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World Order from Hiroshima to Kuwait

Paul H. Nitze

FOR THE FORTY YEARS of the Cold War, U.S. foreign and defense policy was guided by a central theme, a well-defined strategic objective. That goal was for the United States to lead in building a liberal economic and political world while defending that world against totalitarian communist attack. The single word best defining that policy was “containment.” •

In the summer and fall of 1943, it seemed to a number of us in Washington that it was not too early to think about what kind of peace and what kind of relations among the leading powers we wished to see established in the postwar world. The debate begun then continued for some five years before a decision was reached.

A key participant in this debate was, of course, George Kennan, who had recently served in our embassy in Moscow and had sent back from there what became known as the Long Telegram. It contained a penetrating description of Stalinist policy, its origins, its evils, and its dangers. It recommended that our policy be one of containment. It argued that Stalin’s expansionism had become more powerful as it fed upon its successes. If the West were to succeed in resisting and containing that expansionism, the people of Russia would eventually look inward and see what was happening to Russian institutions and to Russian culture; they would then withdraw their support from Stalinesque policies. But that policy did not immediately find majority support in Washington. There was a shift toward it in 1946 when General Marshall returned from the unsuccessful Foreign Ministers’ meeting at Moscow. At that meeting he became persuaded of Stalin’s and Molotov’s adamancy in refusing to consider any reasonable accommodation with the West.

The decisive shift came in April of 1947, when the British government informed President Truman that it could no longer sustain the burden of assisting Greece and Turkey in resisting an intense campaign against their security by the Soviets and Soviet-supported guerrilla units; if such assistance was to be continued, it would have to be done by the United States. This decision by Britain

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brought the postwar crisis to a head. President Truman responded by deciding that the United States would promptly come to the aid of the Greeks and the Turks. This decision was crucial; it implied approval of the containment policy, of a European economic recovery program, and more generally, of the United State's assuming a leadership position aimed at the creation of a new postwar world order.

The next fifteen weeks saw a whirlwind of activity. The president announced the Greek-Turkish Aid Program and the Truman Doctrine declaring U.S. willingness to consider such aid as we could prudently make available to any country subject to aggression or intimidating pressure and prepared to act in its own defense. Acheson outlined, in a speech at Cleveland, Mississippi, the rationale for a general program of European economic aid, and General Marshall's Harvard speech set forth the concept of that program.

The Congress passed the 1947 Defense Act, which created the Department of Defense, the institution of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, an air force independent from the army, and the Central Intelligence Agency. Shortly thereafter, work began on the negotiation of the North Atlantic Treaty and then of Nato. Concurrently, we began work to bring both Germany and Japan back to economic self-support and, step by step, back into the community of nations.

In the spring of 1950 we prepared a basic review of our national security policy, called NSC 68. With appropriate amendments, it has been the backbone of our national security policy ever since.

To our surprise, bipartisan support for this ambitious program developed in the Congress and the necessary congressional authorizations and appropriations were approved.

To maintain the policy of containment during the thirty years after Mr. Truman's presidency required great perseverance on the part of the United States as a nation. During the Korean War, it was necessary for us materially to expand the level of our military expenditures. During the Eisenhower years, we had significantly to expand our efforts on our strategic nuclear capabilities to offset the extraordinary efforts of the Soviets to obtain nuclear superiority.

In 1969, we began serious negotiations with the Soviets to agree on balanced limitations of nuclear systems. But the inventories of nuclear offensive weapons continued to grow. By 1981, both sides had shifted their prime focus to limiting and eventually reducing intermediate-range nuclear weapons.

In 1983, the Soviets walked out of the Intermediate Nuclear Force, or INF, negotiations just as we were to begin deployment of our Pershing IIs in Europe to offset the earlier Soviet deployment of longer-range, MIRVed, INF missiles in the center of Europe. The Nato alliance didn't flinch. This check to Soviet policy seems to me to have been the turning point in the long continuing Western effort to contain Soviet expansionism.

By the mid-1980s, the tenacity with which the United States persevered with the policy of containment succeeded in achieving its principal aim: the leaders of the U.S.S.R. finally looked inward and did not like what they saw. By 1989, as *perestroika* continued in the Soviet Union and revolution swept Eastern Europe, the communist totalitarian ideology seemed to be in final decline, much as Nazism and Fascism were at the end of World War II. The non-Soviet part of the Warsaw Pact lost its strategic significance. It seemed time to reexamine our long-standing central strategic theme and devise a new U.S., and perhaps Western, strategic concept more appropriate to the changing future.

