

United States Foreign Policy: The Legacy and the Challenge

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Henry Kissinger, who has turned out a better negotiator than prophet, said in 1960:

The United States cannot afford another decline like that which has characterized the past decade and a half. Fifteen years more of a deterioration in our position such as we have experienced since World War II would find us reduced to Fortress America in a world in which we had become largely irrelevant.

Despite the accelerated decline of America's position in the world in the intervening years, the United States remains the world's most powerful and influential nation. (Even those who measure power in terms of military strength appear more concerned about an upward trend in Soviet military strength and a relative decline in America's strength and its willingness to use it than about current U.S. inferiority.) The position of the United States has eroded because of its own follies and the growing strength of other countries; the latter development would have occurred irrespective of U.S. actions. Despite this diffusion of power, the position of the United States remains strong enough that when it exercises its considerable powers of leadership it can often achieve its basic aims. More important, and perhaps more dangerous, is the fact that U.S. power and its key role in so many alliances, international organizations, and in the world economy enable the United States to block most efforts to deal with key issues if it throws its weight against any particular scheme. (OPEC policies are a conspicuous exception.) For example, if America can no longer prevent the adoption of United Nations resolutions it deems obnoxious, it can prevent their being translated into action.

But if the United States remains Number One in the world, in fact as well as in campaign oratory, its position must be appraised in light of two considerations. *First*,

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the nation—any nation—counts for less and less in international life, according to many thoughtful students of world affairs. *Second*—as even those observers who disagree, or who deemphasize this point assert—the United States role will continue to decline because the United States will be unable to devise and carry out a successful foreign policy.

Those holding the first position argue that today the key elements of international relations are economic matters and related issues growing out of advances in science and technology. Governments must accord these a higher priority relative to security issues than they did even a decade ago. However, the ability of governments to control the impact these matters have on their own people, at least without inflicting as much damage on themselves as they do on other countries, is severely limited. The "interdependence of nations" is the most common phrase used to describe these phenomena. Indeed, it has become the conventional wisdom, and the fact that it is conventional does not mean it lacks wisdom. Governments must cooperate more closely on economic (and environmental) issues if they are to be managed successfully. There is also an increased need for new international institutions to cope with problems that cannot be managed successfully by any country or small groups of countries (and by institutions I refer to agreed customs and procedures as well as to formal organizations).

But several points should be kept in mind in assessing the magnitude of past and prospective changes along these lines. First, political leaders still must satisfy their national electorates, especially in the Western world, where interdependence has become most pronounced. This places severe restraints on the sacrifices they can make for the welfare of a larger community. Efforts at closer cooperation within the European Community have floundered periodically on this obstacle.

Second, neither the Communist governments—especially the Soviet Union and China—nor the newly independent governments of Africa and Asia are likely (to put it mildly) to cooperate in schemes that dilute their sovereignty. It is much the same story in Latin America,

although the nearly universal desire of these countries to reduce their dependence upon the United States is leading some of them to closer cooperation among themselves. Even in North America, Canadian nationalism, while still inchoate and weakened by the language issue, grows in strength as the country seeks to prevent its identity from being submerged by its giant neighbor. And American patriotism, while weakened by Vietnam, remains a powerful force for far more Americans than speak openly about their feelings. No American political leader has advocated any significant diminution of American sovereignty, and all will move cautiously in this area during the coming decade.

Third, even if there were a substantial increase in the authority of international institutions relative to national governments, we should not overlook the basic fact that international institutions are for the most part controlled by *national* governments. The poor countries want international institutions in which they have a greater weight in decision-making—as well as a new set of rules that increases their wealth—rather than a new set of institutions run by international civil servants. Thus, the international relations of the next decade will be determined basically by the foreign policies of national governments.

This brings us to an appraisal of the tasks facing the new United States administration if it is to conceive and execute a successful foreign policy. The Carter Administration will not be writing on a clean slate, for it is heir to some of the assets and liabilities of the foreign policy of Richard Nixon, Gerald Ford, and especially of Henry Kissinger. Where these men were successful (as is often the case in foreign policy) they often succeeded in containing only particular problems or in making a start at “solving” them; and their failures left the United States in a much weaker position than previously. Some issues were dealt with successfully at times, unsuccessfully at others—or contained elements of both success and failure.

