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Walt W. Rostow

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In a sequel to his address to the Naval War College last year, which appeared in the September 1970 issue of the "Naval War College Review," Dr. Rostow discusses the chance at this juncture in history for the United States to participate in building a stable world order. Contending that America's role over the next few years could prove to be the crucial factor between achieving a stable peace or allowing the world to drift in continued war and chaos, the article focuses both on the hopeful signs for peace as well as the forces in international politics endangering these goals.

WILL WE SNATCH DEFEAT FROM THE JAWS OF VICTORY?

A lecture delivered at the Naval War College
by
Dr. Walt W. Rostow

I

My title today is both unfashionable and paradoxical. I derived it from an article in the London *Economist*¹ referring to American policy in Southeast Asia. I shall be discussing a wider range of issues, including Southeast Asia.

The title is unfashionable because it is not generally regarded as good taste these days to talk about victory; it is paradoxical because my notion of victory is not triumph in the usual military sense: it is the building of stable peace, on the principles of the United Nations Charter, from the intractable raw materials left in the wake of the Second World War.

I put the matter this way in a talk at Fort Bragg in June 1961:²

The victory we seek will see no ticker tape parades down Broad-

way—no climactic battles nor great American celebrations of victory. It is a victory which will take many years and decades of hard work and dedication—by many peoples—to bring about. This will not be a victory of the United States over the Soviet Union. It will not be a victory of capitalism over socialism. It will be a victory of men and nations which aim to stand up straight over the forces that wish to entrap and to exploit their revolutionary aspirations of modernization. . . .

The American interest will be served if our children live in an environment of strong, assertive, independent nations, capable, because they are strong, of assuming collective responsibility for the peace.

4 NAVAL WAR COLLEGE REVIEW

I begin with the question of peace because I believe the word has been debased in the current debate on foreign policy. In the name of peace the questions posed in that debate are: How fast and how much should the United States pull back from responsibility in the world? How many troops can we pull out of Asia or Europe? How far can we cut the military budget or the foreign aid budget?

I believe we are debating the wrong questions. The right question is: What must America do to play its part in moving from where we are to reasonably stable peace?

I believe this is the right question, because the underlying forces at work in the world offer more chance than at any time since 1945—and, perhaps, since 1914—for the attainment of reasonably stable peace. But the movement is not certain. There are also powerful forces at work making for disruption and violence, of which the most dangerous are those pushing the United States toward excessive withdrawal from responsibility.

My theme is, then, that the world community is in delicate balance between hopeful and dangerous outcomes and that our behavior as a society could prove to be the critical factor.

I shall develop this argument in three parts: first, a definition of the forces making for the possibility of stable peace; second, a brief portrait of the precarious balance in the arms race, the Middle East, and Southeast Asia; third, some observations about our political and economic life relevant to the outcome.

II

What, then, are the bases for hope? First, there is the diffusion of power away from Moscow and Washington. This is no new phenomenon. It began, in a sense, for both capitals in 1948.

For the United States it began when

the American Congress voted the funds for the Marshall Plan and threw its weight behind the movement toward Western European unity. We set about reviving a region which we hoped to see emerge as a partner, not a satellite.

For Moscow the diffusion of power began when Tito defied Stalin and proved that Yugoslavia could survive on that basis.

This diffusion has continued over the past generation, gathering momentum particularly after the Cuban missile crisis.

That crisis persuaded men in many parts of the world that the Soviet Union was not as dangerous as it had been over the previous 15 years, and, therefore, they could act with greater independence of Washington, as well as of Moscow. The missile crisis also brought Moscow's split with Peking into the open and intensified it.

So far as American policy is concerned, I believe we can take pride in the fact that in the first postwar generation we threw our political influence, as well as our economic resources, behind the desire of nations to fashion their own destinies. And we have moved in recent years—under President Johnson's leadership and now President Nixon's—to the active support of regionalism in Latin America, Africa, and Asia, as well as continuing our support for regionalism in Western Europe. We did not oppose the diffusion of power. We tried to help organize it in constructive ways.

For Moscow the diffusion of power has meant that the Communist vision of a world led by the Soviet Union has receded. Along its Chinese frontier and in Eastern Europe grandiose hopes have changed to anxieties. In the developing continents, nations increasingly march to their own beat. Soviet policy has moved in the direction of a conventional concern for Russian security. The transition is not complete but I believe there are more men in Moscow than there were 10 years ago who understand

that the world emerging in the latter half of the 20th century is not going to be dominated by any single power or any single ideology and that their duty to their own peoples is to help organize the world peacefully rather than to try to control it directly from Moscow. That is what the Nonproliferation Treaty is about; that is the inarticulate premise of the SALT talks, and the occasional Soviet efforts to join others in damping, rather than exacerbating, crises. But other events raise warning flags: the Middle East since 1967 and the Soviet failure to honor its commitment to the Laos Accords of 1962 should remind us that this doctrine has not been fully accepted. But we are closer to it than we were even 10 years ago; and the forces making for the diffusion of power will certainly persist, not diminish.

Related to the diffusion of power is a second major force which could lead us in the direction of stable peace; that is, the decline of the aggressive revolutionary romantics.

The politics of developing nations has been marked in the generation since 1945 by a group of autocratic or totalitarian leaders who have chosen to build their domestic politics on "anti-imperialism" and to channel a high proportion of the limited energies, talents, and resources available to them into external expansion: in Asia the roster included Mao, Ho, Kim, Sukarno; in the Middle East, Nasser and the other radical Arab leaders; in Africa, Nkrumah and Ben Bella; in Latin America, Castro. In one way or another these men were deeply involved in the world's major crises since South Korea was invaded more than 20 years ago.

