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Violent Peace and the Management of Power: Dilemmas and Choices in U.S. Policy

Eugene V. Rostow

In a legal perspective—and the words war and peace are legal terms, so a legal perspective is appropriate—"violent peace" characterizes the present state of world politics far more accurately than "cold war" or "armed truce." During this century the relatively tranquil peace of the Victorian Age has disintegrated into an increasingly violent and anarchic condition. For compelling reasons of policy, however, it is a condition we should still define as one of peace, that is, of general peace punctuated by episodes of limited war. As compared to "cold war" or "armed truce," the phrase "violent peace" has the advantage of conforming to the vocabulary of international law and thus directing attention to the inescapable role of law in the social process. The widespread neglect and even dismissal of law in studies of security policy, international relations, and diplomatic history is a major intellectual weakness of the literature and of Western policy-making as well.

I wish to make it clear that I am not using the word "law" to signify a static collection of formal rules set down in the books. The law on the books is important, but it is never the same as the law in action, or the living law, the law at the end of a policeman's stick, as Justice Holmes once remarked. The law on the books does not of itself determine the behavior of states or of individuals. In many cultures, notably our own, people are greatly influenced by formal rules and tend to respect them. But the relationship between rules and behavior runs in the opposite direction too. Legal rules are much more influenced by patterns of behavior than patterns of behavior are influenced by rules. The law of a society reflects its customs, its mores, and its aspirations—that is, the patterns of behavior it deems right, seeks to achieve in the future, and finds essential to its well-being or indeed to its survival. Since society is a living organism, its customs and mores change. So do its aspirations, as its moral code improves or deteriorates. Therefore, its law, the external deposit of its moral history, changes as well.

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To put the argument into the proverbial nutshell, the essence of our security problem is to transform the presently violent and volatile condition of world politics into a more stable state of peace before it explodes into unlimited and unthinkable war. To state this same idea in the language of law, the goal of our national security effort must be to bring the real law, the living law of international society, from its woeful condition of near anarchy much closer to the standard of the United Nations Charter which embodies the norms of international conduct with which member nations profess to agree. No lesser goal can assure the survival of our nation and the fulfillment of its heritage.

Some international lawyers have suggested the possibility of identifying a political condition halfway between war and peace, the only two categories used by international law. I looked into the literature on the subject a few years ago and concluded that it is not only impossible but undesirable to establish a third classification to take account of the cold war and its ramifications. The most important reason for this conclusion has to do with the level of warfare tolerated under the two rubrics we now use—war and peace. As bad as the state of violent peace is, it is still preferable to an even more violent state of war in a nuclear environment.

In times of peace, as international law defines the word, some international uses of force have always been permitted. The books say that in peacetime, states are entitled to use whatever force is reasonably required to cure breaches of international law of a violent character when peaceful means are unavailable or would be unavailing. Such uses of force are supposed to be limited, and in fact are limited, and more or less proportional to the breaches of international law they are intended to cure. Episodes of this kind are frequent and familiar, probably more frequent today than ever before. They range from the use of force to rescue citizens in distress abroad, i.e., the Entebbe affair 11 years ago, to campaigns of individual or collective self-defense, i.e., the defense of Greece, Berlin, South Korea, Grenada, and South Vietnam and the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962.

In all these cases, even when prolonged campaigns were needed, the use of force was restricted by international law. For example, we responded to the Soviet blockade of Berlin only in Berlin and only by an airlift; and during the Korean war the Soviet Union made no attempt to interfere with allied ships or planes carrying troops or supplies. The tacit rule of engagement in the cold war, which in this respect reflects the nominal rule of international law, has been quite consistently and prudently respected. In each case, the Soviet Union was attempting a probe or seeking a limited gain, but was not prepared for escalation to the state of war. In Vietnam, we chose to withdraw rather than escalate further, perhaps because the war had become so unpopular at home or because the nuclear balance was no longer so favorable to us as it had been at the time of the Korean war.

I do not mean to suggest that the rules of international law purport to confine the scope of self-defense against a violent breach of international law in peacetime entirely to the place where the breach occurred. Many such episodes have involved crossing frontiers to deal with the attackers in their camps or bases. The law does not recognize sanctuaries. One of the most frequently cited precedents in this branch of the law involved a British incursion into northern New York State in 1837 to disperse an armed band planning to join a rebellion against British authority in Canada; another concerned an American foray into Spanish Florida in 1819 to eliminate a group of freebooters who had been raiding towns in Georgia. But the law, sustained by an acute consciousness of the risks of going too far, has so far imposed limits on the degree of violence which can be tolerated in times of peace.

