Naval War College Review

Volume 44
Number 1 *Winter*

Article 7

1991

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American foreign policy has entered into a new, promising, but potentially dangerous era. The advent of Mikhail Gorbachev and the apparent collapse of communism in Eastern Europe have convinced many that the democracies have won the Cold War, or that victory is imminent. Simultaneously, the relative decline of U.S. economic power vis-a-vis its European and Asian allies has convinced others that multipolarity will replace bipolarity as the ordering principle of world politics. Nonetheless, there are compelling reasons to doubt both the utopian prediction of democracy inevitably triumphant and the pessimistic vision of an American empire doomed to inexorable decline.[1]

There is no doubt, however, that real and significant change has occurred, not just internationally, but in the domestic context of American foreign policy as well. With the ideologically charged Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union apparently waning, with America's global economic power facing an increasingly stiff challenge from its principal geopolitical allies, and with budgetary pressures to reduce U.S. defense expenditures mounting, objections have intensified to the policy of containment that has served as the basis of American foreign policy since the late 1940s. Some advocate a radical retrenchment of American commitments overseas and a return to some variant of isolationism.[2] Others call, less drastically, for a substantial devolution of responsibility to America's allies for meeting a diminished Soviet threat. According to still others, the United States must give primacy to economic rather than security issues. The message of all these alternatives is the same: the United States can and must significantly reduce its commitments and the means for carrying them out.

The Cold War paradigm unreconstructed clearly will no longer suffice as a guide for American foreign policy, but neither isolationism nor substantial devolution of U.S. global responsibilities is a prudent alternative. A United States engaged in world politics remains a necessary if not sufficient condition

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for a peaceful transition to and maintenance of a stable and prosperous post-postwar order. Geopolitical realities, American ideals, and American self-interest interact and coincide to underscore the enduring importance of firm, unambiguous, and credible U.S. commitments to its allies in Europe and Asia. The alternatives to this strategy risk undermining the positive trends of the moment, increasing the dangers should reform in the Eastern bloc fail, and unleashing other forces in world politics which could jeopardize the peace. Although domestic political constraints will make it difficult to sustain a policy of vigilant internationalism in the post-postwar era, determined and farsighted statesmanship can make such a policy possible.[3]

The Legacy of Containment

Since 1945 the United States has pursued a policy of globally containing communism in general and Soviet power in particular.[4] American statesmen based this policy on several assumptions. First there was the assumption, reflecting Halford MacKinder and Nicholas Spykman's theories of geopolitics, that the United States could not be secure if a single hostile heartland power came to dominate the Eurasian rimlands. In some measure this geopolitical logic also inspired President Wilson and Roosevelt's decisions to intervene in World War I and World War II, respectively.

There was the corollary assumption that the Soviet Union was an ideological and military adversary with the intention and the capability to dominate the Eurasian landmass. In his seminal Mr X article of July 1947, George Kennan expressed the view, to which most American statesmen have since subscribed, that the Soviet Union would not cease to wage war on the international system until it ceased to wage war on its own citizens.[5] The object of American foreign policy was, accordingly, to contain the Soviet Union's relentlessly expansionist tendencies in the short term with a combination of military and economic power. American statesmen hoped that denying the Soviet Union the opportunity for expansion would eventually unleash domestic forces within that country which would reform the system in a more benign direction and moderate Soviet global ambitions.

There was also the assumption that containing Soviet power depended on firm, unambiguous, and credible American commitments to vital power centers in Europe and Asia. The lessons of Munich strengthened this conviction immeasurably. Invoking the failure of appeasement and the ill-begotten isolationism of the United States during the interwar years, and analogizing the Soviet to the Nazi threat, the Truman administration and most of its successors believed that formal and credible alliances with Europe and Japan could forestall a recurrence of the events which culminated in World War II. Various American administrations thus envisaged NATO and the Mutual Security Treaty with Japan as a shield behind which these allies could

restore their economic power, which the United States promoted simultaneously through the Marshall Plan, the General Agreement on Tariff and Trade, the International Monetary System, and the encouragement of European integration. With less consensus and success, the United States committed itself increasingly to resisting all variants of communism in the underdeveloped world on the theory that, cumulatively and psychologically, communist victories there could cause an adverse change in the world balance of power to the benefit of the Soviets.[6]

