SECRECY, CONSENSUS, AND FOREIGN POLICY: THE LOGIC OF CHOICE

By Earl C. Ravenal*

I think if one looks at the requirements of foreign policy in the present period, one will find that some things must be done secretively.

Secretary of State, Henry A. Kissinger
Interview with Thomas W. Braden and
Klaas J. Hindriks, Netherlands
Broadcasting Foundation, February 9, 1975.

Most members of the official foreign policy community, and many members of the critical community of American intellectuals, including those who would call themselves liberals, professed to admire the main foreign policy initiatives of the Nixon-Kissinger administration — the opening to China, the detente with the Soviet Union, the extrication from Vietnam, the lowering of the feverish, obsessional competition for the Third World, and the energetic diplomatic activity in the Middle East. But, during the time of Watergate, most members of government quietly dissociated themselves from the *administrative style* of their president, and virtually all American intellectuals, especially the liberals, affected to be shocked and enraged by the conduct of the Nixon White House. And, since then, the *diplomatic style* of Kissinger — the cool, secretive amoralism, the manipulative and coercive use of power — has come under attack. Most of these critics seem to want essentially Nixon's foreign policies without Nixon's personal style, and Kissinger's diplomacy without Kissinger's philosophy of the world.

I think this is too much to ask — not because I happen not to admire either the substantive foreign policy or the administrative and diplomatic style of the Nixon-Kissinger administration, or, for that matter, the Ford-Kissinger administration. The reason, rather, is that these elements are integrally related to each other. In fact, they are related in a logical structure. They are woven warp and woof of the same fabric. Critics cannot pick a thread here and a thread there; they must have this whole fabric or an alternative one.

My inquiry here will be into this relationship among (1) foreign policy content, (2) diplomatic and administrative "style" (in the largest sense of the term — including the resort to secrecy and deception, or "openness" and the denial of secrecy), and (3) the constraints imposed upon foreign policy substance and form by the peculiar operation of the American political system — that is, (a) the American "constitution" (the whole set of political and social relationships that bind us to each other and bind us to our government), and (b) the presence or absence of a popular consensus for our foreign policies.

The Question of Style

The only item of innovation promised by incoming President Ford was a change of *style* in the executive branch of government. After the experience of

*School of Advanced International Studies, The Johns Hopkins University, Washington, D.C.
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the Nixon administration, in which executive independence became isolation and arrogance, and executive privilege became evasion and criminality, the promise of "openness" and "candor" was greeted appreciatively — even with abject gratitude — by Congress, the public, and the press. Virtually the only objections directed against the performance of Henry Kissinger by Americans have been to his *style* of diplomacy and administration: his disdain for consultation and collaboration; his penchant for swift, dramatic moves after secret reassessments; his amoralism and cool disregard for human consequences; his elaborate and obfuscating avoidance of scrutiny; and his suspicion and repression of internal dissent.[1]

Perhaps we should not be surprised at the salience of matters of style. After all, precisely at its most superficial level, style is a conspicuous feature at the interface of a government and its objects and subjects; it represents a personalization of national policy and conduct that seems to make these matters comprehensible to the average person. Even policy analysts and political scientists are usually more engaged by gossip than by their abstractions.

Style has been treated with a misplaced emphasis that might distort the evaluation of the foreign policy of the Nixon-Kissinger administration. Insofar as style is treated as an *aspect* of policy making, it is likely to be misunderstood and consequently exaggerated. But, insofar as style is understood as part of the *structure* of policy choice, it is important, and holds implications that are contrary to the likelihood of a simple change of foreign policy style. In one direction, diplomatic style — and the entire character of an administration — affect the choice of the objects of our diplomacy and the means by which we pursue those objects. And in the other direction, a certain diplomatic and domestic style is a necessary concomitant of certain foreign policy orientations, and cannot be changed without changing those orientations. If a change of orientations is held to be unlikely or undesirable, then it is idle — though it may be entertaining — to criticize style as if it were a completely autonomous and remediable element.