Some of these leaders are gone, and the fate of others—and their policies—is still to be determined. In general, however, they encountered three forces which have tended to frustrate them.

First, they encountered that nemesis

of all expansionists: other people's nationalism.

Second, they encountered the resistance of those who have not wished to see the regional balances of power upset. The United States has carried in our time the major burden of supporting those under pressure of regional aggression; but the British and Australians stood with Malaysia; 15 nations, with South Korea; six, with South Vietnam; Britain and the United States stood with Jordan and Lebanon in 1958; since 1967 the United States has helped keep the balance of regional forces from overwhelming Israel.

Third, their relative neglect of domestic welfare gradually reduced political support at home for policies of expansion. It is easy initially to excite the people with visions of quick redress for real or believed old grievances or humiliations or with visions of new grandeur; but, in time, the desire to eat better, to see the children grow up with better health and more education asserts itself.

It was in such settings of frustration and disabuse that Nkrumah, Ben Bella, and Sukarno gave way to successors more focused on tasks of welfare and growth; Kim and Sadat now elevate the priority of domestic development; Castro lays before his people the depth of the economic disarray in Cuba; and the North Vietnamese, after Tet in 1968, began to surface their inner debate on the priority of victory in the South versus "building socialism" in North Vietnam. (I regret that latest evidence suggests that victory in Indochina has been reinstalled as the overriding priority in Hanoi.)

It is no easy thing for a group of political leaders to abandon a vision to which their mature lives have been committed and which, up to a point, has granted them success. In the case of Hanoi, Pyongyang, Cairo, and Havana, the availability of large external resources permits postponement of the

6 NAVAL WAR COLLEGE REVIEW

decision to shift from expansion abroad to growth and welfare at home. And before these dreams are abandoned, we may see final desperate acts to fulfill them.

But, in the end—sooner or later—they will confront the destiny of the first great romantic revolutionary expansionist—Napoleon. And they—or their successors—will echo Napoleon's memorandum to his Finance Minister in December 1812, when he abandoned the continental system and the attempt to throttle Britain: "Undoubtedly it is necessary to harm our foes, but above all we must live."

The third hopeful force for peace at work is the trend of events and policy in Peking. We have observed a truly extraordinary passage of history since Mao—a few weeks after the first sputnik was launched in the autumn of 1957—proclaimed in Moscow that the East Wind was prevailing over the West and that the Communist Party of the Soviet Union should lead the Communist world in a great offensive:

- from the spring of 1958, at least, Moscow and Peking moved toward mortal disagreement over the nuclear question;

- Mao's Great Leap Forward of 1958 failed;

- by the December 1960 Moscow meeting of the world's Communist Parties, Soviet atomic and economic experts had been withdrawn from China and the struggle for power in the Communist world between Moscow and Peking was fully under way;

- in the wake of the Cuban missile crisis and the Test Ban Treaty the split became overt, and quarrelsome inter-party documents were published before the world;

- following the October 1964 explosion of a Chinese Communist nuclear weapon, Soviet forces gradually built up on the Sino-Soviet frontier and were matched by the Chinese;

- in 1965 Peking moved toward a

major breakthrough: Hanoi was close to victory in South Vietnam; Sukarno withdrew from the United Nations, proclaiming his association with Peking; and plans for the conference in Algiers moved ahead with its aim of welding the developing world into an anti-American bloc. Then, in June, Ben Bella was overthrown and the Algiers conference put aside; in July, President Johnson made his decision to put American forces massively into Vietnam; in October, the Communist effort to seize power in Indonesia failed; and a few weeks later the Cultural Revolution began, throwing the Chinese mainland into protracted crisis;

- after 2 years of economic decline and near political anarchy, in 1967 the tide began to turn in Peking toward more rational domestic and foreign policies. Behind the recent outburst of ping-pong diplomacy lay several years of slow economic recovery, the gradual political triumph of the Chinese military and technocrats, and the quiet resumption of normal diplomacy with other nations in the non-Communist world.

This more hopeful phase in Chinese Communist relations with the outside world is linked with the two major forces which I described a moment ago:

- the diffusion of power away from Moscow and Washington, of which the Soviet troops massed on the Chinese frontier are a powerful symbol;

- and the decline of the romantic revolutionaries, of whom Mao must be regarded as the most remarkable.

Taken all together, then, it is not beyond the range of possibility that we might see in the years ahead:

- a Soviet Union which has accepted its role as a great nation-state among many and is prepared, while advancing its interests, to work toward stabilizing a world environment as potentially dangerous to Russians as to others;

- a transition to moderation in Pyongyang, Hanoi, Cairo, and Havana equivalent to that which has already

occurred in Djakarta, Algiers, and Accra;

- the emergence of a Peking on the Asian and world scenes prepared to concentrate the great talents and energies of the Chinese people on modernization, while, in Mr. Rusk's old phrase, leaving its neighbors alone.

Under those circumstances, the world community would still be a lively place; for the forces at work on the planet are inherently volatile; but it might begin to approximate the relative order and balance envisaged at San Francisco in 1945 when the United Nations Charter was drafted.

III

These are possibilities; but they are not certainties. We have not come easily or automatically to the point where these hopes can rationally be expressed as possibilities. We have come to this point only because Americans and others have acted and, if necessary, laid down their lives to render unrealistic other less benign paths of policy.

