized as a true "window of vulnerability" in the early 1980s.[165] They immediately pointed to the recent past as the cause and sparked a distracting debate that largely ignored the importance of the various attempts to form a new paradigm and strategy to address it.

Ill. 5. American Long-Term Bilateral Power Trends (1945-1975 Viewpoint)



Henry Kissinger, the principal architect of détente and its most articulate defender, became its harshest critic. Although defended by the Secretary of State until mid-1975, this modification of containment had clearly failed. Although he focused predictably on what détente became after he left office rather than what it had originally

[165] Gray, "National Style in Strategy," 40.

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been, the consequences were not what he hoped them to be. Kissinger tacitly acknowledged détente's failure during his last year in office. He did so by his effort to equate détente with the prevention of nuclear war between the superpowers. This failing to persuade, he was left reiterating, "The problem of our age is how to manage the emergence of the Soviet Union as a superpower." [166] This was the problem the United States had faced since the 1940s – the growth of Soviet power – and not solved with containment in its various forms.

Conclusions

The American intellectual tradition has been characterized by the struggle among its people to make two complex and often contradictory principles – exceptionalism and realism – part of one single approach to international relations. The United States, born of unique circumstances and imbued with unprecedented power, has never forgotten the imperatives of its international and historical situation. Unprecedented opportunity leads to uncommonly high expectations, both from its own citizens and observers elsewhere. Americans have always accepted as an article of faith that the unique circumstances of their historical situation provide them with the moral authority to remake the world in their image.

The unprecedented growth of U.S. power in the past century has been accompanied by unusually complex investigation of the purposes of it. Its philosophical

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[166] Tucker, "America in Decline," 460-61.

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and scholarly traditions reflect a deep-seated discomfort with the possibility that the United States might someday relinquish its status as the example by which other nations will rebuild themselves. A preoccupation with the morality and embrace of idealist notions led to a grand strategy in which exceptionalism that has never been entirely absent.

At the same time, Americans have always been profoundly practical people. They cling to their idealism, but from their earliest days have backed it with a surprisingly sophisticated understanding of the requirements of power. They eschewed accepting these responsibilities and the corruptions that can come with them for as many years as possible, until the realities of American superpower status could no longer be denied. American respond with hardheaded calculation when faced with serious challenges to their optimistic visions of their own future. They do this because they lack neither the courage of their convictions, nor the confidence of their purposes.

American approaches to international relations shows clearly in the development of international relations scholarship. Many of its intellectual models and insights apply quite well to the study of American behavior, usually more so than the behavior of states that do not reflect American values. This is clearly the case during the last decade of the Cold War, in which the logic of structural realism and preoccupation with moral authority combined to define a readily identifiable American grand strategy that lends itself well to scholarly interpretation and analysis.

This work began with explanation of a proto-theoretical approach to the grand strategy analysis. It then proposed to demonstrate the effectiveness of this approach by examining the strategic behavior of the United States during the last decade of the Cold

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War. Beginning in a pre-theory state, it identified the general themes of an American approach to international relations. It examined the philosophical and situational conditions underlying American views as they evolved throughout the nation's history. This study then identified the areas of scholarship that will be most useful for analysis of U.S. grand strategy in during the latter days of the Cold War. The preceding section traced the major themes that would appear in the development of the U.S. view of its position in international relations directly preceding the shift in grand strategy witnessed preceding the American victory over its Soviet rival. The next section culminates this process by presenting an examination of American grand strategy that applies these scholarly insights in a flexible and effective way to create a solid understanding of the strategic maneuvers they undertook to achieve their goal of becoming its preeminent nation.

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CHAPTER III

EXAMINING AMERICAN GRAND STRATEGY, 1976-1985

Introduction

As events of the twentieth century retired into history, they left behind numinous wonder and respectful awe, initially concerning all that was demolished and later all that was built in its place. The century's first half was defined by unyielding multi-polarity and deep-rooted nationalism, the consequences of which were the destruction of the existing European order, the transformation of the Asian order, and the emergence of new states from former colonial empires. Its second half was defined by bipolar confrontation and supranationalism, the results of which were a dangerous war between superpowers with no cataclysmic battles but a decisive winner nonetheless. It also brought tremendous proliferation of coincident political, economic, and social interests, binding states ever closer in an increasingly confined geopolitical space.

The ground-shaking events of the twentieth century were the consequences of a number of sometimes successful, sometimes failed grand strategies. Each statesman and strategist had his or her own idea of how things should have happened; very few got what was expected, and none in quite the way predicted. The vocation, task, and joy of those who define and employ international relations theory and historical research is to craft the lenses through which humanity will understand and remember those forces, great and small, that shaped the world in precisely the way they did.

The matters of when and why the United States chose to redefine its grand strategy in the second half of the twentieth century, while of vital interest to this

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particular study, are not as important as the inability of academic circles at the time to foresee these changes. Changes in strategic orientation neither happen overnight nor occur without sufficient harbingers that foreshadow their arrival. Why were these shifts not obvious to all observers at the time, and, more importantly, why do shifts in grand strategy continue to surprise our best observers? The answers are many, but above all the problem remains: the discipline of international relations lacks a methodology for applying its own best insights. This study will apply the methodology described above in the hopes of validating its approach to better understanding of the reasons behind great forces on the move.

As the field of international relations searches for the defining strategies and events of the next half-century, some may question the relevance of a work dependent on political thought deriving largely from a conflict that no longer exists. [1] Why analyze the strategies and policies of competing superpowers at a time when another such situation seems unlikely to arise for a very long time? The answer lies in the human beliefs, perceptions, and interests that motivated such behavior – the long struggle of the Cold War ended, but the competition of grand strategies continues. The inescapable responsibility of leading a nation of one's fellow citizens continues. The danger inherent in poorly chosen courses of action continues. The need for guided foreign policy

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[1] The struggle for recognition continues, despite assertions that the issue has been solved by the triumph of democracy. For more information on the idea that history, defined as the struggle to achieve a form of government that solves the recognition dilemma, has ended, see Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Free Press, 1992).

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decisions continues. In sum, the recognized victory of one superpower over another at the end of the twentieth century did not mean the end of the human struggle that inspires political activity.

Conflict arises as a result of differing perceptions—what and who count to each decision maker, what defines good and bad outcomes, what is happening and likely to happen, and in what ways events should be anticipated, plotted, and manipulated. Everyone forms goals, whether regarding one's personal future or collective progress, and produces strategies that they each hope will allow them to happen. People ask questions to that end. Where do I want to be in ten years? Will a position with one company get me closer to that place than a position with another? What should the world look like in ten years? Will support of the House of Sa'ud make the world more secure for American interests than American encouragement of revolution?

These questions are posed by the complicated and little-understood vicissitudes of the human psyche and its concept of its biological and environmental stimuli.[2] Strategy and policy are the result of uncounted and amalgamated components of the human mind, including rationality, logic, and emotion. As each individual is unique, so is each psyche, the views of the world they produce, and the subsequent decisions they make. Common

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[2] For an entertaining and informative discussion of the degree to which these variables are determinants of behavior, see the debate raised by the works of Richard Dawkins, including *The Selfish Gene* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), and Stephen Jay Gould, including *The Structure of Evolutionary Theory* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002) and *Dinosaur in a Haystack: Reflections in Natural History* (New York: Harmony Books, 1995).

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themes, nevertheless, can be detected in human behavior. Each of us deals with the results of our insecurity, uncertainty, and defensiveness.

Political behavior, whether by individuals or the entities they form, must be examined and understood in the context of human perceptions and the ways in which they inform the world. Perhaps at another time the present tempts, the future confuses, and the past frightens. Situations and people change but politics remains the same confluence of different and shifting aspects of the human condition. Identifying and examining relevant forces motivating behavior fosters greater understanding of past, present, and future scenarios.

The international system remakes itself in violent bursts and continuous evolution, but forces underlying political behavior remain constant. These forces produced a particular order of societies in the first half of the twentieth century and another in the second. That order passed as well, leaving behind its own peculiar legacies, but this order's successor has yet to be identified in any matter drawing general agreement. Ultimately, the collapse of the Soviet empire cannot be said to have ushered in a new era of international relations, for it is not yet established. Rather, this incredible alteration in the structure of geopolitics reminded us that long periods of peace (or impasse) are historic anomalies.

The resulting miasma of Cold War remnants and historically contiguous forces has not achieved any sort of definable form, yet the international system itself is in fact quite sturdy. It deserves examination by any who would seek to understand current and future trends in world politics. Therefore the case study chosen for this work is the set of foreign policy traditions and values is that which is most definable and recent – namely,

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the grand strategy of the United States during the last decade of the Cold War. Only by analyzing the grand strategies and policies of the most influential state at the close of twentieth century can one begin to understand the geopolitics of the twenty-first.

Defining a New American Grand Strategy

After twenty-five years of containment and patience the United States was ready for a new strategic vision. President Gerald Ford tried a few unenthusiastic attempts at defining one, but was unable to appear very credible about it.[3] Of the United States' two chief international experiences since 1945, the Vietnam War had ended and the Cold War appeared stagnant. The national security apparatus was largely comprised, at all but its most senior levels, by people who had no substantive memory of either the misplaced optimism of Munich or the costs of the Second World War. Formation of their views on international relations was more likely to have been influenced by memories of the Gulf of Tonkin incident, the Tet Offensive, and the MyLai Massacre, leaving them less likely to show much appreciation for the logic of the containment of Kennan and Nitze or the practicality of Kissinger's *realpolitik.*

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[3] Ford occasionally touched on the importance of regaining the United States' moral standing, but was tainted by his pardon of Richard Nixon and did not have the standing to lead a crusade for the return of morality to American policy making. His strongest statement came in his 1976 State of the Union Address, in which he proclaimed, "The time has now come for a fundamentally different approach--for a new realism that is true to the great principles upon which this Nation was founded." The full text of his speech is available at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library, http://www.ford.utexas.edu, accessed 7 November 2004.

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During his second televised debate with Governor Jimmy Carter American viewers became convinced that their current administration did not possess the strategic vision necessary to create and implement a new course for the United States. Fresh from extensive briefings by Harvard professor Zbigniew Brzezinski, Governor Carter showed a deft familiarity with obscure mechanisms for the protection of citizens living under Soviet domination. In the same debate President Ford tried to convince an astonished American public that Eastern Europe was free of Soviet domination. An incredulous questioner, Max Frankel of *The New York Times*, believing Ford to have misspoken, asked, "Did I understand you to say, sir, that the Russians are not using Eastern Europe as their own sphere of influence in occupying most of the countries there and making sure with their troops that it is a communist zone?" President Ford answered with an emphatic, "I don't believe, Mr. Frankel . . . that (people such as the) Poles consider themselves dominated by the Soviet Union."[4]

Carter emerged from this exchange with enormous political credibility regarding his ability to define a new strategic vision for the United States. Yet his views were based on much more than high-level advisement and shrewd politicking. Carter's ideas reflected convictions developed by the future president throughout a long career of regional political leadership, a deeply held religious faith, a rare belief in the inseparability of personal and governmental morality, and a recent series of efforts to

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[4] Commission on Presidential Debates, *The Second Carter-Ford Presidential Debate, 6 October 1976*, available at http://www.debates.org/pages/trans76b.html, accessed 20 February 2005.

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develop his own awareness of international politics. They also resonated powerfully with American voters, who sense their nation needed his idealism to fuel an American resurgence.

Carter began to get his first real sense of geopolitics during his initial campaign efforts in 1972. He was invited to serve on the Trilateral Commission, a group of experts, business leaders, and foreign policy elites seeking to strengthen ties between the United States, Europe, and Japan. Carter later recalled, "Those Trilateral Commission meetings for me were like classes in foreign policy – reading papers produced on every conceivable subject, hearing experienced leaders debate international issues and problems, and meeting the big names like Cy Vance and Harold Brown and Zbig."[5] Zbigniew Brzezinski was the staff director of the Commission and became Carter's principal tutor in foreign affairs, providing him with research materials, briefings, and draft speeches. As the election cycle demanded increasingly sophisticated views of foreign policy issues, Carter instructed his staff to run his campaign positions by Brzezinski with increasing frequency.[6]

Much of the Jimmy Carter's new outlook has been ascribed to the emergence of "world order" thinking that characterized academic circles during the 1970s.[7] Brzezinski

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[5] Hamilton Jordan, *Crisis: The Last Year of the Carter Presidency* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1982), 45.

[6] Ibid, 45-6.

[7] World order literature has grown to encompass an entire subfield of international relations. See Stanley Hoffman, *Primacy or World Order: American Foreign Policy since the Cold War* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1978). For current interpretations of its ideas see Rob Kroes, "American Empire and Cultural Imperialism:

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in particular was known – and sometimes criticized – for his embrace of new propositions and concepts in international relations scholarship.[8] On many ideas being bandied about during this period it is not hard to quote Brzezinski against Brzezinski. However, the essentially structural realist nature of his worldview shows far more forcefully in the actual strategies he pushed to implement than in his oftentimes-ambiguous intellectual explorations.[9] Seyom Brown argued it was not long after Carter took office that Washington saw "Brzezinski appearing once again in his 1960s incarnation as the aggressive Russophobe, rather than as the 1970s expert on the international order."[10]

The new outlook seen initially among many members of the Carter administration was a natural result of political requirements stemming from years of strategic dominance by Kissinger and some very real ideational changes in the composition of American foreign policy circles. Carter immersed himself in international politics at a time when

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A View from the Receiving End," in *Conference* (Washington, DC: German Historical Institute, 1999), available online at http://www.ghi-dc.org/conpotweb/westernpapers/kroes.pdf, accessed 22 November 2004; Philip S. Golub, *The American Hegemonic Cycle and System Wide Crisis*, Issues in Regulation Theory no. 46 (Paris: Institut d'études Européennes, October 2003); Robert Cooper, *The Breaking of Nations: Order and Chaos in the Twenty-first Century* (London: Atlantic Books, 2003).

[8] Simon Serfaty, "Brzezinski: Play It Again, Zbig," *Foreign Policy*, no. 32 (Fall 1978), 3-21.

[9] Brzezinski summed his views: "The emerging American-Soviet relationship involves a potentially fatal incompatibility between the emerging balance of forces and the structure of the international system. Two rather homogenous blocs were led respectively by a relatively status-quo-oriented superior nuclear power and by an anti-status-quo-oriented inferior nuclear power, with the rest of the world by and large quiescent. We are now moving into a setting in which the two blocs are beginning to dissolve, in which during the next decade the inferior and essentially apocalyptic nuclear power will also become militarily (though not yet in other respects) a global power, and in which the Third World threatens to dissolve into sporadic violence and international anarchy." Zbigniew Brzezinski, "Peace and Power: Looking Toward the 1970s," *Encounter* (November 1968), 7-8.

[10] Seyom Brown, "An End to Grand Strategy," 29.

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this search for alternative approaches was popular among academic elites, many of whom imparted this idea to him in the years immediately prior to his campaign. However, politics are much more than personality. The worldviews and pressures of the moment combined with individual ideas in unique ways to produce a new direction in U.S. grand strategy.

Through a combination of adherence to strong ethical values and his rigorous absorption of data and views Carter developed his own conception of American power and its uses. Carter called early on his old Annapolis classmate Admiral Stansfield Turner for an assessment of American military strength and areas for improvement.[11] Several times during the campaign and the transition period, then-director of the Central Intelligence Agency George Bush traveled to Carter's home in Plains to brief him. He found the president-elect "all concentration, soaking up data" but with "his guard up." "I felt," wrote Bush, "that beneath his surface cool he harbored a deep antipathy to the CIA."[12] This is hardly surprising given that it had been the instrument for many of the dealings that Carter felt had undermined the moral foundation of America's foreign policy.

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[11] Turner was President of the Naval War College at the time and described his first advisory meeting at the Governor's mansion in 1975: "I was barely seated when he shot his first question at me about the state of the U.S. military. What were its strengths and weaknesses? What were the merits and liabilities of the way we made defense decisions? . . . The questions continued—tough, intelligent, relentless. I felt mentally drained." Stansfield Turner, *Secrecy and Democracy: The CIA in Transition* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1985), 14.

[12] George H.W. Bush, *Looking Forward* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1987).

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Carter spoke openly on this subject in a November interview, unfortunately remembered more often for its personal statements than its deeper philosophical underpinnings:

> Our Government should justify the character and moral principles of the American people, and our foreign policy should not short-circuit that for temporary advantage. I think that in every instance we've done that it's been counterproductive. When the CIA undertakes covert activities that might be justified if they were peaceful, we always suffer when they're revealed . . .[13]

This view had been growing in the mind of Carter since his immersion in international affairs began during his involvement in the Trilateral Commission. He had written in 1975,

> As it has related to such areas as Pakistan, Chile, Cambodia, and Vietnam, our government's foreign policy has not exemplified any commitment to moral principles...it has become apparent that our leaders have often departed from the more honest inclinations of the American people. This has required varying degrees of secrecy and outright lying.[14]

The energetic and critical Jimmy Carter with whom Bush met throughout the fall of 1976 foreshadowed a presidency that would make its campaign themes of moral and idealistic behavior its policies once in office. His choice of Walter Mondale as his running mate signaled a desire to make ethical oversight a continuing theme of his presidency. Mondale had been one of the most active and best-informed senators on the

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[13] *The Playboy Interview*, ed. G. Barry Golson (New York: Wideview Books, 1981), 478-79. This is the same interview in which Carter confessed he had "lust in my heart," an admission that obscured the content of the international relations portions, including any statements of the role of morality in international political behavior.

[14] Jimmy Carter, *Why Not the Best?* (New York: Baptist Sunday School Board, 1975), 141.

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Church committee investigations of intelligence activities. His priorities in the years before the election were regulation of CIA activities and protection of civil liberties.[15]

During the process of forming a cabinet, Carter's choice of his foreign policy mentor came very naturally. While Carter admired Vance's easy familiarity with the corridors of power, he had come to rely on Brzezinski for advice. However Vance's popularity among the foreign policy establishment made his selection a clear choice as well. Carter attempted to ameliorate the discrepancy between the two men's worldviews by letting their assignments keep those differences apart. Carter's chief of staff Hamilton Jordan noted, "The roles were clear to him: Zbig would be the thinker, Cy would be the doer, and Jimmy Carter would be the decider."[16]

Brzezinski brought to Carter's worldview grounding in the then-traditional American foreign policy outlook regarding the dangerous nature of Soviet power and importance of achieving stability, but combined it with lively speculation regarding newer concepts such as the emergence of global international elites. He had been an outspoken critic of Kissinger's myopia regarding the importance of the American-Soviet-Chinese strategic situation and unrelenting advocate of the importance of American ties to Europe and Japan. His hostility toward the Soviet Union meshed well with Carter's distaste of Soviet internal and international policies and found an outlet in Carter's crusade to bring human rights to the fore of international relations. Brzezinski shaped

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[15] Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Power and Principle: Memoirs of the National Security Advisor* (New York: Farrar-Straus-Giroux, 1983), 34-5.

[16] Jordan, *Crisis*, 47.

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Carter's belief that morality could be made to serve the goal of increasing relative national power into the instrument of grand strategy that it became.

Vance brought to his post a star-studded resume, including his legal experience in New York, important posts in the defense department, and a recurring role as mediator general for the Johnson administration.[17] Vance had a lawyer's talent for finding areas of common interest and a diplomat's skill at reducing conflict. Most interested in nuclear arms control, he argued strenuously against provocative actions (which destabilize), broad condemnations (which inflame), and policies of linkage among areas of negotiation (which prevent progress).

Despite numerous warnings that Brzezinski and Vance would engage in a fierce struggle for control of foreign policy, Carter felt they matched the roles he had chosen for them.[18] He sought to strike a balance between the two men's compelling viewpoints and maintained it surprisingly long. His first appraisal of international developments each morning came in the form of Vance's overnight report, waiting for Carter each morning when he arrived to sip his coffee. His first scheduled meeting in the Oval Office was Brzezinski's, who brought him the intelligence community's report, the Presidential

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[17] Johnson relied on Vance to manage international issues that required an exceptionally skilled and detail-oriented negotiator, including in Panama after the anti-American riots of 1964, in the Dominican Republic in 1965, in Vietnam in 1966, in Detroit following racial violence in 1967, in Cyprus in 1967, in Korea in 1968 after the seizure of the Pueblo, and in Paris in 1968-69 for peace talks with the North Vietnamese. Gaddis Smith, *Morality, Reason, and Power: American Diplomacy in the Carter Years* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1986), 40.

[18] Jimmy Carter, *Keeping Faith: Memoirs of a President* (New York: Bantam Books, 1982), 54.

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Daily Briefing, and stayed to discuss international affairs. This schedule served Carter's division of labor, giving State the opportunity to tell him what was happening in the world and Brzezinski the opportunity to outline what it meant for long-term American interests.[19]

In its approach to international relations the Carter administration tried harder than almost any other to bring its philosophical foundations into the open and examine them thoroughly. Its documentation, commentary, and memoirs provide solid evidence, especially in the early years, of unusually intense wrangling over precisely what the sum of its policies and statements pronounced to the world (and its own members) regarding what the United States stands for and the kind of government its people have.

Changing Strategic Situation: Systemic Power and Moral Authority

> I was familiar with the arguments that we had to choose between idealism and realism, between morality and the exertion of power; but I rejected those claims. To me the demonstration of American idealism was a practical and realistic approach to foreign affairs, and moral principles were the best foundation for the exertion of American power and influence.
>
> President Jimmy Carter, *Keeping Faith*

Jimmy Carter assumed the Presidency in 1977 with little doubt about the worldview he planned to enforce on U.S. grand strategy. The long-shot political candidate campaigned very successfully against what he argued were previous administrations' irresponsible and immoral uses of national power. He touched a nerve

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[19] Ibid, 50-1.

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about this issue in a way not seen in American politics since the Johnson campaign shocked television audiences in 1964 with its 'Daisy' commercial.[20] Carter's rhetoric emphasized that the biggest threat came not from what the Soviet Union did to the United States, but what the United States was doing to itself out of fear of losing. He felt too often compromises of American values had been made in favor of pragmatism, damaging American credibility and thereby the overall international power of the United States.

The worldview of the Carter administration, as that of the United States, is often misconceived as the struggle between the opposites of morality and power. It should be understood instead as a struggle among its members to define to what extent a reputation for moral rectitude provided power in international politics. Carter's inaugural address affirmed the great international political and strategic value he placed on moral stature and the role this would play in his grand strategy:

> "Let our recent mistakes bring a resurgent commitment to the basic principles of our Nation, for we know that if we despise our own government, we have no future."
>
> "And we know that the best way to enhance freedom in other lands is to demonstrate here that our democratic system is worthy of emulation.
>
> "To be true to ourselves, we must be true to others. We will not behave in foreign places so as to violate our rules and standards here at home, for we know that the trust which our Nation earns is essential to our strength."

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[20] The Johnson campaign ran a highly successful one-time television advertisement featuring a little girl counting daisy petals that morphed into a nuclear launch countdown and detonation. It sought to ingrain an unforgettable image of the consequences of irresponsible uses of power; consequences the commercial implied would be more likely should the supposedly more hawkish Barry Goldwater win the presidency.

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> "I would hope that the nations of the world might say that we had built a lasting peace, based not on weapons of war but on international policies which reflect our own most precious values." [21]

Despite harsh critiques of the Carter administration's romanticism, the President's embrace of moral issues such as human rights were not proof that he was incapable of dealing with the harsher realities of international relations. [22] On May 22, 1977 President Carter gave his first major foreign policy address at the University of Notre Dame. He affirmed his pledge to reclaim American exceptionalism "does not mean we can conduct our foreign policy by rigid maxims . . . I understand fully the limits of moral suasion . . ." Yet this limitation would not prevent Carter from implementing his broad strategy to rebuild American power in large measure by restoring American moral authority:

> I also believe that it is a mistake to undervalue the power of words and of the ideas that words embody.... For us to ignore this trend would be to lose influence and moral authority in the world. To lead it will be to regain the moral stature that we once had.

This direct and public nod to the importance of American exceptionalism signaled Carter's intention to let his distinctive foreign policy ideas guide his strategies.

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[21] *Inaugural Address of President Jimmy Carter*, available at http://www.jimmycarterlibrary.org/documents/speeches/inaugadd.phtml, accessed 7 November 2004.

[22] Carter had not always pressed the issue of human rights. As late as 1975, he criticized the Jackson-Vanik Amendment, which imposed economic sanctions against Moscow for not allowing Soviet Jews to emigrate, on the grounds that it interfered with the internal affairs of the Soviet Union. He soon changed his mind, however, when human rights offered a means of uniting a Democratic Party bitterly divided by the 1968 and 1972 presidential campaigns. It gave liberal Democrats a reason to attack right-wing governments and conservative members of the party an excuse to level charges against the Soviet Union. Moreover, Carter came to see a close link between human rights and his own born-again Christian background. Victor S. Kaufman, "The Bureau of Human Rights during the Carter Administration," *Historian* 61, no. 1 (Fall 1998), 51-66.

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Thus what distinguished the new American view of international relations, as championed by the Carter administration's worldview, was the uniquely high value it initially placed on a reputation for morality in its calculation of relative international power. Carter himself was the driving force behind this worldview and missed no opportunity to try to convince others of its legitimacy. Echoing the impressions given to George Bush, he reiterated, "For too many years, we've been willing to adopt the flawed and erroneous principles and tactics of our adversaries, sometimes abandoning our own values for theirs." For Carter this translated to a palpable and dangerous loss of power in the international system.

The worldview of the members of the Carter administration, sometimes more so than that of the public it led, embraced enthusiastically the less traditional concepts emerging at the time in academic discussions about foreign affairs. Ted Szulc observed, "The president and his advisers have eschewed the Nixon-Kissinger "grand design" approach to foreign policy (there is no talk of "structures of peace" and the like) to which the world had become accustomed in the previous eight years."[23] There was a sense of renewal in the administration and an expectation that Carter would change course in many areas of government, particularly in the conduct of foreign affairs. This meant use of non-traditional definitions and emphases when talking about national interest. Carter and his advisors held a view of international relations in which calculations of interest, to

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[23] Tad Szulc, "Washington Dateline: Springtime for Carter," *Foreign Policy*, no. 26 (Spring 1977), 178.

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remain applicable, must be updated to serve the United States in ways that upheld its unique status as a 'moral' superpower.

In much the same way a long view of U.S. history shows periodic vicissitudes between exceptionalist and realist traditions, the Carter administration is often criticized for its seeming ambiguity about expressing preferences between the two models in its strategic approach. Simon Serfaty, writing in 1978, reminded observers, "Late in 1968, looking toward the 1970s, Brzezinski perceived the future strictly in terms of the East-West conflict," and could not have been expected to have abandoned these roots entirely in his embrace of nascent ideas. [24] Ted Szulc complained early on that Carter and his advisors were "acting as if he were inventing a wholly new policy with no continuum with the past."[25] Thomas Hughes saw the approach as "maximum democracy and minimum Machiavelli."[26] This may appear to make understanding the sources of its grand strategy in the early administration very difficult.

Carter, however, solved the dilemma neatly for theorists, if not for foreign policy experts on and outside his own team, by combining them to form a view of the world that corresponds well with structural realism. His faith and personal morality combined with an appreciation for the importance of structural pressures in decision making, largely fostered by Brzezinski and applied initially to understand the maneuvers of other states. At first Carter resisted consciously applying this way of thinking to his own policy, but

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[24] Serfaty, "Play It Again, Zbig," 3.

[25] Szulc, "Springtime for Carter," 179.

[26] Thomas L. Hughes, "Carter and the Management of Contradictions," *Foreign Policy*, no. 31 (Summer 1978), 53.

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the influence of the behavioral logic underlying structural realism remained present in his administration's actions.

The logic of the structural realism, therefore, is insufficient to explain the entire foundation of American attitudes about grand strategy at this time. Variables must be redefined to account for this new emphasis on moral power. This requires supplementing traditional structural approaches with a constructivist approach. The United States began to view international reputation, morality, and integrity as tremendously significant sources of relative power in both the bilateral (U.S.-Soviet) and multilateral international systems – more so than at any point during the previous decades of the Cold War. They factor strongly into both his administration's perception of power trends and the grand strategies that would be composed in response.

Before drawing the curve of American systemic power over time, therefore, it is important to take into account the way in which Carter and his associates defined power. Carter's personal ethics and their nearly flawless transfer to political moralism brought to the fore his conviction, encouraged by Brzezinski, that moral authority could be a potent source of international power.[27] This meant that in many cases being idealistic was one

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[27] "America still provides to most people in the world the most attractive social *condition* (even if not the *model*) and that remains America's special strength. The Soviet Union is not even a rival in this respect. But that strength can only be applied if American foreign policy is sympathetically sensitive to this significant shift in global emphasis toward a value which has not been central to the American experience (reform of international structure)." Zbigniew Brzezinski, "America in a Hostile World," *Foreign Policy*, no. 23 (Summer 1976), 95.

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way of being pragmatic. In this conception increases to or loss of moral authority often translated directly to relative power levels.[28]

Carter argued the nation's loss of moral authority had placed it squarely in the midst of a deep and inevitable moral decline.

> Our country has been strongest and most effective when morality and a commitment to freedom and democracy have been most clearly emphasized in our foreign policy.... However, since Truman's days in the White House, persistent support of such a foreign policy has often been lacking. Much of the time we failed to exhibit as an American characteristic the idealism of Jefferson or Wilson.

Carter made clear in his televised foreign policy debate with President Ford on October 7, 1976 that he viewed this lack of morality as a serious loss. In response to a question from NBC correspondent Richard Valeriani on his idea of the national interest, Carter replied:

> What we were formerly so proud of, the strength of our country, its moral integrity, the representation in foreign affairs of what our people or what our Constitution stands for—has been gone. And in the secrecy that has surrounded our foreign policy in the last few years, the American [people] and Congress have been excluded.[29]

To a later question from Valeriani on the strength of the United States, Carter answered, "...as far as strength derives from doing what's right, caring for the poor, providing food, becoming the breadbasket of the world, instead of the arms merchant of the world—in those respects we're not strong.

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[28] The danger inherent in this situation was not limited to American interests. Brzezinski argued in 1976, "An America that ceased to project a constructive sense of direction would hence contribute directly to major global and economic disruptions." Ibid, 94.

[29] Commission on Presidential Debates, *The Second Carter-Ford Presidential Debate*, available at http://www.debates.org/pages/trans76b.html, accessed 20 February 2005.