The key question — the "operational" question — about diplomatic and administrative style is not whether it is congenial or obnoxious to our values, or even whether it is benign or noxious to our system, but whether it is dispensable or necessary to certain substantive foreign policy orientations. In other words, is style just a characteristic of administrations or personalities, or is it an integral part of the diplomacy of a nation? This question matters

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[1]One of the earlier critiques of Kissinger's style was David Landau, *Kissinger: The Uses of Power*, Houghton Mifflin (Boston, 1972). In a more recent example, Roger Morris, "The Press
as Cloak and Suitor," *The New York Times*, Op-Ed, (May 11, 1974), accuses Kissinger of
"spend(ing) even less time on human rights issues than on economic problems," "convincingly
argu(ing) against moralism in diplomacy," and being "reluctant to become involved in human
rights issues, or to appear 'soft' in those he did deal with," and explains this in terms of
Kissinger's "lack of self-confidence and identity." Thomas L. Hughes, "Foreign Policy: Men or
Measures?" *The Atlantic*, (October, 1974), criticizes the "personalism" of the Nixon-Kissinger
diplomacy. Richard Holbrooke, "Kissinger: A Study in Contradictions," *The Washington Post*,
Outlook, (September 15, 1974), remarks that Kissinger is "devious," "deeply flawed," and
"wholly without feeling for human suffering." And the publication of Marvin and Bernard
Kalb's book, *Kissinger*, occasioned several long reviews that stress the Secretary's operating
style; see particularly the review articles of James Chace in *The New York Times Book Review*,
(August 25, 1974), and Ronald Steel in *The New York Review of Books*, (September 19, 1974).

because its answer makes a difference. In one case, we can exorcise a certain group of leaders and elevate another, and expect a meaningful change in the style of government without, necessarily, an alteration in the direction of our foreign policy. But, in the other case, the relationship between style and policy will assert itself, and there can be two outcomes: either (1) a sincere and thorough change of style will inhibit the pursuit of objectives and force their change; or (2) style will be tailored to suit foreign policy objectives that are held to be too important to sacrifice.

In this question of style, just as in questions of the substance of its foreign policies, a prognosis for the Ford administration turns not on its declarations or intentions, but on the logic of choice. In this respect, the cases of Chile and Cyprus are exemplary. These cases illustrate, respectively, the restrictions that (1) administrative style and (2) constitutional relationships can put on diplomatic style and, in turn, on the range of effective foreign policy action.

It is ironic that one of the first events to have embarrassed the Ford administration is one that was engineered by its predecessor: the subversion of the Allende government in Chile between 1970 and 1973.[2] This was no inadvertent, anarchial performance by an "invisible government," the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), but a calculated and multifarious program instigated by the highly official "40 Committee" and its chairman, Henry Kissinger.[3]

The covert nature of this action and the reactions of Congress and the President provide a paradigm of the relationship of foreign policy and diplomatic and administrative style. The essence of covert action is, by definition, "plausible deniability," the sanctity of covering the lie. Yet the Chilean revelation sent legislators and editorialists scurrying for the non-solution of congressional "oversight" — as if it could be both effective and compatible with the discriminating conduct of covert operations. But oversight, if ineffective, would merely invite congressional complicity, and, if effective, would risk public disclosure. The real problem is *what* is to be overseen.

In a larger and obvious sense, Realpolitik, in its entirety, stands in the same relation to healthy democratic processes as does covert action to legislative oversight and presidential candor. Just as oversight is not an effective adjunct to covert operations, but actually a contradiction, so openness in the executive branch is not a constructive complement to power politics, but probably an obstruction. But, from President Ford's espousal of covert operations in Chile (unprecedented except perhaps for Eisenhower's candid defense of the U-2 in 1960), we must conclude that he has not as yet realized that a problem of choice even exists, let alone reconciled himself to making that choice. He can have his preferred style of openness and candor, or the present flexible diplomacy and secret applications of force — but not both for very long.

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[2] It was disclosed that the CIA had spent $8 million to "destabilize" the Allende government. The second of the great CIA scandals from the Nixon (and prior) administration which surfaced during the first several months of the Ford administration—its illegal domestic surveillance—illustrates not so much this first question of administrative style as the second question (discussed below, in the case of Cyprus) of constitutional relationships.

[3] As Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs. The other members are the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Deputy Secretary of Defense, the Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, and the Director of Central Intelligence.