Take, for example, the arms race and the SALT talks.

How have we come to the agreement in principle acknowledged in the 20 May, announcement, in Washington and Moscow, that the next round in the SALT talks will concentrate on a limitation of ABM's plus "certain measures" to limit offensive weapons as well?

First, there was the Soviet psychological triumph of sputnik in October 1957 and Khrushchev's systematic projection of an extraordinary lie; namely, that the Soviet Union had moved into regular large-scale production of ICBM's. On the basis of this lie, plus the reality of the IRBM's targeted on Western Europe, he launched his campaign of nuclear blackmail designed to detach Berlin from the West and to wreck NATO. And when this failed, he sought a cheap way to shift the nuclear balance by putting IRBM's in Cuba.

It was President Kennedy's destiny to deal with this dangerous passage. Having triumphed in a critical test of will in the Caribbean, he sought and succeeded in turning Moscow from nuclear threat to nuclear agreement, in the 1963 Test Ban agreement.

With great stubbornness and sense of purpose, President Johnson pressed Moscow to persist along this path; and he succeeded in achieving a nonproliferation treaty and in laying the basis for the SALT talks which would have begun with a summit meeting scheduled for announcement on Wednesday, 21 August 1968, if the Soviet Union had not invaded Czechoslovakia on the previous day.

Between 1965 and 1969, however, Moscow put enormous resources into ICBM's, built a substantial ABM system around Moscow, and created, in addition, the still somewhat ambiguous Tallin anti-aircraft system with potential ABM capabilities. This movement of the Soviet Union to strategic parity with the United States has continued with great momentum over the past two and a half years, as figures 1-5 suggest.³

The announcement of 20 May was hopeful, but inconclusive. A great question evidently still exists in Moscow which we should understand and discuss candidly: Should the Soviet Union complete the SALT negotiations and bring the strategic arms race to a formal close on the basis of parity, somehow acceptably defined to both parties? Or, should it go forward, on the basis of current momentum, and try to achieve strategic superiority over the United States in some meaningful sense?

There are two ways in which the Soviet Union might achieve superiority. First, a sufficiently massive buildup of strategic forces, offensive and defensive, so that a Soviet first strike might be undertaken against the United States so powerful that the United States could only inflict in a second strike a level of destruction on the Soviet Union which

TRENDS IN US AND SOVIET OPERATIONAL ICBM LAUNCHERS

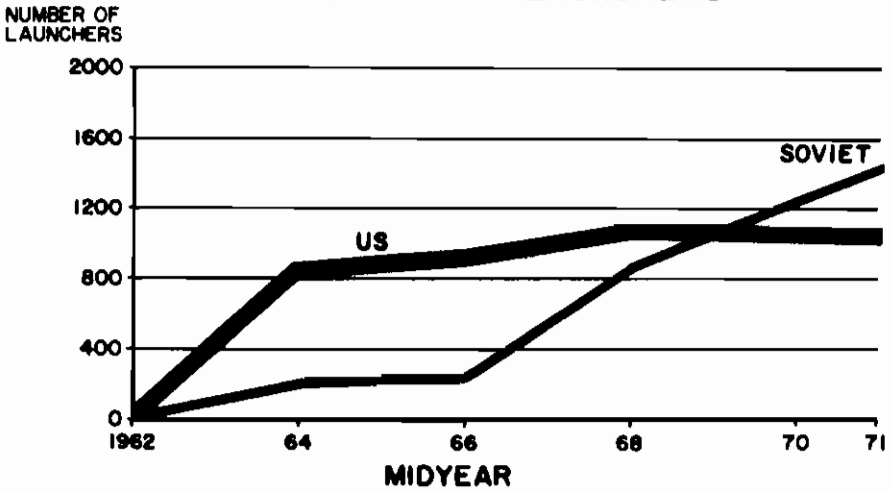


Figure 1

TRENDS IN US AND SOVIET OPERATIONAL SLBM LAUNCHERS

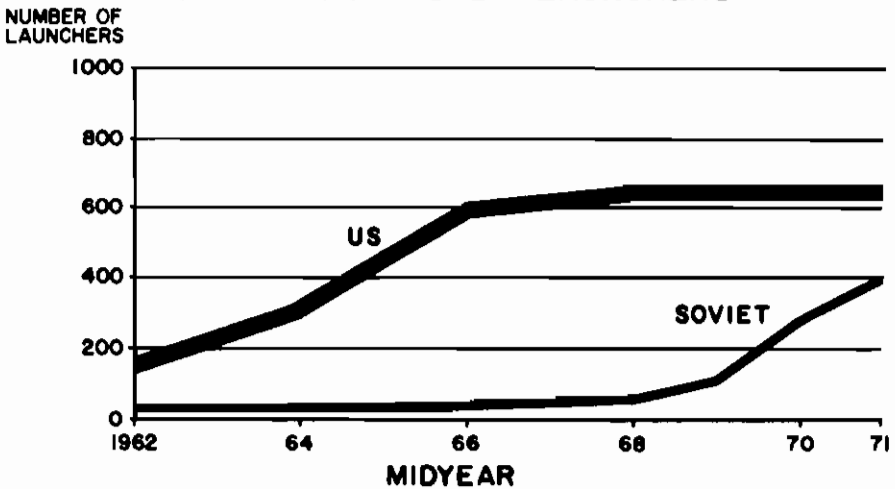


Figure 2

TRENDS IN US AND SOVIET INTERCONTINENTAL BOMBERS (OPERATIONAL)