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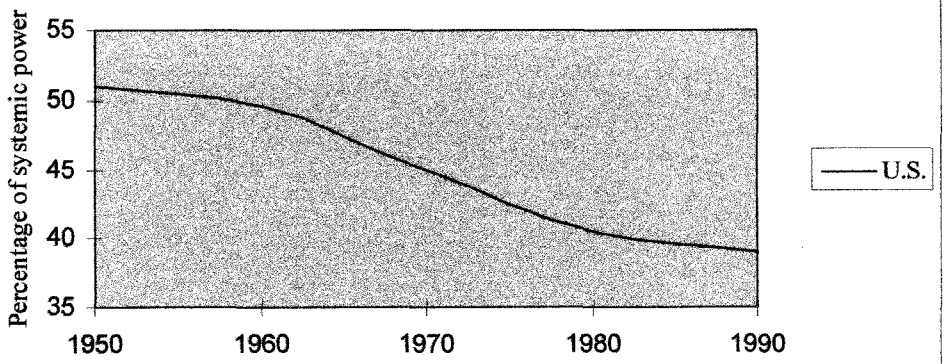
Carter, echoing Brzezinski's criticisms during the early to mid-1970s, identified as the source of this loss of morality a myopic concentration on east-west relations.

> Because of the heavy emphasis that was placed on Soviet-American competition, a dominant factor in our dealings with foreign countries became whether they espoused an anti-communist line.

Thus one of the chief causes of American decline was its undue preoccupation with its Soviet adversary. The United States had neglected to nourish its sense of exceptionalism, ceased to act morally in its international conduct, and cost itself a great deal of international power. Viewed this way, American power had declined even further than had been perceived (Ill. 6).

Ill. 6. American Long Term Power Trends
(1945-1975 Viewpoint)



Another factor that must be taken into consideration is that the Carter administration's particular value system presaged a more sharply pessimistic view of current American systemic power trends, but also a more robust optimism that the

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situation could be reversed successfully if proper steps were taken immediately. He believed that, over the long term, American doctrinal creativity and technical ingenuity could be harnessed to make the United States military more modern and effective than anything the Soviets could match. Fostering this advantage would address currently unfavorable trends in relative military power both vis-à-vis the Soviets and the rest of the world.

Carter also viewed morality arguments as one of the most devastating to the opponents of the United States, particularly the Soviet Union. The United States had a grand tradition of integrity and benevolence that had been tarnished by decades of neglect. He argued that in the process of sacrificing moral credibility, "we forfeited one of our most effective ways to meet threats from totalitarian ideologies and arouse the spirit of our own people." Many Americans agreed with this view, many of whom now worked in government. The ascendance of a new generation of foreign policy staff brought a number of discontinuities with the worldview that had been in place since the Second World War.[30]

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[30] Carl Gershman, for one, protested near the end of the Carter administration that in its total rejection of containment his new foreign policy circle "broke unequivocally with thirty years of historical experience" and were "saturating American foreign policy with defeatism masquerading as optimism and "maturity" and "restraint," cravenly following international political fashion even if this meant denigrating the interests and values of one's own country, and worrying less about American security than about Soviet insecurity, in the nature of which virtually any Soviet action could be condoned or blamed on the United States." Carl Gershman, "The Rise and Fall of the New Foreign-Policy Establishment," *Commentary* 70, no. 1 (July 1980), 24.

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To Carter and many in his administration, the superpower confrontation was the primary but not necessarily hegemonic factor that defined the position in the United States in the world. Preoccupation with the Soviet Union had led policy makers to neglect the larger strategic dimensions of American behavior. Under the Carter administration the United States would shift some of its heretofore almost unidirectional attentiveness to areas of the world too long outside the core of American attention, such as Africa, Latin America, and the Middle East. The overall decline of American systemic power had a great deal to do with the loss of American prestige and influence in these areas.[31]

The most important indicator of American power at the beginning of the Carter administration was therefore not the trend in bilateral power, but the overall trend of American power in the world as a whole. A graph of overall systemic power trends is, of course, very different than a graph of its bilateral power trends. The more Carter and his advisors inclined toward viewing the world in broader systemic terms, the more appropriate it is to give prominence to the theoretical insights that flow from systemic power trends. It follows that perceptions, grand strategies, and policies will change to follow this new emphasis in political thinking.

The most effective way to do this would be to stimulate a desire to among members of the administration to end the United States' preoccupation with east-west

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[31] "The global distribution of power is beginning to favor political systems remote philosophically, culturally, ethnically, and racially from American antecedents, while the process of redistribution of that power is threatening new forms of violence." Brzezinski, "America in a Hostile World," 65.

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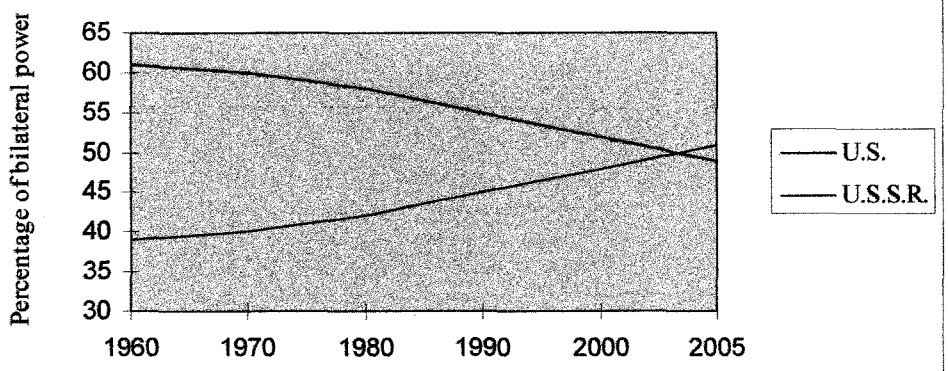
conflict and focus on its neglected role as a preeminent power in the world. Increased attention to international developments outside the context of the Cold War did not mean bilateral comparisons were no longer important to the Carter administration. Brzezinski in particular would never have allowed the superpower rivalry to fall by the wayside. However the bilateral view from the White House during the Carter years was not the same as when Kissinger had run foreign policy. Illustrations of perceived bilateral power differentials also must account for the specific beliefs of those who held power (Ill. 7).

Ill. 7. American Long Term Bilateral Power Trends (1975-1979 Viewpoint)



As the illustrations show, the depth and speed of American decline, multilaterally and bilaterally, are more prominent to those who share Carter's view that the loss of moral authority translates directly to a loss of American power. Both the instantaneous and aggregate slope of American power during the past two decades appear much more

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alarming to those in the Carter administration than to those who came before it and believed a reputation for morality does not contribute much to overall power.

Scholarly Insights: Growing Insecurity

The evolving international system in 1977, combined with a change in the composition of the American decision making apparatus, parallels very closely the causal logic of structural realism and belief-definition aspects of constructivism. The most salient realist and constructivist models for examining this situation are Charles Doran and Wes Parson's power cycle theory, which points to the dangers of paranoia and policy oversteer, Dale Copeland's theory of dynamic differentials, which demonstrates behavioral tendencies flowing from pressures for decline reversal, and Alexander Wendt's constructivist contributions regarding identity and structure.[32]

Modifying structural realism so it encompasses the United States' reassertion of morality's role in creating international power allows one to make very penetrating statements about what the United States' grand strategy could be expected to look like during this period. Changing American views directly prior to and in a large part because of Carter's election meant that American perceptions of long-term power trends became suddenly more negative in absolute and relative terms. Americans believed they held a lower percentage of total bilateral and international power. At the same time these trends

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[32] The best representations of each author's work used here are, respectively, Doran and Parsons, "War and the Cycle of Relative Power"; Copeland, *The Origins of Major War*, specifically 39-46; and Wendt, "Identity and Structural Change," 50.

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became more dramatic in that they showed a more rapid velocity of change and acceleration of change.

Increasing the downward speed of the already negative power differential increases fear and insecurity. This tends to increase the scope of the response, as well as the risks to stability one will take to achieve a trend reversal before the power differential become too threatening to accept. This fear was ameliorated somewhat by Carter's confidence that the sources of American power were renewable and could be used as part of a long-term approach toward turning the tide of bilateral competition. He affirmed in Presidential Directive 18:

> Military aspects aside, the United States continues to enjoy a number of critical advantages: it has a more creative technological and economic system, its political structure can adapt more easily to popular demands and relies on freely given popular support, and it is supported internationally by allies and friends who genuinely share similar aspirations. In contrast, though successfully acquiring military power matching that of the United States, the Soviet Union continues to face major internal economic and national difficulties, and externally it has few genuinely committed allies while lately suffering setbacks in its relations with China, parts of Africa, and India.[33]

Despite Carter's quiet optimism about the long-term prospects of American victory in the Cold War, in 1977 the United States found itself in a situation between serious concern and outright alarm. Looking at the past few decades, the emerging consensus among Americans – the same consensus that propelled Jimmy Carter to the

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[33] "U.S. National Strategy," available at http://www.jimmycarterlibrary.org/documents/pddirectives/pd18.pdf, accessed 7 November 2004.

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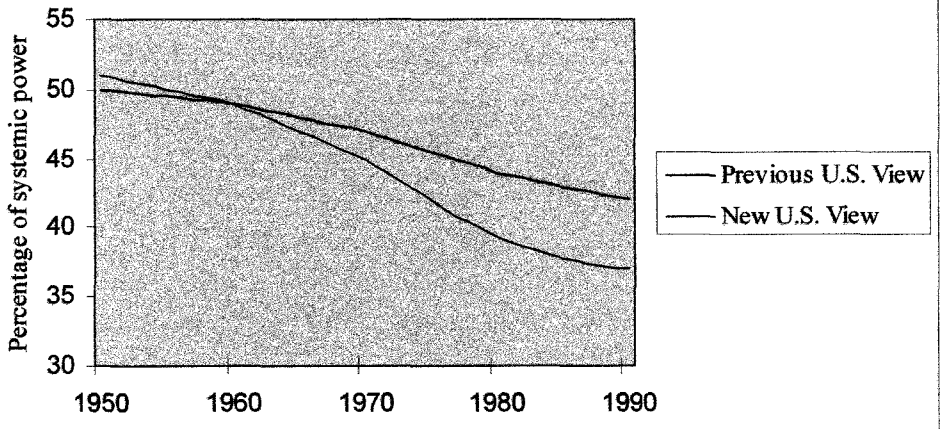
White House – had shifted from the previous view of an unavoidable and steady decline to a new perception of a dangerously negative trend in overall American power (Ill. 8).

At the same time, the bilateral situation was similarly negative and increasingly so as the nation shifted its perceptions of its past, present, and future. Consequent with a realization of the United States' loss of moral authority in the world at large was an increasingly negative perception of the United States was performance in the bilateral confrontation. Détente and containment had failed to preserve the strategic balance and the United States was in danger of becoming equal to and then falling below the power levels of its Soviet adversary.

Ill. 8. Contrasting Views of U.S. International Power



There is another factor, similar in effect to an acceleration of decline, which brought a sense of urgency to the desire to reverse trends. Rather than a gradual change

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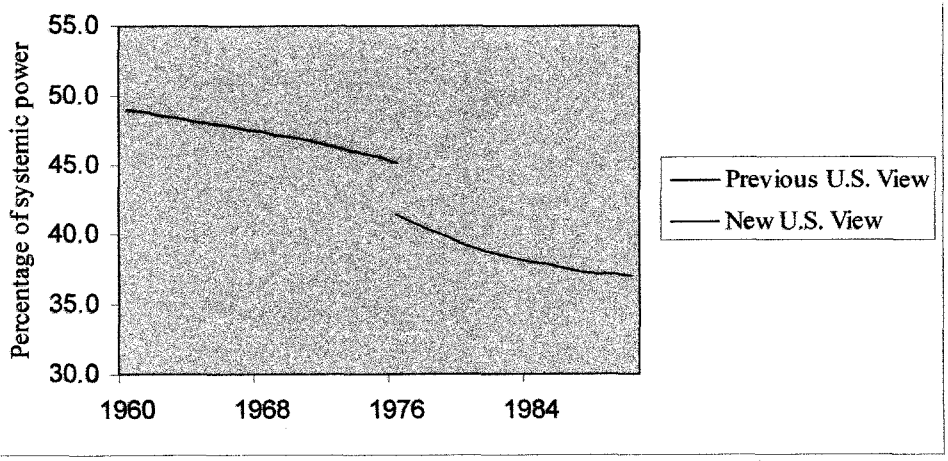
in perceptions among policy makers and subsequent changes in long-term strategy, the United States had a dramatic change in the orientation of its strategic leadership. Carter and his advisors had views that were very different from the views of those who occupied their positions in years past. It was their expression of these views that resonated so powerfully with the electorate and brought them to power. Their very different understanding of American power translated into a sudden shift to the U.S. view of the situation. Theoretically speaking, an instantaneous deceleration of power is represented by a break in the trend line. An illustration of perceived American multilateral power, therefore, jumps in 1977 to one that is simultaneously more seriously negative and more important in the overall calculation of policy (Ill. 9). Such dramatic breaks in continuity are represented in mathematical terms as an instantaneous slope (acceleration) of infinity.

Ill. 9. Transition Shock ca. 1976



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Charles Doran and Wes Parsons demonstrate how this kind of sudden shock to a nation's expectations regarding long-term power, whether through changes in situation or administration, create immense discord in strategic thinking and can lead to exceptionally strong corrective measures. These measures are usually stronger than the situation appears to require, as leaders seek to make up for the time lost between inception and perception of a problem. As discussed in the literature review, these kinds of dramatic corrections are moments of mathematical irrationality, often expressed as strategic irrationality in such ways as policy oversteer.[34] Strategists seek to compensate for lost time and end up overshooting their mark. In 1977, for the United States this mark was long-term U.S. security achieved through the revitalization of American international power and restoration of a small measure of American preeminence in the Cold War. Their work on policy oversteer points to an American response to these trends that will be stronger than the situation requires for realization of their strategic goals, causing the U.S. to implement strategies that overshoot these goals.

Daniel Yankelovich and Larry Kaagan once pointed out that, among the many forms of loss of control felt by a population, "none has more serious foreign policy implications than the concern that the nation has grown "weaker."[35] The enhanced sense of alarm about their multilateral and bilateral power situations experienced by those

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[34] Charles Doran, interview by author, 14 December 1999.

[35] Daniel Yankelovich and Larry Kaagan, "Assertive America," in *The Reagan Foreign Policy*, ed. William G. Hyland (New York: New American Library, 1987), 6.

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Americans who shared Carter's viewpoint could be expected to have important influences on its subsequent grand strategy.

To summarize, the members of the Carter administration brought to office a set of beliefs that followed in the traditions and values of American grand strategy, but in a way substantially different from the Kissingerian outlook of recent administrations. Thomas Hughes called it a "Cultural Revolution in foreign policy."[36] Carter did not subscribe to preoccupation with the triangle of American-Soviet-Chinese power and believed relations between the United States and the Soviet Union were consuming more attention and effort than necessary. This single-mindedness in strategic thinking had importance consequences for American interests, especially the United States' abdicated role in bringing about greater world order and international security.

According to classic dynamic differentials theory, the probability of major power war in this situation is high. American strategists, applying American ideational beliefs to Soviet strategy, believed the danger of Soviet aggression during the temporary ascendance was increasing. At this point realist logic points to a strong likelihood of the United States readying its armed forces and launching a preventative war while its leaders felt they still had the greater capacity.[37] Why then would one not expect the United States to choose a strategy of preventative war with the Soviet Union?

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[36] Hughes, "Carter and the Management of Contradictions," 38.

[37] The distinction between preventative war and preemptive war is almost always a temporal one. Preventative wars generally are associated with grand strategy and initiated to counter long-term threats. Preemptive wars generally are associated with imminent threats and are initiated to gain the battlefield advantages of being the first to

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The answer is that in many senses it did. However, the massive military capabilities of the two superpowers, especially the nuclear deterrent, make the choice of full-scale preventative war highly unlikely. Richard Ned Lebow points out structural arguments are insufficient. States rarely start wars because one side believes it has a military advantage. Rather, they occur when leaders become convinced that force is necessary to achieve important goals. Relative military advantage is merely one component of any decision regarding war. He argues, "Window of vulnerability arguments also tend to ignore the host of non-military factors which can influence leaders in the direction of peace."[38]

By expanding dynamic differentials theory from its original focus on relative military power to relative international power, one can account for wider possibilities and policy responses than major power war. There are many ways to bring an enemy to its knees and the best of them do not involve military force alone. Opponents surrender after they have been weakened; it matters not how they weaken so much as that they do to the point that continuing the struggle appears to them an unwanted policy, whether because of futility or lack of desire.

The United States behaved in the manner indicated by the unfavorable differentials it perceived, as defined according to its own reconstructed view of power and the role morality plays in defining it. Declining states must take action to reverse the situation or face certain peril at a point later in time, a point at which it would have a

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strike. The exception to this is Stephen van Evera, who according to the manner in which the advantage would be gained. See van Evera, *Causes of War*. This work uses preventative war according to its temporal distinction from preemptive war.

[38] Richard Ned Lebow, "Windows of Opportunity: Do States Jump through Them," *International Security* 9, no. 1 (Summer 1984), 149.

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lesser chance of meeting it successfully. The Carter administration showed remarkable confidence that the problems it faced could be surmounted and this period could be temporary. Decline was not inevitable if drastic steps were taken to rebuild American power, from military to economic strength, and especially in the realm in which it had eroded so severely; namely, moral authority.

Changing Grand Strategy: From Coexistence to American Preeminence

The preceding text identified the American view of its international position and applied the insights of appropriate scholarship describing these views. At this point a picture emerges of a likely shift in U.S. grand strategy that could be expected to have begun in the mid-1970s. American strategists had accepted that continuation of détente and containment would result in a sustained and deep U.S. decline, both in terms of its overall power position and its competition with the Soviet Union. This was unacceptable to them and the source of deep-seated insecurity. U.S. strategic views at this moment can be summarized as follows:

- The gravest threat to American interests lay in the continuation of unfavorable trends in relative international power and relative bilateral power.
- The major causes of American weakness are the decline of moral decency underlying American domestic and international behavior and unfavorable trends in the balance of military forces.
- The decline is deeper and more pervasive than previous administrations had realized and was worsening rapidly.
- The nature of American international power, especially its economic and technical prowess, provided prospects for eventually reversing this decline.
- This temporary bubble provides the Soviets at best a temporary advantage in bilateral relations.

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- Strong measures must be taken to reverse these trends quickly before the situation further endangers U.S. security.

These problems could be corrected if the United States put in place a strategy designed to rebuild American power quickly by rebuilding the sources of national power, beginning with moral authority.

Faced with what it perceived as a deep and inevitable relative decline in power in both multilateral and bilateral relations, as well as the shock of transition to a more dramatic view of the situation in January 1977, one would expect the United States to pursue an aggressive, sometimes overly so, grand strategy of American renewal aimed at reversing current power trends before the situation deteriorated further. The strategy enacted would likely be stronger than necessary to restore parity, largely because the American policy making community underwent a transformation of opinion due to both international events and the arrival of a new administration with its unique worldview. This transformation brought with it a shock of being both behind the curve and late in understanding this fact. The policies flowing from this strategic shift could be expected to be more vigorous than necessary to restore a modicum of American preeminence in the bilateral confrontation and American predominance in the multilateral system.

The logical centerpiece of its grand strategy could be described as a series of strong measures aimed at rebuilding quickly what it viewed to be the most important and depleted sources of American international power. American strategists in the early Carter administration regarded the moral authority deriving from its unique tradition of exceptionalism as the most neglected, abused, and thereby faltering component of U.S. international power.

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Carter believed the United States could not continue to be a great and respected nation unless it resumed being moral.[39] American strategists, therefore, could have been expected to seize issues that offered opportunities to demonstrate the United States had resumed its place as the "good" superpower – a nation worthy of international leadership and a model of government worthy of emulation. This meant abandoning acts of foreign policy that cast the United States in an unfavorable light, especially the kind of ethical compromises for minor gains in power that had been chipping away at America's reputation since the start of the Cold War.

U.S. grand strategy now viewed most of these transactions as net power losses. U.S. foreign policy must be conducted under the strictest guidelines of moral rectitude. Given Carter's particular belief that clandestine policy is inherently immoral, covert activities could be expected to receive increased scrutiny and far less administrative support than in previous years. Foreign leaders must demonstrate political integrity and responsible governance or lose Washington's support.

The moral front of American grand strategy also could be expected to include sincere efforts toward significant accomplishments in the area of making the world as a whole more peaceful and secure through leadership on issues such as arms control,

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[39] This view of the sources of American power lay squarely in the quality of American exceptionalism described most succinctly in a quote often attributed incorrectly to Alexis de Tocqueville's *Democracy in America*: "America is great because America is good, and if America ever ceases to be good, America will cease to be great." Presidents from Eisenhower, Reagan, and Clinton have used this quote to describe American exceptionalism, even though it has never been found in de Tocqueville's writings. Carter did more than supplement his speeches with it; he made this idea the cornerstone of his view of American power.

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human rights, and international peace and security. As the Soviets grew both more powerful and more aggressive, traditionally applied structural realism argues the United States would feel increasing insecurity. It would respond with steps to bolster its military capabilities, preferring war as soon as it is ready to long-term decline.[40]

Ideationally speaking this held true as well, for while Carter and his advisors brought unprecedented emphasis on the role of moral authority, they were never blind to the larger realities of tangible power. They understood that concurrent with the loss of American moral stature had been a weakening of its military power and reputation. The balance of conventional and nuclear forces, especially in Europe, left the Carter administration deeply troubled about American security. Years of unsuccessful combat operations in Vietnam left the American military unpopular and demoralized.

Declining military power contributed significantly to the overall loss of American power and would become a far more dangerous trend if not addressed quickly. Therefore the second component of American power viewed as neglected and in need of immediate rebuilding was its armed forces. Looking at the situation from this view, one could expect the United States to seek an increase in both overall spending and targeted spending that would provide an advantage.

In 1977 only one nation possessed the ability to inflict crippling damage on the United States. American strategists, however, did not believe they were under much threat of immediate attack by the Soviet Union. A rising nation that has not yet achieved

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[40] See Copeland, *Origins of Major War*.

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its peak relative power vis-à-vis its adversary is generally viewed as a highly unlikely agitator for war, for the rising state almost always stands to achieve greater gains by simply waiting patiently for the balance to continue to shift in its favor.[41] However, rising nations do tend to become more assertive as they seek to exercise their newfound strength. It is a contradictory urge felt by any nation whose leaders see themselves in this situation in which they can finally be more aggressive in their daily pursuits, while being overly aggressive could disrupt their expected future ascendance by starting a war they are not yet able to win.[42]

Classical structural realism in fact parallels very well Soviet thinking and predicts quite accurately Soviet behavior. Its logic predicts a high probability of war initiated by

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[41] Copeland demonstrated in *Origins of Major War* that this was an area of structural realism that had traditionally been mistaken in its analysis. Rising states were viewed as increasingly aggressive because they would seek to remake the international structure in ways that recognize their newly acquired status, while declining states hoped to maintain a status quo based their over-inflated position. Copeland showed how rising states actually have a greater incentive to remain patient and allow favorable trends to continue developing, while declining states have a strong incentive to pursue preventative war before the rising state acquires sufficient power to win a confrontation.

[42] Theoretical insights about preemptive war – usually understood in terms of the timing of an attack – are in general not very useful for studying grand strategy. Rather, theoretical insights about preventative war – usually understood in terms of the decision to pursue a course of action that will likely lead to war – are at the very heart of the subject. It is important to keep this distinction in mind when considering the strategic implications of scholarly efforts as defining the spiral model and conducting investigations into the offense-defense balance. It is important to explicate whether these insights describe the pursuit of short-term solutions (preemptive) or decisions regarding long-term objectives (preventative). For more information on spiral models see Jervis, *Perception and Misperception* and Charles L. Glaser, "Political Consequences of Military Strategy: Expanding and Refining the Spiral and Deterrence Models," *World Politics* 44, no. 4 (July 1992), 497-538. For more information on offense-defense balances and the manner in which they contribute to preemptive war, see Schelling, *Arms and Influence* and Lynn-Jones, "Offense-Defense Theory."

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the rising Soviet Union. Its leaders would be expected to choose a strategy that reflects its struggle for recognition of the Soviet Union's more prominent position in international relations. This is, in fact, a very good description of Soviet adventurism in the 1970s.

According to classic dynamic differentials theory, the probability of major power war in this situation is high for another reason. American strategists, applying American ideational beliefs to their expectations of Soviet strategy, believed the danger of Soviet aggression during the temporary ascendance was increasing. Bilateral and multilateral trends were increasing negative. Changes in government made this realization come about abruptly, increasing the picture of fear among policy makers by increasing the number and prominence of those policy makers who held the more fearful view. They commanded a formidable military alliance and possessed significant capability to destroy Soviet forces. At this point structural realist logic points to a strong likelihood of the United States readying its armed forces and launching a preventative war while its leaders felt they still had the greater capacity.

Why then would one not expect the United States to choose a strategy of violent preventative war with the Soviet Union? Taking the proto-theoretical approach helps identify where the assumptions of a theoretical model no longer correspond with the views of strategists and, therefore, helps the analyst avoid this erroneous assumption. The particular traditions and values of American grand strategy render the assumptions underlying these predictions invalid. Primary was the American character – the United States is not the kind of nation that will choose to annihilate a rival with a peacetime nuclear sneak attack, nor will it deliberately choose a course of action that leads to major war.

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One unavoidably salient factor affected the mindset of the closely, but not entirely, structural realist orientation of the United States at this point in history. This aberrant factor is the restraining presence of annihilative capability by both sides in the Cold War. Second-strike capabilities reduce this probability to nearly zero. The United States as a nation did not consider the major war option to be a viable solution to fears of relative decline, even deep and irreversible decline, so long as that option meant the destruction of the populations of both nations.

Nuclear parity has dramatic effects on structural approaches, for it renders the war option very unlikely. It removes incentives for escalating hostilities to the point beyond which total war can no longer be avoided. Precisely where that point lies has been a matter of debate for deterrence in American and Soviet circles since 1949.[43] What is not contested is fact that this ameliorated the United States' strategic orientation, channeling the response scenarios outside traditional areas of structural response.

U.S. views parallel very closely the assumptions of dynamic differentials theory, but it is in the translation from tendency to prediction that the divergences become clear. Dynamic differentials theory examines major power war, but American leaders have a wider range of strategic responses to the influences than major power war. By expanding the possibilities of dynamic differentials theory beyond its original scope of war into the

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[43] A few thorough treatments of this topic are Richard Smoke, *National Security and the Nuclear Dilemma: An Introduction to the American Experience in the Cold War*, 3rd ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1993); Erik Beukel, *American Perceptions of the Soviet Union as a Nuclear Adversary: From Kennedy to Bush* (New York: Pinter Publishers, 1989); Richard K. Betts, *Nuclear Blackmail and Nuclear Balance* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 1987); and Kissinger, *Nuclear Weapons.*

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realm of wider competition, a vast range of strategic options becomes available. A nation in the position of the United States can choose to challenge the rising power in other battlegrounds, such as economic might or moral authority, on which it holds the greatest advantages. Any other strategy would run counter to every worldview that ever held enough popular support to take the United States' highest offices.

Henry Kissinger noted in 1957, "Many familiar assumptions about war, diplomacy, and the nature of peace will have to be modified before we have developed a theory adequate to the perils and opportunities of the nuclear age."[44] A number of prominent scholars had been exploring these avenues of inquiry. Thomas Schelling wrote in 1966 of using nuclear brinksmanship as a policy tool.[45] As late as 1987 Richard Betts wrote of the various means of using "nuclear blackmail" for policy ends.[46] Yet it is quite significant that none of these ideas found their way into major foreign policy addresses.[47] Although they occasionally used the nuclear threat to protect vital interests, American leaders never wavered in their belief that the consequences of a deep and

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[44] Kissinger, *Nuclear Weapons*, xi-xii.

[45] Schelling, *Arms and Influence*.

[46] Betts, *Nuclear Blackmail*.

[47] Erik Beukel contributed a useful distinction in the area by dividing nuclear policy into several overlapping facets: *declaratory policy* (public pronouncements on nuclear weapons made by senior administration officials); *force development policy* (decisions on the size and capabilities of American nuclear forces); *arms control negotiation policy* (guidelines as to goals and tactics to be pursued in negotiations on nuclear issues with other countries); *operational policy* (guidelines for such activities as alert rates or patrol practices for various types of nuclear forces); and *force employment policy* (the actual war-fighting plans that the United States would adopt in a nuclear war). See Beukel, *American Perceptions*, 27. Outside of these facets is the realm of scholarly investigation of nuclear issues, for while they overlap all of these at various points, the constraints under which they are made are considerably and purposefully different.

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inevitable American decline were preferable to the immediate devastation of a Soviet nuclear response.[48]

As Kissinger noted, President Eisenhower had already decided nuclear weapons had created a world in which there was no longer any alternative to peace.[49] The devastation of a Soviet retaliatory strike, whether in the 1960s or the 1980s, rendered forcing a nuclear confrontation far too costly to seriously tempt even the most hawkish of policy makers. Even if purposeful pursuit of nuclear war had been possible – and the American public had been uncharacteristically willing to support it – the idea of gaining anything useful by it became increasingly remote. Richard Smoke reminded historians in 1993 that, as the nuclear confrontation progressed into the Carter years, "at each turn of the wheel the *relative* position of the United States was less advantageous than before."[50]

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[48] On the evolution of American policy and the role of nuclear weapons, see Smoke, *Nuclear Dilemma*. Also informative for its historical value into the development of policies other than mutual assured destruction is Kissinger, *Nuclear Weapons*. For in-depth coverage of an incident in which this choice was examined at length, see Ernest R. May and Philip D. Zelikow, *The Kennedy Tapes: Inside the White House During the Cuban Missile Crisis* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997) and Aleksandr Fursenko and Timothy Naftali, *One Hell of a Gamble: Khrushchev, Kennedy, and Castro, 1958-1964* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1997).

[49] Kissinger, *Nuclear Weapons*, 3.

[50] Smoke, *Nuclear Dilemma*, 318. Zbigniew Brzezinski agreed: "The political change is accompanied by a gradual shift in the American-Soviet strategic balance. A mere six years ago (i.e., during the Cuban missile crisis of 1972) the Soviet Union already had second-strike capacity to inflict on the U.S.A. the loss of several tens of millions lives – but at the cost of its national existence. Today, though the U.S. still possesses the capacity to inflict on the Soviet Union the ultimate penalty of national extinction, the Soviet Union can destroy a hundred million Americans. Thus, in effect, parity in non-survivability almost exists and, as Soviet missile strength reaches U.S. levels, it will shortly be attained." See "Peace and Power," 7.

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If the Soviets believed major war inevitable or even advantageous, this temporary bubble of ascendance would seem the best time for it. If Soviet strategists viewed the world through the same beliefs as their American counterparts, then they would perceive a long-term decline vis-à-vis the Americans and move to start a preventative war before American power resurged. However, Soviet ideology dictated that socialism would eventually triumph over capitalism because it was a more just system of political and economic organization. Its long-term outlook is always favorable. Any strategist who predicted otherwise would have been accused of doubting the state's ideology. Therefore Soviet strategy must contain the belief that a preventative war would only be necessary if the Soviet Union was certain of an impending annihilative attack from the United States. In all other cases the avoidance of major war would serve Soviet interests in the long term.