The case of Cyprus illustrates another aspect of the tensions among administrative style, diplomatic style, and foreign policy choice. The administration's persistent attempts to continue military aid to Turkey after its extended occupation of northern Cyprus — despite several congressional amendments that would cut off or restrict this aid,[4] and despite the intent of the original military assistance legislation that the arms not be diverted against NATO members—called into question its recently proclaimed respect for congressional initiative and legal restraint. Thus, Cyprus provides a striking example of the "constitutional trade-off." It invites the Ford administration to contemplate its three basic choices: (1) operate within constitutional constraints, to the likely detriment of foreign policy efforts and outcomes; (2) attempt to operate outside the constraints, either evading or deceiving or intimidating opposition, and possibly precipitating a constitutional crisis; or (3) attempt to widen the constraints by a convincing display of leadership, eliciting a general expansion of public confidence or a particular delegation of congressional authority — a course of action that also has its costs.[5]

Most likely, this administration's reaction will be mixed. In some cases, its commitment to openness will impair effectiveness and limit the scope of action. But, more often, one suspects, this commitment will be displayed in rhetoric, and an open administrative and diplomatic style will be sacrificed to perceptions of strategic necessity. "Personalism" will continue as long as there remains anyone talented enough to pursue personal diplomacy. Secrecy will be attempted to the extent that it is still possible in the face of a more militant, aroused Congress and a more probing, suspicious press. Repression in the bureaucracy will prevail, as much as possible, with the temporary popularity of cabinet independence and principled resignations. And diplomatic nonconsultation and tactical surprise will continue, wherever our allies' capacity for obstruction does not preclude it.

As we shall see, the operating style of the Nixon-Kissinger administration did not proceed solely from its continuing global pretensions or its desire to evade domestic constraints, but the *combination of both* led almost inevitably to a diplomacy of economic maneuver, a military policy of bluff and threat, and an internal regime of secrecy, repression, and evasion of constitutional restrictions. Therefore, it may have been shallow for critics to deplore the executive style (which they increasingly identified with Nixon), but to applaud the foreign policy achievements (which they increasingly attributed to Kissinger). They should have realized that style, including even the crimes of Watergate, is a concomitant of policy objects and situational constraints (as policy objects are the result of style and situational opportunities). It is just as meaningless now for critics to blame Kissinger for his amoral and devious style, while supporting his ambitious policy objectives, but seeking to impose

[4]After failing to override several presidential vetoes of its stringent restrictions, Congress extended the deadline on arms shipments to the Turks until December 10, 1974—later until February 5, 1975— with the proviso that these arms not be transhipped to their army in Cyprus. The administration accepted this compromise, and the arms ban went into effect on February 5, 1975.

[5]I discuss these points more amply in Chapter 2, "Order and Consensus," and in my article, "Foreign Policy Consensus: Who Needs It?" *Foreign Policy*, (Spring 1975).

constraints that would require either abandonment of the objectives or refuge in deception and subterfuge.

Foreign Policy Consensus

It is the perennial anodyne of the foreign policy community to call for leadership and consensus, or to lament their lack. During the directionless period of Watergate, and since, it has become virtually an obsession. Not so long ago, in a speech before the Los Angeles World Affairs Council (January 24, 1975), Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger, with a certain nostalgia, said: "Thirty years ago . . . men of both parties and many persuasions — like Truman and Eisenhower, Vandenberg and Marshall, Acheson and Dulles— built a national consensus for responsible American leadership in the world. . . Three decades of global exertions and the war in Vietnam have gravely weakened this sense of common purpose. We have no more urgent task than to rediscover it."

Of course, these sentiments were followed by a *warning* that "public debate once again must find its ultimate limit in a general recognition that we are engaged in a common enterprise," and by the famous invitation to the Congress to join in a "new national partnership" based on the further instruction that "the legislative process—deliberation, debate, and statutory law—is much less well suited to the detailed supervision of the day-to-day conduct of diplomacy." Nevertheless, the ringing call for consensus comes through all the warnings and qualifications.

A special variant of the call for consensus is the liberal-internationalist argument: that the American government should raise public consciousness; generate national support; bridge the gap between the leaders and the led; give wholesome and attractive content to foreign policy; and mobilize sentiment by making economic and social adjustments that will apportion costs fairly and give the people a greater common share in our foreign enterprises. The liberal-internationalist argument points out that the greatest impediment to a national consensus on foreign policy is the fact that *the burdens are unfairly distributed.*[6] It concludes that these inequities should be remedied, principally, for the sake of a more effective foreign policy.

