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**AMERICAN EXCEPTIONALISM AND HENRY
KISSINGER'S MANAGEMENT OF FOREIGN POLICY
1969-1973**

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DEDICATION

To the memory of my brother

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Abstract

American exceptionalism implies that America's political system and history are uniquely and positively exceptional. This thesis examines the self-aggrandizing portrait of America's role in the world during one of the most tumultuous periods in American history (1969-1973) when Richard Nixon's foreign-security advisor, Henry A. Kissinger came up with a theory of Realpolitik upon which to base Nixon's diplomatic revolution. During the Nixon administration, the central debatable issue was the Vietnam War. America's paradoxical decision to end U.S. intervention in Vietnam while pursuing a destructive policy had a disastrous impact on the country. Yet, the war generated fundamental changes in key international relationships. The unpredictable Sino-American rapprochement offered China the prospect of future concessions leading to normalization of relations basically on Chinese terms while working secretly to oust Taiwan from the United Nations. Unquestionably, this rapprochement was interconnected to the global struggle between the United States and the Soviet Union. However, as America acknowledged Soviet parity, Détente- while promising hope for peace- ended in disappointment and frustration. This research therefore argues that American exceptionalism is a serious burden to executing an effective foreign policy. The most problematic aspect is that Kissinger, while aiming to reduce international tensions with China and the Soviet Union, has also maintained practices- mainly in Vietnam- at variance with the values of American exceptionalism.

Résumé

L'exceptionnalisme américain implique que le système et l'histoire politiques de l'Amérique sont positivement exceptionnels. Ce travail de recherche a pour objectif l'étude du grandissant autoportrait du rôle américain dans le monde au cours de l'une des périodes les plus tumultueuses de l'histoire des Etats Unis (1969-1973) lorsque Henry A. Kissinger, le conseiller à la sécurité et aux affaires étrangères de Richard Nixon, est venu avec une théorie de la Realpolitik pour fonder et initier la révolution diplomatique de Nixon. Pendant l'administration de Nixon, le problème central et le plus contestable était la guerre du Vietnam. La décision paradoxale de l'Amérique de mettre fin à son intervention au Vietnam, tout en poursuivant une politique destructrice a eu un impact désastreux sur ce pays. Mais la guerre a créé des changements fondamentaux dans les relations internationales. L'imprévisible rapprochement Sino-Américain a alors offert à la Chine la perspective de futures concessions menant à la normalisation des relations entre les deux pays selon les conditions chinoises, tout en travaillant secrètement pour évincer Taiwan de l'Organisation des Nations Unies. Incontestablement, ce rapprochement semble être relié de plus en plus à la grande concurrence mondiale entre les Etats-Unis et l'Union soviétique. Alors que l'Amérique a reconnu la parité soviétique, tout espoir prometteur pour la paix s'est terminé dans la déception et la frustration. Ce travail de recherche affirme que l'exceptionnalisme américain est un lourd fardeau pour l'exécution d'une politique étrangère efficace. En fin, l'aspect le plus problématique est que Kissinger, tout en visant à réduire les tensions internationales avec la Chine et l'Union soviétique, a également maintenu les mêmes pratiques, principalement au Vietnam, en contradiction avec les valeurs de l'exceptionnalisme américain.

ملخص

يتضمن مفهوم الإستثنائية الأمريكية أن كلا من النظام السياسي و التاريخ الأمريكي استثنائي على نحو فريد و ايجابي. لذا فان هذه الدراسة تقوم بتفحص هذه الصورة المنمقة لدور أمريكا في العالم خلال واحدة من أكثر الفترات اضطرابا في التاريخ الأمريكي (1969-1973) حينما تبنى هينري كيسنجر و هو مستشار الأمن القومي للرئيس ريتشارد نيكسون نظرية الواقعية السياسية كأساس لثورة نيكسون الدبلوماسية. فإبان إدارة نيكسون، كانت حرب الفيتنام هي القضية الجوهرية و الأكثر جدلا. كما أن القرار الأمريكي و الذي ينطوي على تناقض صارخ و هو إنهاء التدخل الأمريكي في الفيتنام لكن بإتباع سياسة غير بناءة كان له اثر كارثي على الفيتنام. و مع ذلك، فان الحرب ولدت تغييرات جوهرية في العلاقات الدولية. لذا فان التقارب غير المتوقع بين الولايات المتحدة و الصين أهدى للصين تنازلات أدت إلى تطبيع العلاقات بين البلدين وفق شروط صينية في حين كان العمل سرا لخلق تايوان من منصبها في الأمم المتحدة. و مما لا شك فيه أن هذا التقارب كان و طيد الصلة بالصراع العالمي بين الولايات المتحدة والاتحاد السوفياتي. لكن إقرار أمريكا بمساواة الاتحاد السوفياتي لها عسكريا جعل من هذا الانفراج الذي كان يعد بالأمل في السلام ينتهي بالفشل و الإحباط. لذا فان هذا البحث يخلص إلى أن مفهوم الاستثناء الأمريكي يشكل عبئا حقيقيا لأداء سياسة خارجية فعالة. كما أن الجانب المعقد هو انه و مع سعي كيسنجر إلى خفض التوتر الدولي مع كل من الصين و الاتحاد السوفياتي، إلا انه اتبع سياسات تتناقض و بشكل صارخ مع قيم الاستثناء الأمريكي خاصة في الفيتنام.

List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

A-bomb	Atomic Bomb
ABM system	Anti-Ballistic Missile System
ARVN	Army of Republic of Vietnam
COSVN	Central Office for South Vietnam
DRV	Democratic Republic of Vietnam
GVN	Government of the Republic of Vietnam (South Vietnam)
H-bomb	Hydrogen Bomb
ICBMs	Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles
JDHRH	Journals and Diaries of Harry Robbins Haldeman
MAP	Military Assistance Program
MFN	Most Favored Nation
MIRVs	Multiple Independently Targetable Reentry Vehicles
NLF	National Liberation Front for South Vietnam
NVA	North Vietnamese Army
PAVN	People's Army of Vietnam
PRC	People's Republic of China
PRG	Provisional Revolutionary Government of the Republic of South Vietnam
PRK	People's Republic of Kampuchea
RGNUK	Royal Government of National Union of Kampuchea
RVN	Republic of Vietnam
SALT	Strategic Arms Limitation Talks
SEATO	Southeast Treaty Organization
SLBMs	Submarine-Launched Ballistic Missiles
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

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INTRODUCTION

Overview

Many Americans support the notion that the United States uniquely embodies freedom and democracy and possesses an exceptional historical responsibility to dominate the world politically and economically. This attitude has been at the center of the American experience for more than three centuries making Americans believe that they have a moral obligation to the cause of freedom as the cause of all mankind. Alexis de Tocqueville, the French political thinker, was the first writer to coin the term throughout his 1835 book, *Democracy in America*. He described the United States as exceptional stating that the American political system differed very decisively in many respects from the rest of the countries of the world. As many others claim, the United States has been a positive force and quite distinct from other leading countries particularly in the twentieth century. Thus, American political actors have tried to develop foreign policies that would reflect such exceptionalism. Faced with crises, they have often turned to the notion as a powerful force in American foreign policy as in American life.

Appointed to the post of Assistant to President Richard Nixon for National Security Affairs in 1969, Henry Kissinger was afforded the chance to develop a new international framework for American foreign policy. Yet, Kissinger arrived on the diplomatic scene at a very critical moment as the late 1960s was a period characterized by dramatic and fundamental changes in key global relationships. The American war in Vietnam, the Sino-Soviet split, and the dangers of arms race, all threatened to destroy the international order. Certainly, the combination of these multiple changes made the world more complex and less amenable to U.S. dominance.

Amidst this incoherence and confusion, Kissinger aimed to construct a new world order based on a *realpolitik* strategy, a notion used by foreign policy experts to describe the practice of power politics based on a realistic view of the political and security factors that dominate any given situation. Yet, Kissinger, a Harvard professor of government, had also written extensively about international politics. In his writings, he concludes that America must balance values and interests. He further states that a deliberate quest for hegemony is the surest way to destroy the values that made the United States great. He surprisingly suggests that America should not abandon its moral convictions. Therefore, this research analyzes American foreign policy during the period 1969-1973 and discusses how the mounting crises and the upheavals of the period shaped the complex and mixed outcome of Henry Kissinger's foreign policy.

Purpose of the Study

Henry Kissinger had been a key architect of American foreign policy and it would be hard to identify another modern public figure that has so thoroughly fascinated his contemporaries as Kissinger. He has been portrayed as America's most brilliant and enterprising modern statesman and has also been denounced as an exponent of *realpolitik*. Moreover, some historians pointed out that, in 1973, Kissinger was the most-admired person in America and one of the most unlikely celebrities ever to capture the world's imagination.

In his memoirs, Kissinger evidently wrote chronicles of his diplomacy during the Nixon years with great care to his place in history and to perpetuate his image as the strategic thinker who executed highly successful radical shifts in American foreign policy. His best-known writings, *White House Years* (1979), *Years of Upheaval* (1982), and *Years of Renewal* (1994), chronicle his global policy planning and give detailed accounts of historical events and political figures. In these writings, Kissinger astonishingly dazzles the reader when he

presents himself as the consummate deal-maker who highly believes in American exceptionalism; that belief in the divine American mission that makes the United States a redeemer nation fundamentally different from, if not superior to, the rest of the world. Certainly, there is much to admire in Kissinger's role as a foreign policy architect. He has helped moderate tensions among the superpowers and used his formidable intelligence and energies to work toward the settlement of the most dangerous international conflicts. 1973 was the year Kissinger was named Secretary of State by Nixon. It was also the year he won the Nobel Peace Prize for negotiating a cease-fire in Vietnam.

Given these achievements, it may seem almost perverse to single Kissinger's foreign policy out for critical attack. Of course, this widely shared appreciation of Kissinger may not last for we cannot be confident of our understanding and interpretation of critical foreign-policy decisions during the Cold War when they are based largely, or entirely, on the written record of Henry Kissinger. Therefore, uncertainty still exists about the respective roles of President Nixon and of his foreign policy adviser in the formulation of American policy and particularly of its more daring innovations. Kissinger's efforts to close the most detailed record of his activities were carefully calculated to give the facade of legitimacy for his actions while there is no doubt that Kissinger's activities have been predicated on what is good for the U.S. and not necessarily on what is good for the world.

While history is a contested subject, continually open to revision, the other image of Nixon's national security adviser as it comes up repeatedly in the new interpretations is of a person determined to position himself at the top of the decision-making pyramid, with disregard to important inputs from key actors in Washington. Some critics identified Kissinger as a Soviet espionage agent and assembled that conspiratorial forces behind the scenes actually controlled the government and dictated its policies. Others accused him of being responsible for numerous crimes, such as prolonging and expanding the war in

Southeast Asia. The most convincing case made for the charge of Henry Kissinger as a war criminal was the illegal bombings of Laos and Cambodia in a constitutionally undeclared and therefore illegal war. Kissinger, for some, was no less than a murder conspirator and war criminal. Whether critical or admiring, all agreed that he has been different.

One has to view America's political situation today from the perspective of both Kissinger and his detractors to understand his ultimate place in history. Thus, my work does not mean to write a history of the Kissinger era. The primary concern of this research is to examine the role of Henry Kissinger, the most exemplary practitioner of American foreign policy, in the latter part of the twentieth century, during the early part of his policy-making career. This study raises two interrelated questions: What is the role of American exceptionalism in Kissinger's world of stability and power? And did the outcomes envisaged by Henry Kissinger approximate what actually happened in the world?

The study challenges the prevailing view that the United States acts exceptionally by showing that Kissinger was not true to the liberal ideals and pronouncements of American exceptionalism. Further, his foreign policy, successful as it seemed to be, has not sufficiently addressed the central task of American exceptionalism; the need to evolve a new system of world order based on principles of liberty and democracy.

Methodological Concerns

To study American foreign policy in a detailed and a more rooted way, the historical approach is applied in this research. The course of analysis is historical but has important implications for contemporary foreign policy as it does not only focus on the narrative point of view of the historical events but also on commentaries and analysis of these events. It is a mistake to suggest that this means the study is intended to reproduce a replica of the past. Descriptions of events are avoided as the aim is to tell some sort of plausible truths about

what had happened in the past, inevitably drawing conclusions pertinent to some moral concerns. The challenge, however, lay in interweaving the narrative, the ideas, and the cultural context of the period under discussion into one coherent package. This research tries to manage the texts and words to persuade and convince.

To achieve a more accurate engagement with the past, the method of investigation used within this approach is the case-study approach. For re-evaluating U.S. foreign policy under Kissinger's stewardship, this method best promises to match the problem and its setting and to result in the most dependable conclusion. The cases under investigation thus are too selective to constitute a true representation of Kissinger's policy while each of the chapters in this research engages with a moral argument. Analytical procedures are also of prime importance to discern and explicate principles that might guide actions. For that, it is necessary to apply the moral theory according to which the morality of an action is determined solely and entirely by the results or consequences of that action.

Literature Review

To avoid the charges of bias and subjectivity, primary sources are much more reliable and credible in the historical approach. To provide the reader with historical information about key events and issues of the Cold War period, including important conflicts, a significant amount of data is collected from the principal sources that include the testimony of participants in the policy process, mainly through memoirs. For the period covered in this book (1969-1973), the memoirs of National Security Adviser Henry Kissinger; *White House Years* and *Diplomacy*, the memoirs of President Richard Nixon, *RN: The Memoirs of Richard Nixon*; his White House Chief of Staff, Harry Robbins Haldeman- *The Haldeman Diaries: Inside the Nixon White House*, are all of particular value. In *White House Years*, Kissinger covers his first four years (1969-1973) as Assistant to the President for National Security

Affairs and President Nixon's closest adviser on foreign policy. Kissinger recalls countless critical moments with Nixon, His secret trip to China, the Indo-Pakistani war of 1971, and the historic summit meetings in Beijing and Moscow. Kissinger's monumental and most important book, *Diplomacy*, moves from an overview of Kissinger's own interpretation of history to personal accounts of his negotiations with world leaders. His portraits of world leaders including Nixon, Zhou Enlai and Mao Tse-tung provide the reader with a rare window on diplomacy at the time when Kissinger himself was at the center of events. Former President Richard Nixon's autobiography, *RN: The Memoirs of Richard Nixon*, reveals Nixon's beliefs, and behind-the-scenes decisions and provides a unique insight into the complexities of the modern presidency and the great issues of American policy and politics. The Haldeman Diaries, *Inside the Nixon White House*, represent a chronicle of the four years Harry Haldeman was Chief of Staff for President Nixon. His diaries offer a fascinating portrait of the major events of that era, including the Cambodia bombings, and new insights on Richard Nixon.

All these memoirs are highly important historical documents and are full of a sweeping sense of history. Other primary sources that include letters, speeches and government publications provide excellent document collections for anyone interested in American foreign policy during the Kissinger years. Some primary sources are used in the form of block quotations as the original meaning may be distorted when one summarizes or paraphrases passages written by fundamental actors. Explanation or analysis of the primary sources should be epistemically objective. This is almost impossible of any branch of human inquiry as I admittedly acknowledge that the interpretive perspective is occasionally colored by personal and ideological bias.

Numerous secondary sources are heavily relied upon for more information. Jussi Hanhimäki's *The Flawed Architect*, Stephen Ambrose's *Nixon: The Triumph of a Politician*, and William Bundy's *A Tangled Web* are important books about Kissinger and thus should not be overlooked. Sabrina Safrin's "The Un-Exceptionalism of U.S. Exceptionalism," and David Wrobel's "Exceptionalism and Globalism" are among many other journal articles that make a valuable contribution. They are an important source of commentary and analysis; all contain historical accounts and analysis of participants particularly in the discussion of American policy toward China and the Soviet Union. Taken together these journals cover virtually the full spectrum of thinking on American foreign policy during the Nixon-Kissinger era. They, additionally, offer researchers a unique opportunity to reconstruct the story of the Nixon-Kissinger dyad and their control of the foreign policy machinery between 1969 and 1973.

Structure

The process of exploration is accomplished in four chapters. Each chapter in this study has its own moral tone of arguments and ideas, taking on the standard base that the whole study identifies turning points and transforming events.

To better understand the idea of American exceptionalism, the first chapter, Centuries of Exceptionalist Rhetoric and Self-Proclaimed Identity, undertakes a comprehensive and critical study on this concept. The chapter begins its analysis with the seventeenth century and the massive European, mainly English, settlement of America. It covers the colonial period in the 1600s and the subsequent English rule and devotes considerable space to describing the evolution of the myth of American exceptionalism from the birth of the American nation (1783) to Wilsonian America (1918). The rest of the chapter covers the Kissingerian approach to Foreign policy. This treatment is justified in order to devote more space to America's

recent political history, which is perhaps of greater relevance to the subject. The first chapter is meant to be a guide to the intricate issues introduced in the next chapters as American exceptionalism is, on the conceptual front, the core of the dominant American political culture. The chapter puts that notion of exceptionalism in perspective and argues that it does not so much guarantee specific foreign policy initiatives.

Chapter two is an engaging examination of the myth of exceptionalism spawned by the Vietnam War. Americans who believed they were there for a high moral purpose witnessed how their idealism was lost, their morals corrupted, and their purpose forgotten. Voices in Congress and the public at large had long been criticizing Kissinger's 'amoralism.' It was, however, no time to be weakening the country's position further with vain notions that the world be redeemed through the myth of American exceptionalism. The chapter also suggests that the effects of a resurgence of unalloyed realism during the Nixon-Kissinger years could be felt where Washington would work with whatever governments were cooperative without inquiring too closely into how they managed their domestic affairs.

One of the shameful episodes in American history began in 1971 when the American system secretly agreed that Taiwan was part of China and promised not to support its independence. Chapter three, therefore, shows how the sacrifice of small states to grand designs is rationalized through the example of Taiwan. Also, the third chapter attempts to reconstruct the calculations of both the Chinese and American parties to the issue of rapprochement. It effectively introduces the various controversies, and describes how differing points of view have been expressed.

The last chapter reviews American-Soviet relations during the Vietnam War. Kissinger knew that improved relations between the United States and the Soviet Union were essential if a grand design were to work. The chapter, however, argues that American

exceptionalism camouflaged, in his case, opportunism and greed. America's Détente with the communist Soviet Union gained the latter both military and political parity. The chapter, additionally, stresses that exceptionalism is not grounded upon an idea, but rather upon the ambitions of Henry Kissinger.

CHAPTER ONE

Centuries of Exceptionalist Rhetoric and Self- Proclaimed Identity

Introduction

As the United States embarks on a campaign to promote freedom and democracy around the world, the idea of “American exceptionalism” has come back into parlance. Although the idea is too vague and imprecise, Americans do embrace it because it states that the United States is fundamentally different from, if not superior to, the rest of the world. Their self-image is more deeply bound up with a sense of having a special place in history than most other nations’ have. Among the most powerful forms of this American idea has been the conviction that the nation has a special moral mission in the world. But how does America differ from the rest of the world if it is to be accurately labeled an “exceptionalist”? The initial chapter turns consequently to this American ideological tradition of proclaiming and believing that the United States is an exceptional country, different from every other country in the world. It traces this popular tradition of American exceptionalism from its European and Puritan roots to America’s endorsement of Henry Kissinger’s realpolitik by taking its arguments seriously and responding to them with critical engagement.

1.1 Colonial America: A City upon a Hill

American exceptionalism permeates every period of American history and has an exceptionally odd historical evolution. The ideological basis of this exceptionalism is located in American Puritanism, and the beginning of the story is understood to be Puritan ideology, which caused an errand into the wilderness, the redeemer nation, and the jeremiad (O'Brien, M. 605). For early colonists who settled in Boston, America was synonymous with the modern. The exceptional destiny of the New World was to transform itself into a model

nation. It was a “new found land” discovered and its culture created out of the common experiences of uprooting from the “old world” (Huggins 159). The idea has melded with the beliefs of religious reformers who originated some American colonies and its anticipations of escape from ordinary old history run deep in the American past, as far back as the 17th-century declaration by John Winthrop¹, the governor of Massachusetts Bay Colony, that the colonists would create a morally exemplary “city upon a hill.”² He articulated the aims and direction and purpose of the new community at its earliest stages when he charged the early colonists with these words,

[F]or we must consider that we shall be as a city upon a hill, the eyes of all people are upon us; so that if we shall deal falsely with our God in this work we have undertaken and so cause him to withdraw his present help from us, we shall be made a story and a byword through the world. (qtd. in Greene 66)

Winthrop was described as leading his people out of the depravity of the Old World and into the freedom of salvation in the New World. Although it is possible to exaggerate the significance of this particular sermon, which remained unpublished for two centuries after Winthrop delivered it, it nonetheless provides a clear statement of the sense of special purpose that helped motivate the settlement of New England. Puritans were charged with a special spiritual and political destiny: to create in the New World a church and a society that would provide the model for all nations of Europe as they struggled to reform themselves.

Over time, this idea has been adopted by Americans to mean that America, alone among the nations, is beloved by God. Its people touted their status as God’s new chosen people, erecting a nation to illuminate the world; a nation that has operated on the conviction that it was destined to lead the way for humanity (“The Future of the American Idea” 13+). In

short, America was to be a model to other nations, a light shining out to a wretched world and inspiring others to lift themselves up.

From a critical point of view, it might be said that Winthrop's words were by no means an American indicator of exceptionalism. John Winthrop was clear here that the main end of the puritans was religious. Far from a statement of being exceptional, John Winthrop's words were a warning against the failure to be a good example to the world. The speech did not indicate that the destiny of the New World was the destiny of mankind. It was rather a warning of the terrible consequences that the colonists would face if they failed to live lives of complete Christian virtue.

Furthermore, a special set of circumstances led to America's distinctive form of national pride, including settlement by groups fleeing religious persecution, the lack of an aristocracy and emphasis on equality in the nation of immigrants, and, of course, the notion of an empty virgin continent with no history at all, set aside by providence for a great experiment (Murphy 20+). However, to be sure, many nations have a chauvinistic view of themselves and all their socio-economic systems went through the same sequence of stages of development. Civilizations from the ancient world to the modern have possessed a conviction of divine calling and destiny. Variations on this impulse have been evident in cultures as diverse as Confucian China, Hellenistic Greece, Augustan Rome, Ottoman Turkey, Romanov Russia, and Victorian Britain (Gamble 4+). But even at their most arrogance, no other people claim that their nations are chosen by God to be the model for the rest of the world.

Besides, supporters of this idea never seem to notice that the Puritanism they put at the base of exceptionalism came from Europe as surely as the Enlightenment did. The colonists, though in a strange land, came to it with their European thoughts and goals. They saw themselves as Englishmen, as would many in the colonies for the next century and a half. In

this sense, the intellectual construction of America as an exceptional place began in Europe, and thus American exceptionalism is originally a European idea.

American exceptionalism has been shaped not only by its own historical experience, theological roots, and political ideology but also by the expectations of outsiders, like the radicals of the French and English Enlightenment who projected their hopes for universal redemption onto the emerging United States in the 1770s and 1780s (Gamble 4+). These historical facts would surely undermine the exceptionalist argument that America represents a unique or special development.

Moreover, the puritan society did not feature equal opportunity and equal treatment under the law for the seventeenth century. Puritanism was explicitly and adamantly opposed to all those ideals of progress and political freedom especially since they presided over societies that were mostly pre-republican, pre-democratic, and pre-egalitarian (Noll 38+). American exceptionalism under puritan beliefs was to fulfill its mission by the forced spread of its ideology and institutions. Historian Edward McNall Burns was correct to warn that “[I]f a people already feel that they have been endowed by God or by nature with talents surpassing those of their neighbors, they will almost inevitably conclude that it is their destiny to redeem or to dominate their inferior brethren” (187). In these terms, the Puritan colonies remained irrelevant to American exceptionalism and none of their religious beliefs should be cause for true celebration.

The descendants of the Puritans were to enlarge their ideal of a “city upon a hill” into a vision that was so broad in its implications and so specifically American in its application. Ultimately, the religious fervor cooled, and the nature of the exceptionalist argument changed, but the idea of America as a special place with a special people called to a special mission was never to go away.

1.2 Revolutionary America

By the dawn of revolution, American exceptionalism began to embrace secular ideals as well as religious ones. Political freedom in the late 18th century resulted in economic freedom; the bright promise of equal social and economic advancement for all individuals in a land of abundance. Making good on the promises required a political economy that would facilitate the creation of wealth on an enormous scale. Chief among the moral assertions was the idea ingrained in the founding documents that spell out exactly the roles of the federal government in relation to individual and states' rights. The idea assumes that the United States has a responsibility to spread its vision of individual liberty, that individual liberty is a moral absolute and that a system of governance that enshrines individual liberty is morally and practically superior to all others (Schonberg 29+). For Americans then, good government meant the protection of life, liberty, and property. In short, Americans had implanted the principle for which they had suffered and fought- the authority of the individual. Such belief hinged upon the related ideas that all men were by nature created free and equal and that whatever distinctions arose in society should result from talent and hard work not from status or birth.

Free exchange, private property, upward mobility, and unlimited acquisitiveness are key terms describing the unchanging values, institutions, and behavioral traits of this economic individualist. They would protect Americans from the burdens and capricious claims of a too-powerful state and allow individuals to do as they pleased within the confines of the law and to achieve, in ways big and small, to the benefit of the country as a whole (Crowley A19). Over time, this fundamental belief came to be seen as exceptional because of the shared belief in the dignity and creativity of the individual.

From a critical point of view, a major cause of America's greatness was the unlimited expansion of individual liberty. But the democracy born of free land pressing individual

liberty beyond its proper bounds had its dangers as well as its benefits. Individuals found meaning and identity in their lives through service that promoted the common good while the very realities carried individuals to advance their own interests at the expense of the whole community.

Another assessment was to challenge the consensus historian's view that American history and social order were basically rooted in shared values of individual liberty, social tranquility, and economic and political stability. Writing over a century ago, historian Frederick Jackson Turner made the essential point: "Not the Constitution, but free land and an abundance of natural resources open to a fit people," he wrote, "made American democracy possible." For Americans, he observed, "abundance was freedom and freedom was abundance" (293). It is also significant to remember that exceptionalism is not necessarily based on individualism, although it is often an important part of it. Egalitarian collectivism also exists with its focus on economic equality, collective goods, regulatory and welfare institutions, social planning, and harmony (Tilman 177). It is so surprising that exceptionalists de-emphasize the egalitarian collectivist strain and claim exceptionalism to be biased toward emphasizing economic individualism as a causal and normative factor in explaining social consciousness and political behavior.

Politically, when the United States was founded on July 4, 1776, the purpose of the leaders of the constitutional generation who gathered in Philadelphia was not to save mankind. The Declaration of Independence is the first major document from the founding period that has long been cherished as central to the American political tradition. Promising liberty, the Declaration was considered to be a charter of the elementary freedoms and rights of all mankind. However, the purpose of its statement was explicitly not to make strikingly universalistic claims. It was rather a justification for the United States to be independent of

Great Britain. On the contrary then, the Declaration of Independence was purposefully unexceptional.

The Constitution, the document that undisputedly lies at the heart of the American political tradition, was claimed to be an exceptional document forwarding basic principles like protection of inalienable rights and a sensible balancing of power that should be applicable to all the world's people and nations respectively. At its heart lies a certain concept of democracy, a form of self-government that assures a degree of equality and insists upon the rule of law ("The Future of the American Idea" 13+). These truths did not have to be proved. They were, rather, self-evident. The ideas at the heart of the Constitution are not uniquely American, however. The Founders understood French Enlightenment thought and respected British legal traditions from the Magna Carta onward (Woolery A24). The Scottish philosopher David Hume and the French thinker Montesquieu were preeminently the two mid-century theorists who recognizably talked the language of revolutionary America.

Hume made sense to Americans as the one who introduced the idea of federation. Montesquieu's *The Spirit of the Laws* (1758) was implanted into the early American legal tradition. Interest in the ideas of this French thinker was extraordinarily prevalent. James Madison, the Father of the American Constitution, was "for the most part ... an analysis of the ideas of Montesquieu" (Spurlin 157). Both Hume and Montesquieu were after all for large or important parts of their works talking about the British constitution, and most Americans of the founding period had been born British. The writings of these theorists accordingly influenced the new nation.

Moreover, American idealism hasn't been applied in to U.S. foreign policy. It has not been practiced by the Founding fathers who often continued to support domestic policies that undermined these universal ideals. It should not be denied that the U.S. Constitution was, in

practice, a pro-slavery document. It has been pointed out that the man who wrote it could state with simplicity and beauty that every individual has the right to “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness” was himself a slave-owner. Jefferson lived in a slave-owning society, one in which half of the non-slave population and women were not equal citizens (“The Future of the American Idea” 13+).

Similarly, the American political tradition is characterized as much by hierarchies of race and gender as it is by equality and democracy. Racism, sexism, and intolerance are as American, others argue, as the First Amendment or contested elections (Rogers 558-63). Besides, conceiving of American history and culture as the product of an exclusive dialogue between Anglo-Protestant men, Americans monopolized the power and privileges of “American” for men like themselves (Drown 113+). Other American histories were silenced: Protestant religious America ignored those of politically liberal Protestants, and neglected the diversity within conservative evangelical and fundamentalist politics. It also ignored even larger numbers of Catholics, both liberal and conservative, who had a long history of active participation in American public life (Preston 541+). Also, religion’s role in American life today is no longer even solely Judeo-Christian. Millions of Muslims and Hindus, in addition to believers of many other faiths, regularly contribute to the political and popular debates that help shape the domestic context in which US foreign policy is framed.

To satisfy their passion, Americans sought to extend the reach of U.S. power. They evinced a compulsion to acquire territory and extend their commercial reach. In this context, the movement into the interior of the continent, into the heartland of the new country, could thus be viewed as, historian Dorothy Ross has explained “... a story of American escape from the world. With its western safety valve, America could avoid the industrial violence, class division, and general social decay that had accompanied modernization in European

countries” (909). But, of course, this new nation was not discovering itself or expanding into itself so much as constituting itself incrementally on a world stage and displacing those residents who were already there—primarily Native Americans.

History is present here too. When one sees names of rivers and trails, one is reminded that indigenous Americans once trod on the land in America but that they were killed off, sometimes in the very name of expanding the American idea. The idea, as captured in the land, represented not only freedom but also its opposite. White Americans harassed and launched full-scale invasions (Bacevich 18+). They engaged in ethnic cleansing. The American ideals were only a legal convenience to be discarded as soon as the settlers had sufficient power to displace the Indians. The starting point of racism was consequently extraordinarily high, as it surely was against Indians and Blacks. In the case of African Americans, their ancestors did not migrate but were taken forcibly to the new continent under a system of slavery that contradicted the very foundational principles of the nation. Of equal importance, if American exceptionalism was to subdue Native Americans and place them at the disposal of European settlers, and to import several million Africans to the New World and subject them to a lifetime of slavery, then perhaps this exceptionalism was not so admirable.

By his second term as president, Thomas Jefferson began to speak less of America as the “exemplar of liberty” and more of America as the “empire of liberty” (Selden 29+). D. H. Lawrence reacted to this shamefully self-aggrandizing American idea of Liberty along these lines:

Freedom? The land of the free! This the land of the free! Why, if I say anything that displeases them, the free mob will lynch me, and that's my freedom. Free? Why, I have never been in any country where the individual has such an abject fear of his fellow countrymen. Because, as I say, they are free to lynch him the moment he shows he is not one of them. (qtd. in "The Future of the American Idea"¹³⁺)

Stated differently, Americans only advanced idealistic principles to afford themselves a modicum of legitimacy for their illegal works until they could do as they pleased without even a pretense of law. There is nothing of exceptionalism here. The idea was meant to camouflage rampant chauvinism, arbitrary use of power for self-interest and even opportunism and greed ("American Exceptionalism" A09). For two centuries then, American exceptionalism and its arguments were as irritating as were the illegal ways in which it was advanced.

1.3 American exceptionalism and Imperial America

Shortly after the conclusion of the Revolutionary War, Benjamin Franklin noted that the Western Frontier, the part of the new nation farthest removed from the European-influenced and tainted East Coast, was the emerging heart of the nation (117-8). In this way, the leaders' common notion presented the West as an exceptional place, like nowhere else on earth, a place apart from the rest of the world rather than a part of it. The West in the coming years would be the place where Americans would inspire dreams of national expansion. This image of the West was not necessarily true, as it was not necessarily false, but it was extremely powerful. One important way in which nineteenth century America addressed itself was through landownership.