In contrast, the distinguishing feature of the state of war under international law—that is, full, general, notorious, and declared war, in the language of international law and the Constitutional law of the United States—is that it contemplates the unlimited use of force, tempered only by the humanitarian conventions of the law of war. The belligerents are not obliged to confine hostilities to the area of the original episode of violence, should there be one, but may bring force to bear on each other wherever they think it might be effective in coercing the enemy to bow to their will: for example, to give up territory, submit to belligerent occupation, overthrow an aggressive government or regime, or abandon a cause. States hesitate before crossing the legal threshold between peace and war, at least while their memories of the preceding war remain alive. In this nuclear age, they should continue to hesitate with particular care. But memories fade and emotional surges of fear, anger, and injured pride can outweigh cool calculation in the minds of those who govern us. After the Napoleonic Wars, the French statesman, Talleyrand is alleged to have said, "the statesmen of Europe were intelligent enough not to go to war with each other, but too stupid to agree." His comment has a certain bitter resonance still.

This discussion assumes that managing the use of power in international society is the business of governments and particularly of the major powers which possess preponderant military strength. Such an assumption is a modern idea which was strongly asserted in the 17th century after the Thirty Years' War and became a maxim of statecraft after the Napoleonic Wars.

The emergence and partial acceptance of that idea marked the beginning of a new era, the era in which we now live. For the first time, the states recognized a serious challenge to their sovereign privilege of making war at will: the notion that each nation's supreme security interest is not aggrandizement or dominance or glory or revenge for ancient wrongs but the

effective functioning of the state system in peace. Since the state system can never be altogether self-regulating, like the solar system, only the major powers have the power to manage it. The essence of the mutation achieved by the Congress of Vienna was the principle that the great powers should manage the use of power in the common interest. What emerged was a condition of unresolved tension between the historic privileges of national sovereignty, on the one hand, and the claim of a general interest in maintaining world public order, on the other. During the 19th century, the claims of the general interest in peace often prevailed over the lure of national expansion. In the 20th century thus far, the balance has tipped in the opposite direction.

But the 19th century experience has decisively influenced our memory and our aspirations. It is a fact, a shaping fact, a part of our collective uncouscious, that for a century after the Congress of Vienna in 1815, the great powers of Europe practiced a diplomacy of restraint, conciliation, and compromise. There were exceptions and backslidings, like the Crimean War and the Franco-Prussian War, and great changes occurred, but the state system somehow absorbed those shocks without major war. Germany and Italy were created as modern national states. Nationalism began to weaken the Austro-Hungarian empire and accelerated the decline of the Ottoman Empire. Germany and Russia pursued policies of expansion, and the orientation of world politics changed in response to the perceived threat of German ambitions. France and Russia became allies. Britain and France reached an understanding. But the new alliances did not come soon enough nor decisively enough to prevent the First World War, the tragedy from which all the other tragedies of the 20th century have flowed. Germany was pursuing goals incompatible with the practices of the Concert of Europe, and the system collapsed under the strain. The British Foreign Minister of the day, Sir Edward Grey, invoked the procedures of great power consultation which had defused so many crises during the 19th century; in 1914 these procedures failed.

The moment the First World War was over, the nations sought to restore and improve the system of concert which had served them well during the 19th century. This time the state system was organized on a world scale to take account of the fact that world politics was no longer Eurocentric. The 19th century practices of consultation and cooperation were institutionalized in the League of Nations, staffed by an international secretariat. A conscious and important effort was initiated to make the system of world order not only peaceful, but more just as well, in terms of the moral standards of the society of nations.

But the League was weak and its member nations faltered in accepting responsibility for preserving the peace. The United States refused to participate in world politics, and for 15 years the Soviet Union was partly isolated behind a *cordon sanitaire*. When, during the thirties, Germany, Italy,

and Japan began to wage war against the territorial settlement of 1919, the other powers refused to recognize the danger and dithered until it was too late to do anything but fight.

Immediately after the Second World War the nations again sought to re-create and strengthen the state system as they had done in 1919, this time under the banner of the United Nations Charter. The United States and the Soviet Union were participants from the beginning. The European empires were dissolved, save for the old Russian Empire, and more than a hundred new states were formed. On paper at least, the United Nations Charter was stronger than the League Covenant in its prohibition of aggression as a principle of law, and the Security Council was endowed with far greater power than the Concert of Europe and the Council of the League of Nations.