The most important achievement of the past eight years was the initiation of a process of partial accommodation with the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China. Progress was made in dealing with Moscow during Nixon's first term, when the SALT and Berlin agreements were reached. However, the Soviet-American détente was grossly oversold during the 1972 election campaign, and its limitations have now become apparent. As Watergate and increased Congressional restrictions on the Executive weakened Presidential power, Nixon and Kissinger saw Soviet power and Soviet will rising relative to that of the United States. Their effort to moderate Soviet behavior, by offering concessions in the hope of inducing Soviet cooperation, faltered because of Soviet ambitions and America's inability to offer—or withhold—adequate incentives at key points. Yet whether we retain or banish the word “détente,” there is no promising alternative to an effort to place some limits on what will long remain a conflictual relationship.

The opening to China was a major success, but the normalization process has remained suspended since

1974: The U.S. Government was preoccupied with Watergate and there was the fear after South Vietnam's collapse in 1975 that a move involved too many domestic and international risks. (Great powers are never willing to let themselves appear to have been “defeated” twice in rapid succession, and many Americans would look upon the cutting of *formal* diplomatic and military ties with the Republic of China [Taiwan] as an American defeat.) The SALT talks, by their very nature, must be a continuing process, even if each proves “successful.” An exception is the treaty banning the ABM—which appears to be as permanent (and as important) a success as occurs in the uncertain environment of world affairs.

By disengaging the parties Kissinger's Middle East shuttle negotiations laid the essential groundwork for an ultimate settlement, but the main task lies ahead. Ironically, the other aspect of Kissinger's success in these negotiations—the great reduction in the Soviet role in the area—may prove to be temporary; it may be necessary to bring the Soviets back into the negotiations if any general settlement is to prove durable. Despite neglect and periodic abuse of our Western European allies and Japan, relations with our allies have improved considerably since President Ford assumed office. The United States cooperated with the major industrial powers, pulling back from a confrontation with OPEC, and the international economy did not collapse under the shock of dramatically increased oil prices imposed at a time of world inflation. A world recession was bad enough, but avoiding a world depression by standing firm against adopting “beggar-my-neighbor” policies was as difficult as it was essential. And the eleventh-hour effort by Kissinger to prevent an explosion in Southern Africa may prove successful, for acceptance of majority rule within a limited period by the white Rhodesians represents a major breakthrough, however difficult the path to agreement proves. But even if the Rhodesian negotiations are ultimately successful, the enormously more difficult problem of South Africa lies ahead.

The failures of the last eight years are of several different types. Some have already been partially overcome; others can be overcome within a reasonable time given a different type of leadership. But the legacy of certain failures will handicap the United States for years. High among them is our Vietnam venture. Extrication from Vietnam did ultimately occur, but it took far too long and ended in an ignominious manner.

The extensive centralization of power within the Executive Branch, while occasionally necessary for brief periods during delicate negotiations, ultimately weakened the government and the country in several ways. Matters that Secretary of State Kissinger thought unimportant—or uninteresting—were often neglected until they reached the crisis stage, when an uninformed Secretary of State would try to keep them from exploding. Cyprus, Bangladesh, and Angola are prime examples. Excessive secrecy limited the experience of many people who will be serving in important positions in the State Department. On Capitol Hill it brought about the gradual shift from admiration for Kissinger's skills to

distrust of his policy expositions and, in time, to many of his policies. This shift also occurred, although less extensively, among the public at large.

The Nixon Administration gave renewed emphasis to relations with Western Europe and Japan during its first year in office. But after 1969 its excessive concentration on relations with the Soviet Union and China led it to neglect those nations closest to America in outlook and most important as its allies. Neglect shifted to an almost brutal nationalism during the period John Connally was at the Treasury Department in the early 1970's. The need to cooperate with these countries was finally recognized in 1973, and especially during the 1974-75 world economic upheaval. This need is now reiterated in nearly every important speech by top U.S. leaders. But there is still the almost automatic assumption that they should cooperate with *us*—a feeling that is difficult for any American administration to avoid because of the reluctance of Western European and Japanese governments to be more creative, or assertive in a positive sense. Yet resentment over the treatment accorded them in the early 1970's, frustration over their own failings, and a marked decline in their admiration for America as a society will color U.S. relations with these countries in the years ahead.