We can grant the fact that there are disparities in burden-sharing. But, what is important is not so much the question of "who pays" for foreign policy, but what conclusions we draw from the answers. For it is quite possible to get the facts generally right, but the conclusion precisely backwards.

Before examining the relationship between inequities and foreign policies, we should discuss the inequities themselves. An important distinction should be made between two kinds of disparities, more or less directly related to foreign policy: (1) specific inequities, and (2) general inequalities. The first are directly related to the way we carry out our foreign and military policies. An example is our selective service system. Because of the structure of deferments, draft levies have fallen disproportionately on the poor and the less-educated — at least until the partial reform of educational exemptions late in

[6]See, for example, Charles W. Maynes, Jr., "Who Pays for Foreign Policy?" *Foreign Policy*, (Summer 1974).

the Vietnam war. (War related surtaxes and other specific measures might be similarly regressive.) We can confidently say two things about these specifically war-induced and war-aggravated inequities: (1) they should be straightened out, whenever the specific burdens are imposed; but (2) along with the specific burdens themselves, these inequities go away when there are no wars, no crises, no mobilizations.

The second kind of disparities is quite different: the inequalities built into the structure of our economy and society. These may or may not operate in circumstances such as mobilization for foreign wars to distort the allocation of specific burdens. An example is the tax preferences that are available in differing degrees to rich and poor, individuals and corporations, capital holders and wage earners. However well-documented these preferential arrangements might be as facts, it would be tendentious as well as invidious to define them all as "loopholes."[7] What is at stake here is not the plausible issue of the unfairness of these dispensations, but rather their legitimacy and utility in the framework of our type of system. The issue is not whether "America's largest corporations," who are "major beneficiaries of U.S. foreign economic policy," . . . "exploit . . . tax concessions." What we should want to know is whether the tax concessions and other preferential arrangements are actually inducing the risk-taking behavior and productive results for which they were designed.

In this regard, American industry has not profited so well from the Vietnam war and from war-induced inflation (with the exception of the defense contracting sector, and even that sector has belatedly suffered).[8]

American industry is gasping from its inability to replenish productive

[7]Or even as "tax expenditures." One common target is corporate income taxes and exemptions. For example, Congressman Charles A. Vanik has demonstrated that certain corporations (particularly the 100 largest) pay considerably less than the statutory tax rate in given years, (studies reported in *Congressional Record*, (July 19, 1972), p. H6707ff., and in the *Washington Post*, (December 19, 1974). But, this is not necessarily mysterious, or illegal, or inequitable. Corporations do this because they lost money in prior years and are carrying forward and offsetting those losses; or because they are taxed elsewhere in the world and are crediting those taxes toward U.S. taxes; or because they are taking tax credits or accelerated depreciation on productive investments they have made.
Another frequent target is the special treatment of capital gains. Though it hapepns to be true that, under the present tax code, this "saves" recipients of capital gains $10 billion a year, a case could be made, on philosophical grounds, for not taxing longer-term capital gains at all (though admittedly it might be difficult in some cases to distinguish investments revalued by inflation from stock-in-trade turned over at a profit). But, one need not subscribe to any extreme argument to understand the case for a *lower* tax ceiling on capital gain; it would be made in terms of the probable encouragement of equity investment, which is in seriously short supply (see footnote below).

[8]With inflation for 1974 at the rate of 11.5 percent, the average listed stock was selling at less than five times its estimated current earnings (compared to 19 times in December 1968), and many companies were selling at less than twice their annual earnings. Corporate profits were near their historical lows; as a percentage of gross national product they were 5.2 percent after tax in 1973, and were running 4.8 percent for 1974 (compared to 7.9 percent in 1965 and 7.8 percent in 1966). Dividends were the lowest ever recorded: 2.2 percent of 1973 GNP and 2.8 percent of 1974 GNP—*before* investor's personal taxes on their dividend income. The debt-to-equity ratio of many American companies was precarious. Several large offerings of debentures by normally respected industrial corporations and utilities had to be withdrawn. Even 1974's "windfall" profits of international oil companies, and many others, were partially illusory, and certainly transient, since they included the difference between inventories acquired at lower prices and evaluated at current prices. (On the other side of the ledger, the effective tax rate for all American corporations for 1974 was at the lowest level in the last 20 years; and the transfer of income from other sectors to the relatively capital-intensive oil industry benefits capital-holders at the expense of wage-earners.)