A generation after the end of the Revolutionary War, the Louisiana Purchase of 1803 doubled the size of the emerging American nation. Jefferson's purchase brought 828 million acres more, though the Indians were not consulted and in a variety of ways expressed their dissent. The native people living in most of these areas were removed by policies commenced during Jefferson's presidency from 1801 to 1809 and continued through a series of forced emigrations in the 1830s (Kennedy 27). Jefferson knew that there were Indians living in the West and that they had their own ideas of which territories were theirs. However, political necessity had changed Jefferson's theoretical beliefs and he turned to practical actions. The lands of the Delawares, Creeks, Choctaws, Chickasaws, and all the other current inhabitants of the region between the Mississippi and the Appalachians were to be emptied from their Indian inhabitants and offered for sale by the United States. Nowhere is Jefferson's pragmatism better illustrated than in his response to those who criticized him for violating his principles in acting to secure new territory. Replying to those critics, Jefferson noted:

A strict observance of the written laws is doubtless one of the high duties of a good citizen, but it is not the highest. The Laws of necessity, of preservation, of saving our country when in danger, are of higher obligation ^[4]. To lose our country by a scrupulous adherence to written law, would be to lose the law itself, with life, liberty, property and all those who are enjoying them with us; thus absurdly sacrificing the end to the means. (Thomas Jefferson to John B. Colvin 20 Sept. 1810)

The Louisiana Purchase opened terrain across the Mississippi to which the Southern nations were relocated. Rather than assimilating the eastern tribes, Jefferson was attracted to Louisiana as a place in which Indian tribes could be relocated. His action would release cotton land to the planters on the eastern side. It also added to the Cotton Kingdom new provinces on the western side, in Louisiana and Arkansas. Consequently, more land would be put under

slavery. In purchasing Louisiana, Jefferson wrote that “when [Americans] shall be full on this side [of the Mississippi] ...[they] may lay off a range of States on the Western bank from the head to the mouth, and so, range after range, advancing compactly as [they] multiply” (Letter to John C. Breckinridge August 12, 1803). Those decisions and actions, it is clear, aimed at establishing U.S. control and opportunity, not really at fostering order or democracy. When the Louisiana territory was ripe for taking, Jefferson denied his cherished principles and devised means to take it. From the outset, then, the nation seemed unprincipled.

The U.S. achieved remarkable success in making good on its aims of liberty and democracy. The story of westward imperial expansion has often paraded in American historical memory as the “Empire for Liberty.” The myth of American exceptionalism has continued to exist because it provided such incredible comfort to the American national psyche. Better for their national mental health to believe that the world’s greatest democracy had grown naturally, and providentially than to consider that it, like so many other nations, has a history of empire building (Wrobel 431+). The West, so often declared as the most American part of America, has functioned as the primary stage for that imperial drama. It is important to state that Jefferson was the first American president to consider a removal policy against the Indians.

In the years that followed, American planters sought more land and they found their hero in President Andrew Jackson. Elected in 1828, Jackson’s commitment to the idea of expansion relocated thousands of Indians from the southeastern U.S. to beyond the western shores of the Mississippi River. Even the laws and legal procedures were against Indians. In his first State of the Union address on 8 December 1829, President Andrew Jackson urged the passage of an Indian removal bill for the benefit of the state of Georgia.⁵ The Indian Removal Act was adopted by Congress and approved by the President on 30 May 1830 forcing the eastern tribes of Choctaws, Creeks, Chickasaws, and Cherokees and the Ohio River and Great

Lakes tribes as well, the Ottawas, Pottawatomies, Wyandots, Shawnees, Kickapoos, Winnebagos, Delawares, Peorias, Miamis, the Sauk, and the Fox on to land set aside for the West of the Mississippi. The weaker Indian tribes simply could not protect their rights and property against the stronger United States and they were not to share the exceptionalist destiny of the new expanding country.

The most striking example of nineteenth-century American exceptionalism is found in the concept of Manifest Destiny. The phrase originated in an essay written by John L. O'Sullivan in 1845, in which he described "[America's] manifest destiny to overspread the continent allotted by Providence for the free development of [its] yearly multiplying millions" (qtd. in Madsen 89). The explanation of this definition suggests that the United States was designed to bring a perfect form of prosperity through development to the entire North American continent. By the time the phrase "Manifest Destiny" became common currency in the 1840s, the United States had already begun to expand across the continent and its expansion into Mexican territory was inevitable and irresistible.

The concept of Manifest Destiny required the United States to fight the Mexican War to add Texas to the Union and acquire ever larger parts of the West. Annexation was also a critical issue in the presidential election of 1844. Soon after his administration began, James Polk announced to Secretary Bancroft that

There are four great measures which are to be the measures of [his] administration: one, a reduction of the tariff; another, the independent treasury; a third, the settlement of the Oregon boundary question; and, lastly, the acquisition of California (xvii).

Yet, the obstacle to Manifest Destiny in the West was the expansion of British influence in North America. Therefore, the decision to annex Texas would not only eliminate American concerns over British role in the region, it would actually reverse the roles that presently existed between the two rival nations, making Great Britain economically dependent upon the United States. The United States could acquire a monopoly over the cotton-producing regions of North America, giving it the commercial leverage to neutralize Great Britain as a military or economic threat (Bercovitch 161-7). The Texas crisis then represented merely one of several battlegrounds in the competition for empire between the United States and Great Britain while the ideology of Manifest Destiny had mixed consequences for those Native Americans and Mexicans that stood in the way.

Consequently, the 1840s was a decade of much change in the geographic contours of the United States, especially under presidents John Tyler (1841–1845) and James Polk (1845–1849). The admission of Texas as a state in 1845 and the settlement of the Oregon boundary question with Britain in 1846 further expanded the young nation. Further, in accordance with this notion of Manifest Destiny, the United States went to war against Mexico in 1846 in an effort to incorporate the western territories of California and New Mexico and certain Texas borderlands. At the war's end in 1848, Mexico, a defeated country, negotiated a treaty from a weak position. The Mexican government was under tremendous political and financial pressure to sign the treaty. With the American army just outside of Mexico City, Mexicans believed that if the war continued, all of Mexico would be acquired by the United States. In addition, British money brokers, who had made large loans to Mexico, were pushing Mexican officials to end the war and pay off Mexico's debts (Martinez 39). Under these circumstances, the United States virtually dictated the terms of the treaty.

The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo required Mexico to cede about half of its then existing territory. Thus, it ceded millions of acres of the Southwest and California to the

United States. In this sense, it was morally bankrupt to require a defeated country to sell its territory. James Polk became president with the inflexible determination to carry these measures into effect; and when he left the presidency, he had accomplished them all.

But never during the course of America's transformation from a small power to a great one did the United States exert itself to liberate others absent an overriding perception that the nation had security or economic interests at stake. Fundamental to this remarkable expansion was the fact that these territories were already inhabited by non-European people. The fundamental dimension of the issue was that Native Americans were neither incorporated nor admitted to the enjoyment of all the rights and immunities of citizens of the United States.

The American pioneers' response to Indians' presence was not only to push them aside but also to conquer, dominate, and even exterminate them. The Native Americans were removed through "encouraged migration and settlement, subsidized transportation" (Wood 214) and extreme force. This was done during the bloody wars fought with Native Americans and also by continuous government policy and military supervision. California's indigenous population of around 150,000, in 1848 had fallen to 30,000 twelve years later (Faragher and Hine 249-50). Disease accounts only for a portion of that loss. The tide of westward migration was accelerated by the discovery of gold in California. Gold and death went hand in hand. Entire races were declining so precipitously that they appeared headed for extinction. The numbers raise the issue of the applicability of the term genocide in America.⁶

The topic of genocide, in turn, prompts the charting of moral equivalencies, the great counter to notions of benign American exceptionalism, thus rendering genocide perhaps as the most controversial topic for American historians. Gerstaecker's account reminds us that such issues were very much in the American public eye a century and a half ago. He wrote that "the Whites behaved worse than cannibals toward the poor, inoffensive creatures, whom they

had robbed of nearly every means of existence and now sought to trample under foot” (qtd. In Wrobel 431+).

The West, after all, was not exceptional, not a world apart, but a West in the world. And the entire American experiment at that time could be brought into question as it revealed the limits of the American promise of democracy and success. The West in the 19th century became a place where Americans exercised an enduring monopoly on violence. The postwar Gadsden Purchase of the southern portion of Arizona and New Mexico from the defeated Mexican government in 1851- the small piece of southwestern territory that Elliott West describes as “an after-dinner mint following the expansionist gorging,” (25-50) further enlarged the borders of the West into the familiar shape we know today.

In the space of less than half a century, the new nation had tripled its size and its coastline. As Thomas Hietala notes, “within the space of less than a decade... the country acquired nearly eight hundred million acres of land and pressed for commercial and territorial advantages beyond the continent in ... Hawaii, China, Cuba, and Yucatan” (2). In short, the United States’ rise to national greatness, prosperity, freedom, and stability could be explained in one word: land. Dramatically though, there could be no escaping the fact that the acquisition of Texas would certainly increase the size of the slave empire. In acquiring Texas, the position of the slave power in the Union was enhanced and while annexation did not result in the immediate disruption of the Union, it led the nation through its slow descent into an inescapable Civil War.

The middle of the nineteenth century also saw important new moral and social movements arise in America to perfect the country. The anti-slavery struggle was conducted primarily on moral and humanitarian grounds. It was not conceivable to many abolitionists that one human being could become the property of another while the status of being white

prevented one from being transformed into property. Religious leaders argued that Americans demonstrated their superiority to Europeans in political institutions, scientific knowledge, and moral cultivation. Protestantism was combined with constitutional liberty to create an American culture that encouraged both material and moral greatness. Consequently, the spirit of the Bible condemned slavery and so demonstrated the moral inferiority of any society where slavery existed. Moreover, biblical reasoning told the slaves not to wait for their deliverance but to rebel against their masters to take their liberty. If the Bible did not tolerate slavery, then it was obligatory upon believers to hear and obey. The logic was inescapable.

Justice then was not only a social or political issue but also a theological issue. Thus, abolitionist leaders as William Lloyd Garrison adamantly resisted all proposals to shift the basis of their assault from religious to economic grounds, proposals that emanated from the more worldly leaders of the movement. To turn their appeal from the conscience “to the pocketbook,” from “the duty of Christian reformation” to “the love of political preferment,” he warned, would inevitably corrupt and subvert the moral principles on which their movement was based (qtd. in John 326).

Anti-slavery arguments were based on general humanitarian principles. Yet, the overthrow of slavery needed more than black anger. It needed also the outrage of the whites. Henry Ward Beecher was the anti-slave Biblicist who continued to struggle against slavery. He gave a classic expression, in his fast-day address of 4 January, 1861, to the deeply ingrained belief that the Bible, if simply left alone, would interpret itself:

Wherever the Bible has been allowed to be free; wherever it has been knocked out of the king's hand, and out of the priest's hand, it has carried light like the morning sun, rising over hill and vale, round and round the world; and it will do it again! (289)

After human effort failed to prevent the outbreak of war, these religious leaders promptly accepted that God had permitted the disruption of the Union and concluded that such a seemingly disastrous event from man's perspective must have been the divine will for the nation. Astonishingly, the Bible Americans had relied on for building up America's republican civilization was not nearly as unifying for an overwhelmingly Christian people as they once had thought.

American exceptionalism and the sin of slavery remained a major theme of American leaders during the Civil War. The military events of the war were accompanied with moral questions. In his annual message to Congress a month before the Emancipation Proclamation became effective, Abraham Lincoln described the conflict by saying that "[America] shall nobly save, or meanly lose, the last best, hope of earth" (Dec. 1, 1862). In short, Lincoln was convinced that the survival of the Union depended upon the ending of slavery. Yet, the Civil War as not only a war about slavery or the preservation of the Union but also a war about whether the exceptional American experiment in democracy and liberty would succeed. And in the minds of many, the Civil War became the ultimate apocalyptic crusade to purge the land of its grievous sins (Bercovitch 173-4). After the Civil war, the United States industrialized extremely rapidly with the assistance of the government state, which took seriously its responsibility to develop the national economy by maintaining the tariff and permitting massive immigration to accelerate market development and to provide labor (Catley 157). Still, the story of its westward expansion would take place on a global stage.

In April 1898, the United States went to war with Spain. The war was justified as a historical trend of the New World throwing off the tyrannical restraints of Old World (Spanish) political, economic, and religious domination. From the start, as popular thinking went, America was acting from humane causes, seeking to end the oppression and brutality

that Spain had wreaked upon the innocent Cubans (Folsom 741+). To support the war was the highest form of patriotism. From a legal point of view, however, the United States had no international right to interfere in Spain's sovereign affairs as Cuba was a Spanish territory. Moreover, Spain was no threat to U.S. interests. For real reasons then, this might better be described as "altruism, and selflessness. Partisan politics and economic interests dictated the need to end the presence and influence of Spain in Cuba" (Rosenfeld 2). In sum, the United States wanted to justify the war in the cause of humanity, a theme much broader than military and economic priorities.

No matter how debased, American most imperialistic and political goals have always been idealistic, while the goals of other nations have been transparently opportunistic. Ross perceptively commented on this overlooked face of American exceptionalism: "While claiming to describe the American world as it was, exceptionalism instead distorted that world, providing a simplistic and idealized vision of the United States and exaggerating American uniqueness" (xviii).

1898 was the year that heralded the entrance of the United States into the colonizing status. It emerged as an imperial power in its own right, making economic and military claims throughout the Pacific and the Caribbean. While disclaiming expansionist interests, America did not intend to lose Puerto Rico. Interest in Hawaii had been intense for decades, but annexation had split Congress. By design or accident, the United States had joined the European powers in pursuit of an empire, scattered over the Caribbean Sea and the Pacific Ocean. At the turn of the 19th century, the power of the United States became the most extensive to date as it gained political dominance over Guam, Puerto Rico, Cuba, Hawaii, and the Philippines (Rosenfeld 201).

In 1898, Guam was transferred from Spanish to American control. American forces were withdrawn from Cuba in 1902 but Cuban economy became so reliant upon the United States. America wound up paying Spain \$20 million for the Philippines and benefited from its economic control of the Philippines as a new colony, where it would later prop up dictator Ferdinand Marcos. The United States continued to fight against Filipinos who were trying to establish the Philippines as an independent nation from 1899-1903. They were not granted full independence from the U.S until 4 July, 1946. Practically, that triumphalism did not mean exceptionalism. American values were not really universal but merely particular and biased standards that a powerful nation conveniently deployed to justify imposing its will on weaker countries.

If the young United States had a mission, it was not to liberate but to expand. “Of course,” declared Theodore Roosevelt in 1899, “our whole national history has been one of expansion” (qtd. in Drinnon 232). This confession clearly violates the ideals of the American republic and recast American history in an openly imperial mode. It also emphasizes that American power should be exerted simply to shape and safeguard the global balance in America’s own interests. The selfishness of this expansionist stance would, however, be utterly and apparently rejected by his successor, Woodrow Wilson, who took American exceptionalism seriously from another different angle.

1.4 American Exceptionalism in the Twentieth Century

a) Wilson’s Dynamic Exceptionalism

Woodrow Wilson was among the significant American leaders who helped transform the American ideal of mission and Manifest Destiny. He seized on the idea of American exceptionalism, which had been a rather static concept, and made it dynamic. Traditional political philosophy had held that American exceptionalism should compel U.S. leaders to

stay clear of European politics and that the United States' uniqueness required protective isolation. Wilson suggested that American exceptionalism should instead be a basis for intervention; that a more powerful United States had less to fear from the corrupting influence of European diplomacy but might now use its unique national institutions as a model to reshape that system in its own image (Schonberg 41). He thus understood that the United States would have to abandon its imperialist approaches to foreign policy. In order to create a global democracy, the United States would have to take active world leadership and work with other nations in international organizations.

It was, indeed, President Wilson who wedded American exceptionalism to internationalism, and in a way that commanded a new level of support in American public opinion. Consistently, in his 1912 campaign for the presidency, he declared his confidence that America was "chosen, and prominently chosen, to show the way to the nations of the world how they shall walk in the paths of liberty" (qtd. in Link 7). But as he wrote many respected books on American history, Wilson was no amateur in his handling of history; he knew what he was doing.⁸ On any topic in his public addresses, he took great care to present a particular version of the American past, one that was useful in explaining why America had to be the servant of all humanity, why America had to enter the European war, and why it had to participate in the League of Nations.

Undoubtedly, Wilson's conception of American exceptionalism was so expansive. Jon Meacham observes that Wilson brought "a missionary dimension to American life and policy" (150). He often spoke, either directly or indirectly, of there being no price too great in lives and resources for the sake of service to humanity. This new trend of exceptionalism suggests that Wilson's contribution to American foreign policy can be expressed in moral terms. Henry Kissinger, in his book *Diplomacy*, described it thus:

As an approach to foreign policy, Wilsonianism presumes that America is possessed of an exceptional nature expressed in unrivaled virtue and unrivaled power. The United States is so confident of its strength and the virtue of its aims that it could envision fighting for its values on a worldwide basis. (809)

The exceptionalist doctrine heavily influenced Woodrow Wilson whose crafting of American exceptionalism was intended to replace the world of kings, empires, aristocrats, and privileged classes with a democratic American republican and pacific world order. In a remarkable speech given before the outbreak of the European war in the summer of 1914, Wilson claimed that since the United States was the champion of “the rights of humanity” then its “flag is the flag, not only of America, but of humanity” (Remarks to Confederate Veterans in Washington, 30: 234). He divorced the symbolism of the flag’s colors and stars and stripes from their historical meaning and reinvented the banner as a universal symbol for the freedom of all mankind. The American flag itself, he said a few days later, stands for “the right of one nation to serve the other nations of the world” (Flag Day Speech, 30: 186). Was Woodrow Wilson naive? The answer is definitely not. It is misleading to relegate Wilson to abstract idealism. It was an easy step from this conception, for Wilson, to intervene militarily in the name of that benevolent ideal; indeed, it soon became clear that “saving humanity” was the handiest explanation for war and intervention (Gamble 4+). Wilson’s exceptionalism certainly had touches of idealism, but it was not without a core of realism.

Once World War I commenced, Wilson considered strict neutrality as an adequate policy for the United States to bring about a stable postwar world. There was then a consensus among the American people in favor of neutrality. From this point of view, Wilson had misgivings over the prospect of victory by either side. While an Allied victory would not “hurt greatly the interests of the United States,” he was uneasy lest peace on Allied terms

might lead to Russian domination of Europe as well as to other undesirable consequences (Memorandum of Herbert B. Brougham 143). Wilson's judgment was governed by America's interest rather than by international morality or by sympathies with one side or the other. Even while he professed neutrality, he continued to look forward to the day of America's opportunity for the realization of America's destiny.

By 1916, economic and security considerations appeared to be the most important factor in determining Wilson's decision to enter the war (Levin 32-3). In this sense, Wilson was like any other American president. As awareness of the country's new strength grew, theorists of America's destiny began to express the view that the United States would and should supplant the European empires, especially the British, and hence should prepare consciously to organize the projection of its power.

What President Wilson contributed to the debate, as America prepared to enter World War I, was an original conviction that to this power should be added a moral mission: Manifest Destiny would be redefined again to offer the benefits of America's historical beliefs and experience in such a way that they might become a model for the salvation of the world (Fehrenbach 29). Hence, the sincerity of Wilson's neutrality has been questioned in light of the United States' heavy financial, material, and diplomatic aid to Britain and France from 1914 onward, but even in his promises of neutrality Wilson talked expectantly of a special kind of American intervention. While pledging official U.S. neutrality in August 1914, Wilson presented the image of a nation holding itself not aloof, but in reserve, 'as a friend' ready to help; in the meantime America had to keep "itself fit and free to do what is honest and disinterested and truly serviceable for the peace of the world" (qtd. in Boiling 19 August 1914).

Similarly, as he accepted the Democratic Party's re-nomination in 1916, he reminded his enthusiastic audience that the United States was neutral not so much on behalf of its own safety but in order to "seek to serve mankind by reserving [America's] strength and [its] resources" for the recovery of peace once the war was over. In this same speech, the candidate who would soon be campaigning on the slogan "He Kept Us out of War" warned that continued neutrality was impossible when the peace of the world was at stake: "We are to play a leading part in the world drama whether we wish it or not," he concluded (A Speech in Long Branch, 2 September 1916). For Wilson, even neutrality had to be defined in terms of American intervention; neutrality could not be defined in such a way as to deny America its role on the world stage.

President Wilson made the supposed impossibility of the nation refraining from intervention even clearer in his speeches as he moved America toward intervention soon after his reelection. In his Second Inaugural Address on March 5, 1917, he rounded out this logic by claiming that "[Americans] have always professed unselfish purpose and [they] covet the opportunity to prove that [their] professions are sincere" (41: 374). It is this crusading mission that carried the U.S. into the Great War in 1917.

In 1917, German resumption of unrestricted submarine warfare moved both the American people and Wilson closer to active participation. Besides, the American administration revealed the Zimmerman telegram from Germany's foreign minister promising Mexico the return of the southwest if it fought against the United States (Tuchman 112). Consequently, the president moved from neutrality to armed defense. Yet, he, astonishingly, still claimed that service enabled America to go to war as a disinterested associate simply performing its duty, unmotivated by material interests. In June 1917, two months after the American declaration of war, Wilson promised a limitless vindication of service over selfishness:

Now we are going to lay all our wealth, if necessary, and spend all our blood, if need be, to show that we were not accumulating that wealth selfishly but were accumulating it for the service of mankind. (Remarks to Confederate Veterans, 42: 453)

The adversaries were not meant for this service of mankind, however. Wilson informed the Pope in the summer of 1917 in reply to the Vatican's proposal for a negotiated settlement that "if the final solution to imperial ambition and militarism were not found now," he averred, "then the democratic nations would have to fight an even greater war of redemption in the future" (57-9). His rhetoric and writings demonstrates that he was no saint.

In a subsequent speech explaining the significance of the Fourteen Points peace plan, he claimed once again that the American people "are ready to devote their lives, their honor, and everything that they possess" to the enduring principles of universal justice (An Address to a Joint Session of Congress, 45: 539). When, a few months later, Bolshevik Russia withdrew from the war as an Allied power, closing down the Eastern Front and strengthening Germany's defensive and offensive capacity, Wilson vowed "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 in the dust" (qtd. in McDougall 183).

Even after the war, Wilson's sense of superiority would join political power to moral responsibility. He explained that he and all Americans desired to "lift [this great nation] to yet higher levels of service and achievement. Not safety just for one's own, but security for everyone. Not glory, but redemption of others. Not self-interest, but service" (An Address to the Senate 10 July 1919).

His presidency, therefore, clearly marked a turning point in U.S. history. As Robert Nisbet wrote, "Wilson, above any other figure, is the patriarch of American foreign policy

moralism and interventionism” (29-30). American exceptionalism, for Wilson, was an instrument of American interventionism and expansion. In the 1930s, historian Albert Weinberg cut through Wilson’s “humanitarian imperialism” and “ethical interventionism” to see the danger he posed to any sense of limits in foreign policy. Thinking primarily of Wilson’s intervention, Weinberg wrote that Wilson’s “exalted moral consciousness [might] destroy conscience itself in the sense that it remove[d] all sense of limitations upon the means of attaining an ideal” (437). In sum, Wilson’s vision of a global solution was asserted by the exercise of moral arrogance.

What must be understood is that Wilson rationalized that American exceptionalism should instead be a basis for intervention. Yet, he radically altered its practical form and tried to wage war to achieve an impossible peace for humanity. His exceptionalism was a mix of force and faith--a huge force that was often counterproductive and a grandiose faith in the appeal of an American model that was actually as widely resented as admired. If this really was America’s mission, then logically and morally, there could be no compromise. Many years later, Henry Kissinger, one of the most prominent U.S Secretaries of State in the 20th century, would emphasize the dominance of national interest in the calculus of U.S. foreign policy decision-making over against the international liberalism symbolized by Wilson’s failed efforts to create a peaceful world based on abstract international law.

b) Kissinger’s Perception of American Exceptionalism

The realism of Henry Kissinger, the most prominent diplomat of the post Second World War years, and who presided over America’s foreign affairs under two presidents during a period of exceptional intensity in American foreign policy (1969-1977), was the counterpoint to Woodrow Wilson’s “pay any price, bear any burden” principle and disparaged this inherent moralism as immature and unfortunate (Kissinger’s “Foreign policy” 5). Being a

refugee from Nazi Germany, Kissinger witnessed a twisted moral fervor antithetical to the fundamental human security upon which democratic political systems depend. Failing to recognize the reality of Hitler's rising military power, depleting their arsenals and relying on treaties and declarations to keep peace, liberal democracies created the conditions under which the global slaughter of World War II could no longer be prevented.

For Kissinger, the dramatic failure of the West's political idealism from Versailles to Hitler's invasion of Poland is summed up in a single image of humiliation (Greenberg 1789+). The ferocious radicalism of the Nazi seizure of power and destruction of Europe created Kissinger's desire to maintain order. His undergraduate thesis at Harvard, "The Meaning of History," which provides the intellectual foundation of much of his *A World Restored* put it clearly that history is not primarily the product of deep, irresistible forces; it is a clash of wills and a stage for leaders who are either the carriers of new principles or the creative defenders of past experience (Qtd in Cleva 47). According to this view, order and stability should be valued over almost anything else; order should be pursued, even at the expense of justice.

Gallup polls in both 1972 and 1973 found Kissinger the most admired diplomat in America. He had once pointed out; "prudent realists do not ignore values. Rather, the neo-Wilsonians were guilty of illusionism, a cognitive failure to produce an adequate roadmap of means that would balance the risk and realism in their vision" (qtd in Nye 9+). Kissinger's book *A World Restored*, a critique of Versailles and particularly of Wilsonian diplomacy, concludes that most great statesmen are either conservatives or revolutionaries; obviously, he has little sympathy for statesmen who, when they cared for world affairs at all, were essentially liberal reformists (Hoffmann 35). This vision, undoubtedly, conflicts with liberal internationalist conceptions as it emphasizes its persistent promotion of "balance of power" realism.

Kissinger's contention did not emerge in vacuum. A more satisfactory exploration of his book, *Does America Need a Foreign Policy?* (2001) traces Kissinger's analysis of American foreign policy to an extremely well recognized historical tradition called the "Hamiltonian." Hamilton, in his "Camillus" papers of 1795⁹ rejected moralizing and based U.S. foreign policy on manipulating balance of power relations solely for the sake of the national interest- a position that, since Alexander Hamilton's own time, has apparently been represented only by Theodore Roosevelt and Richard Nixon (Kissinger, *Does America Need a Foreign Policy?* 240-42, 248). Strikingly though, in his discussion of the evolution of diplomatic practice, Kissinger analyzes the American experience in the early years of this century by saying that Theodore Roosevelt's pure realpolitik did not lead the United States to a truly fruitful international involvement because its unvarnished appeal to self-interest did not engage the American idea of exceptionalism; the idea that America somehow had a special moral identity and thus was uniquely capable of moral leadership (*Diplomacy* 44).

The idea of American exceptionalism is rarely discussed in Kissinger's books. Yet, he uses it to argue against the American diplomatic practice of requiring the world to meet American moral and political standards. Kissinger, in his book *Diplomacy* (1994), acknowledges American exceptionalism as "the belief in the universal application of American values" (668). According to him, exceptionalism became prominent first in the foreign policy of Woodrow Wilson, who sought to reform the world according to American ideals of human rights and democratic government. He contrasts the missionary idealism of exceptionalism to the national interest realities of successful diplomacy, which he and President Richard Nixon pioneered in the early 1970s. Controversially, committed to defending American national interests, he unwittingly encourages American exceptionalism:

At a time when America is able neither to dominate the world nor to withdraw from it... it must not abandon the ideals which have accounted for its greatness. But neither must it jeopardize that greatness by fostering illusions about the extent of its reach.... Otherwise, foreign policy will turn into self-righteous posturing. (*Diplomacy* 128)

Kissinger poses as a moderate between nationalists who would impose American ideals upon the world and internationalists who would submit American interests to international ideals. He subordinates all ideals to his own *realpolitik*¹⁰ belief in national interests and balance of power. Clearly then, this realist approach was founded on premises opposite to Wilsonianism which argued, on the contrary, that America had a crusading duty to use its power to disseminate its values abroad. Ideas of universalism, moral exceptionalism, and altruism- all were identified with Wilson's project. Yet, as Henry Kissinger has pointed out, the pretense that they might become the operational standards for conducting international relations everywhere was “largely incomprehensible to foreign leaders” (*Diplomacy* 44).

While there is no doubt that Wilsonianism formed a vital part of the story, Kissinger tends to treat its ideals as though they were distinct and discernible principles enduring across time and capable of forming coalitions or falling apart (*Does American Need a Foreign Policy?* 245-9). Not surprisingly, American ideals of exceptionalism, under Henry Kissinger's stewardship, have never been a central concern of American foreign policy. The topic of morality illustrates how Kissinger relies on the realist conception of reality to keep foreign policy within the narrow orbit of realist calculation. Consequently, during the Nixon and Ford administrations, Americans had conducted American foreign policy with respect to the dictates of “geopolitical realism” and evaluations of “the global balance of power”-

approaches to world politics that specifically dismissed Wilsonian concerns to foster democratic governments abroad as naive, even dangerous ways of conducting international affairs (Smith 239). It is difficult to find a prominent figure in post-Wilsonian U.S. foreign policy who does not share Kissinger's view that treaty regimes and institutions remain, when all is said and done, subservient to geopolitical power dynamics.

Kissinger brings to bear an array of logical proofs and moral judgments. His further arguments explain that realists were consistent in insisting that they, not those whom they dubbed idealists, had correctly and realistically understood ethics, human nature, and the international system, especially of what constituted proper roles for states and international institutions (Harbour 14). This world system consists of states competing for survival, where the only rational orientation is toward achieving power. International politics, therefore, is rationally and inherently conflictual power politics, and human reason had to be turned to dealing with that reality as people are by nature self-interested, and that law is useless without enforcement (Beer 35).

Realists also heed Machiavelli's warning that "security for man is impossible unless it be conjoined with power" (Harbour 14). They claim, however, that they were driven by a profoundly moral vision. Thus, realists reject idealism and morality as determinants of foreign policy decisions, and argue that their version of prudent realism was morally as well as pragmatically superior to what they perceived as the illusions of idealism. They offered consequently what they believed was the only plausible hope for order in an anarchic world—the balance of power.

What the idea boils down to is that a nation or group of nations must be strong enough, often militarily, to "balance" the power of other nations. International conflict is inevitable as a result. However, rational, unitary state actors also know that too much greedy behavior

provokes harsh, often collective reactions by equally self-interested opponents. To avoid punishment at the hands of others, most states moderate their behavior, however immoderate their desires. According to realists, this limited balance or order based on fear is all the peace that the anarchic international system can offer. To make the balance work, powerful states should pursue national interests defined in terms of power and consistently counter others' encroachment on those interests (Harbour 16).

A balance of power based on consistently and firmly pursuing national interests thus was the only realistic hope of reducing the chances of another world war. As Hans J. Morgenthau wrote in his *In Defense of the National Interest*, "... the choice is not between moral principles and the national interest, devoid of moral dignity, but between one set of moral principles divorced from political reality, and another set of moral principles derived from political reality" (33). Political evidence, however, indicates also that the powerful nations determine what is right by imposing their own justification on the less powerful. The strong have all the rights and that all that the weak can enjoy is what the strong permitted them to enjoy.

International society is confronted with a paradox. Its most powerful member, the United States, conceiving of itself as the model of modern civilization, responsible for international order and progress, practices economic and military-political policies that are inherently or even deliberately destructive of central elements in the existing apparatus of international law, and the existing norms of international cooperation and order, which it condemns as largely outmoded, if not hostile to American national interests (Pfaff 13). That will have unforeseeable consequences. In foreign policy, considerations of human rights and ideology may coexist alongside those of power and self-interest. As a nation conceived in liberty and dedicated to certain inalienable rights, the United States has strong primal

impulses to respond to crisis not just with power alone, but with power coupled with principle.

Kissinger went far in his pursuit of the national interest at the expense of national ideals. It was, in fact, torture against other people that undermined both human rights and national security. The myth of virtuous American power was not translated to defend the true good of free humanity against the utter evil of tyranny. His foreign policy, in other words, was aimed at convincing minds but not winning hearts. Further, Kissinger's desire for a balance of power would legitimize brutal dictators to make a mockery of human rights in the same way the Nazis had. One consequence is that these dictators around the world could be assured of American backing so long as they declared themselves firmly pro-American and opened up their economies to American capital. That creates the potential for criticism of American foreign policy as, at best, inconsistent with America's proclaimed values or, at worst, as informed by values that served American interests at the cost of the violent repression of subject populations. Kissinger's stream of analysis of America's role in the World often confuses more than it enlightens as his realism paints a rather grim picture of world politics. For all of its insights and pragmatic uses, the realist paradigm remains highly problematic and demands significant criticism.

Conclusion

There can be no question that the Founders of New England believed in a particularly ardent and religiously based form of American exceptionalism. However, the Puritans' belief that they were forming a Godly nation led them to be especially vigilant in punishing any behavior that called into doubt the proposition that they were God's elect and predestined for salvation. American founding fathers later, while attempting to justify expansionism, viewed the entire continent as destined to fulfill a great role in history. This zenith of exceptional behavior led the United States to appear as the greatest international self-controversial

imperial power of the nineteenth century. In the twentieth century, Woodrow Wilson's systematically exaggerated form of exceptionalism demonstrated the idea to be a self-destructed basis for external intervention. Henry Kissinger, on the other hand, while emphasizing realpolitik as his foreign policy approach, did recognize the legacy of American exceptionalism in policy making decision. Chapter two, therefore, will explore the question of American exceptionalism in Vietnam and signal the exhaustion of its mission in the Vietnam War.