Once more, however, the dream of achieving a just and lasting peace has been thwarted. The Security Council has never attained the specific gravity of the 19th century diplomatic congresses at which Bismarck, Disraeli, and their peers averted war and settled the fate of Europe, Africa, and the Middle East.

Why is the United Nations going the way of the League of Nations? The reason is hardly obscure. It is indeed so obvious that even historians, who naturally prefer complex theories, are coming around to the view that the simple explanation of the phenomenon is correct. The cold war was not caused by missed diplomatic opportunities, or American imperial arrogance, or mutual misunderstandings. There were many mistakes but no mutual misunderstandings and no missed opportunities. The United States has engaged in international politics since 1945 reluctantly and spasmodically, driven by instincts of self-preservation, not imperial ambition.

The cold war—the violence of the peace since 1945—was caused by the Soviet Union's imperial appetite. During the early postwar years, the Western allies made every effort to induce the Soviet Union to take its position as a cooperative member of the Security Council and as a responsible great power in the 19th century tradition, but it rejected all such overtures. As Stalin said to Ambassador Harriman in 1944 when Harriman was pressing him to accept a reconstruction loan Stalin had requested some months before, "We appreciate what you are trying to do, but we have decided to go our own way."

The Soviet Union is still in the imperial mood of the 18th and 19th centuries. It refused the Marshall Plan offer and forced the countries of Eastern Europe to withdraw their acceptances of that proposal. It rejected the 1946 American proposal to give up its nuclear weapons monopoly and put all nuclear technology under international control. From the beginning, the Soviet Union has acted as if it were exempt from the rules of the United Nations Charter with regard to the use of and the threat to use force. Starting well before the end of the war, it has pursued a policy of indefinite expansion

based on the aggressive use of military power, beginning in Eastern Europe, Iran, Greece, and Turkey, shifting to Berlin, then to Korea, Southeast Asia, and the Middle East, and later still, to the Caribbean and Africa.

At the end of the war, the Soviet Union held not only its own territories but the Baltic States, East Germany, the states of Eastern Europe, and North Korea. In addition, it was helping the Chinese Communists in their bid for power, and Communist Parties all over Europe and Asia in their attempts to do likewise. The goal of Soviet expansion was not the bauble of prestige or a place at the high table. They were and are interested in more serious things. In 1945, the Soviet Union already possessed a massive geopolitical and military advantage. Adding Western Europe and Japan to the list would make the Soviet advantage overwhelming. If the Soviet leaders could win just one more battle, they thought, they would achieve the prize which had eluded Napoleon, the Kaiser, and Hitler—mastery of the entire Eurasian landmass and all that would flow from it.

In the late forties, Western Europe and the United States became acutely conscious of the magnitude and gravity of the Soviet thrust for dominance. They banded together in the classic response of the balance-of-power minuet. President Truman raised the banner of resistance in announcing the Truman Doctrine 40 years ago, and NATO was born. Japan, then China, and many smaller nations followed suit.

In his famous article on *The Sources of Soviet Conduct* in 1947, George Kennan supplied the intellectual foundation for the policy of containment. He assured the West that if we contained the outward thrust of Soviet power for 10 or 15 years, Soviet policy would mellow under the influence of Russian high culture, and the Soviet Union would become a responsible partner in the tasks of world politics.

For nearly 40 years, the coalitions led by the United States have followed George Kennan's advice. It was persuasive advice 40 years ago, and the West has given it a conscientious try, but Soviet policy has not mellowed. It has become bolder and more persistent in its threat to Western security.

There have been Western successes in this period. Soviet threats to the key elements in the balance of power—Western Europe, Japan, and China—have been deterred or contained, although the Soviet Union never stops probing to gain control of them. With American support, China, Yugoslavia, and Egypt have detached themselves from the Soviet sphere. Soviet-supported military moves—notably those against Berlin, Greece, Turkey, Malaysia, South Korea, and Israel—have been turned back. But Soviet setbacks have not brought about a sea change in Soviet policy. If Soviet efforts at expansion are stopped in one place, the Soviet Union tries again in another. After the failure of the Soviet effort to take Berlin, they switched to Korea, then to Vietnam, to Cuba, and the Middle East.

There has been no change in this pattern under Gorbachev. The nearly unbelievable build-up of Soviet military power continues at a pace which the Soviet Union has maintained since the midfifties. If anything, the Soviet military build-up is gaining in momentum. The military threat of the Soviet nuclear arsenal has become a powerful political tide, tending to divide the United States from its allies and associates and weaken Western confidence in its ability to resist Soviet pressure. Under Gorbachev, the Soviet position in the Middle East is bolder and more intransigent than has been the case for years. More supplies seem to be going to the Caribbean and to the rebellion against the government of the Philippines. While Gorbachev has been an agile juggler in the nuclear arms negotiations, tossing nuclear statistics into the air with the verve of a magician, there is no reason as yet to suppose that he has changed the long-standing Soviet objective in these negotiations—to induce the West to accept massive Soviet nuclear superiority as the rightful foundation for the new world order.

