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American Concepts of Peace and War

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AMERICAN CONCEPTS OF PEACE AND WAR

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Professor William R. Emerson

It is an honor for me to be here at the Naval War College and to address you today. A military historian cannot but feel honored by being given the privilege of lecturing at a College which has produced, among others, such ornaments of our profession as Admiral Luce and Admiral Mahan, whose contributions to American military history and to British military history have perhaps been equaled, but have never been surpassed, in the academic world.

I turn now to my subject, *American Concepts of Peace and War*. Permit me to spend a few minutes on the matter of the title of this lecture, for it was the source of some controversy between the Staff and myself. I, myself, originally suggested the title, *American Concepts of Peace and War*. As I finished my preliminary work on this lecture and more fully considered the implications of the subject, it appeared to me that we should alter the title to *Conceptions of Peace and War*. The word "Concept" appeared too clear-cut. It suggested that American ideas about peace and war are more precise than we find them in fact to be. The Academic Board, in its unlimited wisdom, rejected this suggestion on what I could only consider strong grounds. They advanced the argument that the word "conception" had biological implications; the phrase was that "there was an overtone of pregnancy about it which was undesirable in a family audience of this kind." I was not particularly impressed by this argument, but I gave way. And, whatever may be still said pro and con on this issue, we may at least assure ourselves that future historians of this War College, perusing the curriculum of 1957, will not be misled into thinking that we spent this morning pondering the effects of war and peace upon the American birthrate.

It is nevertheless a point of substance, and I think that a more or less hazy word like "Notions" is more apt than "Concepts" when we consider American ideals and beliefs about peace and war. Foreign states, it is true, have rather precise concepts to guide them in this field. It is hardly necessary to point to the precision and elaboration of the German philosophy of war associated with the names of Clausewitz, Moltke and Schlieffen. The British, on their side, are the happy possessors of an old and well-established strategic tradition which has been illuminated by Admiral Mahan most notably, and crystallized in perhaps the most brilliant modern work on strategy, Julian Corbett's *Some Principles of Maritime Strategy*. Russian ideas in this field, based in large part on Marxist philosophical notions, have been anatomized most carefully in Professor Garthoff's book, *Russian Military Doctrine*, and they are so precise and detailed as to be perhaps rather Procrustean in their effects. The strategic doctrines of all these foreign powers differ, of course, according to geographical situation, political objectives and institutions, and local views of long-range national interests. They have, however, this in common: all of them assume that war, as Clausewitz observed, "is not merely a political act but a real political instrument, a continuation of political intercourse, a carrying out of the same, by other means." In the continental tradition, then, war is one of the tools of policy, to be used when judged expedient but always to be kept subordinate to the political motives which give rise to it.

It is hardly necessary to emphasize how far this traditional continental conception diverges from the notions which Americans hold about war. American ideals and beliefs about war are very much more vague. As we see them in American history, these ideas arise less from a serious consideration of the issues of peace and war than from other more basic American ideas on international relations. To understand the American approach to war it is necessary to consider it tangentially, for our ideas on war are less clear-cut than our ideas on political institutions.

Let us consider, briefly, those philosophical and political assumptions which underlie and mold the American view of war. First, and most obviously, Americans, unlike Europeans, have always considered war not as an instrument of policy, not as an integral and unavoidable part of political evolution, but as a lamentable aberration, a detour in the historical process, and, indeed, a moral evil. This view of war, in its turn, arises from the American conception of the state. Americans traditionally have viewed the state not as an engine of power, as history reveals it to have been in the past, but principally as a device for the preservation of human rights, and thus, by implication, as an essentially passive rather than an active agent both in domestic and in international affairs. That is to say, the American conception of the state is essentially an 18th century conception of government which lays its emphasis on rights rather than power. This being so, the American postulates the existence of a natural harmony of interests among states parallel to — and, indeed, springing out of — the American belief in the natural harmony of interests among individuals. We have tended to assume that the natural relations of states rest upon principles of cooperation, and that enmity between states arises from a false reading of the true interests of states — in most cases caused, we argue, by insufficiently democratic controls of the government. Conflict in international relations, then, is looked upon as an aberration, not as a constant and inevitable factor in international politics. Again we have a characteristically 18th century point of view; in a sense a transference into the international sphere of the economic ideas of Adam Smith and the Manchester School of Economists posited on the presumption of a natural harmony of economic interests among peoples and among states.

To the degree, finally, that these states are considered merely as political embodiments of sovereign nations — that is to say, of racial groups — and to the degree, therefore, that they are considered to be *natural* rather than *artificial* political phenomena, Americans are inclined to feel that such states must, with-

out regard to size, power, policy or interest, be considered as morally equal one with the other. This American idea of the political equality and the moral integrity of all states is a basic idea. We find its first appearance at the time of the American Revolution. It was the basis upon which James Madison argued that the several colonies were in fact independent of Britain, enjoying a "coordinate status," as the phrase went, with England and the other British holdings. This idea is seen again in the Monroe Doctrine, the basis of American policy in the 19th century. It is the cornerstone of our somewhat confused approach to the U. N., as it was to the League of Nations, which, in President Wilson's words, sought to "expand the doctrine of President Monroe into the doctrine of the world, that every people should be left free to determine its own policy, its own way of development, unhindered, unthreatened, unafraid, the little along with the great and the powerful." It is, finally, this idea which in the 1950's leaves America so often powerless to choose between her old, established allies and the new, chaotic states of the Middle East and Asia, and has led us traditionally to be willing to consider Ghana the moral and political equal of Australia, to consider Egypt the moral and political equal of England, to entertain the notion that Algeria may in certain circumstances be considered the moral and political equal of France.