Finally, there was an ideological dimension to the policy of containing communism. How much ideological diversity the United States should tolerate in the world remains, to be sure, an open question. Although some administrations pursued this policy more vigorously than others, virtually all of them regarded the establishment of firm and stable democracies in the developed and underdeveloped world as the preferred alternative. American statesmen sought not just to restore Japanese and German power, but to create enduring democratic institutions there and throughout Western Europe in the belief that democracies are more likely to cooperate and less likely to fight with one another. Even in the Third World, where the American record remains more controversial, Samuel Huntington has argued powerfully that American power has served on balance to promote democracy there too.[7] Similarly, the Reagan administration argued, in justification of its policies, that authoritarian regimes are less oppressive and more amenable to democratic reform than communist regimes — that, in effect, U.S. interest in supporting its traditional friends and U.S. self-interest coincided.[8]

This summary of containment artificially compresses the range of debate on its underlying assumptions and implementation. The Nixon, Ford, and Carter administrations viewed the Soviet Union as less ideological and communism as less monolithic than did their predecessors or Reagan's. In its first two years the Carter administration largely rejected the framework of containment, as has much of the mainstream of the Democratic party since its collective disillusionment with the Vietnam War in the late 1960s. Some administrations have emphasized the military dimension of the Soviet threat more than others. Still, these assumptions reflect generally the underlying basis of containment as practiced since 1945.

Anyone pondering the possibilities for the post-postwar world must consider the extraordinary success of the American policy of globally containing communism. Defending this policy will doubtless provoke controversy. Some believe that the policy of global containment rested on an exaggerated estimate of the Soviet threat, or produced counterproductive excesses in American foreign policy.[9] There is, too, the legacy of revolutionary and ethnic violence, the accumulation of armaments, and the series of devastating limited and protracted wars which have occurred since 1945. Even granting the validity of these arguments, American statesmen

deserve great credit for maintaining the postwar system at less cost and risk than the history of the 20th century and the foreign policy records of peacetime democracies would have given anyone the right to expect. Who would have predicted, at the onset of the Cold War, that the United States and its democratic allies would have succeeded in bringing the end of the Cold War in sight on terms favorable to the West? Who would have predicted further that the democracies could have achieved this outcome against an implacable ideological adversary and military colossus without having to fight a war on the scale of the two world wars?[10]

That containment has worked does not necessarily mean that the democracies should continue the policy. Indeed, many argue that containment should be a victim of its own success. Nonetheless, the declaration of victory in the Cold War is premature. Its inevitability is contingent, in the first place, on what the United States chooses to do. Then, assuming the Cold War ends on terms favorable to the West, American power and the willingness to use it will remain vital to establish and sustain the post-postwar order which emerges.

Winning the Cold War

What has taken place in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe is certainly fundamental and unprecedented. The collapse of communism from Warsaw to Bucharest has proceeded at a pace and scope which has astonished informed observers on all sides of the political spectrum. Within the Soviet Union change has proceeded more slowly, but political reform has occurred there too which eventually could radically transform the Soviet political system. Internationally, the Soviet Union has dramatically curtailed its support of Third World regimes hostile to the West and has disengaged from Afghanistan. For the first time in the long history of conventional arms negotiations, the Soviets have accepted the principle of deep and asymmetric cuts in the conventional arsenals of both NATO and the Warsaw Pact.

Although these changes are remarkable, they are still not irreversible. The Soviet Communist party has only begun to relinquish its monopoly of power. The Soviet Union still possesses the most powerful military establishment in the world; nor, until recently, had any perceptible change taken place in the Soviet Union's force structure, military output, or the size and offensive posture of its armed forces. Quite possibly, Gorbachev merely has shifted the tactics of Soviet foreign policy from blandishment to seduction, while the objectives of Soviet grand strategy remain the same: to decouple Germany from NATO, and NATO from the United States. Even if Gorbachev is genuine by Western standards, there is no guarantee that he will survive, especially should glasnost and perestroika fail to revive the Soviet economy, or ethnic and nationalist violence erupt within the Soviet Empire. The best

evidence available suggests not only that glasnost and perestroika have not worked, but that Gorbachev is unable or unwilling to undertake the bold policies that could possibly make them work.[11] The Bush administration is already drawing up contingency plans in the increasingly likely case that either the military or radical reformers replace Gorbachev. Nor, in the history of declining empires, have many gone quietly or peacefully into the night.[12] Consider the decisions of the Austro-Hungarian and Japanese empires in this century to fight rather than to accept disintegration and defeat. Consider, more recently, the Chinese Communist party's decision in the summer of 1989 to suppress dissent brutally and to cling to power rather than to permit gradual reform.