Benjamin S. Lambeth noted in 1979 that there was little disagreement over this issue. Regardless of what Soviet military doctrine held "regarding the value of superior forces and the necessity for a strategy oriented toward war waging and victory, the Soviet leadership regards deterrence of nuclear war as its overriding security priority and seeks the maintenance of a strategic balance conducive to minimizing the likelihood of such a war."[51] The distinctive ideational qualities of the Soviet system convert structural realism's usual prediction of a Soviet strategy favoring major war initiation to prediction of a Soviet strategy of war avoidance.

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[51] Lambeth, "Soviet Equivalence," 23.

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Instead of choosing preventative war with the Soviet Union, the United States chose rebuilding and confrontation of Soviet power. As a first step, Carter enunciated five principles that would serve as guidelines for foreign policy according to his administration's grand strategy.

> The United States has a legal right and responsibility under the Charter of the United Nations to speak out against human rights violations.
>
> The notion of "linkage" put forth by Kissinger was no longer valid. The United States will pursue human rights objectives simultaneously and independently of its other foreign policy goals.
>
> Bilateral relations will not prevent the United States from pursuing its human rights objectives.
>
> The notion that increased emphasis on human rights will lead to increased repression is not valid.
>
> An American policy based on fundamental American values would best serve its security interests.

Carter sought to establish immediate credibility for these objectives by appointing several noted civil rights activists to key positions in the new human rights machinery emerging in the state department.[52] He also needed to find an issue that would delineate the differences between the American and Soviet positions in this area. In the end he seized upon several. Carter made his "Deep Cuts" proposals in the SALT II negotiations.

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[52] These appointments included Mississippi civil rights leader and former deputy campaign manager Patricia Derian as head of the new Bureau of Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs. In April 1977 Brzezinski tapped her for the Interagency Group on Human Rights and Foreign Assistance (the "Christopher group"). Soon thereafter her position was elevated to Assistant Secretary of State for Human Rights to increase the authority of her voice in foreign policy. See Kaufman, "The Bureau of Human Rights," 51-66.

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He called for a complete ban on nuclear weapons testing, rebuked the West Germans for selling nuclear material to Brazil, explored the possibility of normalizing relations with Cuba, consented to Vietnam's admittance to the U.N., spoke in favor of a "Palestinian homeland," and sent Vance to Moscow with a comprehensive plan for limiting strategic arms.[53]

Shortly thereafter, Carter received a letter from Soviet Nobel Peace Prize winner Andrei Sakharov, who praised Carter for his commitment to human rights and drew attention to human-rights problems in the Soviet Union. He felt he had the moral high ground and pushed relentlessly to reiterate his administration's stand on this issue.[54] According to Brzezinski, "We all felt that the President had to reply. The prestige of the author was such that failure to do so would invite adverse comparisons with the widely criticized refusal by President Ford to meet with Solzhenitsyn."[55]

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[53] George W. Breslauer finds that new American presidents have been far more likely to test their Soviet counterparts. See "Do Soviet Leaders Test New Presidents?" *International Security* 8, no. 3, (Winter 1983/1984), 83-108. Carter announced before his inauguration that he would send Vance to Moscow to reopen the SALT II negotiations. The ill-prepared trip did little more than convey his sincerity on arms limitation and frustrate the Soviets with inept way in which the proposals were made. Anatoly Dobrynin, *In Confidence: Moscow's Ambassador to Six Cold War Presidents* (New York: Random House, 1995), 392-96.

[54] Translations from Russian archives of the exchanges between Carter and Brezhnev and the newly declassified instructions provided to Ambassador Dobrynin can be found in "The Path to Disagreement: U.S.-Soviet Communications Leading to Vance's March 1977 Trip to Moscow," in *Cold War International History Project Bulletin no. 5: Cold War Crises*, Cold War International History Project, available at http://wwics.si.edu/index.cfm?topic_id=1409&fuseaction=library.document&id=26, accessed 7 November 7, 2004.

[55] Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 156.

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By August 1977 the principles underlying these actions translated formally into American doctrine. Carter signed Presidential Directive 18 (PD 18), which codified American grand strategy as follows:

> "U.S. national strategy will be to take advantage of our relative advantages in economic strength, technological superiority and popular political support to:
>
> Counterbalance, together with our allies and friends, by a combination of military forces, political efforts, and economic programs, Soviet military power and adverse influence in key areas, particularly Europe, the Middle East, and East Asia.
>
> Compete politically with the Soviet Union by pursuing the basic American commitment to human rights and national independence.
>
> Seek Soviet cooperation in resolving regional conflicts and reducing areas of tension that could lead to confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union.
>
> Advance American security interests through negotiations with the Soviet Union of adequately verifiable arms control and disarmament agreements that enhance stability and curb arms competition.
>
> Seek to involve the Soviet Union constructively in global activities, such as economic and social developments and peaceful non-strategic trade.[56]

These points expressed very clearly the grand strategy the United States attempted to implement in 1977. They also parallel almost precisely the expectations that flow from the methodology described above for using scholarly insights to discern tendencies in grand strategy formulation.

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[56] "U.S. National Strategy," available at http://www.jimmycarterlibrary.org/documents/pddirectives/pd18.pdf, accessed 7 November 2004.

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The United States made the demonstration of political integrity a prerequisite for the continued receipt of American support. Carter took extraordinary steps that did much to restore America's credibility on issues of world leadership. He allowed the Panama Canal, one of most militarily significant territories under U.S. jurisdiction, to revert to Panamanian control as specified by the original canal agreement. He brought the leaders of Israel and Egypt to Camp David and kept them there with them until they agreed to accept peace, a significant step toward solving one of the most enduring problem of international relations since 1949. With each of the actions the United States spent considerable political and strategic capital in the expectation that these investments would pay off with restoration of U.S. moral credibility and, by direct translation, increases in U.S. power. One of the areas where this showed through clearly was in the United States' refusal to take the violent and potentially destabilizing steps necessary to win its proxy conflict with the Soviet Union on the Horn of Africa.

Case Study: Horn of Africa

The Soviets understood that something fundamental to U.S. strategy was going on in Washington. They misinterpreted, however, the significance of the rebuilding strategy as an aberration that did not having the ultimate goal of abandoning the long-standing American commitment to containment.[57] Rather, they viewed the Carter administration'

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[57] Ambassador Dobrynin wrote to his superiors in 1978, "Insofar as it is possible to judge on the basis of information which the embassy has at its disposal, the Carter Administration has come to its own variety of a selective, half-hearted conception of

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apparent ambiguity about power as a temporary development, the result of naiveté and confusion. Carter's decision that the United States would not become militarily involved in third world countries just because the Soviets were there seemed justification that U.S. could not afford to compete.[58] It was not until later in the Carter administration that Moscow understood that the redefinition of worldviews in Washington was the harbinger of a new American Cold War strategy.

Stephen David concluded in 1979, "It is hard to avoid the central political lesson that has emerged: alignment with the Soviet Union proved demonstrably superior to alignment with the United States."[59] This criticism fell hard on the Carter administration, which was hoping to fulfill its pledge to restore integrity in ways that did not cost it quite so much of its reputation in other areas. Commitment to states that had long-standing arrangements with the United States was one area that would pay the price of this new direction in American strategy. Nowhere was this demonstrated more clearly than on the Horn of Africa in the late 1970s.

The situation in the Horn of Africa was one of the typically complex situations that great powers face in areas that are little known, but nonetheless of sufficient strategic interest to garner extensive engagement. The principal nations involved showed strong

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detente (of which Brzezinski himself first accused us)." See "Soviet American Relations in the Contemporary Era," in *Political Letter of Soviet Ambassador to the United States Anatoly F. Dobrynin, 11 July 1978, to the USSR Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Com. Gromyko, A.A.* Secret, Copy no. 2, 11 July 1978, Attachment to the Issue no. 667. Cold War International History Project, available at http://wwics.si.edu/index.cfm?topic_id=1409&fuseaction=library.document&id=23, accessed 14 November 2004.

[58] Colin Legum, "The African Crisis," *Foreign Affairs* 57, no. 3 (Spring 1979), 633-51.

[59] Steven David, "Realignment in the Horn: The Soviet Advantage," *International Security* 4, no. 2 (Fall 1979), 70.

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similarities. Both were poor and possessed no known petroleum fields or strategic minerals. There were no major sources of foreign investment and no booming trade in tourism. What brought these disputants to superpower attention was their strategic location. Both nations sit on a longstanding bridge between the African subcontinent and the Middle East.

The differences between Ethiopia and Somalia were equally stark. Ethiopia was about twice the size of Somalia and held approximately nine times its population. Ethiopia has a rich heritage as Africa's oldest independent nation, while Somalia did not gain its independence until 1960. Ethiopian leaders shared a continual fear of invasion, being in their perception a Christian nation in a sea of Islam. They also faced threats of internal unrest due to its multiethnic population. Since 1962 they had been in open conflict with the province of Eritrea, a thriving former Italian territory they annexed that became Ethiopia's only outlet to the sea.

Somali history consisted largely of attempts to consolidate lands occupied by the historic expansion of the nomadic Somali people in search of water, irrespective of national borders. Somalis live in Ethiopia, as well as Kenya and Djibouti. Ethiopian leaders were thus trying to hold together its many ethnicities, while Somali leaders sought to unify their people into one Somali nation. This crossing of purposes met in the Ethiopian province of Ogaden. Fully one-fifth of Ethiopia, the nation acquired this province in the late nineteenth century. Somalis claimed that the desert province was rightfully part of Somalia, as it was inhabited mostly by Somalis.

In 1952, seeking to capitalize on growing U.S. fears of Soviet adventurism, Ethiopian leaders requested American aid. They had no domestic communist threat to

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attract American concern, so they offered instead use of a military base at Kagnew (in Eritrea). Kagnew offered excellent strategic geography – its high plain was ideal for communications posts.[60] American leaders jumped at the opportunity and agreed to provide Ethiopia with aid for the years 1953-1978. During those 25 years over $300 million in military aid and $350 million in economic aid made its way to the Ethiopian government, making it the largest recipient of U.S. aid in black Africa.[61] The relationship was stable until 1974, when Emperor Haile Selassie's reign became unstable.

Eight years after the 1952 American-Somalia accord, the Soviets began making their own inroads to Somalia. Unification of Italian Somaliland and British Somaliland into the new nation brought with it an exuberant dedication to continuing to unite all ethnic Somalis into one nation. Somali leaders tested their plan by initiating several border skirmishes with Ethiopia. Ethiopia had little trouble defeating the poorly equipped Somali army. In 1962 Somali leaders followed the same logic as Ethiopian leaders then years earlier: they requested Western aid.

The United States, West Germany, and Italy offered Somalia $10 million in military aid, with the understanding that this aid was to be used for internal security and no requests would be made of other nations. Western leaders could go no higher; they did not want Somalia using this aid to further their ethnic unification plans by invading

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[60] Mohammed Ayoob, *The Horn of Africa: Regional Conflict and Super Power Involvement*, Canberra Papers on Strategy and Defence no. 18 (Canberra: Australian National University, 1978), 10.

[61] Madan M. Sauldie, *Super Powers in the Horn of Africa* (New York: Apt Books, 1987), 169.

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Ethiopia and Kenya. This offer did not tempt Somali leaders, as an invasion force was precisely what Somalia leaders wanted.

The Soviets seized the opportunity and offered a much larger package, first a loan of $32 million they later raised to $55 million. Somali leaders accepted the Soviet package and began recruiting, equipping, and training their invasion force. Aid increased gradually, as Soviet caution and Somali absorptive capacity placed ceilings on the amounts that could flow into the poor nation. In 1969 a military coup brought to power Siad Barre, a general in the new Soviet-trained army. Barre promised to bring "scientific socialism" to Somalia. The Soviets increased their shipments of aid and advisors.

In July 1974 Somalia became the first black African state to sign a Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation with the Soviet Union. The Soviets wrote off much of the Somali loan and received in exchange a deep-water port in Berbera, an air base near Mogadishu. It also consolidated its rights to a communications base at Kismayu.[62] Backed by Soviet political power, armed with Soviet weapons, and trained by Soviet advisors, Somali leaders resumed efforts to seize the Ogaden region from Ethiopia.

American aid to Ethiopia had not kept pace with Soviet aid to Somalia. By 1975 the Somalis had more of everything – tanks, combat aircraft, and armored personnel carriers – and theirs was newer and more advanced. The only advantage Ethiopia still held was in the size of its army, but much of that army was engaged in suppressing the Eritrean revolt. It was not very successful; guerrilla forces held ninety percent of Eritrea.

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[62] David, "Realignment in the Horn," 72.

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The Ethiopian government was sitting on a bed of hostility. In a nation that regards land as the ultimate indicator of wealth, ninety-five percent of Ethiopia belonged to the Royal Family, the feudal nobility, or the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. Ethnic claims for self-determination appeared throughout the country.[63] Government mishandling of a major famine contributed to the deaths of over a hundred thousand Ethiopians. A populace that did not have much confidence that Selassie government could prevent dissolution therefore shared Ethiopian officials' fears of the nation breaking apart.

In February 1974 a group of military officers presented Emperor Selassie a list of grievances. He either would or could not respond as desired and in September was deposed. He died in August 1975 of suspicious circumstances. The military cadre that assumed power had little ideological orientation beyond frustration and desires to modernize the country and improve the lot of the poor. Intellectuals and the Marxist-dominated student movement injected it with ideology.[64] Its leaders (the Dergue) adopted a stridently Marxist platform and killed thousands of "counterrevolutionaries," including many of their early supporters.[65]

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[63] See Christopher Clapham, "Ethnicity and the National Question in Ethiopia," in *Conflict and Peace in the Horn of Africa: Federalism and its Alternatives*, ed. Peter Woodward and Murray Forsyth (Aldershot, UK: Dartmouth Publishing Company, 1994), 27-40.

[64] Gérard Chaliand, "The Horn of Africa's Dilemma," *Foreign Policy*, no. 30 (Spring 1978), 117.

[65] Ermias Abebe recalls that the new leaders were so "ignorant in the realm of ideology that at one point in the early stage of the revolution delegations were sent to Tanzania, Yugoslavia, China, and India to shop for one for Ethiopia." Ermias Abebe,

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American strategists watched these developments with alarm. Although Emperor Haile Selassie had visited the Soviet Union in 1959, 1967, 1970, and in 1973, Ethiopia had been a dependable ally and the location of strategic facilities.[66] The United States had a vital interest in keeping open the strait of Bab el Mandeb, the port of Djibouti, and the Red Sea for the free flow of international shipping to itself and its allies.[67]

Unwilling to cede Ethiopia to Soviet influence without a struggle, American attempted to work with the Dergue. Consequently, in 1975 they provided Ethiopia with an enormous sales credit for U.S. arms ($135 million). The Dergue purchased tanks and aircraft while the U.S. Congress authorized an additional $53 million over a two-year period and transferred a squadron of F-5A aircraft from Iran.[68]

The emerging winner of the Dergue's internal power struggles did not embrace the United States gratefully for its generosity. Although often understood as a strident anti-Western socialist, Colonel Mengistu's priorities were nationalistic.[69] He adopted drastic land reform and continued the Dergue's terror tactics while denouncing the corruption of the West. In a shrewd reading of the political situation, he undercut the

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"The Horn, the Cold War, and Documents from the Former East-Bloc: An Ethiopian View," in *Cold War International History Project Bulletin no. 8: Anatomy of a Third World Cold War Crisis: New East-Bloc Evidence on the Horn of Africa, 1977-1978*, available at http://Cold War International History Project.si.edu/pdf/bull8-9.pdf, accessed 30 March 2001.

[66] "Soviet-Ethiopian Relations (Reference)," in *Soviet Foreign Ministry Background Report on Soviet-Ethiopian Relations*, 3 April 1978, Cold War International History Project, trans. Svetlana Savranskaya, available at http://wwics.si.edu/index.cfm?topic_id=1409&fuseaction=library.document&id=856, accessed 14 November 2004.

[67] Chaliand, "The Horn of Africa's Dilemma," 116.

[68] David, "Realignment in the Horn," 74.

[69] Mengistu himself had neither exposure to nor interest in communist ideology or the Soviet Union. As he admitted in one interview, his first encounter with Russians happened only after the revolution. See Abebe, "The Horn."

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communism of the Eritrean separatists by building diplomatic ties with the Soviet Union, while at the same time giving the Soviets a reason to restrain the Somalis. When American aid dropped suddenly amidst American concern about the Dergue's socialist leanings and human rights abuses, Mengistu responded coldly to American influence.

In December 1976, one year after the Dergue accepted the enormous American aid package, Mengistu went to Moscow and concluded a $385 million arms agreement with the Soviets. He also kept the door open to the United States, which had not yet delivered some $40 million of the equipment and would be the only source of spare parts for its maintenance.[70] The United States, refusing to abandon its investment, also attempted to maintain American-Ethiopian ties and moderate Mengistu's policies. On February 3, 1977, approximately two weeks after Carter took office, Colonel Mengistu consolidated his leadership of the Dergue by executing seven of his colleagues, including the nominal head of state, Terifi Bante. He announced that henceforth Somalia would look exclusively to socialist states for military assistance.

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[70] During a conversation between Political Counselor of the U.S. Embassy in Ethiopia Herbert Malin and Soviet Counselor-Minister in Ethiopia S. Sinitsin on February 2, 1977, Malin noted "that the new Ethiopian administration is pursuing a policy of seeking methods of receiving military assistance form other sources as well, possibly on terms more advatages (sic) to it, including from the USSR (he is aware of the visit by the Ethiopian military delegation to Moscow in December of 1976), as well as the PRC (People's Republic of China), although he doubts that the Chinese are capable of supplying Ethiopia with "serious armaments." *Memorandum of Conversation between Soviet Counselor-Minister in Ethiopia S. Sinitsin with Political Counselor of the U.S. Embassy in Ethiopia Herbert Malin, 2 February 1977*, Cold War International History Project, trans. Bruce McDonald, available at http://wwics.si.edu/index.cfm?topic_id=1409&fuseaction=library.document&id=821, accessed 14 November 2004.

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Carter's grand strategy of rebuilding American moral authority played out very prominently in the Horn of Africa. His administration's policy toward the subcontinent, as part of the overall grand strategy of displaying moral credibility, called for "African solutions to African problems."[71] On February 24th Carter announced that Ethiopia and two other countries were guilty of deplorable human rights violations and removed Ethiopian military aid from his 1978 budget proposal. On April 19th American officials informed the Dergue that they were halving their personnel involved in military assistance to Ethiopia and requested early termination of their lease of the strategic Kagnew base.

Four days later Mengistu expelled the entire group of military advisors and gave the United States 96 hours to close Kagnew. The United States cut its diplomatic personnel in half and stopped all military sales and deliveries to Ethiopia. Mengistu ordered the closure of the U.S. communications stations in Asmara, the U.S. Information Service (USIS) center, and the American military assistance advisory offices, and abrogated the Ethio-U.S. Mutual Defense Assistance Agreement.[72] Mengistu traveled to Moscow in May and reached a series of agreements that led to his signing a Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation with the Soviets in November 1978.

Carter condemned blatant abuses of human rights by a former ally, abandoned American military aid to Ethiopia, and accepted Soviet influence over the strategic country. Carter turned instead to the Soviet client state of Somalia. Tensions between

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71 Legum, "The African Crisis," 633-51.
72 See Abebe, "The Horn."

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Siad Barre and the Soviet Union had been mounting. Somali alignment with Arab states and acceptance of Chinese aid angered Soviet leaders. Somali leaders, in turn, were apprehensive about the Soviet Union's refusal to build anything beyond military capacity for Somalia. It offered a legacy of dependence, rather than grounds for sustainable growth.[73] Finally, increasing Soviet aid to Somalia and attempts to restrain Somali expansion contravened the long-term strategy of Somali unification.

In April 1977, while it was condemning Mengistu's actions, the Carter administration indicated its willingness to consider selling arms to Somalia. This escalated in on July 15th when the United States, Britain, and France openly declared their willingness to supply defensive weapons for Somalia. The Somalis put the question of Soviet backing to the test by invading the Ogaden in July.

The Somalis timed their attack well. Their forces were at peak preparedness, while the Ethiopians were caught between suppliers, having lost the United States but not yet begun receiving and training on significant quantities of Soviet equipment. Moscow hesitated, partly because it did not want the conflict at all and largely because it had yet to pick which side to support.[74] By mid-August Somali forces held nearly all of the Ogaden.

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[73] Edward A. Koldziej noted in 1980 that the Soviet Union had a reputation throughout black Africa for this kind of behavior. It was considered a receding force once racial equality and national independence had been achieved, while the West offered the economic development and liberal political values that could meet long-term African needs. See "The Partial Partner," 122.

[74] The Third Africa Department of the Soviet Foreign Ministry expressed its dilemma as follows: "Beginning in the 1960s, in almost every instance of a serious

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In September Mengistu, having not yet received his arms from the Soviets and increasingly worried that he had chosen the wrong superpower as an ally, publicly accused the Soviets of complicity in the Somali invasion. He sought delivery of the American arms that Carter had refused to allow to reach Ethiopia.

At this point traditional realist logic suggests the United States would provide the Somalis with sufficient arms to end the conflict and reap the rewards of a successful Cold War policy in the Horn of Africa. The United States, however, responded by appearing to place itself above the conflict, calling for an end to hostilities and implementing an arms embargo on both nations. Rather than provide more arms and accept the sure win by Somali forces, Carter pulled back. A spokesman from the State department told an incredulous press corps that the United States had decided ending the proxy war was more important an American responsibility that winning it. The provision of any more arms to the Somalis "would add fuel to the fire we are more interested in putting out."

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aggravation of Ethiopia-Somalia relations, Ethiopia and Somalia have appealed to the Soviet government with a request to assert influence on the government of the other country with the goal of normalizing the situation. Recently, both Somalia and Ethiopia have repeatedly called for more active participation by the Soviet Union in settling their bilateral relations. In this regard each of them is counting on the Soviet Union to support precisely their position, using for this its authority and friendly relations with the opposing side." The report later concluded, "The position of the Soviet Union on the question of the Ethiopia-Somalia territorial dispute, which many times has been brought to the attention of the governments of both countries, is that Ethiopia and the SDR must take all possible measures to settle their disagreements by means of negotiations and to find a way to lessen the tension in Ethiopia-Somalia relations." "Somalia's Territorial Disagreements with Ethiopia and the Position of the USSR (Brief Information Sheet)," in *Third African Department, Soviet Foreign Ministry, Information Report on Somali-Ethiopian Territorial Disputes, 2 February 1977,* Cold War International History Project, trans. Mark H. Doctoroff, available at http://wwics.si.edu/index.cfm?topic_id=1409&fuseaction=library.document&id=822, accessed 14 November 2004.

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The United States would neither supply any more arms nor approve transfer of U.S. military equipment from third countries.[75]

The American refusal to sell more arms to Somali and provide its ally with a victory of a Soviet-backed and Cuban-led Ethiopian force was a dramatic public demonstration of the U.S. commitment to regaining exceptionalism. It was a concrete demonstration of the American willingness to forgo Cold War gains taken through the blood of proxy fighters in Ethiopia and Somalia. Carter hoped it would be an American diplomatic victory, a successful component of prosecution of the strategy of rebuilding moral authority that would help his efforts elsewhere, especially the Middle East.[76] This view seemed justified by events when the Somalis acted on their preference for the American model. Somali leaders renounced their 1974 Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation with the Soviet Union, expelled over 1,500 Soviet advisors, and denied the Soviets further use of Somali facilities.[77]

The end results were not so fortunate for American assertions of the importance of exceptionalism at this time. Mengistu, with nowhere else to turn, badly needed aid to prevent the Somalis from advancing on the city of Harrar, deep in Ethiopian territory. The Soviets, wanting to preserve their position in the Horn, rushed arms to Harrar to hold off the Somalis' assault in November. Unfortunately Ethiopian soldiers were trained for

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[75] Quoted in Ayoob, *The Horn of Africa*, 22.

[76] Bereket Habte Selassie, *Conflict and Intervention in the Horn of Africa* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1980), 129.

[77] David, "Realignment in the Horn," 79.

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American equipment and tactics and would not be able to put the Soviet arms to much use.[78]

Facing the loss of Harrar – and most likely collapse of the Mengistu government – the time had come for the Soviets to bring in the Cubans.[79] Cuban advisors and soldiers had been coming to Ethiopia since the establishment of its ties with the Soviet Union. In November 1977 they numbered about 1,000 and were well versed in the use of Soviet arms. They assisted the Ethiopian defense of Harrar, repelling Somali forces and pushing them back to pre-November positions.[80]

The Carter administration, sticking to its strategy of appearing the "moral" superpower, refused to rise openly to the challenge of Soviet escalation in Ethiopia.

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[78] A state delegation led by Army General V.I. Petrov had arrived Ethiopia in November 1977 on a closed visit. The tasks of the delegation include devising measures jointly with the Ethiopian side to assist the PMAC in building the Ethiopian armed forces, for faster mastering of the Soviet military equipment by the Ethiopian army, and in the planning of military operations in the Ogaden and Eritrea. However, this delegation was far from sufficient to train the entire national army in time to save it. . "Soviet-Ethiopian Relations."

[79] Paul B. Henze, "Moscow, Mengistu, and the Horn: Difficult Choices for the Kremlin," in *Cold War International History Project Bulletin no. 8: Anatomy of a Third World Cold War Crisis: New East-Bloc Evidence on the Horn of Africa, 1977-1978*, available at http://Cold War International History Project.si.edu/pdf/bull8-9.pdf, accessed 30 March 2001. Soviet archives show that "the main purpose of the meeting with the Cuban envoy was to chastise him for permitting Cuban General Ochoa to promise Mengistu that more Cuban technicians would be coming: "The decision to send Cuban personnel to Ethiopia does not depend on Havana, but on Moscow."

[80] Despite its commitment and successes, Cuba agreed it would not undertake to do anything in Ethiopia without the preliminary agreement of the Soviet Union. "About Measures for the Future Strengthening of Soviet-Ethiopian Relations," in *Minutes on Meeting of CPSU CC Politburo, 14 July 1978*, Cold War International History Project, available at http://wwics.si.edu/index.cfm?topic_id=1409&fuseaction=library.Keywords&imageField.x=19&imageField.y=11, accessed 14 November 2004.

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Carter, keeping with his belief that backdoor efforts contravening his public stances were not congruent with moral behavior, did not pursue allied or covert support. Somali pleas for more arms went unanswered, while Soviet weapons and Cuban soldiers poured into Ethiopia toward the end of 1977.

In mid-January of the next year an Ethiopian counterattack, aided by an estimated 10,000 Cubans and led by Soviet General Grigory Barislolov, drove the Somalis out of the Ogaden.[81] On March 9th Somali leaders, defeated and disheartened, announced their final withdrawal and soon began attempting to reestablish ties with the Soviet Union. In June this same force suppressed the Eritrean rebellion, much of which had also been equipped by Soviets and trained by Cubans. One longtime observer noted, "Although overshadowed by its war with Somalia in the Ogaden, the more significant conflict for Ethiopia was in Eritrea – Ethiopia's only access to the sea . . . The struggle in Eritrea was critical to the survival of the Ethiopian regime."[82]

The United States lost much of its influence by in its refusal to escalate fighting over the Ogaden. Its relationship with Somalia soured after implementation of the arms embargo. American leaders appeared to abandon a new client state to Soviet domination. Arab leaders were angered by Carter's restraint on any provision of aid they might have made. Frostiness extended throughout the whole of U.S.-Soviet relations, affecting everything from détente to nuclear arms control. The cost of moral authority seemed

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[81] David, "Realignment in the Horn," 80.

[82] Chaliand, "The Horn of Africa's Dilemma," 123.

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very high indeed, a point that would recur as Carter began to reconsider his views of its role as a source of international power.

Stephen David, writing in 1979, offered this perspective: "It is not, therefore, the Soviet victory in the Horn itself which is cause for alarm but rather it is in the manner they have achieved their success and the example it was set for other third world countries where the real consequences of recent events in the Horn lie."[83] While this episode demonstrated the administration's dogged implementation of many nuances of its grand strategy, it also served to underscore the continuing ascendance of Soviet international power. The United States' reputation of supporting its allies until victory and being on the winning side of history suffered. At the same time Americans became even more concerned about their nation's capacity for restraining Soviet adventurism, deepening their overall fears of relative decline. Yet by showing restraint in the Horn of Africa the United States demonstrated in a very recognizable way its commitment to reestablishing it record of acting for principles, in this case the abhorrence of pointless violence, even at the cost of some of its more tangible strategic interests.

Conclusions

A proto-theoretical approach to this period allows an analyst to bring to bear relevant and insightful scholarship that offers a more accurate and thorough interpretation of American strategy and the shift that occurred in the mid-1970s. It prevents the use of

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[83] David, "Realignment in the Horn," 69-70.

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scholarly insights that mislead by ensuring the assumptions of the scholarship chosen are in accordance with the views of the strategists involved. The fallacy of viewing early Carter administration strategies and policies through structural realism alone, or any other lens for that matter, is especially stark in this case. Contemporary and modern-day theoretical models of behavior do not include the Carter administration's belief that a reputation for morality is an important component of national and international power. Thus none of these models could provide indicators that the United States would choose to bolster its international reputation through its actions in the Horn of Africa, even when this policy forced it to sacrifice a strategic military position for a gain in 'soft' power.

Lacking the perspective of American international relations theory and failing to account for the peculiarities of the Carter administration's worldview, Soviet observers were unable to understand the rationale behind Carter's most controversial maneuvers, such as his administration's decision to relinquish American control of the Panama Canal. Moscow filtered the issue through to its own particular set of lenses, which included hardheaded *realpolitik* and the struggle between capitalism and revolutionary socialism, but not the precepts of structural realism (in the way Brzezinski described it), nor American exceptionalism. The international behavior of one's own nation can be difficult to understand, but that of other nations would be nearly impossible without the benefits of international relations scholarship that is based first on an investigation of the people and traditions of those nations.