In a world of morally equal sovereign states, based upon the twin principles of national self-determination and popular sovereignty, and, furthermore, linked together by a natural harmony of interests in such a world, it is clear that considerations of power can — or, at any rate, should — have no part. In such a world, war cannot be considered the instrument of a rational policy. It cannot — or, in the American view, should not — be used, as it has been used all through history, to alter, to adjust and to balance the power of states, to tinker with the political relations among peoples and nations and to aggrandize one's own power and possessions. If war *is* so used, *ipso facto* it constitutes an aggression against the natural order of society. It is considered thus

a great aberration and, as a morally reprehensible act, deserving of punishment. Aggression must, Americans argue, be opposed — but only after all other courses have failed. And once it has been opposed and overcome, it must be punished. As a consequence of these beliefs, American war, from the time of our Indian Wars down to the present, has always had about it a certain Old Testament quality. If I were forced to choose a motto for the American conception of war, I would turn to Deuteronomy 7 and quote the following:

> When the Lord thy God shall bring thee into the land wither thou goest to possess it, and hath cast out many nations before thee, the Hittites, the Girgashites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Perizzites, the Hivites and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and mightier than thou; And when the Lord thy God shall deliver them before thee, thou shalt smite them and utterly destroy them; thou shalt make no covenant with them nor show mercy unto them . . . . But thus shall ye deal with them; ye shall destroy their altars and break down their images and cut down their groves and burn their graven images with fire . . . . And He shall deliver their kings into their hands and thou shalt destroy their name from under heaven; then shall no man be able to stand before thee, until thou has destroyed them.

In the American view, then, war is waged not to seek adjustment of the balance of power, or for any more precise aims, but rather with the purpose of altering and reforming those political circumstances, however, they may be defined, which caused the war. War itself is the unique evil. Its prevention, similarly, is the overriding goal of policy. This is a view summed up perhaps most clearly in the words of Mr. Wilson, the most moral of our Presidents, on the 6th of April 1918 in a speech delivered on the first anniversary of our entry into World War I:

> Let everything that we say, my fellow countrymen, everything that we henceforth plan and accomplish, ring true to this response {to German aggression} till the majesty and weight of our concerted power shall fill the thought and utterly defeat the force of those who flout and misprize what we honor and hold dear. Germany has once more said that force, and force alone, shall decide . . . There is, therefore, but one response possible from us: Force, force to the utmost, force without stint or limit, the righteous and triumphant force which shall make Right the law of the world and cast every selfish dominion down in the dust.

To Americans, then, war means total war, the overthrow of the opposing governments by use of all military means. It is true that we have had limited wars in our history: the Mexican War, the Spanish-American War. These however, have been the exceptions to the general rule. The true pattern of American war is seen in the first and second World Wars and, perhaps more clearly, in our American Civil War, which had as its object nothing less than the overthrow and reformation of southern society — a project on which I, as an Arkansan, might be permitted to remark that the Federal Government is still at work.

The power and persistence of this idea of war is one of the most striking aspects of American history. All of our leaders have felt its force: Lincoln, the advocate of reconciliation, gave way before it; Mr. Wilson, the advocate of peace without victory, ended up as the reluctant sponsor of victory without peace; Mr. Roosevelt, wending his way cautiously between the Nazi threat and the Soviet threat, fell victim to it. And, most recently, Mr. Eisenhower fell victim to it during the time of the Suez adventure and, more especially, before that unhappy incident. It is impossible to overestimate the strength of these ideas, so deeply rooted in fundamental American principles of government. Equally, we must

not overlook their almost complete irrelevance to the facts of history and to the power-political situation in which we find ourselves today. It is difficult to exaggerate the degree to which American opinion and American policy in international relations remain today still the captive of the 18th century political assumptions on which our own institutions are based. Since 1917, we have found ourselves in a situation which has required the use of American power to shore up an inherently unstable and possibly disastrous world power structure. On the other hand, both our instincts and our strongest traditions not only make no position for the employment of power but argue implicitly against its use in time of peace.

II

Our concern today is less with the causes of these ideas than with their practical results and with the challenges which they pose to us today and will continue to pose in the future. I wish particularly to dwell on two major consequences of these American views of government and war. First, as a result of these basic ideas, Americans have always tended to assume the existence of a deep gulf fixed between peace and war. Military history, of course, shows the insubstantiability of such a view. The issues of war arise out of peace, and the issues of peace, summed up and categorized in the policy of states, persist through war, providing war indeed with its coherence and its principal objectives and shaping wartime policy and strategy. War, in Clausewitz's memorable phrase —

> .... has its own grammar, but not therefore its own logic. Accordingly, war can never be separated from political intercourse, and if, in the consideration of this matter, this occurs anywhere, all the threads of the different relations are broken and we have before us a senseless thing without an object.