The Soviet thrust for dominion is now more than 40 years old. The limits of Soviet hostility are obvious. They are implicit in what Soviet writers frequently call "the correlation of forces," that is, the military balance, and especially the nuclear balance. The Soviet leaders consider nuclear war both risky and unnecessary. If the United States fails to maintain a credible retaliatory nuclear deterrent, the Soviet Union will be able to attain its strategic objectives through diplomatic pressure alone. And the superpowers cannot engage in open conventional warfare, since the greatest risk of nuclear war is through escalation from conventional war. The Soviet Union therefore relies more and more on political, psychological, and indirect methods of warfare, and on flanking actions in the Third World directed against the great centers of Western power. As Raymond Aron commented in his last book, *Clausewitz: Philosopher of War*, the Soviet leadership has reversed Clausewitz' celebrated maxim. Clausewitz said that war is an extension of politics by other means. The Soviets, Aron said, make politics an extension of war by other means.

Someday the Soviet leadership will realize that the imperial dream is a costly delusion which usually ends with a bang, not a whimper. If the West is even moderately rational—and we cannot expect a higher level of performance by our leaders—the Soviet Union can never achieve its goal of dominion.

Western opinion is frustrated and depressed by indications that the cold war shows every sign of continuing indefinitely. The Western peoples are tired of living under siege, appalled by the costs they have been forced to pay in both blood and treasure in order to maintain the balance of power, and they are increasingly irritated with each other under conditions of prolonged stress. Obviously, it is safer to be angry with your friends than with your

enemies. The Western public and their politicians are casting about to find an easy way to bring this grueling test of will to an end.

What are the choices and dilemmas facing the United States and the other Western nations as they confront this bleak prospect? We have many dilemmas but only two choices. Before examining those choices, however, I shall examine four popular and much discussed choices or options the United States does *not* have.

First is the mystical idea that we can attain salvation and security without tears by reaching arms control and disarmament agreements with the Soviet Union, particularly in regard to nuclear weapons. The second is the chimera that by pursuing the policy former President Nixon called "hard détente" we can reach a new *modus vivendi* with the Soviet Union, that is, an understanding about spheres of influence and rules of the game which would make world politics less violent and reduce the risk of an uncontrollable explosion. The third is closely related to the second, but it goes one step further. It is the notion that we should abrogate our alliances and go it alone—the option of global unilateralism, as it is sometimes called. The fourth, the option of isolation and neutrality, sounds less radical than global unilateralism, but would, in fact, be just as suicidal. Advocates of this view contend that we should cut our policy to fit our resources; pull back from the bogs and pitfalls of the Third World; draw up the wagons around the United States alone, or the United States, Western Europe, and perhaps Japan, and let the rest of the world fall into the Soviet orbit.

Arms control agreements are not a panacea for preserving peace. They should be viewed as a means to an end, not as an end in themselves. Conceivably, good arms control agreements could help to stabilize great power relationships and contribute to the effectiveness of crisis management in times of unusual turbulence. They could reinforce a regime of peace achieved by firm and prudent policies of collective self-defense. They cannot, however, be a substitute for such policies. Bad arms control agreements, on the other hand, could gravely weaken the security of the United States, as the SALT I Agreements did, by allowing the Soviet Union to seek nuclear superiority, thus exposing the United States and its allies to nuclear blackmail. Even the best conceivable arms control agreement would be worthless if it were, in effect, a license for Soviet aggression through the use of conventional force. Western nations should not be interested in arms control as a way to make the world safe for Soviet expansion achieved by conventional weapons, subversion, and terror.

In approaching the subject of nuclear weapons, one should recall that their role in world affairs is far more political than it is military. While the risk of nuclear war can never be entirely excluded, it cannot be considered great, at least not among the industrialized nations. But the threat of nuclear attack, however veiled, has been and will continue to be a potent deterrent in

circumstances of sufficient gravity to make such a threat plausible. For the United States and the coalitions it leads, a clear-cut American capacity for nuclear retaliation is indispensable to the possibility of using conventional forces when necessary to protect their interests.