A New Strategic Concept

The questions at hand were: What type of world climate would we like to see prevail in the year 2000 and beyond? What role should the United States play in fostering and preserving such a climate?

In an article in the journal *Foreign Affairs*, I proposed a new strategic concept which can be captured in the following four sentences: "The central theme of U.S. policy should be the accommodation and protection of diversity within a general framework of required order. The aim would be a world climate in which a large array of political groupings can exist, each in its own individual, and perhaps eccentric, way. Supranational institutions such as the U.N. and its organs, Nato, the European Community, C.S.C.E., and O.E.C.D. should concurrently have the task of providing stability and forward movement on important global and regional issues, those transcending national or ethnic boundaries. In such a world, the U.S., with first-class military potential, inherent political, economic, and cultural strengths, and no territorial or ideological ambitions, can play a unique role in bringing its latent power to the support of order and diversity among diffuse and varied groupings."

This proposal raises several questions. Why should we focus on diversity? What precise role can supranational institutions play? Why should the United States take on the burden of supporting international order and diversity? Let me address each of these questions in turn.

The Importance of Diversity

Why should we focus on diversity? One of the most important lessons of the past few years is the near-impossibility of erasing cultural ties, ethnic identities, and social practices, especially in a world in which communications and, thus, ideas cannot be suppressed. In country after country in Eastern Europe, and within the Soviet Union itself, beliefs and practices that had been long dormant under the yoke of oppression rose quickly to the surface once constraints were loosened. The decades-long efforts of communist leaders to impose a common

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culture and society on their subjects and to eliminate ethnic heritages were found to have failed.

Once again, we see emerging the Europe of the past, with its rich mix of nationalities and cultures. Not only are individual aspirations once again being realized, the constellation of the various cultures promises to enrich us all. But unfortunately we are also seeing a resurgence of some of the tensions between nationalities that diversity in Europe generated in the past. Such tensions can be a threat to peace over the years ahead.

Although the renewal of diversity has been most evident in Europe, we are witnessing a similar process on other continents as well, most notably in Africa. As in Europe, the realization of national aspirations elsewhere is also accompanied by tensions between ethnic groups.

Thus, the new diversity presents us with a mixed bag of effects. As a democratic nation that honors freedom and the protection of the right to be different, the United States supports this development. As a people who can learn from the ways of others, we welcome it. As students of history, we understand that it cannot be long suppressed in any event. But as realists, we should recognize and try to deal with the dangers that accompany it and can threaten to destroy it.

This leads to the central element of my theme—among U.S. tasks of the future should be the accommodation of, and protection of, diversity.

The Role of Supranational Institutions

Let me turn now to the second question: what precise role should and can supranational institutions play?

Many problems we now face cut across national boundaries and affect many cultures. Among these are economic problems, environmental problems, terrorism, and drugs. Still other problems that may be faced by individual nations, such as hunger, can be best addressed through international action. Certain regional problems call for regional organizations. New problems of all these various types are likely to arise in the future. Supranational institutions can deal with these problems more efficiently and effectively than individual nations acting without central coordination; however, this approach implies some loss of sovereignty for individual nations and thus some constraint on diversity. We must, therefore, balance the gains against the costs in each case.

The gains deriving from supranational authority most clearly outweigh the costs in the environmental area. National efforts to reverse the growing damage to the world ecology can be easily undercut by the negligence of other countries. We simply must have a coordinated international effort if we are to solve global ecological problems.

Similar considerations apply in the realm of economics. In an increasingly integrated world economy, the need for international coordination of fiscal, monetary, and exchange rate policies is widely accepted. Consideration is also being given to greater international harmonization of banking regulations and other domestic policies such as anti-trust legislation, health and safety standards, and the protection of intellectual property.

The U.S. Role

My final question dealt with the role the United States should play—using its latent power in the direction of preserving diversity within order among diffuse and varied groupings. Why should the U.S. take on much of this burden?

There were many who argued that, in the aftermath of the events of 1989, the United States should withdraw from its leading role in international affairs. Their reasoning was that the great threat to U.S. interest had collapsed, that no comparable threat was evident, and that the U.S. should therefore feel free to retreat from world affairs and tend to its own internal problems. Even before the Persian Gulf crisis, I believed this outlook was short-sighted. The forces of freedom had won a peaceful victory over the threat of communist totalitarian expansionism. But that was only a partial and uncertain victory. One could see a whole new panoply of real or potential problems arising. Many of these problems will deeply affect U.S. interests. I believe that we remain capable, in conjunction with others, of contributing to the effective solutions of these problems and that nobody else can do the job as well without us as it can be done with active U.S. participation.