The military history of Europe provides numerous examples of this interrelationship of the issues of peace and of war. The

history of Louis XIV's "cold war" in Lorraine in the 1680's, and of Napoleon's peaceful though aggressive moves after the peace of Amiens in 1802, show how force in times of peace may nevertheless put itself in the guise of fraud and pursue a policy no less aggressive than war itself might accommodate. A parallel might be drawn to our own American wars against the Indian —almost 300 years of constant fighting on a small scale, and large, on the western frontier. All military history shows the futility of drawing a clear line between peace and war and of attempting to view the issues arising from them in isolation one from the other.

Neither our own American experience, however, nor the experience of others has altered the traditional American view that peace is peace and war is war and that "never the twain shall meet." As Mr. Dulles put it in 1951, in a speech before the Department of State:

> Heretofore we have either had peace or we have had war. When we have had peace we have had a large degree of individual freedom and an absence of regimentation and militarism. When we have had war, there has been an attempt to conquer, by all possible violence, and a considerable surrender of individual choice in order better to marshal our strength for a victory which would restore peace and freedom. There was an end in sight and a sure knowledge of how to reach that end.

In times of peace, the country has given little thought to questions of preparedness. Indeed, there has at all times existed a feeling that it was wrong to use force or considerations of military power as a conscious element in the advancement of our national policy during times of peace. Our peacetime policy has been characterized by disarmament conferences, that purple thread through the history of American diplomacy. We have had

always, as our ultimate goal, some form of international government or international organization. In the interim, we have tended to seek economic adjustments to ease the economic conflict between nations, conferences to try to get paper agreements among hostile nations — in a word, the pursuance of pacific ends purely and solely. The classic expression of this tendency of American policy was the Kellogg-Briand Pact of 1928 by which sixty nations renounced "war as an instrument of national policy," including the Germans who did so in the specific hope that they would then be permitted to rearm.

In war, our policy has taken on a marvelous simplicity. Our aim has been the overthrow of aggressors, on the assumption that once aggression had been chastised, matters automatically would return to the *status quo ante*. This was the pattern of the first World War and the second World War, and, most strikingly, in the Korean War. Our tendency, as one student of American military history has put it, has been —

> . . . to make every war a crusade, fought, not for specific objectives of national security, but on behalf of universal principles such as democracy, freedom of the seas and [national] self-determination. Indeed, for the American, a war is not a war unless it is a crusade . . . It was not until June 1950 that the American people were called upon to support a war rather than to enlist in a crusade.

The situation since 1948 — a condition best described in Trotsky's phrase "no peace, no war" — has not, of course, permitted us to return to our usual policies. Since the Truman Doctrine, and Prague and Berlin, Americans indeed have taken up the gauntlet and responded gallantly and, on the whole, wisely to the perplexities and challenges of "cold war." But the very phrase "cold war" suggests the depth of our distress over this unprecedented state of affairs, suggesting a strong underlying hope that this

situation can be resolved, perhaps, by negotiations and agreements at the summit, and suggesting thus an unwillingness finally to accept this condition of "no peace, no war" as the shape of the future. In the meantime, there has been a distressing lack of balance in our policy and in our diplomacy. Under conditions of cold war, policy — especially defense policy — has proved more than ever difficult to formulate. Its goals have never been quite clear, and its means and methods have equally been confused. As a result, our policies since 1945, and more notably, since 1948, have revealed a tendency towards oscillation, involving the overthrow and, in some cases, the repudiation of traditional goals of American policy. The great neutral has roundly condemned neutrality and "neutralism." The great exponent of collective security has founded and sustained the most vast and complex military coalition in history. The great advocate of "isolation" finds itself allied with almost fifty states the world over, states whose interests have thereon become indistinguishable from ours and whose survival, for good or ill, involves or impinges on our own.

Like our notions of peace, American conceptions of war, and our predications of its contemporary and future forms, have been excessively rigorous, excessively logical. In this, our strategic views have been the captive of the political presumptions on which we have already remarked. Of the two historic forms of war — total wars and wars of limited objectives — Americans have as a rule considered the former the only true form of war. Until recently, indeed, the very possibility of a war of limited objectives was officially reprobated by American defense officials, despite numerous limited wars which have occurred since 1945, including the Greek civil war, the Arab-Israeli war, the Korean "conflict," and numbers of others. Indeed, the ill-fated policy of massive retaliation was based upon the explicit presumption that all local, limited crises should be turned into general crises; that is to say, that situations which might lead to the possibility of limited war should be avoided by American policy, even at the