Notes

1. John Winthrop was an effective colonist who served as the governor of Massachusetts Bay in the first half of the 17th century. He proclaimed about “Christian Charity” in a famous sermon preached as the Puritans set off New England. His proclamation is often quoted to invoke an exceptionalist American “City upon a Hill.”

2. Their phraseology often borrowed from Judeo-Christian thought, specifically the Sermon on the Mount: “you are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden.”

3. The Louisiana Purchase was the acquisition by the United States of America of 828,000 square miles (2,140,000 km²) of France’s claim to the territory of Louisiana in 1803. The U.S. paid 60 million francs (\$11,250,000) plus cancellation of debts worth 18 million francs (\$3,750,000), for a total sum of 15 million dollars (less than 3 cents per acre) for the Louisiana territory (less than 42 cents per acre).

4. Advocates of President Thomas Jefferson argue that he was spurred by Spanish presence in the region to move toward the Louisiana Purchase.

5. State of the Union Addresses of President Andrew Jackson can be accessed freely on the website [PRESIDENTIAL RHETORIC.com](http://www.presidentialrhetoric.com). The web address is <http://www.presidentialrhetoric.com/historicspeeches/jackson/stateoftheunion1829.html>

6. Faragher and Hine, on page 249, refer to the campaign against the California Indians as the clearest case of genocide in the history of the American frontier.

7. In her introduction to *Cultures of the United States Imperialism*, Amy Caplan locates the genesis of American Studies on the shores of Africa. In boldly stating that “the field of American studies was conceived on the banks of the Congo,” Kaplan rejects the national parameters Americans have created for themselves, claiming instead that U.S. domestic and foreign policies are inseparable, that “U.S. imperialism is also about consolidating domestic cultures and negotiating international relations” (14). This statement makes it impossible to see the question of slavery in isolation, as not specifically connected to American imperial expansion.

8. Congressional Government is Wilson’s best-known political work. It emerged as a critical description of America’s system, with frequent negative comparisons to Westminster.

9. Having given up his secretary-ship (January, 1795), but still continuing to influence the government as “minister without portfolio,” Hamilton began on 22 July, 1795, a series of papers under the pen name of “Camillus” in support of the Jay Treaty in a series of thirty-eight papers. He brought into action the artillery of his astounding intellect and his papers were more serious, dignified, and thorough in treatment of their subject than some earlier papers with similar titles. They were equally admirable in their closeness of reasoning, wide knowledge, and moderation.

10.”Realpolitik” is defined by Henry Kissinger as “foreign policy based on calculations of power and the national interest” (Diplomacy 137).

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CHAPTER TWO

The Vietnam War: Exceptionalist Values in Crisis

Introduction

Nixon, elected in 1968, promised along with his National Security Adviser-Henry Kissinger- that, despite appearances, America could have both victory and virtue in Vietnam through the Vietnamization of the war. The traditional words of exceptionalism were still spoken, but they were accompanied by new behaviors. In Vietnam, thereupon, America's moral self-confident tradition of exceptionalism would be tested when its exportation of values were reinterpreted abroad as the imposition of peculiarly American values on unwilling foreign peoples. Ironically, at the very time the United States was supposedly seeking a favorable position in Vietnam to stabilize the status quo, its actions would help create disorder and generate revolution in neutral countries of Cambodia and Laos. In this regard, America would be in dire straits. The country would stand at a point where its actions inflicted great injury to its ideals of exceptionalism.

2.1 The Nixon Doctrine: America's Grand Strategy in Asia

In an informal press conference in Guam on the evening of July 25, 1969, Nixon articulated a new "Doctrine" designed to limit American engagement in future wars. This would soon be dubbed the Nixon Doctrine. In essence, he affirmed three points. First, the United States would keep its treaty commitments to allied nations in the Far East, e.g., to those countries that belonged to the Southeast Treaty Organization [SEATO]. Second, the president reaffirmed that the United States would continue to provide a nuclear shield to its allies as well as to governments that were considered necessary to American national security. Third, Nixon said that in the future, when friendly governments were under a military threat, the United States is going to encourage and has the right to expect that the responsibility for

these countries defense be handled by Asian nations themselves (Nixon's *RN* 395). Equally important, the President was signaling to allied nations in Asia and elsewhere that American resources could no longer be viewed as inexhaustible.

This more-limited U.S. role was described by Nixon in the First Annual Report to Congress on U.S. foreign policy for the 1970s, submitted on 18 February, 1970. In this document the president wrote of the Nixon Doctrine: "Its central thesis is that the United States will participate in the defense and development of allies and friends, but that America cannot and will not conceive *all* the plans, design *all* the programs, execute *all* the decisions and undertake all the defense of the free nations of the world. We will help where it makes a real difference and is considered in our interest" (*Public Papers of the Presidents* 116). The general parameters of the doctrine seemed fairly clear. It projected the partial disengagement of American military personnel from Asia in the near future and set clear limits on America's international obligations. The Doctrine's aim was to maintain American commitments abroad while at the same time reducing its direct military involvement. In this sense, the essential ingredient was that the most visible American presence in Asia- almost a million U.S. troops- would be partially reduced.

On July 26, the morning after his press conference, Nixon continued on his journey for brief visits with the heads of state of the Philippines, Indonesia, Thailand, South Vietnam, India, Pakistan, and Romania. On August 3, he began his return to the United States via England, while Henry A. Kissinger, the president's special assistant for national security affairs, flew to Paris to meet with Xuan Thuy, Chief negotiator of the North Vietnamese, on August 4- the first of many, though intermittent, secret meetings Kissinger was to have with North Vietnamese negotiators (Entries for July 23-August 4, 1969, JDHRH).

Kissinger, though familiar with the ideas Nixon had expressed, was initially unhappy. His main concern was that Nixon had made what seemed to some a major policy statement that had not been properly vetted and was sufficiently ambiguous as to create problems for the administration with allies and clients- problems that Kissinger and his staff would have to repair. Years later, Kissinger commented that he did not think that Nixon intended a major policy pronouncement in Guam: “[Nixon’s] original purpose had been to make some news because of the empty period produced by the crossing of the international dateline. That a formal pronouncement was not at first on Nixon’s mind is indicated by the fact that his remarks were made on background” (*White House Years* 224). In other words, at the very moment Nixon announced the doctrine, the measures for which it stood were secondary to others he had in mind for dealing with Asia, and the world.

Nixon wanted not to make policy but to project an image of a foreign-policy leader who was experienced, comprehensive in his thinking, and far-sighted. He needed to reassure the majority of Americans, as well as other allies, especially in Japan and Europe, that he had learned a lesson, namely, that U.S. troops should not again become bogged down so massively in an Asian quagmire, especially one that was not vital to its interests. Above all, he needed to assure voters and European allies that he intended to withdraw from Vietnam and avoid future “Vietnams” while also assuring Asian and other allies and clients in the capitalist-leaning developing world that he was not abandoning U.S. commitments. Later, at his stops in Manila, Jakarta, Bangkok, and Saigon, Nixon was at pains to repeat assurances that the United States would abide by its security commitments, provide assistance against internal threats, and help defend against external ones with new and old strategies (*Public Papers of the Presidents: Nixon, 1969, 557-604*).

But did Nixon practice his Doctrine's principles consistently or even intended to do so when he first announced them? Rejecting the option of withdrawing from the Pacific as did the British and the French, Nixon argued that he was convinced that the way to avoid becoming involved in another war in Asia was for the United States to continue to play a significant role. "We need policies that will see that we play a part and a part that is appropriate to the conditions that we will find" (qtd. in Jeffrey 59+). Partnership based on interests rather than ideology was the heart of the Nixon Doctrine.

Despite new considerations and emphases then, the basic analysis of the situation in Asia, and of America's proper relation to it, has not changed. In his 1967 Foreign Affairs article, Nixon argued that "Both [American] interests and [its] ideals propel [Americans] westward across the Pacific" (qtd. in Sanford 133). He has repeated this as President: "[w]e remain involved in Asia. We are a Pacific power... America... must not withdraw from Asia" ("State of the World," address of February 18, 1970). Departing from his predecessors, Nixon believed that American interests must shape its commitments, rather than the other way around.

Militarily speaking, whatever form the future American military presence was to take in Asia, the essentials of the containment policy remained. Most significantly, the Korean War presumably converted a generation of America's military and political planners to a belief in the absolute necessity of avoiding a land war in Asia. It was Eisenhower himself who, during the Korean War, stated that "If there must be a war there in Asia let it be Asians against Asians" (qtd. in Col. James 22). In this sense, the Nixon Doctrine brought nothing new concerning keeping American commitments in Asia. The doctrine, moreover, did not represent a major shift in U.S. foreign policy: no postwar American administration had ever claimed that it was performing anything other than temporary military tasks within in Asia,

and all have supported huge military investments in Asia in anticipation of that day when Asian allies would be able to shoulder the bulk of the burden themselves. According to a 1969 study by Congressional Quarterly, Inc. (Global Defense: U.S. Military Commitments Abroad), between 1950 and 1968, over \$9.7 billion in military equipment, training, and related support was made available to the countries of East Asia under the Military Assistance Program (MAP), with South Korea (\$2.5 billion) and Taiwan (\$2.4 billion) the major recipients.

Under MAP a total of 107,044 military personnel from East Asia were trained in the United States between 1950 and 1968; these included Korea, Japan, Taiwan, the Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam.

Table 1

Asian Military Personnel Trained in the U.S. 1950-1968

1950-1968	Military Personnel
Korea	28,525
Japan	15,280
Taiwan	23,113
The Philippines	12,217
Thailand	10,136
Vietnam	13,998
Other countries	3,775
Total	107,044

Source: National Diplomacy, 1967-1970 (Congressional Quarterly, May 1970): 28.

All this stimulation has supported healthy or at least military establishments among America's major Asian allies. In the U.S. view, such nations were too small to resist successfully any external threat. Washington's obsession with the Communist bloc convinced Americans that any states in East Asia would need to be contained. Therefore, Washington chose to react with massive military assistance programs.

At the time the President announced his doctrine on Guam, the United States maintained roughly 63,000 troops in Korea, 40,000 in Japan, 45,000 in Okinawa, 10,000 in Taiwan, 30,000 in the Philippines, and 49,000 in Thailand. Another 389,000 were with the Pacific Fleet, with over 200,000 of these in the Western Pacific with the Seventh Fleet (“The United States in Asia.” no.pag) Southeast nations also agreed to make bases available to the United States in implementing its obligations in the region. Thus, the United States would likely have the use of bases in Korea, Japan, Okinawa, Taiwan, the Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam.

Table 2

American Military Bases in Asia 1969

Year 1969	Military Bases
Korea	54
Japan	40
Okinawa	16
Taiwan	3
The Philippines	6
Thailand	7
Vietnam	59

Source: Dower, John. “Ten points of note: Asia and the Nixon Doctrine.” *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars* 4. 2 (1970).

In practice then, the Nixon administration would provide strong military assistance to regional powers that would act as the guarantors of stability in their specific corners of the globe.

While the primary thrust of the doctrine was military, the economic side was not ignored. Economically speaking, the economic interdependence of Japan and Southeast Asia has been one tenet of America’s Asia policy since at least 1950. Consider Vice President Nixon in December 1953:

Why is the United States spending hundreds of millions of dollars supporting the forces of the French Union in the fight against communism? If Indo-China falls, Thailand is put in an almost impossible position. The same is true of Indonesia. If this whole part of Southeast Asia goes under Communist domination or Communist influence, Japan, who trades and must trade with this area in order to exist, must inevitably, be oriented towards the Communist regime. (23 December, 1953)

The Nixon Doctrine denied any intention of reevaluating present American commitments in Asia, and did not pretend to offer a fundamental redefinition of American national interests in the area. Significantly, the economic dimension of the Nixon Doctrine was thus interlocked with both past perceptions and present economic containment policy. Unquestionably, The Nixon Doctrine continued to place unwarranted emphasis on the role of external assistance while its fundamental objectives in Asia remained containment and counterrevolution. Applied to the Vietnam War, the practical application of this doctrine to what remained America's most pressing foreign policy problem would be through the policy of Vietnamization.

2.2 Vietnamization, the Nixon Doctrine for Vietnam.

The Nixon Doctrine was both a key ingredient in Kissinger's global architecture of limiting direct American commitments in disparate regions, and part of the strategy of ending the Vietnam War. In the Indochina theater, Kissinger and Nixon implemented the new doctrine through "Vietnamization," by which means they sought to withdraw American armed forces from Indochina while simultaneously defending South Vietnam, winning the

war, achieving peace, and preserving American “honor” (Kimball 50+). In a 1998 Cold War TV series, episode 16, Melvin Laird, U.S. secretary of defense said that when he became secretary of defense, there were 550,000 men on the ground in Vietnam, another 1,200,000 in Asia, in the Navy and Air Force supporting this operation. It was a big war.

It is of high importance though to note that Vietnamization was not even a Nixon administration invention. It was a topic that candidates and parties discussed during the 1968 election campaign. Further, Richard Nixon’s team secured the White House in 1968 by sabotaging peace talks that might have ended the Vietnam War. In an interview, Jack Valenti, aid to President Johnson, revealed that President Lyndon Johnson heard close to the election time in 1968 that Nixon was telling the South Vietnamese not to make a deal because they would get a better deal under Nixon (Cold War TV series, “Vietnam” 1998). In addition, during the first year of Nixon’s presidency, Nixon and Kissinger expected that the measures they had adopted would force the other side to accept their terms. They did not begin to implement Vietnamization in earnest until many months into Nixon’s presidency, and they did so only after other components of their strategy failed to produce victory.

The plan, then, to withdraw United States combat troops from Vietnam was announced on 8 June, 1969, by the new president Richard Nixon less than six months after taking office. He hoped that this would calm domestic public opinion and silence foreign critics by graphically demonstrating that the U.S was beginning to wind down the war (Boorstein 156). In other words, Nixon sought ways to curb the growing impatience with the war at home by gestures suggesting a reduction of the U.S. military role. Aside from the public relations boost Nixon hoped to receive, he intended his trip to serve several purposes, most of which were related to his evolving strategy for the Vietnam War. Nixon intimated in his 1978 memoir, *RN*, for example, that the trip’s main purpose was to provide “the perfect

camouflage” for Kissinger’s clandestine meeting with the North Vietnamese in early August (394).

On 30 July, meanwhile, following an unannounced flight from Bangkok to Saigon, Nixon met with President Nguyen Van Thieu of South Vietnam to give him the unwelcome news that additional American troop withdrawals would take place in phases according to an American plan whose timetable was supposed to be contingent on the circumstances of the war, but which would prove to be contingent as well on political circumstances in the United States (Memorandum of Conversation, Nixon and Thieu, 30 July, 1969). But on what terms had America real intention to wind down the war? and how to pursue the political goals of Vietnamization? The U.S. Vietnamization plan was basically twofold: the first aspect, Vietnamization of the military side of the war.

Nixon decided in principle on 15 March to pursue Vietnamization. The plan was promoted by Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird and aimed to withdraw American forces slowly, replacing them with well-supplied South Vietnamese. Laird had additionally recommended that the term “Vietnamization” be used to describe withdrawals rather than the negative-sounding “De-Americanization”(Coleman 207). Yet, the term would be a poor one. It implied that the South Vietnamese had been bearing little or no burden in the war which was of course certainly false. Apart from the significance of the term, Vietnamization would be the best way to stop the deterioration in the performance of U.S. forces. Thus, Vietnamization came to stand for two different but related processes: American withdrawals and- in order to counterbalance these withdrawals- the accelerated training, equipping, and enlarging of the South Vietnamese army. This was to mean that the great responsibility of the fighting would be shifted to Saigon’s military establishment and the U.S. military role would be largely one of supply and training.

Implemented only later in the year, an announcement in June that 25,000 U.S. troops would be withdrawn during July, to be replaced by South Vietnamese, marked the beginning of the end of this involvement. The timetable, in turn, would depend on the progress of the peace talks, the scale of enemy activity and progress in the training of South Vietnamese troops. While Laird encouraged stressing the prospects of Vietnamization, it was a disaster from Kissinger's point of view. Kissinger argued that

U.S. policy ran the risk of falling between two stools. With Hanoi we risked throwing away [American] position in a series of unreciprocated concessions. At home, the more we sought to placate the critics, the more we discouraged those who were willing to support a strategy for victory but who could not understand continued sacrifice for something so elusive as honorable withdrawal. (*White House Years* 265)

By this explanation, Kissinger meant that the policy of Vietnamization would inevitably weaken the U.S. bargaining position in negotiations with the North Vietnamese. The policy of withdrawing troops while negotiating for peace was inconsistent since the North Vietnamese had only to wait out the troop withdrawals to achieve its objectives. On the other side, the U.S. was under increasing pressure to reduce its involvement in Southeast Asia. How could one achieve an honorable peace in a situation where the most important part of U.S. leverage in negotiations- the presence of a large number of American troops- was being removed? ¹ Unlike Nixon and Laird, Kissinger believed that the U.S. had to maintain pressure on all fronts to be successful at the negotiating table. The U.S. so far had been unable to compel the North Vietnamese to agree to mutual troop withdrawals even when it had more than a half- million soldiers in South Vietnam. As they started to depart, what incentive would North Vietnam have to agree to American terms?

Controversially though, Kissinger's public views were not dramatically different from those of Laird. In a book published in 1969, Kissinger maintained that "American objectives should be to (a) bring about a staged withdrawal of external forces, North Vietnamese and American, (b) thereby to create a maximum incentive for the contending forces in South Vietnam to work out a political agreement" (*American Foreign Policy* 130). Inevitably then, Vietnamization was to be achieved through a well-equipped South Vietnamese Army (ARVN), massive military aid, and the maintenance of sufficient American air power to prove decisive in any major military encounter between the PRG/ North Vietnamese forces and the ARVN (White 2). The perennial problem was whether the South Vietnamese government was ready to bear the enormous burden or not.

The core of Thieu's system of rule was the vast and complicated structure of military, paramilitary, and police organizations which have been built up since the Tet Offensive in 1968.² The national police and security agencies have been expanded through sizeable commitments of American aid and advisory personnel. The budget for police work would increase for fiscal 1972, although the main U.S. financial commitment was made in 1968 after the Tet Offensive. In 1971, the National Police Force was increased from 80,000 to 122,000 in order to extend the police network down to the village level (White 5-6). The army was the political backbone of the regime because Thieu lacked significant civilian support. It must, though, be understood that the U.S. ability to get so many men into the Saigon army did not in any way represent success in extending Saigon's control (Vinh Long 17). Even if U.S. assistance could at least marginally improve the effectiveness of police, there was no connection between reforming police and reforming Saigon's political system. There was no evidence that reforming the police would lead to a democratic country. Therefore, political reform in Saigon should accompany the military side of Vietnamization. Training a hopelessly corrupt and ineffective South Vietnamese army would not achieve the goals.

Much attention has been paid in the U.S. press to the authoritarian, unrepresentative and corrupt aspects of the Thieu government. The instances of corruption were indicators of the rottenness of the regime. This shows clearly that the policy of Vietnamization continued to offer support to the same type of generally corrupt, exploitative- but pro-American- regimes which the United States has supported in the past. In Indochina, this has been readily apparent in the puppet regime in Saigon. As Nadine Strossen put it: “American diplomats ... around the world have complained that American policies have emboldened dictators everywhere, including in countries where it is strategically important for the United States to advance democracy and human rights” (495+). Stated differently, the United States did not tend to be merely neutral toward authoritarian regimes but has positively aided the dictators. One result of such support has been the release of the feeling of resentment against the United States and its policies in Indochina.

Of equal importance, the role of economic aid and foreign investment in pursuing the political goals of Vietnamization was undeniable. The tasks before the U.S. in the economic realm were basically threefold: (1) to cushion the impact of American military disengagement through increased economic aid; (2) to maintain economic aid at appropriately high levels for the next coming years in the face of political pressures in the United States so as to guarantee the continued economic and political stability of the Thieu government; (3) eventually to reduce the enormous dependence of the South Vietnamese economy on U.S. Government aid by stimulating foreign investment and encouraging exports , and to achieve all three aims without seriously impairing American influence on the policies of the GVN (White 9).

The economic means, thus, were the most important components of the Vietnamization scheme because of U.S. assumptions that an ARVN soldier cannot survive without U.S. pay. But it was precisely here that Nixon and Thieu run into difficulties. Their

design for controlling the ARVN was riddled with economic problems that resulted in concomitant political side-effects (Vinh Long 18). First, the South Vietnamese economy was an artificial one and the continued existence of the Thieu government depended a great deal on the continuation of a high level of economic aid. Second, the increase in the size and training of ARVN required an enormous monetary outlay. So far, this military spending has been met by U.S. money pumped in mostly through the U.S. army. But with the withdrawal of more and more American troops, it would become increasingly difficult for Nixon to justify such large expenditures (Vinh Long 20). Additionally, while it was assumed that Nixon would be able to bring most of the American troops out of Vietnam, the economic situation in Vietnam would make it difficult for Nixon to withdraw them beyond a certain level because of the need to pump aid to the ARVN through the U.S. military.

It was the policy of Vietnamization then that could maintain a major U.S. role in at less cost in both dollars and American lives. This emerged vividly in Ambassador Bunker's notorious comment that Vietnamization simply meant changing "the color of the corpses" (qtd. in Bagby 284). Viewing the issue from a slightly different vantage, former Defense Secretary Clark Clifford informed Congress on January 15, 1969 that "an Asian soldier costs about 1/15 as much as his American counterpart" (qtd. in Michael Klare 1970).

The success of this plan would depend greatly upon the effectiveness of the U.S. Military Assistance Program (MAP) -- a program which embraced military grants, training, and some of the needed weapons, and, in some circumstances, specialized military support. In Laird's words:

The Military Assistance Program is... the key to this approach. It is the essential ingredient of our policy if we are to honor our obligations... a MAP dollar is of far greater value than a dollar spent directly on U.S. forces. (Defense Industry Bulletin, April 1970, 23)

It was crystal clear that the United States was using military assistance as a major instrument of national policy. As the Cold War deepened, the United States sought to contain both the Soviet Union and China and prevent them from dominating Asian resources. Thus, the overriding purpose was to preserve political stability in Asia, in which the United States had important economic and strategic interests. National interest then, not only military necessity, justified American measures of assistance.

The proposal to disengage from Asia militarily was itself highly qualified. In the first place, the emphasis thus far has been placed primarily on ground combat troops, while support forces, particularly the devastating aviation units, would continue to be maintained in Asia indefinitely. This has been openly acknowledged. Melvin Laird explained in late March that “[America would] seek to help... allies develop the capability to defend themselves with the United States providing material and logistic support” (Defense Industry Bulletin, April 1970, 21). Certainly, the American military would benefit through training in new environments and building relations with their Asian counterparts. On the other side, the Asian countries would benefit through receiving American training and assistance.

Vietnamization also amounted to an attempt to provide an American logistical and air power substitute for U.S. troops. Dr. John S. Foster Jr., Director of Defense Research and Engineering, noted that each few years often saw a tenfold improvement in military electronics technology. With these advances, “flexibility of installation and operation and increased survivability [would] also be realized... greater power output [would] be possible

with reduced power consumption” (Defense Industry Bulletin, May 1970).³ It has become clear without doubt that the use of technology was absolutely essential to national security. In providing tactical air support to ground forces, the Nixon administration was convinced that air power might assure political results. More bluntly, one can afford to disengage combat forces because they were no longer the big killers. While recognizing this, however, it still could be argued that even without the policy of Vietnamization, the logic of increasingly sophisticated military technology would have dictated a gradual disengagement of American manpower from Asia.

Finally, while soldiers were paid outrageously insufficient salaries, the Thieu regime was making them take higher and higher casualties through the operations they were forced to carry out. The militarization side of the war meant returning combat to the South Vietnamese army. It called for turning the war over to them (Haas 78). According to 29 January, 1972 Duoc Nha Nam Newspaper, an average of 326 ARVN soldiers were killed and 824 wounded per week during the previous three months. All this was done in the name of protecting the “pacification program” and “the security of the remaining American troops while . . . withdrawing” (Vinh Long 19). What was important to the Administration and military was the capability of killing more at less cost and less loss of American lives (Dower 57). At this point, many Vietnamese asked: “Are the foreign troops fighting to protect us, or are we fighting to protect them?” As Vietnamese did more of the fighting, the intensity of the civil war was increased and Vietnamese were killing each other in increasing numbers.

The Vietnamese came to conclude that Vietnamization was a foreign-directed, massively financed and multi-faceted coercive program. The primary purposes of this program were political rather than developmental, and the major impetus for pushing them was the desire to eradicate PRG support rather than a genuine attempt to lay the basis for

sustained economic development and social justice. On the American side, Vietnamization was not the main component of the whole strategy. The shrinking deployment of personnel in South Vietnam did not equate with a decline in the U.S. military contribution to the war. Thus, Vietnamization would primarily serve the political purpose of buying time on the home front for the other elements of the strategy to take effect. Nixon and Kissinger secretly valued other, more militant approaches.

2.3 Expanding the War Geographically:

a) The Cambodian Incursion

Although Kissinger knew that Vietnamization was an essential component of a White House strategy he had been instrumental in fashioning, he was convinced that other components of the strategy were more likely to coerce the other side into compromising on the terms Nixon and he wanted. He was a reliable backer of Nixon's forceful measures and madman theory threats. So Nixon developed a strategy of placating the anti-war movement while trying to coerce Hanoi into an agreement on U.S. terms. While narrowing the war on the ground by bringing troops home, Nixon would actually expand the war with an incredible bombing campaign that, on average, dropped a ton of bombs each minute on Vietnam between 1969 and early 1973 (Genovese 119).

Controversially then, Nixon talked peace, but in March 1969 ordered the secret bombing of "communist sanctuaries" in Cambodia, a neutral country which had managed to stay out of the war for the previous five years (Schulzinger 292). Codenamed MENU, the barrage of raids had both a military and a political-diplomatic objective. Nixon's military justification for bombing the Cambodian sanctuaries was to prevent a PAVN thrust against Saigon and to cause severe damage to the Ho Chi Minh Trail, the enemy's main infiltration route that ran south from North Vietnam through Laos and Cambodia to South Vietnam.

MENU was also undertaken to destroy the Central Office for South Vietnam (COSVN), the headquarters of the Communists' operation in the South that were, according to U.S. intelligence sources, based in Cambodia.⁴

But the purpose of the bombing was not just to hit North Vietnamese supply lines. Nixon's real reason for approving it was, on the one hand, to achieve Washington's long-time goal of placing the United States in a favorable negotiating position, and thus terrify Hanoi into peace on his terms (Donaldson 121). On the other hand, it was to convince the Saigon government that the Nixon administration was not going soft on the enemy and was even willing to escalate the war if necessary. Nixon signaled Hanoi that the United States was still committed to the war.

Beginning on 18 March 1969, 3,600 B-52 sorties dropped, for 14 months, some 110,000 tons of bombs against suspected "Communist" base areas in Cambodia. The first phase was known as "Breakfast", followed in succession by "Lunch", "Snack", "Dinner", "Dessert" and "Supper". Taken together the operation was known as Menu. It was a real Menu of bombardment, indeed. Its hallmark was secrecy; this was important for two reasons. First, the domestic body politic was likely to have no appetite for MENU. Most Americans would be outraged if Nixon's secret plan to end the war turned out to be a euphemism for expanding it. Second, the operational effectiveness of the bombing would be reduced with advance notice (Lafeber 641). Menu, for these reasons, was kept from the American public and, significantly, from much of the U.S. government, but not from the unarmed innocent Southeast Asians who were the targets.

The raids were flown by B-52 bombers, which, it is important to note, fly at an altitude too high to be observed from the ground and carry immense tonnages of high explosive; they give no warning of approach and are incapable of accuracy or discrimination. On 9 May,

1969, a New York Times article reported that American B-52s had been conducting raids in Cambodia. Democratic Senator J. William Fulbright from Arkansas agreed with the Washington Post that Nixon had become “the greatest bomber of all time” (Hanhimäki 45-6). Despite the partial success of the bombing, both Kissinger and Nixon showed their amorality and putative abandonment of traditional notions about American exceptionalism and national mission.

The Cambodian intervention endangered a number of the Nixon administration’s foreign policy moves. For one, there would be a long halt in the Kissinger–Tho meetings as the North Vietnamese protested the invasion as a sign of American duplicity. In February 1970 Kissinger met with Le Duc Tho in Paris in the first of a series of secret meetings that went through April and ended with no breakthroughs (Donaldson 124). Kissinger’s threats were often blunt. The North’s government continued to refuse to accept a divided Vietnam. The air strikes forced the Communists farther inside Cambodia, the nation became more unstable, and the Cambodian government became an increasing problem to the U. S. action there. Kissinger’s delight would turn to frustration as the bombing campaigns had seemingly little impact on Hanoi’s position.

Extensive American bombing campaigns drew Cambodia deeper into the morass of the Vietnam War. In spite of this, Prince Sihanouk, Cambodia’s chief of state, still wished to retain a semblance of a relationship with the United States in case he needed external support against the North Vietnamese. Additionally, Sihanouk tried to position himself in a non-committal diplomatic position by re-establishing diplomatic relations with the United States in June 1969 and allowing the National Liberation Front (NLF) to have an embassy in Cambodia (Hanhimäki 71-2). Yet, as the Cambodian ruler had maintained close ties with Beijing, America was not to tolerate him.

On 18 March, 1970, while the prince was out of the country, a group of right-wing military officers, led by General Lon Nol, overthrew Prince Norodom Sihanouk. Sihanouk, who was in Moscow trying to recruit Soviet help in pressing the North Vietnamese to reduce their operations in Cambodia, had few places to turn to for help (Hanhimäki 72). Despite some cooperation with Sihanouk in 1969, the CIA established ties with more reliable proxies in Phnom Penh, and then pretended to be surprised when Lon Nol ousted Sihanouk in 1970 (Haas 79). In fact, the Nixon administration was delighted to see him go. The administration's actions immediately after the coup also made it clear that Lon Nol was welcomed as an American asset.

There is no evidence that the United States had any complicity in the Cambodian coup, although it came at a very convenient time for the Nixon administration and Lon Nol was a clear U. S. ally who was eager to allow the United States to begin the bombing of Viet Cong bases in his country. Sihanouk took refuge in Beijing and from there he worked to build a coalition with the Cambodian Left, the Khmer Rouge (Donaldson 122). By late 1970, those forces had grown until they spread over at least one-third of Cambodia. By early 1974, they controlled the entire country. In the coming weeks the United States extended recognition to Lon Nol, launched a military and aid program to Cambodia, and even authorized South Vietnamese troops, with U.S. air support, to attack North Vietnamese sanctuaries in Cambodia in late March (Hanhimäki 72).

But how far should the exceptionalist country go in supporting the new Cambodian regime? The new regime was corrupt and incompetent. Its government, which was violently anti-Vietnamese, soon ordered the withdrawal of NLF and North Vietnamese units from Cambodian base camps built along the RVN border during Sihanouk's rule (Lafeber 641). This demand only triggered widespread fighting between strong Vietnamese formations and

Cambodia's poorly trained army. The escalating violence presented the Americans with an opportunity to strike at strongholds that had troubled their forces for years (Morgan 141). National interest then, rather than fostering American ideals of exceptionalism, made the Nixon administration embrace without visible disgust the new government in Cambodia.

In addition, Nixon and Kissinger had their own unique perspectives on each part of the strategy. Kissinger was not as interested in morality as in creating a new international balance of power to secure lasting world peace. He did not shrink from the use of force and remained convinced that air power would carry the day. Privately, Nixon valued big military operations more than the Nixon Doctrine, as evidenced by a comment he made to Kissinger in the Oval Office on 27 April, 1970, shortly before his invasion of Cambodia: "Looking back on the past year we have been praised for all the wrong things: Okinawa, SALT, germs, Nixon Doctrine. Now finally [we are] doing the right thing."⁵ (Entries for 8 and 11 October, 1969 and 27 April, 1970, JDHRH)

In April 1970, there were still 429,900 U.S. troops in South Vietnam. That month, Nixon announced the unilateral withdrawal of 150,000 men from Vietnam over the next year. This made sense domestically as it helped defuse the peace movement, but it conceded to the DRV the one thing it wanted most in negotiations: the removal of U.S. ground troops. Hanoi was confident that with American forces gone it could easily defeat ARVN (Tucker 158). However, American efforts to end the war in Vietnam took an ominous turn.

After weeks of heated debate among his advisers, the United States chose to widen the war by elevating military criteria for intervention. Nixon thus seized the chance and launched an invasion of eastern Cambodia on 30 April, 1970, to destroy the camps of some 40,000 Communists. The argument was simple: before large numbers of American troops were withdrawn, U.S. and South Vietnamese troops needed to eliminate Hanoi's supply sanctuaries

and to destroy North Vietnamese troops lurking in the Cambodia (Lafeber 641). Stated differently, to achieve Vietnamization, drawing Cambodia into the war was not an unfortunate side effect, but a necessary component of that policy so long as the North Vietnamese relied on Cambodian base areas.