Much more difficult to correct, and therefore a more serious failure, has been the neglect of the poorer countries during all but the last eight years of the Nixon-Ford administrations. Offsetting the value of Nixon and Kissinger's welcome reduction of the ideological element in U.S. opposition to Moscow and Peking was an overemphasis on the importance of the balance of power. Because the less-developed countries appeared to lack military or economic power—at least until the OPEC oil-price increases in 1973—U.S. relations with these countries were downgraded substantially. There was also a tendency to view Soviet support for local groups creating an upheaval as Soviet masterminding of the action and benefiting from it, and it was only when a country seemed to be moving into closer relationship with Moscow that the U.S. Government took much interest. Even then, the principal U.S. concern was often the short-term one of "throwing the rascals out," with little concern for who replaced them, as long as they were not seen as pro-Soviet.

This fear of instability and concern for the status quo imparted a rigidity to U.S. policy that left us beholden to and working with a wide assortment of unsavory regimes around the world. A strong concern for stability was understandable, and necessary, in the years following the upheaval of World War II and during Stalin's days. But a failure to recognize that the world has changed—even though the Nixon-Kissinger policies toward Moscow and Peking were important factors in the change—led the U.S. Government into such discreditable ventures as the covert destabilization program in Chile and strong support for the brutal regime that replaced it.

Instead of recognizing that periodic instability was inevitable in the Third World—but not everywhere simultaneously—and attempting to bend with the times

and influence the forces of change, America became identified in the eyes of much of the world as the protector of the privileged élites who sought to deny justice and equity to the forces working to alleviate human suffering. American actions in such far-flung places as Vietnam, Chile, Cuba, Greece, and Bangladesh have used up much of the moral credit the nation acquired from its opposition to Hitler and Stalin, from the Marshall Plan, NATO, the successful occupation of Japan, and the inauguration of economic assistance programs in the newly decolonized states. Since becoming Secretary of State in 1973, Kissinger has recognized guardedly the importance of moral and human rights issues in foreign policy, but little if any action has followed his rhetoric. He has insisted simply that the search for peace is the highest moral goal, that America cannot dictate the internal policies of any country, no matter how dependent on the United States, and that American policies must be guided by these considerations. While the U.S. record in supporting authoritarian regimes had always been a mixed one, in recent years there has been much less reluctance to be tied to repressive regimes.

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The impression of disinterest in the conditions of people elsewhere was intensified by America's declining foreign aid program and its unwillingness to give serious consideration to new international arrangements designed to provide the poor countries a greater voice in international decision-making and a better chance to improve their economic circumstances. U.S. policy contributed to an ever more strident anti-Americanism in the Third World, which felt increasingly desperate about its future. Since Secretary Kissinger's September, 1975, United Nations speech, the rhetoric has emphasized U.S. concern for the developing countries. But Kissinger's preoccupation with other issues, the economic recession at home, and the adamant opposition of Treasury Secretary Simon prevented significant policy changes on most issues.

Uncritical acceptance of the various schemes put forward by the poor countries is hardly called for, nor is it expected by these countries themselves. But concern for their plight, a sympathetic hearing for their complaints, and some imagination and generosity on America's part could gradually create an atmosphere characterized by important elements of cooperation. The North-South relationship will be difficult in the best of

circumstances; domestic constituencies and pressure groups in most countries will make compromise risky for the governments of rich and poor countries alike. Even when the United States put forward a rather generous proposal for deep-sea mining at the Law of the Sea Conference in 1976, the sense of past grievances (and the hope of getting an even better deal from the Carter Administration) led the less-developed countries to reject the U.S. initiative.

Finally, in recent years the United States has promoted extensive arms sales to earn foreign exchange and attempt closer political relations with the newly rich countries, but it has given little thought to the political consequences of such sales *within* the various regions. (Sales increased from \$1.7 billion in fiscal year 1971 to \$9.5 billion in fiscal year 1975.) Virtually no attention was paid to the problem of nuclear proliferation until India's explosion of a nuclear device in 1974. Since then U.S. pressure caused South Korea to cancel its plans to purchase a French nuclear fuel reprocessing plant, and U.S. efforts may cause Pakistan to cancel its plans to import a similar plant from France. The major suppliers have begun to cooperate on measures to reduce the dangers of proliferation, but only to a limited extent, as witness the sale by West Germany to Brazil of a wide variety of nuclear facilities.