cost of grievous retreats. This tendency of American military thought is the more serious in view of the development since the 1930's of a new and distinct form of war, a third form of war, variously called "war of nerves," or "cold war," or — to employ the term used by German military theorists of the 1930's "broadened strategy." This was a German development, but it was an idea that Hitler took — and he frankly admitted it — from the Bolsheviks, specifically from Lenin's and Trotsky's brilliant and reckless diplomatic tactics of 1917 and 1918. The keynote of this new form of war was the transference into international affairs of the technique of the coup d'etat, subordinating direct military action to a wide variety of other means — economic, political, propagandist, and action of disruptive internal groups — and having as its object the *undermining* of the enemy government, rather than its defeat by open war. The aim of broadened strategy, thus is *subversion*, and its greatest weapon — a weapon to which we have as yet no answer — is the radio. "Indirect aggression," as our experience in Syria and in Jordan reveals, is one of the real keys to Russian policy. And it is difficult not to be impressed by the strength of the Russian position in this respect as compared to our own. Due not only, and not primarily, to their military forces — strong though they are — the Russian power and omen rests in the existence of alternative instruments of Russian policy, which, while closely allied with military forces, can nevertheless operate independently of them, and, as Syria shows, far in advance of them. The brilliance and sophistication of this Russian method of indirect aggression has been seen in several instances since the war and, particularly during the last two months, in their penetration of the Middle East. The present state of affairs in Indonesia is another example of the situations which they can utilize for their purposes, and the possibility of India going the same way cannot forever be ruled out.

From our point of view, the military implications of this "indirect aggression" are serious, so obvious, indeed, as not to require elaboration before an audience of this kind. It hardly needs

to be pointed out that our existing forces, and, in all liklihood, our potential peacetime capabilities, are very largely powerless to operate in the sorts of situations which Syria and Indonesia present. These areas nevertheless are vital to our security interests and have been so defined officially. Grave as are the military implications of these events and tendencies, their political implications, I feel, are more ominous and more fundamental. "Indirect aggression," if pursued wisely and cynically by the Russians, may possibly undermine the very foundations of American foreign policy which, as we have seen earlier, merely assumes the national solidity and the political stability of foreign states. The facts are often far different — but, as the lamentable example of our China policy during, and after, World War II, reveals, we are sometimes prone to assume that *what ought to be, is!* Since 1945, American foreign policy has been based upon two propositions. Our aim has been peace, but possessed by the strongest traditions of American life, we have, unfortunately, tended, in defiance of history, to define peace in a negative way — as the absence of war. But, peace — alas! — is not merely the absence of war. Peace cannot be the goal of policy, a prize for which the nations may justly contend. Defined in this negative fashion, peace is a lure, a will-of-the-wisp. On the positive side, which should the more concern us, peace is a resultant, a vector, so to speak, of a complex balance and interrelationship of forces and influences which, by restraining, by channeling, and, on occasions, by energizing existing political tendencies, has the effect of maximizing those tendencies which may serve to restrain the rise of issues which could lead to war and of minimizing those tendencies which tend to intensify belligerence and resorts to violence. Peace, then, is not itself a goal of policy. To assume otherwise must lead us to disaster. It is rather a situation, a peculiar and ever-shifting balance of affairs which can only be influenced indirectly and through very various channels, some of which Americans can control and dominate, others of which lie quite outside our power to command or influence. Peace in a world of "cold war" and competitive coexistence is a

different peace from that which Americans traditionally have envisaged.

The second proposition on which American postwar policy has rested is the concept of "aggression." Since the 1930's, the concept of "aggression" has been the central element in American diplomacy and a powerful influence upon American popular views on world affairs. It led us to condemn, although not vigorously to oppose, Japanese moves in Manchuria in 1931 and in China after 1937; it was at the root of our disapproval of the Italian adventure in Ethiopia; it provided the arguments which Mr. Roosevelt used to mobilize American public opinion against Germany; it is the basis of the U. N. organization; and it influenced our intervention in the Korean War. Today, the notion of deterrence of aggression is the foundation of American diplomacy and defense policy; as our recent policy in the Middle East — the so-called "Eisenhower Doctrine" — makes clear, overt military action against states in that region will, upon request of those states involved, bring American retaliation upon the aggressor either by means of all-out war or, as in Korea, by involvement of American forces in a limited or "brush-fire" war. It is well to make the implications of this idea quite clear. The preservation of peace being the unique goal of American policy, a breach of the peace must *ipso facto* be resisted, as our policy in the Suez affair showed, without regard to political and diplomatic circumstances of the moment and without regard to specific American interests in the disputed area. Resistance to aggression, then, is the be-all and end-all of American policy, a general interest which transcends and must therefore override all narrow and specific interests, a moral imperative before which diplomatic, military and material concerns must give way.