In fact, the invasion gained little militarily. North Vietnamese troops retreated westward, spreading the war into central Cambodia. The invasion thus had widened the conflict and now the U. S. government was responsible for a larger, more expensive, and more complicated war. As the new pro-American regime showed little strength, Washington had to keep the government of Lon Nol propped up in Cambodia against the growing Khmer Rouge forces supported by Hanoi and Beijing (Donaldson 125). Nixon resumed heavy bombing of North Vietnam to warn Hanoi what would happen if it launched an all-out attack against the Saigon government. But the invasion failed. Ultimately, U.S. and South Vietnamese troops could not find and destroy the Communist forces (Lafeber 641). The search for the communist headquarters in Cambodia proved elusive.

Moreover, the inevitable end result of intensified fighting was increased military and civilian casualties. Although no accurate figures have ever been confirmed, estimates of Cambodian deaths in 1970–73 vary between 100,000 and 300,000. Another 1.7 million Cambodians perished (Hanhimäki 78). Civilian population then was exposed to indiscriminate lethal force, in which the customary laws of war and neutrality were violated. The North Vietnamese, astonishingly, were not losing the war and held important cards at the negotiating table. As a result, Kissinger's hopes for a negotiated settlement were extremely slight. The United States could not fold under pressure from Hanoi, which was what Tho was effectively demanding (Hanhimäki 69-70). The emptiness of Kissinger's threats only served to embolden

Le Duc Tho to demand a full united Vietnam. More badly, the raids in Cambodia were not to be kept secret as Melvin Laird, U.S. secretary of state, stated,

I was all for bombing the sanctuaries in Cambodia but I could not tell the president of the United States, the secretary of state or the national security adviser, Henry Kissinger, that I could keep it secret... I thought it would be a very bad thing if that came out at a later time. And I knew it would- because we had 12,000 people that had all the information and you just can't keep secrets. (Cold War "TV series" episode 16 1998)

Melvin Laird was right. The public reaction against the invasion was fierce and widespread and shocked the administration. The incursion made no sense to college students, who started a wave of protests around the country; as the historian Melvin Small put it: "No single event so inflamed the college campuses as the Cambodian invasion" (qtd. in Hanhimäki 78). The most famous result of the uproar was the May 4 killing of four students at Kent State University; four days later a similar incident occurred at Jackson State University in Mississippi.

The Cambodian campaign, known as a "sideshow" set off new protests in the United States and heated up again the war at home beyond anything the president expected. The new expansion of the war brought a fresh outburst of opposition and produced another round of demonstrations on university campuses. Nixon's comment about "bums blowing up campuses" was published and further encouraged the already outraged protesters (Coleman 208). Students at 448 colleges declared themselves on strike. The most violent of the campus protests occurred on 4 May, 1970, when four unarmed students were killed in a skirmish between the Ohio National Guards and antiwar protesters at Kent State University in Ohio. A few days later, police fired at students protesting against war and racism at Jackson State

University in Mississippi, leaving two dead and 12 wounded. Nixon's main goal was to convince his opponents that domestic disorder had not weakened the resolve, military or diplomatic, of the United States (Nelson 42+). One way of accomplishing that goal was to numb the roots of urban race riots and student protests.

On May 9, the biggest student strike in U.S. history followed. Over 250,000 demonstrators descended on Washington, and across the country campuses shut down. Clark Kerr, who chaired a Carnegie Commission study on higher education, reported that 89 percent of all independent universities and 76 percent of all public universities held demonstrations (Genovese 52). Public pressure on Nixon was enormous. The American people expressed outrage that Cambodia, a country that had never harmed the United States, was a victim of so much immoral destruction, whereas Nixon's imagination went out of control when he later sought to justify his action by claiming that the Communist resistance in Cambodia was highly organized by 1970, that there was a firm alliance between Hanoi and Pol Pot, that the Lon Nol era brought peace, and similar errors of fact. Nixon also noted that the Prince permitted some U.S. military operations inside Cambodia in 1969, as they attacked enemies of his regime, but he never approved of indiscriminate bombing (Haas 78). Yet even if Prince Sihanouk were not adverse to the United States crossing the border to pursue the North Vietnamese, he could not give permission to an American invader to violate principles of war. Nor, for that matter, could he give permission to the Americans to kill large numbers of the Cambodian population.

Meanwhile, it was up to Congress to reassert the dedication to foreign policy morality they liked to believe had traditionally imbued American statecraft. Nixon and Kissinger did not like either members of Congress or the general public meddling in their calculated maneuvering. But failure in Vietnam intensified executive and congressional battles over war

powers. The Vietnam debate enlarged and encouraged congressional participation in the foreign policy process, a long overdue adjustment to the use and abuse of executive power in this field since 1945 (Florig 162). The antiwar movement in Congress, galvanized by Nixon's invasion of Cambodia, reached a climax, for Nixon and Kissinger valued secrecy and deception as great assets in their foreign policy and Congress had been left in the dark about the bombing of Cambodia for over a year. When Nixon moved to widen the ground war in early 1970 without congressional approval, the reaction in Congress was not surprising; It had been excluded from a major decision, and again the question of who has the power to make war, the president or Congress, came up for debate.

Undoubtedly, Congress lost patience with the administration over a war that, instead of winding down, was spreading. Sixteen years after the United States had become enmeshed in Southeast Asia, Congress, for the first time, had been able to find the votes to limit the president's power to make war in the region (Lafeber 642). It protested the usurpation by the President of its war making powers and took steps to tie his hands. From 1970-1972 the House and Senate considered a number of resolutions either limiting or eliminating the president's capacity to make war in Southeast Asia (Woods 10). Not surprisingly, in June 1970, the Senate passed the Cooper-Church Amendment (sponsored by Senators John Sherman Cooper and Frank Church) which demanded that Nixon remove all U.S. troops from Cambodia by July 1. The amendment also forbade the use of U.S. troops outside South Vietnam's borders, and threatened to cut off funds for American operations in Cambodia after June 30 (Small 201). It was the first time that Congress had ever imposed such a requirement on a president during a war. Battle thus was joined over whether Congress or the president would control the moral high ground of foreign policy, and thereby set the broad parameters for U.S. engagement in world affairs.

The vehement popular and Congressional opposition now cut short the Cambodian invasion. Repeatedly in the following months, fear of the political consequences restrained Nixon from trying to use massive bombing and blockade to end the war without a U.S. defeat (Boorstein 159). By the end of 1970, as the United States was not able to force the Communists out of the South, the plan for ending the war was failing miserably. Indeed, Kissinger's promotion of realpolitik was not enough. It certainly did not engage the broader American public and Congress, who wanted and often required a larger purpose as a prerequisite for supporting foreign policy. The result was that a narrow realism could not be sustained by a country and a people that were uncomfortable with realpolitik and pride themselves on their morality and their exceptionalism. By early 1971, though, Kissinger still believed that it was necessary to continue with military pressure. But the target was changing. Instead of Cambodia, the next show of force came in Laos.

b) Targeting Laos

To appease his critics Nixon was forced to accelerate the troop withdrawals throughout 1971. By the end of the year another 100,000 had been brought home, leaving only 175,000 U. S. soldiers in Vietnam. But at the same time, Nixon began heavy bombing attacks against the North and against Viet Cong sanctuaries in Laos. Unlike in the case of the Cambodian bombings, Kissinger had pressed for and Nixon had agreed to make the Laotian bombings public.

Nixon initially authorized Operation Lam Son 719 against Laos on 18 January, 1971. The plan had two objectives. First, Nixon's motive was to disrupt Communist supply lines in the North and along the Ho Chi Minh Trail in Cambodia and Laos in an attempt to buy time for Vietnamization (Donaldson 126). Second, it was, at its most optimistic, an attempt to sever the trail by moving a force west, along to Tchepone, a village in southern Laos. If the

effort succeeded, the flow of the North Vietnamese troops and materiel would be reduced if not cut off (Earl 128). In short, an attack on North Vietnam's supply routes in Laos, would hamper the North Vietnamese ability to send troops and materials to the South and thus buy more time for Vietnamization.

Additionally, both the president and his National Security adviser had been enthusiastic about Lam Son 719 because they were convinced that superior firepower, particularly air power, would be decisive. Thus, this time, unlike in Cambodia, the ARVN was on its own. No American troops, not even advisers or forward air guides, could accompany the South Vietnamese (Earl 128). The Cooper-Church amendment, passed on 29 December, 1970, forbade the use of Americans in Laos or Cambodia. Kissinger was fully optimistic that a turning point in Vietnam was finally at hand (Haldeman Diaries, 287-8, January 26, 1971).

Nevertheless, after 36,000 ARVN troops crossed the border into Laos on 8 February, 1971, Kissinger's hopes were quickly dashed. On February 11, the incursion, though, was heavily supported by U.S. aircraft, artillery, and helicopters, the South Vietnamese had moved only 12 miles into Laos. Then the North Vietnamese counterattacked. Their response was rapid and violent. Using the jungle for concealment, the NVA surrounded many of the ARVN firebases (Johnson 63+). The South Vietnamese quickly went from the offensive to the defensive. In their fire support bases, ARVN units were vulnerable to concerted attacks by the PAVN (Earl 128-9). The North Vietnamese were ready to take on American air power in Laos. As they did in the North, the PAVN relied on anti-aircraft artillery and heavy machine guns to gain air deniability.

Lam Son 719 turned into an utter disaster. The ARVN took a month to get to its target Tchepone. Once there, the troops found themselves trapped and President Thieu ordered an

immediate withdrawal. This turned into a nightmare as the enemy attacked those troops using the roads; many had to be airlifted by U.S. helicopters (Hanhimäki 113). By March 24, the last ARVN units were out of Laos and Lam Son 719 was over.

In about seven weeks of operations, Lam Son 719 had been as frustrating as it was ambiguous in its outcome. Losses, however, were certainly heavy. Officially, ARVN casualties were listed at 5,000 killed and wounded—a casualty rate of nearly 50 percent. Additionally, 137 Americans were killed and 818 wounded. At least 108 American helicopters were destroyed and other 618 were damaged, many seriously. Seven fixed-wing Air Force planes were shot down (Earl, 133). Army personnel casualties were also high: 65 U.S. helicopter crewmen were killed in action, 818 wounded, and 42 went missing in action. These losses were inflicted by optically directed small arms, RPGs, heavy antiaircraft machine guns, as well as 23-mm and 37-mm antiaircraft guns (Johnson 63+). Importantly, in 1971 the NVA did not have shoulder-fired missiles. The bad news was that intense small arms fire used in Lam Son 719 drove off an entire regiment of very expensive, sophisticated attack aircraft.

It was clear by the end of the operation that Laos became a case study of how bombing did not have the desired effect on peasant revolutionary forces. Lam Son 719 was yet another in a series of misguided efforts to find some sort of a military solution to the war. It did not meet any of its military objectives. The attacks only produced thousands of dead Laotians and hundreds of thousands of desperate refugees (Lafeber 643). The problem again was not indiscriminate use of firepower but a problem of quite discriminating use—as a matter of policy in populated areas. Consequently, refugee generation was only one deliberate consequence of the bombing of the 250,000 people who then inhabited the provinces through which the Ho Chi Minh Trail ran. Fatalities certainly increased as the bombing spread westward over even

more populated zones in both Laos and Cambodia (Littauer and Norman 69-75). While Hanoi's losses were high, they were certainly well worth the cost of defending its logistical pipeline. After April, 1971, the North Vietnamese were reasonably certain that the ARVN would not attempt another stab at the Ho Chi Minh Trail.

A year after the invasion of Cambodia hastened the destruction of that country; the United States helped the Vietnamese army move into another neutral neighbor, Laos, in May 1971. By expanding the territory in Laos under its control, the pro-Communist groups held more of Laos than before. Soon this arsenal would be moving along the secured and expanded logistical network in Laos.

Accordingly, Lam Son 719 marked a transition in the war. It ended in a disorderly withdrawal. An additional 60,000 American troops left South Vietnam during the two months of Lam Son 719. Nixon, later, announced that between May and December 1971, an additional 100,000 Americans would be brought home. By the end of the year, Nixon would have reduced the number of U.S. forces in Vietnam by two-thirds since he took office (from 540,000 to roughly 180,000). Kissinger's conclusion was upbeat: [Lam Son 719] was far from devastating to the North Vietnamese (*White House Years* 1003).

The invasion of Laos in February 1971 did not go well for the Americans or the South Vietnamese army and government. What it really demonstrated to the world was a glaring lack of leadership on the part of the South Vietnamese, and an exercise of exceptional irresponsible power with devastating human consequences that prevented the achievement of professed U.S goals in Vietnam.

2.4 1972: The Bitter End

a) 1972 Easter Invasion and Linebacker I

Vietnam was, in fact, high on the agenda in early 1972. In January, Nixon had made public the existence of secret negotiations in Paris to shore up his political position in an election year. The president did make an announcement of another set of troop withdrawals on January 13, promising that by 1 May, 1972, American troops would be down to 69,000 from the high of 540,000 three years earlier (Boorstein 161). Clearly, Nixon and Kissinger hoped to portray themselves before the people of the United States as architects of world peace who could be trusted to end the war in Vietnam. On January 25, Nixon spoke on national TV about his latest plan for peace in Vietnam. He summarized the American proposals:⁶

If the enemy rejects our offer to negotiate, we shall continue our program of ending American involvement in the war by withdrawing our remaining forces as the South Vietnamese develop the capacity to defend themselves. If the enemy's answer to our peace offer is to step up their military attacks, I shall fully meet my responsibility as the Commander in Chief of our Armed forces to protect our remaining troops. (Public Papers of the Presidents, 1972, p100-5)

On January 31, the North Vietnamese responded to Nixon's speech by publicizing their nine-point proposal of June 26, 1971, which Xuan Thuy had presented to Kissinger in Paris. It included two points that the United States could never, formally, accept: reparations payments to North Vietnam and an end to U.S. support of President Thieu's government (Hanhimäki 190). On the morning of 30 March, 1972, while Nixon, Kissinger, and Haldeman were discussing the Moscow summit, an aide brought in a note. It had a simple, shocking, yet

not entirely unexpected message: the DRV forces had crossed the demilitarized zone into South Vietnam. The Spring Offensive had begun (Haldeman Diaries, 434, 30 March, 1972).

With optimistic goals similar to the Tet Offensive of early 1968, North Vietnam struck hard at American and ARVN forces throughout South Vietnam. It was their chance to show the world that their fighting ability was still well intact, and to show the American public by defeating ARVN troops in the field that the policy of Vietnamization had failed and that the time had come to negotiate seriously for a U. S. withdrawal (Donaldson 130). Employing its growing arsenal of armor and artillery, the North Vietnamese Army achieved stunning early victories facilitated by ineffective resistance by South Vietnamese forces (Benson 49+). In response, ARVN performed poorly in almost every sector of the North Vietnamese advance. As American military manpower in Vietnam at the end of March 1972 stood at 95,000, less than 20 percent of the peak of three years before, it appeared that the South Vietnamese Army and Air Force would have to shoulder the brunt of the attack, as they had, in fact, been supplying most of the combat power in South Vietnam in the previous months (Grinter 52). It became obvious within hours that the South Vietnamese could not defend against North Vietnamese entire army.

The year, then, began with a massive North Vietnamese assault that threatened the survival of the southern regime. Yet the North's advances gradually stalled because of logistical shortcomings, tactical mistakes, and most significantly powerful and brutal weapons that its Politburo, on the eve of operations, had feared might be used by the United States (Benson, 49+). With time seemingly running out, President Nixon decided to provide massive reinforcement for the South Vietnamese in the form of air power. As Haldeman recorded in his diaries, Nixon considered the situation "a do-or-die proposition." He felt "very strongly that we've got to make an all-out effort" (438).

Consequently, 1972 saw some of the most dramatic uses of air power in the entire war. United States Air Force and Navy air elements returned to the theater with dramatic vengeance in the spring of 1972 to retaliate against North Vietnam's attempt to conquer South Vietnam in a mass invasion. Unexpectedly, to make things worse for Kissinger, the city of Quang Tri fell to the North Vietnamese on 1 May, 1972 (Hanhimäki -213). Additionally, his meetings with Le Duc Tho and Xuan Thuy were, by all accounts, a disaster. It was becoming a desperate time for Nixon and Kissinger. Kissinger, given the events in South Vietnam, had no real sticks or carrots. Nixon, with both Kissinger's and Haig's support, decided in favor of bombing and mining as deciding factors in preventing the fall of South Vietnam. On May 8, the United States launched its new military reprisal, code-named Linebacker I. It had been an interdiction campaign directed against supply routes throughout North Vietnam. U.S. forces began mining Haiphong harbor. Simultaneously, the bombing of Hanoi was enhanced. As Nixon himself declared, he was now ready "to go for broke and bring the enemy to his knees" (Hersh 506).

During the next several weeks, the U.S dropped over 200,000 tons of bombs on Vietnam (Brigham 103). Only a handful of B-52s were to be used, mostly in the South. Yet, they never really had to fight their way through an aircraft defense. American General Vogt declared, "More damage was done to the North Vietnamese lines of communications during Linebacker than during all our previous efforts." He claimed that U.S. aircraft destroyed almost all fixed oil storage facilities and 70 percent of the electric power generating capacity in NVN, meaning that nearly all of Hanoi's portable generated power had to go to military use. In addition, the psychological effect was great because 20-40 percent of Hanoi residents had to be evacuated (qtd. in Clodfelter 173).

Without doubt, U.S. air power played a decisive role in preventing a Southern defeat in 1972. Linebacker I was a good example of the effectiveness of air power. Further, it took considerable pressure off the ARVN forces. Nixon and Kissinger hoped to force Hanoi to come at last to terms (*White House Years* 1109, 1116). In spite of their losses, the NVA made important gains: They held much of the countryside in South Vietnam. Territory controlled by the North Vietnamese in South Vietnam rose from 3.7 per cent in February to 9.7 per cent in July. Intense ground fighting continued throughout the summer all over South Vietnam (qtd. In Clodfelter 204). Hanoi believed it was now in a stronger bargaining position at Paris.

b) Bombs for Peace

Problems still existed. In mid-summer, Kissinger had been singularly unsuccessful in making any significant progress in his negotiations with the North Vietnamese. On July 19, Kissinger returned to Paris with a mandate to negotiate a peace agreement prior to the November presidential election (Hanhimäki 227). On the other side, the North Vietnamese feared that a reelected Nixon might find in his mandate the incentive he needed to begin a major offensive against the North or to resume a major bombing campaign. For the leaders in Hanoi, a pre-election agreement might be the best agreement they would get (Donaldson 130).

On September 26, Kissinger and Tho were engaged in their latest tête-à-tête in the outskirts of Paris. What Tho had to propose met, in Kissinger's mind, Nixon's basic demands. Kissinger presented North Vietnam with the most comprehensive plan for peace yet placed on the table: In exchange for U. S. prisoners of war, Kissinger agreed to withdraw all U. S. troops from Vietnam within seven months after the signing of a cease-fire (Donaldson 130). Finally having achieved Washington's retreat on the issue of withdrawing its forces, on 8 October, Tho agreed for the first time that the Thieu government could remain (Tucker 171). This simple agreement was an abandonment of the long-standing American demand for a

withdrawal of combat troops from both sides. “The political structure of South Vietnam,” Kissinger wrote in his memoirs, “was left to the Vietnamese to settle” (*White House Years* 1345). For the first time the United States agreed to allow North Vietnamese troops to remain in the South after the U. S. withdrawal. Most significantly, the ceasefire-in-place legitimized the PRG's political control of large parts of the South.

The snag in the negotiations arose from objections by South Vietnamese President Thieu to a peace settlement which would have the United States remove the last of its troops while the North Vietnamese agreed only not to introduce any new forces in the South. Thieu was now convinced that he had been sold in Paris. He was determined to resist. In his memoirs, Kissinger wrote that his “strategy was working everywhere with dazzling success, except with our own allies in Saigon.” His people, Thieu added, would assume that accepting the right of the North Vietnamese to remain in the South meant “that we have been sold out by the U.S. and that North Vietnam has won the war” (*White House Years* 1388, 1391–2). Thieu correctly recognized that the agreement was South Vietnam's death warrant.

But the Nixon administration was not required to withdraw support from the Thieu government. Nixon quietly let the South Vietnamese leader know that if he did not endorse the accords, the United States would cut off aid (Woods 9). The United States had separated the military from the political aspects of the war by permitting the North Vietnamese and the Provisional Revolutionary Government (the new name for the National Liberation Front) to work out the best deal they could with the Thieu government (Schulzinger 302). The North Vietnamese, believing that peace was at hand, told their cadres in the South to occupy as much land as they could in anticipation of a coming agreement that would allow them to remain in control of the territory they possessed at the cease-fire. In an effort to force Nixon's

hand, the North Vietnamese revealed the secret record of the negotiations. They demanded that the agreement be signed on October 31 (Haldeman Diaries, 523, 26 October, 1972).⁷

This publication of the agreements required an immediate response. In a press conference that same day Kissinger made perhaps the most famous and soon-to-be most controversial of his public comments (Hanhimäki 250). Voters were heartened by Henry Kissinger's announcement on October 26 just a week before the election that he had arranged a settlement with the new negotiator for North Vietnam, Le Duc Tho. "Peace is at hand", Kissinger assured (qtd. in Genovese 55). In November, Nixon won a decisive victory over South Dakota Senator George McGovern. He carried every state but Massachusetts and captured nearly 61 percent of the vote

Unfortunately for Kissinger, as Hanoi refused an early return to the negotiation table the following day, this premature announcement blew up in his face. The "at hand" would turn out to become a rather lengthy period, eventually almost three months, causing critics to brand his statement as a pre-election gimmick (Hanhimäki, 250-1). In fact, Kissinger was only announcing the result of a secret diplomacy that had slaughtered innumerable victims known and unknown in Indochina.

Kissinger's counterpart, Le Duc Tho, head negotiator for the North Vietnamese Communists, relayed that peace was indeed at hand-under their terms or there would be no peace at all. On 13 December negotiations in Paris, which had resumed in early November, broke down. Furious, President Richard Nixon quickly dispatched an ultimatum to Hanoi demanding it return to the bargaining table within 72 hours "or else" (Hemingway 26+). The North Vietnamese refused. Unfortunately for Hanoi, Nixon was not bluffing. He had a bold plan to force Hanoi back to the talks. Two weeks after Nixon's landslide re-election, the White House was planning the most intensive bombing raids of the war. Intent upon

punishing Hanoi for its perceived intransigence and weakening its military capabilities, the Nixon administration decided on 18 December, 1972, to step up the pressure and unleashed a massive eleven-day bombing campaign (Hanhimäki 253).

The key objective of Linebacker II, according to internal instructions, was to make a “psychological impression” on northern morale. It was not conducted for anything that could be described as military reasons. The bombings focused heavily on the key areas near Hanoi and Haiphong. Linebacker II targets included storage and supply complexes, railroad yards, trans-shipment points, repair facilities along the northwest and northeast rail lines, and communication installations (Hemingway 26+). The B-52s would hit targets within ten miles of Hanoi. They would also make night raids to force the populace to seek shelter during sleeping hours, increasing the psychological discomfort and reducing the threat of MIG attacks (Clodfelter 184-5). Kissinger, once bombing began, appeared, at least within the confines of the White House, happy with Nixon’s policy of “brutal unpredictability” (Haldeman Diaries, 679, 18 December, 1972). The Christmas bombings also were received with some delight in Saigon. In a sense, the bombings were aimed at convincing President Thieu that the agreement that was still in the making, while not perfect, would not diminish American military support for his government.

Linebacker II lasted a mere 12 days, but in terms of firepower and destruction, it was awesome and devastating. In all, the B52s flew over 700 sorties against thirty-four targets with the tactical aircraft logging over 1,000 missions. The United States dropped more tons of bombs than had been dropped in the entire 1969 to 1971 periods. A total of 15,000 tons of ordnance was dropped, destroying or crippling 1,600 military installations, 372 pieces of rolling stock, 80% of Hanoi’s electric generating power reducing power generation from 115,000 kilowatts to 29,000 (Mets 98). More dramatically, U.S. sources determined that

civilian casualties had been relatively low. Figures, in fact, were several multiples of that. North Vietnamese sources claimed nearly two thousand civilians died under American bombs and much of the Kham Thien district of Hanoi was destroyed (Brigham 111). In addition, the widespread use of toxic chemicals created a massive health crisis that naturally fell most heavily on children, nursing mothers, and the aged. As it turned out, there were no enemy air defenses. As one participant, Capt. John R. Allen, affirmed in a subsequent interview with Col. Mark Clodfelter, “By the tenth day there were no missiles, there were no MiGs...there was no threat. It was easy pickings” (189). The locust years ended as they had begun-with a display of aggression and deceit.

In the U.S., the Christmas bombing provoked a strong reaction. In Congress, senators voted overwhelmingly to condemn the bombings and to end American involvement in Vietnam through legislation (The Vietnam Bombing Weekly Report, 3171). Many of Nixon’s long-time supporters abandoned him, and his popularity rating plummeted to an all-time low (Brigham 111). The Christmas bombing also brought a chorus of angry responses from public and media against Nixon, but by this time Nixon was impervious to the outrage. He had won a second term and was beyond the clutches of his critics, he thought.

The twelve days of bombing inflicted great damage but changed nothing basic. Americans claim that, in the end, it was the devastation of U.S. airpower that brought the Communists to their knees, but even a U.S. Air Force survey later noted that the impact of the Christmas bombings on the morale of the North was minimal (Hanhimäki 254). In fact, the bombings did not force the North Vietnamese back to the negotiating table. Negotiations resumed on 8 January, 1973, because Hanoi and the NLF had concluded that international public opinion and the U.S. Congress now demanded that the Nixon administration produce a final settlement (Bo 216-7). In other words, Hanoi knew that Nixon’s aims were limited by

both potential congressional constraints and international public opinion. With bases in South Vietnam guaranteed by the basic agreement, they had no reason not to sign the Paris Peace Accords.

By January 9 it was clear that a deal was emerging; four days later, Kissinger and Tho concluded an agreement that retained the key principles of the October agreement. Kissinger and Tho initialed the “Agreement on Ending the War and Restoring Peace in Vietnam” on January 23 and Secretary of State Rogers was given the questionable honor of signing the Paris Peace Agreements four days later. On 27 January, 1973, a month after Linebacker II ended, the American participation wound down to its final stages. Secretary of State William Rogers signed a peace agreement with Hanoi, ending America’s active participation in the war (Hemingway 26+). The North Vietnamese agreed to return U.S. prisoners of war, and the United States consented to withdraw all its forces. Vietnamese troops on both sides remained in place, and Thieu, who continued as president of South Vietnam, signed the pact reluctantly.

Later, when asked what effect linebacker had had on achieving the Paris Peace Accords, then presidential foreign policy advisor and soon to be secretary of state, Henry Kissinger, declared, “[T]here was a deadlock...in the middle of December.... There was a rapid movement where negotiations resumed... on January 8. These facts have to be analyzed by each person for himself” (qtd. in Johnson Calvin71). The absolute reality though was that the Christmas bombings assured that the question of morality would become a constant scourge in Kissinger’s remaining years in the White House and beyond. While the strategy brought no better peace terms than might have been achieved the previous October, questions of morality also surfaced. The slaughter of innocent lives resulting from the Christmas bombing of North Vietnam was to be questioned as the widespread use of chemical weapons made American behavior particularly unpleasant.

c) A Peace Agreement

Hanoi and Washington concluded a new agreement, which was imposed on Saigon and for which Kissinger and DRV negotiator Le Duc Tho were later awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. Nixon claimed his peace with honor. What peace with honor now meant was that the U.S agreed to a cease-fire that allowed North Vietnam to keep its 150,000 soldiers in South Vietnam when the United States withdrew. Despite a few changes, the agreement was for practical purposes identical to that signed the previous October. The terms were essentially the same, and in several cases, word-for-word the same--as those offered to the United States in 1969 (Nelson 42+).

The Accords opened with the statement that “the United States and all other countries respect the independence, sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of Vietnam as recognized by the 1954 Geneva Agreements on Vietnam” (qtd. in Tucker 174). This was what Hanoi had argued for years: that Vietnam was one country and that its effort in the South was not foreign aggression but rather a legitimate struggle for national independence and unity. In other words, by signing the agreement, the U.S. government publicly admitted that Vietnam was one country and that the U.S. had no right to interfere in its internal affairs. The terms assured that South Vietnam would fall to the North Vietnamese, and that American continued involvement will be perceived throughout the world as an even more blatant violation of international law and common decency than it is at present (Branfman 48).

Additionally, the agreement provided for a cease-fire, withdrawal of all U.S. troops and advisers from South Vietnam, release of prisoners, the formation of a Council of National Reconciliation and Concord that would resolve disagreements between the RVN and DRV and organize new general elections, new supervisory machinery, and withdrawal of foreign troops from Laos and Cambodia (Tucker 174). For all practical purposes, the United States

had abandoned South Vietnam to its fate. This was the best settlement Kissinger could get. The war would undoubtedly go on between the North and the South, and in that war the South would suffer a distinct military disadvantage. But the United States would be out of it, and it would leave behind an independent nation of South Vietnam to fight its own battles.

Peace finally came in January 1973. Hanoi also claimed victory, but the cost had been substantial, and estimates of Vietnam War casualties vary. In 1995 Hanoi announced that 1,100,000 fighters had died and another 600,000 were wounded between 1954 and 1975. Hanoi estimated civilian deaths in the war over the same time period at 2,000,000. In April 1995 the U.S. Department of Defense listed 1,621 Americans MIA (missing in action) in Vietnam and 2,207 for all of Southeast Asia (Tucker 174- 6). From a realist angle, American ambiguous objectives in Vietnam were not worth dying for. It is morally wrong, also, to risk or take lives when not necessary.

The last American troops were withdrawn in March 1973, two months after the ceasefire. Besides the tremendous loss of human life and environmental destruction, relations between northern and southern Communists had once again deteriorated (Coleman 208). In the last two years of the war, 1973 through 1975, the North Vietnamese seized as much territory as possible. Hanoi completed its goal of reunifying the two Vietnams by force of arms in April 1975.

Kissinger believes there was a very reasonable chance that South Vietnam could have maintained its freedom and independence if the U.S. had continued its modest support after the withdrawal of its troops (Neuhaus 79). Of course, Kissinger's harshest and saddest words are reserved for members of Congress who, in his view, were guilty in leaving South Vietnam to the tender mercies of Hanoi. His judgment on the war's outcome was severe:

The United States devoted two decades of blood and treasure to help a group of newly independent, fledgling societies avoid conquest by their merciless and militarily more powerful Communist neighbor in North Vietnam. Yet, when the precarious peace wrought by the Paris Agreement [1973] was challenged, the United States...cut off military and economic assistance to people whom we had given every encouragement to count on our protection. This consigned those we had made our wards to an implacable-and, in Cambodia, genocidal-Communist conqueror. (*Years of Renewal* 463)

In effect, Kissinger told the American people that Congress had overthrown allies of the United States. According to him, Congress provided the cause of the downfall of South Vietnam by cutting aid and depriving the administration of power to punish North Vietnam. In this sense, the behavior of Congress meant that it could not be trusted to support the national security of the United States. However, it would be unjust for Kissinger to accuse Congress of denying the executive branch the power it needed to enforce the peace agreements. The executive branch was also a partner in the failure of American policy in Vietnam because it lacked the ability to fashion a policy capable of commanding public support. Errors in executive policymaking led Nixon and Kissinger to work by secrecy and force. Unless they based their actions on policies capable of winning widespread public support, the Congress would not hesitate to refuse the funds and authority needed to carry out their plans.

In September 1973, Kissinger received the prize when Nixon dropped William Rogers as secretary of state and appointed his national security adviser in his place. But one must take into account the nature of Kissinger's policy, which in outline has been followed under his administration. To Kissinger, an emphasis on realism and national interests was the best way

to pursue the stable world order that he believed was the ultimate moral imperative. However, the power-oriented realpolitik that made Kissinger's accomplishments possible also has carried a price. In the case of his Nobel Prize-winning negotiations with Le Duc Tho, it was the North Vietnamese takeover of South Vietnam. Further, whether the actions taken, under Kissinger's stewardship, were in line with general policy or not, they surely included in this installment the mass killing of civilian populations in Indochina.

Conclusion

In its inevitable conclusion, the Vietnam War was humiliating for America, devastating for its local allies, and exceptionally expensive. The collapse of Saigon together with the defeat of pro-Western elements in Cambodia and subsequently Laos marked the end of American influence in the area. In the meantime, the impact of the Nixon-Kissinger years on Indochinese society and on American exceptionalism was beyond computation. With its appalling consequences, the Vietnam War was catalytically responsible for shattering the ideals of American exceptionalism. Yet, as important as it was, Vietnam was only one aspect of a much larger struggle. For Kissinger's grand design to work, this country became an important piece in the larger puzzle he and Nixon were trying to put together. In that regard, the impact of superpower diplomacy was as important as America's military power.