For more than 30 years, Soviet policy with regard to nuclear weapons has been firmly based on these two closely related ideas. The extraordinary Soviet nuclear build-up during the last generation was designed not to fight a nuclear war, but to achieve overwhelming nuclear superiority, especially in ground-based ballistic missiles, and thus isolate and neutralize the United States. The U.S. nuclear arsenal is intended to deter Soviet or Soviet-supported attacks on American vital interests. The Soviet force, on the contrary, is designed to deter any American assistance in the defense of countries subjected to such attacks. The pattern revealed in the U.S.-U.S.S.R. nuclear arms control negotiations since 1969 reflects this fundamental difference in goals. The United States has been seeking agreements to maintain its nuclear deterrent, while the Soviet Union has sought agreements to attain overwhelming nuclear superiority. In short, the United States perceives nuclear arms and nuclear arms agreements as instruments of collective self-defense, while the Soviet Union sees them as weapons of aggression designed to make collective self-defense impossible.

The second option that is often proposed as a policy the United States should pursue in order to escape the burdens of the violent peace is a *modus vivendi* agreement with the Soviet Union—an agreement that Gorbachev often urges. Forty years of searing experience should have long since convinced the West that no Soviet-American rule of engagement that compromises with the United Nations Charter—that is, the rule of peaceful peace—has worked or can work. The United States has made many *modus vivendi* agreements with the Soviet Union since Yalta and Potsdam, and the Soviet Union has broken them all. As the Committee on the Present Danger has said, the goal of Western policy must be "sound conditions of peace with the Soviet Union, not illusory détente."

The Yalta and Potsdam Agreements were perhaps the most important of the Soviet-American political agreements since World War II. They promised free elections in the countries of Eastern Europe, whose independence remains indispensable to the possibility of achieving and maintaining a stable balance of world power. In a message to the Soviet people, President Kennedy said that there can be no peace between the Soviet and the American peoples until the Soviet promise of free elections in Eastern Europe is carried out. That judgment is as sound today as it was in 1962; Central Europe continues to be a pivot of the world system of power, as Mackinder pointed out.

The list of *modus vivendi* agreements between the United States and the Soviet Union includes a long series of agreements with respect to Indochina,

starting with the Geneva settlement of 1954 which recognized the partition of French Indochina into the separate states of Laos, Cambodia, and North and South Vietnam, and the agreements of 1962 and 1973 committing the Soviet Union to pull North Vietnamese troops out of Laos and South Vietnam, thereby permitting self-determination for South Vietnam. Another important agreement of this kind was that of the Nixon-Brezhnev 1972 summit meeting in Moscow which established a code of conduct for the cold war and promised "détente"—which, according to President Nixon, would substitute Soviet-American "cooperation" for "confrontation." Ambassador Dobrynin once said that the Soviet-American agreement embodied in Security Council Resolution 242 after the Six-Day War in 1967—the resolution that promised peace and territorial adjustments between the Arab States and Israel—was the first time in the history of the cold war that the Soviet Union used the phrase "package deal" in a positive sense. The Soviet Union broke that agreement as it has broken all others.

But the record of broken promises is not the fundamental reason why *modus vivendi* agreements, spheres of influence arrangements, and the like, cannot reduce East-West tensions and lead to peace. That fundamental reason is simple: there is no way in which the United States and the Soviet Union can define and agree to respect each other's national security interests until the Soviet Union gives up its drive for dominant power and settles down to live in peace within its legitimate boundaries.

The facts that compel this conclusion are so familiar that they are easy to ignore. The most basic national security interest of the United States is to prevent any one power from controlling the Eurasian landmass, a reservoir of power which the island and coastal states, including the United States, Great Britain, France, and Japan, could not hope to defeat. Thomas Jefferson defined that aspect of the American national interest vividly when he wrote of Napoleon's invasion of Russia: "Surely none of us wish to see Bonaparte conquer Russia, and thus lay at his feet the whole continent of Europe. This done, England would be but a breakfast . . . [P]ut all Europe into his hands, and he might spare such a force to be sent in British ships, as I would as leave not have to encounter. . . . No. It cannot be to our interest that all Europe should be reduced to a single monarchy."

The primary American national security interest today remains what it was in Jefferson's time: never allow an adversary or potential adversary to become too strong. Jefferson's rule is a conditioned reflex as old as history. Thus the United States fought in the two World Wars of this century in order to prevent Germany from dominating Western Europe and Russia. It helped organize NATO in 1949 and has participated in its activities ever since in order to keep the Soviet Union from dominating Germany and Western Europe. American policy in the Pacific Basin rests on the same principle. We have fought in four Asian wars to prevent the emergence of hegemonic power

in the Pacific Basin. That principle, spelled out in the Shanghai Communique of 1972, is the explicit basis of our relationship with China today.