This is not a counsel for pessimism, but for prudence and caution. The trends are favorable. The cost of reversing the changes within the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe mount daily. The devastating consequences of a nuclear exchange between the superpowers also raise sharply the threshold necessary to contemplate the use of force to reverse historic decline, even among the most desperate and tenacious elites. The problem for American decision makers is how best to ensure that the favorable trends continue while minimizing the risk should totalitarian communism revive. Even now, the policy of vigilant containment is vital and prudential. Applying steady military and economic pressure on the Soviet Union has worked to make victory in the Cold War probable. Why abandon a successful policy on the verge of a success not yet assured?[13]

Some argue, to the contrary, that a hard-line policy toward the U.S.S.R. will undermine Gorbachev and strengthen Soviet hard-liners, which may result in missing a historic opportunity to end the Cold War.[14] This analysis is plausible in theory but flawed in point of fact. The record demonstrates that the Soviet Union, and Great Russia before it, reform not when they feel secure but when under pressure.[15] Contrast the success of the Reagan administration in dealing with the Soviet Union and the failure of Nixon and Carter's premature detentes. Although Reagan benefited from some internal developments within the Soviet Union autonomous from U.S. policy, his administration's vaunted arms buildup and the restoration of American military power deserve much credit for moderating Soviet hostility and convincing Gorbachev that the Soviets could not hope to bully or outbuild the United States.

Even in the justifiable enthusiasm of the moment, the United States must maintain NATO as a credible political and military deterrent to the Soviet Union. This means that Germany must remain an integral part of NATO; for without Germany, by the sheer weight of its geography, resources, population, and vigor, NATO is unsustainable. This does not mean that the alliance should reject out of hand arms control agreements with the Soviet Union aimed at reducing both sides' arsenals substantially. Perhaps arms

control is not only a political necessity for peacetime democracies, but strategically desirable as a potential way to close the credibility gap of the American commitment to defend NATO (which depends currently on the willingness of the United States to use nuclear weapons first, despite its vulnerability to devastating Soviet attack). Still, American statesmen must recognize that any arms accord which substantially decouples American forces from Europe risks unleashing powerful and unilateral pressure for further reduction and disengagement which peacetime democracies will find much more difficult to reverse should the need arise than more closed societies. NATO must therefore proceed with arms control cautiously, lest it reduce the cost or risk of reversing the salutary changes in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe that soon could end the Cold War in the democracies' favor. Furthermore, the United States and its allies must not ameliorate significantly the Soviet Union's economic crisis, lest the necessity for free enterprise and political reform lessen and the totalitarian system survive.[16]

Managing the Transition to the Post-Postwar Order

Suppose, however, that the collapse of communism occurs in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union irrevocably and soon. What should America's role be in making the transition to and maintaining a prosperous post-postwar order? Most predict that, in the short term at least, the world will return to multipolarity, with the United States, Japan, China, Russia, possibly a united Western Europe, or possibly a now united Germany as the major powers. Some hope that, in the long term, the world will move to unipolarity, based upon a super-sovereign state among the industrial democracies.

In either type of world, many of the central premises of containment remain valid and a United States actively internationalist a predicate for achieving them. The end of the Cold War does not invalidate the imperatives of geopolitics. Now as before, the United States still has a vital interest in ensuring that no hostile power or combination of hostile powers achieves dominance of the Eurasian landmass. Thus, Western Europe, East Asia, and the Middle East should remain central focuses of American concern. Now as before, the United States also has a vital interest in Latin America, where crisis could imperil America's pursuit of its other vital global concerns.[17]

Nor does the end of the Cold War invalidate the premise that the United States has a vital interest in promoting democracy abroad, especially in geopolitically crucial states. Indeed, American ideals and self-interest will remain complementary in the post-postwar era. One does not have to accept the argument that the spread of democracy inevitably will end war to recognize that Michael Doyle has given powerful if not conclusive empirical confirmation to Kant's prediction offered more than 200 years ago: Constitutionally secure democratic regimes not only tend not to fight one

another, but are more likely to cooperate and manage conflicts of interest harmoniously. Witness, for example, the zone of peace among democracies since the end of World War II.[18]

This is not to say that the United States can or should court enormous costs and risks to establish or maintain democracy everywhere. Even a country as powerful as the United States does not have the resources to discharge this enormous burden all of the time. Sometimes the prospects for democratic forces succeeding are too remote and America's interest in a favorable outcome too peripheral to justify active American intervention or involvement on democracy's behalf. This is to say, however, that the promotion, establishment, and maintenance of constitutionally secure and stable democracies at least in Europe and East Asia stand as important national interests of the United States.