Like the American conception of peace, our ideas about war, based upon this concept of aggression, are simple ideas. Simple ideas, unfortunately, fare ill amid the complexities of power politics. War has ever been a protean thing, altering its guise to conform to the conditions of the moment, and never more so than

at the present time. The concept of aggression, which assumes that the coming of war will be simple and clear-cut, is no longer applicable to the politico-military situations which we face today. It may still be applicable to the situation in Europe, although even there it might under some circumstances be difficult to apply. It is very little applicable to world security problems in other areas — in the Middle East, in Southeast Asia and in the Far East — in which neither political units nor policies have the solidity which is characteristic of the European stuation. In these areas, our concern is not with aggression, with its moral overtones, but with regional balances of power. How can we apply the concept of aggression to the fluid and possibly ominous situations which will probably arise in South Korea after Syngman Rhee dies, or in Taiwan after Chiang Kai-Shek passes on to join his ancestors? Does aggression apply more aptly to the affairs of dismantled Indonesia than it did in the tangled affairs of Indo-China? How can we make our simple notion of aggression fit the vague and supple confusions of Middle Eastern politics?

In all these areas, the greatest danger is the subversion or collapse of unstable states amid circumstances which cannot be made to fit the simple formulas of American policy but which nevertheless involve serious, though indirect, misfortune for vital American interests. We have, in a word, a wide range of politico-military problems to which the characteristic American conception of total war — rigorous and logical in its nature, extreme in its objects — simply has no revelance; as one British military thinker has put it, "Preparing for total war in the conditions of the 1950's is like sparring with the inconceivable on a boxing ring which is being eaten away by termites." Similarly, we have a peace which in no way corresponds to the traditional American conception of peace, defined merely as being the absence of war. It is furthermore a peace inherently unstable, at the mercy of trends and tendencies, many — if not most — of which are quite beyond the reach of American influence and the limits of American political and military capabilities, great though these are. In other words, we face

a world whose problems and challenges in no way correspond to those powerful and deeply-rooted American ideas on international relations which the 18th century established, which our national experience during the 19th century seemed to confirm, and which, even amidst all the changes and overturns of the last fifty years, the American people, and therefore their leaders, show no sign of giving up.

III

What conclusions emerge from this consideration of American conceptions of peace and war? There is, I think, one basic conclusion which is unmistakable. Our traditional ideas of peace and war, simple and overly logical in nature, have gravely misled our approach to the wide and tangled security problems arising from World War II. World wars have always left behind them unstable and dangerous situations. As one military historian has observed —

> Great wars do not commonly end when the main hostilities have ceased. The confusion created: the passions and animosities aroused; the fall and disruption of empires; the weakening and even destruction of governmental, legal and moral controls and sanctions tend to prevent the firing of the last formal shot from serving as a signal for the immediate reappearance of a peaceful spirit and of peace . . . . Great wars are likely to trail in their wake secondary wars, *sequelae* [or] morbid conditions following upon disease, which are likely to be fought in a spirit more savage than that which the former at their worst evoked.

In this respect, World War II did not differ from previous world wars. The Russians, more traditional than we in their approach to power problems, did not hesitate to take advantage of the confusion and chaos which 1945 revealed both in Europe and in Asia.

Grievously hurt and weakened though they were by the devastation suffered in the war, Russia nevertheless kept on foot a huge peacetime army. Following the established usages of power diplomacy, the Russians used this great force to over-awe and subjugate their near neighbors, and used their wide war-won political influence and prestige to stir up in Europe and Asia "all mischief short of war." After 1944, Eastern Europe gradually disappeared behind the "iron curtain"; Western European politics and economic recovery were systematically deranged by the actions of large and ruthless Communist parties; China, defeated and desolate in victory, fell in 1948-1949 to a Communist regime and provided the base from which Southeast Asia could be disrupted; and, more recently, the Russians, cynically employing the Arab-Israeli hostility to further their own purposes, have penetrated the Middle East with serious long-run implications for European and American interests.

What was the American reaction to these events? On the political and military side, the story is well known. I am more concerned with the American reading of the meaning of these events. At the risk of some oversimplification, I think that since 1945, or, more accurately, since about 1948, we have tended to assume that the motives behind Russia's actions have corresponded with the traditional American conceptions of peace and war; we have, in a word, viewed Russian policy through American spectacles. From 1776 onwards, American political and social conceptions, the intellectual framework of American policy, have tended to be abstract and absolute in their nature and universal in their application. Woodrow Wilson summed up one aspect of this American universalism when he stated our war aims in 1918:

> The great objects [for which we fight] can be put into a single sentence. What we seek is the reign of law, based upon the consent of the governed, and sustained by the organized opinion of mankind.

Franklin Roosevelt repeated this somewhat chiliastic theme during World War II, when he set as our goals the Four Freedoms — and, after enunciating each of them in order, reiterated the sonorous phrase "everywhere in the world." Mr. Dulles, in a press conference in July 1957, repeated the theme again, with elaborations:

> American policy is conducted on the assumption, as a working hypothesis, that free governments in the long run are going to prevail and despotic governments in the long run are going to go under . . . . I don't put any dates on these things. I don't say what is going to happen in one year, five years, ten years, but I am confident that that is a basic truth; certainly it is an assumption that I think must be made by anybody who believes in the American tradition. It was in that belief that our nation was founded. It is expressed in the Federalist Papers. It is expressed by Abraham Lincoln in a sentence I often quote. He said, 'Our Declaration of Independence meant liberty not alone for the people of this country but hope for all the world for all future time. It meant in due course the weight should be lifted from the shoulders of all men.' That [Mr. Dulles concluded] is a basic American belief and it is also the working hypothesis on which we conduct our foreign policy.

