

SHOULD AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY  
BE MORALISTIC?

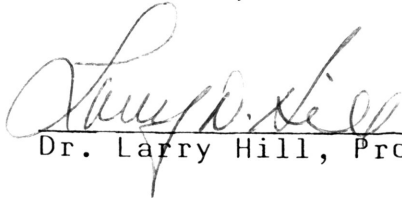
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ABSTRACT

"Should American Foreign Policy be Moralistic?" is an inquiry into one of the many controversies surrounding United States foreign policy. Mr. Keeney traces the development of moralistic undercurrents in our foreign policy up to the end of the Second World War. He then discusses the particular effects moralism had on the definition of America's national objectives during the critical early years of the Cold War. The effects these moralistic objectives had on our foreign policy actions during the Cold War are also examined.

A discussion of the "realist" and "moralist" philosophies follows. In his conclusion, Mr. Keeney presents his own formula for the future incorporation of moralism in America's foreign policy.



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"If the democratic nations fail, their failure must be partly attributed to the faulty strategy of idealists who have too many illusions when they face realists who have too little conscience."<sup>1</sup>

Reinhold Niebuhr

<sup>1</sup>Reinhold Niebuhr, Kenneth W. Thompson, Christian Ethics and the Dilemmas of Foreign Policy (Durham, N. C., 1959), 3.

## INTRODUCTION

Shortly after his election in November, 1976, President-elect Jimmy Carter pledged to concentrate on developing a more moralistic tone in America's foreign policy. In the few months since taking office, President Carter's new emphasis on human rights has had considerable impact upon American foreign relations. Totalitarian regimes that have considered the United States their ally, such as Brazil, have expressed considerable indignation at the new administration's refusal to sell them military equipment. The recent stalling of United States - Soviet Strategic Arms Limitations Talks (S.A.L.T.) have also been blamed on Moscow's irritation with America's emphasis on moralism.

These incidents have helped fuel a renewed interest in questions regarding the nature of American foreign policy: Should American foreign affairs be an extension of our basic moral philosophy and, by its implementation, promote both American interests and a general improvement of human conditions throughout the world? Or, should United States policy refrain from transposing our values into international affairs and base our decisions solely on considerations that are designed to enhance our own prosperity, security and standing in international affairs?

To many observers, President Carter's new emphasis on morality in foreign affairs is considered an unwelcome and unwise shift in policy. Others feel that the President has made a needed improvement in our foreign affairs strategy. There is also a considerable number of observers who feel that American policy has always been markedly moralistic and that the Carter stance represents no major alteration.

This paper represents my attempt to deal with the question of moralism in American foreign policy. I feel that American foreign relations, moreso than those of any other nation, have always been greatly influenced by our morals. This is undoubtedly a carryover from domestic values that make American political philosophy somewhat unique. That Americans would be involved in a policy of moralism, which normally results in additional costs and complications for a foreign policy, may also be "...because the nation has prospered materially."<sup>2</sup> America's prosperity has been instrumental in increasing our pride in our constitutional heritage of liberty, equality and the rights of private property. This pride, and the success we have enjoyed with those values at home, have always tempted us to spread our morals abroad.

<sup>2</sup>Leonard M. West, "The United States", International Affairs, XII (1958), 99.

Morality is the right or wrong of an action. An act is considered moral when it either supports some desired value or represents such a value. These values, and the rightness or wrongness of an act, are all defined by a particular society's mores, norms and beliefs. In regard to foreign policy, morality often refers to the best possible choice for all concerned, but still a choice that does not run counter to one's own values. Moralizing in foreign policy is, in effect, teaching a lesson in morals through action.<sup>3</sup>

Much of "...the controversy over foreign policy...is moral controversy; that is, controversy that is about what the United States ought to do in order to serve its fundamental values."<sup>4</sup> This controversy has been the subject of ongoing debate between "realists" and "moralists". The realist believes that American foreign policy should be a direct response to the international environment, with American values having no important effect on our policy decisions. The realist also contends that the rest of the world should be allowed to practice its own values and that

<sup>3</sup>This is not to imply that an act that does not meet the requirements of my own definition of moral, is instead immoral. One of the many areas of ambiguity regarding the concepts of moral and immoral, is a seemingly neutral condition between these two concepts.