In short, the Republican leaders made some positive gains in relations with the USSR and the People's Republic of China, but allowed a number of major problems to reach crisis or near crisis proportions by 1973. They have made a beginning in grappling with some of these problems, which offers President Carter the opportunity to make further gains if he proceeds with reasonable imagination and skill.

No brief article can even list, much less adequately discuss, the variety of challenges a new U.S. administration will face over the next four years. While some are obvious, others will arise unforeseen, changing the context in which the United States must deal with certain enduring problems. Some matters will be very general, some will relate more to the manner in which the Administration deals with the American people or with other countries than to the substance of the issues, and still other problems will be very specific.

The success or failure of the Carter Administration in the field of foreign policy will depend heavily on the manner in which it handles four general issues. The *first* is how the Administration deals with the country's domestic affairs, for this will have major international repercussions. For example, will the new Administration be able to manage America's domestic economy, making possible sustained economic growth while keeping inflation at a tolerable level? (According to Paul Samuelson, "the new President takes office at a relatively favorable time. Things are not so good that they cannot be improved. Things are not so bad that they cannot be improved.") The direct and indirect impact of the American economy on the economies of other nations, rich and poor alike, in an era of growing interdependence makes this a priority task for international as

well as domestic affairs. Moreover, if our own economy is growing, it will enhance the Government's ability to follow liberal and cooperative international economic policies.

Another aspect of this issue is how the country deals with its own domestic and social problems. Sustained economic growth must be supplemented by programs that reduce unemployment, provide decent living conditions for those at the bottom of the income scale, and deal with such "quality of life" issues as urban decay and crime. No administration can *solve* these problems in four or eight years, but it can grapple with them and make some progress toward a solution. A realization that things are moving in the right direction would be almost as important as the specific progress registered; for it would help restore the self-confidence of Americans in their future and their institutions.

Without underestimating America's cultural impact for good and bad around the world, we should not mislead ourselves into believing that improving our own society will make us a model for most other societies to follow, especially those that spring from vastly different cultures and whose past histories and present conditions are very different from our own. There is widespread admiration abroad for America's domestic achievements, but also a keen awareness of our domestic problems. Unless we make a sustained effort to deal with our own faults and failures and achieve a measure of success, the world will have little respect for us. This would hardly make the United States irrelevant in world affairs, but a society that is not respected must rely more heavily on raw power than would be tolerable for long to the American people—or to an increasingly diverse world.

A *second* general issue facing the Administration is the need to develop and articulate a U.S. policy that provides a focus or a few central themes the people can understand and thus accept and support. This, it should be emphasized, is a task that can be performed only by the President and his close associates. Whatever the ultimate magnitude and nature of the shift in power from the Executive to the Congress that has been a feature of recent years, Congress's lack of cohesion and the independence of its members render it incapable of carrying out such a mission.

Some astute observers argue that the world is becoming so disorderly, with the explosion in number of states and the diffusion of power, that no grand design is possible. Without going this far, Alastair Buchan observed in *Pacific Community* in April, 1974:

I can recall no period since the later 1940s when it was as difficult to generalize the nature or structure of the international system, let alone make any firm predictions about its future course, as the present time. The reason, of course, is that like the immediate postwar era, we are in the midst of a transformation, or at least a drastic modification, not so much of the relative strength of the different actors as in the focus and nature of effective power that nations wield....[T]he period of systemic change through which we are

passing now is considerably more difficult to comprehend than the situation created by the rise of the super-powers a generation ago. It is not the consequence of a great war but of a multiplicity of causes, both in material relations and in human perspectives.... Many forms of technological change, now the single revolution of the development of nuclear weapons, now affect the calculations of major states. Economic considerations are no longer subordinated wholly to political or strategic ones, so that they create new lines of stress among countries that have been partners and allies....

And to complicate still further a world order of increasing complexity, there is no clear break with the past as is generally the case after a major war: many important features of the postwar pattern persist, and will continue to persist in the new relationships, though others may disappear.