Figure 3

TRENDS IN TOTAL US AND SOVIET INTERCONTINENTAL DELIVERY VEHICLES (ICBM LAUNCHERS, SLBM TUBES AND STRATEGIC BOMBERS)

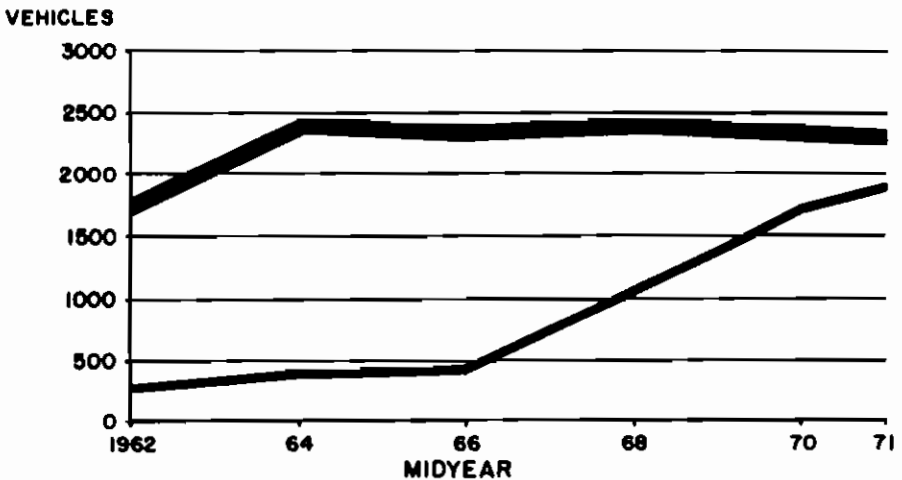


Figure 4

TRENDS IN US AND SOVIET DEEP WATER OPERATIONAL COMBAT SURFACE SHIPS

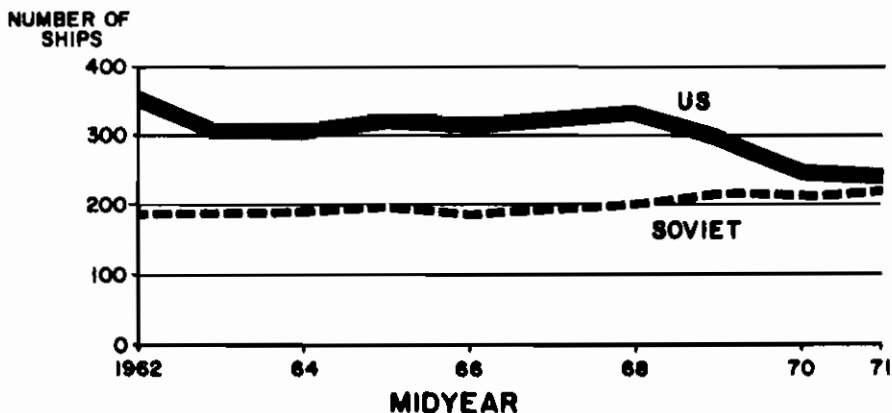


Figure 5

the Soviet leaders judged acceptable; that is, the United States would be destroyed as a viable power, whereas a viable Russia, still under Communist control, would survive. Such an insane enterprise is most unlikely; but it is conceivable in a world which has seen, in this century, a good deal of political madness. And we have no right to offer such a temptation.

The second sense in which Soviet superiority might be achieved would be what might be called a reverse Cuban missile crisis; that is, against the background of a substantial Soviet strategic advantage over the United States, plus the availability of sufficient Soviet conventional forces, Moscow might try to force Washington to back down in a major confrontation in a particular area; for example, the Middle East.

Thought in Moscow, as in all capitals, is complex. I do not believe all Soviet officials are obsessed with envy and hostility toward the United States; but it is worth recalling Khrushchev's frame of mind, in his own words, as he put the missiles into Cuba:⁴

... it was high time America learned what it feels like to have her own land and her own people threatened. We Russians have suffered three wars over the last half century: World War I, the Civil War, and World War II. America has never had to fight a war on her own soil, at least not in the past fifty years. She's sent troops abroad to fight in two World Wars—and made a fortune as a result. America has shed a few drops of her own blood while making billions by bleeding the rest of the world dry.

We would be most unwise to believe that Soviet leaders might not, in something like Khrushchev's spirit of 1962, try again, if they felt they had a military advantage. The likelihood of such a dangerous adventure is increased somewhat by a belief that our statistical strategic advantage played a large role in President Kennedy's stand at Berlin and in the Caribbean in 1961-62. I do not believe it did. It gave President Kennedy small comfort, if any, to know that

more of America than Russia would survive a nuclear exchange, as Western Europe was incinerated. He accepted some risk of nuclear conflict rather than surrender vital American interests, because there was a good chance that Moscow would not risk nuclear war to expand its power if it found the United States redoubtable in defense of a vital interest. As he told Khrushchev at Vienna, Kennedy believed Moscow would be equally redoubtable in defense of its vital interests. Nevertheless, some Soviet leaders may believe—and some Americans do believe—that the numbers mattered greatly in 1961-62; and that fact makes it essential that we do not permit a Soviet strategic advantage to emerge even if it is well short of what would be required for a first Soviet strike.

