President Johnson’s policy in Southeast Asia and U.S. intervention in the Caribbean have been condemned by a number of leading American professors and journalists, a vocal minority of liberals in Congress, and some leaders of religious groups and the Civil Rights movement. “Teach-ins” on Vietnam have been held at many universities and colleges across the country, and were capped by the confrontations in Washington between supporters and critics of the Administration. Those who oppose the President’s actions in foreign affairs have many arguments regarding the specific cases at issue. It seems apparent, however, that fears of nuclear war, attitudes toward the use of force, and assumptions regarding the nature of international relations also underlie the views of many critics. Given the fact that most of the President’s opponents are not professionals in the field of foreign affairs, it can be argued that the obvious fears and unstated assumptions probably account more for the attacks than particular arguments regarding Vietnam and the Dominican Republic.

In the years since the second world war, practitioners and students of American foreign policy have carried on a Great Debate regarding the respective merits of Idealism and Realism in world affairs. Diplomatic historians generally agree that the tension between these schools of thought can be traced back to the Founding Fathers. Idealists assume that human nature is essentially rational and good, and that a world of peace, order, and justice can be realized. They view nationalism and power politics as passing phenomena which will be displaced sooner or later by an organized world community somewhat along the lines of that described in Pacem in Terris. Realists think that the weaknesses of man account for imperfections and injustices in the world. They believe that a rational and moral order cannot be attained, and counsel the search for “the ever temporary balancing of interests in the ever precarious settlement of conflicts” among nations. In short, Idealists may be said to be optimists, and Realists pessimists, regarding the prospects for significantly improving the character of international relations.

Although the tension between proponents of these two philosophies of foreign policy persists, something like a consensus has developed among many American practitioners and students of world affairs as a result of the postwar debate. To be more precise, many have come to feel that neither camp offers an adequate standard of thought and action for those responsible for the conduct of United States policy. They would like to combine what might be called “tough-mindedness” and “warm-heartedness” in approaching international relations. They think that both ideals and self-interest should play a part in the formulation of American foreign policy. Those in Washington and on university and college campuses who seek to combine the best of Idealism and Realism feel that both schools have something to contribute, but take a more or less pragmatic approach to particular issues in a moral context. Some within the ranks of those concerned with foreign affairs do not subscribe to this consensus. But it seems that most of the concerned critics outside influential academic and governmental circles are not even aware of the Idealist-Realist debate, much less of the literature on the subject of international relations.

Winston Churchill once wrote that “those who are possessed of a definite body of doctrine and of deeply rooted convictions upon it will be in a much better position to deal with the shifts and surprises of daily affairs.” Churchill was, of course, anything but a doctrinaire ideologist. He had a philosophy, remarkable foresight, and moral and intellectual qualities which enabled him to make fewer mistakes than most of his contemporaries. It can be argued that Churchill, like most of the American Founding Fathers, “made the best of both worlds, appeal to justice and energetic defense of the national interest.” It seems that those who have found both the Idealist and Realist views wanting have moved toward the approach followed by most of the Founding Fathers, Churchill, and a handful of other Anglo-American
statesmen in recent times. What follows is an attempt to state the consensus which has developed in this country among informed officials and observers in the form of ten axioms. Others would no doubt add to, subtract from, or otherwise modify this list of propositions. The axioms are not intended to be comprehensive, but suggestive of the more or less balanced philosophy shared by many actors and students. Perhaps the anxious critics of President Johnson's foreign policy will find this statement informative and interesting, even if they do not find it convincing.

1. God's in His Heaven, but political man is largely alone in this world. Many, perhaps most, American academics and officials do not believe in God. They do seem to agree, however, that one of the great heresies of the twentieth century is giving total allegiance to nationalism and to secular political religions, allegiance which should be given only to God, if He exists. Apart from nazism, communism, and other politico-religious movements of the age, most people around the globe are intensely nationalistic. Those who share in the present consensus in this country take a dim view of Jacobin-style "practical zealots and furious fanatics" of whatever stripe — Nazi, Communist, nationalist, internationalist, Utopian or Realist. American academics and practitioners believe that God's secular design in history has not been revealed to any elite, whether Western, Communist, or neutralist. They think, therefore, that the conduct of American foreign policy should try to combine humility and flexibility with a pragmatic attention to legitimate concerns of the United States. They believe that the makers and executioners of foreign policy should attempt to be on God's side according to their lights, but do not assume that this will always be the case, much less that God is on the side of the United States in world affairs. American statesmen have to steer the ship of state through uncertain and dangerous waters without benefit of much clear guidance from above beyond such principles as the Fatherhood of God and Brotherhood of Man, the injunction "Do Good and Avoid Evil," and their logical derivatives, which are both few in number and not susceptible to precise application.