Under such circumstances it is true that there can be no grand design—if by that one means a blueprint for the future. But a conceptual framework need not—indeed, must not—be a rigid plan or blueprint. We know too little about the future to make such a goal feasible, and the United States does not have the power to impose its will on the world. What is needed is a sense of direction, an awareness of how the various sets of relationships we will be involved in should relate to each other, and a set of priorities.

In general terms we are likely to be involved in three separate sets of relationships with three quite different sets of countries: (1) a basically competitive relationship with the Soviet Union and China designed to keep their power in check by maintaining adequate American military power and by utilizing—but not exacerbating—their mutual hostility, and designed to keep competition under control by cooperating with each of them on particular measures, especially those intended to reduce the dangers of war; (2) a basically cooperative relationship with other democratic industrialized nations—chiefly Western Europe, Japan, and Canada—in order to deal jointly with the consequences of interdependence while holding our own in the inevitable economic competition with them; and (3) a relationship with the poorer nations designed both to help them develop economically and to mitigate local and regional violence (to the extent possible in a revolutionary age) and thus reduce the dangers of outside involvement or their undue dependence on major powers hostile to the United States.

None of these relationships exists in isolation, however. Containing Soviet and Chinese power involves America's relations with other non-Communist industrial societies, and aiding the less-developed countries is a task for the industrial nations as a whole—and for the newly rich oil states, whose command of financial resources allows them to call for a greater voice in international monetary affairs. The priorities it assigns to the different sets of relationships will also influence the way an administration organizes itself. Balance-of-power politics requires greater concentration of power in a few hands and an element of secrecy. Emphasis on

alliance relationships and economic interdependence brings to the negotiating tables so many technical issues that far more government officials must be brought into the decision-making process.

A *third* issue has less to do with policies as such than with the general attitude of the Administration and the American people about America's proper place in the world. While the United States remains the strongest country in the world, the gap between the U.S. and the next ten to twenty nations has narrowed considerably during the past fifteen years. For some Americans this is a worrisome or even frightening development, and they react with nationalist fervor, stridently insisting that the United States do whatever is necessary to remain Number One. Others, less worried about what they see as an inevitable development, call for "leadership without hegemony" (in Marina v. N. Whitman's phrase). Such an approach requires adjusting to the diffusion of power by giving more countries—especially those whose strength has grown—a greater voice in key international organizations such as the IBRD and the IMF. It also necessitates constant consultation and compromise. Yet given its preponderant size, the slow process of coordinating decisions with Western Europe, the even slower process of reaching a consensus in Japan, and the diversity within the Third World, it is far simpler for the United States to act first than to inform other countries—even though the U.S. wants to be consulted before other countries make decisions that affect it.

The *fourth* general issue President Carter must come to grips with is that of morality and foreign policy, a topic whose importance he has repeatedly emphasized. This is one of the oldest and most difficult in American political life, but one that cannot be avoided. An examination of the writings of those who argue that the U.S. Government should do no more than pursue America's national interest reveals that moral assumptions, claims, and judgments slip into their arguments at many points. Nonetheless, given the excesses that flowed from acts of statesmen who believed they were acting on the highest principles for a noble cause, it should be evident that it is as dangerous to let abstract moral principles dominate foreign policy as it is to conduct such policy without regard for moral concerns and methods. This is a complex affair and requires, above all, a sense of judgment, for principles often conflict with each other, as well as with more mundane concerns. One illustration of the difficulties involved is clear from Louis Halle's comment that many critics of our Latin American policies in the late 1940's insisted we act to replace dictatorships with democratic governments, demanding simultaneously that we adhere to the principle of nonintervention in the internal affairs of other countries.

Yet morality should enter our foreign policy decisions in several ways and for several different reasons. One reason is that the American people want it to be an element of policy, as both private and government surveys show. Thus it is a necessary element if our

foreign policy is to be considered legitimate. This popular desire is, however, a tempered one, recognizing that trade-offs between morality and security are sometimes necessary. The people want our foreign policy to be a decent one, but few are willing to make great sacrifices or decide all issues on the basis of abstract principles. Presidential leadership can influence the public on these issues, but only gradually and to a modest extent.