For his part, Carter understood the realities of 'hard' power mattered to his Soviet rivals, a view he grasped increasingly well under the tutelage of Brzezinski. Carter initiated the May 1977 meeting of the leaders of the NATO alliance in London that

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considered specific steps toward reversing perceived negative trends in relative conventional and nuclear forces. Imminent deployment of the SS-20 threatened to diminish the alliance's advantage in theater nuclear forces, an advantage upon which it had relied since the 1950s to counter an overwhelming Soviet advantage in conventional forces. At the same meeting the Carter administration also pushed for and got a 3 percent increase in defense spending by each member of the alliance. Suggested by Secretary of Defense Harold Brown and Secretary of State Cyrus Vance, the policy was a reaction to a palpable fear Soviet military power in the region would soon end the balance of forces.[84]

Soviet leaders could see quite clearly the Carter administration sought to reverse its perceived negative trend. Brezhnev noted in a speech to the full Politburo, one year after Carter's push at the NATO meeting,

> We should note with regret, that the work of the session of the Council of NATO and its resolutions do not serve detente or the consolidation of peace, but the exacerbation of the international situation and the intensification of military preparations, the arms race. Urgent calls for the increase of allotments, the agitation of the NATO representatives for neutron, chemical, bacteriological arms, the forcing through of long-term programs for the production of arms of all types–this is the real meaning of this session and of that which follows after it.[85]

The military buildup that began in the Carter administration could be foreseen easily by conventional application of the insights of international relations scholarship.

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[84] Vance, *Hard Choices*, 65-6.

[85] "Speech of Com. L.I. Brezhnev at the Politburo Session of the CC CPSU Concerning Several Issues of the International Situation, 8 June 1978," Cold War International History Project, available at http://wwics.si.edu/index.cfm?topic_id=1409&fuseaction=library.document&id=70, accessed 14 November 2004.

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However the grand strategy itself is missed, for conventional models with pre-built assumptions about the sources of power do not model very well the views and actions of the Carter administration. For this reason much of Carter's grand strategy does not come into full focus through analysis that neglects the perspective of proto-theory. Only by refining the assumptions of theoretical models to parallel the particular beliefs and views of the members of the Carter administration could one have expected that the centerpiece of its grand strategy would be to rebuild American power by reclaiming the moral authority the United States had lost since the end of the Second World War.

Having met the preconditions of this proto-theoretically defined scenario, American strategy and behavior followed the projected path with a high degree of accuracy. Carter expressly sought gains in prestige and trustworthiness by relinquishing a longstanding source of strategic and military power. However, Carter was initially unable to accept that Soviet leaders did not share his view of moral authority as a source of international power. The realities of the evolving bilateral situation demanded a different Cold War strategy, one that he adopted later in his administration.

Carter's initial strategy did not appear to pay off immediately, nor did he expect it to do so. Yet signs were already pointing to a successful rebuilding of American moral stature. Thomas Hughes lauded this approach in 1978, arguing that Carter "has enhanced the American appeal abroad by reviving the liberal, egalitarian, populist, and humanitarian elements in the American tradition."[86] William Bundy echoed, "The Carter

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[86] Hughes, "Management of Contradictions," 37.

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Administration plainly saw major gains from its decision to make human rights a worldwide element in American policy – in giving the people a renewed sense of idealistic purpose and in enhancing the American image abroad."[87] Richard W. Stevenson argued, "Indeed, in retrospect, Carter's human rights policy seemed to function most effectively as a means to rebuild an American moral consensus on foreign policy and to reassert American ideological leadership around the world."[88]

The Carter administration suffered tremendous political costs by enacting its plans to sacrifice immediate strategic losses while increasing defense spending by allies and modern U.S. forces. Seyom Brown warned in 1978 that Secretary of Defense Harold Brown viewed the military equivalence of the superpowers to be stable but not necessarily sustainable.[89] Yet within ten years the cruise missiles and stealth technology programs pushed by the Carter administration in general and Secretary Brown specifically provided a tremendous military advantage. They put the United States at least one generation ahead of its Soviet rivals and several generations ahead of much of the rest of the world. Realizing this would be the case offered an inviting area in which to challenge the Soviets.

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[87] William Bundy, "Who Lost Patagonia? Foreign Policy in the 1980 Campaign," *Foreign Affairs* 58, no. 1 (Fall 1979), 21.

[88] Richard W. Stevenson, *The Rise and Fall of Détente: Relaxations of Tension in US-Soviet Relations, 1953-1984* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1985), 203.

[89] "Secretary of Defense Harold Brown remains confident that today, as he put it in the Defense Department's annual report for fiscal year 1979, "Neither country enjoys a military advantage . . . The situation is one of standoff or stalemate." But Brown is concerned over the increasing vulnerability of the U.S. land-based intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) to the new generation of Soviet missiles now being deployed – the SS-17, SS-18, and SS-19." Seyom Brown, "An End to Grand Strategy," 24.

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Hughes noted that Carter tried to "put the country on the right side of history in places like southern Africa where, by neglect of preference, past administrations have displayed their instinct for the losers."[90] He successfully jettisoned some lost causes and, in the process, eroded the artificial anti-American world majority that has organized itself around highly vulnerable symbolic issues. Unfortunately, his focus on the global situation outstripped the American public's desire for him to do so and detracted from his ability to focus on the superpower rivalry, an inattention the Soviets exploited to increase power differentials in their favor more rapidly than ever before.

First Adjustment: Confronting Soviet Expansion

Grand strategies are implemented with the expectation that they are long-term programs. This is rarely the case, for changes in administrations, worldviews, and situations usually require extensive modification of them after a few years. The next section will demonstrate this was again the case with the Carter administration's attempts to rebuild U.S. power, as the need to use it to confront Soviet aggression suddenly became overwhelming, both for Carter and his successor.

Robert Tucker, writing in 1980, mused, "One of the many ironies of recent American history is that in 1976 an election brought to power an Administration that looked either to the recent past or to a policy-irrelevant future, while turning from office

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[90] Hughes, "Management of Contradictions," 37.

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an Administration that had begun to confront the present." [91] His statement demonstrated the kind of continuity that usually underlies American grand strategy during switches in administration. These continuities are usually downplayed for political reasons. In this case, the opposite of Tucker's statement appeared to be true. Most critics saw Kissinger as a throwback to an age and a strategy that was no longer a model for the pursuit of American interests. Carter, in the meantime, grasped ever more firmly the precepts underlying the strategy he had helped put aside.

While Carter was becoming more like Kissinger, Kissinger, no longer burdened with the requirements of political continuity, finally allowed himself to become more like Carter. He began to argue, tentatively at first, for a new direction in American grand strategy. When even the architects of the previous order have started taking a long, penetrating look at the current one, the previous age has indeed passed. By this time the United States had made significant progress toward restoration of moral credibility in the international system. As the realities of Soviet power became even more alarming, this resurging strength gave the United States the confidence to move on to a deepened, more sophisticated version of its new grand strategy.

Changing Strategic Situation: Perils of Patience

American grand strategy in the mid-1970s was predicated on a fundamental faith that the moral authority gained from acting on ideals will bring more power and security

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[91] Tucker, "America in Decline," 462.

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in the long term than the temporary advantages seized by successful maneuvering in a *realpolitik* sense. The Carter administration codified this belief in its national security strategy and acted accordingly, even as the costs of doing so mounted. Hughes noted, "By any calculation, the costs of the administration's recent foreign policy showdowns on the Panama Canal and the Middle East arms sales were excessive in terms of time, energy, and political capital."[92]

Shortly after the new strategy began to take shape the members of the Carter administration found that efforts to resurrect American morality had little deterrent effect on the behavior of the Soviet Union. The purpose of these new foreign policy moves was to expand U.S. influence in the world by helping to pluralize the politics of others and disrupt Soviet political structures wherever they existed. It worked only sporadically, although one could argue the success of the Camp David Accords eclipsed much of the criticism this strategy would have generated. Nevertheless, in the middle years of his administration Carter was plagued by his foreign policy failures, chief among them an inability to translate his successes in rebuilding U.S. moral credibility into terms his Soviet counterparts could appreciate.

Carter had begun his term in office with a belief typical of new presidents – that he could make his adversaries see his view of things.[93] The affability Brezhnev

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[92] Hughes, "Management of Contradictions," 38.

[93] Franklin Roosevelt kept his advisors in fits of frustration with his naïve insistence that he and "Uncle Joe" Stalin could settle their differences "in the way of gentlemen." It is a rare president who, after the domestic political achievement of

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traditionally shows for equals reinforced Carter's hope this would be the case.[94] After his initial high-level experiences with them in 1979, Carter recorded:

> I met President Leonid Brezhnev for the first time at the palace of Austrian President Rudolf Kirchschlaeger . . . [After the formal speeches concluded] Brezhnev and I then moved off by ourselves to chat for a few minutes as real people...He and I agreed that success was necessary for ourselves and for the rest of the world, and he startled me by placing his hand on my shoulder and saying, "If we do not succeed, God will not forgive us."[95]

By the end of 1979 this had changed dramatically. Brezhnev's adroit politicking could not hide the cold facts of Soviet behavior. Carter encountered tremendous frustration over his inability to 'get through' to Soviet leaders. Ted Szulc commented, "There are already indications that the Carter administration is discovering that realities are catching up with it after its shakedown cruise."[96]

Samuel Wells noted, "Concern about Soviet military power . . . is probably as great now as at any time since the outbreak of the Korean War . . ."[97] Seyom Brown argued the defense establishment needed quick and substantial expansions to prevent the

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winning the White House, does not fall victim to overabundant faith in his powers of personal persuasion.

[94] Brezhnev was unusual among Soviet leaders in this trait. Stalin told Mao insultingly that he was a turnip – red on the outside, but white on the inside. See Li Zhisui, *The Private Life of Chairman Mao: The Memoirs of Mao's Personal Physician, Dr. Li Zhisui*, trans. Tai Hung-chao (New York: Random House, 1994), 116. Khrushchev bullied Kennedy so badly at their first summit that he retired to his villa shaking. He predicted to Richard Nixon, "You children will live in communism," to which the ever-feisty Nixon replied, "Your children will live in freedom."

[95] Carter, *Keeping Faith*, 243-45.

[96] Szulc, "Springtime for Carter," 179.

[97] Samuel F. Wells, Jr., "Sounding the Tocsin: NSC 68 and the Soviet Threat," *International Security* 4, no. 2 (Fall 1979), 149.

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balance of power from tilting even further away from the United States.[98] Szulc described the Carter administration as having "abandoned much of its "zero-budget" approach to foreign policy, modifying rather than radically changing past policies."[99] The Carter administration moved toward more fully accepting the dangers inherent in this temporary bilateral weakness and the necessity of compromising principles in favor of interest, as well as the possibility that principles could be separate from interest. Correspondingly, the United States began moving away from its heavy emphasis on the role of morality in the Cold War confrontation and became more inclined to focus on bilateral gains.

There is much debate over exactly when the Carter administration decided it had no choice but to escalate its confrontational tactics vis-à-vis Soviet adventurism. Brzezinski's plans for energetic confrontation of the Soviet Union had always had the president's ear, but precisely when they won over his heart (if ever) remains unclear. Throughout the administration he pressed the president to adopt tougher stances against the Soviets, in concordance with Carter's idealist principles when possible, but against them if necessary.

In a memorandum entitled, "Acquiescence vs. Assertiveness," Brzezinski stated his concerns to Carter directly: "I think that the increasingly pervasive perception here

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[98] "To the geopoliticians, at least, the basic implications for U.S. policy are unavoidable: new defense programs to keep the Soviets from achieving military dominance at any level and an active diplomacy to counter Kremlin attempts to project Soviet power and presence beyond the Warsaw Pact area." Seyom Brown, "An End to Grand Strategy," 28.

[99] Szulc, "Springtime for Carter," 182.

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and abroad is that in U.S.-Soviet relations, the Soviets are increasingly assertive and the U.S. more acquiescent."[100] Carter agreed with his argument, penciled "Good" in the margin of the memorandum, and his administration took another step away from its commitment to confronting the Soviets through moral persuasion.[101]

This walk was not as unintentional as many may have believed. Détente was a failing strategy that needed more than resuscitation – it needed replacement. Some sort of opportunity to demonstrate to the Soviets in a military sense and the rest of the world in a moral sense that the United States would not continue to tolerate Soviet misbehavior. Dmitri Simes noted in 1980, "In the United States, an influential school of thought clearly felt that if the Soviet "fraternal" aggression against Afghanistan had not happened, it would have had to been invented to provide the last straw to break détente's back."[102]

To this end in December 1979 Secretary of Defense Harold Brown lobbied Congress on behalf of the administration's desire for a defense buildup. The change in strategy, Secretary Brown noted, reflected an appreciation that "we are in for a long pull in adversary relationships," and not necessarily with the Soviet Union alone. "We must

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[100] Quoted in Gaddis Smith, *Morality, Reason, and Power*, 215.

[101] If a journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step, Carter's incremental abandonment of his naïve original expectation that he could make the Soviets see the value of a reputation for morality as a source of power is the classic grand strategy example. Carter's failing has been shared by nearly every world leader, who almost without exception attain their positions of power at a time when they are overawed by their seemingly infallible ability to forge common understandings. World leaders, however, rarely fall under their spell and do not, as a rule, throw away their own hard-earned worldviews to embrace those of the newcomers.

[102] Dmitri K. Simes, "The Death of Détente?" *International Security* 5, no. 1 (Summer 1980), 3.

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decide now," he warned, "whether we intend to remain the strongest nation in the world. Or we must accept now that we will let ourselves slip into inferiority, into a position of weakness in a harsh world where principles unsupported power are victimized, and that we will become a nation with more of a past than a future."[103]

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan became a touchstone for the new hardness in American confrontation of the Soviet Union. Americans began viewing their adversaries through more suspicious and watchful eyes. When Carter returned from Camp David to deal with the crisis, Brzezinski told him it matters little what "subjective motives" were behind Brezhnev's decision. What counted were the "objective consequences" of Soviet military power "so much closer to the Persian Gulf." Carter agreed.[104]

Carter, in an interview with Frank Reynolds of ABC, called Brezhnev a liar for his response to Carter's hot line message of December 27, castigating the Soviets for their invasion of a neighbor's territory. "He claimed that he had been invited by the Afghan government to come in and protect Afghanistan from some outside third nation threat. This was obviously false. Because the person that he claimed invited him in, President Amin, was murdered or assassinated after the Soviets pulled their coup." Carter continued ominously, "My opinion of the Russians has changed more drastically in the last week that even the previous two and one half years before that. It is only now

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[103] "Testimony before Senate Armed Services Committee, December 13, 1979," *The New York Times*, 14 December 1979, A1, 6. Tucker, "America in Decline," 468.

[104] Gaddis Smith, *Morality, Reason, and Power*, 222-23.

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dawning upon the world the magnitude of the action that the Soviets undertook in invading Afghanistan."[105]

By the end of 1979 the United States and its president had come to view the superpower rivalry once more as the most important U.S. security consideration. American strategists conceded the last year of the 1970s confirmed and expanded the major trends of decades.[106] The Carter administration became increasingly anticommunist and even more strongly in favor of rebuilding all sinews of American power, including military and economic, for their confrontation of Soviet initiatives. The day before Secretary Brown's testimony, Carter proposed his five-year expansion of American defense forces. Carter justified this buildup in terms of grand strategy and warned potential critics of his plan that "not every instance of the firm application of power is a potential Vietnam."[107] Such a judgment would not have been made by the Carter administration in 1977 or, for that matter, in 1978. Carter's statement was, in fact, almost a paraphrase of a statement Henry Kissinger had made in 1976, shortly before leaving office.

There was, in fact, no single event that changed American perspectives; developments in Africa, the Middle East, Western Europe, and Central Asia merely brought to the fore what had already been concluded about the nature of the U.S.-Soviet rivalry. Robert Legvold noted, "The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan comes not as an

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[105] Quoted in Gaddis Smith, *Morality, Reason, and Power*, 223-24.

[106] Opening sentence of Tucker, "America in Decline," 449.

[107] "Address to Business Council Executives, Washington, DC, December 12, 1979," *The New York Times*, 13 December 1979, A1, 24.

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isolated whirlwind, battering an otherwise sturdy relationship, but as a watershed in a long-deteriorating, deeply distressed relationship. In truth, relations have been in decline since before the arrival of the Carter administration."[108]

Scholarly Insights: Differentiated Strategic Views

The international position of the United States in late 1979 presents an interesting study in seeming contradictions and potential power. The Carter administration had done much in its first two and a half years to restore American moral authority. The willingness of Carter to pay the political costs of restructuring the armed forces meant the United States was on a path to a resurgence of military power, based on streamlined forces and high technology. Through its efforts, especially those of Secretary Brown, to root out outdate and entrenched programs, the United States was on a path to refocusing its military might to make it more agile, responsive, and useful. Increasing spending overall sought to bridge the gap between Soviet and American conventional forces, while technological advancement offered opportunities to surpass its primary adversary by one level of advancement and all other potential belligerents by at least two.

Buoyed by recent successes in restoring American moral power and, to a lesser extent, military power, the view predominant among American strategists in 1979 was that the decline in American multilateral power had begun to slow (Ill. 10). Continuation

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[108] Robert Legvold, "Containment without Confrontation," *Foreign Policy*, no. 40 (Fall 1980), 74-5.

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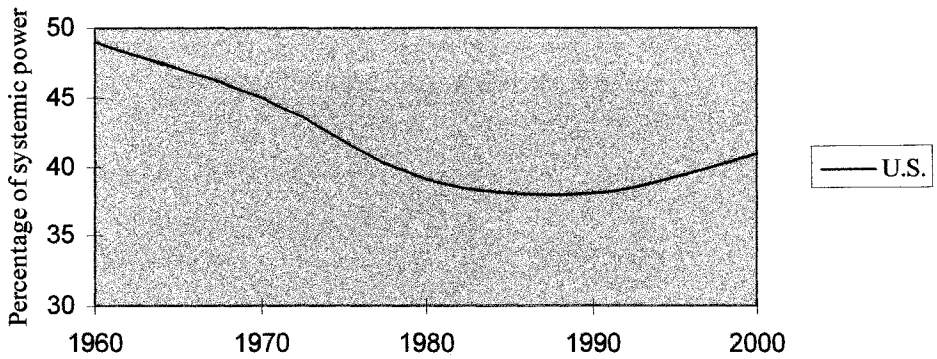
of these strategies would lead to a more favorable future for American security in the wider world.

Ill. 10. Carter Administration's View of American International Power in 1979



However, consequent with this optimism was a sense that this strategy was working for the broader purposes of American grand strategy, but was insufficient for the immediate requirements of the Cold War. Much of this was the result of disillusionment regarding the behavior and morality of Soviet leaders. Failing to translate the "superior" morality of his American foreign policy into greater leverage over Soviet behavior, Carter came to accept the more blunt aspects of Brzezinski's strategic vision as it applied to the Soviet Union. The United States was not making much headway in the Cold War, although the Carter administration believed it was on the right course (Ill. 11).

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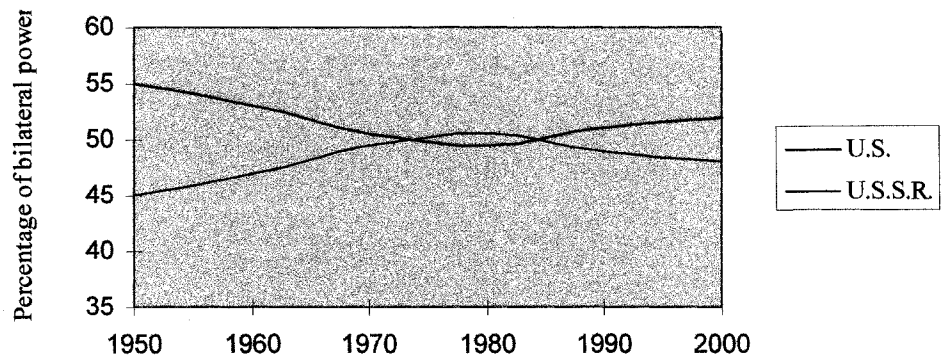
Ill. 11. Carter Administration's Perception of Relative Power Trends ca. 1979



Carter, however, received very little credit from American voters for his change of perspective. The electorate could not have been expected to know the full extent of the efforts being made – especially those undertaken covertly. Americans desired a more energetic version of Cold War confrontation that was, in fact, already beginning to take shape in 1980. However, they were not convinced the Carter administration was capable of confronting the Soviets. Discontent with Carter grew apace with Carter's commitment to the energetic confrontation of soviet power the American electorate wanted to see.

At the same time the United States in general and the Carter administration in particular became increasingly preoccupied with dealing with the Soviets. Despite early rhetoric about shifting attention from an east-west to a north-south perspective, Carter found that countering Soviet aggressiveness required more and more of his time. The strategic implication of this focus on bilateral aspects of power is a stronger correlation between bilateral gains and losses and overall gains and losses.

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Joel Krieger noted, "Imperial decline means, above all, reduced options and riskier consequences. At different points in the arc of decline the range of choices available to post-hegemonic powers varies considerably, and the political legerdemain of ruling elites reflects the very different options they have left to pursue."[109] This increases somewhat the United States' propensity to undertake actions that promise Cold War gains, such as covert operations and embrace of unsavory characters whose efforts against the Soviet Union translate to net power losses for Moscow.

The systemic pressures described by structural realism continued to influence grand strategy in the manner outline for the early years of Carter's governance, but his own view of bilateral relations, as well as that of the American people, gradually and continuously deemphasized the power of moral authority in the Cold War. U.S. views, when applied to the Soviet Union, began to parallel more closely the original assumptions of structural realism regarding the sources of power and began have more of an effect on overall power calculation. From 1979 forward American grand strategy could have been expected to parallel more closely more traditional structural realist assumptions.

The Carter administration moved toward more fully accepting the structural realist view and, despite a continued construction of power in the multilateral sense that included a heavy emphasis on the moral component. It embraced, hesitantly at first, the necessity of compromising principles in favor of interest for the purposes of the Cold War. These changes presaged adjustments in the newly applied American grand strategy.

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[109] Joel Krieger, *Reagan, Thatcher, and the Politics of Decline* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1986), 109.

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Adjusting Grand Strategy: Confronting Soviet Aggression

Carter lost faith that the leaders of the Soviet Union could accept peaceful and honorable coexistence with the United States at the same time that he lost faith that such a coexistence was morally acceptable. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan dispelled any notion still held by Carter that Brezhnev and his colleagues would not continue the aggressive policies predicted by the realists in his administration. He realized the moral consistency of his administration meant little to the Politburo, other than making his actions somewhat incomprehensible, irresponsible, and therefore, in light of their own realist viewpoint, less "rational."

The change in the Carter administration reflected hardening convictions among the American people. These winds of change blowing into Washington had been recognized in other capitols around the world. In a remarkable conversation between Fidel Castro and Erich Honecker, the two leaders discussed recent developments in the American view of the superpower conflict. Honecker recognized that the United States "apparently is trying to increase tensions at the international level... they have been preparing for a blow against the policy of detente, in order to go over to a policy of confrontation."[110]

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[110] *Transcript of Conversation between Cuban Premier Fidel Castro and East German leader Erich Honecker, Havana, 25 May 1980, Wednesday, 28 May 1980*, Cold War International History Project, trans. Carter-Brezhnev Project, available at http://wwics.si.edu/index.cfm?topic_id=1409&fuseaction=library.document&id=739, accessed 14 November 2004.

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Honecker noted as evidence of this change the unmistakable ascendance of the hard-line viewpoint, its successful pushes for increased NATO spending at the 1978 NATO Council Meeting in Washington, and the production of new American intermediate nuclear forces for deployment in Europe. Fidel Castro responded presciently, "If they have some clash with the Soviet Union in a part of the globe where the balance of power is unfavorable for the USA, then they should respond in a place where the balance of power is favorable for the USA." He concluded that the issue of changing the current course and of finding the way back to detente, if possible, is of tremendous importance.

In 1978 Dobrynin submitted a political letter to Gromyko informing the Politburo of upcoming changes in the Carter administration's strategic viewpoint. Entitled "Soviet American Relations in the Contemporary Era," the letter projected an incipient movement by the Carter administration away from the spirit of détente.

> In the middle of April of this year, Carter, as is well known, conducted in his country residence, Camp David, a meeting of the members of his cabinet and closest advisors, at which was teken [sic] a decision to carry out a regular reevaluation of Soviet-American relations. The initiative for this affair came from Brzezinski and several Presidential advisors on domestic affairs, who convinced Carter that he could succeed in stopping the process of worsening of his position in the country if he would openly initiate a harsher course vis a vis [sic] the Soviet Union.[111]

Dobrynin believed Brzezinski had forged a shrewd alliance of hawkish foreign policy advisors within the Carter administration who agreed the United States should adopt a tougher stance toward the Soviets and domestic political advisors who believed

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[111] See "Soviet American Relations in the Contemporary Era."

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such a stance would be politically beneficial for the 1980 reelection campaign. He foresaw this coalition would be successful in pushing on Carter its hard-line views. American Cold War strategy would thus shift toward greater hostility in the bilateral relationship and increased American confrontation of the Soviet Union in its conduct of foreign relations.

The first area in which this shift would become noticeable, the letter argued, would be Africa. In his analysis Dobrynin came very close to the truth and guessed correctly the new direction of American strategy. He placed too much emphasis, however, on the political process as a motivator for grand strategy, an unsurprising error given the degree to which personal political advantage shaped the foreign policy stances of his own superiors.[112] Dobrynin used his own beliefs about the ways in which politics determine foreign policy, rather than those of the Carter administration. He misunderstood the evolving political situation when he provided the following analysis:

> Flirting with the conservative moods in the country (the strength of which he at times clearly overestimates), Carter frequently resorts to anti-Soviet rhetoric in order to, as they say, win cheap applause. The danger is found in the fact that such rhetoric is picked up and amplified by the means of mass communication, in Congress, and so forth. Ultimately, as often happens in the USA, the rhetoric is transformed, influences policy, and sometimes itself becomes policy. [113]

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[112] The United States has a far from perfect record of its leaders keeping considerations of personal political expediency separate from issues of national grand strategy. It is, however, much more successful at doing so than most great powers in history. The Soviet decision to invade Afghanistan, for example, contained a great deal of political maneuvering and very little belief that it was, strategically, the best use of resources for a gain in Soviet power.

[113] "Soviet-American Relations."

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Dobrynin failed to account for the particular worldviews of the Carter administration and emphasis on keeping domestic political concerns separate from the conduct of foreign relations that are important traditions for both American administrations in general and the Carter administration in particular. He thereby mistook the coming reorientation as political maneuvering, rather than honest recalculation of the international situation, and thereby underestimated the scope of both the change in Carter's own viewpoint and the degree to which this would affect policy.

Despite his flawed reasoning, Dobyrnin's instincts about the direction rhetoric from the Carter administration would soon take reflected a very astute sense of changes within the administration's view of bilateral relations. Throughout his term in office Carter continuously retreated from his reliance on the power of foreign policy morality in the struggle against communism, largely because he came to understand that the Soviets themselves did not seem to care much for it and would not be deterred by it.

Reassured by its successes in restoring international moral credibility, the United States chose to stay the course it had embraced in the mid-1970s concerning the sources and purposes of American power. At the same time it recognized the need to address the Soviet threat on more immediate and traditional grounds. At this point a salient question posed by structural logic again is, "Why did the United States not go to war with the Soviet Union in 1979?" Once again, the probability of confrontation was high, but the availability of alternatives was an ameliorating factor. American grand strategy adjusted to allow for a more robust confrontation of Soviet power but kept its insistence on the maintenance of American exceptionalism as essential to its long-term security.

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The United States, therefore, could be expected to seek means of crippling Soviet power outside the major war option. There are many ways to bring an enemy to its knees and the best of them usually do not involve military force alone. Opponents surrender after they have been weakened; it matters not how they weaken so much as that they do to the point that continuing the struggle appears to them an unwanted policy, whether because of futility or lack of desire. Once the United States decided that coexistence with its adversaries was not acceptable, weakening the Soviet empire became a strategic imperative.

The United States lost its aversion to tough stances when it came to Cold War strategy. It never relinquished, however, its belief that a reputation for morality would be of great importance in the in the multilateral system of world politics. Brzezinski successfully pushed the classical and structural realist viewpoint that one should disregard information about intentions and focus on relative power distribution. However, such a focus should not make the mistake of assuming that each player views power through the same lens. This meant the differentiated approaches to international power as a whole and bilateral power would entail an adjustment to American grand strategy. Toleration of the Soviet empire and its aggressions was not consistent with American exceptionalism or American realism. The United States needed to take a more confrontational stance with its adversary if it wished to remain moral.

One of these areas that would see the most dramatic adjustment would be the use of covert action to achieve the ends of war. Stansfield Turner recalled sagely,

> These were the very kinds of circumstances that have driven most recent Presidents to turn to covert action – circumstances in which resort to military force is either not warranted or feasible and in which either diplomatic or economic sanctions seem little more than a slap on the wrist

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> . . . There is an old cliché in intelligence that says the place for covert action is as an alternative between diplomacy and war.[114]

Unfortunately for American strategists, there would be a significant lag between strategic determination and policy implementation. This was especially endemic in the area of covert operations. Extensive and intrusive Congressional investigations had decimated the American intelligence community.[115] Turner's memoirs described his frustration with the state of affairs during his tenure.

> The professionals were so shook by the Church committee that they weren't bringing much forward. They were protecting the hides and weren't proposing risky things in intelligence collection, let alone covert action. It wasn't till [the Soviet invasion of] Afghanistan that they began to get in the Cold War mold.[116]

Turner's views were typical of many who worked in the intelligence community. In the late 1970s, noted Turner's assistant William Gates, "The CIA was hunkered down in a defensive crouch."[117]

As American strategists recovered their assertiveness, Soviet strategists, acting in accordance with their beliefs about the growth of Soviet power perceived situation, became increasingly bold. Leonid Brezhnev proclaimed in 1979, "The correlation of forces is shifting against capitalists." Recent efforts in the international arena had

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[114] Stansfield Turner, *Secrecy and Diplomacy*, 87.

[115] "We didn't have any assets in the places we most needed them," recalled one CIA official to reporter Peter Schweizer. "We couldn't have run a covert operation against the corner 7-Eleven, much less behind the Iron Curtain." Quoted in Peter Schweizer, *Victory: The Reagan Administration's Secret Strategy that Hastened the Collapse of the Soviet Union* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1994), 11.

[116] Quoted in Andrew, *For the President's Eyes Only*, 431.

[117] Joseph E. Persico, *Casey: The Lives and Secrets of William J. Casey – From the OSS to the CIA* (New York: Viking, 1990), 213.

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brought the Soviets a foothold in North Africa, a stronghold in Southeast Asia, and potential allies in Central America. Afghanistan was moving toward civil war, offering a further opportunity to expand Soviet influence, this time in a region that had been coveted by Russian tsars and Soviet premiers alike.