Notes

1. The number of American troops in Vietnam declined from a high of 540,000 in early 1969 to almost half of that by the end of 1970, to 140,000 by 1971, and to a mere 24,000 by late 1972.

2. The Tet Offensive was a military campaign during the Vietnam War that was launched on January 30, 1968. Regular and irregular forces of the People's Army of Vietnam fought against the forces of the Republic of Vietnam (South Vietnam), the United States, and their allies. The purpose of the offensive was to utilize the element of surprise and strike military and civilian command and control center throughout South Vietnam, during a period when no attacks were supposed to take place.

3. The statement was originally delivered by Dr. Foster before the Senate Joint Committee on Armed Services and Defense Subcommittee of the Appropriations Committee on February 26, 1970.

4. The COSVN was, according to U.S. intelligence information, located in the Fish Hook area of Cambodia, a mere seventy five miles northwest of Saigon. If the United States managed to destroy these headquarters then, surely, the enemy's war-making capacity would be reduced, U.S. negotiating position would be improved, and the war would be brought closer to a conclusion.

5. "Okinawa" is a reference to the Okinawa reversion agreement, "SALT" to the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty, and "GERMS" to the Chemical Weapons Negotiations.

6. Text of President Nixon's address to the nation on January 25, 1972, that made public his plan for peace in Vietnam, in Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Richard Nixon 1972. p.100-5.

7. The key points of the agreement as well as a brief history of the negotiations and the timetable for signing the agreement were broadcasted over Radio Hanoi on October 25, Hanoi Time.

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CHAPTER THREE

American-Chinese Relations and the Issue of Taiwan

Introduction

The Sino-American relationship is one of the most complex and troublesome in the entire history of American foreign relations. For many decades, China figured centrally in the American ideology of exceptionalism as the original American position in the Asia-Pacific derived from the imperialist expansion of 1898, which made Hawaii, Guam, and the Philippines American possessions. 1972 was the year that witnessed a significant event in recent American history: the rapprochement or improvement in relations with the People's Republic of China (PRC). The normalization of relations of the two countries offers a challenging case to compare the basic assumptions of the foreign policies of the two countries and the decision-making process involved. Yet as Taiwan has been always the cause of Sino-American discord, this rapprochement brought into question the way the United States and China were treating the foremost moral issue of Taiwan in their bilateral relationship.

3.1 Sino-Soviet Split 1969

Few persons expected Republican Richard M. Nixon to alter the traditional American posture of hostility toward Red China when he became president of the United States in January 1969. Given his anticommunist credentials, Richard Nixon seemed like the last person who would want to improve relations with China as it was an ally of North Vietnam and aided the Communist forces in defying American attempts to drive them out of South Vietnam. Yet, President Nixon immediately initiated an examination of possible changes in U.S. policy toward China and began to indicate Washington's desire to open a dialogue with China and to withdraw U.S. military forces from Vietnam. Clearly, he believed world events

increasingly demonstrated the limitations of established policies toward China, and the policy the United States had been pursuing for a generation was utterly wrong (Alexander 213). By January 1969, when Nixon entered the White House, the times seemed to call for some significant reversals of policy.

Certainly, there were many pressing problems: most importantly, the settlement of the war in Vietnam. For years, the excessive commitment of American power in Vietnam prevented the United States from responding to other changes in the world balance. Secretary of State Dean Rusk explained that the United States fought in Vietnam to meet the threat of “a billion Chinese armed with nuclear weapons” (Schulzinger 289). Thus, relations with China were not on the top of the foreign policy agenda, but Nixon was greatly concerned with the need to re-evaluate U.S. policy toward that giant country.

Nixon had contemplated moving in this direction for some time, perhaps as far back as 1967, the year he published a Foreign Affairs article alluding to the need to draw China back into the international community (“Asia after Vietnam” 122). For him, this was a major concern. Kissinger also had considered the possibility that the United States might be able to improve its relations with China. His view appeared in May 1968 when he supported the Republican governor of New York, Nelson Rockefeller. Kissinger wrote a speech for the candidate, in which Rockefeller declared, “In a subtle triangle with communist China and the Soviet Union, [America] can ultimately improve [her] relations with each- as [she] test[s] the will for peace of both” (Isaacson 125). Kissinger believed that the time had come to explore new initiatives toward both China and the Soviet Union. The triangular relationship about which Kissinger wrote represented part of a sophisticated worldview that Kissinger and Nixon shared.

Although the dispute between the P.R.C. and the U.S.S.R. had come into public view, the Sino-Soviet dispute had not reached an irreconcilable point by the late 1950s and for most of the 1960s because the governments still cooperated on some issues. One of these issues, which also drew Americans' attention, was the Vietnam War. After escalation of the Vietnam War by the United States, Beijing and Moscow began strongly condemning the U.S. "imperialist invasion." Although China and the Soviet Union occasionally accused each other of not being devoted to supporting North Vietnam, they cooperated in the Vietnam War at the agreed level until 1969. One interesting phenomenon was that, even when accusing each other, Chinese and Soviet leaders still called one another "comrade," which seemed to leave room for them to cooperate (Chen 57).

Surprisingly, the immediate psychological basis for the drastic change of events occurred partly because of a growing discord between the Chinese and the Soviets. In the late summer of 1968 the Soviets had used tanks to crush a reformist government in Czechoslovakia and then announced that they might do the same to any other Communist country that deviated from the Moscow line (Donaldson 127-28). Of course, the invasion, for the Soviets, had been a justifiable act of collective self-defense though it relied on force to solve political problems. This announcement had a profound impact on Chinese perceptions of the Soviet Union. It was merely cynical opportunism on Moscow's part applied to justify Soviet aggression and imperial control. The warning was clear enough: might China be next?

Fear of Soviet intentions was reflected in Beijing's behavior. Three months after the Brezhnev Doctrine¹ was announced in August 1968, the Chinese government ordered its citizens to construct extensive anti-air-raid shelters in Beijing and other major cities (Congressional Quarterly. *China: U.S. Policy since 1945* 188). It also told the people to be prepared for a protracted war against Soviet social imperialism. At this point, the Sino-Soviet

conflict had taken a new turn: the conflict was no longer characterized only in terms of ideological and other issues, but, as a matter of life and death, with a potential danger of war. In a 1998 *Cold War* TV series, Lev Deluisin, Soviet ambassador to China, commented that

Siberia and the Far East were sparsely populated, so what if the Chinese millions began pouring in? Writers had warned before about the “yellow peril”—that the Chinese would come right through Russia and conquer Europe. (Episode 15, “China”)

In 1969, Sino-Soviet hostility intensified taking a military turn. The gap between the Communist giants grew larger when the two engaged in border clashes along the Ussuri River in northern Manchuria. Armed clashes were reported on Damansky/Chenpao Island in the Ussuri River, causing heavy casualties. One principle factor behind the conflict was Soviet tactics in Eastern Europe that crushed the government in Czechoslovakia. The war in Indochina further complicated the Beijing-Moscow relationship. The Chinese took Russian supplies loaded on trains intended for Hanoi in order to bolster their own defenses actions which eventually caused the Soviets to begin the mass shipping of supplies by ocean and air (Robinson 1201). Both sides claimed victory, and blamed the other for initiating the fighting.

The conflict was followed by a massive Soviet military buildup on the Chinese border, while the Chinese publicly charged the Soviets with being social-imperialists (Donaldson 127-8). The Sino-Soviet relations worsened dramatically. There was only all-out struggle; no basis for unity on any major issue existed. Following the border crisis, the Chinese government, on March 14, halted Soviet shipments across its territory to North Vietnam. This action marked the total termination of cooperation between Beijing and Moscow (Chen 59). This complete split between the P.R.C. and the U.S.S.R. undoubtedly marked disintegration of the so-called Communist bloc during the late 1960s and early 1970s.

It was obvious by this time that the Sino-Soviet alliance had torn at the seams. China, however, was no match for the Soviets who had superior nuclear power. Beijing now learned that such border clashes could escalate in a devastating manner. This episode prompted the Chinese Chairman Mao Tse-tung to start rethinking how best to preserve China's security. He was looking for a friend to counter the growing Soviet threat. He found it, surprisingly, in the United States and Richard Nixon.

3.2 Mutual Perceptions

Divorce, then, between the two Communist powers was not due to American efforts but rather to deep conflicts between them. While Beijing had severed its ties with Moscow, there was no obvious indication in 1969 that the Chinese were looking for rapprochement with Washington. The PRC continued to support North Vietnam and castigate the United States for its support of South Vietnam (Hanhimaki 29). What made it possible for Kissinger then to believe that China was no longer a revolutionary power and might accept separating its ideology from its conduct abroad? The answer seems to be a combination of self-interest and of necessity.

The primacy of security considerations was compelling in the case of China and its leaders had strategic and security concerns of their own. With the Ussuri River clashes coming on the heels of the Brezhnev Doctrine, survival became the overriding priority and ideology had to be strictly confined (Genovese 64). In other words, China sought to move closer to the United States in an effort to further weaken Soviet influence in Asia. Moreover, by virtue of China's relative weakness and vulnerability to Soviet military power, Chairman Mao Tse-tung and Premier Zhou Enlai² believed that the Soviet Union was collaborating and colluding with the United States in establishing "a military encirclement" of the PRC (qtd. in

Hao 1). Clearly, questions of national security were uppermost in the concerns of China's leaders. Obviously, the Soviet threat was the crucial background to Mao's rethinking.

Beijing also took into account another weighty external factor- the U.S. involvement in the Taiwan Strait. This presence had dashed Beijing's hope of "liberating Taiwan" for the foreseeable future. The Chinese official leaders sought concessions from Washington in relation to Taiwan, which had been the outpost of the vanquished Chinese nationalist forces since 1949. Further, a softer attitude abroad might bring such rewards as participation in the United Nations and a rapprochement with the power that had deterred Moscow over much of the globe (Hoffmann, 44-5). More generally, Beijing wanted acknowledgment that their country had emerged as an important international power. Fortunately for Mao, signs had been accumulating of the desire of the new Nixon administration to adopt a radically new posture toward China.

As for Kissinger and his president, they afforded politically to approach China because no one could accuse Nixon of being soft on communism. They, surely, believed that changing U.S. China policy from hostility to détente would benefit the United States significantly in the following ways: In national security terms, U.S. policy toward China was largely driven by external threat perceptions; the United States gradually moved to integrate China into an overall security structure designed to contain Soviet power (Skidmore 514+). Nixon could use improved Sino-U.S. relations to pressure the Soviet Union into moderating their behavior. If the United States could bring China out of its isolation, Beijing could provide a challenge to Moscow's control over international communism. This might be the leverage Nixon needed to gain certain concessions from the Soviets (Garett 76-102). Moreover, rapprochement could also prevent a possible Sino-Soviet rapprochement, which would increase the possibility of a coordinated Chinese and Soviet strategy against the United States. Kissinger and Nixon hoped

that rapprochement would enable the United States to benefit from Sino-Soviet hostility by gaining diplomatic leverage over both the Soviet Union and China, especially if China could be used to exert pressure on the Soviet Union.

But there were additional reasons for improving relations with China. If tensions could be reduced with China, some of the military pressure on the United States might be eased in Asia. Improved U.S.-Chinese relations would reduce the United States' defense requirements by reducing the Chinese challenge to U.S. interests in Asia, as Asian communism was believed to be a monolithic movement controlled by Beijing through puppet governments in Southeast Asia. In 1965 presidential candidate Nixon expressed this belief. Nixon stated, "A United States defeat in Vietnam means a Chinese Communist victory" (Congressional Quarterly, *China: American Policy since 1945* 35).

Improved relations would also help offset the reduced U.S. presence in Asia; U.S. allies could improve relations with Beijing without undermining the U.S. position vis-à-vis the Soviet Union (Ross 151). Indeed, this was a critical element in the Nixon Doctrine, which called for greater U.S. reliance on regional powers to maintain stability. In his book *Diplomacy*, Henry Kissinger describes Asian security in these terms,

[R]elationships in the Pacific are fundamentally different from those in the Atlantic area. Whereas the nations of Europe are grouped in common institutions, the nations of Asia view themselves as distinct and competitive... Any significant increase in strength by one of them is almost certain to evoke an offsetting maneuver by the others... The stability of the Asia-Pacific region, the under-pinning of its vaunted prosperity, is not a law of nature but the consequence of an equilibrium which will need increasingly careful and deliberate tending in the post-Cold War world. (826)

According to Henry Kissinger, nothing is more essential to the future U.S. role in Asia than the avoidance of an unnecessary confrontation with China. Finally, and most important, if the United States could achieve détente with not just the PRC, but also the Soviet Union, it could use the influence of the two communist powers in Hanoi to bring the war in Vietnam to an end. As Raymond Garthoff explained, “[T]he dominant foreign policy preoccupation of Nixon and Kissinger in 1969, and indeed for the period through 1972, was ... finding an honorable exit from Vietnam.” Improving relations with the two communist powers “were at that time seen as much as means to that end as they were ends in themselves” (77-8). Although Beijing no longer monopolized the foreign contribution to North Vietnam’s war effort, U.S.-Chinese rapprochement would call into question China’s commitment to Vietnam, thus pressuring Hanoi to be more accommodating. Creating a new and more favorable military and strategic balance in Asia, as well as exploiting the split between Beijing and Moscow, presented a variety of beneficial options and possibilities for the United States. Rapprochement was thus deeply rooted in the Nixon-Kissinger conception of global diplomacy and their efforts to change the international balance of power.

A further justification frequently given for engagement with China was to encourage that country to adopt more liberal economic and political policies; at the same time, it was sometimes argued that to ensure the success of engaging China, the United States should reduce its support of Taiwan, which already practiced those liberal economic and political policies (Lasater 49). Policies toward Taiwan and the interests used to justify those policies are filled with such contradictions. Taipei had been a successful example of U.S. aid and support. But America was dealing with political realities and not with ideological differences. The political reality indicated that China was globally more important than Taiwan and the U.S. commitment to Taiwan was more apparent in security matters not in economic policies.

The accommodation, then, between China and the United States demonstrated a new boldness, flexibility and imagination in American foreign policy and confirmed that ideological differences could be put to one side in favor of a more pragmatic relationship. Therefore, Nixon (in Henry Kissinger's words) "made two extraordinary decisions." He put aside America's historic dispute over Taiwan, and he warned the Soviets that the United States would "not remain indifferent" to a Soviet attack on China (qtd. in Blankley 21). Clearly, the president and his key adviser, Henry Kissinger, explicitly expressed their new perspective on world politics and new definition for the nature of Sino-U.S. relations. The *realpolitik* metaphor of this approach was that if you feed the shark, his teeth will eventually wear out and then he'll be unable to bite (Beichman 47). In short, both Nixon and Kissinger believed that the ultimate rationale of world politics was balance of power instead of anti-Communist ideology.

After twenty years of virtual isolation and intermittent hostility, however, it was not easy to initiate moves for rapprochement with the Chinese. This, of course, should be done privately and should under no circumstances get into the public prints from this direction (Nixon's "U.S. Foreign Policy for the 1970s" 28-9). Kissinger spent the next few months studying and reviewing U.S. policy toward China.

3.3 Channels of Communication and Unilateral Initiatives

After reviewing possible options for the United States, it was recommended that the president "move toward a two-China policy, preserving ties with Taiwan while gradually establishing a better understanding with Beijing" (Ogata 18). Both Nixon and Kissinger had thus perceived the opening of China in terms of its impact on the structure of international relations and of the possible development of a new triangular power balance separating the two communist states. The "*realpolitik*" approach urged the expansion of contacts with China

because the Soviet Union would be more likely to be conciliatory if the United States sought rapprochement with China (Kissinger's *White House Years* 182). In other words, China was treated by U.S. policy makers as a world power with great potential- an element of global equilibrium. The new relationship did not require much consideration of ideology, but calculations of power. As the United States had been the principal foe of China, it was the responsibility of Washington to initiate a rapprochement (Alexander 215). Nixon's main concern was the Vietnam War, which he could not seem to end.

Diplomatically, instead of closing the door to the P.R.C. as it had done during 1949-1953, Washington was quite active in seeking high-level and direct contact with Beijing. Small steps were thus taken to signal China the U.S. interest in establishing contacts. The White House and the State Department, despite their differing perspectives, collaborated in the attempt to open up channels of communication with the Chinese throughout 1969 and until the beginning of 1970. The first initiative was to send messages expressing the U.S. government's intention to establish constructive dialogue with Beijing. In the end, the occasion for a first diplomatic signal to China was the trip of the U.S. Secretary of State William Rogers to Pakistan in 1969.

Pakistan was an ideal state to act as intermediary between the United States and China, as it had good relations with both countries. On May 24, Secretary Rogers discussed China at great length with President Agha Mohammad Yahya Khan and asked whether Pakistan could help the United States set up secret contact with Beijing. He specifically requested the president to relay the U.S. intention to the Chinese (Szulc 112). The China experts in the State Department argued for some kind of overt gesture toward China in preparation for his trip; Nixon concurred. On July 21, three days before his departure to Guam, the State Department

took unilateral steps to ease U.S. travel and trade restrictions that had existed since the Korean War (Cohen 196).

After announcing the Nixon Doctrine on July 25, 1969, Nixon continued on his journey for brief visits to East Asian countries. He had other purposes for the trip in mind, especially with his visits to Pakistan and Romania. These were indirectly related to the Vietnam War and directly related to his interest in exploring the possibility of rapprochement with China and linkage diplomacy toward the Soviet Union and its East bloc allies. In Lahore, he was hoping the Pakistanis would agree to serve as intermediaries with the Chinese, and with his visit to Bucharest he hoped to needle the Soviets while using the Romanians to deliver a warning to North Vietnam (MemCons, August 2, 1969).

The Pakistanis had proved encouraging and supportive. By the middle of August, the United States conveyed, through public statements, intermediaries, and administrative actions, its intention to enter into communication with the Chinese (Ogata 22). There was a sense of urgency in the desire to come into contact with China, because of growing tensions along the Sino-Soviet border.

Militarily, in addition to announcing the Nixon Doctrine calling for a low profile for the U.S. military intervention in Asia and to making a first cut of 25,000 American troops in Vietnam, the Nixon administration took several important steps to relax the tension between the United States and the P.R.C (Dept. of State, "United States Foreign Policy, 1969- 1970" 36). In October 1969, to convey some specific sign of U.S. willingness to improve relations and with the approval of the president, Kissinger indicated readiness to withdraw two destroyers that had been on patrol in the Taiwan Strait. The United States quietly ended the Seventh Fleet's nineteen-year patrolling of the Taiwan Strait, which had been deployed to

protect Taiwan from mainland China's attack since the outbreak of the Korean War (Senate, "Committee on Foreign Relations" 1010).

These steps, though small, were significant for they began to signal the change of the two decades-old containment policy. There was grudging recognition of the viability of the People's Republic. This was a rather curious exercise in which the most significant change lies in the psyche of the American officials rather than in China itself. From Beijing came no response.

Yet, to Mao Tse-tung and other Chinese leaders, the Soviet threat had surpassed the American threat, and the United States seemed increasingly attractive to the PRC as a potential counterweight to the Soviet threat. As a result, a fundamental change occurred in Chinese leaders' perception: Beijing now viewed Moscow as the greatest and most immediate threat to its security. In this new situation, the Chinese clearly hoped that they could deter the Soviet threat by improving relations with Washington (Hao 31). In fact, the Beijing leadership believed that because Washington could benefit greatly from new relations with Beijing, U.S. leaders might be ready to make certain compromises regarding Taiwan.

There was, finally, more than a glimmer of hope in early 1970. In this atmosphere of relaxing Sino-American relations, the Warsaw talks resumed in January 1970 and ambassadorial-level conversations began anew. Two days prior to the February 20 meeting between the Chinese chargé d'affaires Lei Yang and the U.S. ambassador to Poland Walter Stoessel, the Nixon administration's first foreign policy Report to the U.S. Congress was published. The report summarized the Nixon administration's overall approach to the Soviet Union and China as follows:

We will regard our Communist adversaries first and foremost as nations pursuing their own interests as they perceive these interests, just as we follow our interests as we see them. We will judge them by their actions as we expect to be judged by our own. Specific agreements, and the structure of peace they help build, will come from a realistic accommodation of conflicting interests (PPP: Richard Nixon, 1970, 116–189).

It was as clear-cut a statement of realpolitik as any American administration had yet put forth publicly. For the first time, an American administration maintained that communist ideology was no obstacle to having a fruitful relationship with another nation (Hanhimäki 66). Interests, rather than ideals, formed the basis of the Nixon administration's policies toward the PRC.

However, the effort at rapprochement briefly received another setback when the United States and South Vietnam launched an attack into Laos to destroy Vietcong bases and lines of communication. Beijing responded angrily denouncing American actions. Washington had hoped that its bombing activities would especially not damage prospects with Beijing. The president had to engage in damage control, stating at a February 17 news conference that his target was only North Vietnam: "This action is not directed against Communist China . . . I do not believe that the Communist Chinese have any reason to interpret this as a threat against them or any reason therefore to react to it" (Public Papers, 1971, 160).

At the second meeting, on February 20, 1970, Washington offered a significant and yet easy concession. Washington informed Beijing that it was its intention that as tension in the area diminished the United States would reduce its troops on Taiwan. "Tension in the area" referred to the war in Indochina. Most of the U.S. forces on Taiwan supported the war

effort in Indochina, and Washington would likely draw down its presence when the war ended. But by linking the withdrawal to an end to the war, Washington increased Beijing's interest in an end to the war and, thus, Vietnamese compromises (Ross 151). The Nixon administration was drawing an obvious link between the Vietnam War and the touchy issue of Taiwan by indirectly suggesting that Chinese help in reaching a Vietnam settlement would allow the United States to reduce its troop levels in Taiwan. The Chinese indicated that they would "in principle" welcome a high-level U.S. delegation to Beijing. The Warsaw channel was looking increasingly promising as a launching pad for triangular diplomacy (Mann 23-4). Unfortunately for Kissinger, the U.S. invasion of Cambodia in April 1970 led Beijing to cancel the Warsaw meeting planned for the following month. (Kissinger's *White House Years* 360-61) It would take another four months, however, before further communication arrived from Zhou Enlai confirming Chinese willingness to accept the president's special envoy or the secretary of state or the president himself.

Also, Nixon and Kissinger's increasing reliance on force in April 1970, especially bombing, cost the United States in terms of support for its other policies from states around the world. Yet, in Kissinger's view, the U.S. invasion of Cambodia in 1970 demonstrated

the possibilities of triangular diplomacy to help settle the war. It became unmistakably clear that neither Communist power would risk a sharp break with [America] over Vietnam for fear that [Americans] might then throw [their] full weight behind the other (*White House Years* 695).

These detailed retelling of U.S. attempts to manipulate Chinese policy toward Vietnam was unclear on many points and not completely convincing. China had undoubted incentives for restraint in Indochina, yet these incentives did not necessarily derive from the workings of the strategic triangle. The United States, after all, struck North Vietnamese bases in Cambodia

more than a year before Kissinger's trip to Beijing. In the spring of 1970, the possibility that the United States might somehow throw its full weight to either side- and in particular to China- was not unmistakably clear at all, but highly speculative (Alexander 219). The Chinese government had responded to earlier U.S. escalations in Vietnam with the same detachment in 1970. China's desire to stay out of the line of fire in Indochina was obvious; it did not in any way increase U.S. freedom of action in the endgame of the war. And while keeping direct involvement limited, China had never curtailed its aid to North Vietnam after the Cambodian invasion (Ross 127). It accordingly promoted the creation of the Royal Government of National Union of Kampuchea (RGNUK) under Sihanouk's leadership on May 5, 1970, the same day as the PRC withdrew its ambassador from Phnom Penh to coordinate the anti-Lon Nol resistance.

As a result, over the next few years, Chinese military aid to the DRV increased significantly, even as the course of Sino-American rapprochement was restored (Hanhimäki 81). In short, from the Chinese perspective the Cambodian invasion ran contrary to the hopeful signs of a decreased U.S. role in the region. Diplomatically, the Chinese reaction to the Cambodian invasion (April 1970) was immediate. The invasion brought condemnation from Beijing for "American imperialism" but no threat of active Chinese assistance (Tucker 155). Further, a third Warsaw meeting, scheduled for May, was canceled by the Chinese after U.S. ground forces invaded Cambodia in an attempt to destroy Vietcong staging bases in that country (Powaski 173). Nevertheless, the Nixon administration accelerated its effort to improve U.S. relations with China.

In the fall of 1970, President Nixon decided to make his move to seek rapprochement with the People's Republic. Secrecy had become a hindrance to Kissinger's search for an opening to China while Nixon never gave up. In a press conference near the end of the year he

declared that “[America] must have relations with Communist China” (December 10, 1970). Gradually the official imagery of the United States in the Chinese press changed. Within two weeks, Kissinger received promising signals of Chinese interest in opening a new dialogue through the Pakistani and Romanian channels. Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai gave the first hints of an interest in establishing high-level contact with the United States. Washington responded quickly and positively (“Congressional Quarterly, China” 194-5).

In October 1970, Nixon asked Pakistani president Yahya Khan to tell the Chinese that the Americans were prepared to send a high-level emissary to Beijing. In early December, three weeks after President Yahya Khan’s visit to China, Ambassador Agha Hilaly visited Kissinger with President Yahya Khan’s missive, which contained Zhou Enlai’s invitation welcoming President Nixon’s special envoy to Beijing. The White House regarded the PRC’s act of reciprocity as promising further movement forward. Kissinger and Nixon were elated by the Chinese proposal and were in complete agreement to accept the invitation.

A week later, a message was sent through the Pakistani channel that the President was prepared for high-level talks in Beijing. As Pakistan had a key role in opening talks with China at the time, Kissinger did not want to intervene later in the 1971 repression by Pakistan (then West Pakistan) of Bangladesh (then East Pakistan), when an estimated 1,247,000 people were killed in nine months. When U.S. diplomats in East Pakistan protested about the violence, Kissinger had them demoted or fired. He later famously thanked Pakistani General Yahya Khan for his ‘delicacy and tact.’³ The acceptance of the U.S. offer to send a representative to Beijing led to a dispute between the State Department and the national security adviser. The State Department wanted to move slowly on making concessions to the PRC for fear that it would upset America’s Asian allies, but Kissinger favored speed.

However, if relations between China and the U.S. were to be restored fundamentally, the U.S. must withdraw all its Armed Forces from China's Taiwan and Taiwan Straits area. A solution to this crucial question can be found only through direct discussions between high level official leaders of the two countries. What exactly were the factors that caused the Chinese delay cannot be determined. There must have been ideological, political, and bureaucratic opposition to an approach that was to deviate so drastically from the past. Lin Biao and top radical leaders were probably among those opposed.⁴

3.4 The Great Breakthrough 1971

By 1971, many polls showed that Americans did not want to lose Vietnam, but neither did they want to send thousands of their sons and daughters to die for such a country. To help create some political breathing space, Nixon increased the bombings. Americans now said little. By February 1971, when Laos was invaded, Nixon faced failure on nearly every side. In addition to problems with vietnamization, he endured rapid decline in public support (Lafeber 643). In the meantime, the United States continued to send conciliatory signs to China. The president's second Foreign Policy Report of February 25, 1971, for the first time referred to China by its official name. Nixon also spoke of the need to establish a dialogue with Beijing. He called for a place for the People's Republic of China in the United Nations—without sacrificing the position of Taiwan (Cohen 197).

The State Department was not unaware of the back-channel developments, but pursued its own efforts to open relations with China (Ogata 25). Yet, any declared American intention to withdraw from Vietnam might not have been taken at face value, especially in view of the fact that the United States supported the South Vietnamese invasion of Laos in February. Still, there had been no resolution to the Vietnam War, and no opening to China.

Other steps quickly followed. In April 1971, President Nixon announced that the twenty-one-year embargo on trade with China would be lifted (*RN: Memoirs 2*; 13). Apparently that was enough to gain Zhou the support he needed. The Chinese responded by sending friendly signals to the United States. On April 7, 1971, they made a startling and remarkable move. While refusing to play against the South Vietnamese and Cambodian teams (considered representing illegitimate governments) that were participating in the World Table Tennis Championship in Nagoya, Japan, the Chinese warmed to the Americans. The two teams exchanged gifts and the Americans indicated an interest in visiting the PRC. After initial reluctance, Mao decided to invite the Americans for seven days to play with other Chinese ping-pong teams (Hanhimäki 122). Americans were as bad at Ping-Pong as the Chinese excelled, so acceptance of the invitation implied that the Americans would gladly lose to their hosts to improve relations (Schulzinger 296). The fifteen Americans on the team arrived in China on April 10 and received enthusiastic welcomes wherever they played.

“Ping-pong diplomacy” was the breakthrough President Nixon was waiting for. The visit opened a new chapter in the relations of the American and Chinese people. It is hardly an accident that the visit of the U.S. ping-pong team coincided with Nixon’s announcement regarding travel restrictions and the easing of economic sanctions. On April 14, 1971, Nixon ordered visas for visitors from the People’s Republic to be expedited, relaxed currency controls to permit China to use U.S. dollars, authorized U.S. vessels and aircraft to carry Chinese cargoes, and stopped military flights over China (Alexander 220). Following the review, the administration on June 10 announced that it was reducing significantly the number of goods still under embargo and would permit Chinese commercial imports. In short, the United States was in the process of abandoning its decades-long economic war on the PRC. The Nixon administration’s willingness for an opening to China was hardly a secret.

When the Chinese sent over an invitation for President Nixon's envoy to Beijing, the purpose of the talks was "to discuss the subject of the vacation of Chinese territories called Taiwan" (Ogata 26). For a long time China had urged the United States to withdraw its troops from Taiwan as well as to sever its relationship. Clearly then, the April message from Zhou Enlai reiterated the importance of the Taiwan issue. Zhou stated that "the US must withdraw all its Armed forces from China's Taiwan and Taiwan Straits area." Kissinger noted with some optimism that though the Chinese still designated the subject of the meeting to be Taiwan, "the emphasis was on withdrawing our forces rather than abandoning our relationship with Taiwan" (*White House Years* 680-88).

Now that the invitation was confirmed, the big question was whom to send to Beijing. Nixon decided on Kissinger, who writes that he was chosen in the end because Nixon felt that "[Kissinger] understood [American] policy best, and that being familiar with [his] complicated chief, [he] would be able to arrange the sort of [Beijing] visit for him with which Nixon would be most comfortable" (*White House Years* 717). The choice was a great relief for Kissinger himself, for after being involved in the arrangements he found himself in a position to bring the enterprise to fruition. In the spring of 1971, Kissinger clearly had the upper hand vis-à-vis Secretary of State Rogers.

Secret cables then flew back and forth through a variety of channels, and friendly signals flew from every post. As he prepared for the trip in June 1971, Kissinger could justifiably expect that his visit to China would give him an extra trump card in his negotiations with the North Vietnamese (cited. in Hanhimäki's *The Flawed Architect* 120). Yet, it was Kissinger who would in Beijing where he went for another visit a month after the summit with the Soviets, plead for help: the Americans, he would effectively explain to the Chinese premier Zhou Enlai, simply wished to withdraw their troops without witnessing an

immediate takeover of the South by North Vietnamese forces. But, if a period of time elapsed after the American withdrawal, the United States would not re-intervene in Vietnam (Hanhimäki 186).

In the summer of 1971, the world diplomatic structure began to shift when Kissinger made a secret trip to Beijing. The results of this visit paved the way for President Nixon's historic 1972 visit to China, one of the most dramatic shifts in American foreign policy in the 20th century.

On July 1, 1971, Kissinger had commenced a tour of South and Southeast Asia. After first disappearing from sight on a visit to Pakistan, he went, from July 9 to 11, 1971, on a secret mission to Communist China to investigate the potential for American-Chinese rapprochement. Kissinger recalled that in order to divert media attention from his mission to China, American officials planned in advance to lie by claiming that due to illness during his visit to Pakistan, the secretary of state had to flee the Islamabad heat to the presidential rest house in the mountains (*White House Years* 738-9).