But the critical question, in my view, is not merely the estimate in Moscow of the strategic numbers, but the image of American will. I know what it took in American strength and will to bring about the Test Ban Treaty, the Nonproliferation Treaty, and the beginning of the SALT talks. These things did not happen because we went about sloganeering for peace. They happened because we combined strength with a deep understanding of legitimate Russian security interests. We induced Moscow to move along a path where certain of its legitimate national interests could find constructive expression, while blocking the paths to other, more dangerous enterprises.

I believe President Nixon and Ambassador Gerard Smith, and their Soviet counterparts, have the chance to achieve a major breakthrough in the months ahead to the benefit of the American and Soviet peoples and all humanity. The greatest danger to that possibility, however, lies in our projecting to Moscow the image of a nation engaged in unilateral disarmament, or a nation so confused about its role and purposes in the world—so weakened in will—that a

reverse Cuban missile crisis might be worth the try.

Much the same kind of balance between hope and danger exists in the Middle East.

Look back, for a moment, at the rocky road we all have traveled since the Soviet arms deal with Egypt and the Suez crisis some 15 years ago. First, there was a phase of Soviet penetration reaching into Iraq, Syria, and Algeria as well as Egypt. President Eisenhower's conduct of the Lebanon-Jordan crisis drew a line in the dust; and, for a time, Nasser turned more moderate, looking to the great unresolved tasks of Egyptian modernization.

President Kennedy sought to encourage this process, granting substantial aid to Egypt in the form of food to feed the cities. The tensions in the area subsided for a little while. In the phrase of one Egyptian diplomat, Israel was put on the back burner. But, tragically, Nasser could not resist commitment to the struggle in Yemen which began in September 1962. This indecisive and costly affair distorted his economy, increased his dependence on Soviet arms, drew him away from the West, and, in the end, lowered his prestige in the Arab world.

As Syrian pressure on Israel increased, Moscow threw a match into the haystack in the second week of May 1967, by spreading false information of Israeli mobilization. This induced Syria to press Nasser to mobilize in the Sinai. Nasser, loaded with Soviet arms but diminished by events in the Yemen, saw a road back to Arab leadership; and he agreed. Then, carried away by the momentum of events, he closed the Gulf of Aqaba, and the Six Day War resulted.

President Johnson moved to minimize the possibility of direct Soviet intervention and to keep the balance of arms in the area, while working for a stable long-term settlement. President Nixon has pursued a similar policy.

In this setting, gradually, painfully,

12 NAVAL WAR COLLEGE REVIEW

the balance of feeling in the Arab world began to move toward moderation: the Fedayeen made their bid last year but were defeated in Jordan; a new, more temperate government emerged in Damascus; and President Sadat has talked to his people about the primacy of education and other tasks which must be faced if a modern Egypt rooted in the great Arab culture is to emerge. He is apparently trying to assure that Egypt can be truly independent, rather than the pawn in the imperial game of a great power.

All these events, as we know, were framed by a massive expansion in the Soviet Navy and a kind of latter-day Mahanian effort to expand Soviet influence in the Mediterranean, East Africa, and the Indian Ocean area as far east as Singapore.

There must be great temptation in Cairo and Moscow to try again: to succeed against Israel in the 1970's after the failures of the 1940's, 1950's, and 1960's. The balance between another bloody crusade, on the one hand, and, on the other, an acceptance of Israel and a turning to the modernization of Arab societies is close.

And again, we—we Americans—are the critical margin. If American military strength in the Mediterranean (the capability for the projection of power into the Mediterranean) weakens—if American political life projects an image of hasty, irresponsible withdrawal from responsibility in Europe and Asia—the balance could tip, in Moscow and Cairo, away from pursuit of a firm Middle East settlement toward another desperate try to reverse the course of history since the emergence of Israel in 1949.

The policy and posture of America bear also on policy in Tel Aviv. Any likely Middle East settlement will involve much more explicit American guarantees and a larger American role in the Middle East than the fragile settlement of 1957, put together with chewing gum and string. Israel must clearly

withdraw, in such a settlement, from the bulk of the territory it now occupies. Its willingness to do so, the ability of its political life to bear the strain, depends greatly on the credibility of American strength and will. It is not surprising, therefore, that Israelis follow with great attention the American performance in Asia and Europe, and the temper of our political life, as they study the peace proposals laid before them by the American Government.

Now my third illustration of the precarious balance existing between forces making for a more stable world order and those threatening to plunge us into still worse turmoil—I speak of Asia. Look back and consider again the panorama of Asia in 1965.

- A South Vietnam on the verge of defeat and takeover;

- Indonesia in confrontation with Malaysia, out of the United Nations, making common cause with Peking, eager to complete what both Djakarta and Peking described as a pioneer movement to take over the whole of Southeast Asia, through a "Djakarta-Phnom-Penh-Hanoi-Peking-Pyongyang Axis"—a concept enunciated on 17 August 1965 by Sukarno himself.

- A Peking proclaiming that "Thailand is next."

All of Asia knew that its future hung in the balance. As Robert Menzies said in 1965, if Vietnam fell it would be "not so very long" before Australia would be "menaced," and the danger was still closer and more obvious in the other capitals—as, for example, Macapagal, in Manila, and Abdul Rahman, in Kuala Lumpur, made clear.

Then President Johnson moved to commit American forces.

Now, 6 years later, there is a different Asia.