Recognition of the enduring geopolitical imperatives of U.S. foreign policy does not in itself make an unassailable case for the policy of vigorous internationalism. Advocates of this policy also must argue compellingly that substantial American withdrawal, devolution of responsibility to erstwhile allies for maintaining their security, or a cutback in American capabilities could menace America's vital geopolitical concerns. Will there really be plausible threats to these vital U.S. geopolitical concerns which require firm, unambiguous, and credible American commitments abroad? Does the establishment and maintenance of democracy minimize these threats? Is American internationalism and vigilance necessary to encourage the salutary trends toward global democratization, which seem to have a powerful momentum of their own regardless of what the United States chooses to do? It is dangerous and imprudent to act on the assumption that the answer to these questions is no.

The collapse of communism does not necessarily mean the end of rivalry in international politics. For the foreseeable future the world will remain bipolar, militarily if not economically. Furthermore, even a non-communist Soviet Union will remain a major potential geopolitical threat. True, a Soviet Union without an ideological cause will become a less menacing adversary. Indeed, the Soviet Union could become even more pacific vis-a-vis the United States and other democracies should the liberalizing and democratizing trends continue. But democracy is not the only or even the most likely successor to the present Soviet regime. The Soviet Empire could implode violently amidst seething ethnic violence, while a successor Russian state could return to some variant of authoritarianism if not communism. Czarist Russia was historically expansionist and interventionist even before the Bolshevik revolution. The remarkably peaceful transition away from communism in Eastern European states, save for Rumania, should not obscure the danger that the Soviet Empire may dissolve violently and spasmodically, with a potential spillover of chaos to the Western democracies should the latter let

down their guard. Within the Soviet Union, 1989 witnessed an eruption of long-simmering ethnic enmity and violence: Latvians and Estonians against Russian immigrants, Azerbaizhanis against Armenians, Muslims against non-Muslims and vice versa. 1990 witnessed Lithuania's demand for immediate independence, which the Soviet Union seems determined to suppress. Vigorous assertions of Ukrainian nationalism, a potential calamity for any Russian regime, likewise seem inevitable. In this environment, maintaining the NATO alliance and a credible American commitment to it serves as a prudential hedge against either an aggressive and authoritarian Great Russian state which could emerge, or a bloody and protracted civil war which could ensue should the Soviet Union collapse from within.[19]

Similarly, the remarkable developments of 1989 in Eastern Europe give cause for optimism, but not for euphoria. Even under the best of circumstances, the transition from communism to democracy in this region will require much time, discipline, resources, and patience to achieve. The success of market economies and democratic polities absolutely and relative to their competitors speaks for itself. In the short term, however, the movement away from state control to markets will cause extreme pain and dislocation among many segments of Eastern European societies. The possibility of ethnic violence also could thwart a peaceful transition to and maintenance of democracies there.[20]

Again, America's active involvement in and commitment to the security of Western Europe and the stability of Eastern Europe remain vital. For if history teaches anything, it is that great powers abhor and will fill a power vacuum. Some sort of Marshall Plan for Eastern Europe seems essential for those states to succeed in establishing democracy while averting the alternative of civil war, authoritarianism, or hostile great-power intervention. As with a post-communist Russia, a NATO with strong American support reduces the possibility of the worst case occurring and the danger of the worst case should it occur. The history of the 1920s should warn that establishing democracy in Eastern Europe is only part of the problem: maintaining democracy is even more difficult. In the early 1920s, for example, most of Europe's 28 regimes, including those in Eastern Europe, were democracies. By the end of 1938, that number had dwindled to 12 in Europe generally and none in Eastern Europe. By 1941, only five democracies remained intact.[21] The breakdown of democracy during the interwar years, the concomitant rise of totalitarianism, and even the Second World War itself, owed largely to the failure of the democracies, the United States included, to maintain and form strong alliances. Even if one believes that nothing could have deterred Hitler—a plausible assumption—surely preventive action by the democracies could have minimized the risks and costs of war greatly.[22]

Then there is the German question. Before 1945, a united Germany was a militaristic and aggressive Germany, a Germany which willed, as other

states did not, two world wars. Whether a united Germany becomes a menace to a stable world order will depend on what type of Germany emerges from the process of reunification. Will a united Germany choose unconditional alignment with the West, as the German Federal Republic has done since Konrad Adenauer? Or will Germany opt for neutrality between East and West, or even worse, collaborate with Russia against the West, as the Germans did from Rapallo in 1922 to the Nazi-Soviet Pact in 1939?