A few examples of such problems come quickly to mind. There are today somewhere near 30,000 nuclear warheads in storage somewhere in the Soviet Union. Even if the prospective Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty, or START, is signed and implemented, the Soviets will retain, and are currently modernizing, a large number of long-range missiles, submarines, and aircraft capable of delivering thermonuclear warheads on targets worldwide. Exacerbating the problem is that due to the current instability in the Soviet Union, no one can be sure into whose hands these weapons will eventually fall. Thus, for the foreseeable future they will continue to present a potential threat to the U.S. and to our friends and allies everywhere.

To deal with this problem, the United States today maintains forces both to deter use of the Soviet weapons and to provide the necessary leverage to negotiate their reduction in a stabilizing manner. No other country is capable of relieving us of this burden now, and none is likely to be able to do so in the future—nor would we want any other country to deploy the nuclear arsenal needed to assume that role alone. Therefore, in the future as much as in the past, the U.S. should not shy away from this task.

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On the European continent, the nationalist tensions I cited earlier could erupt into civil or cross-border warfare. Peace throughout Europe and beyond could be threatened. To forestall such problems, efforts should be made to encourage and facilitate the peaceful resolution of these tensions. Should warfare erupt, efforts would be needed to contain and terminate the conflict quickly. In the absence of the United States, Germany would seem to have the greatest military, political, and economic clout in such a situation. But leadership in such a situation is not a role for which Germany is well suited. Suspicions of German intentions, whether justified or not, remain too high among the nations of Europe for Germany to be effective in the role of European leadership.

Therefore, the United States should remain in a position to contribute to this task should the European nations, including Germany, wish us to do so. This does not necessarily mean the continued presence of large numbers of American troops in Europe—we will keep only such forces there as are wanted and for only as long as they are wanted. A constructive U.S. role in European affairs can derive from much more than just the number of forces deployed; potential power can be symbolized by the presence of forces of limited size.

Similar examples of problems meriting a U.S. role exist in other regions of the world. In the Far East, our leading role could, perhaps, be assumed in time by Japan. But this would raise considerable concern among other Asian nations, especially those who have fallen under Japanese domination in the past. Further, I doubt whether the Japanese would find it feasible to consider the interests of others as being comparable to Japanese interests. And the unique qualifications of the U.S. to play a central role in the Middle East have never been more evident than during the events since the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait.

All of this argues for the U.S. role proposed in the suggested strategic concept. But let me make clear the constraints on such a role. I am proposing active U.S. participation in cooperative efforts among varying groups of sovereign nations to deal constructively with common problems; I am not proposing unilateral U.S. action.

The Effect of Recent Events

Since my *Foreign Affairs* article appeared, three dramas—the Persian Gulf conflict, continued ferment in the Soviet Union, and the further transformation of countries throughout Eastern Europe—have dominated world affairs. In each case, the ultimate outcome remains unclear.

The full repercussions of the Persian Gulf war on the Gulf region and on the Middle East in general are not yet evident. Millions of Iraqi Kurds and Shiites face the continuing threat of renewed repression by Saddam Hussein. Millions of other Iraqis face the threat of disease and hunger as a result of the devastation

inflicted on their infrastructure and resources by the war. A return to normalcy and stability is unlikely as long as Saddam remains in power.

On a broader scope, we have seen once again an effort to invigorate the peace process, between Israel and the Arab states on the one hand and between Israel and the Palestinians on the other. In the glow of the coalition's military victory, the problems of this region have seemed slightly less intractable than in the past. One can still not predict a successful resolution with any confidence, however.

Finally, there is the uncertainty spanning beyond the Middle East that is created by the evolution of grass-roots political psychology in the Muslim world. Muslims are also important in large parts of North Africa, Russia, Azerbaijan, Pakistan, India, and east to Indonesia. They are divided among various sects, who often hate each other more than they hate non-Muslims. But Saddam Hussein has united many of them through what they consider to be his courageous, and not yet wholly unsuccessful, opposition to the Great Satan, in the form of the United States, and its allies. Dealing with the Muslim world is likely to be a problem increasingly plaguing many governments in the years ahead.

Observing the second drama, the evolution of the Soviet Union, from the West, it is next to impossible to estimate even roughly how the situation there will evolve before it reaches a more stable outcome. The range of possibilities is wide, from a reversion to authoritarian central government, to a devolution of power to the republics, to a complete breakup of the union into separate, perhaps warring, parties. The one outcome that seems unlikely is that the Gorbachev regime will be able to continue over the long term its practice of muddling through in the face of sustained economic decline.