South Vietnam, having harvested the greatest rice crop in its history, is about to conduct its second presidential election under a democratic constitution, with well over 90 percent of its popula-

tion under reliable government administration.

- Indonesia is independent and moving forward hopefully in economic and social progress.

- Asian regional organizations have come into being; for example, ASPAC, ASEAN, the Asian Development Bank. These offer great promise that in the future Asians, working together, can increasingly shape their own destiny.

- Japan, the third industrial power in the world, is evidently prepared to use its expanding economic resources to help others in the region whose modernization began in later times but who are now moving forward with astonishing momentum: in South Korea, Taiwan, Thailand, Malaysia, and Singapore.

- Peking, enjoying economic progress after a decade of erratic frustration, is experimenting, at least, with the idea of normalizing its relations with Asia and the rest of the world.

But all this is still precarious and fragile. As the South Vietnamese take over increasing responsibility for their own defense and try to make a constitutional system work which very few postcolonial nations have been able to manage, they feel every day the threat of hasty, total American withdrawal and the pressure of those who would cut off all military aid to them in order to guarantee a Communist victory.

North Vietnamese troops are embedded, without a shred of legality, deep in Cambodia and Laos, threatening the Mekong towns and the Thai border; and not one weapon they carry or shell they fire was manufactured in North Vietnam. And, putting aside their long-neglected tasks of economic and social development, the leaders in Hanoi continue to pour young men into the infiltration pipelines in an effort to crack the process of Vietnamization.

There is a decent hope that an Asia could emerge in the years ahead in which the North Vietnamese go back to their borders; the independent states

survive and increasingly work together; relations with China—and, indeed, North Vietnam—are normalized; and the American role continues to diminish, while remaining a relevant force in Asian and Pacific affairs.

There is also a real danger that all that has been achieved since 1965 by those in Asia and ourselves could be lost; that a vacuum emerge in Southeast Asia which Peking, as well as Hanoi, would feel impelled to try to fill; that Asia move from the promise of stability and progress to chaos or a war far greater than that we now see in Indochina. And along the way the possibility of a Nonproliferation Treaty could be lost and the world plunged into nuclear chaos. I find it hard to believe that Japan, India, and others would rely on the nuclear guarantee of an America that walked away from its solemn treaty commitments to Southeast Asia; and the American nuclear guarantee is the major underpinning of the Nonproliferation Treaty.

There are some, I know, who believe we can uproot our commitment in Asia—where two-thirds of humanity lives—but keep intact our commitments to Europe and the Middle East. I do not believe that. The world is round and it is small, and the bankruptcy of a great power is indivisible.

IV

If this analysis is correct, what is wrong with the United States? If the possibilities of movement toward stable peace are so real and the risks of chaos and increased violence also so real, why is American political life fixated not on these great hopes and dangers, but on just how rapidly we can pull back or pull out?

I believe there are two major reasons. The first I dealt with at length in my talk a year ago from this platform, which I called the Toqueville Oscillation. Historically, in this century, we

14 NAVAL WAR COLLEGE REVIEW

have only acted abroad with unity and purpose in the face of a clear and present danger to the balance of power in Europe or Asia or to the effort of a major power to emplace itself to the south of us in this hemisphere. Thus, the responses of 1917 in Europe and the Atlantic; 1940-41 in Europe and then the Pacific; 1947-49 in Europe; the initial response of 1950 in Korea; 1961-62 in Europe and the Caribbean; and, even the initial response to President Johnson's decision of 1965.

America has performed best when it faced a palpable and acute problem—widely recognized and defined in common terms—to the solution of which it could address its full energies, talents, and resources.

Now we are trying to do something quite different. We are trying to manage a redistribution of responsibility in which we will do less, while others will do more, without inducing major crises or chaos on the world scene. We are trying safely to withdraw, in degree, from the preponderant positions we initially filled in the postwar world while also making our contribution to stable world order.

We are trying to exploit constructively the gathering strength of others on the world scene; their desire increasingly to shape their own destiny, without being dominated by any major power, including the United States; and the fact that abiding American interests are satisfied by an essentially negative condition: that no potentially hostile power hold the balance of power in Europe or Asia or gain a foothold in this hemisphere.

This is the complex pattern of policy which our Government—under President Johnson and President Nixon—has been trying to pursue in order to reconcile abiding American security interests, the emerging possibilities for stable peace, and the widespread sense in America that we were, somehow, overcommitted or disproportionately committed in the

first postwar generation.

But as this subtle, triangular policy is managed, deeply rooted, old-fashioned strands of isolationism have come to the surface of American life. They are being pressed with ardor and ingenuity by some men of unquestioned sincerity as well as access to money and the media. And some American leaders—old enough and experienced enough to know better—are howing their heads to this onslaught, as they read the polls and sense again the moods that swept the Nation at such great cost in the 1930's and in the period 1945-47.

There is nothing new about Americans, when they feel safe, taking the view that conflicts in Europe or Asia are not vital to our national interests; that our problems at home are so pressing that we must put aside concerns for the state of the world; or even that the wars we fought were immoral. As Dexter Perkins noted in the *Yale Review* as long ago as June 1951, it is characteristic of Americans to think of past wars with "a somewhat guilty conscience"; and reading our long line of "revisionist" historians, one could conclude, Perkins noted, "that every war in which this country has been engaged was really quite unnecessary or immoral or both." And with the unique but partial exception of the Second World War—when Pearl Harbor and Hitler's declaration of war were quite clarifying—all of our conflicts have been accompanied by dissidence and impassioned opposition, including the Revolution itself.