Perhaps stronger substantiation of the Soviet's belief was its misinterpretation of the overriding combination of alarm and defeatism besieging the Soviets primary adversary. Literature on Western political, economic, and moral corruption and decline abounded. After years of seemingly decisive superiority, the enemies of the Soviet Union began to agree that they were losing, a powerful sign that Marxism/Leninism was indeed the inevitably rising force of international politics. Gromyko explained the new American Cold War strategy to a Communist Party of the Soviet Union Plenum in June 1980: "Now the American administration has once again begun to veer wildly. The underlying cause of the current break in Soviet-American relations is Washington's attempt to do whatever it takes to achieve military superiority over us.[118]

Case Study: Afghanistan

The United States demonstrated its strengthened commitment to confronting Soviet aggression with an assortment of initiatives. Among these were a boycott of the 1980 Olympic games in Moscow, a grain embargo, a tightening of export controls, and

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[118] *CPSU CC Plenum, 23 June 1980*, Cold War International History Project, available at http://wwics.si.edu/index.cfm?topic_id=1409&fuseaction=library.document&id=115, accessed 14 November 2004.

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robust international condemnation. Some of these measures, such as the grain embargo, were ephemeral and ineffective. Others, however, created severe difficulties for the Soviet empire. Chief among these early programs was the United States' covert aid program to Afghan insurgents prior to and throughout the Soviet occupation.

Western fears of Russian ambitions to gain direct access to the oil-rich Persian Gulf predated the Soviet Union. Afghanistan had a long history of fighting for independence from the Mongols and Safavids, but was considered no match for the emerging superpower on its border.[119] The Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan three times in six years: it precipitated minor skirmishes in 1925 and 1930 and launched a large-scale attempt to overthrow a new Afghan government in 1929.[120] As the Second World War drew to a close, NATO allies began putting together a defensive band of pro-Western and anti-Soviet states to contain part of the Soviet Union's southern frontier. Known as the Baghdad Pact, this coalition included Iraq, Iran, Pakistan, and Turkey, as well as British territories. The participation of Afghanistan would have completed the West's defensive arc, so the United States began enticing Afghani leaders with development projects.[121] American aid by 1979 totaled $378 million in gifts and $154 million in loans.[122]

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[119] Maj. Gen. Oleg Sarin and Col. Lev Dvoretsky, *The Afghan Syndrome: The Soviet Union's Vietnam* (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1993), 2-3.

[120] Thomas T. Hammond, *Red Flag over Afghanistan: The Communist Coup, the Soviet Invasion, and the Consequences* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1984), 9.

[121] The United States built over 2,500 miles of roads between major cities, the Darla Dam (near Kandahar), and large airfields at Bagram and Kandahar. Edgar

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While King Zahir appreciated the assistance, he remained stubbornly neutral. Over his objections, the United States was strengthening containment of the Soviet southern flank by giving military aid to Pakistan. The American decision to arm its neighbor was seen as unacceptably threatening, so in 1954 Afghan Prime Minister Mohammad Daoud Khan made concrete his nation's neutrality by also requesting economic assistance from the Soviet Union. Between 1954 and 1979 Afghanistan received $1.3 billion worth of Soviet aid, almost all of it in the form of loans to be repaid in natural gas from fields Soviet engineers had developed in northwestern Afghanistan.

In 1954 Daoud also began conversations with Moscow about military assistance. Bulganin and Khrushchev traveled to Kabul in 1955 to solidify the relationship, and a Soviet military mission arrived there in 1957. Soon afterward Soviet T-34 tanks, guns, military vehicles, field radios, and combat aircraft began arriving in Afghanistan.[123] Soviet expertise and assistance reoriented their force structure so drastically that Russian became the technical language of the Afghan military. By 1979 Soviet military aid had reached a total of $1.3 billion and approximately 3,700 Afghan military personnel had received training inside the USSR.[124]

O'Ballance, *Afghan Wars: Battles in a Hostile Land, 1839 to the Present* (London: Brassey's, 2002), 76-7.

[122] Henry S. Bradsher, *Afghan Communism and Soviet Intervention* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), esp. Ch. 1, "The Problems of Modernization."

[123] O'Ballance, *Afghan Wars*, 77.

[124] Bradsher, *Afghan Communism*, esp. 2. See also Joseph J. Collins, *The Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan: A Study in the Use of Force in Soviet Foreign Policy* (Lexington, MA: Lexington Books, 1986).

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The Afghan government itself had, by 1979, become a roiling hotbed of intrigue and hostility.[125] In 1973 former Prime Minister Muhammad Daoud led a successful coup against Afghanistan's longstanding monarchy, headed by his first cousin and brother-in-law, King Mohammad Zahir Shah. Daoud instituted a Koran-guided republic and continued his predecessor's Cold War neutrality by requesting aid packages from the Soviet Union, Western nations, Iran, Kuwait, and others.

In April 1978 a group of Marxist army officers allied with Afghanistan's communist parties overthrew Daoud and installed Nur Muhammad Taraki as Afghani President. Taraki was a strident believer in socialist ideology whose political fortune was a long-term Soviet project.[126] Nonetheless, he initially proclaimed that his Marxist orientation, Soviet-style political organization, and years of Soviet backing did not necessarily preclude Afghani neutrality. Taraki formed a coalition government of Afghanistan's communist parties to stabilize his rule. He implemented widespread social and economic reforms and requested American aid.[127]

Meanwhile, the Politburo began to feel more confident of the USSR's position in Afghanistan. The Soviet ambassador reported the Afghan leadership "is not showing

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[125] J. N. Dixit, *An Afghan Diary: Zahir Shah to Taliban* (New Delhi: Konark Publishers, 2000), 11-2.

[126] Taraki's plebian background, leftist publications, and penchant for intellectual discussion in teahouses marked him as an early Marxist revolutionary figure. He founded the first of Afghanistan's leftist study groups in 1956. He became first Secretary General of Afghanistan's first communist political party, the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA). Bradsher, *Afghan Communism*, 3-4; O'Ballance, *Afghan Wars*, 80.

[127] Secretary Vance sent Undersecretary of State David Newsom to discover Taraki's true intentions. Newsom had little praise for the new government but recommended token aid as a means of retaining some small leverage.

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haste" in concluding economic agreements with the West, "proceeding from an intention to reorient its foreign economic relations primarily towards the USSR and the socialist camp." The new government requested Soviet advisors to help its transition to socialism and put together its first five-year plan. The Soviet ambassador in Kabul concluded, "The overall situation in the country is stabilizing more and more."

The ambassador's description of the domestic situation was inaccurate. Taraki's social reforms, which included massive land redistribution, enforcement of women's rights and educational opportunities, and thinly veiled reliance on direction from Moscow angered tribal groups throughout Afghanistan. Islamic discontent grew into sporadic violence that swelled beyond the new government's ability to repress. In January 1979 the Politburo instructed the Soviet ambassador in Kabul to "Say that the Government of the USSR, based on the friendly relations between our countries, is rendering assistance, with very favorable conditions, aimed at reinforcing the Afghan military."[128]

Exactly when the United States began its covert assistance to the insurgents remains a matter of historical dispute. Robert Gates asserts Carter signed the first Presidential finding authorizing covert aid in July 1979. [129] Transcripts of Politburo discussions show its belief that the program was well underway by March. Foreign

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[128] "The Soviet Union and Afghanistan, 1978-1989," in *CPSU CC Politburo Decision on Afghanistan, 7 January 1979*, Cold War International History Project, trans. Daniel Rozas, available at http://wwics.si.edu/index.cfm?topic_id=1409&fuseaction=library.document&id=281, accessed 14 November 2004.

[129] Robert M. Gates, *From the Shadows: The Ultimate Insider's Story of Five Presidents and How They Won the Cold War* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996), 143-46.

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Minister Gromyko complained of "Bands of saboteurs and terrorists, having infiltrated from the territory of Pakistan, trained and armed not only with the participation of Pakistani forces but also of China, the United States of America and Iran." These rebels had already established an insurgency that had taken control of the city of Herat and other areas around the country.

Regardless of precisely when the operation began, it was effective in boosting the effectiveness of the Afghan rebels. Taraki appealed to the Soviet Union for help in the form of military equipment, ammunition, and rations. He suggested directly that Soviet ground and air support of Afghan government forces might be required and implied that they were, in fact, expected. Soviet leaders concluded that Taraki's requests still did not encompass the full extent of the insurgency; they should proceed with immediate shipments of arms. Gromyko stated the gravity of the situation clearly: "Under no circumstances may we lose Afghanistan." KGB head Yuri Andropov repeated these exact words. The prospect of direct Soviet intervention to prevent the fall of Afghanistan to the rebels was presented to the Politburo at this time, but Soviet leaders demurred in favor of continued indirect support of the Afghan army.[130]

Soon thereafter Kosygin reported to the Politburo an allegation by Taraki that Iran and Pakistan were supplying arms to the insurgents. Furthermore, the Afghan Muslims returning from exile in Iran to join the insurgency were allegedly soldiers of the Iranian

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[130] Ponomarev: "Above all, it will be necessary to accomplish everything that is necessary with the forces of the Afghan army, and only later, if and when the necessity truly arises, to deploy our own forces."

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army dressed in Afghan clothing. Taraki, whose armed forces were not yet trained on the latest equipment and tactics, submitted another request for tanks and armored cars for his infantry. When asked by Kosygin who would operate them, the Afghan leader responded by asking the Soviet leadership to send him Tajik crews dressed as Afghans. Taraki left the impression among the Soviet leadership that he could muster very few military forces in his own country.

Kosygin concluded that the political situation in Afghanistan was becoming unstable and the military situation untenable. He reported that "manifestos are circulating, and crowds of people are massing. Large numbers of persons are flowing into Afghanistan from Pakistan and Iran, equipped with Iranian and Chinese armaments." The nation of Afghanistan was neither ready for nor desirous of the socialist reforms being imposed on it.[131] Brezhnev agreed with Kosygin's assessment, and the Soviet Union tabled the issue of armed intervention.

At this early stage Moscow already perceived the United States to be playing a substantial role in fostering the Afghan insurgency. Gromyko argued, "We may assume with full justification that all these events, not only in Afghanistan but in the neighboring

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[131] Andropov concluded, "It's completely clear to us that Afghanistan is not ready at this time to resolve all of the issues it faces through socialism. The economy is backward, the Islamic religion predominates, and nearly all of the rural population is illiterate. We know Lenin's teaching about a revolutionary situation. Whatever situation we are talking about in Afghanistan, it is not that type of situation. Therefore, I believe that we can suppress a revolution in Afghanistan only with the aid of our bayonets, and that is for us entirely inadmissible. We cannot take such a risk." Gromyko agreed: "Comrade Andropov correctly noted that indeed the situation in Afghanistan is not ripe for a revolution. And all that we have done in recent years with such effort in terms of detente, arms reduction, and much more–all that would be thrown back."

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governments, including those in China, are being directed by the hand of the USA." However, the Soviet leadership did not yet believe the danger posed by the Afghan insurgency justified full-scale invasion.[132]

The Soviet leadership soon came to understand that Taraki had lost the support of nearly all of Afghanistan's population to the religious uprising. Taraki continued to submit requests for presence of Soviet troops, disguised as Afghans, this time to retake Herat and sustain his government. Brezhnev complained, "Their army is falling apart, and we are supposed to wage the war for them." The only thing the Politburo was willing to offer was release of 460 Afghan military personnel currently stationed in the Soviet Union.

In late May the Soviet Union decided to give the Taraki government a three-year military assistance package worth 53 million rubles. This took the form of 140 guns and mortars, 90 armored personnel carriers (of which 50 will represent an expedited delivery), 48,000 machine guns, 1000 grenade throwers, 680 aviation bombs, 100 incendiary tanks, and 160 single-use bomb cassettes. They also provided an expedited delivery in June and July of 50 thousand rubles of medicines and medical aid.[133]

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[132] Gromyko summarized the larger costs of such a course for his colleagues: "We would be largely throwing away everything we achieved with such difficulty, particularly detente, the SALT-II negotiations would fly by the wayside, there would be no signing of an agreement (and however you look at it that is for us the greatest political priority), there would be no meeting of Leonid Ilych with Carter, and it is very doubtful that Giscard d'Estang would come to visit us, and our relations with the Western countries, particularly the FRG [Federal Republic of Germany], would be spoiled."

[133] "On the Situation in Afghanistan," in *CPSU CC Politburo Decision, 15 September 1979, with Report by Gromyko, Ustinov, and Tsvigun*, Cold War International

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In June the Soviet Union followed these efforts by sending to Afghanistan a Soviet parachute battalion disguised as an aviation-technical maintenance team. This force had the task of protecting the Soviet air squadrons at Bagram airfield. They also began preparations to dispatch a special detachment of the KGB (120-150 men) in August. They were disguised as Embassy service personnel and given the task of defending of the Soviet embassy in Kabul· At the same time a special detachment of the GRU of the General Staff prepared to move to Bagram airfield to be used to protect important government installations, should the situation deteriorate further.[134]

Soviet maneuvers did not go unnoticed by the United States. Carter recalled, "Since May 1979, we had been observing closely the increased Soviet presence in Afghanistan, and admonishing the Soviets about their obvious moves toward intervention."[135] On March 28, 1979 the National Intelligence Office for the Soviet Union, Arnold Horelick, wrote to CIA director Turner to alert him of the increasingly dangerous developments in the region. Robert Gates recalled Horelick's warning:

> He sketched a plausible scenario in which the Taraki regime disintegrated to such an extent that: (1) only extensive and direct external military assistance could save it; (2) the Soviets would decide to provide such assistance; (3) this would evoke overt political and barely disguised covert military assistance to the insurgents from Pakistan, Iran, and perhaps even China; and (4) this would lead to a sharp deterioration of Soviet relations with Pakistan and possibly a call from Islamabad for the United States to deter or oppose military intervention in Pakistan and provide military assistance to states aiding the insurgency. After describing the possible

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History Project, trans. Mark Kramer, available at http://wwics.si.edu/index.cfm?topic_id=1409&fuseaction=library.document&id=39, accessed 14 November 2004.

[134] A.A. Liakhovskii, *The Tragedy and Valour of the Afghani* (Moscow: GPI "Iskon," 1995), 76. Liakhovskii notes that this the recommendations made in this document were approved during the CPSU CC Politburo meeting of 28 June 1979.

[135] Carter, *Keeping Faith*, 471.

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> scenario, Horelick concluded that "the Soviets may well be prepared to intervene on behalf of the ruling group."[136]

Soviet involvement in Afghanistan grew apace with Politburo accusations that the United States and China were stirring up the rebellion. This accusation was not without justification; the CIA had been fomenting discontent with the expectation of that it would bring an aggressive Soviet response. Brzezinski later admitted in an interview, "It was July 3, 1979 that President Carter signed the first directive for secret aid to the opponents of the pro-Soviet regime in Kabul. And that very day, I wrote a note to the president in which I explained to him that in my opinion this aid was going to induce a Soviet military intervention." [137]

CIA analysts did not agree the situation would induce a Soviet invasion in support of the Afghan government. On August 20th the agency issued a classified paper that described Soviet involvement as reaching the point of being able to stage a successful coup, but concluded, "We see few signs that the Soviets are so wedded to leftist rule in Afghanistan that they will undertake an operation of this magnitude."[138] Another report to key policy makers on August 24th reiterated the position of the majority of analysts that "the deteriorating situation does not presage an escalation of Soviet military involvement in the form of a direct combat role."

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[136] Gates, *From the Shadows*, 131.

[137] "Interview of Zbigniew Brzezinski," *Le Nouvel Observateur* (France), 15-17 January 1998, 76, trans. Bill Blum, available at http://www.counterpunch.org/brzezinski.html, accessed 7 November 2004. The interview, which was not included in the U.S. distribution of the publication, is taken from the French edition.

[138] Gates, *From the Shadows*, 132.

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Throughout the autumn Carter continued to receive conflicting predictions about the course of events in Afghanistan. Brzezinski, Horelick, and Turner pointed to the increasing likelihood of Soviet invasion while CIA analysts continued to conclude this would not happen. The State department echoed CIA's rather relaxed view of regional circumstances. The National Security Council, the Department of Defense, and Vice President Mondale, who expected the situation to escalate toward armed intervention, challenged this view.

Brzezinski in particular urged that strong warnings be sent to the Soviet Union about their "creeping intervention." He stressed grave strategic possibilities, recalling traditional Russian expansion toward the Indian Ocean and Moscow's suggestion to Berlin, during the period of the Nazi-soviet non-aggression pact, that the Soviet Union be granted control of South Asia. Brzezinski also pushed American policy toward being "more sympathetic to those Afghans who were determined to preserve their country's independence"–a euphemism for increasing clandestine aid to insurgents. He recalled in his memoirs, "Mondale was especially helpful in this, giving a forceful pep talk, mercilessly squelching the rather timid opposition of David Newsom, who was representing the State department."[139]

Soviet understanding of American involvement wavered between suspicion and conviction. Gromyko recorded, "We are under the impression that the Americans are still wavering and cannot come to a definite conclusion. Apparently, they have not

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[139] Quoted in Gaddis Smith, *Morality, Reason, and Power*, 221.

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worked out any specific evaluations."[140] However, as Soviet involvement increased, so American commitment to tying the USSR into Afghanistan grew, and thus prospects for a Soviet invasion.

The situation in Afghanistan continued to destabilize. President Taraki's second-in-command, Hafizullah Amin, began amassing power quietly during the fall of 1979.[141] Amin, like Taraki, was an early intellectual figure in the development of Afghani Marxism.[142] In October 1979 he overthrew Taraki and orchestrated his murder. Amin shook off many of his communist trappings and publicly announced his intentions to place Afghanistan in a position of Cold War neutrality.[143]

The Politburo had long been wary of Amin's loyalties.[144] It kept an even closer eye on him after he seized control of Afghanistan.[145] Amin met with U.S. officials in

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[140] Excerpt from transcript, "Meeting of Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko and Afghan Foreign Minister Shah-Valih, New York, 27 September 1979," Cold War International History Project, trans. Daniel Rozas, available at http://wwics.si.edu/index.cfm?topic_id=1409&fuseaction=library.document&id=39, accessed 14 November 2004.

[141] " . . . Amin continued actively preparing to achieve his aims and Taraki, as before, was indecisive and was clearly unable to put an end to Amin's activities. As a result, all the levers of real power by now are essentially in Amin's hands. He controls the leadership of the armed forces, the state security organs, and the internal affairs organs." See "On the Situation in Afghanistan."

[142] Amin graduated from Kabul University and later earned a Master's degree from Columbia University in New York City. In 1979 he said that he had gained his political awareness while taking Summer courses at the University of Wisconsin in 1958, although he later changed his story to the more politically correct stance that his views were entirely the result of his realizations about "the reality of the ideology of the working class." Bradsher, *Afghan Communism*, 9.

[143] O'Ballance, *Afghan Wars*, 80.

[144] Dixit, *An Afghan Diary*, 17.

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Kabul soon after he came to power. The United States desperately sought an ally in the region to replace the loss of Iran and its strategically important location. The KGB suspected Amin of "doing a Sadat on us" – abandoning Soviet patronage for that of the United States.[146]

The strategic implications of an Afghanistan aligned with the United States were unacceptable to the Soviet Union. Dangerous scenarios abounded in Moscow. Installation of listening posts in northern Afghanistan would offer its American adversaries a windfall of electronic intelligence. More ominously, any future deployment of missiles in Afghanistan would have been at least as unacceptable, if not much more so, to Moscow as Soviet deployments in Cuba had been to Washington in 1962.[147]

"One thing was certain to the Soviets. Afghanistan was not to be allowed to abandon its socialist orientation."[148] Unwilling to accept the possibility of an American client state on its southern flank, the Soviet Union undertook several efforts to remove

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[145] Gromyko-Andropov-Ustinov-Ponomarev Report to CPSU CC, 29 October 1979, To the CPSU CC, "The situation in Afghanistan following the events of September 13-16 of this year, as the result of which Taraki was removed from power and then physically destroyed, remains extremely complicated." Liakhovskii, *Tragedy and Valour*, 102.

[146] "Recently there have been noted signs of the fact that the new leadership of Afghanistan intends to conduct a more "balanced policy" in relation to the Western powers. It is known, in particular, that representatives of the USA, on the basis of their contacts with the Afghans, are coming to a conclusion about the possibility of a change in the political line of Afghanistan in a direction which is pleasing to Washington." Liakhovskii, *Tragedy and Valour*, 102.

[147] Soviet leaders felt much the same about the deployment of Pershing II missiles to West Germany, which offered no more than a four-minute warning between detection and detonation in Moscow. The Soviets had significantly better prospects of precluding any possibility of this development in Afghanistan with political and military action than it had in the case of a nation that was both a European power and NATO member.

[148] Sarin and Dvoretsky, *The Afghan Syndrome*, 39.

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Amin from power. It initiated contacts with other members of his government and authorized two unsuccessful assassination attempts.[149] The Soviet leadership also began preparations for an invasion, if necessary, to remove Amin from power.

Geostrategic prospects for a successful Soviet invasion of Afghanistan appeared initially very optimistic. India was friendly to the Soviet Union A military coup in Pakistan in 1977 and a fundamentalist revolution in Iran in 1979 had removed the possibility of counter-invasion by two potential adversaries.[150] The Chinese military, despite its size, did not have much in the way of expeditionary forces and had disgraced itself in the Sino-Vietnamese War earlier that year. Finally, Brezhnev considered Carter a weak President who would be unlikely to authorize the use of substantial military force

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[149] Personal memorandum, Andropov to Brezhnev, early December 1979:
"1. After the coup and the murder of Taraki in September of this year, the situation in Afghanistan began to take an undesirable turn for us...At the same time, alarming information started to arrive about Amin's secret activities, forewarning of a possible political shift to the West. [These included:] Contacts with an American agent about issues which are kept secret from us. Promises to tribal leaders to shift away from USSR and to adopt a "policy of neutrality." Closed meetings in which attacks were made against Soviet policy and the activities of our specialists. The practical removal of our headquarters in Kabul, etc. . . .All this has created, on the one hand, the danger of losing the gains made by the April [1978] revolution." See "The Soviet Union and Afghanistan, 1978-1989: Personal memorandum, Andropov to Brezhnev, n.d. [early December 1979]," in *Cold War International History Project Bulletin no. 8: New Evidence on the Soviet Intervention in Afghanistan*, trans. by Daniel Rozas, available at http://wwics.si.edu/index.cfm?topic_id=1409&fuseaction=library.document&id=181, accessed 14 November 2004. One of the assassination attempts at the presidential palace wounded the chief of intelligence, Amin's nephew Assadulah. Anthony Arnold, *Afghanistan: The Soviet Invasion in Perspective,* Hoover International Studies no. 10 (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1981), 90-4.

[150] President Carter ceased U.S. military aid to Pakistan in 1979 after developing suspicions that it was trying to manufacture a nuclear bomb. Khomeini's fundamentalist revolution in Iran ejected the United States' staunchest supporter in the Muslim world.

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in an election year. In this he was mistaken, although not without justification.[151] An invasion is precisely what many in the Carter administration came to believe would be the likely outcome of its efforts in Afghanistan. Brzezinski, "We didn't push the Russians to intervene, but we knowingly increased the probability that they would."[152]

In late 1979 events demonstrated that Amin's position in Afghanistan was no more secure than Taraki's had been. His top political advisors exploited their contacts within the Soviet leadership and made preparations to unseat him from power.[153] Amin responded with intense domestic repression, including mass arrests of "suspect persons" and the deaths of at least 300 Afghanis. As the situation continued to deteriorate, Amin made increasing demands on the Soviet Union for military assistance.[154]

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[151] Robert Gates writes of an American intelligence community that had drawn much the same conclusion: "The Carter administration, from the top down – except for Brzezinski – arrived in Washington suspicious and distrustful of CIA." The idea that Carter would choose covert action, to most observers, seemed to be very improbable. Gates, *From the Shadows*, 136.

[152] "Interview of Zbigniew Brzezinski," 76.

[153] Andropov to Brezhnev in early December 1979: "Recently we were contacted by group of Afghan communists abroad. In the course of our contact with Babrak [Karmal] and [Asadullah] Sarwari, it became clear (and they informed us of this) that they have worked out a plan for opposing Amin and creating new party and state organs . . . In these conditions, Babrak and Sarwari, without changing their plans of opposition, have raised the question of possible assistance, in case of need, including military . . . We have two battalions stationed in Kabul and there is the capability of rendering such assistance. It appears that this is entirely sufficient for a successful operation. "The Soviet Union and Afghanistan, 1978-1989: Personal Memorandum."

[154] Extract from *CPSU CC Politburo Decision, 6 December 1979*, Cold War International History Project, available at http://www.wilsoncenter.org/index.cfm?topic_id=1409&fuseaction=library.document&id=39, accessed 21 February 2005. CC Secretary L. Brezhnev to the CPSU CC: "Amin recently has been raising the issue of the necessity of sending to Kabul of a motorized rifle battalion for defense of his residence . . . we propose that it is possible to drop it in

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During this time General Ivan Pavlosky, a Deputy Defense Minister, concluded from his three-month visit to Afghanistan that, regardless of who was in charge of the communist government, it could not survive much longer without substantial outside assistance.[155] The Afghan government had generated too strong a resistance among the population to regain control of country in any meaningful way. The Soviet Union responded by increasing the head count of its military mission in Afghanistan from 1,500 to more than 5,000 persons. During the night of December 7-8 a full Soviet airborne assault brigade appeared at the Bagram airfield, approximately 40 miles north of Kabul. On December 20th it moved out to secure the strategically-critical Salang Tunnel, remaining there to ensure the safe passage of Soviet ground troops.

Four days later a massive Soviet airlift brought two more Soviet airborne assault brigades to Bagram. It offered strong air cover, which proved unnecessary as the Soviet military mission succeeded in grounding the Afghan air force and confining the Afghan army to its barracks. On December 25th Soviet forces overwhelmed local forces and seized the main government centers in Afghanistan.[156] Soviet forces stormed Amin's temporary headquarters on December 27th. Information about the manner of Amin's death is sparse and ambiguous, but his reign ended in the Soviet assault.[157]

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on airplanes of military transport aviation during the first half of December of this year. Com. Ustinov, D.F. is in agreement. Liakhovskii, *Tragedy and Valour*, 107.

[155] Hafizullah Emadi, *State, Revolution, and Superpowers in Afghanistan* (New York: Praeger, 1990).

[156] See Sarin and Dvoretsky, *The Afghan Syndrome*, 73-6.

[157] Accounts of the battle range from almost no opposition to the Soviet Spetsnaz unit sent to capture Amin to full-scale resistance that included Amin personally accounting for many deaths before his own. Others claim a shoot-out between rival factions of Amin's military guard ended his life.

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The head of a rival faction within Amin's party, Babrak Karmal, returned from exile in Eastern Europe to be installed as the new Afghan leader by the Soviets. On the evening Karmal arrived – reportedly riding in a T-72 tank – Kabul Radio, broadcasting from Soviet soil, announced his immediate election as President by a newly reshuffled Revolutionary Council. Karmal was given the impossible task of solidifying his hold over Afghani communism and persuading the Afghani people to end their revolt and adopt a communist-style society.

The United States, along with the rest of the world, reacted with calculated anger and outrage. Publicly, Carter condemned the action and expressed his surprise, calling it "a shock to a world which yearned for peace."[158] Privately, many of the more hawkish members of the Carter administration rejoiced. They proposed increasing the operation to unprecedented levels. Opposition came, not surprisingly, from the mid-level staffers who wanted to conduct all aspects of U.S. foreign policy according to precepts of American exceptionalism.

The administration initially had a difficult time getting its Afghan supply operation up and running. Carter met stiff bureaucratic reluctance to instructions for implementing his more aggressive tactics. "The funny thing here," Stansfield Turner recalled, "is this was Carter and Turner pushing the CIA":

> We couldn't get them interested in this. I was mad. I wanted to show we could react. They [the Soviet-made arms supplies] were still in Texas or someplace, and I couldn't get these people to move them off, so I set a deadline myself. They didn't really appreciate that Turner and Carter

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[158] Carter, *Keeping Faith*, 471.

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> would back this thing. They figured we'd get them [the Mujahadeen] started and then leave them hanging down there. Personally, I had to beat people over the head to get the program moving.[159]

Despite domestic opposition, the United States came to understand that the moral consistency of the Carter administration seemed to have little effect on the Politburo. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan dispelled the last remaining vestiges of his faith that the leaders of the Soviet Union could accept peaceful and honorable coexistence with the United States. At the same time he concluded that peaceful coexistence with such a nation was not morally acceptable.

A special session of the United Nations General Assembly demanded unconditional withdrawal of Soviet troops in early January. A few weeks later the first-ever Extraordinary Ministerial Meeting of the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) seconded the U.N.'s demand. The European Community, while sharing American views that the invasion posed a threat to the region, feared derailment of the already dead détente. It refused to endorse punitive U.S. sanctions or Carter administration's decision to freeze arms talks.[160] Instead it offered a proposal, later quietly endorsed by Carter, for guaranteed neutrality in Afghanistan in return for a Soviet withdrawal. Gromyko rejected the plan as unrealistic during a July 1981 visit by its sponsor, British Secretary for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs Lord Peter Carrington, to Moscow.

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[159] From Christopher Andrew's interview with Admiral Stansfield Turner, March 18. 1994. Quoted in Andrew, *For the President's Eyes Only*, 448.

[160] Riaz M. Khan, *Untying the Afghan Knot: Negotiating Soviet Withdrawal* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1991), 7.

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In February 1980 the Politburo still protested, to no avail, that Soviet forces had entered Afghanistan to protect it from foreign influence.[161] "In fulfillment of our treaty commitments, we were obligated to defend the national sovereignty of Afghanistan against external aggression." [162] The Soviets warned, "Washington is openly accelerating the delivery of arms to the so-called insurgents. As illustrated by the visit of the minister of foreign affairs for the PRC, Huang Hua, Beijing does not lag behind Washington."

The Soviets also accused Washington and Beijing of attempting to enlist several Arab states in their efforts to stir up trouble in Afghanistan. This was, in fact, what they were trying to do. The United States made reconciliatory overtures to Pakistani President Zia, offering him $400 million in military aid a few weeks after the Soviet invasion. Zia contemptuously rejected this package as "just peanuts" and informed the Carter administration that his friendship – and the dangers inherent in Pakistani opposition to the Soviet Union – would require $2.6 billion, including F-16 fighter aircraft.[163] Brzezinski

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[161] The Soviets maintained that their invasion had been in response to an invitation by President Karmal under the terms of the Afghan-Soviet Friendship Treaty of 1978. However, Karmal's return to Afghanistan and assumption of power did not take place until after the invasion, an inconvenience that severely undermined the Soviet position. Brezhnev also occasionally quoted Article 15 of the United Nations Charter as justification.

[162] In their meeting on January 4, 1980, Gromyko instructed Afghan Foreign Minister Shad Mohammad Dost: "It is necessary to emphasize that the deployment of a limited military contingent in Afghanistan has been undertaken by the Soviet Union as a response to repeated appeals by the DRA to the government of the USSR. These requests had been voiced earlier by Taraki during his visit to Moscow and by Amin. See "The Soviet Union and Afghanistan, 1978-1989."