The ostensible destination, at least as far as Washington press releases were concerned, was South Vietnam and several other Far Eastern countries. But the ten-day trip had a far more sinister purpose. The purpose of Kissinger's trip was to completely transform U.S.-China relations (Gilboa 279). The best way of doing this was, naturally, by finding compromise solutions on controversial issues such as Taiwan. The entire trip was arranged secretly without the knowledge of the State Department. The latter was cut out of the decision-making process. Henry Kissinger stated that the president-elect

had very little confidence in the State Department. Its personnel had no loyalty to him; the Foreign Service had disdained him as Vice President and ignored

him the moment he was out of office. He was determined to run foreign policy from the White House. (*White House Years* 11)

Initially, Secretary Rogers was only informed that Kissinger was to take a lengthy “information trip” through Asia. It was only on July 8 day before Kissinger reached Beijing that the president disclosed to the secretary that Kissinger was on his way to Beijing as a result of a “last minute decision in response to an invitation [Kissinger] had received while in Pakistan.”⁵

The opening then began with secret conferences. Kissinger defends the secret procedure on the basis of the exigency of the time as well as the lack of confidence of the president in his secretary of state. Further, Kissinger and Nixon assumed that a shock announcement would shake the Soviets from their intransigence, and make them more forthcoming on the unresolved issues of SALT, Vietnam, and a Soviet-American summit. Additionally, the Soviets were becoming the great ally of the Communist Vietnamese. The greatest hatred in the region was not between Communists and U.S.-supported dominoes, but between the Communists themselves as the Chinese tried to block growing Soviet influence on their southern borders. Instead of using Vietnam to contain China, Nixon concluded that he had better use China to contain Vietnam (Lafeber 647). Of more interest were not the secret meetings of Kissinger with the Chinese but the kind of deals that were made during the lengthy talks between Kissinger and the Red Chinese leaders. The ultimate price of the opening would be of much grave importance.

In Beijing, Kissinger and Zhou Enlai agreed in principle that Taiwan should be considered a part of China and that the political future of the island should be settled peacefully by the Chinese themselves. What Kissinger gave was an assurance that the United States was willing to downgrade its relationship with Taiwan by, for example, not objecting to

the PRC becoming a member of the UN Security Council (Hanhimäki 137). The two men also agreed that the political future of South Vietnam would have to be settled by the Vietnamese without outside intervention. Zhou then extended an invitation to Nixon to visit China, which the president promptly accepted (Powaski 173). In sum, Kissinger was clearly laying down the groundwork for his and Nixon's vision of the PRC as a strategic ally of the United States against the Soviet Union. His July trip was the beginning of a series of negotiations that terminated the years of estrangement between the United States and China.

True to form, Kissinger congratulated himself about this meeting as a masterly example of triangular diplomacy. As he wrote to Nixon:

We are building a solid record of keeping the Chinese informed on all significant subjects of concern to them... We have now foreshadowed the potentially unpleasant combination of a Moscow Summit and visits by the Emperor of Japan and Prime Minister Gandhi in a way that should make these events at the same time palatable and a reminder that we are not so eager with the Chinese that we will shy away from those countries which they dislike (Memcon: Kissinger to Nixon, August 16, 1971).

Once revealed to the general public in mid July 1971, the visit dramatically transformed Kissinger's foreign policy. Journalistic commentary tended to attribute an increasing amount of praise to the administration's foreign policy successes to Henry Kissinger. Nixon announced that Kissinger had recently returned from a round-the-world tour that had included a stopover, on July 9–11, in Beijing. Nixon appeared on American radio and television with an announcement:

I have taken this action...because of my profound conviction that all nations will gain from a reduction of tensions and a better relationship between the United States and the People's Republic of China (Public Papers, 1971, 819—20).

Nixon added that he had accepted the invitation, and he would go to China as soon as arrangements could be worked out.

Kissinger's secret trip to China was, by far, the most significant foreign policy event of the Nixon administration. It clearly shook the Soviets. Kissinger's main concern remained guarding the success of the China initiative. He admitted that in the months following his secret trip he "took great pains to keep the Chinese informed of all our moves with Moscow and our assessments of Soviet intentions" (*White House Years* 768). Kissinger visited Beijing again in October to settle the major issues to be negotiated during the presidential visit, including the preparation of a communiqué to be issued at the end.

But having increased China's appetite for rapprochement, Washington still had to address its relationship with Taiwan. When Kissinger landed in China for the second time on October 20, 1971, his most important task was to secure China's commitment to a U.S.-Chinese summit (Hanhimäki 170). Although the focus of the discussion was on the specifics of Nixon's trip, Kissinger and Zhou covered much of the globe during their talks. Yet, their focus was decisively regional: the key topics were Taiwan, Indochina, the Soviet Union, and South Asia. Sensing that Washington might abandon Taipei, many other states also began to shift their recognition to the PRC. Kissinger's presence in Beijing at the time of the UN vote hardly helped Taiwan's cause. Many states apparently interpreted this as a lack of U.S. interest in preserving Taipei's seat. As a result, the favorable 1971 vote for Beijing in the U.N. General Assembly was not unexpected. Beijing's diplomatic breakthrough to

membership, and the ousting of Taiwan in the United Nations, became the most spectacular achievement in the contest for international recognition.

Though, losing the Taiwan vote was hardly a major problem for Kissinger, its failure only confirmed Kissinger's central position as the czar of U.S. China policy. The coincidence of the vote and Kissinger's second trip to China made him, in effect, the foremost of the new China hands (*Haldeman Diaries* 368, October 26, 1971). Further, both Zhou and Kissinger made a number of oblique references to the USSR throughout the talks, but their discussions never extended to specifics. Kissinger, for his part, promised to keep the Chinese fully informed of all contacts with the USSR and said that he always refused to share with the Soviets any details of his discussions with the Chinese. In the end, he wrote Nixon, "the Chinese try to downgrade the Russian factor, but their dislike and concern about the Soviet Union is clear" (November 11, 1971). The general tone of discussions then contained no surprises. Kissinger secured China's commitment to a U.S.-Chinese summit, but the text of a joint communiqué remained to be negotiated. Kissinger began these negotiations with Zhou Enlai in October 1971, but a common language on the status of Taiwan remained elusive and had to wait until Nixon visited Beijing in February 1972. Kissinger, not Nixon, emerged as the man of the moment.

America's Asian allies were quite another matter. Needless to say, the Taiwanese felt betrayed. The rules of realpolitik and the logic of Kissinger's foreign policy architecture clearly dictated that Taiwan, like ultimately South Vietnam, was expendable. Or as Kissinger would put it somewhat more antiseptically later on, the loss of Taiwan's UN seat was "a diplomatic setback which had been recognized as inevitable," a necessary price, indeed, for the "new flexibility" that the opening to the PRC had brought to U.S. foreign policy (qtd. in Tyler 112-3). As a matter of fact, Zhou's experience far outweighed Kissinger's. The Chinese

premier was a legendary figure, a man who had played a key role in shaping postwar Asia for a quarter century. Kissinger, while quickly learning the trade, was still a relative newcomer to the game of high-level diplomacy.

On November 30, 1971, Washington and Beijing simultaneously announced that President Nixon, accompanied by Mrs. Nixon, Secretary Rogers, and Dr. Kissinger, would visit China from February 21 to 28, 1972. Zhou maintained that it was Nixon who had virtually yearned to visit China. This had given China the upper hand, he believed, because Nixon had to have “something in his pocket” when he returned to the United States, while the Chinese side was in a position in which “it is to our advantage if the negotiation succeeds but it constitutes no detriment to us if the negotiation fails” (qtd. in Barnouin and Yu 188-196). Unquestionably, the Chinese in particular have made much of the fact that in all of the efforts over an opening to Beijing, not a single signal was flashed from China seeking such a new relationship. Not a single major Red Chinese dignitary went to Washington, to genuflect at the feet of American decision makers. It was all the other way around. Truly, Kissinger’s secret trip to China was, by far, the most significant foreign policy event of the Nixon administration.

3.5 Rapprochement- At Last

Nixon left for Beijing on February 17, 1972. Secrecy and deliberate exclusion of the State Department from substantive negotiations continued to characterize the U.S. negotiations with China throughout the presidential visit (Ogata 29). The Beijing summit was carefully and meticulously planned. From February 21, 1972, to February 28, 1972, Nixon met with Chinese leaders. It was a dazzling political and diplomatic event. The trip was the first ever to Beijing by an American President. Only a handful of Americans had ventured onto the mainland during the previous two decades. The cultural divide between the two

countries was planetary, greater than geography could explain (Tyler 127). For Zhou, too, this was a pregnant occasion. Ever since his government had been created, the United States had refused to formally acknowledge its existence. The arrival of the president of the United States acknowledged the failure of that strategy and thus was a vindication of Zhou, his government, and the entire Chinese Communist movement (Harding 3).

Thus, the trip signified the end of the impasse in Sino-American relations that started with the civil war victory of the Chinese Communist Party under Mao in 1949. Inevitably, it was the “journey of peace,” or “the week that changed the world” (qtd. in Robertson 153). At the end of the trip, the two countries issued the Shanghai Communiqué, a document dealing with—if not solving—most of the major issues in Sino-American relations: Vietnam, Taiwan, and the Soviet Union.

Getting agreement on a joint communiqué was not easy. Nixon, Rogers, and Kissinger were unable to work out their greatest differences with Zhou and other Chinese leaders until February 28, in the final hours of the visit. The trip’s public conclusion, the Shanghai Communiqué, reflected the nature of the new Sino-American relationship. It, by no means, resolved mostly all of the problems between the United States and China. Yet, it acknowledged differences and opened the way for a positive relationship that promised hope for the future. Its four “principles of international relations” stated that: a) Progress toward the normalization of relations between China and the United States is in the interest of all countries; b) Both wish to reduce the danger of international military conflict; c) Neither should seek hegemony in the Asia-Pacific region and each is opposed to effort by any other country or group of countries to establish hegemony; d) Neither is prepared to negotiate on behalf of any third party or to enter into agreements or understandings with the other directed at other states (cited in Tyler 141-2).

The Shanghai communiqué portrayed Chinese and American leaders as each assumed that their country had a special role in the world, and a special mission. The Maoists propagated a Chinese revolutionary model and supporting wars of national liberation. The United States has propagated its own liberation theology, i.e., to make the world safe for democracy. Like the Chinese, Americans have typically pointed to their own exceptional experience as a model to be emulated by the rest of the world. This common exceptionalist national identity made the moral dimension of the relations between the two states particularly sensitive and potentially volatile. Realist calculations, however, were also widely present in the Shanghai communiqué. Among many issues, Vietnam would be of high importance to both sides.

a) Impact of Rapprochement on Vietnam

Nixon's visit to China was one of the highlights of an eventful year. Vietnam remained the backdrop for Nixon's reelection effort, and during the fall campaign, Kissinger peppered Beijing with secret cables seeking last-minute help to buttress his public assertion that peace was "at hand" in Vietnam (Tyler 148). Kissinger indicated that from the very first session that he had with Zhou Enlai on his first trip, "more time was spent on [His] explaining [America's] policy in Indochina" than on Taiwan (*White House Years* 749). Kissinger had thought that even if China could not do much to help the United States directly, the trip itself would have a profound impact on the war in Vietnam. It would show the American people that the government was capable of a bold move for peace and would undermine Vietnam's psychological offensive (Ogata 32). On 17 August 1972, Hanoi's Communist Party newspaper and mouthpiece, *Nhan Dan*, grumbled that "Nixon's détente had saved South Vietnam from defeat. The failure of China and the Soviet Union to provide North Vietnam

with adequate assistance, the newspaper stated, equated to “throwing a life-buoy to a drowning pirate...in order to serve one’s narrow national interests” (qtd. in Clodfelter 181).

It is important, however, to stress that in the months following Kissinger’s return from the May summit in Moscow⁶, triangular diplomacy was closely linked to the Vietnam negotiations. Starting in June and July 1972, the Chinese, constantly prompted by Kissinger, advised the North Vietnamese to engage in serious discussions (Hanhimäki 230). Zhou would pass on Kissinger’s views to Hanoi, yet he could not impose anything on the North Vietnamese; in fact, as long as the fighting continued, Chinese aid to North Vietnam would continue. Still, Zhou would encourage the North Vietnamese to negotiate and he would tell them of the United States’ lack of interest in future political developments in Vietnam. Indeed, while pressing for serious efforts in the Paris negotiations, Beijing continued its economic and military aid to North Vietnam. Thus, the North Vietnamese could rest assured that concluding an agreement with the United States would not mean abandoning their ultimate goal of unification; they would only be accepting an “interval” (Hanhimäki 234). Kissinger, for his part, assumed that Beijing was more interested in its new relationship with Washington than in its competition over influence in Southeast Asia.

This seemed to have been a partially false assumption. As the records of the June 1972 Zhou–Kissinger conversations, released only in April 2001, indicate, Kissinger was willing to accept a package deal that included a cease-aggrandizement, will which at the time meant that more than 100,000 North Vietnamese troops could stay in South Vietnam, the complete withdrawal of U.S. troops, and the return of American prisoners of war. The real carrot, however, had to do with the political future of Vietnam. Kissinger’s comments represented, in effect, a plea for helping the United States to exit Vietnam without immediate embarrassment. He was willing to abandon the South, but not to suffer the embarrassment that would follow if

the North Vietnamese launched an immediate offensive following the American withdrawal (Hanhimäki 231).

Unquestionably, the United States did not prove to be a model of consistency. There was always a double standard, or sometimes no standard at all in the way that it engaged in its diplomacy. In short, Nixon agreed to pull out American troops from Vietnam, thereby abandoning the South Vietnamese regime. Kissinger promised to pull out “most, if not all” American troops from Korea before the end of Nixon’s next term (qtd. in Windschuttle 4+). Kissinger assured that “after the agreement is signed there will be an increasing American disinterest in Indochina” (Hanhimäki 232). This double standard strategy was always so evident in the strategy put forward by Kissinger and his president. The real issue was whether the United States now maintained that Taiwan was a part of China, therefore making the Taiwan dispute, as Beijing had always contended, an internal Chinese matter.

b) Taiwan and Sino-American Relations

The dispute over Taiwan is dynamic and volatile; the focal point of maneuvering between Taipei, Beijing, and Washington. Of all the threats to security and U.S. interests in Asia, the confrontation across the Taiwan Strait was surely the most perilous over the long run and had the greatest potential for erupting into a war between the United States and China. With all this, the quarrel over Taiwan rose to the top of the list because it could turn into a clash of empire. The Communist government in Beijing wanted possession of Taiwan for several reasons.

Among the principle reasons is surging nationalism. National pride was perhaps the prime motive for capturing Taiwan. Beijing saw the island, ceded to Japan after the Sino-Japanese War of 1895, as a vestige of China’s humiliation by Japan and Western colonial powers in the 19th century.⁷ The Communist take-over of mainland China in 1949 marked the

origin of the conflict between China and United States over Taiwan in the 20th century (Halloran 14).

The second reason is linked to strategic geography. Chinese leaders saw Taiwan as a critical link in a chain of containment that begins with U.S. forces in Korea and Japan and run south through Taiwan to the Philippines, Thailand, and Australia, nations with which the United States had security treaties. Beijing sought to break that chain and to project power into the Pacific. Taiwan, therefore, would determine whether the United States retained its security posture in the Western Pacific or would be forced to withdraw so that China could exert the hegemony it wielded (Lijun 10). In sum, China's leaders saw bringing Taiwan into the PRC as a crucial step in establishing Chinese influence over East Asia and in driving the United States from the Western Pacific. Finally, Beijing's long-term goal would be to exert such political, economic, and military power that no decision of importance could be made in any capital in Asia without China's approval.

As for the United States, Taiwan might be considered important for a range of factors that further complicate American policy on Taiwan. One of the factors was the responsibility necessarily shouldered by the world's sole superpower to uphold liberal values in the international system against Communist regimes. In this sense, the United States retained Taiwan as an ally and an outpost in the frontline of U.S. defense in the Western Pacific (Sutter 2). Thus, the United States endeavored to strengthen Taiwan's position as a key link in the ring of containment that the United States constructed around China's periphery in Asia. Moreover, a failure by the United States to support Taiwan in a crisis situation with China would symbolize willingness to defer to China in regional matters, amounting to a reordering of great power influence in East Asia. More importantly in the immediate term, such a failure would demonstrate to Japan, South Korea, and Australia that Washington is an unreliable ally,

and to the Southeast Asians that it is an unreliable protector-stabilizer in the western Pacific. Strategically, Taiwan's importance in world affairs was more as an area acted upon by others, rather than as a significant force in its own right.

Strategic competition then made a difficult situation even less tractable. To achieve America's laudable goals, though, Mr. Nixon was willing to do what Beijing demanded, which included throwing overboard the government on Taiwan. On that issue, The Shanghai Communiqué's Taiwan section was carefully phrased to allow both sides to interpret it according to their political needs. For its part, China stated its position that

The Taiwan question is the crucial question obstructing the normalization of relations between China and the United States; the government of the People's Republic of China is the sole legal government of China; Taiwan is a province of China which has long been returned to the motherland; the liberation of Taiwan is China's internal affair in which no other country has the right to interfere; and all US forces and military installations must be withdrawn from Taiwan. The Chinese government firmly opposes any activities which aim at the creation of "one China, one Taiwan," "one China, two governments," "two Chinas," and "independent Taiwan," or advocate that the status of Taiwan remains to be determined. (qtd. in Thurston 52+)

China, according to the official formulation, is one country, temporarily divided and governed by two distinct political entities on either side of the Taiwan straits. Beijing demands that Taipei, as well as Washington, show that it still saw Taiwan's separation from the rest of China as a temporary and unnatural state of affairs- one that negotiators from both sides of the Taiwan Strait should seek to correct through agreement on a process of reunification. Clearly, China's vision of the future strategic structure in the Asia Pacific which

should not go against the “one China” principle. The American position, though, was the more interesting and complicated one. The U.S. side declared that

The United States acknowledges that all Chinese on either side of the Taiwan Strait maintain there is but one China and that Taiwan is a part of China. The United States Government does not challenge that position. It reaffirms its interest in a peaceful settlement of the Taiwan question by the Chinese themselves. With this prospect in mind, it affirms the ultimate objective of the withdrawal of all U.S. forces and military installations from Taiwan. In the meantime, it will progressively reduce its forces and military installations on Taiwan as the tension in the area diminishes. (Memorandum of Conversation Feb. 22, 1972, NSA)

Stated differently, the United States recognized that both Chinese governments claimed that Taiwan was part of China, and that the United States acknowledged the Beijing government as the sovereign power in China. Unquestionably, Taiwan posed a problem in the joint communiqué that would be released to the public. Nixon explained to the Chinese prime minister that it was important for him to “be able to go back to Washington and say that no secret deals have been made between [them] on Taiwan.” Otherwise, Nixon later wrote, “he could find himself under attack from the various pro-Taiwan, anti-Nixon, and anti-P.R.C. lobbies and interest groups at home.” (Nixon, Public Papers, 1972, 378) Surprisingly, the Shanghai Communiqué did not mention the Washington-Taipei diplomatic relations.

Another diplomatic disaster was still to come. World opinion was shifting toward Beijing in the battle for diplomatic recognition; for twenty-two years, from 1949 to 1971, Taiwan represented China in the United Nations (including holding a permanent seat on the Security Council). Then it was expelled as the United Nations voted to give China’s seat on

the Security Council to the People's Republic instead. In other words, Taiwan could not continue to garner global support to represent all of China in various international forums and organizations. This recognition was no law, though. It was merely a "framework" for Sino-American relations, and it could be abolished relatively easily. When President Nixon went to China in 1972, that abstraction of reality ended and was replaced by another abstraction. Since the United States needed a powerful ally in the region able to counter the Soviet threat, the United States decided to suddenly shift recognition from the Taiwan claim to recognition of the PRC claim. Truly then, Chinese policy toward Taiwan did achieve an objective with far-reaching implications. This was the international community's recognition and acceptance of the One-China Principle.

The fact that Kissinger was actually in Beijing on the very day Taiwan was kicked out of the United Nations made the signals unmistakably clear. Japan, the Philippines, and other Asian nations, realizing the implications of their corner of the world being dominated by China, began clamoring for the best deal they could get with Mao. Taiwan was abandoned and stranded while the conquest of most of Southeast Asia by China added a whole new dimension to an already catastrophic situation. President Nixon's historic 1972 visit to Beijing also doomed any long-term ties between the United States and Taiwan. Subsequently, it lost formal diplomatic ties with most nations of the world (Copper 157). Taiwan suffered a shock because of subsequent actions taken by the United States while the latter had to design policies based more narrowly on its national interests.

The other concessions that the United States made on Taiwan were also of grave damage. In 1969, as part of the Nixon Doctrine, the United States formalized a policy of reducing the level of U.S. forces in Asia and America's military commitment there. This policy was further implemented in 1971 when the U.S. declared it would progressively

withdraw forces from Taiwan “as the tension in the area diminishes.” Kissinger felt that this condition was susceptible to solution, as it was not obliging the United States to abandon its relationship with Taiwan.

Although the Shanghai communiqué left much unresolved, both sides pledged to work for a “peaceful resolution” of the dispute over Taiwan (Schulzinger 298). No one knew precisely what that meant, and the phrasing was purposely ambiguous. Evidently though, the foreign policy establishment then believed communist China was the wave of the future and Taiwan would shrivel and fall into its hands. So why not abandon it and make peace with the communists? The immorality of that action was brushed aside. It was, the supporters of *realpolitik* argued, merely accepting the inevitable. Contrary to Kissinger’s hopes, Taiwan reacted stoically. It denounced the Shanghai Communiqué, stating that any agreement with the Communists “is tantamount to inviting wolves into one’s home” (qtd. in Tyler 144). Other American critics also yelled when Kissinger continued to defend the Shanghai Communiqué. The Shanghai Communiqué had “set up the framework to abandon 15 million people to the tender mercies of a regime that during its tenure in office has managed to slay 34 million of its own citizens” (Tyler 144).

For the United States, the policy certainly paid some good dividends, and the gains from the Nixon visit were extremely important. Developing friendly relations with communist China, with which the U.S. had fought a bitter war in Korea from 1950 to 1953, was considered a key to solving both problems (Hackett 15). Not the least was the interment of twenty-six years of animosity to the Chinese Communists. This hostility had consumed an enormous amount of American energy and had been the reason why the two countries went to war in 1950 and reached the brink of war several times thereafter (Chen 74). *Rapprochement* with China exchanged the threat of war with prospects of peace. But, if Taiwan were to be

abandoned, the entire U.S. policy and strategy framework for Asia would become defunct and relationships would be redefined in ways as yet unknowable, bringing into play further unwanted, unpredictable, nonlinear consequences. Such a loss would at the least accelerate regional instability and animosity, and create a greater likelihood of a genuinely adversarial relationship between China and the United States, one in which China would enjoy a more advantageous correlation of forces than before (Rahman 69+). Finally, Washington gradually lifted its twenty-year economic embargo against the P.R.C. in order to lure Beijing into cooperation with the United States in world politics. By 1972, President Nixon announced the termination of the ban on direct trade with the P.R.C and the United States gained materially by vastly increasing its exports to China (Alexander 224-5). Thus, Sino-U.S. relations began a new chapter. This new chapter was written by the United States in the context of balance of power while Taiwan descended into a decade of political chaos. Surely, China pocketed a lot of concessions, especially U.S. acceptance of his position on Taiwan, and was not asked to give much in return.

Most importantly, Richard Nixon and Chairman Mao Tse-tung reestablished diplomatic contact, not because American and Communist ideologies had become more compatible but because of their respective geopolitical necessities. China and the United States were brought together by a growing concern over the expansion of Soviet military power. Consequently, one of the key points of the Shanghai Communiqué was a message to Moscow: neither the United States nor the PRC would “seek hegemony” in the Asia-Pacific area and would oppose any other power seeking such hegemony.

Conclusion

It was the intensification of the Sino-Soviet tension that turned the Chinese toward accommodation with the United States. Aiming to take strategic advantage of the Sino-Soviet split, rapprochement with China signaled a major change in the course of American foreign policy, though everything about the opening was done in secret. The Shanghai Communiqué pointed to the resolution of a number of dangerous conflicts and promised a calmer and peaceful future. Yet, it was not an unmitigated triumph. In concrete terms, the achievements were more limited. As far as Taiwan was concerned, it was difficult to devise a policy toward Taiwan that would embody an appropriate balance between American exceptionalism and policy making realities. The United States simply broke its written and moral commitments to Taiwan to have full-scale, normalized relations with the People's Republic of China. Finally, it would be misleading to argue that the idea of rapprochement with China was a revolutionary concept as such. The question one should probably ask is what the principal American practitioners thought could be gained by engaging the Soviet Union.

Notes

1. The Brezhnev Doctrine was a Soviet Union foreign policy announced to justify the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in August 1968. Dubbed the “Brezhnev Doctrine of Limited Sovereignty,” the new policy line would rely on the implicit threat of military intervention to prevent any deviation in the region from Soviet-approved norms.

2. Mao Tse-tung was the founding father of the People’s Republic of China from its establishment in 1949. He governed the country until his death in 1976. Zhou Enlai was the first Premier of China serving from 1949 until his death in 1976.

3. For more on that note see, Ignoble Peace Prize? Answers to Correspondents. *The Daily Mail*. November 29, 2005. p. 54.

4. Lin Biao was a major Chinese Communist military leader who died in September 1971 when his plane crashed in Mongolia, following what appeared to be a failed coup to oust Mao.

5. Rogers was informed on July 8. At the time, Kissinger was in Pakistan, the last of several stops before he traveled to Beijing. Kissinger, *White House Years*: 738—9.

6. Kissinger’s visit with Nixon was for a conciliatory purpose. On May 26, Nixon and Brezhnev signed the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT), the most significant of the agreements reached during the summit.

7. The war was fought primarily over control of Korea. For the first time, regional dominance in East Asia shifted from China to Japan.

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CHAPTER FOUR

Détente- An Imaginary Respite amidst the Threat of Destruction

Introduction

Besides the Sino-American rapprochement, the beginning of the 1970s was another significant punctuation point of the twentieth century because the period was witness to marked relaxation in the confrontational policies of the both the United States and the Soviet Union. Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger formulated a new strategic policy known as détente- an expression used to describe eased relations between capitalist and Communist blocs. The expression is, however, often debated as an aspect of a relationship between adversaries instead of as a phenomenon of international evolution. The crucial point was that within the new context of the bilateral relationship between the U.S and the Soviet Union President Nixon changed the course of U.S. foreign policy radically while Kissinger's role in the new relations determined the shape of détente and established its results.

4.1 From Confrontation to Negotiation

By the end of the 1960s, American foreign policy was at low ebb. President Nixon and his national security adviser, Henry Kissinger, believed that the coherence of American diplomacy had been substantially reduced as a result of pursuing ideological conflict against the Soviet Union. No longer would a foreign policy based simply on containment of Soviet expansion be effective in the face of a rapidly changing global balance of power. It was in this situation and with many other pressing problems in mind that Nixon and Kissinger needed to find a new policy toward the USSR in the hopes of simultaneously lowering tensions between the two superpowers and placing restraints upon the exercise of Soviet power (Hartley 3).

Accordingly, while retaining his career-long obsession with fighting communism, Nixon introduced more flexibility into U.S. relations with the Soviet Union. He sought areas in which they could negotiate agreements on particular issues and, while continuing to compete, achieve limited cooperation. And, for the first time in the postwar period, the Nixon administration expected that the differences between the two superpowers could be managed, if not resolved, through negotiations. “After a period of confrontation,” he said in his inaugural address that America was “entering an era of negotiation... to reduce the burden of arms, to strengthen the structure of peace” (“Presidential public Papers 1970” 59). It seems surprising on the surface that Nixon should have made fundamental changes on his foreign policy. After all, he had built his domestic political career as a hard-line anti-communist.

Nixon then wanted to move from an “era of confrontation” to an “era of negotiation,” while not abandoning containment as the strategic foundation of U.S. policy. The new approach was, as it seemed to be, another means of updating containment, a means of containing the Soviet Union in a way that would be consistent with available resources (Genovese 58). What mattered most to Nixon was the advancement of U.S. interests. If cooperation with a communist state served that purpose, he was prepared to modify his Cold War reputation.

President Nixon’s great plans to build a new approach to the Soviet Union required the vision of Henry Kissinger, his national security adviser. Kissinger had criticized the traditional U.S. approach to the communist world with its heavy emphasis on military rather than diplomatic solutions to the problems of the Cold War (Garrison 29). He believed that the United States had to rely on both diplomacy and military power if it were to advance its national interests effectively in an increasingly complicated international arena. Yet, he also remained obsessed with the Soviet Union. Behind his analyses was always some suspicion

that the Soviets were either behind the problems or somehow planning to profit from them. At the core of Soviet strategy, he insisted, was a “ruthless opportunism,” and he countered it with his own version of American responsibility to maintain a balance of power (Crunden 267).

Astonishingly, one of the most intriguing aspects of Kissinger’s beliefs is the difference between Professor Kissinger and national security adviser Kissinger. Until 1969, Kissinger considered the Soviet Union to be the most dangerous enemy of the United States (Draper 231). The change in attitude in 1969 may be subtle but fundamental. Kissinger’s new goal then was the creation of a new framework of international relations in which the Soviet Union could participate as a non-revolutionary power and thereby make possible a resolution of the issues that had perpetuated the Cold War (Powaski 168). For example, the administration’s proposal to end the Vietnam War through its balance-of-power approach would promote stability in the relationship between the superpowers. All of this would be accomplished via a “peace through strength” policy.

Kissingerian new vision of the Soviet-American standoff did not place enough emphasis on the ideological nature of the conflict. From the outset, Kissinger made it clear that he and Nixon saw the United States as moving from “domination to leadership” (Kirchick 99+). This was a transition of America’s role in the world. For much of the postwar period, the United States was preeminent because of its nuclear predominance and economic strength. By the time Nixon entered office, Europe was gaining vitality and Asia was entering the international arena. “[A]n attempt to balance rewards and penalties inseparable from consensus-building,” writes Kissinger, “ran counter to the prevailing Wilsonianism, which tried to bring about a global moral order through the direct application of America’s political values undiluted by compromises with realism” (qtd. in Heilbrunn 45). This criticism of Wilsonianism shows Kissinger as the icon of the realist alternative to Wilsonianism. Thus, he

consequently advocated negotiations with the U.S.S.R. - particularly on arms control, seen as one of the ways to stability -- as long as the United States knew exactly what it wanted and had no illusions about its adversary.

Nixon and Kissinger called their policy “détente.” The word itself came from the French and could mean either a “relaxation of tensions” or a “trigger.” It was the first explanation that was sold to a trusting American public. By this, they meant not an end to the Cold War, for détente was a strategy for conducting relations with an adversary, but a moderation of its intensity. The Soviet Communist Party head, Leonid Brezhnev, held similar views. Détente meant, he said, “normal, equal relations between states,” including a readiness to resolve disputes by peaceful means and respect for each other’s “legitimate interests” (qtd. in Garrison 31). They inevitably knew that improved relations between the United States and the Soviet Union were essential if a grand design were to work. International developments, mainly Soviet help to Hanoi, however, did not convince Americans that substantial progress with the Soviets could be achieved. In a press conference on 6 February, 1969, Nixon said he took a dim view of “instant summitry,” particularly when there were “very grave differences of opinion” between the participants. He was not against a “well-prepared summit” but said it would take time to identify the areas where progress might be possible (“Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States” 5). Yet although Nixon had made it clear that there would be no rush to the summit, both superpowers had powerful incentives to reduce mutual tension.

4.2 Incentives for Détente

Nixon and Kissinger had ambitious geopolitical goals at a time of declining U.S. power, shrinking military budgets, and decreased domestic support for American engagement in the world. In broad terms, Nixon was seeking to implement a grand design in the international arena. He and Kissinger thought that détente would help the United States deal

simultaneously with the USSR and the People's Republic of China by taking advantage of their differences to create a triangular relationship in which American leverage could be exerted (Hoffman 159). Further, Nixon thought that their fear of China might motivate Soviet leaders to stabilize their relationship with Western Europe. And he expected that the Soviets would be willing to abstain from competing for influence in South Asia, the Middle East, Africa, and Latin America¹ so as not to jeopardize chances for progress on more important issues (Larson 156).

In narrower, more immediate terms, Nixon's biggest headache was Vietnam, where half a million U.S. troops were bogged down in a conflict that had bitterly divided American society. The main problem facing the American administration was how to end the Vietnam War and at the same time retain the United States' global role and continue to compete with the Soviet Union when the domestic consensus in favor of containment had broken down (Mason 51). In short, Americans were hoping the Soviet Union would put pressure on North Vietnam to accept Nixon's peace proposal (Genovese 58). Extricating America from the Vietnam quagmire was therefore essential, not just to clear the way for foreign policy initiatives but also to salvage the presidency itself.

Aside from Vietnam, however, Kissinger and Nixon faced a whole host of other challenges and uncertainties. The relationship with the Soviet Union was at a crossroads as the Soviets approached nuclear parity. Nixon also hoped that détente between the superpowers would facilitate the conclusion of a SALT agreement that would place a cap on an alarming Soviet nuclear buildup. Between 1967 and 1969 the size of the Soviet nuclear arsenal had increased from 570 to 1,050 ICBMs, giving the Soviets parity with the United States in numbers of that weapon system (Hanhimaki 28-9). The point here was not whether the world has changed for better or worse because the Soviet Union decided to catch up with

the United States in nuclear power. The Soviet achievement faced the Nixon administration with the choice of accepting nuclear parity or engaging in another futile arms race. With Congress reluctant to authorize additional defense spending, Nixon surmised that SALT was the only feasible way to restrain the Soviet strategic buildup. In addition, the prospect that the Soviets would build a nationwide ABM system made SALT an urgent necessity for the new president (Powaski 167). The awesome danger implicit in nuclear weapons made imperative American efforts to expand cooperation with the Soviet Union. This attitude, however, stands in contrast to Kissinger's warning in his book, *A World Restored*:

Those ages which in retrospect seem most peaceful were least in search of peace... Wherever peace- conceived as the avoidance of war- has been the primary objective of a power or a group of powers, the international system has been at the mercy of the most ruthless member of the international community (1).