The other key domestic aspect of morality and foreign policy has to do with the relationship between the President, Congress, and the public. Political leaders promise openness and then resort to secrecy and deception. Greater openness is essential, but many diplomatic activities must still be carried out in secret. What requires top priority is not secrecy or openness, but *candor*—frank speaking about the broad goals of our foreign policy (without unduly ennobling them). Equally important is the frank admission that if we are serious about having morality influence American foreign policy, it will sometimes *cost* something. The politicians, columnists, and editorial writers who claim that our national interest will be advanced if we will only be more moral are as guilty of deception—perhaps of themselves as well as of their audiences—as those political leaders whose misrepresentations over the past ten years have cost the country dearly. Sometimes it pays to be good, but not always.

Morality in dealing with other nations involves both negative and positive considerations. There are some things the government should not do, and others it should do. One can hardly catalogue all that enter each category. There are few absolutes involved, for nondemocratic governments of both Left and Right run the gamut from relatively benign authoritarian regimes to brutal totalitarian ones. We should not attempt to impose our values on others, but we should live by them ourselves. Thus we should keep our distance from harsh and repressive regimes that torture and treat their own people in an inhuman fashion. For example, there should be no more accolades of the type Secretary Kissinger bestowed upon the Brazilian regime when he said that “there are no two peoples whose concern for human dignities and for the basic values of man is more profound in day-to-day life than Brazil and the United States.” Nonetheless, we shall on occasion have to work with autocratic regimes with which we have long had close ties lest abrupt shifts in our policies so destabilize a *key area* that a major war could result. (For instance, no policy we adopt regarding South Korea—either supporting or withdrawing our support of Seoul—is without major risks.) Neither perfection nor complete consistency are possible or necessary. A substantial improvement over the record of recent years is the essential, and matters of degree are important over time.

More positively, we should be generous in helping those who presently live in economic degradation—without automatically doing so in the very manner the governing élites in those nations urge. The leaders of these countries have a variety of goals, not all of which we can or should support: They want national strength, often because of quarrels with their neighbors as well as

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because of a desire to deal on more even terms with the major powers. They want greater status, both for themselves and for their countries. They often want to reduce poverty in their countries, although they frequently give this a lower priority than advancing living standards and maintaining the privileges of the upper and middle classes, who remain the key supporters of such governments. North-South tensions over these issues will persist for decades, no matter what policies we adopt. But our policies should be those that encourage accommodation and mutual efforts toward advancement rather than confrontation.

Speculating about the ability of a new President to conceive, articulate, and execute a foreign policy when he has had virtually no experience in this arena is obviously a risky affair. Much will depend upon the views and abilities of his key appointees, but, as his appointment of Cyrus Vance confirms, Jimmy Carter is not the type of man to turn American foreign policy over to a new Henry Kissinger. He has demonstrated the capacity to learn quickly the facts about a variety of areas and issues, but his ability to integrate the diverse strands of U.S. foreign policy, as well as his judgment in difficult situations, remains untested. The United States, for example, cannot ignore or even neglect the central balance of power, but it must move beyond balance-of-power considerations—and considerations of narrow national interest too—in order to deal with the many new items that have become part of the international agenda. How well does Carter understand the complexities and subtleties involved in such matters? His campaign provided no clear answers.

President Carter will enter office with a number of assets and liabilities. Among the latter are his inexperience and the fact that despite Watergate and the high level of unemployment he won only a modest victory against a relatively undistinguished conservative rival. Part of the narrowness of Carter's victory probably was due to a widespread desire, after the upheavals of the past

decade, to know the character of the candidate. For many millions of voters Carter never succeeded in conveying a clear sense of himself, his philosophy, and his program. In addition there was a belief that President Ford had made a contribution to American political life.

President Carter will also have several important assets when he takes office. His party will have a solid majority in Congress. While few Democratic Congressmen are beholden to him for their elections, nearly all of them will want his administration to succeed. This offers hope that the government can stimulate an adequate rate of economic growth and begin a new attempt to deal with the country's economic and social needs. Yet Congress will remain more assertive than in the past. The less hierarchical nature of power within Congress and the fact that, as international economic issues rise in importance, foreign affairs impinge on the prerogatives of a growing number of committees will make the task of securing Congressional support an onerous one. And divisions over international economic policy occur within each party as well as between them.