[163] Khan, *Untying the Afghan Knot.*

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and Deputy Secretary of State Warren Christopher flew to Pakistan one month later to begin more specific discussions. The final, expanded U.S. aid package amounted to $3.2 billion of military sales credits and economic assistance over six years, including the sale of forty F-16s.

The strategic adjustment made by the United States during the last years of the Carter administration is unmistakably demonstrated by this U.S. policy toward Afghanistan. Brzezinski recalled nearly twenty years later, "That secret operation was an excellent idea. It had the effect of drawing the Russians into the Afghan trap and you want me to regret it? The day that the Soviets officially crossed the border, I wrote to President Carter: We now have the opportunity of giving to the USSR its Vietnam war."[164]

The Soviet Union's strategy began to falter almost immediately after the initial success of its invasion. Soviet Muslims, dispersed among the countryside to work with Afghan government forces, more often than not sided with the resistance fighters. They provided intelligence, arms, and food to the rebels. Soviet commanders, horrified, pulled these troops out of the country. They began to replace the Soviet Muslims stationed within the formations with Slavic conscripts.[165]

Very soon after the invasion, Moscow started to seek a political settlement as an alternative to war. In May 1980 Soviet leaders called for negotiations that would lesson the need for direct Soviet action by securing legitimacy for the Karmal regime. The

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[164] "Interview of Zbigniew Brzezinski," 76.
[165] O'Ballance, *Afghan Wars*, 97.

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United Nations began tentative efforts at mediation, although even vague agreements on agenda and procedure did not take shape until 1982.[166] Meanwhile Brezhnev continued to insist that cessation of all foreign interference in Afghanistan must be a prerequisite for Soviet withdrawal. This played perfectly into American plans, especially those of Brzezinski, who sought to keep the Soviets in Afghanistan as long as possible by means of covert assistance.

The Politburo concluded sagely on January 27, 1980, "Providing increasing assistance to the Afghan counter-revolution, the West and the PRC are counting on the fact that they will succeed in inspiring an extended conflict in Afghanistan, as the result of which, they believe, the Soviet Union will get tied up in that country."[167] It began outlining strategies for dealing with the escalating situation in Afghanistan, including plans leaving the country.[168]

Despite Soviet recognition of American efforts to entrench the Soviets in Afghanistan, on February 7th Ustinov projected Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan within the next 12-18 months.[169] On April 10th the Politburo concluded its decision to

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166 Khan, *Untying the Afghan Knot*, 7-8.

167 "About Further Measures to Provide for the National Interests of the USSR in Relation to the Events in Afghanistan," in *CPSU CC Politburo Decision, 28 January 1980, with Report by Gromyko-Andropov-Ustinov-Ponomarev, 27 January 1980*, Cold War International History Project, available at http://wwics.si.edu/index.cfm?topic_id=1409&fuseaction=library.document&id=690, accessed 14 November 2004.

168 "On the Situation in Afghanistan."

169 *Andropov-Gromyko-Ustinov-Ponomarev Report on Events in Afghanistan on 27-28 December 1979*, Cold War International History Project, trans. Mark H. Doctoroff, available at

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invade was still the correct one.[170] Nevertheless, by June 19th the Politburo had decided it would be "expedient to withdraw several military units whose presence in Afghanistan now is not necessary."[171] The Soviet Union was unable to do so for nearly a decade.

The sources of pressure were frustratingly apparent: foreign efforts to foment and aid insurgency grew apace with Soviet entanglement. Defense Minister Ustinov reported to the Communist Party of the Soviet Union on October 2, 1980:

> Following the revolution in Afghanistan, the USA and it allies in NATO, as well as China, Pakistan, Iran, and several reactionary Arab countries, launched subversive actions against the DRA, and these actions were greatly stepped up once Soviet troops were sent into Afghanistan. The USA and its allies are training, equipping, and sending into DRA territory armed formations of the Afghan counter-revolution, the activity of which, thanks to help from the outside, has become the main factor destabilizing the situation in Afghanistan.

Ustinov continued, informing the CPSU that Afghans rebels were being trained at 42 sites in Pakistan and 13 sites in Iran. He alleged that 65,000 Afghans had been trained since 1980 by American, Chinese, Pakistani, and Egyptian instructors; 53,000 of them had already found their way back to Afghanistan and were fighting the Soviet puppet

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http://wwics.si.edu/index.cfm?topic_id=1409&fuseaction=library.document&id=180, accessed 14 November 2004.

[170] "The development of the situation in Afghanistan after the introduction of the limited contingent of the Soviet troops in December 1979 confirms our assessment that it was a timely and a correct action. It undermined the plans to overthrow the revolutionary regime in DRA and prevented the emergence of a new hotbed of military threat on the Southern borders of the Soviet Union." See *CPSU CC Politburo Decision on Afghanistan, 10 April 1980, with report by Gromyko-Andropov-Ustinov-Zagladin, 7 April 1980*, Cold War International History Project, trans. Svetlana Savranskaya, available at http://wwics.si.edu/index.cfm?topic_id=1409&fuseaction=library.document&id=695, accessed 14 November 2004.

[171] *CPSU CC Politburo Decision, 19 June 1980*, Cold War International History Project, trans. Sveta Savranskaya, available at http://wwics.si.edu/index.cfm?topic_id=1409&fuseaction=library.document&id=697, accessed 14 November 2004.

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regime. He cited American efforts as particularly strenuous, including active participation by instructors from its "International Policy Academy" in Washington, DC and "School of Subversion" in Texas. Ustinov made the case that these Americans were the prime organizers of rebel operations in Afghanistan. [172]

Along with instruction came the weapons to be used. Through a complicated scheme involving Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, China, and Texas, the United States funneled arms, intelligence, and Islam through Pakistan and into the hands of Afghan rebels. One of the main goals was to unite the Afghan tribes' efforts. The American advisors promised unlimited supplies of arms if they did so.

The American-led covert aid operation swelled from approximately five hundred thousand to tens of millions of dollars in its first year.[173] Its effectiveness in drawing the Soviets into their own seemingly endless quagmire gathered the attention of the next administration. Under the Reagan administration the covert operation in Afghanistan grew tremendously, drawing off an ever-increasing percentage of Soviet power. One Congressman deeply committed to the scheme remarked in 1985, "There were 58,000 [U.S.] dead in Vietnam and we owe the Russians one . . . I think the Soviets ought to get a dose of it."[174] The Soviets did not find an escape from Afghanistan until it signed the

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[172] *Report by Soviet Defense Minister Ustinov to CPSU CC on "Foreign Interference" in Afghanistan, 2 October 1980*, Cold War International History Project, available at http://wwics.si.edu/index.cfm?topic_id=1409&fuseaction=library.document&id=701, accessed 14 November 2004.

[173] Gates, *From the Shadows*, 147.

[174] *The Daily Telegraph*, 14 January 1985.

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Geneva Accords on April 14, 1988 and withdrew its troops in early 1989. The invasion and occupation of Afghanistan was the last major military campaign fought by the Soviet Union.

Conclusions

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan dispelled any notion still held by the United States – especially its President – that coexistence with the Soviet empire, peaceful or otherwise, was acceptable.[175] The Soviets made plain that the force of international opinion and U.S. moral suasion made little difference in Moscow. Robert Tucker, writing in 1980, noted that a "sea-change has occurred over the past decade in the military relationship of the superpowers. The consequences of this change do not begin in Afghanistan. They have been increasingly apparent since the mid-1970s. What Afghanistan has done is to make them considerably more explicit than before."[176]

Yet the American public either did not notice Carter's transformation to hard-line policies or felt he could not pursue this strategy effectively. Even many in U.S. foreign policy circles failed to perceive the fundamental shift in U.S. strategy. Barry Posen and

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[175] Daniel Yankelovich and Larry Kaagan recorded, "By the end of 1980, a series of events had shaken us out of our soul-searching and into a new, outward-looking state of mind. The public had grown skeptical of détente and distressed by American impotence in countering the December 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. It felt bullied by OPEC, humiliated by the Ayatollah Khomeini, tricked by Castro, out-traded by Japan and out-gunned by the Russians. By the time of the 1980 presidential election, fearing that America was losing control over its foreign affairs, voters were more than ready to exorcise the ghost of Vietnam and replace it with a new posture of American assertiveness." Yankelovich and Kaagan, "Assertive America," 1.

[176] Tucker, "America in Decline, 480.

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Stephen Van Evera complained in 1980, "The strategy that requires new spending remains vague."[177] Norman Podhertz believed one important factor was missing from American confrontation of the Soviet Union: ideology. [178] He protested – several years after Carter began his rebuilding of American exceptionalism – that it was insufficient for American strategists to treat the superpower rivalry as merely another struggle between great powers. Podhertz asserted that scholarly approaches might display the rise of Soviet power and the fear this causes in Washington, but the American citizenry craves deeper meaning to its contests. For a "new nationalism" to take root and sustain itself, the conflict must be one of freedom and democracy versus totalitarian dictatorship. The fight for American interests could not take place without also being a fight for American values.

This was in fact one of Carter's primary strategic themes, but was unable after 1979 to make the case that he was the man to lead the fight. Americans wanted a more credible and strident statement of the positions Carter had learned to embrace. Ronald Reagan made these principles compelling themes in his 1980 campaign. [179] He trumpeted the structural realist themes of Brzezinski and Kissinger while asserting the value of morality as a source of international power. In this way the Reagan

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[177] Barry R. Posen and Stephen van Evera, "Overarming and Underwhelming," *Foreign Policy*, no. 40, (Fall 1980), 99.

[178] Norman Podhoretz, *The Present Danger* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1980).

[179] "It seems clear the election turned precisely on the theme of imperial decline. Are Americans doomed to watch the Soviets assume military mastery? Is the economy past the point of renewal? Can industries compete effectively again? Are you better off than you were four years ago?" Krieger, *Politics of Decline*, 140.

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administration embraced the new, sophisticated, and uniquely American grand strategy emerging in the late 1970s despite its lack of a similarly credentialed grand strategist.[180]

Second Adjustment: Pushing for Preeminence

Ronald Reagan, like his predecessor, came to Washington, D.C. championing a renewal of American power. He felt the United States had lost but could reclaim its rightful heritage as the world's preeminent military, economic, and moral power. All it lacked was political leadership that had faith in the possibility of American triumph. Reagan's rhetoric struck a chord with American aspirations and frustrations. Joel Krieger notes, "Reaganism was no accident. Each element of his appeal – the populist anti-state, anti-welfarist rhetoric, the Manichean cast of foreign policy, and the no-pain promises of supply-side economics – succeeded at least in part because of objective circumstances."[181]

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[180] Robert Osgood pointed out, "The greatest discontinuities spring from responses to unanticipated events, not from changes of Administration." Robert E. Osgood, "Revitalization of Containment," in *The Reagan Foreign Policy*, ed. William G. Hyland (New York: New American Library, 1987), 19. Sterling Kernek, in a 1993 discussion of Reagan's foreign policy, agreed. "Robert Osgood put it rather well when he said that "The continuities of American foreign policy are always greater than the political claims to innovation would have one believe." To be sure changes occur, but much of it has a familiar rhythm. Osgood described the oscillation in America's world role between assertion and retrenchment. It has tended to reflect perceived changes in the Soviet threat." From "Reagan's Foreign Policy Leadership," presented in a forum at the Miller Center of Public Affairs, University of Virginia, August 16, 1989, and reprinted in *Foreign Policy in the Reagan Presidency: Nine Intimate Perspectives*, ed. Kenneth W. Thompson III of The Miller Center Reagan Oral History Series (New York: University Press of America, 1993), 5.

[181] Krieger, *Politics of Decline*, 135.

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Reagan's virulent campaign statements, unrestrained by the requirements of national governance, had been similar to that of Kennedy and Nixon during their bids for the White House. The two former Presidents had achieved the Oval Office by warning an uneasy populace that the United States was losing the military balance and needed to take immediate and strong corrective measures. Each had also changed their view on this very soon after taking the oath of office. This led many observers to erroneously dismiss Reagan's stances as over inflated campaign rhetoric.

The Soviet Union had the opposite reaction. Publicly, Soviet ideologists proclaimed the move to be a desperate choice of a wounded animal, evidence that the United States "was in the throes of a systematic crisis." The election of "right-wing ideologues bent on war" was a sure sign of America's "impending fall." Privately, the results of the 1980 election shook the Soviet leadership. "There was widespread concern and actual fear of Reagan on the Central Committee," recalls Yevgenny Novikov, then a senior member in the International Department of the Central Committee. "He was the last thing they wanted to see in Washington." Oleg Kalugin, then a KGB general and in charge of foreign counterintelligence, concurs: "Reagan and his views disturbed the Soviet government so much they bordered on hysteria. There were cables about an imminent crisis. He was seen as a very serious threat."[182]

A more assertive American strategy was in some part, although not entirely, what the United States wanted from its government. The seemingly static nature of U.S.-

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[182] Oleg Kalugin, comments at the Hoover Institution. Quoted in Schweizer, *Victory*, 17.

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Soviet competition aroused polarizing sentiments within the West. Robert Legvold wrote in 1980 of "a permanent competition."[183] By 1981, albeit very expensively, the Soviet Union had achieved a position of marginal strategic superiority – meaning that with good luck and judgment it would win at modest cost; with less good luck and less good judgment it should still win, though very probably at catastrophic cost.[184]

Robert Tucker described foreign policy circles as still being divided in late 1980 between "those who believe that we must adjust our interests and behavior to the more modest position we now occupy in the world" and "those who believe that we can and must recapture the position and leadership we once enjoyed." Tucker specified that, for the former, "adjustment to our diminished status is a necessity we can attempt to escape only at our peril." For the latter, "the reassertion of something akin to the former policy of global containment is the only safe course we can take."[185]

This was not the view that predominated among the individuals the American people placed in charge of their nation's grand strategy. They felt "mutual restraint" had never characterized the behavior of the Soviet Union, nor had containment contained or détente slowed its ever-increasing military strength.[186] Reagan and his advisors rejected détente and its acceptance of Soviet ideology as a legitimate counterweight to American

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[183] Legvold, "Containment without Confrontation," 75.

[184] Gray, "National Style in Strategy," 36.

[185] Robert W. Tucker, "The Purposes of American Power," *Foreign Affairs* 59, no. 2 (Winter 1980/81), 242. Tucker argued that a renewed confrontation of the Soviet Union required the mobilization of ideology and must therefore take place in the form of global containment. See also 262-65.

[186] Caspar W. Weinberger, *In the Arena: A Memoir of the 20th Century* (Washington, DC: Regnery, 2001), 328.

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values. The newly elected president derided détente was "a French word the Russians had interpreted as a freedom to pursue whatever politics of subversion, aggression, and expansionism they wanted anywhere in the world."[187] Reagan's distaste for détente and moral objections to the Soviet system, as well as its behavior, was a significant factor in the more hostile Cold War stance the United States would adopt under his administration.

Changing Strategic Situation: Weakening Adversary

> During the late seventies, I felt our country had begun to abdicate that historical role as the spiritual leader of the Free World and its foremost defender of democracy. Some of our resolve was gone, along with a part of our commitment to uphold the values we cherished.
>
> President Ronald Reagan, *An American Life*

Robert Tucker asked, "While pursing a restoration of American power and position, and while once again drawing lines which the Russians are expected not to violate, can we still keep the relationship short of one that is under constant strain?" Reagan not only thought this was possible – it seemed to him the only course of action consistent with American values that could ensure long-term American security. He refused to accept the view that the Cold War was a permanent competition between equally valid ideological systems. "In my speeches and press conferences, I deliberately set out to say some frank things about the Russians, to let them know there were some

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[187] Ibid, 278. Quote in Ronald Reagan, *An American Life* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1990), 265.

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new fellows in Washington who had a realistic view of what they were up to and weren't going to let them keep it up."

The advisors Reagan brought to his administration appeared to substantiate Western expectation that American foreign policy would revert to something more akin to the Nixon-Ford-Kissinger days. National security slots were given to longstanding Washington figures such as Alexander Haig (State) and Caspar Weinberger (Defense).[188] He filled domestic positions with associates of no clear ideological adherence, such as Donald Regan (Treasury), or moderate conservatives such as Malcolm Baldridge (Commerce) and Drew Lewis (Transportation).

Reagan deplored Kissinger's use of the National Security Council to promote his strategic vision. Like nearly every President before him, he decided initially that the Secretary of State would be his primary advisor, architect, and spokesman on international relations.[189] Reagan, however, stuck to this pledge and made his National Security Adviser a less prominent figure in his administration. He nominated Richard Allen, a former NSC staff member from the Kissinger days, and placed him and the NSC subordinate to the presidential counsel.[190]

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[188] Haig would later be forced to resign and be replaced by George Shultz. Vice President-elect George Bush, known for his quiet demeanor, had foreseen this conflict as early as 1980. He told a group of transition team members who were considering Cabinet slots, "Do what you want to. But if you pick Al Haig, I predict you'll have serious problems." Quoted in Persico, *Casey*, 201.

[189] The glaring exception to this tradition was Henry Kissinger, who eclipsed Secretary of State William Rogers in this respect during the Nixon administration.

[190] From 1953 to 1981 the United States had nine National Security Advisors. During Reagan's eight years in office he appointed six: Richard V. Allen: January 21,

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Reagan's choice for Secretary of State Alexander Haig, was a powerful Washington insider who had all but run the United States during Nixon's last six months in office. Crisp and decisive, sometimes overly so, Haig made an immediate move to consolidate power over national security. On inauguration day he submitted a draft National Security Decision Directive (NSDD-1), calling for transfer of most of the NSC's power to State.

Haig requested Reagan's signature on the spot and was refused. His brusque grab at power solidified the forces against him, bringing together presidential advisors James Baker, Mike Deaver, and Ed Meese. As presidential councilor Meese had the National Security Council, disenfranchised and dispirited, under his authority. He intercepted Haig's draft NSDD-1 and had it rewritten as a confirmation of the status quo. The Reagan administration left in place most of its predecessor's policies and arrangements while it studied the situation.

The choice of Weinberger to run the Pentagon seemed an important sign that Reagan was not serious about pursuing a quick defense buildup. A former director of the Office of Management of Budget, he was known in Washington circles as "Dr. No" or, more often, "Cap the Knife" for his efforts to cut federal spending during the Nixon

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1981 - January 4, 1982; William Clark: January 4, 1982 - October 17, 1983; Robert C. McFarlane: October 17, 1983 - December 4, 1985; John M. Poindexter: December 4, 1985 - November 25, 1986; Frank C. Carlucci: December 2, 1986 - November. 23, 1987; Colin L. Powell: November 23, 1987 - January 20, 1989. A full list of Advisors is available at http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/history.html#appendix, accessed 7 November 2004.

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administration.[191] The Reagan transition team, by choosing Weinberger, appeared to be backing away from its campaign pledge for a massive military rebuilding program.

This interpretation, however, was incorrect.[192] Weinberger combined virulent anti-communism with enthusiasm for technological innovation. He lobbied nearly everyone he met on the idea of a resurgent military. "I was already aware of the general deterioration of our military during the Carter years, bust as I began receiving the classified data on our capabilities, I found that it was even worse than I had thought. It was truly appalling."[193] Weinberger became a staunch supporter of the administration's push for larger and more powerful armed forces, lobbying hard for more and newer weapons programs.

The absence of a strong National Security Advisor and apprehension about Haig allowed power over foreign affairs to diffuse throughout the government. When Reagan settled on Bill Casey to run the CIA, Casey received unprecedented authority. He had been a member of the Office of Strategic Services, forerunner of the CIA during the Second World War, in its energetic days under "Wild Bill" Donovan.[194] After Casey

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[191] The nickname came from presidential speechwriter and future columnist Bill Safire. Weinberger, *In the Arena*, 208.

[192] "In view of my reputation from California and my OMB days as a zealous budget cutter, many may have thought it odd that the president-elect would ask me to conduct and lead the great military buildup that we both knew was necessary. I had always felt that we needed to maintain a strong defense at all times. I had recognized this back in 1972, when I was director of the budget, and I made no secret of my opinion." Ibid, 274.

[193] Ibid, 273-74.

[194] "I could see some many similarities between him and Bill Donovan," observed John Bross, a former OSS member who worked directly for Casey at CIA.

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assumed the directorship at CIA, he quickly reverted to his concept of the role and methods of intelligence as he had learned them forty years earlier.[195] Casey complained publicly, "It is hard to overstate the damage done to the intelligence service during the 1970s."[196] During his tenure the CIA would rebuild its capabilities and reassume its energetic pursuit of U.S foreign policy goals. This process took a few years, limiting initially its ability to supply President Reagan with the more forceful tools of covert confrontation the United States had begun to use under Carter.

The first nine months of the Reagan administration, in fact, showed remarkably little movement on international relations. Reagan's first priority was the economy. He spent the majority of his efforts in the first year of his administration filling out his cabinet, recovering from an attempt on his life in March, and working to pass his budget. While Reagan focused on the economy, his administration tried to sort out ways of implementing Reagan's vision for U.S. foreign affairs and who should be in charge of it.

In October 1981 Reagan turned his attention more fully to foreign affairs. He and Weinberger presented the first attempt at a coherent strategy, National Security Decision Directive (NSDD-12), in a disastrous ceremony that demonstrated neither man had yet defined a clear vision and strategy for the nation. Chastised by the press and frustrated with his administration's performance, Reagan restructured the National Security Council

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Richard Helms, Casey's roommate during his OSS days and a future DCI himself, agreed: "They were both connivers in their own way." Quoted in Persico, *Casey*, 208 and 209, respectively.

[195] Ronald Kessler, *Inside the CIA: Revealing the Secrets of the World's Most Powerful Spy Agency* (New York: Pocket Books, 1992), 110.

[196] Address to the Association of Former Intelligence Officers, San Francisco, California, May 21, 1982. The full text of the speech can be found in *Scouting the Future: The Public Speeches of William J. Casey*, compiled by Herbert E. Meyer (Washington, DC: Regnery Gateway, 1989), 10-2.

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and replaced Richard Allen with William Clark, a longtime friend whom he felt he could trust with the position. Clark received the kind of access that had been denied Richard Clark and the authority to put together a new NSC staff.

Under the leadership of Clark, Weinberger, and Casey a coalition of like-minded experts, just below Cabinet level, formed around its shared view that the Soviet system was weakening.[197] This view was hardly universal among Americans. Seweryn Bialer and Joan Afferica stated in 1982, "Even were the West able to impose extreme economic choices on the Soviet Union, the system would not crumble, the political structures would not disintegrate, the economy would not go bankrupt, the elites and leadership would not lose their will and power to rule internally and to aspire externally to the status of a global power."[198] This view of the futility of confronting the Soviet Union, while prominent and very popular in some circles, did little to deter the aspirations of the majority of American people in their choice of grand strategy.

Scholarly Insights: American Opportunism

In the early 1980s the United States came to accept Reagan's assertions that communism was the continuation of the totalitarian threat it had faced and defeated in the

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[197] Economist Norman Bailey and Thomas Reed, former Secretary of the Air Force, were staff officers of the National Security Council. Andy Marshall was the longtime Director of Net Assessment at the Pentagon. Henry Rowen chaired the National Intelligence Council. Bill Lee worked at the Defense Intelligence Agency.

[198] Seweryn Bialer and Joan Afferica, "Reagan and Russia," *Foreign Affairs* 61, no. 2 (Winter 1982/83), 263.

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Second World War.[199] Americans viewed the existence of the Soviet system itself as a threat to international stability and morality. They still subscribed to Carter's ideas about the efficacy of moral authority in international relations, but believed dealing with the Soviets required substantially more forceful efforts to confront and roll back their advances. The American purpose was still moral and, therefore, exceptional, but its Cold War policy was to be based on "strength and realism."[200]

Perceptions of American strength were not as optimistic as had been promulgated by the Carter reelection campaign. Restoration of American moral credibility was a long and arduous process that required more than displays of an administration's moral consciousness in the periphery. Carter began this process in areas of the world in which morally indignation and championing of "the good" bore fewer costs and lesser risks. A complete recovery of American credibility in this area meant doing so in the face of annihilative nuclear power and overwhelming military forces. American moral authority would not be restored to its full strength until it had established a consistent record of tough diplomatic, economic, and military opposition of its most powerful adversary.

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[199] The administration pushed this view relentlessly, for it formed the core of its belief in the immorality of the Soviet system. Casey, for example, proclaimed in a speech in 1983 at Westminster College in Fulton, Missouri – location of Winston Churchill's famous "Iron Curtain" warning about the Soviet Union – "The threat posed by the Soviet Union is the lineal descendant of the same threat Western civilization has faced for better than two thousand years . . . The chief threat posed by the Soviet Union . . . (lies) in the relentlessness of its assault on our values." Address to Westminster College, Fulton, Missouri, October 29, 1983. Available in *Scouting the Future*, 16-24.

[200] Reagan, *An American Life*, 267.

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Reagan, like Carter, chose the University of Notre Dame as the forum for a major address on foreign policy. He told the audience defiantly that the United States was not destined for Cold War stalemate and unending superpower coexistence. Instead, "The West will not contain communism, it will transcend communism." Under his leadership the United States would push the Soviets in ways that demonstrated for their own citizens, as well of those of Eastern Europe, the limitations of their own totalitarian system. It would, in turn, help expose their preference for American-style democratic values.

This began with deterrence through the kind of strength the Soviets understood: military might. Unfortunately, the United States did not yet possess sufficient military strength to be effective in stemming Soviet expansionism. Weinberger records, "All of this causes me – and President Reagan – more than a little alarm. When we took office, the first thing we did was to add $32 billion to the Carter administration's Defense budget requests for fiscal years 1981 and 1982 . . . in truth it wasn't nearly enough."[201] Barry Posen and Stephen Van Evera noted with alarm that U.S. grand strategy "is the most expansive and demanding strategy adopted by any administration since Eisenhower's. Its requirements substantially exceed those suggested by the original logic of the American policy of Soviet containment."[202]

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[201] Weinberger, *In the Arena*, 276.

[202] Barry R. Posen and Stephen van Evera, "Reagan Administration Defense Policy: Departure from Containment," in *Eagle Resurgent? The Reagan Era in American Foreign Policy*, ed. Kenneth A. Oye, Robert J. Lieber, and Donald Rothchild (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1987), 76.

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Reagan's decision to challenge the Soviets on both moral and structural grounds meant a substantial amount of his administration's energy would be devoted to finding ways to make life hard for the Soviet Union. During the early and mid-1980s the United States' focus on Cold War issues would become more central to overall grand strategy. Some thought this reversal of Carter's rhetoric about "North-South" being more important than "East-West" went too far. Seweryn Bialer and Joan Afferica noted, "In foreign policy President Reagan has subordinated almost all decisions to the East-West conflict as the central axis of American international concerns" and that it continues "to display the characteristics of an ideological crusade."[203]

This indeed appeared the case unless one understands the Cold War in the context of larger American grand strategy. The United States sought to create the conditions of sustainable preeminence, which at this time required that it reverse Cold War trends toward bilateral equality and eventual subordination to Soviet power. The Reagan administration wanted to find and exploit Soviet weaknesses to help this process along. As it believed the Soviet system was inherently weak to begin, the campaign for support was largely a case of convincing the American public and especially the foreign policy community that their assessments of Soviet power were correct. Casey, for example, presented this case to the Annual Meeting of the Business Council in May 1981: "The Soviet economy is gasping under its inherent inefficiencies and its burden of enormous military expenditures; also its many billions each year to Cuba and Vietnam, cut-rate oil

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[203] Bialer and Afferica, "Reagan and Russia," 249.

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to East European satellites, and huge worldwide expenditures for propaganda and subversion."[204]

On February 5, 1982 the President signed National Security Study Directive Number 1 (NSSD-1), instructing the NSC staff to review U.S. national security objectives and examine the ways in which Soviet power affected them.[205] Thomas Reed, after coming on board the NSC in January 1982, noted American foreign policy was changing course. "Words like "containment," "détente," and "mutual assured destruction" were out."[206] The United States was in the process of leaving behind notions of a permanent competition and moving toward ending the Cold War on a basis acceptable to American values. It was at this time that the phrase "evil empire" first made its way into official drafts of Reagan's speeches. It was cut, reinserted, and cut again from his 1982 British Parliament speech, a year and a half before Reagan said them to the National Association of Evangelicals.[207]

The Regan administration codified the United States' commitment to this view in its National Security Decision Directives. "The key military threats to U.S. security during the 1980s will continue to be posed by the Soviet Union and its allies and clients. Despite increasing pressures on its economy and the growing vulnerabilities of its

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[204] Address to the Annual Meeting of the Business Council, Hot Springs, Virginia, May 9, 1981. Available in *Scouting the Future*, 16-24.

[205] For an account of the study by the man in charge of it, see Thomas C. Reed, *At the Abyss: An Insider's History of the Cold War* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2004), 235-36.

[206] Ibid, 236.

[207] Weinberger, *In the Arena*, 328.

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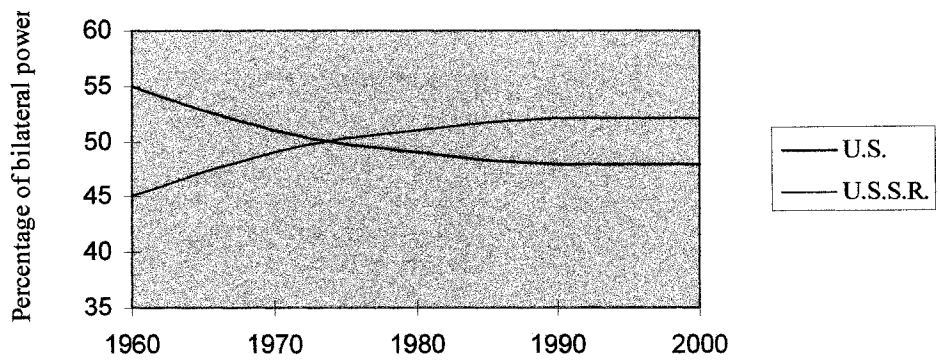
empire, the Soviet military will continue to expand and modernize."[208] This reflected the administration's view of the threat of Soviet military power, yet asserted the possibility of direct confrontation remained remote. One such memorandum concluded, "The Soviet Union remains aware of the catastrophic consequences of initiating military action directly against the U.S. or its allies."[209] This meant the United States could push aggressively for favorable changes in the bilateral structure without precipitating major war (Ill. 12).

Ill. 12. Reagan Administration's Perception of Relative Power Trends ca. 1980



[208] "National Security Decision Directive 23: U.S. Civil Defense Policy," available at http://www.fas.org/irp/offdocs/nsdd/nsdd-023.htm, accessed 7 November 2004.