2. Man is neither beast nor angel. Utopians believe that man is essentially a rational and moral creature, both able and willing to do what is right. Realists think that human nature is afflicted with irrational and power-seeking drives, and man is both able and willing to act far worse than beasts. Both sides can cite examples of saints and barbarians in this age and every age to support their conception of man. The twentieth century has witnessed some of the most outrageous behavior in recorded human history, and some of the most hopeful and progressive developments, such as the civil rights movement in this country, and the emergence of the long suffering peoples of Asia, the Middle East, Africa, and Latin America. Both danger and opportunity abound in our time, at home and abroad. Most academics and practitioners concerned with foreign affairs reject the Utopian and Realist notions of human nature alike. They believe the faith of the Enlightenment in the possibility of realizing a Heaven on Earth is naive. They agree with Robert Penn Warren, that "there's no forgiveness for our being human. It is the unexpungable error. It is...the one thing we have overlooked in our outrageous dreams and cu-

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**Nuclear Weapons:**

**CAN THEIR SPREAD BE HALTED?**

by  

**BETTY GOETZ LALL**

(former special assistant to the Deputy Director of the U.S. Arms Control & Disarmament Agency)

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ningest contrivances.” On the other hand, most actors and observers in the field of world affairs believe in the possibility of improvement, as opposed to perfection in international relations. As Waldemar Gurian wrote, “man is a being faced by the task of making life as human as possible in the changing world of time and history, and even though he belongs to some particular group, he must never forget that he participates always in the unity of mankind.”

3. Nothing is the wave of the future. Edmund Wilson has acknowledged that his generation finds it very difficult to abandon its belief in inevitable progress. The True Believers in the Kremlin and the Heavenly Palace and their cohorts around the globe likewise think that they know the course of history. It must be hoped that the latter will sooner or later abandon their certainty. As for Americans and Westerners generally, before 1914 it was intellectually respectable to believe that liberalism, cooperative nationalism, and material and moral progress were the wave of the future. Thirty years later, in the midst of America’s Second Crusade, it was at least equally reasonable for Carl Becker to ask, How New Will the Better World Be? Another twenty years have passed and the cold war continues largely unabated.

It is surely advisable to abandon the notion that through evolution and/or revolution the long elusive American academics and practitioners of foreign Brave New World will finally be at hand. Most American academics and practitioners of foreign policy have learned this lesson of the age. Grand Designs, whether American, French, Russian, or Chinese, are notoriously difficult to achieve, as well as unsupportable given the facts of this diverse and dangerous globe. Most actors and students involved in world affairs now believe that a sense of history is more useful than a philosophy of history. That is to say, they think that some things are possible, and others impossible, given the circumstances of the time. Limited arms control and some diplomatic accommodation with Moscow and hopefully even Peking are possible; general and complete disarmament and world government are thinkable, but impossible. Academics and practitioners believe that the actions of dogmatic Idealists and of Communists alike demonstrate the wisdom of Montaigne’s remark: “Between ourselves, there are two things that I have always observed to be in singular accord: supercelestial thoughts and subterranean conduct.”

4. Politics is the art of the possible. Actors and observers in the realm of world affairs are generally supporters of the pragmatic, compromising brand of politics played in Western democracies. They admire President Johnson’s effort to combine leadership with consensus in pursuit of America’s domestic goals. They do not believe that liberals, moderates, or conservatives have a monopoly of truth, virtue, and wisdom in American politics. They abhor the pretensions of any and all quarters addicted to confusing their particular philosophies and remedies for the ills of the country with the one sure path to the “Great Society.” And they do not believe that such a society can be constructed overnight, or indeed that it will ever be achieved once and for all. The task of political man is never ended. They subscribe to Lord Acton’s famous dictum: “The pursuit of a remote and ideal object, which captivates the imagination by its splendor and the reason by its simplicity, evokes an energy which would not be inspired by a rational, possible end, limited by many antagonistic claims, and confined to what is reasonable, practicable, and just.”