This persisting tendency in the American approach to world affairs was given perhaps its clearest expression by the mystical 19th century novelist, Herman Melville:

> To her [America] was given an express dispensation; to her were given new things under the sun. And we Americans are a peculiar, chosen people, the Israel of our times; we bear the ark of the liberties of the world.

The objects of American policy, if these authoritative statements are to be accepted at face value, are, then, ample and even arrogant, and revolutionary in their implications. We assume that ultimately the whole world will be made over to fit American notions; this is "the working hypothesis on which we conduct our foreign policy." Thinking thus, Americans confronted by the aggressive moves of postwar Russian policy, have tended unquestioning to assume that Russian objectives are absolute and universal and that, like ourselves, their policy envisages domination of the world as its ultimate goal. There is, of course, considerable support for this in Communist theory. There is, however, little to support it in a study of Communist actions since they came to power in Russia — and deeds, not words, are the real test of policy. Almost every Russian move in world politics since 1920, far from suggesting that world revolution was their goal, suggests the precise opposite — that the objects of their policy are precise and limited ones, dominated by narrow considerations of Russian national security. Stalin during his long reign never hesitated to sacrifice the interests of world Communism to those of Russian security. Thus, in 1927, he ruthlessly sacrificed the interests of the Chinese Communist party, and the Chinese "proletariat," to Chiang Kai-Shek and the Kuomintang in return for diplomatic concessions of a trifling kind. Similarly, in the last months of the Weimar Republic, the German Communist party, the largest and most influential in Europe, was written off in the interests of Russian foreign policy; and when Stalin signed his nonaggression pact with Hitler in 1939, at Hitler's request he coldly delivered over to the tender mercies of the Gestapo numbers of leading German Communists who had fled Nazi Germany after 1933 and sought asylum in Moscow. Again in post World War II Europe, the great prestige and governmental influence which Communists had won by their leadership of wartime resistance movements were tarnished and squandered by the harsh policy of opposition to economic recovery and to the Marshall Plan which Russian weakness and Stalin's stupidity forced upon them. Wherever the interests of world revolution and Russian national security clashed, Stalin always opted

for the latter. Indeed, where possible, he seems to have preferred weak foreign Communist parties to strong ones which might feel inclined to oppose Russian policy and Russian domination of their own internal affairs. Stalin's almost obsessive concern with security was intensified after World War II, partly, no doubt, as a result of his age and growing paranoia, partly owing to the grievous losses which Russia had suffered in the war and her grave weakness in 1945. The German problem seems from the earliest time to have been uppermost in Stalin's mind; and fear and suspicion of Germany are a dominant motive in the minds of his successors in the Kremlin. At all times the Russians, of course, have been willing to take such gains as the varying circumstances of European politics provided, as they revealed in the last years of World War II. What is more remarkable about Russian policy is not the gains which they have made, but, since the time of Lenin, the speed with which they have withdrawn from situations which seemed to threaten war. Stalin's relations with Hitler are on object lesson in this regard. World revolution, it is true, was Lenin's major objective in the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, in his policies at Brest-Litovsk and afterwards, and, most notably, in the Bolshevik invasion of Poland in 1920. But world revolution died at the gates of Warsaw and was buried at Rapallo in 1922. Since that time, it has been a slogan, not an objective of Russian policy. The Russian approach to foreign affairs and power politics is indeed in many ways more conservative and more practical than ours. As Lenin once observed, "We have taken over the Czarist apparatus and only thinly annointed it with Soviet oil." This is as true of Soviet conduct of foreign affairs as it is in their domestic affairs.

Mistaken in our estimate of Russian intentions, American policy, I suggest, was further misled by the most precise and impressive evidence of this Soviet obsession with security — the massive army of 175 divisions which they maintained after 1945 and which they maintain more or less intact to the present time. Impressed by this great armament, so disproportionate to any

force which it might encounter in Europe, and impressed, too, by the immense sacrifices which its maintenance imposed upon the Russian economy and people, we assumed in the immediate postwar years that the Russians would maintain such an army only if they intended to use it in aggressive war, according to a master-plan established by the Kremlin. Thus, at the time of the Berlin Blockade, and again during the Korean War, it was argued in Western capitals that these embroglios were merely the first, preparatory phases of a grand Russian master-plan of aggression, that the Russians intended war, and that their conceptions of war, and of the proper role of military force in international relations, corresponded to our own conceptions. As a result, the NATO conference at Lisbon, swept away by American urgency, established the wildly unrealistic goal of 96 divisions to be raised in the NATO countries over a four-year period and set 1954 as a year of "maximum danger," during which, it was presumed, the Russians would declare war upon the West. Under similar impulses, and in somewhat similar circumstances of crisis, the SEATO pact was established later to deter Communist expansion in Southeast Asia, and, at grave political costs, the Baghdad pact was set up as a barrier to presumed Russian aggression in the Middle East.