This pattern of behavior is determined by geopolitical reality. If the Soviet Union gains control of the 300 million people of Western Europe and their skills, capital, productive capacity, and geographical position, then China, Japan, and a great many other countries around the world would conclude that the balance of world power had turned irreversibly against the United States. As a consequence, they would acquiesce to the best possible accommodation the Soviet Union would allow them, leaving the United States isolated, impotent, and too weak to protect its territorial integrity and political independence, but too strong for the Soviet Union to ignore and allow to remain neutral indefinitely. Soviet hegemony in Asia would have precisely the same consequences for Europe and the United States. The Western-oriented nations would face the nightmare so brutally described by Thucydides in the debate between the general of an invading Athenian military force and the leaders of Melos, a Spartan colony which sought to remain neutral. The Melians pleaded for mercy in the name of justice. The Athenian replied: "You know as well as we do that, when these matters are discussed by practical people, the standard of justice depends on the equality of power to compel and that in fact the strong do what they have the power to do and the weak accept what they have to accept."

The third alternative security policy frequently urged upon the American people—the policy of abrogating our security treaties and trying to protect our national security single-handedly—founders on the same rock as the second; it flies in the face of the arithmetic of power. Strong as it is, the United States does not have the power to defend its security without allies in the Atlantic, the Pacific, the Middle East, and Southern Asia. We are in the position held by Great Britain for four centuries between the reigns of the two Elizabeths. Britain was never as strong as the successive bidders for European hegemony—Spain, France, and Germany. But Britain skillfully maintained the balance of power in Europe by a policy of astute alliances backed by its money, its sea power, and the armies its navy deposited on near and distant shores.

The fourth alternative security policy often advocated for the United States—that of narrowly confining our defense perimeter—is a variation on the same theme. The advocates of global unilateralism accept Jefferson's principle that the security of the United States depends on maintaining a world balance of power. Their mistake is to imagine we could achieve that end by our own exertions, or with *ad hoc* alliances made at the moment of crisis. The advocates of withdrawal to either a purely national or a purely North Atlantic defense line, on the other hand, simply ignore the problem of the balance of power. It is fantasy to suppose that if we did abandon the security policy we have pursued since the late forties that we would be

allowed to live as Switzerland does, safe within a stable state system governed by generally respected rules of international law. We are too big, too rich, and potentially too dangerous to be left untouched in such a world.

If the United States follows the counsel of those who advocate pulling our troops and fleets out of Europe and Asia, the American nuclear guaranty would lose all credibility; Western Europe, Japan and China would become neutral, at a minimum; and the United States would be truly isolated and at the mercy of events. With a minute fraction of the world's population and less than 22 percent of the world's global output, the United States could not defend itself against the Soviets if they controlled Western Europe, China, and Japan, a combination astronomically stronger than the United States in every way. In Jefferson's words, we would be "but a breakfast" for the Soviet Union and that fact would be self-evident.

Moreover, even a hint or expectation of an American withdrawal from forward positions in Europe, Asia, and the Middle East would have another consequence: it would necessarily trigger the rapid spread of nuclear weapons and the breakdown of the regime of the Non-Proliferation Treaty of 1967. The influence of that treaty has not been negligible. Today there are fewer nuclear powers than most observers thought likely 20 years ago when the treaty was signed. But if the United States reduced its forces abroad, many countries which now rely on the nuclear power of the United States would feel driven to become nuclear powers themselves. The world political system would become far more volatile and unpredictable, and the Soviet Union would have a plausible excuse for attacking Germany and Japan under Article 107 of the United Nations Charter which provides that nothing in the Charter "shall invalidate or preclude action, in relation to any state which during the Second World War has been an enemy 'of any signatory of the Charter,' taken or authorized as a result of that war by the government having responsibility for such action."

Increased isolationist sentiment in the United States, caused mainly by the fear of nuclear war, has an ironic dimension: as an isolated "neutral" state, we would have to maintain at least as large a nuclear arsenal as we do now because the retaliatory nuclear force required to keep the Soviet Union from attacking Western Europe, China, or Japan is mathematically the same as that required to prevent attacks on the United States itself. Our defensive needs are determined by the nuclear forces of the Soviet Union, not by the particular target chosen for a Soviet attack. This is one of the lessons of the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962. Because we had full nuclear retaliatory capability then, the Soviet Union could not have opposed an American invasion of Cuba and therefore withdrew its missiles in the face of American preparations for an invasion. If the nuclear balance were unfavorable to the United States, could we oppose a Soviet landing in Florida?