[209] Ibid.

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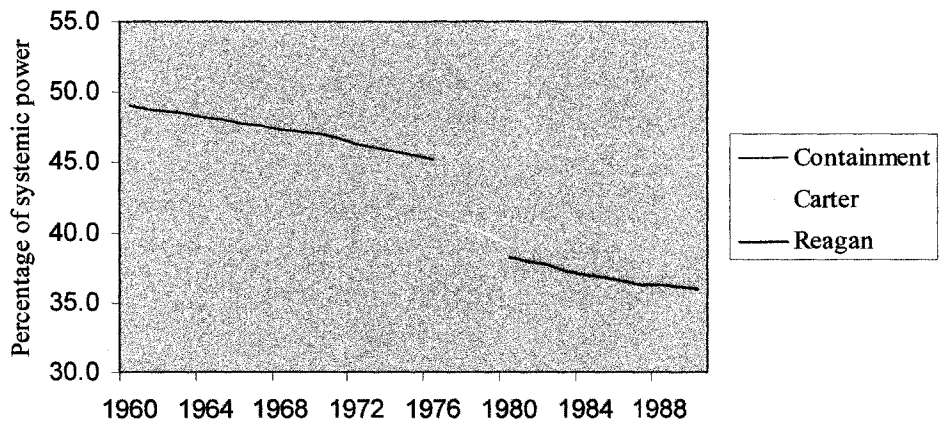
Reagan and his advisors understood their assertive stances and combative policies would increase the risk of confrontation. They counted on greater Soviet efforts to tie up their resources in an attempt to prevent the United States from reversing the USSR's recent gains. Such an effort from an already vulnerable state would exhaust its people and weaken their government's authority. NSDD-32 declared, "...the decade of the eighties will likely pose the greatest challenge to our survival and well-being since World War II and our response could result in a fundamentally different East-West relationship by the end of this decade."[210]

Ill. 13. Transition of Views ca. 1976 and 1980



[210] Ibid.

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The prominence given to Cold War concerns meant perceptions of bilateral relative power trends would be more critical to the overall picture of U.S. international power than during the previous administration. Their effects would factor more prominently in U.S. strategic thinking (Ill. 13). This creates for the United States an overall picture that looked bleaker in the short term, but held out the possibility that it could improve dramatically with the successful rollback of Soviet power.

The election of a more assertive president fit structural realist patterns of a nation caught in a deep relative decline. The United States was in the throes of insecurity and could be expected to attempt aggressive measures to stave off what Soviet leaders viewed as the inevitable fall of the West. At the same time it perceived an opportunity to weaken severely the economic and political foundations of the Soviet empire. These maneuvers would take place on those battlegrounds that American strategists at this time believed most advantageous: overall economic power, the productive capacity of the military-industrial complex, high technology, and ideological appeal.

Adjusting Grand Strategy: Escalating Adversarial Confrontation

The conclusion of NSSD-1, which ran from February to the end of April, was the creation of NSDD-32, titled "U.S. National Security Strategy." In its eight pages the Reagan administration laid out in plain language the strategic objectives of the United States that had been evolving since the mid-1970s. NSDD-32 began by enumerating longstanding objectives of preserving democracy, protecting citizens, promoting economic growth, and fostering an international order based on American values. It then moved into specifics of threat posed to these objectives by Soviet power, a tabulation of

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Soviet strengths and weaknesses, predictions of increased confrontation between the superpowers, and, finally, a resolution that the United States would seek the dissolution of the Soviet empire. [211]

Under Reagan the United States escalated the conflict by challenging the Soviets on both moral and physical grounds. His rhetoric reflected his beliefs and reinforced American strategy. In his foreign policy speeches Reagan condemned communism as a failed experiment, called for massive reform in Soviet behavior and within the Soviet system, and predicted its impending downfall. American policies reflected this attitude as well – it sought to push the Soviet Union in ways that exposed the inherent contradictions of its authoritarian government.

NSDD-32 spelled out the specific policies that would achieve these objectives. It stated the administration's belief that the United States was at a strategic disadvantage in nuclear and conventional forces, civil defense, and access to strategic minerals and petroleum. It identified five areas of strategic adjustment that would remedy this: modernizing U.S. military forces, increasing military support by U.S. allies, economic pressure on the USSR and its allies, political pressure on their governments, and covert operations designed to make the Soviet empire more difficult to hold together.[212]

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[211] "National Security Decision Directive 32: U.S. National Security Strategy," available at http://www.fas.org/irp/offdocs/nsdd/nsdd-032.htm, accessed 10 August 2004.

[212] Christopher Simpson, *National Security Directives of the Reagan & Bush Administrations: The Declassified History of U.S. Political & Military Policy, 1981-1991* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1995), 62-4.

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Shortly thereafter Alexander Haig finally resigned and was replaced at State by the highly experienced Washington economist George Schultz, a longtime Reagan associate and a colleague of Weinberger's at both OMB and Bechtel Corporation. Schultz shared the administration's pessimistic view regarding the viability of the Soviet empire.[213] Replacement of Haig with Schultz meant American diplomacy would reflect more clearly the administration's desire to confront the Soviets on ideological grounds, pressuring on human rights, dissident persecution, and totalitarian repression of the inherent human desire for freedom.

The administration's rebuilding of the American military so soon after its experience in Vietnam seemed to indicate an almost desperate effort to swing, at least temporarily, the correlation of forces in the Americans' favor. Meanwhile, Bill Casey had been restructuring the CIA and preparing it for the tasks associated with a more aggressive foreign policy. The heightened secrecy, extraordinary levity, and sudden exuberance of the United States' intelligence services in the early 1980s seemed to indicate a flurry of covert activity would soon follow. Taken together, these maneuvers were the most visible preparations for its indirect confrontation of Soviet power.

The United States held important advantages over the Soviet Union in the areas of advanced technology, moral authority, and overall economic performance. These would become the battlefields on which the United States would choose to confront its

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[213] As early as 1979 Schultz had been making this view public. He told an audience at Stanford University, "The Soviet system is incompetent and cannot survive." George Schultz, *Turmoil and Triumph: My Years as Secretary of State* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1993), 6.

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adversaries. The most vulnerable point in the Soviet empire was its economy. The Soviet Union simply could not afford its commitments as a global superpower and competitor of the United States. It suffered from imperial overstretch, or taking on more than its empire could afford.[214] The tremendous pressure was becoming unbearable.

Recognizing this, the Reagan administration specifically sought situations it could use to exacerbate the situation. It implemented policies and programs designed to make the Soviet Union pay a high price for its superpower status. At the same time it took steps to formalize the United States' strategic break with the past. On January 17, 1983 Reagan signed NSDD-75, "U.S. Relations with the USSR," making official the U.S. abandonment of its thirty-year commitment to containment.[215] Reed recalls, "NSDD-75 was a confidential declaration of economic and political war."[216] The thrust of its strategy was made public eight weeks later in Reagan's famous "evil empire" speech.[217]

The first major action taken in this context was an escalation of covert aid to the Afghan resistance. Casey took one look at Brzezinski's program and decided it was exactly the kind of confrontation the United States should be pursuing. "We need twenty Afghanistans." He pushed for increased aid to the Afghan rebels, who were tying up

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[214] See Kennedy, *Rise and Fall of the Great Powers.*

[215] "National Security Decision Directive 75: U.S. Relations with the U.S.S.R.," available at http://www.fas.org/irp/offdocs/nsdd/nsdd-075.htm, accessed 7 November 2004.

[216] Reed, *At the Abyss*, 240.

[217] The "evil empire" line finally made it into the speech Reagan gave before the National Association of Evangelicals, Orlando, Florida, March 8, 1983. Reprinted in Ronald Reagan, *Speaking My Mind: Selected Speeches* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1989), 168-80.

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Soviet military forces and draining the system of many of its war supplies. He declared as early as 1981, "The USSR has fallen into a hornet's nest in Afghanistan."[218] By 1983 the Reagan administration had converted the nest into a truly dangerous quagmire.

The United States accelerated its supply of military equipment to Afghanistan, while maintaining for at least a few years its highly transparent arms-length arrangement. The weapons sent to aid the fighters were designed by Russians, produced by Egyptians, paid for by Saudis, and smuggled through Pakistan into Afghanistan. The United States also provided the disorganized bands with maps showing the location of strategic Soviet supply lines. It eventual broke with the policy's original conception of ensuring all weapons funneled to Afghanistan would be of communist origin. In 1986 Reagan decided to accede to field commanders' requests and provide the Afghan fighters with the brand-new Stinger missile. This brought to the Soviet battlefield a "wonder weapon" that destroyed or warded off Soviet gunships and jets.[219] By then Reagan had told the CIA in

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[218] Address to the Annual Meeting of the Business Council, Hot Springs, Virginia, May 9, 1981. Available in *Scouting the Future*, 16-24.

[219] The Stinger missile was both an effective battlefield weapon and a source of fear for Soviet pilots. Brigadier Mohammad Yousaf, head of the Afghan Bureau of Pakistan's Inter-Service Intelligence, was responsible for training and operational planning for the Mujahadeen inside Afghanistan and, later, the Soviet Union from 1983 to 1987. He described the introduction of Stinger missiles in stark terms: "It fired an infra-red, heat-seeking missile, capable of engaging at low-altitude, high-speed jets, even if flying directly at the firer. The missile carried a high explosive warhead with significant countermeasure immunity. Once a missile has locked on to a target no other heat source, such as flares, can deflect it. The only possible way to avoid the lock-on is to keep so high as to be out of range, or to dispense flares as such a rate that there is virtually no interval between them. This entailed knowing when to start firing flares and having an inexhaustible supply." See Brig. Mohammad Yousaf and Mark Adkin,

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a Presidential Directive that the aim of U.S. involvement in Afghanistan had changed from increasing the costs to the USSR to trying to push the Soviets out.

The ideological front required tangible efforts to demonstrate the superiority of the American model and aid those attempting to break free from Soviet domination. The first opportunity that presented itself was the Solidarity labor movement in Poland. A group of Polish workers formed an illegal trade union and began demonstrating for the right to organize and bargain with their communist government. The popularity of the movement forced the government to recognize Solidarity as legitimate and begin discussing the tiniest measures of democratic reform within the Polish Communist Party. The Soviet Union responded by sending its troops to the Polish border for "maneuvers" in spring 1981. A military regime assumed power in Poland under Soviet orders to end Poland's liberalization. It also cut off the supply of loan credits, leaving the Polish people and their economy without much in the way of foreign assistance or, because of their failed communist system, domestic production.

"I wanted to be sure we did nothing to impede this process and everything we could to spur it along. This is what we had been waiting for since World War II." Reagan recalled.[220] The United States could not provide visible support for Solidarity without sending an inadvertent signal that it would repel any Soviet invasion.[221] This might give the Polish people false hope of overt American aid while providing the Soviets with a pretext for invasion. There was an intricate problem to be solved: how to

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Afghanistan – The Bear Trap: The Defeat of a Superpower, 2nd ed. (Havertown, PA: Casemate, 2001), 174-75.

[220] Reagan, *An American Life*, 301.

[221] This lesson came from the unsuccessful 1956 uprisings in Hungary.

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help the Polish people without either propping up its communist government or destroying it and inviting Soviet intervention.

The solution was a combination of policies. Reagan made public statements condemning the threat of Soviet aggression and private assurances to the Soviet leadership that an invasion would have dire consequences for its other, more important aims such as arms control and trade relations. At the same time the United States began providing clandestine assistance to Solidarity. Dissent became more widespread throughout Poland. On December 13, acting on orders from Moscow, the Polish government declared martial law, closed the country's borders, and arrested the leaders of Solidarity. Reagan and Brezhnev exchanged unpleasantries and within weeks the United States imposed sanctions against Poland and the Soviet Union and suspended their negotiations for a new grain sale.

Support for Solidarity in Poland grew into a propaganda war for the hearts and minds of Eastern Europe and within the Soviet Union itself. The Reagan administration convinced Voice of America, which was usually sensitive to efforts to make it any part of a propaganda campaign, to aid these efforts at stirring up regional ethnic identities within the Soviet Union. American Ambassador to Moscow, Jack Matlock made repeated trips to the ethnic states within Soviet Russia, taking special care to deliver his speeches in

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native languages. Voice of America aided this effort by helping his translations of his speeches into the native languages.[222]

Reagan himself spearheaded the ideological argument. In a dramatic speech delivered before the British Parliament, he told a stunned audience about Soviet immorality, Soviet economic difficulty, and the ways in which he believed the tides of history would favor the West:

> We are witnessing today a great revolutionary crisis, a crisis in which the demands of the economic order are conflicting directly with those of the political order. But the crisis is happening not in the free, non-Marxist West, but in the home of Marxist-Leninism, the Soviet Union. It is the Soviet Union that runs against the tide of history by denying human freedom and human dignity to its citizens.[223]

Knowing the Soviet Union lacked the capacity to compete with the United States in high technology, the Reagan administration placed a great deal of emphasis on projects developing the next generation of military sophistication. The primary projects were stealth technology and cruise missiles. In 1977, the year the movie Star Wars was released, the idea of space-based lasers was already under investigation by some of the United States' top physicists. Dr. Robert M. Bowman, an Air Force colonel in charge of the U.S. military space program, submitted a classified report warning of the destabilizing effects of any future laser battle stations on the overall strategic nuclear

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[222] See Jack F. Matlock, Jr. *Autopsy on an Empire* (New York: Random House, 1995), 12-3.

[223] Ronald Reagan, Address to the Members of the British Parliament, Palace of Westminster, June 8, 1982. Reprinted in Reagan, *Speaking My Mind*, 107-20.

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balance.[224] Senator Malcolm Wallop (R-WY) published an article in Strategic Review titled, "Opportunities and Imperatives of Ballistic Missile Defense."[225] Reagan received briefings from Wallop and Lt. Gen. Daniel O. Graham on this subject during the 1980 campaign.

The first White House meeting on missile defense took place in September 1981. Reagan attended the second in January 1982, at which missile defense was portrayed as the next Manhattan Project. The president showed enthusiasm for the idea and instructed those present to move ahead on it. [226] On March 23, 1983 Reagan proposed the idea of Strategic Missile Defense (SDI) and challenged American scientists to find a way to make it work.[227]

The Strategic Defense Initiative Organization (SDIO) opened within the Department of Defense in April 1984. The department's own history of the program reflects, "At the inception of the SDIO, the vision of BMD embraced by President Ronald Reagan of eliminating the threat of nuclear attack by use of space- and ground-based interceptors needed tremendous amounts of research before it held the promise of

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[224] Cited in Gordon R. Mitchell, *Strategic Deception: Rhetoric, Science, and Politics in Missile Defense Advocacy* (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 2000), 50.

[225] Malcolm Wallop, "Opportunities and Imperatives of Ballistic Missile Defense," *Strategic Review*, no. 7 (Fall 1979), 13-21.

[226] Mitchell, *Strategic Deception*, 51.

[227] The feasibility and implications of SDI was the subject of a remarkable work, edited by Zbigniew Brzezinski, titled *Promise or Peril: The Strategic Defense Initiative; Thirty-five Essays by Statesmen, Scholars, and Strategic Analysts* (Washington, DC: Ethics and Public Policy Center, 1986). See also the edited volume by Robert Tucker, "SDI and U.S. Foreign Policy," *SAIS Papers in International Affairs*, no. 15 (Washington, DC: Westview Press / Foreign Policy Institute, 1987).

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reality."[228] Reagan, noting that his critics had called SDI unfeasible and a waste of money, responded, "Well, if that's true, why are the Soviets so upset about it?"[229]

The Soviet leadership did not take Reagan's assertion at face value. In a January 1983 interview, Gromyko showed contempt for the idea that SDI would remain a research project. "And who can guarantee that it will stop there after research has been completed? Will there not be people, scientists and others, who will say: we have spent so many billions of dollars on research, why waste all this money?" He called the policy of conducting research alone "wholly untenable."[230] At the same time the Soviet leadership understood what was happening: the United States had challenged the Soviet Union to a competition it could ill afford to sustain.

Case Study: Soviet Energy Exports

No single facet of the confrontational approach drew more criticism, strained allied relations more dangerously, and in the end perhaps crippled Soviet power than the United States' longstanding efforts to disrupt the Soviet petroleum industry. In 1949 the Truman administration pressured its European allies and Japan to form the Consultative

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[228] The DOD assessment is quoted in Anthony Cordesman, *Strategic Threats and National Missile Defenses: Defending the U.S. Homeland* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2002), 185.

[229] Speech delivered to the Republican Party of California, August 1985. Jerry F. Hough, "Soviet Interpretation and Response," in *Arms Control and the Strategic Defense Initiative: Three Perspectives*, Occasional Paper 36 (Muscatine, IA: The Stanley Foundation, 1985), 5.

[230] "A.A. Gromyko: Interviewed by Soviet Political Analysts, January 13, 1985" (Moscow: Novosti Press Agency, 1985).

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Group-Coordinating Committee (COCOM) as an institutional vehicle for a multilateral Western embargo against the Soviet Union and its allies. Based on a series of executive agreements, rather than a formal treaty, it gave American strategists a weak but effective structure through which they could leverage east-west trade toward containment of Soviet influence.

Among the most strictly controlled COCOM sectors was energy. Oil and natural gas are highly strategic commodities. There was deep concern among American strategists that Soviet political influence would flow along with Soviet petroleum. They did not take long to translate these fears into policy. According to the state department's Battle Act Report of 1950, "All basic specialized equipment for the exploration, production, and refining of petroleum and natural gas" was on the COCOM embargo list.[231]

The Soviet Union had no choice but to create these technologies on its own. As a result the Soviet petroleum industry lagged behind its potential; it did not even recover its pre-war strength until the end of the 1950s. In 1950 the United States strengthened its policy by passing the Mutual Defense and Assistance Control Act, making any COCOM member state that violated the export controls ineligible for Marshall Plan aid. Any conceivable trade relationship the Soviet might offer would not compete with the amounts of aid from the Marshall Plan. This legislation, therefore, was very effective in

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[231] Quote in Bruce W. Jentleson, *Pipeline Politics: The Complex Political Economy of East-West Energy Trade* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1986), 8.

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persuading Western allies to comply with U.S. export controls and containment objectives.

Eventually the Soviet petroleum industry recovered its strength and became an effective tool for the extension of Soviet political influence. The hard currency it generated helped fund the restoration of dominance over its satellites in Eastern Europe.[232] It also offered opportunities for the Soviets to make inroads in Western Europe. Trade with the Soviets could provide a source of cheap and plentiful petroleum. It also would open a market for the revived West European industry in machine parts.

West European nations also recovered their strength in the 1950s. They used their rebuilt political power to pursue their own economic interests, which they saw as hampered by American restrictions through COCOM. They balked at American leadership during the 1956 Suez Crisis, straining the Western alliance. Soon thereafter the Eisenhower administration agreed to relax COCOM restrictions as a means of stabilizing the transatlantic relationship.[233] Although COCOM continued to restrict certain vital energy technologies, the Soviet Union and Western Europe found ways of expanding dramatically the scope of their trade relationship. The Soviet Union completed its Friendship Pipeline to supply Western Europe with petroleum and Western Europe supplied the Soviet Union with a steady supply of hard currency.

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[232] For details on Soviet oil exports and their effect on balance-of-payments, see Margaret Chadwick, David Long, and Machiko Nissanke, *Soviet Oil Exports: Trade Adjustments, Refining Constraints, and Market Behaviour* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), Ch. 6.

[233] Jentleson, *Pipeline Politics*, 43-4.

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The Suez Crisis underscored Western Europe's need for alternative sources. American's European allies began searching for them. France, for example, initially looked to its Algerian oil fields, which began production in the early 1960s. Algerian nationalization of the fields in 1971 forced France to diversify its sources further.[234] The oil crisis of 1973 sent ripples of instability through Western European economies. Faced with a series of supply disruptions, price swings, and general market unpredictability, the demand for a stable and profitable petroleum trade with the Soviet Union grew irresistible.

Transatlantic differences over the negotiation of oil prices sharpened in the 1960s and early 1970s. The United States, as the lead consumer, demanded the lead role in negotiations with Arab petroleum producers for allied purchases. Other nations, such as France, wanted to make its own separate bargain for the European Community.[235] The differences were papered over during a December 1974 meeting between Presidents Ford and Giscard, but allied enmity over petroleum policy remained strong.

Substantial increases in petroleum prices in the 1970s plunged the Western world into deeper recession. Reduced growth rates and rising unemployment were extremely worrisome trends, weakening governments and deepening divisions in national societies. One way for Western Europe to bring their economies out of this slump was to expand their petroleum contracts with the Soviet Union. They did so assiduously. The view

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[234] Horst Mendershausen, *Coping with the Oil Crisis: French and German Experiences* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), 28.

[235] Ibid, 60-1.

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predominated that "The real danger for France today is the oil crisis, not the SS-20."[236] The same held true for other West European allies.

The Soviets were delighted with the prospect of expanding their already profitable oil and natural gas exports to Western Europe. In the 1970s, when the price of oil skyrocketed, Soviet hard currency earnings had risen 272 percent, while the volume of its exports increased only 22 percent.[237] Moscow had been using its hard currency earnings to fund Soviet projects throughout Africa and in Afghanistan.[238] It welcomed the opportunity to receive more hard currency from Western Europe, especially as its entanglement in Afghanistan escalated and required substantially more financing than initially projected.

Unfortunately for Moscow, the Soviet petroleum industry was not poised to deliver the profits demanded by the Politburo. It needed to expand oil and natural gas production at a time when Soviet exports and domestic industrial investment were declining. This led to implementation of a broad range of short-term solutions that would produce quick profits but ruin long-term prospects. By 1980 over 85 percent of the oil produced in the USSR was extracted with the aid of a practice known as "waterflooding" – injecting water into the well under high pressure to raise the oil and make recovery

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[236] Robert J. Lieber's interview with a leading French expert on foreign policy, Paris, May 17, 1979. Quoted in Robert J. Lieber, "Energy, Economics, and Security in Alliance Perspective," *International Security* 4, no. 4 (Spring 1980), 139.

[237] Schweizer, *Victory*, 105.

[238] Energy exports in 1978 accounted for 64 percent of all Soviet hard-currency earnings. Over the next two years that share grew larger still, even though the actual volume of Soviet oil exported declined. See Thane Gustafson, "Energy and the Soviet Bloc," *International Security* 6, no. 3 (Winter 1981/82), 66.

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easier.[239] This places enormous strain on equipment and is generally considered a practice that provides faster initial oil recovery but shortens the useable lifespan of the well considerably. Furthermore, the Volga-Urals oilfields had "peaked" a decade earlier than expected.[240]

Soviet energy export growth had been declining for several years and only an extraordinary upswing in the productive capacity and profitability of the Soviet petroleum industry could meet the requirements of the Soviet Union's command economy. The future of the Soviet-West European trade relationship, in turn, depended on a steady flow westward of Soviet energy exports and a steady flow eastward of Western hard currency and technology. Hamstrung by the limitations of its own inconvertible ruble, the Soviet Union used Western hard currency to pay for Western technology and equipment. A steady supply of it encouraged West European governments and banks to extend credit for the purchase of industrial technology. Any interruption in Soviet shipments of petroleum to Western Europe might put doubts in the minds of Western Europeans about the Soviets' reliability as an energy supplier. It would endanger, in turn, the Soviet Union's most reliable and profitable source of hard currency.

The Soviet Union placed top priority on keeping the oil and natural gas flowing. It tried to maintain its contracts with Western Europe by reducing the supply of cut-rate

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[239] U.S. Congress, Office of Technology Assessment, "Technology and Soviet Energy Availability" (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1981), 51.

[240] Gustafson, "Energy and the Soviet Bloc," 73.

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oil to the East European satellites. In the early 1970s the Politburo notified them that Soviet oil deliveries in 1976-1980 would be held to the 1975 level. In 1979 they repeated this gesture, holding the line at 1980 levels, which had grown nevertheless by nearly one-third.[241] These supply reductions were temporary measures at best, while pressure mounted for a better solution. The Soviet Union needed to develop, quickly and extensively, new sources of oil and natural gas to stave off critical economic difficulties.

Western Siberia offered the best prospects.[242] Its fields could be tapped to increase production, generate more hard currency, and stabilize the Soviet economy. However, accessing Siberian petroleum resources required large quantities of more advanced industrial technology than the Soviet Union had been able to produce on its own. Soviet industrial equipment production was, in fact, entirely dependent on the West.[243] The Soviet system was incapable of mass-producing civilian products to Western performance and reliability standards. One official of the French Machine Tool Association outlined the limitations of Soviet industry starkly: "The Russians can produce quality and they can produce quantity. Their problem is mass producing quality."[244]

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[241] Ibid, 73.

[242] See Han-ku Chung, *Interest Representation in Soviet Policymaking: A Case Study of a West Siberian Oil Coalition* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1987).

[243] A 1979 study of Soviet industrialization concluded, "By 1930 there was not a single important industrial process" in the Soviet Union "which did not derive from transferred Western technology." See Carl Gershman, "Selling Them the Rope: Business & the Soviets," *Commentary* 67, no. 4 (April 1979), 37.

[244] John W. Kiser, "What Gap? Which Gap?" *Foreign Policy*, no. 32 (Fall 1978), 92.

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One reason for this was critical weakness was a tradeoff between military investment and investment in the energy sector. Unlike the United States, the Soviet Union was not powerful enough to achieve all of its primary growth objectives simultaneously. Soviet leaders had to choose among them. "Each time capital investment for economic growth has been the chief victim; consumption growth has been cut back less and defense growth hardly at all."[245] The high-quality steel, for example, needed to make strong drill pipe was reserved for high-priority military uses. Consequently, the Soviet oil industry had to use drilling technologies that do not require top-grade steels; that in turn imposes limits on the depth and speed of their drilling."[246] The USSR needed an infusion of Western technology to update and revitalize its petroleum industry so it could exploit new reserves.

The Soviet Union began to negotiate in 1980 with West European companies to acquire the technology they to explore and develop their Siberian fields.[247] It was touted as "the deal of the century" – a 5,000 kilometer pipeline bringing natural gas from fields in western Siberia to Western Europe.[248] Its path lay across frozen terrain, over the Ural

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[245] Myron Rush, "Guns over Growth in Soviet Policy," *International Security* 7, no. 2 (Winter 1982/83), 167.

[246] See Arthur A. Meyerhoff, "Soviet Petroleum: History, Technology, Geology, Reserves, Potential, and Policy" (discussion paper prepared for the Association of American Geographers Project on Soviet Natural Resources in the World Economy, June 1980). Cited in Gustafson, "Energy and the Soviet Bloc," 69.

[247] Jonathan P. Stern, "Soviet Oil and Gas Exports to the West: Commercial Transaction or Security Threat?" *Energy Papers* no. 21 (Hants, UK: Gower Publishing Company Ltd, 1987), 33.

[248] The project initially proposed to exploit even larger reserves on the Yamal Peninsula, some 150 miles to the north. The costs and engineering challenges were more

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Mountains, through a dense forest, and required seven hundred river bridge points. It was a monstrous business project that involved large infusions of Western industrial technology financed by unprecedented amounts of European credit. The Siberian pipeline project offered the Soviet Union the opportunity of securing an estimated $8 billion per year in hard currency if it could be completed on schedule.[249]

Only the kind of deal put together for western Siberia could have made the project possible. The Soviets required the more advanced Western industrial technology to circumvent their own systemic blockages. While much of the equipment that was needed for the project could be made within the Soviet empire, the nature of its system precluded much in the way of efficient production and distribution.[250] Bureaucratic procedures, production bottlenecks, inherent resistance to innovation, and a host of other problems made the use of Soviet technology prohibitively expensive.[251] West European nations welcomed the large Soviet requests to buy more of their drilling equipment and pipe.[252]

The United States initially warned its European allies against the dangers of dependence on the Soviet Union for their energy, but stopped short of actively pressuring them not to sign the deal. With twin prospects of profitable industrial exports and inexpensive petroleum imports, there was strong incentive for West European allies to

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substantial, especially considering the hard currency situation and state of Soviet industrial production. The project reverted to the already tapped Urengoi reserves. Jentleson, *Pipeline Politics*, 172.

[249] Ellen L. Frost and Angela E. Stent, "NATO's Troubles with East-West Trade," *International Security* 8, no. 1 (Summer 1983), 182.

[250] U.S. Congress, Office of Technology Assessment, "Technology and Soviet Energy Availability," 76-7.

[251] Kiser, "What Gap? Which Gap?" 91.

[252] U.S. Congress, Office of Technology Assessment, "Technology and Soviet Energy Availability," 19-80.

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ignore American protests about strategic implications and help the Soviets. They enthusiastically signed large contracts with the Soviet Union to help it develop its Siberian fields. These included subsidized loans and other preferential practices as a further incentive to get the petroleum flowing as quickly as possible.

American strategists never relished the cooperation its West European allies were offering in the growth of the Soviet economy and the subsequent sustenance of USSR's foreign adventures. Americans viewed the regulation of east-west trade as a logical extension of the Cold War rivalry. Successive administrations believed they could significantly weaken the Soviet economy by denying their Soviet adversaries the benefits of trade with the West. Western Europe's eagerness to provide petroleum technology, much of which was produced under American license, angered many U.S. strategists. They complained that their allies were shortsighted and selfish in their willing to increase Soviet power in exchange for Soviet petroleum. The American ambassador in Paris, Evan Galbraith, summed up the long-standing U.S. objection: "It was especially galling to see the West not only sell the rope with which to hang the West, but also to finance the sale of the rope with subsidized credit terms."[253]

In April 1977 the White House Press Office released a newly declassified CIA study, "The International Energy Situation: Outlook to 1985."[254] The report accurately identified technological difficulties experienced by the Soviet petroleum industry that

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[253] Evan G. Galbraith, *Ambassador in Paris: The Reagan Years* (Washington, DC: Regnery Gateway, 1987), 20.

[254] *Public Papers of the Presidents* 649. Cited in Andrew, *For the President's Eyes Only*, 432.

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made keeping pace with its foreign contracts and its own growing domestic demand almost impossible. Unfortunately, the study suggested erroneously that by 1985 the Soviet Union would need to import 3.4 to 4.5 million barrels a day – a conclusion fiercely disputed by experts who gave evidence to the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence. Some accused the CIA of having "cooked the facts to fit the President's recipe."[255] This cut the persuasiveness of the study's conclusions. Nonetheless, it brought the issue to the attention of the Carter and Reagan administrations.