The consequences of this frenzy of pact-building suggest the fallibility of intelligence estimates based solely upon consideration of enemy capabilities, without regard to enemy intentions as revealed in his actions. The Russians have since 1945 maintained armies powerful enough to overwhelm and subjugate Europe in a fortnight, and, since 1948, these land forces have been augmented by a great and growing aerial power. Their capabilities have been, and remain, immense. Yet, events since 1947-1948 have shown that Russian intentions are very complex and, in some sort, defensive in nature; the flexibility — and, on occasion, incoherence — of their policies suggest that there is in fact no grand master-plan or time table, any more than Hitler, or the Kaiser before him, had a master-plan; and Communist willingness to pull back

and to cut their losses, as they did at Berlin, in Korea, and, most remarkably, in Indo-China — where they could have taken the entire peninsula — is, in my opinion, evidence of a suppleness and variety of purpose which far surpasses the grand and simple motives which Americans attribute to Russian policy. The United States, meanwhile, has amid some panic hammered together the most immense and cumbrous military coalition the world has ever seen. It is a coalition whose military capabilities are stringently limited and, in some areas, laughable. But its political consequences at any rate are formidable, for it has pinned down American prestige in every corner of the world, including some very obscure and grubby corners, and has left with us little if any diplomatic flexibility.

All of this suggests to me that the present grave challenges to American policy arise not so much out of a direct Russian threat as they do out of the mistaken assumptions upon which our postwar policies have been based — and this because the American conception of war, our "instinct for the jugular," as one student has termed it, is so engrained and deeply rooted in our thought-patterns that we are to all intents and purposes unwilling to question it. I am appalled by the immensity and incoherence of our responsibilities, not the gravity of the Russian threat. The challenge of American policy is an intellectual challenge, and its gravest threat arises out of a failure of ideas, an unrealistic approach to national security problems which is directly traceable to our traditional American conceptions of peace and war. Unable, as always, to distinguish clearly between the dictates of *national interest* and those of *national defense*, and inclined, as always, to conceive our political goals in abstract rather than concrete terms, American policy since 1945 has seemed unable to set up *what are*, and *what are not, our vital security interests*. Oppressed and confused by Russian policy and Russian intransigence, we have since 1948 been under a constant and increasing compulsion to try to defend everything, if only by guaranteeing it. The commitments thus undertaken are so vast

as to be far beyond the reach of American power to defend. At best, all that we can do is to use SAC to avenge them. Our policy and our diplomacy, as a result, have been based upon a "calculated risk" in which the risk is more apparent than the calculation. It is, to be blunt, a policy of bluff which can have disastrous consequences.

American moves in the "cold war" have tended to wear a military guise and our characteristic reaction to Russian initiatives is to set up a new pact, a new alliance, a new coalition, a new "supreme headquarters" without any accompanying military forces but providing large-scale employment for staff officers. But though these American moves wear a military guise, they have not been based upon a military estimate. Since 1945, indeed, the military factors bearing upon American policy have never been sufficiently disentangled from political, economic and other factors for our staffs and our policy makers to be enabled to distinguish clearly between vital military interests, secondary military interests, political and ideological interests, and economic interests. American military commitments, as a result, have only to a limited degree been exemplifications of a clearly thought-out national strategic doctrine. In many areas, indeed, these commitments have not been seriously regarded from the military point of view at all. Throughout, the dominant consideration has been political. Military commitments, undertaken by statesmen, have sought to shore up situations primarily political and moral in character. More often than not they have been undertaken on purely short-term views, during situations of developing crisis in which the long-term interests of American security have been given insufficient consideration; our recent heedless guarantee of the Kingdom of Jordan is the most glaring example of this tendency. While expanding our commitments, moreover, we have whittled steadily away at the limited war forces which alone can uphold our interests and responsibilities in these wide confused areas short of total war and an atomic holocaust. Increasingly, the only real sanction of our policy has been the threat of atomic war, a threat

which has undoubtedly given pause to the Russians — but which will, in the long run, prove prejudicial of our national interests.

If my reading of the Russian threat is correct, if "indirect aggression" upon our weaker and more unstable allies is the gravest danger to American interests, the policies which we have followed since we began to inflate NATO and to link it up with a system of world-wide coalitions may prove a serious, perhaps a disastrous, mistake of American diplomacy and a serious transgression of our long-term national interests. If this is so, then we must give a first priority to a reassessment of American interests from a narrowly military point of view. We must study our past and our present to establish sound guidelines for American diplomacy and American defense policy. We need, in a word, a national strategic doctrine, firmly based upon a broad view of American security interests rather than upon the interests of the several separate services.