<sup>4</sup>David Little, American Foreign Policy and Moral Rhetoric (New York, 1969), 26.

the United States should only be concerned with its own aspirations and the role other nations may play in advancing those aspirations.<sup>5</sup>

The moralist contends that our foreign policy cannot be successful unless it attempts to transfer American values to the international scene. It is the moralist who believes one of the primary goals of American foreign affairs is to help create a world that shares the American values of liberty, self-determination and equality. The moralist acknowledges that this may seldom prove to be the easiest of alternatives for the United States, but that it is nonetheless essential to the realization and perpetuation of American values at home that we include them in our goals abroad.<sup>6</sup>

Foreign policy is unquestionably one of the most important responsibilities of any government. Given the increasing number of independent nations actively involved in world politics today, America's foreign policy becomes more important every year. The introduction of nuclear weapons into the arsenals of the United States and several other states has also increased our emphasis upon international

<sup>5</sup>Some of the most noted realists include: Hans J. Morgenthau, Reinhold Niebuhr, George Kennan and Dean Acheson. I will discuss the realist point of view more thoroughly in Part III.

<sup>6</sup>Two of the most noted moralists are Woodrow Wilson and President Carter. A more detailed investigation of the moralist philosophy will follow in Part III.

relations. Therefore, the manner in which these policies are implemented, as well as the basic philosophy that supports that policy, is of prime importance for serious discussion. Though my opinion will not offer any finite solutions to the questions I shall discuss, the goal of my paper is to help clarify the controversy surrounding moralism in American foreign policy.



CHAPTER I  
MORALISM AND THE DEVELOPMENT  
OF  
AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY

Within a short time after the ratification of our Constitution, the question of the extent to which moralism should be included in our foreign policy was raised. The first conflict concerning American moralism revolved around the wisdom of a possible United States intervention in a war between England and France. Moralists argued that we should enter the war on the side of the new revolutionary government of France. It was felt that Americans owed a moral obligation to the French for their aid in our own rebellion and because their new government was a democratic regime. Realists countered that our young nation should stay out of European affairs because such entanglements would only harm our own prosperity.

Though the realist faction successfully won this particular debate, the question of moralism in America's foreign affairs was far from settled. However, throughout most of the nineteenth century American foreign policy became closely intertwined with our domestic policy. This condition was the result of several factors in America's history.

The first of these developments was an era of geographic

isolation. This isolation allowed Americans to remain active in conquering their western frontiers while at the same time keeping us out of the mainstream of international politics. The second important factor in nineteenth century America was that our foreign policy was directed most actively in the acquisition of areas already adjacent to our borders.

This concentration of foreign policy in the area of western expansion, coupled with her relative isolation from the rest of the world, allowed the United States to concentrate its moralistic debates in the nineteenth century on domestic considerations. The persistent debate concerning the status of slavery in newly acquired territories is an example of the country's moralistic accrescence. Even the Civil War itself may be seen as a conflict between two opposing sets of American values. As a result of the energies America expended in defining her values at home, American attempts to export those values abroad were severely limited.