5. Foreign policy is both different from and more difficult than domestic politics. The pattern of democratic politics in the West, with its emphasis on both the pursuit of justice and the rational adjustment of conflicting interests, is based on general agreement on ends if not means, competitive but loyal parties and groups, and a certain minimum standard of economic and social well-being. Unhappily, the world community in our time does not share common standards and purposes. Indeed, both Nazis and Communists represent the very antithesis of Western moral and political values. It is simply not possible to achieve on the world stage the relative harmony of interests attainable within viable constitutional democracies. Even apart from Nazis and Communists, the differences in culture, religion, race, and political standards and systems around the globe preclude at this time the establishment of an effective United Nations, much less the “Parliament of the World and the Federation of Mankind.” This state of affairs means that the United States must employ “deals, goods, force, and ideas” as instruments of foreign policy, in Harold Lasswell’s famous phrase.

It is, or should be, patently clear that President Johnson cannot rely solely on Isaiah’s injunction, “Come, let us reason together” in world affairs. It is generally known that he doesn’t limit himself to this approach even in domestic politics. It is perhaps fair to say that most American Presidents in this century, and most Congressmen as well, have had to undergo “on-the-job training” in foreign
policy. We have generally been fortunate thus far. But it seems that most of the non-professional critics of the Administration’s actions in Vietnam and the Dominican Republic are not aware of the truth of de Callières’ remark: “Faults in domestic policy are often more easily remedied than mistakes in foreign policy. There are many factors in foreign affairs which lie beyond the control of the ministers of any given state, and all foreign action requires greater circumspection, greater knowledge, and far greater sagacity than is demanded in home affairs.”

6. Statesmen should serve both the national interest and the international community. Utopians argue that politicians and diplomats should place the interest of mankind ahead of the interest of their own country. They consider the pursuit of “enlightened” self-interest by statesmen to be one of the most baneful aspects of world affairs. In Woodrow Wilson’s words: “National purposes have fallen more and more into the background and the common purpose of enlightened mankind has taken their place.” And again: “There must be, not a balance of power, but a community of power; not organized rivalries, but an organized common peace,...” On the other hand, Realists believe that statesmen should foster the national interest. It is considered the only practical object of foreign policy, the one purpose that statesmen can both discern and promote realistically. In Hans Morgenthau’s words: “... it is not only a political necessity but also a moral duty for a nation to follow in its dealings with other nations but one guiding star, one standard for thought, one rule for action: The National Interest.” Most American academics and actors in the field of world affairs believe that both Utopians and Realists exaggerate partial insights in this regard. If statesmen should indeed try to foster the legitimate national interest, they should also try to go beyond that limited and in part selfish objective and throw their weight into the scales on the side of greater peace, order, and justice. In the words of a study by the Council on Foreign Relations: “Self-interest alone, however enlightened, will not support a role of leadership in the world. Power is a reality in the world politics of today. Diplomacy is an art that cannot be neglected. But leadership cannot rest solely on the strength of America’s armed forces or on the skill of its diplomats. It must rest also on principle.”

7. The United States is not omnipotent, but it is powerful, and on its performance largely rests the fate of mankind. The British scholar Dennis Brogan wrote a justly famous essay during the Korean War in which he criticized the “Illusion of American Omnipotence.” He pointed out that the frustration of many Americans over the failure of World War II to usher in a Brave New World, as well as over the decision to fight a limited war in Korea, stemmed in large measure from the false notion that the United States can single-handedly reshape the world in a desirable fashion. Brogan reminded his readers that despite America’s vast strength, its capacity on the world stage is limited by the power and purposes of other nations. Charles Burton Marshall directed his attention to a similar theme in his remarkable little book, The Limits of Foreign Policy, and for a time it was accepted wisdom among academics and actors that America should lower its sights in world affairs.