In the last few months, there have been indications that Gorbachev has tacked back toward the reformers in their ongoing battle with the conservatives of the Communist Party, the army, and the KGB. The so-called "one-plus-nine" agreement between Gorbachev and the leaders of nine republics promises a further shift of political and economic power to the republics. There are other indications of impending economic reform. On the other hand, military power remains concentrated in the Soviet army and the Interior Ministry, which remain fully capable of crushing opposition in the republics and, perhaps, beyond Gorbachev's complete control. Military actions in Lithuania over the past few weeks are an ominous reminder of the threat to reform these forces pose.

In Eastern Europe, the prospects for success of the former Soviet satellites in their efforts to shift to free market economies remain uncertain. The residue of decades of communist leadership and command economies poses a number of difficult problems involving questions of ownership and property rights and how one goes about restructuring and privatizing state enterprises. Efforts to convert previously subsidized and monopolistic industries into firms that can compete

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and turn a profit in an open market must inevitably create disruption as weaker enterprises fail and their workers are laid off.

The difficulty of the conversion task has been demonstrated most vividly by the experience of the former East Germany. Starting with the strongest economy in Eastern Europe and bolstered by a huge influx of aid from West Germany, this region is nonetheless undergoing great economic difficulty, with unemployment rates soaring through the roof. Seeing this, we should sympathize all the more with the valiant efforts of Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary. We should also heighten our efforts to help them, recalling that it is in our interest to see this great experiment succeed.

In Bulgaria and Rumania, the political struggle is incomplete as well. The future may hold more democracy or greater repression. The situation is even more explosive in Yugoslavia, facing conflict within as well as among its republics, and in Albania, currently in a state resembling that of the Eastern European countries just prior to their revolutions of 1989. Combining all this with tensions between Czechs and Slovaks, Hungarians and Rumanians, and many other groups heightens the uncertainties for this region in the years ahead.

What are the implications of these dramas, and their uncertain outcomes, for the strategic concept I proposed? Is it still possible, and advisable, for the United States to fill my suggested role as an honest broker seeking the accommodation and protection of diversity within a cooperative international framework? I believe it is. In fact, U.S. leadership of the international response to the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, which has been aptly described as the first defining event of the post-Cold War world, represents precisely the type of effort the strategic concept envisages.

The Persian Gulf war provides the first indication for leaders worldwide of the mores of international behavior that are emerging in this new era. Had Saddam Hussein's forces not been expelled from Kuwait, the lesson would have been that brutality and aggression pay; potential tyrants would have been encouraged to imitate his approach in future international disputes. With Saddam's military defeat, a different message has been sent. At least in this case, the moral was that aggression against a sovereign neighbor would not be tolerated, intimidation and force were not acceptable means of resolving disputes among nations, and attempts to employ such means would be met by the concerted opposition of the world community.

If key members of the international community can resolve that the coalition effort to reverse Iraq's aggression will be a model for future responses to similar encroachments, and if they can make a demonstrable commitment to this view, future would-be aggressors should be discouraged and the prospects for a more civilized era should be greatly enhanced. But this is unlikely to happen without strong leadership. In this case, the United States exercised such a role in assembling the coalition opposing Saddam Hussein and in facilitating that

coalition's efforts. In dealing with similar situations in the future, that role is likely to fall again to the United States.

The United States should likewise take the lead in facilitating an international effort to deal with the current problems and future contingencies in the Middle East, the Soviet Union, and Eastern Europe. We should continue our current efforts to establish a regional peace conference to resolve the Arab-Israeli and Palestinian problems. We should press the anti-Saddam coalition to retain economic sanctions against Iraq as long as Saddam remains in power, and we should be prepared to lead an expedition to Baghdad to arrest him if he continues his brutalities against his own people. We should work within Nato and elsewhere to counsel vigilance among the free world so that we are prepared for any outcome within the Soviet Union. Finally, we should take the lead within the developed world and its economic organizations in devising programs and generating resources to aid the countries of Eastern Europe in their struggles to convert to market economies.

These, of course, represent only a fraction of the concerns that confront us as we embark on the next era. I continue to believe that the United States is uniquely qualified to lead international cooperative efforts on other elements of the global agenda as well.

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As we enter the 1990s, the United States and the West generally confront new opportunities to resolve longstanding problems, as well as new challenges presented by emerging problems. In an increasingly interdependent world, where our neighbor's problems, and even the problems of those far away, are more and more our own, this is not the time for the U.S. to retreat from the world stage. Rather, it is a time for wise leadership to bring the great American potential to bear so that the many benefits promised by a free and diverse world can be realized. To create the public foundation for such action, we need to build a wide consensus on a new strategic concept and, based upon it, a new and common resolve.

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