In this century, isolationism has never been far from the surface of our politics. There have been strands of isolationism on what are called conservative and liberal sides of American politics. Both are now being evoked, sometimes by the same isolationist advocates; for example:

- with respect in Vietnam: on the right, we ought to win the war with all we have or get out; on the left, the war is immoral;

● with respect to Europe: on the right, by this time the Europeans ought to defend themselves; on the left, the cold war is over.

Now, the precise scale of our forces in Asia or Europe is a legitimate question; but it is a subsidiary question.

The trouble with the current debate on foreign policy in the United States is that we have permitted the isolationists to set the terms of the debate on that subsidiary issue while concealing the truly great primary question we face—the question of how we move toward stable peace.

The way to talk about military forces is to pose this question: What American forces are required, in a world where others are gradually gathering strength, to provide a secure base for the pursuit of stable peace?

The grand question is, then: Can America overcome the Tocqueville Oscillation; can America for the first time make the responsible, steady, and energetic pursuit of stable peace the focus of its foreign policy rather than await situations of mortal danger before we react convulsively? Are we doomed to oscillate between: "Too proud to fight" and a crusade to make the world safe for democracy; between Neutrality Acts and "unconditional surrender"; between sentimentality about our noble ally, Joseph Stalin, plus "bring the boys home" and rigid cold war policies; or, to invert the sequence, between a Communist China viewed as an abiding mortal enemy and now, in the wake of ping-pong diplomacy, the intoxicating discovery that the streets of Peking are clean, Mao makes the trains run on time, and the danger to Southeast Asia has, therefore, ended.

It is time we grew up. The Tocqueville Oscillation is a mortally dangerous game in a nuclear age. It is precisely because they were aware of this mortal danger that four of our postwar Presidents have taken upon themselves heavy political costs to lean against it:

● President Truman, who saw his standing in the polls disintegrate as he held the line in Korea but avoided a larger war;

● President Kennedy, warned on all sides from the beginning of the dangers of a long, twilight struggle in Southeast Asia, with the memory of President Truman's polls engraved in his retentive mind, but firm to the end on Vietnam;

● President Johnson, holding tenaciously to a complex policy of resisting aggression, avoiding a larger war, and pressing the possibilities of a nuclear reconciliation with Moscow while watching his political capital ebb away;

● and, now, President Nixon, refusing to set a date for total American withdrawal from Southeast Asia, refusing to tear up our treaties, holding the line in Europe and the Middle East, knowing full well the course of President Truman's and President Johnson's polls, as well as his own.

I have no doubt that President Eisenhower would have acted on his advice to President-elect Kennedy of 19 January 1961, if he had continued to bear responsibility: hold at all costs in Southeast Asia. And he backed President Kennedy and President Johnson at every hard step of the way.

All five of our postwar Presidents have struggled for the larger objective beyond resistance to aggression. They all saw that the proper outcome of the cold war struggles was not merely holding at the truce lines, not merely holding the balance of power, but reaching out beyond to build a world of stable peace.

We ought, then, to have the maturity to move out of the Tocqueville Oscillation to the patient pursuit of world order, because that goal is a more realistic possibility than it has been since 1914. Look at the forces at work in Asia, including the trend toward moderation in China, the potentially constructive role of Japan, and the rising determination and capacity of the

16 NAVAL WAR COLLEGE REVIEW

smaller states, including South Vietnam, to stand on their feet. Look at the forces of moderation at work in the Middle East, tortured for so long by multiple schisms that might abate as political leaders come to realize that the needs of the men, women, and children of the region and the conditions for dignified independence deserve higher priority than old enmities and out-of-date ideologies. Look at Western Europe, moving toward a long delayed unity embracing the United Kingdom, with the promise of being able to carry more of the common burdens of building the peace than over the past quarter century. And, above all, there is the possibility of bringing the nuclear threat to humanity more nearly under control by a successful completion of the SALT talks and a consolidation of the Non-proliferation Treaty.

All these elements in play could yield good results; but in no case is the outcome certain; in no case can it be brought about by America acting on its own; but in no case can it happen unless a responsible America recognizes that in a world of diffusing power we remain the critical margin.

V

Now a second observation about our situation. One of the wholesome forces operating almost universally in the world is the rising claim of domestic welfare for scarce resources. We are not and we should not be immune, given our unfulfilled tasks as we seek to improve the quality of our society.

We cannot play our critical role at the margin of world affairs unless our economic performance improves at home. Our people will not support a protracted and responsible search for peace if they feel that essential domestic problems are not being solved, and we shall lack the resources to play our part abroad unless the domestic economy is strengthened and our balance of payments remains viable.

Right now efforts are being made to expand our economy after a phase of stagnation. That period of stagnation, accompanied by continued inflation, has cut into every household and private institution; and it has weakened public policies necessary for the progress and stability of our domestic society:

- State and local governments are strapped for tax revenues;

- educational institutions, public and private, are shaken;

- the cities, already in crisis, have seen a further deterioration of essential services;

- above all, the economic and social gap between whites and nonwhites, which narrows quite rapidly at, say, a 4 percent of real growth, has ceased to move fast enough in the right direction as nonwhite unemployment rises disproportionately. The number of those statistically designated as "poor" in the United States rose last month for the first time since 1959. In addition, the continued pressure of inflation has kept our balance of payments position weak and our capacity to carry our responsibilities in the world under question.