As the nineteenth century drew to a close, America had conquered her vast inland frontier. The economic opportunity which had been closely related to frontier policy now became a primary interest of the nation's foreign policy. As American industry began to prosper, America's need for new raw materials also increased. As a result, America's frontier conquering ideals turned to the conquering of

foreign territories and imperialism.<sup>7</sup>

Such slogans as "manifest destiny: and "the white man's burden" marked this era of imperialism. However, our attempts to reconcile this expansionism with our own values ultimately failed, and the era was relatively short-lived. Nonetheless, our involvement in the Spanish-American War and the acquisition of Hawaii, the Phillipines, and Puerto Rico, did have considerable affect upon our foreign policy. For example, our imperialism had led us to become more active in world politics. Also, our inability to defend the colonization of foreign peoples within our own value structure, would have important bearing on our future policies.<sup>8</sup>

In the early twentieth century European tensions, which seemed to threaten America's interests, drove her to again participate actively in international affairs. With her

<sup>7</sup>I should note that the term "imperialism" has taken on a connotation today. I am speaking here of the actual conquering (by force, if necessary) and colonization of foreign peoples. This should not be confused with economic imperialism, of which the United States is often accused of practicing today.

<sup>8</sup>A good example of our inability to support colonialism except where practical considerations overruled our support of self-determination, occurred during World War II. Americans found it difficult to accept the British interpretation of self-rule as defined in the Atlantic Charter. The British did not want their own colonies included in this self-determination. As a rule, Americans have never been eager to use their foreign policy to support colonialism.

entry into World War I, America played its most aggressive role in world politics to that date. World War I was also important because it is in this period that America first attempted to impose her moralism on world affairs.

Woodrow Wilson, the American president during the war, was in many respects the author of modern American moralism in our foreign relations. He argued that "It is a very perilous thing to determine the foreign policy of a nation in terms of material interests...morality and not expediency is the thing that must guide us..."<sup>9</sup>

Wilson called upon Americans to join the fight to make the world safe for democracy and by doing so, seemed to ignore the practical considerations of America's vital interests. When the war ended and the Treaty of Versailles did not seem to produce an ideologically superior world, the American public began to question Wilson's original reasons for joining the war.

Wilson had not educated Americans to the benefits they would gain from this crusade for democracy and thus their skepticism soon developed into disillusionment. A nation that thought it had been instrumental in leading "good" over "evil", soon realized the world order produced by the

<sup>9</sup>Hans J. Morgenthau and Kenneth Thompson, Principles and Problems of International Politics (New York, 1950), 24.

war was little better than its prewar prototype. Other revelations would soon convince Americans that their blood had been spilled for the protection of American business interests, and not for the redemption of American values. These feelings led to a quick retreat by the United States into a less active role in international affairs. War and foreign entanglements in "power politics" were condemned as immoral. America then began a period of intense isolationism and self-indulgence.<sup>10</sup>

By the time European tensions again threatened this self-indulgence in the late 1930's, isolationism had become a powerful and popular ideology in the United States. Nazi aggression in Europe and Japanese imperialism in Asia were fast becoming major concerns of the United States. Isolationism however, represented a major domestic obstacle in President Franklin D. Roosevelt's attempts to use American influence to thwart Axis aggression.

An isolationist versus activist debate began, with both sides relying heavily upon moralistic rhetoric. Isolationists argued that it was contrary to America's

<sup>10</sup>The extent to which this isolationism affected our foreign policy interactions can be exemplified by the American influence lent to developing the Kellogg-Briand Pact of 1927. This pact, signed by 62 nations, outlawed war as a means of solving international disputes.

values for us to become involved in European politics or war. Activists countered that it was even more immoral to allow fascism to conquer all of Europe while one of the world's leading democracies stood by idly and watched.

However this national debate did not produce a final solution to the controversy. Instead, the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor left the United States little alternative but to enter the war.<sup>11</sup>

American rhetoric became notably moralistic once we joined the war effort. As German atrocities in Europe were made public, American resolve to destroy totalitarianism heightened. Once again it was the task of the United States to defend democracy. American war aims, which were enunciated in the Atlantic Charter, were a pledge to support the self-determination and freedom of all peoples. These sweeping proclamations of moralism more than once created tensions between the United States and her allies. Yet the fact that America defined her war goals in such ideological terms did not prevent her from compromising on those ideals when it was practical to do so.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>11</sup>For a more detailed discussion of the Second World War, and its effects upon American foreign and domestic policy, see: Stephen E. Ambrose, *Rise to Globalism* (Baltimore, 1973).