The Carter administration initially vacillated between liberalization and tight controls in its attempts to balance Cold War concerns with the need to rebuild transatlantic cooperation. Its policy hardened as it moved toward greater confrontation with the Soviet Union. In May 1979 it granted a license to Dresser Industries to export desperately needed drill bits and build a factory in the Soviet Union. It suspended the license a few months later following Soviet imprisonment of two prominent dissidents. The Carter administration then lent its support to the Export Administration Act, a Congressional initiative that liberalized American policy. Soviet invasion of Afghanistan ended the oscillation – Carter declared an across-the-board cutoff of technology.[256]

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[255] Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, *The Soviet Oil Situation: An Evaluation of CIA Analyses of Soviet Oil Production*, 95 Cong., 2 Sess. (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1978) and Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, *Report to the Senate Covering the Period May 16, 1977-December 31, 1978*, 96 Cong., Sess. (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1979), 35-6. Cited in Andrew, *For the President's Eyes Only*, 432.

[256] J. Fred Bucy, "Technology Transfer and East-West Trade: A Reappraisal," *International Security* 5, no. 3 (Winter 1980/81), 133. For more information on Bucy's

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West European allies, nevertheless, moved in to provide the technology the United States refused to sell to the Soviets. Much of this equipment produced in Europe was done so under license from American companies. Administration efforts to enforce its policy met with strong resistance from Western Europe. European leaders would have a difficult time convincing themselves and their electorates that they needed to subordinate their respective national interests to the East-West rivalry. [257] American frustration with Western Europe's seemingly selfish opportunism and its enthusiastic embrace of contracts that strengthened their mutual adversary increased substantially.

Allied collaboration regarding Cold War strategy degraded to the point at which one commentator referred to transatlantic relations as a "partial partnership."[258] Even when there was allied agreement on an issue – that Soviet acquisition of advanced Western technology, for example, poses a military threat to the West – there were disputes about the proper response. Everyone agreed that Western technologies that could be adapted by Soviet engineers for wartime use should be banned. The

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warnings, see his "On Strategic Technology Transfer to the Soviet Union," *International Security* 1, no. 4 (Spring 1977), 25-43.

[257] Robert J. Lieber concluded in 1980, "Although the importance of traditional military and strategic issues should not be minimized, for most Europeans, including the informed public and even those generally attuned to foreign policy, discussion of European deterrence and defense has tended to become somewhat abstract and removed. SALT II, the SS-20, grey area weapons, MBFR, enhanced Pershings, and a 3 percent real increase in NATO defense budgets are debated among a relatively limited number of specialists. By contrast, economic and energy security issues have become pressing and important subjects of great attention in both public and elite arenas." See "Energy, Economics, and Security, 139.

[258] Koldziej, "The Partial Partner," 104. Former Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Economic Affairs (1977-1981) Ellen Frost and Georgetown University professor Angela Stent opened their 1983 study of the situation lamenting, "East-West economic relations have never before played such an important and divisive role in the politics of the Western alliance as they do today." Frost and Stent, "NATO's Troubles," 179.

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disagreement was over the extent to which east-west trade in industries vital to military effectiveness should also be restricted.

The Export Administration Act of 1979 authorized Carter to impose export restraints for foreign policy reasons alone (as opposed to the needs of national security). As the United States moved toward a more adversarial stance with Moscow, Carter broadened security controls to include goods and technologies that contribute to the conduct of war. These included Western exports that served to strengthen the entire Soviet industrial base.[259] Unlike the grain embargo, the Soviets could not find alternative suppliers when it came to Western industrial technology. Europe and Japan offered the best hope of providing this technology. The United States put strong pressure on them to prevent this from happening.

Meanwhile, a series of American estimates in the early 1980s regarding the health of the Soviet economy began identifying the full severity of the difficulties that were described in the 1977 CIA study. One such estimate concluded, "The Soviet Union's hard currency situation will probably deteriorate. The U.S.S.R. currently has a net hard currency debt of $9.6 billion to the West."[260] The Soviets would have to use large amounts of hard currency in the next few years to help its allies in Eastern Europe repay their growing debt to the West. The best way for the Soviet Union to alleviate the pressure on its economy would be to get its Siberian operations working as quickly and

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[259] Frost and Stent, "NATO's Troubles," 180.

[260] Wharton Econometric Forecasting Associates, Centrally Planned Economies *Current Analysis* Newsletter, December 7, 1982. Cited in Frost and Stent, "NATO's Troubles," 182.

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fully as possible. This meant completion of both new strands of its Siberian pipeline, a project known as Urengoi-6, was a top priority.

As the United States moved toward greater confrontation of its Soviet adversary, members of the Reagan administration seized on the Soviets' hard currency situation as an excellent opportunity to cripple Soviet power. They began a two front war on Soviet hard currency. It sought to drain the Soviet treasury by increasing the already high costs of supporting its overextended empire while restricting the flow of hard currency into the Soviet Union. The underlying purpose of American efforts to stir up discontent in Eastern Europe and Soviet Central Asia reflected the first component of this. The Soviet petroleum industry was the natural place to implement the second part of this plan. It was simultaneously the primary source of hard currency and the target most vulnerable to American economic manipulations. Restricting Soviet exports while lowering their profitability would deliver a one-two punch to the Soviet economy.

Lowering profitability meant lowering the price of oil. CIA estimates concluded that for every $1 drop in the price of a barrel of oil, the Soviets lost $1 billion a year in hard currency earnings.[261] This was an amazing figure, considering most the entire Soviet economy had a total of $30 billion a year in hard currency earnings, half of which came from the export of oil and natural gas. For this the United States needed the cooperation of OPEC's swing producer, Saudi Arabia. Reducing Soviet petroleum exports meant taking measures to decrease Soviet production while finding ways of

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[261] Schweizer, *Victory*, 105.

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lowering demand for Soviet oil and natural gas. Preventing or slowing development of its Siberian field was a top priority for both goals. It would limit Soviet influence in Western Europe and place enormous pressure on the Soviet economy.

In 1981 Reagan presented his administration's analysis of the negative strategic implications of the Siberian pipeline project at the Ottawa Summit. He got a cool reaction from European leaders. Later that year the communist government in Poland, unable to suppress growing dissent through normal procedures, imposed martial law. The United States imposed sanctions on the Soviet Union and suspended the licenses of American companies exporting equipment to the USSR that was linked to the pipeline project. Reagan administration officials felt there was enough moral indignation in Europe to push for more restrictive trade policies and against completion of the Siberian pipelines.[262] COCOM became once again a focus of new proposals to limit trade.

When European leaders did not support the American position, the Reagan administration reacted with the anger born of intense frustration. To them the Soviet threat was clear and called for strong punitive measures. West Germany's refusal to go along with the sanctions particularly rankled the Reagan administration. The President, and indeed most Americans, thought of West Germany as a nation that ought to be full of penitence and gratitude.[263] Germany was responsible for starting two incredibly destructive world wars and drawing the reluctant United States into the responsibilities of

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[262] See "National Security Decision Directive 66: East-West Economic Relations & Poland-Related Sanctions," available at http://www.fas.org/irp/offdocs/nsdd/nsdd-066.htm, accessed 7 November 2004.

[263] Galbraith, *Ambassador in Paris*, 18.

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world leadership. Americans believed West Germans owed their current health to their generosity and protection, including the Marshall Plan, NATO, and the Berlin Airlift.[264]

The Reagan administration pushed its agenda relentlessly at the G-7 meeting in Versailles. The president placed finding alternative sources of petroleum for Europe and ending its subsidized credits at the top of his agenda.[265] European leaders rejected his proposals outright. Reagan proposed a compromise: the Soviets could build one pipeline instead of two, but the subsidized credits would stop and export controls tighten. This was not much of a concession and proved a non-starter. The summit ended with nothing but allied enmity about the U.S. position and a vague joint communiqué about fighting preferential agreements. Francois Mitterand reported to France that there had been no change in policy. Reagan made one last appeal for European cooperation at the next leadership meeting in Bonn. He pleaded with his colleagues to place their individual needs subordinate to the needs of the alliance. His colleagues barely listened.[266]

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[264] Marion Dönhoff, then co-editor of *Die Ziet*, complained in *Foreign Affairs* that, "Americans feel – often probably quite unconsciously – that we Germans should still act like well-behaved pupils with only one aim in mind: to be in tune with Washington." See "Bonn and Washington: The Strained Relationship," *Foreign Affairs* 57, no. 5 (Summer 1979), p.1052.

[265] Galbraith had already raised this issue with France. Locating petroleum sources for a friendly government was unusual assignment for an ambassador, but indicative of the seriousness of the Reagan administration's efforts to hurt the Soviet economy while preventing Western Europe from becoming dependent of Soviet petroleum.

[266] According to a U.S. official present at the meeting, German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt gazed out the window throughout Reagan's presentation, purposefully ignoring him.

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The job of selling American positions to the alliance fell to Secretary of State Alexander Haig. He developed personal relationships with most European leaders during his days as Supreme Allied Commander, Europe and seemed a natural bridge between their positions and the position of the United States. Haig was perhaps the only administration official who understood the opposition the U.S. position would generate in Europe. He soon fell into further disfavor among Reagan's advisors his refusal to push the Europeans on the pipeline issue. The president wanted someone to sell U.S. positions to the Europeans, not act as an arbiter.

In June 1982 the United States announced its license suspensions would include European licensees of American firms and backdated the measures to cover the period during which the pipeline contracts had been signed. Within weeks of the American action, France, Italy, Britain, and Germany decided to oppose the action and ordered their firms to proceed with their contractual deliveries. American opposition was rejected on the grounds that it was an unacceptable extension of U.S. law into the internal affairs of sovereign nations.[267] Allied relations worsened.

The Reagan administration ended its grain embargo a few weeks after it imposed pipeline sanctions. The availability of alternative suppliers meant the embargo was not going to have much effect on the Soviet economy, while grain imports by the USSR helped deprive its treasury of hard currency. This move incensed the same leaders

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[267] Robert J. Lieber, "International Energy Policy and the Reagan Administration: Avoiding the Next Oil Shock?" in *Eagle Resurgent? The Reagan Era in American Foreign Policy*, ed. Kenneth A. Oye, Robert J. Lieber, and Donald Rothchild (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1987), 167-89, esp. 178-79.

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Reagan was trying to convince to sacrifice their nations' individual economic objectives for the larger goal of alliance security. They pointed out that Reagan was not willing to defy farmers' lobbies for Cold War objectives. Allied leaders held that Reagan should not ask of their manufacturers what he would not ask of his farmers.[268]

Faced with immovable opposition from its allies in Western Europe, the United States eventually backed off its demand. In November, after lengthy consultations with allied leaders and sharp internal disagreement among his own staff, Reagan announced the lifting of sanctions against companies taking part in the pipeline project. Allied governments would allow no new contracts to be signed, tighten controls on strategic items, and make efforts to put financial relations with the Soviet Union in their strategic context.

Much damage had already been done to the Soviet economy. The Soviet response to the pipeline sanctions was to prioritize the acquisition or manufacture of embargoed items. The command economy enabled the Politburo to pull some of the Soviet Union's best engineers away from existing projects and employ them in making the gas project work. This kind of rearrangement is expensive and has important effects on the stability of the other sectors, largely civilian, that found themselves suddenly missing their top experts.

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[268] Reagan did, in fact, face opposition from American companies involved in the pipeline project. More than sixty American firms were affected by it. Caterpillar Tractor lost a $90 million order for pipe-laying equipment. General Electric lost an order worth $175 million. See Schultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, 135-45.

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The Soviets also conducted a large-scale operation of industrial espionage that sought to steal the technology that the Americans would not sell. Reagan, like Carter before him, turned to covert action to achieve what diplomacy could not. Expecting this, CIA director William Casey commissioned engineers to create purposefully flawed industrial schematics and allowed Soviet agents to steal them. As a result the Soviet Union built a number of critically important turbines, drills, and other machines that did not work. U.S. efforts to hamper the Soviets' pipeline project had become a series of clandestine operations.

The effectiveness of American efforts against the Siberian project is uncertain. Some American scholars concluded the technology restrictions and economic sanctions had little effect on the Soviets' timetable for completion and hard currency earnings.[269] Jonathan Stern noted in 1987, "In terms of delaying the pipeline and/or dissuading European utilities from signing contracts, the Reagan sanctions could generally be considered a failure."[270] The Soviet Union was "inconvenienced" by having to use equipment produced domestically and scored a large propaganda victory by completing the pipeline on schedule. Actual deliveries to Western Europe were smaller than

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[269] A senior fellow at the Brooking Institution, Ed A. Hewitt, concluded in 1984 that U.S. efforts were a waste of time and political capital. "There is probably little the United States can do to influence the development of the Soviet energy sector, and through that economic performance and Soviet economic relations with the two Europes." Ed A. Hewitt, *Energy, Economics, and Foreign Policy in the Soviet Union* (Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution, 1984), 222.

[270] Stern, "Soviet Oil," 33.

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anticipated, but largely because a European recession lowered demand for petroleum and left the pipeline with excess capacity.

Others believe the Soviet energy industry was already on the brink of catastrophe and the American efforts helped push it over the edge. Thane Gustafson, for instance, argued the USSR's struggles to cope with its energy problems ranked them "the single most disruptive factor in Soviet industry since the mid-1970s" and one of the leading causes of its stagnation.[271] This lends credence to the view taken by many, including most Soviet observers, that even a slight nudge by the United States in the area of oil and natural gas would have catalyzed the Soviet economic collapse.

The United States continued to restrict trade in energy-related technologies, albeit without much support from its allies.[272] On January 17, 1983 Reagan signed NSDD-75, which added specifics to the general U.S. Cold War strategy and called for further efforts to keep the Soviets from getting what they needed to complete their pipeline projects. Subsequent studies and discussion within the framework of the International Energy Agency led to an agreement among importing governments to limit Soviet gas to no more than 30-35% of total gas supplies in any West European country.

American efforts to disrupt the Soviet petroleum industry were aggressive, costly, and as least in some measure effective. The United States paid a high price for its efforts in terms of alliance unity and cooperation. Transatlantic relations during these years

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[271] Thane Gustafson, *Crisis amid Plenty: The Politics of Soviet Energy under Brezhnev and Gorbachev* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989), 5.

[272] NSDD-75, "U.S. Relations with the U.S.S.R.," available at http://www.fas.org/irp/offdocs/nsdd/nsdd-075.htm, accessed 7 November 2004.

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were extraordinarily frosty as the Americans unrelentingly pushed European governments to drop the project, or at least limit its scope. There was also a price to be paid at home: American firms watched begrudgingly while their European licensees made profits on the very technology they had developed but were prevented from selling to the Soviets.

Conclusions

In the early 1980s the United States began to view its international position as increasingly threatened by the Soviet Union. American strategists adjusted their grand strategy to allow for greater confrontation of their primary adversary as a necessary component. Only by defining Soviet communism as the inheritor of the totalitarian threat of the Second World War could this assertive America accept the realities of power politics without abandoning its sense of exceptionalism. The Soviet Union became not just a threat to American hopes for preeminence, but an evil empire that required the active opposition of the United States.

This process started during the last years of the Carter administration and continued more forcefully under Reagan. Robert Osgood argued that the Reagan administration followed a typically American pattern in gaining office by criticizing its predecessors and then later claiming credit for following their policies.[273] Throughout

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[273] "Each newly elected Administration of the alternative political party launches its foreign relations with themes that were developed during the national campaign in opposition to the policies of its predecessor. But then comes the down beat: unexpected

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1981 this was often the view among experts within the Soviet Union as well. One study noted, "Many Soviet specialists on the United States regarded the Reagan Administration as "Carterism without Carter," that is, as a continuation and intensification of policies pursued during Carter's last year in office."[274] Within the next two years, as the United States focused more heavily on its foreign affairs, most experts abandoned this view. Despite the persistence of many of his predecessor's policies, American grand strategy in late 1970s and early 1980s represented a major break with the past. Caspar Weinberger noted, "From the earliest days of his administration, President Reagan made a concerted effort to win the Cold War and consign the Soviet system to "the ash heap of history" . . . such was the grand strategy and greatest foreign policy accomplishment of the Reagan administration."[275] This process began with the abandonment of containment, détente, and policies of sustainable equivalence and ended with an aggressive American confrontation of the Soviet Union.

Conclusions

In the late 1970s the most powerful nation in the world decided its grand strategy was insufficient for its security objectives. The United States had undergone a fundamental shift away from classically realist power politics and their assumptions

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domestic and international conditions contradict (or appear to contradict) the underlying premises of the "new" foreign policy. Then either the Administration abandons or modifies its themes (in substance, if not in rhetoric) or it takes uncontested credit for the transformation. This phenomenon began with the Eisenhower Administration. It has deep roots in the American political system and the American approach to the outside world." Osgood, "The Revitalization of Containment," 19.

[274] Bialer and Afferica, "Reagan and Russia," 253.

[275] Weinberger, *In the Arena*, 286-87.

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about morality that did not figure into American traditions of exceptionalism. The longstanding expectation among American strategists that their nation would settle into perpetual preeminence was challenged by an inexorably growing Soviet empire and the unexpectedly amoral nature of American own responses to it.

Many elements of the decision to abandon its defensive mentality were foreseen by some scholars and analysts before, during, or immediately after they took shape. However, perceptions of the fundamentally different nature of the new American grand strategy went largely unnoticed by both sides. These observations were never assembled in any fashion that allowed one to identify the nature of the changes taking place. This is not the fault of any particular community in international relations. Throughout the period many scholars produced very useful insights and, in hindsight, appear to be at times quite prescient.

What prevented wider recognition of the shift in American viewpoints and grand strategy was the lack of a consistent approach to behavioral analysis based on the assumptions and views of the very people who made it happen. Scholars were constrained, and properly so, to advancement of their theoretical work and, therefore, bound by the assumptions underlying their models. Policy makers were constrained by their professional viewpoints and the duties of leadership. The responsibility for bringing them together falls to the analyst. Only in the area of analysis can one pursue a proto-theoretical approach that is free of the limitations of theorizing and policy-making.

Between the end of the Second World War and the mid-1970s the American people were learning what it was like to engage in protracted struggle with an adversary capable of defeating them. They were disturbed both by their first real taste of fear for

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their nation's survival and their own surprising willingness to overlook minor transgressions of cherished U.S. morality to ensure their own survival. They understood that continued erosion of American morality in international affairs had brought with it a deterioration of international power and acted to preserve this heritage.

American strategists recognized that they would need every source of power available to them if they were going to withstand the encroaching power of the Soviet Union and achieve lasting preeminence in the international system. Military, economic, and ideological power were all required for successful confrontation of the Soviet assault on the free world. Failure to muster all sources of American power would create an unacceptable situation of relative power parity and perhaps even irreversible inferiority. Such a situation, obviously, would not be consistent with American preeminence.

Faced with an unavoidable threat to its long-term international position, the United States abandoned its decades-old pursuit of containment in favor of rebuilding its sources of power and an energetic confrontation of its primary adversary. Whether the Soviet Union possessed the capacity to achieve full parity with the United States remains a matter of vigorous contention. The answer does little to explain U.S. strategy, for the important thing to note is that Americans in the mid-1970s believed it was possible. Alarmed by expected trends in bilateral and multilateral power, the United States created and implemented a grand strategy bent on dispatching its primary challenger while it remained the more powerful nation.

The Americans took the fight to those areas in which it held an especial Cold War advantage: ideology, economy, and high technology. They sought to increase the price of superpower competition with the United States in precisely those areas that would hurt

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the Soviet Union most dearly. To rebuild ideological power the United States elected Jimmy Carter and abandoned as many immoral elements of American foreign policy as it thought possible. This meant relinquishing control of the Panama Canal to boost credibility for fidelity to agreements. It made Camp David a prominent place as Carter sought to reestablish America's role as a force for peace in the world. It brought human rights to the fore of international relations discussions. It prevented the United States from winning at all costs in the Horn of Africa.

Rebuilding American economic and military power proved a surprisingly short process, proof of the resilience and potential of the United States. Investment in high technology, such as cruise missiles, stealth technology, and strategic defense, presented the Soviets with an area in which it could not afford to compete, but ill-afford not to try. Aggressive confrontation of Soviet power in places like Afghanistan and Poland increased the amount of hard currency and effort expended to maintain the Soviet empire. Pressuring the Soviet economy by restricting its earnings from petroleum exports and forcing restructuring on its already-strapped industrial base exacerbated the economic woes of the vulnerable communist system.

That this strategy proved effective hardly requires explanation. In the mid-1980s the United States realized its confrontation of Soviet power had become so successful that the Soviet Union and its far-flung empire experienced the first throes of a systemic crisis. Neither side sought the destabilization of the Cold War. The Politburo, recognizing that only a wrenching transformation of the Soviet system could save it, handed power to Mikhail Gorbachev.

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The American grand strategy of renewal, confrontation, and preeminence displayed all the characteristics of policy oversteer. The United States continued to pressure the Soviets throughout the 1980s to compete simultaneously with American economic output, military might, and ideological appeal. Reagan visited Berlin to challenge his Soviet counterpart to "tear down this wall" and allow those under Soviet domination to decide if they wished to remain so. The American strategy adopted in late 1970s worked so well that within ten years of its inception it was abandoned in favor of a strategy of stabilization. The United States, aware of the dangers dissolution of an empire could pose in a nuclear world, eased but did not end its assertive confrontation. The seventy-year Soviet experiment with communism came to an end as the people of Eastern Europe and Russia took to the streets to demand freedom.

Five decades after the United States initially sought to maintain its tenuous position as the preeminent nation of an increasingly integrated and cooperative international system, it achieved it. American ideology proved more attractive than that of the Soviet Union, causing the Soviet satellite states in Eastern Europe and, finally, the Soviet Union itself to cede defeat and adopt the American model. American armed forces stood unchallenged as the preponderant military institution on the globe. The American economy, freed from its Cold War restrictions, erupted with the next generation of information technology and unprecedented prosperity.

At this moment in history President George Bush proclaimed the arrival of the New World Order, based on an ever-expanding international preference for the American model. The United States, freed from the longstanding threat of its greatest adversary, began looking at ways of refashioning the international order to sustain its position. It

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restructured its own military and encouraged unprecedented cooperation among differing national armed forces. This bore fruit in the efforts of a truly international coalition, led by the United States, which responded to the invasion of Kuwait by ejecting the occupying Iraqi military forces and reestablishing Kuwaiti sovereignty and regional security. The United States solidified its economic position with a series of economic maneuvers, including more extensive trade with its partners, opening of markets, expansion of the World Trade Organization, and the creation of the North American Free Trade Association.

This strategy itself, in turn, would be modified in response to a series of terrorist attacks on American soil, beginning with devastating bombings at the World Trade Center and American embassies. They culminated in simultaneous airplane hijackings that were used subsequently to attack the Pentagon and destroy the World Trade Center in 2001. Suppression of terrorism became a requirement of long-term international stability, inducing the United States to invade Afghanistan in 2001 and Iraq in 2002 and replace the governments of both nations. The imperial nature of American foreign policy at the turn of the millennium has repercussions for the ways in which Americans view their country. Understanding changes in American grand strategy that result from this offers opportunities for further research, analysis, and projection.

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CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

International relations scholarship is an invaluable accompaniment of political interaction. It provides the vision, wisdom, and adroitness that together enable the evolution of human interaction. Recognizing patterns of human activity allows national leaders to avoid many of the most treacherous perils of statecraft. Scholarly investigation of patterns of human activity produces a striking body of work, intellectually engaging to the casual observer and invaluable to the policy maker. Yet it is in a sense perpetually unfinished. There will always be more to accomplish in the theory, practice, and analysis of international relations.

The implications of proto-theory are manifold. The analysis that flows from it deepens understanding by bringing the best insights of scholars to bear on the situations faced by policy makers immersed in details seemingly remote from most scholarly propositions. When scholars and policy makers work together more effectively, they create more sophisticated and prescient grand strategies. These serve the interest of the both the nations that create them and the international community.

This work sought to demonstrate the utility of a proto-theoretical approach to understanding international relations. It did so from the point of view of the political analyst that resides in each scholar and policy maker – that patient observer of events and discerner of their larger implications. By suspending the observer's own assumptions about the international system the observer can transcend his or her own prejudicial judgments and analytical tendencies to identify instead those areas of inquiry most

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relevant to understanding the situation at hand. This kind of understanding leads to better analysis of historical and evolving situations while offering a better opportunity for identifying the which trends are most likely to shape events.

A proto-theoretical approach to analyzing international behavior avoids many of the pitfalls inherent in applying scholarly insights to real-world situations. It reduces the likelihood that analysts will contaminate their work with views and assumptions that do not correspond to those of the investigated situation. It is also meant to benefit scholars, whose work often is dismissed by unwarranted criticism that their theories do not explain developments in situations that do not parallel their assumptions. Proto-theoretical states provide a kind of political agnosticism that allows observers to temporarily suspend the limitations of their own viewpoints. Proto-theory encourages preference of scholarly insights that are most useful, rather than those most preferable to those doing the investigation. Strenuous effort must be made to eliminate as much as possible the human tendency to see all situations from one's own view of the world. Maintaining a proto-theoretical state of mind at the outset of political analysis makes this possible.

Frustration with the growing density of international relations demonstrates the need for reliable means of understanding them. As human civilization progresses the international system and all the nations in it continue to push the bounds of complexity. Each generation finds its world more interconnected and confusing than the one into which it was born. Some of this can be perception can be attributed to the greater understanding of depth, subtlety, and nuance that comes with increasing age. The rest is produced by a world that is, in fact, growing more complex daily.

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Risks, consequences, and unexpected reverberations multiply as civilization continues its inexorable embrace of complexity. The pressure to be prescient grows ever more difficult to bear. Decision makers want answers, not ever more multifaceted understandings of the questions. Therefore the continued inability of international relations theorists to produce a "magic bullet"—a single, reliable predictor of international behavior—causes the rest of the world to lose patience with their scholarly investigations and dismiss their findings as immaterial.

Consigning theoretical work to scholarly panels and academic journals might appear at first glance to be a sensible course of action. Understanding its value requires time and patience, both scarce resources in the fast-paced, high-energy world of international politics. In the midst of never-ending crises and policy making, why stop to listen to the unintelligible discussions of an academic community that begins and ends its presentations with the conclusion that more study is needed? The answer is that doing so makes both political and practical sense.

In political terms the use of the most advanced and powerful approaches to the understanding and conduct of international relations is psychologically reassuring to those who must find confidence in the analysis being used to make decisions. On the advice of their most trusted scholars, the leaders of history's various polities consulted what they considered the most effective means at their disposal. Caesar's advisors scrutinized animal innards, Chinese emperors poked at I-Ching hexagrams, European rulers besought Nostradamus, and countless heads of state from Abraham of Genesis to Abraham Lincoln prayed to God for guidance. Many of these methods seem utterly ineffective to those born in more scientific and computerized ages, but they were the best

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methods available to them and that fact made their use comforting to both policy makers and citizens. Outcries over the use of anything other than the most advanced form of behavioral prediction, such as those heard regarding the consultation of a San Franciscan psychic advisor during the Reagan administration, are a forceful reminder that public dissatisfaction with results of modern theoretical analysis may not be nearly as powerful as public dissatisfaction with continued use of outdated methods.

Practically speaking, modern international relations scholarship has been genuinely useful to those making and understanding grand strategies. Theoretical models provide a rigorous format for the study of international phenomena and often identify influences and trends that slip past even the most observant diplomat. To ignore their insights, and rely solely on the experience and wisdom of foreign policy practitioners, would be to leave fallow a resource essential to any serious player in the competitive environment of international politics. It also opens one's grand strategy to counterproductive and even dangerous fluctuations, which often limit the effectiveness of any particular grand strategy to the length of the administration that implements it. [1]

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[1] Henry Kissinger made the case forcefully in 1977 that a well informed and consistent grand strategy was essential to security: "Our country cannot uproot its whole foreign policy every four or eight years – or imply that it is doing so – or else America will itself become a major factor of instability in the world . . . Of course, a foreign policy that stresses continuity above all else would be stultifying and would in time be overwhelmed by events. A new Administration is obviously not elected to carry out all the policies of its predecessor. But change in our policy should be seen as reflecting new circumstances and not change for its own sake." From "Continuity and Change in American Foreign Policy," the Arthur K. Salomon Lecture, given September 19, 1977 at the Graduate School of Business Administration, New York University, New York City.

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International relations theory and diplomatic expertise are highly complementary, each straining toward greater understanding of international behavior. Grand strategists who exclude either sphere have only a limited understanding of the international environment, a weakness often revealed by inconsistent and largely ineffective foreign policy. More than ever before it is incumbent upon analysts, advisors, and decision makers to use all effective means available to understand the forces driving international events. The world has always been and remains a very dangerous place. Periods of international tranquility are brief and opportune times in which every effort to establish a more stable, secure international order is critical. It is during such times that full comprehension and energetic implementation of grand strategies will be most effective, for rapid successions of perilous international events have a way of stalling, often permanently, debate over long-term objectives.

The days in which identification and pursuit of grand strategy fell by the wayside are usually those that historians identify as those days in which steps should have been taken to prevent the calamities that followed. The machinery of effective foreign policy implementation – effective intelligence networks, well-established response plans to likely scenarios, methods of crisis management – cannot be adjusted quickly to respond to crises. They must have structures and purposes that are consistent with long-term strategic goals. Strategic thinking encourages the kind of foresight necessary to prevent nations from becoming myopic over present-day particulars and later overwhelmed by

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Published in Henry A. Kissinger, *For the Record: Selected Statements, 1977-1980* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1981), 77.

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unforeseen events.[2] Successful grand strategy *requires* application of the best insights of international relations scholarship.

Scholarly pursuits occur with equal brilliance in many directions. The analyst must be proficient in situations both intimately familiar and completely foreign. Proto-theory offers the analyst the capacity for, at least the beginnings of investigation, similar levels of effectiveness. The resources one can marshal for deepening analysis will, of course, affect the explanatory power of the work. However, suspending preferences for one kind of scholarly construct increases the versatility of the analyst, whose insightful mind is no longer confined to the realm of his or her own experience.

This study sought to demonstrate the effectiveness of a proto-theoretical approach for the study of U.S. grand strategy. The next logical avenue of investigation is its application to a situation in international relations that assumes a very different pattern of human relations. Religious fundamentalism, transnational terrorism, and organized crime are all examples of analytical situations that do not correlate very closely with the structural realism (non-state actors) or constructivism (as they do not construct a coherent system of politics). The next phase of research can demonstrate the wider applicability of proto-theoretical states to all areas of grand strategy analysis by working outside these areas.

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[2] An example of this viewpoint can be found in the excellent presidential address on the subject given by Robert Jervis to the APSA in 2001 and reprinted as "Theories of War in an Era of Leading-Power Peace," *American Political Science Review* 96, no. 1 (March 2002), 1-14.

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While proto-theory is, of course, not a universal theory of international relations, it is a universally valid method of applying scholarly insights effectively to the study of international relations. If offers an approach to international relations analysis that can produce results useful to both scholars and policy makers. A unified field theory of political behavior does not exist and does not appear likely to evolve. A proto-theoretical approach is perhaps the best substitute.

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