A Democratic President is also fortunate because normally he is less dependent than a Republican upon dramatic foreign policy successes for winning and holding popular support; after all, he heads the majority party, whose domestic program is more popular than that of the Republicans. Yet dramatic foreign policy failures—especially involvement in wars—can and have cost Democratic Presidents dearly. Awareness of this latter danger may have been one reason for Carter's statement that he would not send American troops to Yugoslavia even if it were invaded by the Soviet Union (an unwise statement, whatever the intention).

Carter will also benefit from the fact that his administration is less bound by the past than a Ford Administration, even one without Kissinger as Secretary of State. But this provides no more than an opportunity. It can be lost if the new administration lets the obvious need for continuity in many areas combine with the force of inertia to prevent it from making any significant changes.

Finally, Carter should benefit from what appears to be an emerging consensus about America's role in the world. The extensive study *U.S. Foreign Policy: Principles for Defining the National Interest* (published by the Public Agenda Foundation and prepared by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace) reveals that after a period of doubt and dismay the American people are moving toward the view that the U.S. should continue to play a substantial, if more selective, role in world affairs. The American people want the United States to retain close ties with the industrial democracies, to maintain a strong defense posture, to continue to pursue détente with the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China (but without making what many view as inequitable concessions) to give more emphasis to human rights issues, and to remain actively involved in working with other countries in the search for solutions to outstanding international problems.

Since Carter has expressed these same basic positions, he should have reasonable latitude to pursue these lines of policy. On the other hand, his emphasis on the need

for far greater efforts to control nuclear proliferation, to curb American arms sales, and to do more to help the developing countries encounters more skeptical public attitudes. Some of these differences will present difficult problems for him. He will find it hard to convince the Congress and the people to be more forthcoming in dealing with the developing countries—unless the latter become less hostile, putting aside their anti-American rhetoric and resolutions in favor of an attempt to work out practical if less than wholly satisfactory solutions to their grievances. Although exploitation does and will occur in various forms, we should not make the mistake of thinking that the developing countries are poor because we are rich. Their *basic* problems are internal, although some of their leaders attempt to evade their own responsibilities by trying to blame the wealthy nations for their plight. Nonetheless, our wealth and power impose a responsibility to help them progress and to eliminate specific injustices in the international economic system.

If Carter has the opportunity to improve the domestic economic situation, to work out an integrated and coherent foreign policy and win public support for it, there is a question about his ability—or willingness—to exercise American leadership in a way that is acceptable to other countries. This is a critical matter, for while the U.S. can block constructive action on many issues, so can other countries—or groups of countries—if their concerns are not given due weight or their sensitivities are ignored. Carter's campaign statements—that he would never give up control of the Panama Canal, that he would "halt" our allies' sale of nuclear equipment that might eventually be used to create nuclear weapons capabilities in other countries, and his threats of total economic warfare against Arab countries if they instigated a new oil embargo (not an issue at the time)—may have been seen by him as necessary campaign oratory. Yet to other countries, and to many Americans as well, such statements suggest a tendency toward nationalistic bluster that could easily backfire.

This would be particularly dangerous in the Middle East, where a Carter Administration will inevitably suffer for a time from the lack of the personal rapport Kissinger established with key Arab leaders. A worse scenario is, unfortunately, not inherently implausible there: continued failure to move toward a peace settlement, a new Arab-Israeli war a few years hence, another Arab oil embargo when the U.S. is much more dependent upon such oil than in 1973, and a public rupture (even if temporary) of U.S. relations with Western Europe and Japan if we again face no choice but to give Israel massive support while inaugurating a counterembargo (both of them policies Europe and Japan would strongly oppose).

This risk could be lessened if the United States substantially reduced its need for Middle Eastern oil, but until a President and Congress agree to impose the sacrifices this would require of the American people, the value of the agreements among the industrial countries to share scarce oil resources in an emergency remains

questionable. Similarly, no peace settlement is possible without substantial territorial concessions by the Israelis as well as basic political concessions by the Arabs, or without coming to grips with the issue of an Arab Palestine. Carter may do this, but he has yet to move in this direction, and leaders in many countries fear that Carter's campaign efforts to win votes by making extensive promises to Israel will hamper his ability to deal effectively with Middle Eastern problems.