What type of Germany emerges may depend, in turn, on the internal arrangements of the German state. Four possibilities exist, based on historical experience. The first, most dangerous, and least likely is a totalitarian Germany: Adolf Hitler's Germany. A second, and still dangerous, is an authoritarian Germany: the Germany of Kaiser Wilhelm. A third possibility is an unstable and neutral democratic Germany: the Germany of the Weimar Republic. The fourth is a stable, democratic, pro-Western Germany: the Germany of Adenauer and his successors, at least until now. Obviously, a united Germany modeled on the Federal Republic is the best practicable alternative for the United States and its allies; a democratic Germany will likely remain a pacific Germany, the type of Germany easiest to accommodate in any post-postwar order.[23]

In light of the dramatic success of the German Federal Republic and the unqualified failure of totalitarianism of the right or left, the prognosis for democracy in Germany is much better today than at any time in its history. As with Eastern Europe, however, one should not take democracy or favorable trends for granted. Recall how recently democracy has become established in Germany, how many democracies have failed in this century, and how difficult democracy is to sustain even under the best of circumstances. For this reason, the United States must stay actively engaged in Europe to ensure democracy's success.

The maintenance of NATO with a strong American presence best ensures a democratic Germany anchored in a whole and free Europe, a Germany which will not become what Dean Rusk termed "the loose cannon of Europe." The policy of containment succeeded not only in containing the Soviet Union by threat but also Germany by inducement, through integration with the West politically, economically, and militarily.[24] As Joseph Joffe has observed, America's double role as protector and pacifier has served as a precondition for Western European integration and for the German Federal Republic having achieved such great success. It virtually freed Western European states of the security dilemma vis-a-vis one another which had undermined democracy and promoted interstate rivalry there in the past.[25] Without the United States, Western Europe might revert to the dangerous balance-of-power politics that sets one nation off against another. The nations of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union might worry again about a strong Germany. The strong nations of Western Europe—Germany,

France, and Great Britain—might worry again about each other. Nor, as the history of interwar Europe suggests, will weak or democratic states always balance in a timely and effective way against the strong. Without a U.S. military presence in Europe, states might choose appeasement, neutralism, or indecision as a means of conciliation rather than resisting either a resurgent German or Russian threat, just as states did during the interwar years when the United States retreated into isolation.[26]

Thus, a substantial devolution of American global responsibilities in the post-postwar order is imprudent. Even with U.S. allies' relative share of power increasing and U.S. power in relative decline, there is simply no substitute for American power to maintain a stable world order.[27] A united Europe will remain much weaker than the sum of its parts because of historic rivalry among the member states and the difficulty of integrating Germany on terms mutually acceptable to the Western democracies, the Soviet Union, and Germany's other wary neighbors in the East.[28] With or without the Soviet threat, NATO with a strong American commitment will remain important as a deterrent to war and as the political underpinning of a post-postwar order based on Western democratic values.

Geopolitical logic and American ideals apply with equal force to justify continuity in the American security commitment to allies in East Asia. The Pacific may replace the Atlantic as the most geopolitically crucial region for American foreign policy in the 21st century. According to the Commission on Integrated Long-Term Strategy, China will have the second largest gross national product in the year 2010, with Japan number three and the Soviet Union slipping to number four.[29] India also will emerge as a major power. Already the United States has a higher level of foreign trade with the Pacific-rim nations than with Europe. What happens in Asia therefore does and will have a major impact on American security.

In the post-postwar world, Japan will remain the linchpin of America's position in the Pacific. The current economic tensions affecting Japanese-American relations should not be permitted to obscure the complementarity of American and Japanese interests. America needs Japanese capital for investment, just as the Japanese need a healthy American economy with which to trade and invest. For many years to come, Japan will remain dependent on America's security guarantee and its willingness to spend substantially more on defense than Japan. Correspondingly, a strong American presence in East Asia will facilitate Japan's emergence as a major power with the maximum benefit and the minimum risk.

Without the United States, Japan's transition to a full-fledged world power, including possibly military power, would cause major alarm among the smaller states of East Asia and in China. With the United States vitally engaged in East Asia, the Japanese may decide not to rearm, or Japanese rearmament would menace the Asian countries less than if it occurred as a

result of America's strategic withdrawal from the region. What type of impact Japan's power will have in East Asia will also depend on what type of internal regime the Japanese maintain. As with Germany, a democratic Japan will facilitate the possibility of a smooth transition and a benign impact. As with Germany, a vigorous American presence in Asia serves as the best insurance to keep Japan firmly in the democratic camp. As with Germany, the history of the interwar years reveals that the problems of trade that merely irritate Japanese-American relations now become potentially explosive when Japan maintains an authoritarian and militaristic regime. As with Germany, the inevitable adjustments in Japanese-American relations will occur with less rancor and cost with a democratic Japan than with the alternatives.[30]