<sup>12</sup>Several examples of Americans compromising on their ideological war goals in favor of expediency are: the decision to maintain Vichy control of North Africa and allowing the Fascists to remain in control of Italy after the allies had liberated that country.

By the end of the war in 1945, America had undergone some of the most profound changes in her history. From an isolationist nation suffering from the worst economic crisis in its history, the United States arose from the war not only a victor, but as the most powerful state on earth as well. Her homelands had been spared. Her industry had flourished. She possessed the secret of atomic power, a knowledge which she only partially shared with her British allies.

On the other side of the Atlantic, Europe was ravaged. Russia had lost as many as twenty million people and a sizeable portion of her industry. France and Britain were on the verge of economic collapse. It seemed all too obvious that the power vacuum created by the war could be filled by the United States.

Thus, in a relatively short period of one hundred and fifty years, America had matured from thirteen disunited colonies to become the world's most powerful nation. She had survived the worst war in mankind's history with her morals almost intact. It was at this time in our history that critical changes in our foreign policy would so alter American international relations; that our very values themselves would be called into question.

Post-World War II America was not convinced that its new prosperity was as secure as it appeared to be. America's response to this dilemma between her apparent security and

feelings of insecurity, would have a profound effect on American foreign policy formulation during the postwar years. In turn, these postwar changes would have critical effects upon American policy for the next thirty years. It is in this period, i.e., postwar America, that the bulk of my research is concentrated.



PART II  
POSTWAR MORALISM  
IN  
NATIONAL OBJECTIVES AND FOREIGN POLICY ACTIONS

INTRODUCTION

Many factors besides moralism combine to give American foreign policy its distinct tone. Our capitalistic economy, democratic form of government, and unique culture all interact to shape American foreign affairs. The effect that ideology has on the definition of a state's goals in international relations is one of the most important aspects of moralism. Moralism is also an important force in shaping American actions that are designed to help us reach those goals.

In this paper I have emphasized the effects of moralism upon American national objectives and upon our means to reach those objectives. I feel it is difficult, if not self-defeating, to attempt to separate foreign policy theory from action. They go hand in hand, i.e., theory being clarified and defined through action and action being influenced by theory.

When considering American foreign policy, the distinction between theory and practice becomes even more muddled. American foreign policy is not the work of statesmen alone.

Businessmen, labor leaders, religious groups, educators, the media, and countless other people contribute to policy formulation in the United States. The input of these different groups forces countless compromises. This is one of the basic differences between democracies and totalitarian regimes. That is, in democracies various interests define national objectives through the forum of domestic politics. On the other hand, national interests in totalitarian regimes are often narrowly defined by - and perhaps for - a few powerful individuals.

As long as men carry out the foreign policies of governments, a degree of their socialization will always filter into international affairs. The question of to what degree this socialization should affect that policy is one aspect of the controversy surrounding moralism in America's foreign relations.

Once domestic politics have defined a nation's objectives, those objectives are introduced into the arena of international politics. At this point many more compromises are forced upon a nation's foreign policy. Certain shifts and sacrifices may then be warranted by these international pressures. Therefore, many believe that policies "...are primarily forged in the fire of practice."<sup>13</sup>

<sup>13</sup>George F. Kennzy, American Diplomacy: 1900-1950 (New York, 1951), 128.

These international pressures also have considerable influence on a state's foreign policy theory. A state's philosophy of foreign policy is crucial in such decisions as when to compromise and when to remain steadfast. Responses to different international stimuli are also influenced by a state's political theory and overall perception of the world environment. Therefore, it may also be correct to assume that theory, as well as form, is actually forged in practice.