assets. It cannot raise enough equity capital; it cannot easily pay the high interest on loans, or even borrow sufficiently; it cannot generate enough cash from internal operation through depreciation reserves.[9] All this restricts capacity and inhibits development and innovation in the face of national needs such as housing, transportation, energy generation, and the material sources and technologies this country must have to solve its problems of shortage and vulnerability.[10]

The fundamental trade-off between distributive justice (roughly equated with greater returns to labor) and productive effectiveness (roughly equated with greater returns to capital) is at issue in the Ford administration's deliberations about approaches to inflation, recession, and energy conservation, and in the legislation being drafted in the House Ways and Means Committee for the revision of the tax code. This implicit trade-off, submerged during several decades of relatively smooth growth of the total economy, can no longer be avoided. The previous continuously expanding "production frontier," allowing the allocation of surpluses to foreign policy objectives without prejudicing social welfare and capital investment (or forcing a choice between them), has palpably been closed. Thus, the trade-off aspects of the production curve—the distribution of burdens and rewards, and the sacrifice of objectives—are now stressed, rather than the infinite horizon—the increasing participation in benefits and the ample provision for every worthy purpose.

A trade-off does not mean that the terms are mutually exclusive, but rather

[9]This set of statements will not pass unchallenged. Economists cannot decide whether we are experiencing a "capital shortage or glut," in the provocative words of Paul A. Samuelson, *Newsweek*, (August 26, 1974). Looking at high savings rates and unprecedentedly low multiples of earnings on the New York Stock Exchange, Samuelson wonders, if capital is supposed to be so scarce, "why does it sell at such a discount in the free market?" Samuelson's argument presents something of an equivocation: "capital," in the form of already created productive assets, *is* selling at a discount precisely because "capital," in the form of investible savings that ought to be going into the purchase of new equity shares, is "selling" at a *premium*, in terms of the return and the share of ownership necessary to attract it. Part of the reason for the reluctance to invest is the present tax treatment of individual capital gains, as well as of dividends and corporate profits. Samuelson himself states that "what comes hard these days is new equity capital." And, that is the point in this context: common stocks are made relatively unattractive; the relative attractiveness of fixed-income investments at high rates of return starves the equity market (and the savings-and-loan companies and, in turn, housing construction); individual companies, whose common stock is selling at extremely low price-earnings ratios, are inhibited from equity flotations because they would have to give away a disproportionate share of equity to raise capital; so they must float bonds and borrow from banks; debt-equity ratios become precarious (and the integrity of the banking system is undermined); Interest rates are abnormally high; borrowing reaches a limit, short of investment needs, but too high for corporate and banking soundness; the economy is stunted and distorted. Moreover, this is not just a recent phenomenon; Peter F. Drucker has said, *The New Republic*, (February 1, 1973), p. 23: ". . . American commercial banks have been pushed since 1960 into aggressive lending by the federal government and the Federal Reserve Board so as to replace increasingly scarce equity capital. For it is not true that equity money only became scarce when the stock market collapsed around 1970; except for "growth stocks" it had become scarce ten years earlier. This then created the 'European' situation for most businesses, that is, inability to raise equity capital. And we responded with the 'European' (or 'Japanese') answer." And it might not be a short-lived phenomenon either. According to a study by New York Stock Exchange economists, "Capital Gap Predicted for U.S.," *The New York Times*, (September 10, 1974) there will be a shortage of capital, from all sources, compared with America's needs over the next decade, on the order of $650 billion.

