

worldview

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FOREIGN POWER AND FOREIGN POLICY

It is one of the minor paradoxes of political life in America that every recent administration has had under constant reappraisal exactly that which it was said to lack—a foreign policy. The present administration is no exception. Although no one sympathetic to these reviews would revive the unfortunate phrase “agonizing reappraisal,” important aspects of our foreign policy are now being reexamined with much effort and some anguish. If the reexamination is bold and imaginative, as it can be, the foreign policy pursued by the United States in coming years may be measurably and importantly different from that which it has followed since the end of the second world war.

The truth is that in spite of some modifications and changing emphases, the major policy outlines that were established around 1947 have provided the structure and the limits of our policy for each successive Administration. Simply put, the end of the war saw a great reshuffling of power, and the United States emerged as the strongest world power and the leader of the Western nations. Out of its great resources it developed the means and the programs to stabilize and strengthen its allies and to “contain” the forces of the Soviet Union. Thus was born the Point Four program, the Marshall Plan, the Truman Doctrine and NATO.

For fifteen years the United States has followed this policy—at times faltering, at times with decision and imagination. But having assumed the responsibilities of leadership the United States quite rightly took on the rights and, in some instances, the privileges of leadership. It is a measure of the success of its policy that the exercise of this leadership is now being successfully challenged. The grand “*non*” of Charles de Gaulle has done much to clear the air of misconceptions on which we have based much of our political plans and action.

The United States is still the strongest of the Western countries, but Western Europe is no

longer weak and defenseless. It is still dependent in many ways on the power of the United States—on the strength of our nuclear deterrent, for one thing—but it is not utterly dependent. One of the reasons de Gaulle can oppose his vision to the Kennedy “Grand Design” is that he knows it is in the best interest of the United States to offer military support to West Europe. He can count on such support without offering anything in exchange or even feeling grateful. In effect he can use the strength of the United States for his own purposes, even when they run counter to the declared purpose of the United States. And what he can do others can learn to do. The conditions of today are distinctly different from immediate post-war conditions; the policies adapted to apply to one set of conditions are not suitable to another.

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De Gaulle’s rejection of NATO as we have, until recently, conceived it raises hard questions concerning the Atlantic Alliance. What, for example, are the present political, military and economic underpinnings of that Alliance? How is control and guidance within the Alliance to be shared? What, exactly, can we expect the Alliance to accomplish within, say, the next few years? One political analyst posed the final question when he asked “whether there is any further use in NATO.”

To raise such questions is neither frivolous nor radical. Nor do the questions contain their own answers. Raymond Aron, for instance, has said that “unless American public opinion wearies under the burden, or European public opinion rebels, I think it probable that the Alliance, which none but the frivolous-minded can describe as lacking in substance, will endure.” But what is all important of course, is to say—and to help determine—how the Atlantic Alliance will endure in the face of opposition, not from without but from within.