These are several of the considerations that have led me to divide my discussion of moralism in recent American foreign affairs into two sections. In the first section I will discuss moralism in respect to national objectives and American self-interests. In the second part of my discussion, I will concentrate on moralism and its relationship to foreign policy actions and responses.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>14</sup>For my discussion of the basic components of foreign policy, I used K. J. Holsti, International Politics: A Framework for Analysis (Englewood Cliffs, N. J., 1972). For an understanding of the workings within American foreign policy in particular, see John E. Esterline and Robert B. Black, Inside Foreign Policy: The Department of State Political System and Its Subsystems (Palo Alto, California, 1975).

CHAPTER II  
MORALISM AND POSTWAR  
NATIONAL OBJECTIVES OF THE UNITED STATES

The first area I shall consider in discussing moralistic ideology in American foreign affairs is in respect to national objectives.

National objectives can be defined as "...an 'image' of a future state of affairs and future set of conditions..."<sup>15</sup> which a government attempts to achieve through its foreign policy. National objectives, sometimes referred to as national self-interests, can range from insuring a state's security to negotiating new markets for one's exports. National objectives are perhaps the most important component of any foreign policy. This is because they are often viewed as "...a state of affairs valued solely for its benefit to the nation."<sup>16</sup> Consequently, national objectives are integral parts of a state's political philosophy and overall foreign policy theory.

These national self-interests can also be areas of high sensitivity in a state's foreign relations. In turn, this sensitivity often diminishes the possibility for compromise that is so essential in world politics. On such example of a

<sup>15</sup> Holsti, International Politics, 131.

<sup>16</sup> Robert Osgood, Ideals and Self Interest in America's Foreign Relations, (Chicago, 1953), 4.

sensitive self-interest would be national security.

By the end of World War II, it became evident that some alteration in America's national objectives was necessary. The end of the war itself had freed us from concentrating solely on military and security concerns. As the United States arose from the shambles left by the war, she began to flex new muscles. It now seemed that the American values we had so believed would benefit all mankind, could be transposed to a large part of the world via America's new strength.

America's power at the end of the war seemed so awesome that there was little reason for Americans to fear international complications. Nonetheless, American leaders were frustrated with the postwar international situation. Though Russia had been devastated by the Nazi invasion, the Red Army remained the most powerful force in Europe. Many Western European nations were also faced with armed leftist groups who had fought in underground actions against the Nazis and now turned their energies against the traditional European political institutions. Washington was also becoming increasingly concerned over Stalin's efforts to seal off Eastern Europe from western influence.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>17</sup>Several examples of postwar underground movements that were characterized by leftist sympathies are Greece, Yugoslavia and Indochina. These movements' attempts to overthrow prewar political regimes caused considerable alarm in both Washington and London.

The inherent ideological opposition between communism and capitalism, which had up to this point been somewhat subdued by United States and Soviet prewar isolationism and their World War II alliance, now became a central force in international politics. The cleavage between communism and American democracy also added to Washington's anxiety. Consequently, before the United States could truly explore and appreciate her newly acquired power, she seemed to be forced into crisis situations that demanded immediate response.

As the international scene began to be viewed with increasing alarm by Washington, American leaders were also confronted with a dilemma at home. The American public was hardly eager to return to a war footing. After four years of costly war, which had followed ten years of bitter economic depression, the American people were most interested in enjoying their new prosperity.<sup>18</sup>

Harry Truman, America's president in 1945, was acutely aware of these domestic and international situations. To Truman, the Soviet troops in Eastern Europe represented a reincarnation of a totalitarianism similar to the kind America had just helped to defeat. Truman refused to believe

<sup>18</sup>For an excellent discussion of the prevailing domestic moods in the United States after World War II, see William E. Leuchtenburg, A Troubled Feast: American Society since 1945 (Boston, 1973).

that Soviet actions in Europe were primarily designed to gain Russian security. Instead, the American president viewed Stalin's postwar policies as aggressive anti-capitalistic moves designed to enslave whole portions of the world.