The pendulum has swung the other way, however, and it is now widely believed that this country at times has underestimated its power and influence during recent years. The notion that the United States is overcommitted around the globe is indeed attractive. No one likes the burden of alliances, foreign aid, and all the other programs in which this country is involved around the globe. But the question which must be answered is, if the United States seriously reduces its commitments, what other nation or bloc of nations could or would assume the mantle of Western and free world leadership? It would appear that this country, while neither omnipotent nor omniscient, does have the Manifest Destiny of trying to play a leading role in forestalling Moscow’s and Peking’s efforts, in trying to build a stronger Atlantic Community, and in helping the developing nations to help themselves. The only question is whether or not America will bring to these immensely difficult tasks the necessary patience, will, flexibility, and imagination.
Morgenthau's words aptly state an axiom in foreign policy which was forgotten by Utopians and many American statesmen in the first half of this century. During the second world war, President Roosevelt and his military advisers concentrated on winning in the shortest possible time with the minimum possible loss of American and allied lives. Wartime strategy in Europe and the Pacific did not adequately take into account the fact that the position of the armed forces at the end of the struggle would decisively influence the postwar balance of power and political settlement. It was hoped that the strange alliance with the Soviet Union would continue in the postwar period, and that the United Nations would render "alliances, military power, and spheres of influence" unnecessary. The record of this country in the last twenty years is a mixed one. It can and has been argued that in this or that instance American Presidents have not adequately related diplomacy to power. Nevertheless, it is clear that postwar Administrations have all understood in general the necessity of both power and diplomacy, and have tried to relate these instruments both to each other and to the other available means of American foreign policy.

Some critics of President Johnson's actions in Southeast Asia and the Caribbean seem to think that the United States can foster its interest and the welfare of the international community without employing force and the threat of force. They appear to want the President to rely solely on diplomacy, foreign aid and trade, and other instruments. They place particular faith in negotiations. Perhaps they need to be reminded, as Fred Ikle has put it in How Nations Negotiate, that "negotiation is only an instrument. . . It may settle dangerous conflicts short of war, divert governments from the use of force, and terminate fighting before destruction becomes complete." On the other hand, negotiations "may also exacerbate hostilities, strengthen an aggressor, prepare the way for his attack, and erode the legal and moral foundations of peace."

9. Statesmen must try to relate general principles to concrete cases in foreign policy through practical judgment. Utopians have long argued that a rational and moral political world order can be established through application of general principles. They ignore the necessity of taking into account the circumstances of time and place, of deciding what is possible and what is impossible in each epoch. They lack a sense of history in addition to holding to a belief in the possibility of a secular millenium despite all the tragic events of this century. Realists like Hans Morgenthau have pointed out quite properly the necessity of prudential judgment, although they hold to what is widely regarded today among academics and actors as a narrow conception of the national interest, and neglect the goal of building a better global community. There is no easy or scientific formula for dealing with the complex problems of foreign policy. Statesmen have to examine the pros and cons of alternative courses of action, and in Thomas Gilby's words, "reach a resolve by a kind of poetic freedom, not by the determinism proper to the deductive sciences, where conclusions are brought out from principles by logical implication."

Unhappily, statesmen must often choose among options all or many of which may have good moral and political reasons in their favor. William Carleton has said that a statesman "cannot wait until all the evidence is in, for all the evidence is never in. He must necessarily do some operating on hunches.' . . The great decisions are not made with scientific precision, and they never will be. If made effectively, they are made with a kind of high artistry." Carleton concludes, "If this sounds like a species of mysticism, the reader can best disabuse himself of that notion by analyzing scores and scores of actual concrete situations, historical and contemporary."

10. "There are no final victories." President Kennedy made this remark in his Memorial Day speech in 1963 at Arlington National Cemetery where he now rests. The late President was referring to the failure of America's two crusades in this century to usher in a Brave New World. The comment is also applicable to the idea that somehow, someway, mankind should be able to create a Heaven on Earth in which the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse and all the other scourges which afflict the human race will be abolished once and for all. It is of course possible that a Golden Age lies ahead of rather than behind mankind. But to expect American foreign policy to be able to lead the way in creation of such a paradise in our time is to ignore the divisions and conflicting purposes among and between Western, Communist, and neutralist nations. Robert Heilbroner has tried to suggest the necessity of America coming of age in its expectations in his The Future as History. The United States should play a responsible role in the defense and development of the West and the free world, and in the search for reasonable accommodations with the East. But it should not count on the liberalization of Russia and China or of the developing nations in the foreseeable future, which would surely be necessary if a Brave New World were to be realized. The United States is
going to have its hands full trying to realize its present goals in world affairs, and cannot be expected to achieve the sort of moral and rational order envisaged by Utopians and by many critics of President Johnson's foreign policy.