The case for a policy of economic expansion is strong—indeed, overwhelming; but we are launched upon it with the problem of inflation unsolved. There is no way this Nation of ours can do what it must do at home and abroad if we continue with annual money wage rate increases of 8, 10, 12 percent or more when productivity increases at only 3 percent. In their hearts, every worker and his wife knows this; every labor leader; every businessman; and every international banker. The fact that some of our competitors abroad are doing not much better is of no comfort. The dollar is a special currency in the world. A painful and dangerous retribution awaits us, unless we alter course soon. And the problem of inflation will get worse, not better, as the economy expands and labor markets tighten.

I can only assert the remedy here,

not argue the case fully. I believe we must build our economic policy on a three-legged stool: fiscal policy; monetary policy; and wage-price guidelines which relate wages to productivity and assure that price policies do not exploit labor self-restraint to shift income disproportionately to profits. We enjoyed that kind of situation, without legislation, between 1961 and 1966. Whether we can now reach that mutual self-discipline in our society without legislation, I have come increasingly to doubt. We should certainly examine the most stable example of this essential reconciliation in a vigorous free economy: Australia, where compulsory wage arbitration has come widely to be accepted and a 2.3 percent annual price increase was reconciled in the 1960's with an average 1.5 percent unemployment rate.⁵

But legislation and even compulsory arbitration are not enough. Something more basic must happen. Labor leaders must come together to examine what would be fair as among the different unions and groups of labor under rules which relate wage increases to the average increase in productivity; and then they must come to agreement on the terms of equity with business and government. The task is difficult. But it is not impossible, because every segment of our society loses now and all would gain by a reconciliation of steady growth and price stability. There are no fiscal tricks or monetary tricks that will do the job without this statesmanlike social contract. Legislation may help; but a deeper mutual understanding must be sought and reached if America is to do what it must do and be what it must be—at home and abroad.

VI

The two problems I have discussed are linked; that is, the need for a new, more positive approach to the world community and a reordering of our

domestic economic policy. If the isolationist mood is accepted as inevitable, if the only serious question is how fast we cut our responsibilities and commitments in the world, it is natural that men should squabble meanly over their cut in the national pie.

As Angus Maude wrote recently of Britain:⁶ "People will only do great things if they see the possibility of great things to do." I believe there are great things to do abroad as well as at home. I do not believe we can come to responsible consensus at home while behaving irresponsibly abroad. I do not believe we can act steadily and responsibly abroad if we fail to reconcile steady growth and price stability. We must find our way to common cause in foreign as well as in domestic policy.

BIOGRAPHIC SUMMARY



Professor Walt W. Rostow is a recognized international authority on economics and economic history and has written many prominent books and articles in the field. Graduating from Yale in 1936, he

attended Oxford as a Rhodes Scholar and completed his Ph.D. degree at Yale in 1940. He also holds M.A. degrees from both Oxford and Cambridge.

After serving in the Office of Strategic Studies during World War II, Professor Rostow taught American history at both Oxford and Cambridge prior to returning to the United States. In 1950 he joined the faculty of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology as Professor of Economics and senior staff member of the Center for International Studies, where he remained for 10 years. In January of 1961 he was appointed as Deputy Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs. In November of that year he was designated Chairman of the Policy Planning Council of the State Department. Selected as Special Assistant to President Johnson in 1966, Dr. Rostow left Washington in 1969 to become Professor of Economics and History at the University of Texas.

18 NAVAL WAR COLLEGE REVIEW

And the key to that reconciliation is the perception that the great things to do abroad consist in working steadily, patiently, and actively toward a stable peace men have not known since 1914.

That is the victory potentially within our grasp. That is the goal that could and should reunite us. In a nuclear age we have no right to wait for another Pearl Harbor or a Cuban missile crisis in reverse: in an age of a trillion dollar GNP we have no right to stumble about like a helpless giant.

The task of political leadership in the United States is to find our way to this consensus in foreign and domestic affairs. I know well, and so do you, that the winds appear to be blowing in other directions. These are awkward days of passionate and unresolved debate. But I

am old enough—and a good enough historian—to remember other such periods of groping and to know the capacity of this Nation to right itself. There are vast wellsprings of good sense and inner confidence in this land of ours, as well as great resources. As a matter of faith and judgment, I do not believe we shall snatch defeat from the jaws of victory; but, in a quiet way these are truly dangerous times. As always in a democracy, it is up to us—it is up to individual, responsible citizens—to let our voices be heard, to let our representatives know that it is not America's destiny to collapse in a heap, to drop by the wayside when the nearly visible next stage of the journey could be so much more hopeful for us and for all mankind.

FOOTNOTES

1. "Foreign Report," *Economist*, 23 October 1969.
2. Walt W. Rostow, *View from the Seventh Floor* (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), p. 115, 116.
3. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Statement by Adm. Thomas H. Moorer, USN, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff before the Senate Armed Services Committee on the Military Posture* (Washington: 1971).
4. Edward Crankshaw (ed.), *Khrushchev Remembers*, Boston, 1970, p. 494.
5. W. A. Eltis, "The Australian Economy Today," *Lloyds Bank Review*, April 1971, p. 30.
6. *The Common Problem*, London, 1969, quoted in *The Sunday Times*, London, 20 July 1969.

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Peace and freedom do not come cheap, and we are destined—all of us here today—to live out most if not all of our lives in uncertainty and challenge and peril.

John F. Kennedy, *Address at University of North Carolina, 12 October 1961*