The seemingly "...restless siege of aggressive and antidemocratic powers outside of the Western Hemisphere..."<sup>19</sup> increased Truman's resolve to take an active role in world politics. Adding to this resolve was a sincere belief on the part of many Americans that history had burdened "...the United States (with) the major responsibility for defending the cherished values of western civilization."<sup>20</sup> Thus, the Soviet-American misunderstandings after World War II soon developed into major ideological and international confrontations. The immediate results of this conflict were many. One such example was an increase in American tensions at a time when America itself seemed most secure.

It was under such conditions that President Truman was forced to shape postwar foreign policy. That America's transition from a war footing to a peace time policy caused problems for the United States is not surprising. Particularly

<sup>19</sup>Osgood, Ideals and Self Interest in America's Foreign Relations, 429.

<sup>20</sup>By Ernest W. Lefever, "Introduction to," Reinhold Niebuhr, The World Crisis and American Responsibility (Westport, Conn., 1958), 3.

when one considers American leadership's inexperience in dealing with the world conditions that existed after World War II. Also, both America's leadership and her public shared a relative immaturity in regard to understanding their new power. Complicating both of these situations was the urgency added to our policy formulation by the threat of totalitarianism.

Most surprisingly, President Truman's initial response to the world situation was to define it in simplistic terms of good and evil. America was portrayed as the defender of liberty, equality, and self-determination. The Soviets, on the other hand, represented the evils of repression and enslavement which were spread by the means of force.

President Truman stated that

"...one of the primary objectives of the foreign policy of the United States (is to create) conditions in which we and other nations will be able to work out a way of life free from coercion."<sup>21</sup>

The effect of such a sweeping proclamation was that almost overnight the American people accomplished a remarkable mental transformation. The fear of totalitarianism that had been associated with Hitler was quickly transferred to Stalin. The Russian ruler became the new despot bent on world domination. Once again the American people visualized

<sup>21</sup> James A. Nathan and James K. Oliver, United States Foreign Policy and World Order (Boston, 1976), 77.



the picture of a world that was becoming increasingly hostile to their values. Americans would have to rally once more for the cause of liberty, or risk the loss of that freedom in their own country.

Ideological universals such as the defense of democracy and self-determination proved quite useful to America's statesmen. American values helped accentuate what appeared to be a major threat to our civilization by a government that scorned both private property and free elections. Also, moralism was already prevalent in American foreign policy and thus the Truman administration was not forced to make a major ideological shift in policy at a time when prompt action seemed imperative.<sup>22</sup>

As the American public began to accept this burden of defending western morals, the Truman administration began to cautiously implement a program of securing and strengthening those values abroad. The first step in this procedure was the development of an ideological basis from which to originate American aid. It emerged in the form of the Truman Doctrine.

The Truman Doctrine represents a major shift in American foreign policy. Never before had peacetime America

<sup>22</sup> Moral considerations were not, of course, the only reason American statesmen considered Soviet presence in East Europe a threat. The thought of American products being barred from half of Europe's markets also infuriated Americans.

taken such an active position in international affairs.

When introducing his doctrine, President Truman announced:

"I believe that it must be the policy of the United States to support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures."<sup>23</sup>

This statement presents two important aspects of American postwar policy. First, a moral debt and obligation on our part to protect the "free peoples" of the world. Secondly, and equally important, is the statement that America would go much farther than just being involved in world politics. We would instead try to shape a new world community.

This new design for a world community would be modeled after our own value system. We would attempt to shape history in such a way as to protect our values where they were already practiced, and to introduce them where they were not yet known. It is no coincidence that in doing so, communist ideology would be limited and hopefully overcome.

One of the goals the Truman administration sought in accomplishing this moral victory was the rebuilding of Western European nations who shared our values. It was reasoned that these western democracies would help us in our struggle with totalitarianism.

America's first attempt to rebuild the western

<sup>23</sup> Ambrose, Rise to Globalism, 150.

democracies had occurred in 1945. In that year Americans sent millions of dollars to Europe in a humanitarian response to the extremely bitter winter Europe had experienced.