The strong regional coalitions we have helped organize since 1947 to thwart the Soviet bid for mastery have maintained a powerful internal coherence. There is no escape from their logic. Only the United States can frustrate the formidable nuclear arsenal of the Soviet Union, so the United States is an indispensable member of each coalition. And only by maintaining its nuclear guaranty for its allies and other vital interests can the United States sustain the balance of power on which its own primitive safety depends.

If these four familiar approaches to the problem of defining the national security objectives of the United States are not in fact available, what choices do we have? Two, I think, and only two. The first is to muddle through along the lines of our present policy of containment and collective self-defense as it has evolved since the time of President Truman and Secretary of State Acheson. The second, which I much prefer, would be to renew and modernize the policy of containment and supplement it with a policy of active defense.

Muddling through is an unacceptably dangerous course. Ceding the initiative entirely to the Soviet Union and to chance would permit the Soviet leadership to pursue a risk-free strategy. It could try one probe after another without fear of the military consequences. If the probe failed, the Soviet Union would be no worse off than before. It could bombard Western solidarity with an endless stream of political, psychological, and nuclear threats of the kind that have already had such a devastating effect on Western domestic politics and foreign policy. A continuation of the cold war as we have known it is a strategy doomed to fail. True, the United States and its allies have managed so far to prevent the worst. Western Europe, Japan, China, South Korea, Israel, Iceland, the Azores and a few other key countries have not yet been invested by the Soviet Union. But the Soviet attempt to dissolve the nuclear cement which holds the Western alliances together is making great progress, and Gorbachev is showing new flexibility and ingenuity in his choice of tactics to exploit every opportunity given him by the turbulent politics of the West.

One of the difficulties of the concept of containment is that its outer limits are necessarily vague. Certain places are obviously essential components of the balance of power—Western Europe, Japan, China, India and Pakistan, for example. Others are important or even essential to the defense of critical areas or sea lanes, or as sources of raw materials, as Korea is important to the defense of Japan, and the Middle East is essential to the defense of Western Europe. This is not the occasion to analyze the problem in depth. It is impossible to exclude in advance any area from the purview of our concern in the context of the Soviet Union's program of expansion.

Standing in a posture of static defense for 40 years, waiting for one's enemy to see the light, is hardly a strategy for victory. The West can no longer afford

to retire in frustration in the face of Soviet stonewalling and double-talk on the primordially important issue of Soviet expansion. The threat to the balance of power is too great, and the political impact of the Soviet military build-up on the solidarity of the West is too insidious and pervasive to be tolerated indefinitely. Forty years of the cold war is enough. The West must make it clear, by actions rather than by words, that the process of Soviet expansion has gone too far and that its continuation may have consequences which cannot be predicted and could not be controlled.

The worldwide state system cannot survive on the basis of a double standard, with one rule governing the international use of force for the Soviet Union and its satellites and quite another for the rest of the world. The pressures of Soviet expansion are forcing the West into a policy of more active defense. Tit-for-tat may not be a formal rule of international law, but it is the way people behave. And it is the essence of the Reagan Doctrine, as the Soviet Union fully understands.

The principle of a more active defense embodied in the Reagan Doctrine was part of George Kennan's original formulation of the policy of containment. Soviet pressure on the free institutions of the Western world cannot be "charmed or talked out of existence," Kennan wrote, but it can be "contained by the adroit and vigilant application of counter-force at a series of constantly shifting geographical and political points, corresponding to the shifts and maneuvers of Soviet policy." Over the years, the West has neglected this aspect of the policy of containment. The doctrine of "massive retaliation" against the Soviet Union for its Third World campaigns proved to be an empty threat. The West has tended only to respond directly to Soviet and Soviet-sponsored attacks. It is time to consider seriously the use of limited counterforce at a series of constantly shifting geographical and political points as an important tool of Western policy.

Thus far the Reagan Doctrine has been explained in terms of ideology rather than the geopolitics of the national interest. The first few tentative American and Allied moves in the direction of a more active defense—in Lebanon, in Libya, and in Nicaragua, for example—have been poorly planned and badly executed. But in democracies, the first few steps toward a new policy usually have that character. If we learn from our mistakes, the Reagan Doctrine could become an indispensable supplement to the policy of containment which has been the cornerstone of Western foreign policy since 1947. The West cannot remain mesmerized forever within the limits of its 1947 posture, waiting for Soviet policy to mellow.