[10]For the past decade-and-a-half, increases in American productivity have been the lowest of all developed nations (less than one-third of Japan, about half of Western Europe, and even less than Britain; in fact, for the past two years, actually negative). This problem is derived from the low percentage of GNP devoted to capital investment (between 1960 and 1973 about 10 percent channeled into non-residential fixed investment, the lowest rate of any industrial nation) and research and development (between 1964 and the present declining from 3 percent to 2.5 percent, half of which is for military and space).

that they are both antithetical and complementary. Correspondingly, there are two alternative ways of looking at the economic problem that confronts us: (1) we could try to maximize productivity (through enhanced returns to capital), subject to the constraint of insuring sufficient returns to labor (through sufficiently liberal wage guidelines and a minimally equitable income policy, perhaps affecting dividends, profits, and executive compensation) to prevent labor's defection and obstruction; or we could try to maximize distributive justice, subject to the constraint of insuring minimally satisfactory capital generation and investment. The trouble, of course, is that there might be no adequate solution, within either statement of the problem. There might be no combination of measures—no consistent set of values necessary to satisfy the constraints— that will produce an effective policy. In short, we might just muddle along—but not necessarily "muddle through."

Whether or not our social and economic systems are candidates for equalization, the motive should not be the perfection of a foreign policy consensus. It is true that some disparities operate as a constraint on foreign policy. But, it is important to see why and how; for this we need a clearer model of the foreign policy process. In particular, we need to know which constraints "bite" harder and closer; by equalizing burdens, are we relieving one constraint only to tighten another? And, most important, is there *any* combination, any allocation that yields foreign policy elites the room they think they need for maneuver, staying power, or escalation? Would fairer burden-sharing produce more support or less support for active foreign policy? That is, are the terms "social justice" and foreign policy effectiveness positively related? Some think it obvious that fairer burden-sharing would produce more support.

Eliminating some kinds of inequities might make it *harder* to carry out an active, expansive foreign policy. For instance, equalizing the draft put student activists in the line of fire, brought Vietnam home to their (policy influential) parents, and helped abort the prosecution of the war. We cannot make blanket statements about inequities and foreign policy effects. We must see how the inequities operate as constraints: which groups are affected, and in which direction. In fact, the problem we are addressing here is precisely that preferences and sentiments cannot be smoothly aggregated for the whole nation. We are faced with a series of disaggregated, separate constraints generated by the circumstances of different groups, any one of which could inhibit the effective projection of foreign policy.

That raises another set of points about the relationship of the American social structure to our foreign policy. The first point begins with the fact that inequitable burden-sharing is not the only cause of foreign policy "dissensus." We must also recognize that different groups of Americans have widely disparate stakes in the *objects* of our foreign policy. These differential stakes run along the multiple lines of cleavage that divide this country—not just the divisions between rich and poor, educated and uneducated, but also the divisions of generation, class, politics, region, and race. Perhaps this country was not destined to be a coherent society, but rather an ill-fitted composition of heterogeneous groups, most of which came here to assert their separateness, affirm their identity, keep their distance, and maintain their autonomy—at most, willing to join in selected common projects of limited duration and purpose. Some kinds of cleavage (ethnic, perhaps regional) cannot be effaced by income redistribution or other domestic reforms, because they are related not to burdens, but to sympathies—unequal or opposite interests in the *outcomes,* not just the costs, of foregn situations (viz. Israel, South Africa), to the extent, in some imaginable circumstances, of paralyzing America's choice of sides. We have to recognize the inhibitions of this state of affairs on a unified, positive foreign policy. Such a fragmented society is not a sufficient base for a policy of upholding world order and contesting a series of border challenges. It is for this reason that the United States cannot sustain foreign policies commensurate with its ostensible power.

The second point is that most foreign intervention does not unify the country or distract it from its problems, but exacerbates the divisions in American society. Vietnam, like all such wars (though perhaps more than most), demonstrated how fragile, tentative, and partial is the American social contract. The confused condition of public support was not a momentary "dissensus" brought about by the trauma of Vietnam. It is a basic condition that was accentuated by the Vietnam war. Ours is still a precarious society that cannot long bear the kind of strains, such as mobilization for foreign adventures, that expose the differential stakes of various groups.

There is not one unique prescriptive conclusion that can be drawn from the logic of social constraints, consensus, and foreign policy. There are at least three reactions that policy-making elites might have.