The best critique to Kissinger's new held position is, then, Professor Kissinger. Surprisingly, Americans' preference for order, stability, and predictability in the Cold War had advanced to the stage that even their adversaries had begun to share certain aspects of it. Anatoly Dobrynin, Soviet ambassador to U.S. made it clear that

American-Soviet relations were always at the center of [Soviet] diplomacy... basically, whether the West believed it or not, [Soviet] attitude was to have a more constructive relationship with the United States. (CNN Cold War series, episode 16, Détente 1998)

In the larger European context, Eastern Europe was a real concern of the Soviets. Soviet perspectives on international order gradually settled into a bipolar balance of power framework. Initially, order was perceived to rest on the possession and deployment of

sufficient force to control the buffer and discourage Western attempts to challenge the Soviet position in Eastern Europe (Foot 189). Soviet interference in Eastern European states was accompanied by a normative justification- the Brezhnev Doctrine. The argument was essentially that, although each communist party had a right to apply socialist principles, it did not have a right to abandon them. A retreat from socialism in any particular state threatened the viability of the socialist enterprise as a whole. As such, the other members of the socialist community had not only a right but a responsibility to resist any abandonment of socialist orientation (Archibugi, Held, and Kohler 35). Therefore, Moscow made violation of Czechoslovak state sovereignty the cornerstone of its normalization program. However, even after Warsaw Pact forces had brought Czechoslovakia back into the hard-line communist fold, the Soviets were uneasy about the potential for unrest in the other satellite states (Powaski 168). It was clear that Moscow saw détente with the United States as a means to activating its foreign policy and making major advances. It was truly a license to suppress resistance. Achieving order within the international system would make it easier to impose order at home.

Although the Brezhnev Doctrine was applied principally to Eastern Europe, Soviet spokesmen hinted at its applicability to Mao's China. The Chinese feared they could be next on the Soviet list and both sides massed forces across their long, disputed border. In March 1969, the conditions on the Chinese border were even worse, with Mao Tse-tung officially calling the Soviet Union a "revisionist" power which had betrayed the revolutionary heritage of Leninism (Beer 300). Chinese incursions in the east on the Ussuri River resulted in several hundred casualties. In response the Soviets gave the impression they were planning a preemptive nuclear strike. The prospect of a Sino-Soviet war did not seem out of the question. Eventually the Chinese backed down and agreed to talks about the border (Kuisong 26). In light of Moscow's moves, Kissinger wrote Nixon that "the Soviets may become more flexible

in dealing with East West issues.... [T]hus, Soviet concern may have finally reached the point that it can be turned to [America's] advantage" (*White House Years* 170-71). Both the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China could now look to the U.S. as at least a tacit ally. Beijing felt more threatened by Russian new leaders than by their American counterparts. For Moscow, it was a matter of crucial importance to keep China isolated from the West by seeking a Soviet détente with the West.

Economic factors were also important in the Soviet desire to pursue détente with the United States as the Soviet Union suffered from a defective economy. The inability of the Soviet Union's collectivized farms to feed its people was increasingly apparent, as was the declining rate of Soviet industrial growth. Indeed, the relative backwardness of Soviet technology was demonstrated in the way the Soviet space achievements of the late 1950s and early 1960s gave way to repeated failures late in the decade (Powaski 168). Soviet interests would naturally focus on economic and technological issues since they were the areas of greatest weakness and hence greatest potential gain. Thus, the economic importance of détente was probably more important to the Soviet Union than it was to America.

The other reason that pushed the Soviet Union into a better relationship with the United States stemmed from the need to avoid a nuclear confrontation. Here the first fundamental change was in the nature of the military balance of power and the drive toward détente arose not from a problem but an achievement. The nuclear arms race had moved into a new phase.

For some reason, U.S. officialdom has been prone to underestimate Soviet military intentions and capabilities. It was surprised by the rapidity with which the Soviets achieved the A-bomb, the H-bomb, advanced jet engines, and large-scale fissile material production (Wohlstetter no. pag). In the mid-1960s, the Americans did not expect the Soviets to be

willing to pay the exorbitant price necessary to achieve numerical equality in missiles. In 1966, the United States decided to build no more nuclear weapons and to limit itself to improvement of existing weapons (Ruse 479). The publicly announced Soviet military budget rose from 12.8 billion rubles in 1965 to 13.4 in 1966, to 14.5 in 1967, 16.7 in 1968, 17.7 in 1969, and 17.9 in 1970--an increase of 40 percent (Draper 180).

By 1969, it was apparent that the Soviets were heading for nuclear parity with the United States. They had more land-based intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) than the United States. On the other two legs of the strategic "triad"-- submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs) and nuclear-capable bombers-- the United States still enjoyed substantial superiority (Mason 50). But overall by 1969 its nuclear arsenal was only double that of the Soviets, compared with a four-to-one advantage in 1964, and the gap was shrinking every month (Holloway 58-9).

Kissinger, in a briefing paper on nuclear options early in the president's first term, pointed out that unlike in 1962, "now [America] ha[s] no first strike capability," and that it would be "hard to recapture 5 to 1 superiority" (NSC Meeting, February 19, 1969). Kissinger also argued that the Soviet missile force was growing at a rapid rate, deploying large missiles and increasing the size of its Submarine-launched Ballistic Missiles (SLBMs). In addition, the Soviets were developing a nuclear weapon system and already had deployed an antimissile defense system to protect Moscow (Garrison 30). No longer could the United States maintain its nuclear monopoly or clear superiority in the world arena, as it had been able to in the first two postwar decades. The President felt with the nuclear umbrella diminished, America's "bargaining position has shifted. [America] must face facts" (NSC Meeting, February 14, 1969). From a strictly military point of view, the Soviet Union preempted the fullest attention.

The Soviets thus were eager to preserve their about-to-be acquired nuclear weapons parity with the United States, and they saw SALT as the only way to halt or restrain the

deployment of new U.S. multiple-warhead missiles (MIRVs), at least until they had time to deploy their own (Bagby 267). The situation had become one of mutual assured destruction.

On paper, therefore, it was possible to discern compelling reasons for improvement in American-Soviet relations. But politics are about leaders, not paper. The perennial problem was about the way Nixon and Kissinger expect to drag a Soviet Union, whose few contacts with the United States had been more contentious than friendly, into the new order.

4.3 Unsafe Road to Détente

Linkage between issues was the key concept to Kissinger who envisioned a competitive world in which power politics prevailed. As Kissinger explained, “We have ... sought to move forward across a broad range of issues so that progress in one area would add momentum to the progress of other areas” (*Congressional Briefing* 3). To put it somewhat differently, every problem between the United States and the Soviet Union was linked with every other problem; progress on one would affect progress on all. This linkage concept also appealed to Nixon. After only a week in office, he subscribed to it in a statement of his own:

[W]hat I want to... see... [is] that we have strategic arms talks in a way and at a time that will promote, if possible, progress on outstanding political problems at the same time... problems in which the United States and the Soviet Union, acting together, can serve the cause of peace (“Text of President Nixon’s News Conference on January 27, 1969 A8).

However, America’s constitutional separation of powers left the president frequently at the mercy of Congress. Nixon therefore came to power convinced that he had to conduct foreign policy in maximum secrecy.

February 17, 1969, stood out as one of the defining moments of Soviet-American relations. To carry out the new policy, a meeting was held between Richard Nixon and Anatoly Dobrynin- Moscow's ambassador to six U.S. presidents. Nixon invited the Soviet ambassador to bypass the State Department on important issues and deal directly and secretly with Kissinger (Hanhimäki 32). This was deliberately and systematically done to deprive the State Department of every area that traditionally pertained to it. U.S. Secretary of State Bill Rogers was subjected to such degradation for different reasons.

Kissinger's and Nixon's divergent explanations show each of them retrospectively making the other responsible. Kissinger explains that Nixon "wished to establish his dominance over negotiations with the Soviet Union" and, therefore, "required the exclusion of Rogers [U.S. Secretary of State], who might be too anxious and who might claim credit for whatever progress might be made..." Nixon, on the other hand, relates that "Kissinger had suggested that we develop a private channel between Dobrynin and him." (qtd. in Draper 221). In any case, Secretary of State Rogers was left out of the first meeting between Nixon and Soviet Ambassador Anatoly Dobrynin. This approach outflanked also Congress in the formulation of foreign policy. Détente was to be the preserve of the White House even if it meant avoiding needed expert advice on the technically complicated aspects of arms control (Hoff 188). Curiously, had it not been for the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, the talks would have been over before Nixon was in office. The first SALT conference was originally scheduled to be held in July 1968. When Soviet tanks rumbled into Czechoslovakia, however, it was decided to postpone the SALT meetings until November 1969.

Having gotten his big chance, Kissinger was not going to let anyone else interfere with his operation. He and Dobrynin kept up what was called "the back channel," through which passed countless pieces of information in an effort to prevent misunderstandings and to work

out linkages (Cruniden 268). In his memoirs, Dobrynin reflected that the extensive use of this back channel was “unprecedented in [his] experience and perhaps in the annals of diplomacy” (199-201). According to Dobrynin, “... any references to the confidential channel [between Kissinger and Dobrynin] were cut out. Some messages were not shown to [Rogers] at all” (*In Confidence* 240).

Certainly, Kissinger's creation of a “back channel” to the Soviets gave him more control over policy, while the meetings became a way for the White House to avoid confrontations with the State Department. Dobrynin identified Kissinger as the dominating influence on the president because he had “gathered in his hands the collection and personal presentation to the president of all foreign policy data that comes to the White House” (qtd. in Garrison 35). Suddenly, Kissinger had a starring role. And he was not about to let anyone else share the spotlight with him.

Kissinger and especially Nixon had a different notion of how nuclear weapons affected international relations, however. In his first official meeting with the Soviet ambassador Anatoly Dobrynin, Nixon cautioned that “there is no guarantee that freezing strategic weapons” would bring about peace. “History makes it clear that wars result from political differences and problems” (“Ambassador Dobrynin’s Initial Call on the President” February 17, 1969). Consequently, a cardinal principle of American diplomacy was tying concessions in one aspect of superpower relations, such as arms control, to progress on priority issues for America, notably Vietnam.

Although this action appeared to be big powers using little powers as pawns, it was a means to complement the concert Nixon and Kissinger sought. In a statement at the beginning of his presidency, Nixon told Cabinet members that “the Soviet leaders should be brought to understand that they cannot expect to reap the benefits of cooperation in one area while

seeking to take advantage of tension or confrontation elsewhere” (Nixon to Laird and Rogers, Feb. 4, 1969). To draw Soviet concessions, both deterrents and inducements would have to be used. Thus, Nixon was still ready to apply America’s power with calculated ruthlessness, as his secret bombing of Cambodia in 1969 showed. And he had no doubt about the global superiority of the American way. Indeed he considered Wilson “[America’s] greatest President of this century” because he had the “greatest vision of America’s world role.” Wilson failed, insisted Nixon, because “he wasn’t practical enough” (qtd. in Will 30-1).

Due to delays on the Soviet side, it was not until October 25, 1969, that spokesmen for both sides announced that negotiations on curbing the strategic arms race would begin on November 17 in Helsinki, Finland. In November 1969, the two superpowers began Strategic Arms Limitation Talks. Although the two parties made some progress, the talks quickly bogged down. The reason for the slow pace of the SALT negotiations lay in large part in the U.S. insistence on pursuing linkage (Garrison31). Dobrynin found Kissinger evasive about a summit, seeking to link this to progress on other issues including Vietnam. For all these reasons there was no rush to a summit in 1969 (Kissinger’s *White House Years* 136). SALT talks, in other words, were not to be treated as their own separate category but were intertwined with regional issues.

The largest obstacle to progress involved whether both offensive and defensive weapons should be included in a treaty. The Soviets wanted an agreement limiting only defensive weapons, so that they could restrict deployment of the American ABM system while being free to develop their own MIRV program. On the other hand, the United States wanted to limit both offensive and defensive weapons systems so as to block development of a Soviet MIRV capability, which, when combined with Soviet quantitative superiority in missiles, would give the Soviets an enormous lead in number of warheads (Powaski 170). As

the real agenda was being shaped privately in the back channel, the American SALT negotiator, Gerald Smith, bitterly resented the resulting confusion in conducting foreign policy. Smith was more than once put in the humiliating position of bargaining with Soviet representatives without knowing what Kissinger had already agreed to. He consequently argued that this uncoordinated “double-track” negotiating process resulted in “doubletalk” (444).

In the spring of 1970, when PAVN troops entered Cambodia, the Soviet Union had approved in advance, justifying Hanoi’s move in terms of self-defense and human rights. As Kissinger’s secret talks with the North Vietnamese in Paris were getting nowhere, Nixon sent troops into Cambodia to neutralize the communist sanctuaries. During the bombing of Cambodia, Nixon stated that “looking back over the past year we have been praised for all the wrong things: Okinawa, SALT, germs, Nixon Doctrine. Now [we are] finally doing the right thing” (*Haldeman’s Diary Entry*). The Soviets did not react to the Cambodian incursion in an overtly aggressive manner. Naturally, the Kremlin had to protest. Kissinger noted to Nixon that the Soviets made no new public commitment to Hanoi but simply gave the United States “a general warning.” To be sure, the Soviet side linked the incursion to the general development of Soviet-American relations and progress in SALT negotiations (Kissinger to Nixon, May 6, 1970). But the conflict did have the most profound effects on the course of world politics, in a way that perhaps no one could have predicted.

The Soviet Union saw the self-inflicted American defeat in Cambodia as signaling a true shift in the correlation of forces- that is, the tides of world politics were definitely flowing toward Communism. The Soviets became much more self-confident. The realities of Cold War politics were reasserted, and Cambodia and its people were again isolated by an American-led political and economic embargo based on Vietnam’s continued military

involvement in the country as well as the Soviet Union's economic and ideological support to the Vietnamese-backed and communist-inspired People's Republic of Kampuchea (PRK) (Curtis 6). However, the roadblocks to peace and the massive domestic protests prompted Americans to make a dramatic leap toward a summit. Nixon believed this would outflank the antiwar lobby and help his party in the midterm elections that autumn (Powaski 174). But the Soviets had been reluctant to participate in one so soon after the U.S. incursion in Cambodia. Kissinger had also to concede that "the Soviets [were] not yet ready to commit themselves [to a summit] officially" (*White House Years* 552–6). It was clear that the president would not have a summit before the November 1970 mid-term congressional elections.

In the late summer of 1970, as the leaders of the United States and the Soviet Union were moving tentatively toward détente, a significant incident occurred. On 16 September, 1970, just before congressional elections, American leaders learned that they had been deceived by Soviet diplomats. U2 planes revealed that the Soviets were secretly building a base for their submarines at Cuba's Cienfuegos Bay, clearly with the intention of using this base to support their own expanding naval presence on the world ocean (Garthoff 144). This activity triggered a crisis for the central decision makers of the United States who perceived a threat to the 1962 agreement on Cuba².

More disturbing still, the submarine base posed a more gigantic threat than the land-based missiles the Soviets had attempted to deploy in 1962. Thus, the United States viewed nuclear missiles stationed off the coast of Florida as a serious danger to military security (Harvey 76). Since the base might soon become operational and capable of offensive action, the United States had a limited time available for response. Nixon, though distracted by other matters, said publicly that America viewed this development with the "utmost seriousness,"

and Kissinger, secretly as usual, used stronger terms to the Soviet ambassador. He had spelled out the full basis for, and extent of, American concern (*White House Years* 632-52).

By early October the “mini-crisis” was resolved. Backing down on October 6, the Soviet ambassador, Anatoly Dobrynin, told Kissinger that the base would not be constructed. Kissinger presented this episode as a successful instance of foreign policy management:

In autumn of 1970 Moscow chose to test whether . . . [détente] reflected indecision, domestic weakness due to Vietnam, or the strategy of a serious government. Having been given the answer, Moscow permitted Cienfuegos to recede once more into well-deserved obscurity. (*White House Years* 652)

The issue, then, was resolved by quiet diplomacy. Nonetheless it was significant because of what it represented to the leaders on both sides with respect to conflict management in a new era of political relations and under an emerging new strategic relationship. The Soviet leaders were seeking to test the relationship of the two powers in a dawning age of American strategy. The American leaders were seeking to contain what they regarded as Soviet expansionist impulses and to manage the emergence of Soviet power under the new conditions of parity³.

The SALT negotiations were further complicated by the reinvigorated domestic debate in the United States over nuclear weapons. At the heart of it was the highly publicized and growing opposition to anti-ballistic missiles (ABMs) on the part of leading Democrats like Edmund Muskie, Frank Church, and Hubert Humphrey. Their argument was that ABM systems could not knock out every incoming missile, so each side would have an incentive to build more missiles and flood its adversary’s defenses. More destabilizing still was the idea that each side could strike before the other’s defensive system was operational (Bundy 250-3).

Such objections led the senators to oppose funding for further development of ABM while Kissinger resented congressional interference in arms policy. The Soviets undoubtedly hoped to use such pressure as well as Nixon's obvious reelection calculations to their advantage. The public negotiations began in the spring of 1971.

4.4 The Soviet-American Thaw 1971

On 20 May, 1971, a breakthrough occurred in SALT. After a flurry in the back channel, the Soviets finally agreed to participate in talks that would eventually produce limits on both offensive as well as defensive nuclear weapons' systems. Both American and Soviet sides agreed that the treaty would focus on defensive weapons (ABM), while a separate interim agreement would place a ceiling on the numbers of offensive missiles (SALT), or, ICBMs (Powaski 171-3). The announcement contrasted with the earlier American insistence on a comprehensive agreement to limit all offensive and defensive weapons (Garthoff 166-8). Once again, Secretary Rogers and the State Department had no more to say. Kissinger's group, instead, prepared and coordinated the agreements. The announcement, however, was the most dramatic one Nixon had yet made on issues having to do with Soviet-American relations.

The announcement was greeted with almost universal public approval, and, in sum, the President could finally claim to have concluded a practical step on the road to launching détente. But the Soviets appeared in no hurry to set a date for the prospective superpower summit while the Nixon administration would prefer to hold the summit in the fall of 1971 (Memcons Kissinger–Dobrynin June 1971). The superpowers also made significant progress in promoting trade. In May 1971, as a part of the SALT breakthrough negotiated that month, the United States secretly agreed to sell the Soviets \$136 million worth of grain (Powaski 174). While the announcement was a political triumph for Nixon, the conceptual

breakthrough also represented another bureaucratic victory for Kissinger. He had certainly confirmed his central role as the architect of détente.

In July 1971, after Kissinger's secret trip to Beijing, Nixon made a subsequent announcement that he would pay an official visit to China in 1972. The Soviet government was not pleased with the news. Nixon bluntly told Kissinger on his return: "We're doing the China thing to screw the Russians and help us in Vietnam . . . and maybe down the road to have some relations with China" (July 22, 1971 note2). Cautiously, before Nixon's broadcast on July 15, 1971, Kissinger had phoned Ambassador Dobrynin to emphasize that rapprochement with China was not directed against the USSR (Powaski 173). Yet, the precise impact of the China opening on Soviet policy is a matter of dispute.

The generally accepted view is that at this point Kissinger's secret trip to China suddenly transformed the nature of the Soviet-American relationship. Nixon and Kissinger, on the one hand, had claimed that the opening to China spurred the Soviets to assume a more accommodating attitude toward the United States. Kissinger also added that when Dobrynin met him on July 19, just after the president's broadcast, he found the ambassador "for the first time in [Kissinger's] experience with him, totally insecure" (Kissinger-Dobrynin memcon, July 19, 1971). On the other hand, by going to China, Kissinger had heightened and complicated the Sino-Soviet competition in Indochina. In the second half of 1971 both Moscow and Beijing responded by increasing their military and economic aid to Hanoi, not by pressing for concessions in the Paris negotiations (Gaiduk 231-2).

In October 1971, the Soviet head of state, Nikolai Podgorny, went to Hanoi. But the visit, as noted above, did little to advance Kissinger's search for an honorable peace. Instead, the Soviets increased their military shipments to North Vietnam and hence encouraged Hanoi's plans for the 1972 Spring Offensive (Gaiduk 239-241). In the end, this could only encourage the North Vietnamese to continue fighting while negotiating. Eventually, Nixon

exploited a meeting with the Soviet minister of Foreign Affairs, Andrei Gromyko, at the White House on September 29 to pretend that the Soviet foreign minister had offered a surprise invitation to visit Moscow.⁴ On October 12, Nixon announced in a news conference that a summit would be held in late May 1972. He said he would be meeting with the Soviet “leaders,” in the plural, but admitted that Brezhnev was “the major center of power” (Kissinger’s *White House Years* 834–40). On Dobrynin’s advice, Nixon started addressing his messages to Brezhnev rather than to any other Soviet official.

Further, in an attempt to humiliate the Chinese, the Soviet Union signed a treaty of friendship with India on 9 August, 1971. It provided for mutual consultation and military assistance should either party be threatened by a third country. For the Soviets, the treaty was, in large measure, a reaffirmation of its growing role on the South Asian subcontinent and an opportunity to respond to the opening to China with a geopolitical move of its own. For India, its domestic resources and efforts were sufficient to cope with the Pakistani threat. The Chinese threat, however, required support from allies. In its efforts to cope with this threat, the Indian political leadership carefully forged a relationship with the Soviet Union (Sumit 221). In sum, Soviet aid and relations with Moscow were aimed at Islamabad but also the United States and China.

In Kissinger's view, the treaty was an opportunity for the Soviet Union “to demonstrate Chinese impotence and to humiliate a friend of both China and the United States” (*White House Years* 867). Interestingly, on August 10, the day after signing the Friendship Treaty with India, the Soviet Union issued the formal invitation to President Nixon for a summit meeting in Moscow in May or June 1972. The chief point of the alliance, however, was to make it possible for India to move against Pakistan with confidence. Consequently, the Moscow summit was nearly disrupted by a war between India and Pakistan.

The crisis began when Pakistani East Bengal, which was separated from western Pakistan by 1,000 miles of hostile Indian Territory, arose in full revolt against the central authorities in Islamabad. Before signing the friendship treaty with the Soviet Union, India's perennial hostility toward Pakistan had been restrained by the fear of China, which had befriended the Pakistanis. Now India was determined to achieve its objective against Pakistan through armed conflict. With the encouragement of Moscow, the Indians stepped up their assistance to the East Bengal rebels, thereby challenging not only Pakistan but China as well (Powaski 174-5). On November 21, 1971, India's military confrontation with Pakistan turned into open warfare while a Pakistani brutal civil war was already in progress.

Indian military action was meant to weaken the Pakistani state and to underscore the disillusionment of the Bengali Muslim majority in East Pakistan (Sumit 654). Clearly, it invaded to depose the Pakistani government and allow the breakaway faction to take control by assisting the Bengali independence fighters with training, weaponry, and sanctuaries (Lester and Jalali 66+). As the Indian forces overran East Bengal, the Nixon administration warned the Soviets, on December 10, that the United States was prepared to use force against India if the Indians attacked Pakistan. To reinforce his warning, the President ordered a U.S. naval task force into the Bay of Bengal. Simultaneously, the Chinese began to mass troops on the frontiers of Sikkim and Bhutan, two Indian protectorates (Powaski 175). The Soviets responded to the Sino-American moves by sending their own naval units into the Indian Ocean and by issuing thinly veiled nuclear threats against the Chinese.

After repeated warnings to India to desist from this activity, Pakistan attacked India. At the height of the 1971 Indo-Pakistani conflict, Kissinger suggested that if "Pakistan [were] swallowed by India, China [would be] destroyed, defeated, humiliated by the Soviet Union, it [would] be a change in the world balance of power of such magnitude that the security of the

United States [might] be forever weakened, certainly for decades” (Oval Office Conversation no. 637–3 Dec12, 1971).

The other ally, China, issued statements of outrage condemning the Indians and fully supporting Pakistan. Yet, China’s outrage could not prevent the humiliation of Pakistan. Within two weeks, India had routed the Pakistani forces and won a decisive victory. This resulted in the breakup of East from West Pakistan and the creation of the independent state of Bangladesh. While the United States succeeded in defending the territorial integrity of western Pakistan, it did not prevent East Bengal from proclaiming its independence as Bangladesh. The loss of East Pakistan was not seen as a priority requiring military intervention. An ally of the United States and a friend of China was defeated. On the Indian’s side, it was to a large extent India’s treaty of friendship with the Soviet Union which made possible Indian’s invasion of East Pakistan. The treaty certainly gave India the backing, both military and psychological; to embark upon her armed conflict (Ziring 231). Pakistan, on the other side, received no material assistance from the United States. In response to the humiliation, Pakistan withdrew from the SEATO alliance in 1972.

Six months later, in January 1972, President Nixon elaborated on his theme. He fitted the new era of the big five into the traditional theory of balance and power, which he praised as having been the only basis for an extended period of peace in the history of the world. “It is when one nation becomes infinitely more powerful in relation to its potential competitor that the danger of war arises,” he explained. “So I believe in a world in which the United States is powerful. I think it will be a safer world and a better world if we have a strong, healthy United States, Europe, Soviet Union, China, Japan, each balancing the other, not playing one against the other, an even balance” (qtd. in Levering 111). In any event, this Presidential analysis of the world in 1972 seemed to make the balance of power official doctrine, with each of the five

so strong in relation to the others that they could play independent roles and constitute “an even balance” (Draper 182). Yet, conventional wisdom in Washington was that the United States should be infinitely more powerful in relation to its “potential competitor.” Moreover, the five powers concerned did not have the same range of resources at their disposal. The United States and the Soviet Union possessed a degree of military and economic resources which the other three did not.

Brezhnev shared Nixon’s concern that everything should come to the boil nicely at the summit. In February 1972, after discussions with the State Department, the Soviet government agreed to reopen Lend-Lease settlement talks as part of a larger trade agreement. A grain deal was now particularly important: in March, the Central Committee had held emergency discussions about the poor crop of winter wheat. Like the White House, however, the Kremlin also saw more at stake than a few substantive deals that would yield economic and political benefits (Powaski 174). In return, the Nixon administration announced that it would attempt to obtain congressional authorization to reduce restrictions on U.S. exports to the Soviet Union as well as grant the Soviet Union most-favored-nation status, by imposing America's lowest tariff rate.

It seemed clear that the Nixon administration was now willing to take the Soviet Union seriously as an equal partner, and this represented a dramatic tilt in the balance of the Cold War. Secretly, Kissinger even briefed the Soviet ambassador on exactly what the U.S. secretary of state, William Rogers, did and did not know about the diplomacy he was supposed to oversee (Dobrynin 239–40). The summit was now coming into view and it looked alluring to both sides. Several useful bilateral agreements were close to completion on issues such as health, space and the environment. The SALT talks were progressing and both leaders, eyeing their domestic critics, wanted to sign an agreement when they met in May.

But on March 30, the North Vietnamese army mounted a new offensive into the south. Moreover the north's breakthrough showed that it was still receiving substantial logistic support from Moscow and Beijing. During the offensive, Nixon fumed:

We're going to ... destroy the goddamn country, believe me, I mean destroy it if necessary.... By a nuclear weapon, I mean that we will bomb the living bejeezus out of North Vietnam and then if anybody interferes we will threaten the nuclear weapons. (Conversation between Nixon and Kissinger, April 19, 1972)

President Nixon escalated the bombing. But he also had to address a more fundamental question: should he call off the Moscow summit as well? For Nixon, Vietnam and reelection were the overriding priorities. Kissinger, in contrast, gave the summit higher priority; partly because he believed that the U.S. could still exert leverage on Hanoi through Moscow. After the North Vietnamese offensive, Dobrynin increased the pressure arguing that the visit would be an opportunity to discuss Indochina as well as the summit. Kissinger's evident keenness to go to Moscow fuelled Nixon's innate suspicions, "Henry wants to talk about the summit," he told H. R. Haldeman, the White House chief of staff, "He just loves this excuse for going over there" (FRUS 1969-76 docs94-5). In April, discussions over the summit were sketched in outline on Kissinger's talks with Brezhnev. In fact, Kissinger needed to discuss the summit for more personal reasons. He was operating way beyond Nixon's instructions. In April 21, in fact, Nixon instructed Alexander Haig to tell Kissinger that the "summit is not to be discussed further until Vietnam is settled" (FRUS 1969-76 docs136). Next day, April 22, the United States, Kissinger told Brezhnev, had two principal objectives in Vietnam:

to bring about an honorable withdrawal of all our forces... [and] to put a time interval between our withdrawal and the political process which would then start. We are prepared to let the real balance of forces in Vietnam determine the future of Vietnam . . . [w]e are not committed to a permanent political involvement there. (FRUS 1969–76 486)

In other words, the Nixon administration would tolerate a united, communist Vietnam as long as this did not seem the direct result of American withdrawal. Brezhnev had promised only to submit Kissinger's proposals to Hanoi, not to press for their acceptance.

As with Beijing in July 1971, the April visit was concealed from most of the administration; all the substantive agreements were in fact accepted by Henry Kissinger without the participation of the U.S. SALT delegation, while Rogers was informed only a few hours before Kissinger took off. The U.S. embassy knew nothing of his trip until Kissinger summoned Ambassador Jacob Beam just before flying home to Washington. In his memoirs, Kissinger defended his personal, secret diplomacy as a necessary response to the leaks. The way, for instance, that he bypassed the U.S. ambassador when visiting Moscow in April 1972 was attributed to “[the] strange system of government”; his persistent sidelining of Gerard Smith in the SALT talks was blamed on “the administrative practices of the Nixon Administration.” It is “difficult,” he argued, “for a President to make new departures through the ‘system’” (*White House Years* 840). Having marginalized the State Department, Kissinger could not expect much support from its embittered staff. These methods undermined long-term support for administration policies, and ultimately for the administration itself. Kissinger flew home on April 24. He was returning with, essentially, the outlines of the summit, but he had negotiated most of them on his own initiative having ignored Nixon's instructions to sort out Vietnam before anything else.

On 1 May, 1972, Nixon suddenly had to face the possibility of total defeat in Indochina. The North Vietnamese evidently thought victory was so close that they did not need even to pretend to negotiate. Equally disturbing to Nixon and Kissinger, Soviet pressure was irrelevant: either Hanoi felt able to ignore it or Moscow was not exerting any. Yet, evidently, Moscow had given massive military aid to North Vietnam. A message from Brezhnev, which Nixon received on May 1, strengthened the latter impression: the Soviet leader urged American restraint in Vietnam to expedite negotiations and save their meeting (qtd. in Hoff 219). Nixon did not want U.S. policy in Vietnam to be held hostage by the summit. He had to be free to bomb North Vietnam with the gloves off, but that would make it very difficult for the Moscow meeting to take place. On May 8, the President spoke to the nation announcing “decisive military action to end the war” (Nixon, address of May 8, 1972).

Of course, there were critics. The Soviets quickly abhorred the actions of the Nixon administration. On May 10, 1972, Dobrynin called with the inevitable message of protest (Hanhimäki 217). Yet, there was no rush to sever relations with the United States over its campaign against the Vietnamese. The White House was relieved that it was delivered via the back channel, not publicly, and that it was relatively mild in tone. It became clear that the Soviets intended business as usual. “The general feeling now, even on Henry’s part,” Haldeman wrote on May 11, “is that the Summit is going to be on rather than off” (FRUS 1969–76, doc. 214). Clearly, Americans were put in the absurd position of prosecuting an anti-communist campaign against an impoverished country of Vietnam while extending the hand of friendship to the center of world communism, the Soviet Union. In short, at SALT it was Henry Kissinger, and no one else, who arranged America’s terms.

4.5 The May Summit 1972

Three months after his China trip, Nixon, accompanied by Kissinger and Rogers, went to Moscow in May 1972, on the first visit by a U.S. president since 1945. Many of the big issues had been settled in advance and were now being formalized in a politically acceptable way. Nixon, however, did not see any value in signing an agreement with the Soviets for its own sake. With the Vietnam War still unresolved, Nixon told Kissinger, “I don’t give a damn about SALT; I just couldn’t care less about it” (Conversation between Nixon and Kissinger, May 6, 1972, 752).

Nixon thus felt that none of the technical issues or treaty agreements had any worth if the core, underlying geopolitical tensions remained unresolved. Therefore, Nixon’s trip to Moscow was all the more surprising as it came on the heels of a major escalation of the war in Vietnam by the United States. But Kissinger hoped that the inducements offered behind the scenes would have an effect (Beer 299). Kissinger did not, however, draw attention to the concessions he made on Vietnam during the summit. Building on his remarks the month before, he told Soviet minister of Foreign Affairs, Gromyko, on May 27 that the Americans were ready to withdraw if the war stopped and then “leave the struggle to the Vietnamese . . . All [the Americans] ask is a degree of time so as to leave Vietnam for Americans in a better perspective. . . [Americans] are prepared to leave so that a Communist victory is not excluded” (qtd. in Gaiduk 240). In other words, it was not America’s peace with honor but a face-saving interval.