Ideally, the policy of active defense should be undertaken by groups of allies and the United States working together, not by the United States alone. This is much the better course, both from the military and the political points of view. I can imagine no better antidote for the frustration and irritability which now characterize allied relationships than allied cooperation in

mounting successful applications of counterforce at outposts of the Soviet Empire at shifting geographical points around its periphery.

The Soviet Empire is extremely vulnerable to such a peninsular strategy. As even a glance at the map suggests, it has given many hostages to fortune on the assumption that the West is so completely possessed by a Maginot Line conception of defense that it would never undertake more open, fluid, and mobile operations. (In this forum I do not have to underline the fact that an active defense would necessarily be based on the special capabilities and advantages of sea power, as well as the offensive potential of highly mobile, modern land and air forces functioning as a team.) In this connection, I am much encouraged by the fact that the North Atlantic Council recently reviewed and reaffirmed the Harmel Report of 1967 on the Future Tasks of the Alliance. I regard that study as a valuable and realistic vision of the future for both NATO and the other Western regional security coalitions. One of its most important features contemplates the collaboration within the NATO framework of key allies who wish to concert their policies with regard to threats to allied security arising outside the treaty area. The Middle East, the Persian Gulf, and Africa are obvious examples of areas where the United States should be patiently taking the lead in bringing together groups of allies to undertake careful contingency planning and preparations for combined action should such action be required. The normal difficulties of such an effort are increased at the moment by the memory of the badly handled allied mission in Lebanon a few years ago. But such difficulties can be overcome, and we must try to do so.

Would a policy of modernized containment plus active defense in the peninsular mode be a step towards full-scale war or towards a less violent peace? Would it be more or less dangerous, more or less promising than a policy of muddling through? Or would it be the one policy open to us that might persuade the Soviet Union that its adventures in imperialism can never succeed and that it would be wise to follow the examples of Germany and Japan, and settle down to genuinely peaceful coexistence?

I close with the proposition advanced at the beginning—that the supreme national interest of the United States as an open democratic republic is to achieve an effective and pluralist system of world public order based on a stable and favorable balance of world power. In defining the national interest in this way, I suggest that we are like M. Jourdan in Molière's play: we have been talking prose throughout our history without realizing it. As a group of British colonies and then as a small and medium-sized nation, we always were part of the European balance of power, which in the early days was also the world balance of power. Since 1914 we have been necessarily engaged in the prolonged struggle to achieve and maintain a world balance of power managed by the great powers in accordance with just rules of international law. There is no alternative goal for the United States if

we wish to survive as a free democracy facing the excessive ambitions of the Soviet Union, the predator of the moment, or the threats to world public order which will doubtless arise after the Soviet Union has decided to rejoin the society of nations.

This is a perfectly feasible goal in terms of what Soviet experts like to call "the correlation of forces," if we face the facts as they are. Our problem is intellectual, but not exclusively or even primarily intellectual. It is, like all situations of conflict, above all, a matter of spirit and will.

There is no ground for discouragement in the fact that there have been so many battles lost in the quest for world public order since the Congress of Vienna. There have been successes too. There is nothing unusual in this history of success and failure in an effort to change the living law by governmental action.

The objective of achieving peace through the management of power was and is an attempt to impose new norms of law on habits of war which have the momentum of millennia behind them. What is remarkable is not that success has been intermittent. That was to be expected. The significant feature of the story is that the effort is so persistent. Each time the 19th century equilibrium is disturbed, the states seek to restore it and to improve its functioning. They no longer believe that the quest for peace is a quixotic and utopian activity, a waste of time for practical men. On the contrary, they are convinced that peace is a moral necessity in the contracting, integrated, and dangerous world in which we have no choice but to live. In this way, a new norm of law is struggling to prevail, the idea of peace achieved through the international management of power. The story is the same for all attempts to change customary law through statutes or constitutions. In our own law, it took 100 years for the Fourteenth Amendment to begin to flower, and its promise is not yet fully realized. And, the national government envisioned by the authors of the Federalist Papers and John Marshall, the great Chief Justice, was achieved in the end only by a great war.

I do not mean to suggest that it will take a great war to fulfill the ideal of international peace which has been gaining ground in the mind of the West for more than three centuries and is now embodied in the United Nations Charter. Our task is to attain that goal without a major war, through calm, steady diplomacy backed by visibly deterrent force and will. The tides of history and technology give us no choice. The burden cannot be escaped. But the burden is also an immense privilege. Can you imagine a destiny for Americans more worthy of our past than to lead in the quest for a peaceful peace?

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