South Korea remains a vital interest for Japan and thus an important interest for the United States. Under the umbrella of the American security guarantee, the Korean peninsula has experienced close to four decades of peace. South Korea has developed into an industrial society and a fledgling democracy, a vindication for Western ideals and theories of development. There is no compelling reason to undermine these benign trends with a precipitate American withdrawal. Elsewhere in the Asia-Pacific region, a United States actively engaged is important to help friendly states avert economic and political crisis, to minimize the social and economic dislocations which inevitably accompany rapid modernization. Unlike Western Europe, the Asia-Pacific region lacks a regional organization to fulfill these tasks.[31] Nor do these states have even the hypothetical capability to balance successfully against a resurgent Great Russian or Chinese threat.[32]

In the post-postwar era, the states of the Asia-Pacific region will need American power as a counterweight to the potential emergence of an expansionist and imperialistic China which is just beginning to develop its industrial strength. Perhaps China will develop democratically and forego the attempt to expand its influence and control as it industrializes. Nevertheless, China's cultural tradition, its history in the 20th century particularly, and its brutal suppression of democratic dissent in June 1989 caution that neither democracy nor passivity is the inevitable outcome. Even if an authoritarian China continues to be more preoccupied with the reemergence of a Soviet threat than with its own expansion, the credibility of American power is a necessary if not sufficient condition for the stability of East Asia.

Saddam Hussein's brutal invasion of Kuwait, Iraq's bid to dominate the Middle East, should remind us why there is no substitute for American power in this region vital to U.S. security. Despite Europe and Japan's formidable economic power, only the United States has the will and the capability to stop Saddam. Thus, the United States still must have an unequivocal commitment to resist any attempts to gain hegemony over the Persian Gulf, the oil lifeline on which the Western European democracies and Japan depend.

Even if the United States defeats Saddam, Islamic fundamentalism and Arab radicalism will continue to represent potential threats to the moderate Islamic regimes friendly to the United States and necessary to sustain America's geopolitical interests. The security of Israel, a domestic and moral as well as a geopolitical imperative, will continue to depend, likewise, on an active American involvement and commitment in the region. Here, too, no plausible substitutes for American power loom on the horizon. Latin America will also require active American involvement and commitment in the post-postwar era. Mounting instability, Mexico's demographic crisis, foreign debt, and virulent anti-U.S. nationalism could produce a crisis which diverts the United States from directing its attention to more vital geopolitical concerns abroad.

Although the complementarity of ideals and self-interest, of democracy and geopolitics, is most compelling and promising for Europe and the industrial countries of East Asia, the United States will continue to have an interest in promoting democracy in the underdeveloped world. To be sure, the end of the Cold War does diminish the urgency of hastening the spread of democracy there. Without a connection to a communist superpower, small regimes hostile to the United States pose a less immediate threat and are less likely to survive, even without active American efforts to resist or undermine them.[33] The United States thus should have a greater margin for tolerating ideological diversity in geopolitically less significant regimes, because the latter no longer represent the forward outposts of a massive Soviet ideological and geopolitical assault on the cause of freedom generally.

However, even in the more remote areas of the Third World, the United States will continue to have an interest in promoting democracy when possible and prudential. First, the United States has never defined its self-interests wholly without reference to its ideals. Nor should it: the idea of freedom is not just a particular but a universal aspiration. Second, Kant's prophecy that democracies tend not to fight with one another should apply with some force to the underdeveloped world. Third, it is unwise to write off vast areas of the world which may be geopolitically insignificant today but the great powers of tomorrow. Why not anticipate these developments by promoting democracy now rather than later? Fourth, the United States would lose its uniqueness by abandoning the promotion of its universal founding principles abroad. The United States without these principles becomes merely an amalgam of fractious ethnic and religious groups, rather than a people united on the basis of a universal idea of freedom transcending race, creed, color, background, or ethnic origin.[34]

In many developing countries, democracy will not become an option for years to come. There the choice will continue to be the lesser of two evils, based on a calculation of U.S. geopolitical interests and the relative odiousness of contending authoritarian alternatives. Nevertheless, this should not relieve the United States of the responsibility for distinguishing between lesser

degrees of geopolitical and moral evils. In the underdeveloped world in particular, practicality and prudence often will limit the character and extent of intervention to promote American values. Even the United States has finite resources; it cannot and should not intervene everywhere. Furthermore, the American people have a very low threshold of tolerance for military intervention in the underdeveloped world. Presidents can intervene there only when the cost of victory is minimal and the duration of the operation quick. The recent successful American interventions in Panama and the Philippines, two states with longstanding ties to the United States, indicate, however, the desirability and possibility of meshing ideals with self-interest. Even in the post-postwar era, the United States should not hesitate to use force on democracies' behalf for relatively low-cost, low-risk operations.