1. They can eliminate inequities and inequalities as one element (others being "education" and "leadership," particularly presidential) in mobilizing support for a more active foreign policy, to keep alliances intact, forces and defense budgets and military aid sufficient, and American pronouncements credible, as well as to promote foreign development and international resource transfers. This seems to be the preferred solution of the liberal-internationalists. It assumes that a certain style and scale of foreign policy can be maintained if, and only if, we eliminate these inequities.
2. They can deal with lack of consensus by bypassing it, operating in secrecy and with covert moves, insulating foreign policy even more than traditionally from the need for public support. This course is interesting because it is actually the one that the Nixon-Kissinger administration followed. That administration intended specifically to conduct foreign policy in the absence of a consensus (viz. Cambodia, the Indo-Pakistani war, perhaps detente with the Soviets). Indeed, the guiding concept of the Nixon Doctrine was to evade the economic and social constraints that became apparent in the Vietnam war. The Nixon-Kissinger administration acknowledged the constraints, but would not pay the "normal" price to widen them. Still, needing extraordinary room for foreign maneuver, that administration had to deal with domestic reactions by obfuscation and anesthesia (perhaps a better description would be narcosis, sometimes hypnosis). What its liberal critics failed to understand is that this was an objective requirement of that administration's policy, not a gratuitous and dispensable element of political or personal style.

Conversely, an open, persuasive style—particularly if it is successful in arousing support—has its costs. If a president widens public and congressional constraints through education and exhortation, he becomes committed to the result for which he has sought support. Directions become fixed; escalation is facilitated; adversaries become less approachable. Thus, active public support could be a special embarrassment for a policy of balance and maneuver. To the extent that Kissinger's policies require flexibility, subtlety, and control of graduation and surprise, and necessitate dealing with adversaries and placating unpopular clients, they admit as little of public enthusiasm and congressional impetus as they do of public challenge and congressional obstruction. This is a powerful reason why the Nixon-Kissinger regime never genuinely pursued consensus or understanding, but rather cultivated apathy and bemusement.[11] It is interesting to observe how long Kissinger's professions of courtship of America's hearts and minds, and President Ford's promises of candor and responsiveness, will last in the face of the more objective demand of a balance-of-power policy for stunted public participation. Cambodia and Cyprus, and perhaps the Middle-East, will provide the tests.

3. Or, finally, they can observe—live with—the constraints that the inequalities (and other factors) place on an active, particularly an expansive or interventionist foreign policy. They can deal with inequities and inequalities —or not—on their own terms, for reasons appropriate to them, without invoking foreign policy effectiveness as a rationale or purpose. They can keep the lack of consensus from becoming critical by cutting an open policy-making process—even somewhat chaotic, if that is how it turns out—respecting the verdict of the people and their representatives and taking the consequences in terms of our foreign policy effectiveness. But, this approach might be too much to expect from our policy-making elites, at least at this stage of history.

Contrary to the claims of almost all observers, that Vietnam fractured the common beliefs of the American "Establishment," there *is* a post-Vietnam consensus—but it is among foreign policy *elites*. It exists on a very basic level of foreign policy premises, and I think it is falsely oriented. But, policies that depend on a *national* consensus are doomed. Increasingly, objective international conditions are making certain interventionist policies too expensive and risky for the rewards, and thus unworthy of domestic sacrifices, however fairly they may be apportioned. It is not enough for our leaders simply to regain public trust, even if they could. The point is what our leaders do with this public trust. Certain foreign policies will outrun their public mandate, and no amount of economic or social fixing will create sufficient support.

Of course, leaders can mobilize the support of their nations in a defense against a direct threat to the homeland, to lives and property. The important point about such cases is that people perceive that they are risking and sacrificing their own welfare for their own welfare; and, in turn, the limits of toleration for domestic inequities are much wider (viz. Tsarist Russia versus Napo-

[11]Even with the bureaucracy—though here the primary reasons were fear of leaks and policy sabotage and the generation of obstructive coalitions.

leon, a depression-emergent American versus the perceived threat of Hitler). The trouble begins with limited wars. Public constraints on prosecuting a war will be tighter (that is, support for it will be less) as its purposes are seen to be more limited. A government may try to coerce support or anesthetize opinion; but that sort of thing becomes a contentious point in itself in a constitutional democracy. It might be—whether fortunately or unfortunately—that a country such as ours can fight, and therefore ought to fight, only very important wars, or none.

Perhaps what we need is not a foreign policy consensus, but a foreign policy *that does not require consensus;* that accommodates in our society a never-finished process of experiment and contention for distributive advantage; that allows our internal differences to remain unresolved because it generates fewer external pressures that demand their resolution.