Any tendency toward nationalistic bluster could be dangerous in another way. Since the U.S. Government does not control events throughout the world, it will suffer what critics and political opponents will label "defeats," and some will actually be defeats. Unless a President can accept and admit the truth about such situations, he will either lose his credibility or be tempted to strike out in another area to prove his toughness. Less dramatically, there will be cases when the U.S. Government will have to offer important concessions, either to achieve larger goals or to prevent situations from getting worse. (The Panama Canal, recognition of the People's Republic of China, and normalizing relations with Cuba are a few examples.) It will require a set of priorities as well as a good judgment of domestic and foreign opinion for a President (who will want many bills passed by Congress on a wide variety of issues) to know when to stand fast and when to concede how much to which country. Balancing consistency and flexibility is never an easy task, and explaining why one factor governs one situation and a different factor another taxes the skills of the most articulate and trusted leader.

Perhaps nowhere will this balance be more difficult than in trying to curb nuclear proliferation while reducing conventional arms sales. The diffusion of power has not only stimulated the ambitions of larger regional powers, but means that fewer countries feel they can, or should, depend quite as heavily as they once did upon the superpowers—especially the United States—for their security. In this environment the Carter Administration will have to contend both with commercial pressure to sell nuclear power for civil purposes without encouraging or adding to the risks of nuclear proliferation. It may also have to sell more conventional arms than it would like in order to discourage proliferation in particular countries. Cooperation among the countries that sell nuclear equipment and conventional arms is one way to reduce the competition for advantage among them. But to avoid both the appearance and reality of paternalism, buyers as well as sellers should be included in such arrangements. All of this suggests that the United States will have to remain deeply involved in political-security matters in many parts of the world if it is to discourage proliferation and arms races. It will also, of course, have to do all it can to arrange limitations on Soviet and American arms expenditures if it is to have any credibility when it urges other countries to limit their defense spending.

Any administration must spend an inordinate amount of time coping with unexpected crises, many of them occurring with dramatic suddenness. Southern Africa could explode. A new war could break out in Korea. The

collapse of Canadian unity as a result of the French-English language conflict would pose problems for the United States it is totally unprepared to face. A Carter Administration, which is unlikely to concentrate power in a single pair of hands, may also be able to cope with more than one crisis at a time. Even so, it will find it difficult to avoid letting current crises divert its time and energy from much needed longer-term reforms. And there will probably be more than one occasion in the years ahead when the negotiating talents of Henry Kissinger will be sorely missed.

Perhaps one of the most dangerous potential problems is the international economy. The world has demonstrated great flexibility in coping with the economic strains of the past few years. However, many of the major industrial nations are heavily in debt, and have governments that are new or weak—or both. Of the six major non-Communist economies, the British and Italian are very weak, and the French is showing increasing signs of strain. Only the U.S., West German, and Japanese economies have made reasonable recoveries, but even their advances are slowing down. These weaknesses make it more difficult to be responsive to the appeals of the poor countries for help. Although the developing nations have grown more rapidly than the developed nations in the last few years, the debt burden of many of the poorer countries is particularly worrisome.

The Carter Administration is likely to be somewhat more flexible and imaginative in devising measures to deal with international monetary issues than was the one dominated in economic matters by Secretary of the Treasury Simon. Flexible exchange rates were designed to promote balance-of-payments adjustments by stimulating exports and curbing imports. However, governments are being forced to deal with speculative capital flows of unprecedented size and speed, which force the value of a country's currency so far down that its import costs soar, worsening its balance of payments. In these circumstances a crisis psychology can arise with little warning. Moreover, the U.S. Government has no adequate organizational structure for dealing with foreign economic policies, and none for integrating them with domestic economic policies on the one hand and with diplomatic and security policies on the other. Many efforts have been made to cope with this situation, but none has succeeded.

Thus President Carter takes office with many opportunities and many dangers. Simple and permanent solutions are available to few, if any, of the issues the country faces. Americans will have to learn to be patient with more uncertainty and insecurity than they have previously known. Their ability to accept this situation and adjust to it without abandoning their effort to play a constructive role in world affairs will depend heavily upon the ability of the Carter Administration to establish goals that combine idealism and practicality, to demonstrate the skills needed to deal with complexity and ambiguity without being overwhelmed by them, and to speak with candor about America's role and policies to the people of this nation and of the world.