Most importantly, at the core of the détente lay the issue of arms control. Nixon and Kissinger brought a radical change in Washington’s nuclear arms policy by insisting that sufficiency rather than superiority was enough. Sufficiency reflected the assumption that it would be prohibitively and unnecessarily costly to maintain U.S. nuclear superiority in

numbers of strategic missiles (Powaski 170). The Soviet Union had developed its strategic offensive forces in the 1960s and both sides were now worried about the costs of the arms race and the fact that either side might take a decisive lead in a particular area (Mason 52). Looking beyond merely an arms control agreement, the Soviets hoped to conclude a pact renouncing nuclear war and another articulating the basic principles of Soviet-American relations. Thus, Nixon, in Moscow, signed the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT I) with Leonid Brezhnev. It was the first superpower accord to regulate the nuclear arms race thus formalizing détente between Moscow and Washington.

The Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT), which began in 1969, was about arms control, not disarmament. The SALT I negotiations, however, failed to reach a comprehensive agreement limiting strategic weapons. Instead, two lesser agreements were reached. First, in return for a mutual pledge to drop production of an antiballistic missile (ABM) system, there was an interim agreement fixing a five-year freeze on offensive strategic delivery vehicles. The agreement attempted to establish a rough balance of parity between the offensive nuclear arsenals of the two superpowers though America was duped into accepting inferiority in offensive missiles. The agreement seemed to give the Soviet Union a decided advantage: 1,618 land-based ICBMs and 740 sub-launched ballistic missiles, or SLBMs; the comparable U.S. figures were 1,054 land-based ICBMs and 656 submarines (SLBMs) (Mason 52-3). On the American side, the U.S. retained a two-to-one numerical advantage in nuclear warheads and superiority in strategic bombers; it had three times as many long-range bombers as the Soviet Union: 460 in 1972 for America to 120 for the Soviets. Second, a treaty was signed limiting the deployment of antiballistic missile systems (ABMs) to two for each country (Mason 52-3). In sum, what the SALT I treaty in effect did was to give the Soviets a numerical advantage in missiles which was offset by the American technological and numerical lead in warheads.

Judging from their memoirs, the president and his national security advisor seemed to share this view. Nixon stated that "...the ABM treaty stopped what inevitably would have become a defensive arms race, with untold billions of dollars being spent on each side." The treaty made "permanent the concept of deterrence through 'mutual terror'" (*RN* 617-8). Kissinger claimed, "...the fundamental achievement was to sketch the outline on which coexistence between the democracies and the Soviet system must be based. SALT embodied our conviction that a wildly spiraling nuclear arms race was in no country's interest and enhanced no one's security" (*White House Years* 1253-4). Maintaining stability by arms control, however, does not affect international relations positively because arms race does not necessarily lead to war.

Nixon was proud of his major accomplishment. Back in the U.S, the president listed the various agreements signed, of which the "most important" were the arms accords:

Three-fifths of all the people alive in the world today have spent their whole lifetimes under the shadow of a nuclear war which could be touched off by the arms race among the great powers. Last Friday in Moscow we witnessed the beginning of the end of that era which begun in 1945. We took the first step toward a new era of mutually agreed restraint and arms limitation between the two principal nuclear nations (Address of June 1, 1972).

While President Nixon and his national security adviser Kissinger presided over a quest for limited nuclear options, others raised searching questions about the value or relevance of that approach. It seemed ironic and contrary to logical thinking that any nation, especially a superpower like the United States, would agree to remain defenseless in hopes of maintaining strategic stability. SALT was also criticized for not imposing sufficiently severe limitations on the United States and the Soviet Union. The ABM treaty, for example, limited

each side to two ABM sites of no more than 100 missile launchers each. One site could protect the country's capital (Moscow or Washington) and the other could protect a major ICBM site. But, as it turned out, neither side intended to build an ABM system to the extent permitted by SALT I. Further, SALT has been called a 'crucial failure' because it did not include the development of MIRVs, which first the United States and then the Soviet Union continued to deploy (Hoffmann 54). While this leaves the Soviets with their superiority in throw-weight, it leaves Americans with theirs in warheads. John M. Ashbrook, a conservative Republican member of the House of Representatives denounced the agreement as one that would "lock the Soviet Union into unchallengeable superiority, and plunge the United States and its allies into a decade of danger" (Hersh 550).

Also at the 1972 summit, the United States and the Soviet Union, agreeing that there was no alternative to peaceful coexistence, signed a document entitled "Basic Principles of Relations between the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics." Not a treaty, it attempted to set up ground rules to make superpower competition less dangerous. Both sides pledged to avoid confrontation and to coexist peacefully (Lafeber 651-652). Attaching little importance to this document, Nixon dismissed it as an aspiration. The Soviets, however, regarded it as the summit's most important accomplishment- the first acceptance of the Soviet Union's entitlement to equal security. The Soviet interpretation of peaceful co-existence was never the same as that of the United States. The Russian political newspaper associated with the Communist party of the Soviet Union, Pravda, on August 22, 1973, stated that "... the implementation of the principles of peaceful co-existence means: securing the conditions for the peaceful development of the socialist countries... preventing imperialist interference in other countries' internal affairs particularly for the purpose of suppressing the people's liberation struggle... and preventing the use of force to resolve conflicts between states" (qtd. in Cahn 51).

Besides, the fact that Nixon felt obliged to sign a document so advantageous to the Soviet Union demonstrated how far the 'correlation of forces' between the two sides had shifted. Complementing SALT and the Basic Principles, the two leaders also concluded other agreements for economic and social cooperation. The Soviet Union had everything to gain and nothing to lose by such deals. Nixon agreed to extend most favored nation (MFN) trading status to the Soviet Union which would reduce American tariffs on imports of Soviet goods.⁵

These specific agreements on trade, played up by the Soviet media, also struck a chord. There was a genuine sense of optimism that summitry could literally deliver the goods to the people. In a few months' time, the Soviets bought over 19 million tons of U.S. grain worth \$ 1.2 billion. This was the largest purchase of grain in history, and all of it was bought at bottom prices. Within a short time after the Soviet purchase, however, the international price of wheat had doubled (Goldman 194). It is hard to believe that this was a complete surprise to Americans. Certainly, Kissinger tried to use the sales of cheap grain as leverage on the Soviets for help in Vietnam. The impact of this policy on the United States was of little concern to him. If food power could be used effectively in the building of a stable international order, the cost would be a small price for Americans to pay. Further, the Soviets agreed to pay \$722 million to settle their Lend-Lease debt. In fact, they paid only \$32 million, and then reneged on the rest (Bagby 269). Truly, this was a welfare program for the Soviet Union.

Did détente fail then? Actually, it had never been really tried because each country had such different conceptions of what détente entailed. Besides, many factors conspired to ensure that this new policy would be strongly challenged. Within a few months, the entire fabric was in danger of being torn to shreds as many serious charges were aired.

The war in Vietnam was the main thorn in the flesh of better US-Soviet relations. Here the American attempt to link détente to a world-wide U.S.-Soviet understanding failed since

Moscow refused to put pressure on Hanoi. There were also questions about Soviet compliance with the Strategic Arms Limitations Talks agreements. In June 1973 Brezhnev spent a week in the United States. But there was nothing on the scale of the ABM Treaty; moreover no real progress was made on a full-scale arms control agreement—SALT II. On arms control, the Pentagon blocked further negotiations, angry at the inequality of the SALT I interim freeze (Reynolds 277). In 1968, when the first SALT talks were scheduled, the United States possessed 1,054 intercontinental ballistic missiles; the Soviets had only 850. By 1975, however, the Soviets had 1,618 long-range missiles deployed while Americans, in turn, still had 1,054. In other words, a five-to-four American advantage had changed to an eight-to-five Soviet superiority. The balance of military power was shifting strongly in favor of the Soviet Union. In other words, the Soviets were not deterred by détente. While the United States has stood still, the Soviet Union has been continuously moving forward.

Kissinger's détente, for all its innovativeness, did not survive the Ford administration. In 1976, President Gerald Ford, Nixon's successor, banned the word "détente" from the official diplomatic lexicon. Détente, in short, became an easy target when performance failed to meet promise.

Conclusion

In pursuing détente, Nixon and Kissinger were not trying to retreat from world competition with Communism. They sought rather to readjust to new realities, and satisfying America's desire for a relaxation of tensions. Yet, détente also symbolized White House control of foreign policy above and beyond Congress and the State Department as the back channel excluded them from the most important discussions about key issues, such as Vietnam, and arms control negotiations. American acceptance of Soviet nuclear parity represented the official recognition of the emergence of the Soviet Union as a co-equal superpower with the United States. Soviet's goal to be treated like an equal in the

international arena was thus easily achieved. But the underlying reason that the era of détente failed to achieve is the high moral ground of foreign policy. In one of the most fascinating gaps between perception and reality, the anti-morality of détente has brought American policy to a breaking point. The new reality was that the totalitarian repressive Soviet Union gained not only military parity but also political parity. Kissinger and his president, as it seemed to be, could not change that one uncomfortable fact.

Notes

1. In fact, both the United States and the Soviet Union competed for influence by proxy in the Third World as decolonization gained momentum in the 1950s and early 1960s. Consequently, Cuba, Chile, Vietnam and the Arabs were often allied with communist groups, or perceived in the West to be allied with communists.

2. The Cuban Missile Crisis is generally regarded as the moment in which the Cold War came closest to turning into a nuclear conflict. Its agreement, publicly, states that the Soviets would dismantle their offensive weapons in Cuba and return them to the Soviet Union, subject to United Nations verification, in exchange for a U.S. public declaration and agreement never to invade Cuba.

3. Other problems in 1970-the election of a Marxist, Salvadore Allende, as president of Chile, the Syrian invasion of Jordan, and the U.S. discovery of a Soviet submarine base in Cienfuegos, Cuba-blocked a summit meeting the following year.

4. Andrei Gromyko served as Soviet Minister of Foreign Affairs (1957-1985) and was responsible for many top decisions on Soviet foreign policy until he retired in 1988.

5. "Most Favored Nation" means the country which is recipient of this treatment must, normally, receive equal trade advantages as the "most favored nation" by the country granting such treatment. The advantages include low tariffs or high import quotas.

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CONCLUSION

In the American wilderness, the new comers of the 17th century created a new life grounded on original sinlessness where individual enterprise and free markets could create the conditions of earthly paradise. Optimism displaced pessimism about the human condition, and happiness was available in this life to any who would exert their energies in an abundant land. The rhetorical repetition that Americans were God's own people in God's own country added a distinctive and pervasive religious undercurrent to this idea of America as the exemplary modern nation.

In the 18th century, American national consciousness became organized around the myth of its uniqueness- a belief in the essential virtue of the ordinary American individual who had escaped not only the confining social categories of the Old World but also its endemic corruption. However, it is significant that American exceptionalism was as much a product of European hope and imagination. It was essentially the Enlightenment myth of human progress that had fueled European expansion, and transfigured the idea into a national myth. Also, whatever may have been the situation in the past, a set of core beliefs in democracy and civil liberties is no longer distinctively American. Modern Europe defines itself as a democratic region. Most importantly, in a reckless attempt to rid the world of evil, Americans have inflicted great harm to Indians and Blacks, who suffered severe losses, and put their national interest at risk.

Later, in 19th century America, a natural consequence of active virtue was the generation of national wealth. American self-help and cupidity had devastating consequences on the already oppressed racial minorities, especially Native Americans and blacks, while economic waste and destruction of the natural environment symbolized the very real material progress weighed against the human costs. By the second half of the century, American

wealth led inevitably to power and the problem of its proper disposition. To seize the future, America was to identify the terms on which it would engage with the world beyond its borders.

The sheer power of America in the turbulent 20th century meant that its leaders were inevitably faced with pressures and temptations to play a more active role in the construction and reconstruction of the world order, and thus with choices, if they did, on whether to act unilaterally or in concert with other nations.

Creating the League of Nations was Wilson's dream to put America's virtue at the service and leadership of a new world order that would ensure the spread of democracy and the onset of enduring peace. Attempts to spread democracy, however, could turn out to be costly and ultimately frustrating as the objective would demand the most flagrant interference in the internal affairs of other countries. Thus, the moral mission could never be pure and uncontaminated. Even in a struggle for good ends, American exceptionalism could end up doing wicked things. Richard Nixon blamed the fiasco he inherited on exceptionalist Wilsonian crusading and sought to reestablish U.S. foreign policy on the basis of America's strict interests.

Henry Kissinger, Nixon's National Security Advisor, made it crystal clear that the overarching ambition of the U.S. state has marched beyond the grubby confines of the diplomacy of self-interest. This is a state with a global mission. Realism theories and essentially state practice prove that all countries, irrespective of their ideology, rely on a combination of both diplomacy and military power to anchor their foreign policy and national security to a relatively rigid set of policy tenets, values, and beliefs.

Yet, the leading Kissingerian concept at that time had to do with a question of fundamental importance: What area of the world would be most dangerous to the United

States in the final third of the twentieth century? Mr. Kissinger's answer was Asia, not Europe or Latin America. Asia had by far the highest priority in his scheme of things.

By the late 1960s, the United States was still stuck in Vietnam. President Nixon appealed to Americans values of victory, honor and credibility and won their overwhelming support. Determined to monopolize policy making, he orchestrated realpolitik as a new foreign policy approach and had clearly come to the reluctant conclusion with Kissinger that the war needed to be ended as soon as possible. Paradoxically, Nixon tried to uphold his and previous administrations' commitments to the Saigon government in South Vietnam. The very power of America gave the country enormous influence and in no important arena can anything be settled without its participation and commitment. Yet, the war was more important to the Vietnamese than to Americans. It was the only option to reclaim their country. And the outcome of the war would determine their very existence. It was a quest for national unity. For each side, the Vietnam War had to be resolved.

The beginning of the end of the American involvement in Vietnam was marked by Nixon's deliverance of his first public comments about what would later become known as the Nixon Doctrine. The meaning of the Doctrine has been ambiguous though many who have heard of the doctrine understand that its key principle was that any future U.S. military role in the world would only serve to supplement efforts of indigenous armies to hold back Communism. Considered more broadly, however, the Nixon Doctrine had a far-reaching significance. Local regimes were to fight for American objectives. Clearly, this was a strategy of trying to reduce the opposition of the people of the United States to intervention and war by having local surrogates do the fighting and take the losses.

Indeed, as discussions over the significance of the Nixon Doctrine took place, Nixon launched a Vietnamization program that involved the withdrawal of U.S. ground forces from

Vietnam and their replacement by Vietnamese units with extensive aerial and logistic support from the Americans. To Nixon and Kissinger, the policy of Vietnamization had its positive incentives. American officers would lead South Vietnamese troops and they would provide the fighting force for years to come. South Vietnam would be encouraged to believe that it would result in the strengthening of its army, while the prospect of a strengthened South Vietnamese army would presumably pressure North Vietnam into compromising at the negotiating table.

Yet the whole thing was built on something decisively fragile. In fact, the South political regime was not to survive if the U.S. would not continue to provide massive assistance. Its government lacked civil support and without American aid it would never be able to build a viable nation. In this sense, the plan to end the war was not well calculated as costs and benefits were not weighed in a rational process. Besides, Vietnamization was but a veil for American defeat as negotiations and Vietnamization were fundamentally incompatible strategies. Instead, the North Vietnamese continued to refuse to accept a divided Vietnam, and with each reduction in the size of the United States army in South Vietnam, American influence over the future of Indochina diminished.

Consequently, Vietnamization was to be supported with other strategies. The U.S., secretly, combined the troop withdrawal with incredible bombing campaigns on neighboring Cambodia. The public justifications of the invasion were unconvincing. America had to destroy Cambodia in order to save it from the "Communists." The intensely troubling question, though, was ultimately not over the invasion itself but over the morality of massive aerial bombardment which did not respect the conspicuous neutrality of Cambodia. The resulting turmoil claimed the lives of hundreds of thousands of civilians.

With the extension of the war in Cambodia, the number and fervor of antiwar protests increased dramatically to its hottest point. Also, the voice of authority in foreign policy was not only the executive. Congress had fundamentally a different conception of America's proper world role. The underlying values for Congress to the debate were America's great ideals of liberty and democracy. The unique concept of Kissinger and Nixon was *realpolitik*. So weak then was the national consensus on foreign policy. Congress feared excessive executive power and was concerned that the president would lead the nation into war without congressional approval. Eventually, criticism pounded the President and Congress even came to question the morality of that involvement. Doubts about the constitutionality of the president's actions were a major theme in the congressional debate as well. What had once seemed for Kissinger to be a logical way to conduct foreign and military operations appeared to Congress to be immoral, and even unconstitutional. With the loss of consensus over the war, the fragility of the situation stemmed from the inability of Nixon and Kissinger to persuade the Congress and the American people to support it.

It is not so surprising then that Kissinger identified his strongest critic as being not the media or the antiwar protest movement but members of Congress. Though Kissinger placed the greatest blame on Congress, he should also accept, as part of the executive, some of that blame. Congress could not be held responsible for something it knew nothing about.

As the war progressed, more exorbitant methods were required to fight it and more grotesque excuses had to be fabricated to justify it. Nixon urged the expansion of the war and launched a massed helicopter incursion into neutral Laos. This was a severe test of helicopter technology. Laos then was subjected to devastating bombardment and many victims were unarmed innocent civilians. Kissinger, too, was fully aware of, and was entirely accountable for these actions. Did America have no choice but to destroy foreign countries? The unsatisfying answer is that Kissinger had no trouble using brute force if it helped promote his

vision of realpolitik. Laos also was bombed to destruction because the pursuit of war to save American honor was a necessity.

By 1972, the wind was clearly blowing against Kissinger's predictions. To prevent North Vietnam from winning the war militarily, Nixon reacted to the Easter Offensive by resuming strategic bombing against North Vietnam in an operation known as Linebacker I. Nixon and Kissinger wanted to devastate the enemy's military capabilities that Hanoi would have no choice but to negotiate seriously. They thought that despite the desperate situation, the war could still be brought to victory. The operation led to bitter arguments about the identity of America: was it a democracy or a warrior country? America was labeled exceptionalist by its early founders because they saw European armies and their endless wars as the nursery of tyrants. That for them was never to happen in the democratic America. Astonishingly, Americans used violence to bring order. And order meant preventing South Vietnam from defeat. Thus, the aggressive operations were the normal consequence of the gap between America's abstract notions and the political realities practiced by the Nixon administration.

When Kissinger announced that peace was at hand, Saigon fell to the North Vietnamese in spite of Nixon's promise to President Thieu to respond with full force if North Vietnam violated the agreements. At the political atmosphere was tense and unstable, Americans were planning for peace by having a last show of power. Operation Linebacker's II message to the North Vietnamese was clear: submit or be annihilated. Again, devastation was enormous and the policy of realpolitik was annihilatory. The realistic foreign policy vision did not embody a clear set of priorities and America has not been positively exceptional in the use of its military power. The target was always civilians.

The “Agreement on Ending the War and Restoring Peace” was signed in Paris but ironically it was not on American terms. The terms of the Paris Peace Accords were nearly identical to the terms which were offered by the North Vietnamese in 1969, and rejected by the Nixon administration. The treaty was a triumph of Vietnamese determination for national unity. But no war would go uncontested and morally unexamined. The war was expensive and its outcome was the central issue driving debate in the United States. It was clear that the war was not conducted humanely as Kissinger’s desire for *realpolitik* left much of Indochina in ruins. American values were entirely abandoned in favor of a realistic foreign policy vision and the nation of exceptionalist ideals was not capable of making a difference for the better when and where it got involved.

The historical record of the Vietnam War was striking and the resulting controversy no less so. Henry Kissinger, the architect of the illegal bombings that targeted civilians, received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1973, for negotiating a ceasefire to a war that he himself had a hand in expanding. His actions were to fall in the category of depraved *realpolitik* and did not seem to have violated any known law. In its inevitable conclusion, American exceptionalism became increasingly impossible to maintain while the conception of the free world lost its narrative coherence. Kissinger, however, hung on to the premise that, within the context of his grand strategy, the more ferocious enemy was in Beijing, not in Hanoi.

The split between the Russian and Chinese Communists during the 1960s had created the intriguing possibility that the two in the future might be used to check each other. Further, the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia constituted a watershed in the history of Soviet bloc policy as the Soviet leader Brezhnev relied on increasingly damaging ideological inflexibility in dealings with his neighbors. Armed clashes between China and the Soviet Union occurred along the Ussuri River, which formed part of the Sino-Soviet border. The split then was

manifested by a decreased Chinese threat alongside an increased Soviet threat. With tensions multiplying between China and the Soviet Union, the Chinese publicly replaced the United States with the Soviet Union as their primary enemy.

The ideological dispute, apparently, might be considered a strategic deception to fool the west. This deception opened the door for China to import Western credits and technology. Indeed, Sino-Soviet cooperation manifested itself in the shipment of military goods to North Vietnam as observed by U.S. intelligence. China and the Soviet Union were never exactly implacable enemies.

From the American side, Nixon and Kissinger put increasing emphasis on playing the China card. The President and his fellow realist had mainly three reasons for playing the China card. First, U.S. forces in Asia and the Pacific area had been deployed to contain China since the Korean War, and stability of the entire Asian region was predicated on a balance of power that would keep Red China in check. For America, China was a regional challenge to national security interests. Second, U.S. parity with the Soviet Union seemed to force Americans to consider more realistically and less ideologically their policy toward China. Nixon and Kissinger thus sought to enlist Chinese help to balance the growing power of the Soviet Union. Most importantly, if U.S. troops were to be withdrawn from Vietnam, old views of the "China threat" would have to change. Washington, therefore, hoped that Sino-American rapprochement might also provide Washington with leverage to pressure the North Vietnamese at the negotiating table.

Consequently, forces were coming together that would make possible the Sino-American rapprochement. Nixon and Kissinger favored such an improvement, which would fit in with their multi-polar worldview and Beijing itself was realigning its position in favor of

the United States. In sum, the need for contact from both sides appeared more and more urgent.

Slowly and cautiously then, the Nixon administration signaled its desire to improve relations with China. Washington began to disengage from Vietnam and promised to reduce U.S. forces elsewhere in Asia. Moreover, these unilateral steps were simultaneously supplemented by a series of secret initiatives. Nixon's administration opened secret diplomatic channels through Romania and Pakistan. Kissinger later realized that Pakistan's ties could prove useful. Therefore, America was to work with the new government of General Agha Mohammed Yahya Khan though it overthrew the nation's leader Marshal Mohammad Ayub Khan. The controversy here could not be away from the United States. Even if the U.S. were not involved in the coup, it would have a negative image in Asia by embracing illegitimate and undemocratic governments. American support to the new Pakistani government could ultimately be harmful to its interests in the region. It should come as no surprise, however, that Kissinger considered the new government of Pakistan as beneficial to the United States.

In March 1971, Premier Zhou Enlai invited a U.S. table-tennis team to play Chinese teams. A month later, the United States eased trade and travel restrictions relating to the People's Republic, and virtually eliminated its naval patrol of the Taiwan Straits. Because of this shift in U.S. foreign policy, Taiwan was voted out of the United Nations, and Beijing was admitted in triumph to the United Nations as the representative of China. Taiwan lost credibility and was kept as invisible as possible. Further, there were leaks from Washington to the effect that the Red Chinese would not agree to the first Nixon trip until they received advance guarantees that the United States would significantly downgrade its military mission in Taiwan.

Pakistan helped organize Kissinger's secret visit to China. Kissinger secretly flew from Pakistan to Beijing, and began a precedent visit with the leaders of Red China- the first official-level contacts with the mainland since it had been seized by the Communists 22 years before. Washington went all-out to create an image of a changing China taking its place in the world community. Until the last minute, even Secretary of State William Rogers did not know about Kissinger's mission to China. After all, the purpose of the trip would be to prepare the ground for Nixon's eventual visit.

But secrecy was not really necessary in Kissinger's conduct of foreign policy. While recognizing that it was of course essential for Kissinger's planning, the fact of maintaining it meant that Kissinger did not embrace the notion of trust and openness. This would lead him to view national interests through his lens of individual cognition while the state department would not have any role in framing foreign policy. Consequently, matters of rapprochement with China were subject to direct Kissingerian control. One can argue that Kissinger used the argument of secrecy to justify political decisions that were based on considerations of personal ambition.

Nixon became the first U.S. president to step on Chinese soil. Coming on the eve of the 1972 presidential elections, the trip had an added dividend for the president. Nixon met with Chairman Mao, inaugurating a new era in the Sino-American relationship. A wide range of issues were covered including Vietnam, Sino-Soviet relations, and Taiwan. As a result of this visit, the Shanghai Communiqué was issued. The communiqué cited areas of global and bilateral agreement. For instance, it opposed hegemony in the world, and it called for efforts to normalize the relations between the two countries and to develop trade and other contacts between the two peoples. This communiqué was remarkable also in a more profound sense: after more than twenty years, formal contact between previously harsh adversaries had begun.

The status of Taiwan has been the primary irritant affecting Sino-U.S. relations. Yet, it was clear that the United States had come closer to recognizing Beijing's position than ever before. In this communiqué, the United States made it clear that Americans stood for a peaceful resolution of the Taiwan problem by the Chinese themselves. The United States has never challenged that position.

Unquestionably, America failed miserably to unite its interests and moral exceptionalism in the doctrinal formation of foreign policy regarding Taiwan. Nixon made it clear to Zhou that the United States would gradually withdraw its military forces from Taiwan and that, as far as the White House was concerned, "There is one China, and Taiwan is a part of China." He added that he hoped to achieve a normalization of U.S.-PRC relations, though he understood that Taiwan posed a barrier to reaching that goal. The situation had become confusing, uncertain, and even precarious for Taiwan, while it proved difficult for Kissinger and his president to accomplish that policy in a complex world that demanded endless political compromises, inconsistencies, and sometimes downright betrayals. In essence, it was not politically difficult for Nixon's administration to implement policies openly harmful to Taiwan- when the justification was improved relations with China. However, the possible strategic significance of relations with China aimed to potentially design a new relationship with the Soviets, the top priority of U.S. foreign policy.

As for the Soviet Union, Nixon and Kissinger argued that the situation in the world was not only dangerous but catastrophic. The service of common interests like avoiding confrontation with the Soviet Union should be an American goal since a threat to peace represented a threat to American interests. Thus, they envisioned a *détente* policy that meant a certain trust and ability to take into account the legitimate interest of one another. Yet, this idea of *rapprochement* was not a revolutionary concept. It was the regular fare of the long-term development of any bilateral relationship.

Nixon had a number of specific reasons for hoping to improve America's relationship with the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union had, under Leonid Brezhnev, undertaken a sustained expansion of its military power, conventional and nuclear, and was clearly gaining an advantageous position in the global balance against the United States, whose will to continue the rivalry was being steadily sapped by the inconclusive war in Vietnam. Nixon hoped that reaching an agreement with the Soviets would help him escape from Vietnam with some honor. It was a badly misplaced hope for the Soviets had little control over the Hanoi government. Now, how can Kissinger proclaim détente with the Soviet Union, the supporter of communist causes everywhere, and yet fight communism to the death in Indochina? The Soviet Union saw détente in transformative terms as a way of controlling the arms race, increasing trade links with the West and winning recognition of its status as an equal superpower. Détente, in the Soviet view, granted the Soviets this position and power. That would be a lesson to the Chinese and also evidence to the world that the Soviet Union had come of age.

The concept of détente then was needed to cope with an international system fragmented by nuclear weapons. The pivotal point, however, was that détente would not be easily applicable. The two nuclear superpowers sought fundamentally different ends in a world remarkable of its heterogeneity of values. Since the views were immensely different, it was uncertain that both sides would jointly ensure world order. In sum, the Soviet threat was perceived but it was not to be confronted.

Presenting himself as a realist dedicated to disarmament, Henry Kissinger would emerge as the key American arbiter of détente. He was fond of the concept of linkage- that is telling the Soviets that progress in one area of diplomacy was linked to their behavior in another area. The Soviets deeply resented Kissinger's linkage strategy. To them, it implied

that the Soviet Union needed a SALT agreement more than the United States. As a way to conduct a vigorous foreign policy under the constraints imposed by the American political system, Kissinger and his president excluded Secretary of State William Rogers from several major decisions and even excluded him from the first meeting with the Soviet ambassador Anatoly Dobrynin.

Incidents of American incursion of Cambodia and the Soviet naval base in Cuba sabotaged the SALT talks which commenced in Helsinki, Finland. These events led Americans to worry that a conference might create the illusion of progress while leaving fundamental issues unresolved. The first meaningful breakthrough, however, would have to wait until May 1971 when the Soviets and the Americans suddenly announced that they would concentrate on two areas: antiballistic missile systems and a freeze on missile launchers. During the same year, India and the Soviet Union signed a twenty-year friendship treaty. Needless to say, the timing of the treaty, shortly after the announcement that President Nixon would be making a visit to China, was not entirely coincidental. The friendship treaty between the two countries was designed to offset the developing entente between Washington, Beijing, and Islamabad.

War between Pakistan and its principal adversary India erupted when Indian troops entered East Pakistan to help the East Bengalis win their independence. The United States and the Soviets specifically were to provide economic and military aid to both sides of the conflict. The Pakistanis drove ten million of Bengali Muslims into exile but Americans remained silent. The imperatives of the strategic balance again had overshadowed the human tragedy. As a result of the war, an independent Bangladesh took the place of East Pakistan. Americans, as it seemed, did not succeed to prevent Pakistan from a humiliating defeat. At this defining moment, America's passive reaction to the international conflict resulted in more

violence and resentment. The role of values and ideas in foreign policy was, as it has always been, negligible. The conception of realpolitik was, again, at odds with American exceptionalism.

The Moscow summit was announced to be held in May 1972. Yet, in their process of talks over arms control, both Nixon and Kissinger relied on secrecy. They feared that Congress would place restraints on the executive's ability to reduce tension with the Soviets and thus harming the process as a whole. Further, the Nixon administration did not attempt to inform the American public about détente and its foreign policy adjectives with the Soviet Union. This meant that they failed to convince Congress and the public of the merits of their strategy. It was understandable then that Congress never fully supported the administration's aims toward the Soviets. Yet, secret deal by secret deal, détente became a reality.

With bombs falling on North Vietnam, the much-awaited Moscow summit between Nixon and Brezhnev commenced. The two leaders signed the first-ever agreement on controlling the growth of nuclear weapons, the Strategic Arms Limitations Treaty (SALT I), which set upper limits on the nuclear missiles of both sides. Like the president, Kissinger championed SALT. He believed that some limitation on the nuclear arms race was necessary to provide both sides with the required degree of security to make the accommodations necessary to build the new cooperative relationship he envisioned. But Kissinger made the mistake of claiming too much for détente. Resistance to the Soviet Union should merge the protection of America's national interest and military superiority. The arms control agreements apparently confirmed the Soviet Union's equality with the United States. In this regard, the costs exceeded the benefits. It was thus easy to charge that Nixon and Kissinger had, in effect, given up U.S. missile superiority.

The script was, still, incomplete. The American and the Soviet sides signed also the “Basic Principles of U.S.-Soviet Relations,” which clearly mattered politically to Brezhnev. The agreement promised Brezhnev huge benefits because it pledged the Soviets to seek normal relations based on equality and non-interference in each other’s internal affairs, and to avoid military confrontations. This was *détente* on Soviet terms. Kissinger and Nixon have made numerous concessions and have asked for none in return.

Further, one of the most persistent criticisms made of *détente* was that it ignored the moral dimension of foreign policy. In practice, nothing has changed in Communist ideology and *détente* turned out to be benefiting only the Soviets. What seemed to Americans to be a pleasant atmosphere of *détente* was in fact the strengthening of totalitarianism in the world. America seemed to gain nothing more than vague promises of good behavior from the Soviet Union. When reality set in, bitter disappointment followed as the public turned against *détente*.

The heart of Kissinger’s hypothesis was that the real challenge was to merge the strands of values and interests into a coherent whole. Yet, although the concept of American exceptionalism flew through his rhetoric, it has been used without meaningful nuance. One is to conclude that Henry Kissinger’s approach to foreign affairs excessively emphasized the importance of geopolitics and advancing national interests at the expense of moral issues. As the ultimate practitioner of *realpolitik*, his historical account and policy prescription were certainly controversial. His era has come to stand for all the excesses of US foreign policy during the period he served as national security advisor. This criticism would not necessarily destroy Kissinger’s capacity for constructive foreign-policy-making in general. He has made enormous contributions to the world order. Yet, it is fair to say that the outcomes envisaged by Kissinger never approximated what actually happened. If Kissinger assumed that the U.S.

has acted in the service of its national interests, one must also concede that the ideals of American exceptionalism were capable of saving the nation from the mistakes of realpolitik.

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