It soon became clear that Western Europe was in need of much more than just humanitarian aid. Four years of war had destroyed the western democracy's industry, agriculture, manpower, and its ability to recover. America responded to these needs with the Marshall Plan, initiated in 1948. This plan called for a massive program of American economic assistance to Europe. It was reasoned that American dollars would help rebuild Europe so that she would stand as a powerful obstacle to Soviet domination of Europe. An attempt was also made to include Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union in this program. This was done in the hopes that American aid might neutralize Moscow's influence in the Eastern states. The actual logistics of the program made it unacceptable to Moscow though (as Americans had somewhat hoped). Stalin's reaction instead was to completely seal off Eastern Europe from American influence.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>24</sup>For a more detailed description of the Truman Doctrine, the Marshall Plan, and the events leading up to this East-West split, see Ambrose, Rise to Globalism, 102-192, Nathan and Oliver, United States Foreign Policy and World Order, 63-142.

The humanitarian aspect of the Marshall Plan served American moralism admirably. When Stalin attempted to seal off West Berlin from American influence, several of the Western European states joined Americans in their zeal to combat communism.

Soviet-American relations by this time were characterized by a high level of tension. As the Cold War heated up, American rhetoric took on even more moralistic tones. The American position shifted to a stance that believed a "...breach of peace anywhere in the world threatens the peace of the entire world."<sup>25</sup> This American belief resulted in the theory of containment.

Containment, briefly defined, was an attempt to freeze communism by blocking its access to any new territory. This would give the west time to build up her defenses in areas where our moral values were most vulnerable to communist coercion. It would also help isolate an ideology that we were convinced could not mix with our own.

Containment's effect upon American policy was rather profound. Besides becoming a crusader for world freedom, the United States also became the world's chief defender of the status quo. Often, the status quo we were protecting

<sup>25</sup>Nathan and Oliver, United States Foreign Policy and World Order, 47.

represented nations such as South Korea that only remotely shared our values. When confronted with this fact, we countered that the evils of communism overruled the domestic conditions in many of the world's developing "democracies". Another result of containment was that Americans began to equate nationalism with communism. This was particularly the case in many Third World nations, where Americans intervened on the side of governments that were experiencing the growing pains of nationalism and communism. This was particularly ironic when one recalls the United States emerged from just such a nationalistic revolution. Finally, the containment theory affected our attempts to create a world based on our own ideals in such a way that American foreign policy became increasingly conservative.

Behind the United State's struggle to produce a more democratic world community were developing several new American assumptions. The United States began to consider its own view of history and reality as superior to that of other peoples. It thus became increasingly easy for Americans to take any action they wished because, in the end, their actions were designed to help all by eliminating communism. In a sense, American moralism lost its respect for other's boundaries. Our virtue seemed to grant us our license.

American moralism also played an important part in where we extended our power. Though conditions in areas such as South Korea or Iran did not - in themselves - directly have a great bearing on American security, they were viewed as ideologically vital. It was our moral commitment to the Korean people, our conviction that we must use our power to help a people not as fortunate as ourselves, that drew us into conflicts like the one between North and South Korea. This American sense of mission was a very important consideration in our decisions to defend distant peoples and differing concepts of liberty.<sup>26</sup>

American disillusionment with the containment theory followed the "limited war" in Korea. Under the Eisenhower administration, American rhetoric responded to this disillusionment by taking a more active stance against communism. The term "liberation" was introduced into American Cold War policy. The concept of liberation itself gave Americans a new means to "...express foreign policy in terms of moral purpose...and towering intentions."<sup>27</sup> We would no longer simply be content with neutralizing the menace of communism

<sup>26</sup>A more detailed account of the Korean War is found in Andre Fontaine, History of the Cold War, Volume II (New York, 1969) 9-63. Also, Nathan and Oliver, United States Foreign Policy and World Order, 142-190, and Ambrose, Rise to Globalism, 192-217.