The United States' actions in Southeast Asia and the Caribbean may appear more understandable in the light of these axioms of foreign policy. The Administration's course in each area can and has been defended by officials and observers in terms of the specific aspects of the problems as well. On the other hand, many who more or less subscribe to the consensus stated above are critics of President Johnson's policies in Vietnam and/or the Dominican Republic. This difference of opinion among authorities in the field of foreign affairs is only natural, and demonstrates the truth of the axiom regarding practical judgment. Hans Morgenthau, George Kennan, Walter Lippmann and other experienced actors and observers have presented their objections in forthright and persuasive terms. They have contributed to the national debate in a reasonable and respectable manner, unlike some of the less informed and more demonstrative critics.

President Johnson, Secretary of State Rusk, and other officials have argued their case regarding Southeast Asia essentially in terms of the necessity of responding to Communist aggression. As the President has said, "The central lesson of our time is that the appetite of aggressors is never satisfied." The Administration believes that the failure of the Western democracies to respond promptly and adequately to Nazi German, Fascist Italian, and Imperialist Japanese aggression in the 1930's led directly to the catastrophe of the second world war. The President and his advisers do not want to act in a weak fashion which could lead to miscalculation in either Moscow or Peking and could plunge the world into such an even more devastating conflict. The United States' intervention in the Dominican Republic in order to forestall a Castroite or Communist takeover is perhaps more debatable than the President's course in Vietnam. Fear of another Cuba may have led the Administration to act rashly on the basis of limited information and analysis. On the other hand, as Max Lerner has put it, no one doubted that the Marines would leave the Dominican Republic sooner or later. "That would not have been true of the Castroites, if they had been given a chance to turn the rebellion into a class dictatorship."

It is unfortunate that President Johnson has long been mistrusted by liberals in this country. They are now attacking him in domestic as well as foreign policy. William S. White suggested in his biography The Professional that Lyndon Johnson hopes to put an end to racial injustice and sectionalism at home, and to lead the nation and the West toward a more favorable and bearable position abroad. It can be argued that no other politician on the scene is better equipped to handle these internal problems. As for world affairs, President Johnson was more of an unknown quantity when he assumed the burdens of the White House. But it can also be argued that he has demonstrated a capacity in foreign affairs to combine "warm-heartedness" and "tough-mindedness." His informed critics perhaps need to be reminded, in the words of The London Observer, that "the most important lessons to be learned from Churchill's career are those he was never allowed to apply: how to prevent wars. His maxims that peace must be enforced and that risks must be taken to enforce it are still not grasped."

Most of the President's critics are not informed or sophisticated in the field of foreign policy. It is understandable, however, that many academics, religious and civil rights leaders, and others assert their views in this dangerous nuclear age. Clemenceau said "war is too important to be left to the generals," and de Gaulle has remarked that "politics is too important to be left to the politicians." It would therefore be expecting too much, and indeed be unwise, to leave American foreign policy to the Administration and the experts in and out of government.

On the other hand, it seems only fair to ask that critics of President Johnson's foreign policy acquire a greater measure of understanding of the field than most of them have demonstrated. Reliance on reason, passive disobedience, and other measures advocated by some opponents are simply not ordinarily relevant to the difficult choices confronting statesmen in world affairs. Perhaps more than anything else, it must be more widely understood that it is impossible to devise a risk-free foreign policy. Any action or inaction involves risks. The President and his advisers are trying both to contain Communist expansion and to avoid a nuclear Armageddon. They think history supports their conviction that strength and patience and the prudent use of force and the threat of force leads to peace, while weakness and timidity and unwillingness to respond to aggression leads to war. It is not easy to refute their attitude in the light of the tragic events of this Age of Conflict.