Domestic and Alliance Constraints

It is easier to formulate a post-containment paradigm than to implement one. American statesmen will encounter some significant obstacles to pursuing a policy of vigorous internationalism. The Bush administration and its successors will have to forge a bipartisan consensus for this policy in difficult domestic circumstances. Nor will America's principal allies agree with all of the prescriptions offered here. There are many who oppose any policy which threatens the loosening of bipolarity, substantial arms reduction, or cooperation with the Soviet Union so long as Gorbachev continues to be forthcoming. Some believe, moreover, that continued American vigilance threatens these objectives.[35]

Any post-postwar policy thus must accommodate the inevitability of substantial reductions in defense spending and an intense demand for far-reaching arms control. It must recognize that economic issues will increase in importance as the Soviet military threat appears to wane. It must recognize that the United States will have to devise a new rationale for NATO. And it must recognize that America's allies will have significantly more bargaining power vis-a-vis the United States than they have had in the past.

Nevertheless, one should not underestimate the possible. Many commentators have exaggerated both the extent and the irreversibility of America's relative decline.[36] For many years to come the United States will remain the most powerful economic power in the world and by far the most powerful military power in the free world. America's current economic problems are not irreparable, and the apparent reduction in Soviet-American enmity will make the military requirements for a policy of vigilant internationalism easier to bear. A substantial American military presence in Europe should remain, but there is nothing sacred about current force levels. On the contrary, the opportunities seem promising for substantial reductions in the quality and quantity of Soviet and American forces deployed in Europe.

Economically and militarily, U.S. allies will continue to need American cooperation and support at least as much as the United States needs theirs. Thus, America's bargaining power, albeit diminished, is still considerable. Nor should one underestimate the will of the American people to continue supporting a policy of vigilant internationalism in the post-postwar era. The history of the Cold War demonstrates that the American people will bear the burden and pay the price of global leadership so long as American statesmen articulate the rationale for internationalism.

The rationale is indeed convincing. To retrench substantially now, or even in the future with the Cold War won, would merely risk repeating the historic mistakes of the 1920s, when the United States retreated into isolationism. Although every historical situation is in some way unique, and although the prospects for long-term peace and stability now are signally greater than during the interwar years, the United States cannot take too much for granted. The historic success of containment contrasts starkly with the 20th century alternatives which preceded it. The burden, then, should be on those who advocate unleashing the potential dangers which could arise should the United States abandon the geopolitical and moral tenets of a vigorous internationalism.

Notes

1. On Endism, see, e.g., Francis Fukuyama, "The End of History?" *The National Interest* Number 16 (Summer 1989), pp. 3-18; Samuel Huntington, "No Exit: The Errors of Endism," *The National Interest* Number 17, (Fall 1989), pp. 3-12; Francis Fukuyama, "A Reply to My Critics," *The National Interest* Number 18 (Winter 1989/90). On Declinism, see e.g., Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000* (New York: Random House, 1987); Samuel Huntington, "The U.S.—Decline or Renewal," *Foreign Affairs* Volume 67, Number 2 (Winter 1988/1989), pp. 76-96.

2. For such an argument from the right, see Patrick Buchanan, "America First—and Second, and Third," *The National Interest*, No. 19 (Spring 1990), pp. 77-82.

3. For an excellent essay on the need to reassess the premises of American foreign policy for post-Cold War Europe, see Burton Yale Pines, "Waiting for Mr. X," *Policy Review*, No. 49 (Summer 1989), pp. 2-6.

4. On the policy of containment generally, see John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment: A Critical Appraisal of Postwar American National Security Policy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982).

5. George F. Kennan, "The Sources of Soviet Conduct," *Foreign Affairs* XXV, Number 4 (July 1947), pp. 566-582.

6. See, e.g., NSC 68 in *Foreign Relations of the United States*, Volume 1 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1977), pp. 235-292.

7. Samuel Huntington, *The Promise of Disharmony* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press, 1981), p. 240-259.

8. Jeane Kirkpatrick, *Dictatorships and Double Standards* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982), pp. 23-59.

9. For an example of the reasoning underlying the arguments of those who believe that because the Cold War may be over, it need not have been fought, see Strobe Talbott, "Rethinking the Red Menace," *Time*, January 1, 1990, pp. 66-72.