The Cult of Sport

A foreign policy cannot even be defined without considering the sources of its support. "Support" is a complex of relationships, (a) between the executive branch and the public, the legislature, and certain interested groups, and (b) within the institutions of the executive branch itself. Both sets of relationships function as constraints; the second also acts to filter, bias, and shape proposals and programs.

The Nixon administration hoped to carry on its foreign strategy even in the face of adverse opinion readings. And yet, it was extraordinarily self-conscious about public support. The contradiction is resolved by noting that its strategy required—in fact, implied—not active support, but passive acquiescence. For such a cool equilibration of power, neutral exercise of control, and intricate apportionment of roles within our alliances, warm and positive domestic support might even be an embarrassment. President Nixon defined the quality of the support he was seeking:

> We must convincingly demonstrate the relationship between our specific actions and our basic purposes. In turn, the leadership can ask the American people for some degree of trust, and for acknowledgement of the complexities of foreign policy. This does not mean a moratorium on criticism. It means listening to the rationale for specific actions and distinguishing attacks on the broad policy itself from attacks on tactical judgments.[12]

This is a prescription for anesthetizing political dissent and attaining the requisite condition of apathy, bemusement, and deference that sums up to acquiescence.

The concomitant strategy toward the legislative branch was a sort of pacification, in which an attempt was made to win the legislature by superficial and subtle means of co-optation. The pattern included the acceptance of the outlines of congressional resolutions limiting foreign policy and military maneuver; the thin intrusion of a semantic wedge; and the widening of this wedge through subsequent actions. A consultative oligarchy of legislators was sometimes admitted to a sharing of intelligence and a complicity in a basically executive determination of policy.

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[12] Nixon II, p. 21.

The military exponents of executive policy were extended the promise of a revitalized professionalism of the Services, a strong "participatory" share in the elaboration of strategy, the determination of procurement and resource allocation, and the prospect of organization-enhancing weapons systems subjected to less stringent justification. Quite naturally, the reaction of the Services to any new national security policy is to accommodate to it by gravitating to where the "action" is—as they all adapted to the unconventional warfare vogue of the 1960's (even the Navy was operating in commando units far behind enemy lines). In the 1970's the Services again competed innovatively, this time to adapt their traditional arms to the aseptic connotations of the Nixon Doctrine. The Navy—by far the principal beneficiary—promoted its normal "over-the-horizon" posture (the presumably non-provocative, stand-off readiness to deliver overwhelming force) and its comprehensive "blue-water" strategy (the quiet worldwide reach). The Air Force insisted, characteristically, on the centrality of strategic attack (the attempted destruction of the enemy's will). The Army abstracted from its role of closing with the enemy and furthered a new mythology of remote engagement (the automated electronic battlefield and the prompt, precise, lethal reaction).

A Prediction: A Byzantine Age?

Since the beginning of the Nixon presidency, pressures and constraints have produced considerable displacement and accommodation of institutions and strategies—without producing constructive foreign and military policies. There has been a more complaisant arrangement with the military within the national security departments of the executive branch; a tighter, more self-contained military establishment, perhaps better managed, certainly more technologically formidable, and now manned by volunteers. There has been—particularly for Asia—a more selective strategy of intervention; an attenuated overseas presence; a large scale program of force-substitution that relies on allied contributions and U.S. arms transfer. This dispensation achieved a fair level of popular and congressional acquiescence. On the other hand, the same logic and the same compulsions could bring about nuclear threats, decisive interventions, and remote methods of destruction that obviate human involvement and diffuse moral considerations.

In larger terms, the Nixon Doctrine—the Nixon era itself—can be seen as signaling the beginning of a long secular transit for America. One can sense the emergence of the features of such a mature state as Byzantium—policing a more consolidated empire; exercising a more sophisticated blend of diplomacy and war, manipulation and coercion; deploying more parsimoniously its technically virtuose weapons and mercenary armies; dispensing internal welfare and resting content with a more settled mercantilism; superimposing self-centered executive institutions on a quiescent and deferent political base. Perhaps one should not overextend the parallel, but the historical analogy also suggests historical choices. The coming age could be neo-imperial, or it could be post-imperial. And the transition could be a grudging, baleful retreat; or it could be a tolerant concession to the condition of America's prospective long haul: the abandonment of the principle that this nation has a privileged purpose that it must impress on the rest of the world.