In the field of security policy, there is no substitute for a sound tradition. American traditions in this sphere, based, as they are, upon our experience in the 18th and 19th centuries, have played us false in the crises and troubles of the 20th century. Neither within the three military services nor outside them — in government circles and in the consciousness of the American public — is there a consensus of opinion in these vital matters of national defense. Unlike other nations, we have, as we have seen, no tradition of strategy embodied in doctrine and generally agreed upon by military men and by statesmen. The lessons of American security policy in the 19th century, that exceptional age in the history of mankind, have little application to the problems we face today. The lessons of our wars in the 20th century have not seriously been studied or applied, for they have rapidly been inundated by technological change and by the rapid rush of events as one crisis succeeds another; each new crisis, indeed, diverts our attention even further from them. "Those who will not learn from history," said George Santayana, "are condemned

to repeat it." This — alas! — has been the story of American war in the 20th century. The lessons are there, but they have very largely been ignored amid the competing clamors of technological novelties and political debate.

What are the lessons of recent American military history? As I read them, they are few in number and are, I think, directly relevant to our current concerns. I present them for your consideration:

1. Owing to geostrategical and political circumstances beyond our power to alter, there, are, and will always be, strict limitations upon American political influence and even stricter limitations upon our military power. A clear perception of these limitations and of their politico-military implications is the cornerstone of sound American policy; the tendency since 1945 has been increasingly to ignore these limits.

2. Trammeled as it is by these limitations, American policy, like policy at all times, involves us basically in questions of national priorities, with the corollary — which American public opinion appears at all times unwilling to admit — that some things, perhaps many things, important but not vital to American security must be let go by the board.

3. Above all, it is a dominant American security interest to prevent by all means in our power a drift towards "total war," for in that event the geostrategic limitations upon American power must always prevent us from intervening in such situations to good effect. This is the great lesson of the political disasters which followed upon our victories in World War I and World War II. In both

those wars, our "political purposes," as George Kennan has put it, "were mortgaged in advance," our entry too tardy and too limited to affect the basic political issues over which these wars were fought, not because of any fault of our wartime policy and strategy but because of the position which we occupy in the world — and because of the limitations which democracy imposes, and must always impose, upon American power.

4. Bearing all these factors in mind, it clearly is our interest, as it was in the case of England, so to constitute our military forces in peacetime that we may be able to influence, to guide, and to control the intricate and unpredictable situations of world politics before there arise from them threats to the peace so serious as to make general war inevitable, as happened in 1912-1914 and again in 1936-1939. In an age of ballistic missiles and hydrogen bombs, conventional forces cannot take first priority, for weakness in the air under modern conditions can only bring "disaster on the instalment plan," as the somber history of France and Great Britain in the 1930's shows. They must nevertheless take an overridingly high priority. This is not a question of "either" and "or"; we must be prepared for both kinds of wars.

5. Finally, the possible use of American limited war forces for limited purposes during times of peace, in such situations as I have described, can never be ruled out. We cannot, as Winston Churchill once observed, "be neutral between right and wrong"; we must not be passive where our vital security interests are involved. If we are unwilling to use our military forces to advance our policies during

> times of peace, we will inevitably, at some stage of the game, be forced to use them in war. It is folly during crises of high politics to renounce publicly the use of force under any and all conditions, as Mr. Dulles did during the crisis following Colonel Nasser's seizure of the Suez Canal; to do so undermines our diplomacy, and brings us not respect but contempt. Many questions of high politics — indeed, almost all such questions — can be settled without war. In a world of sovereign states and of great international tensions, there are few questions which can be settled satisfactorily to ourselves without power considerations making their weight felt in the balance — and this involves the ability and will to use our armed forces to back our interests and our allies' interests where and as we choose. To ignore this is to turn away from the realities of world politics.

These "lessons" of recent American military history, if I read them aright, will serve to show how far the traditional American conceptions of peace and war diverge from the realities of a world still based on power politics. Conflict, whether serious or trivial, whether prosecuted by war or by other less violent means, is the history of mankind. And military history reveals that nations are very rarely given the option of choosing or not choosing to go to war. It is less a question of peace or war than a question of the terms on which war is likely to be forced upon one, either by direct action or by indirect aggression. The principal concern of statesmen and strategists cannot be merely to avoid war; it must be the application of national policy and national resources to influence the terms on which war might come, to inuence the conditions — not the mere fact — of peace, to influence that vital middle range of security issues where American statesmanship has ever been weakest.

Mr. Eisenhower was firmly in the American tradition when, during the political campaign of 1956, he set peace as the unique goal of his policy and went on to say,

> It is not enough that their elders promise [their children] 'peace in our time.' It must be peace in their time, too, and in their children's time. Indeed, there is only one real peace and that is peace for all time.

Despite the strength of the American tradition which is exemplified in Mr. Eisenhower's remarks, a sounder guide and standard for American policy was set by General Washington in his Farewell Address, when, in a world no less distracted than ours by wars and threats of war, he stated that American policy should remain free "to choose peace or war as our interest, guided by justice, shall counsel."

BIOGRAPHIC SKETCH

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Professor Emerson received his B.A. degree from Yale University in 1948 and his Doctor of Philosophy (History) from Oxford University in 1951.

He was an Instructor of History at Yale from 1951 to 1955 and has been an Assistant Professor of History there since 1955, specializing in the fields of European and American military history and English agrarian history in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. During 1956 and 1957, he was also a visiting lecturer at Harvard.

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