10. For an extensive argument of this point, see John Lewis Gaddis, *The Long Peace* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), pp. 215-235.

11. John Dunlap, "Will the Soviet Union Survive Until the Year 2000?" *The National Interest*, Number 18 (Winter 1989/1990), pp. 65-76.

12. This is one of the major themes of Kennedy's *The Rise and Fall of Great Powers*.

13. For a compelling statement of this point, see Charles Krauthammer, "Universal Dominion: Toward a Unipolar World," *The National Interest*, Number 18 (Winter 1989/1990), pp. 46-49.

14. See, e.g., Jerry Hough, "Gorbachev's Politics," *Foreign Affairs*, Volume 68, Number 5 (Winter 1989/90), pp. 26-41.

15. Richard Pipes, *Survival Is Not Enough* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1984).

16. This is precisely the advice which the anonymous Z recently offered. See Z, "To the Stalin Mausoleum," *Daedalus*, (Winter 1990), pp. 295-344.

17. Colin Gray, *The Geopolitics of Super Power* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1987); Zbigniew Brzezinski, "America's New Geostrategy," *Foreign Affairs*, Volume 66, Number 4 (Spring 1988), pp. 680-699.

18. Michael W. Doyle, "Kant, Liberal Legacies, and Foreign Affairs," *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, Volume 12 (Summer 1983), pp. 205-235; Michael W. Doyle, "Liberalism and World Politics," *American Political Science Review*, Volume 80, pp. 1151-1169.

19. Zbigniew Brzezinski, "Post-Communist Nationalism," *Foreign Affairs*, Volume 68, Number 5 (Winter 1989/90), pp. 1-25.

20. *Ibid.*

21. Stephen Lee, *The European Dictatorships, 1918-1945* (London and New York: Methuen, 1987).

22. This is indeed the argument of Winston Churchill. See, e.g., Winston Churchill, *The Gathering Storm* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1948), pp. 15-16. For a more recent restatement, see Williamson Murray, *The Changes in the European Balance of Power, 1938-1939* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984).

23. Dennis Bark and David Gress, *A History of West Germany*, Volumes 1 and 2 (Cambridge: Basil Blackwell, Inc., 1989).

24. Wolfram Hanrieder, *Germany, America, Europe: Forty Years of German Foreign Policy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), pp. 1-25.

25. Joseph Joffe, *The Limited Partnership: Europe, the United States, and the Burdens of Alliance* (Cambridge: Ballinger Publishing Company, 1987), pp. 186-188.

26. On the subject of the effect of American withdrawal on alliance dynamics during the 1930s, see Robert G. Kaufman, "Balancing and Bandwagoning Reconsidered—Alignment Decisions and Non-Decisions against Nazi Germany between the Two World Wars," currently under review at *World Politics*.

27. For an excellent analysis of why even a united Western Europe or Japan cannot substitute plausibly for American power, see Joseph Nye, Jr., *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power* (New York: Basic Books, 1990), pp. 141-170.

28. Gray, *The Geopolitics of Super Power*, pp. 144-164.

29. Cited in Zbigniew Brzezinski, *The Grand Failure: The Birth and Death of Communism in The Twentieth Century* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1989).

30. On the growing importance of the Pacific for the U.S., see Owen Harries, "The Coming Dominance of the Pacific," *The National Interest*, Number 11 (Spring 1988), pp. 124-128.

31. *Ibid.*

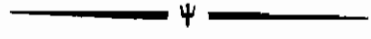
32. For an assessment of how the ASEAN countries depend on credible American commitment as a hedge against a potential Soviet, Chinese, or Japanese threat, see Robert Tilman, *Southeast Asia and the Enemy Beyond: ASEAN Perceptions of External Threat* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1987).

33. For an excellent statement of this point, see Krauthammer, "Universal Dominion: Toward A Unipolar World," pp. 47-48.

34. Nathan Tarcov, "If This Long War Is Over," *The National Interest* (Winter 1989/1990), pp. 50-53.

35. Joseph Joffe, "The Revisionists—Moscow, Bonn, and the European Balance," *The National Interest*, Number 17 (Fall 1989), pp. 41-54.

36. For an excellent critique of Declinism, see Huntington, "Decline or Renewal," pp. 76-96; Nye, *Bound to Lead*, pp. 141-170.



"History is lived forewards but it is written in retrospect. We know the end before we consider the beginning and we can never wholly recapture what it was to know the beginning only."

C.V. Wedgwood
William the Silent
(Yale University Press, 1944)