<sup>27</sup>Kenneth W. Thompson, American Diplomacy and Emergent Patterns (New York, 1962), 24.

by containing its spread. Instead, we would actively try to free those peoples already suffering under communist oppression.

John Foster Dulles, author of the liberation theory and Eisenhower's Secretary of State, announced that:

"We should be dynamic, we should use ideas as weapons, and these ideas should conform to moral principles. That we do this is right, for it is the inevitable expression of faith ..."<sup>28</sup>

Thus, America began to turn to a more ideologically re-warding strain of moralism, i.e., a moralism that called for action and not patience. Yet liberation did not produce the response many felt was necessary. Our failure in 1956 to aid Hungary in her attempt to cast off Soviet control is a good example of American actions failing to match words. Instead, liberation led to a more institutionalized containment. The United States during this period signed a series of treaties (for example, S.E.A.T.O., N.A.T.O., A.N.Z.U.S.) that were designed merely to preserve this status quo.

For many Americans, liberation was still too passive a response to the threat of communism. In 1960, we could hear John F. Kennedy echo this feeling in his Inaugural Address. Mr. Kennedy announced that America would:

<sup>28</sup>Nathan and Oliver, United States Foreign Policy and World Order, 203.

"...pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foes, in order to assure the survival and success of liberty."<sup>29</sup>

Presidents Kennedy and Johnson were successful in giving American foreign policy its most active stance since the end of World War II.

Nonetheless, the primary objectives and beliefs directing American foreign policy throughout the Cold War were basically extensions of decisions made shortly after World War II. It was in this period that such declarations as Dean Acheson's claim that Americans "...are willing to help people who believe the way we do, to continue to live the way they want to live,"<sup>30</sup> set both the tone and the limits for American foreign policy of the next three decades. Though succeeding administrations altered some of the means by which these objectives were achieved, the goals themselves remained relatively constant.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>29</sup>Ambrose, Rise to Globalism, 272.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., 9.

<sup>31</sup>There are several good accounts of the importance of this postwar period on future American foreign policy. These include Nathan and Oliver's, United States Foreign Policy and World Order; Ambrose, Rise to Globalism; George Kennan, Memoirs: 1925-50 (Boston, 1967); William A. Williams, The Tragedy of American Diplomacy (New York, 1962); Eric Goldman, The Crucial Decade and After: America 1945-1960 (New York, 1960); and David S. McLellan, Dean Acheson: The State Department Years (New York, 1976).



The American responses to ideological confrontations after World War II resulted in important shifts in America's policy objectives. No sooner had America become a world leader than she began to view her power as a right that allowed her to shape a new world order. This new world order was to be a mirror image of America herself. A world based on equality between men, on liberty, a world where free elections would determine democratic governments and where private property was both cherished and safeguarded. Yet in the end, it was only the American definition of these values that was considered by Washington.

Few of those individuals involved in the formulation of these objectives ever questioned whether or not this new world order would be anything but beneficial to the United States. It was felt that once people were introduced to these values they would quickly accept their worth. The result of this confidence was an attempt to move mankind toward a realization of our ideals through American foreign policy. This amounted to an attempt by the United States to politically instill in others what had taken centuries to develop in America. This attempt to create a "...unity of mankind in a pluralistic world"<sup>32</sup> through institutions as imperfect as governments, inevitably led to frustration. This frustration

<sup>32</sup> Reinhold Niebuhr, World Crisis and American Responsibility, 107.

was to have considerable impact upon America's foreign policy action.

CHAPTER III  
MORALISM AND FOREIGN POLICY ACTIONS

One of the most drastic changes in postwar American foreign policy was the shift in our methods of carrying out our national objectives. These methods are known as foreign policy actions. Foreign policy actions are the means by which a state chooses to accomplish its national objectives. These actions include a wide assortment of such means, but some of the most common would be force, persuasion and diplomacy. Foreign policy actions are normally influenced heavily by a state's own cultural beliefs. Such circumstances as size and location also affect a nation's choice of response. American morals made a very clumsy transition between objectives and foreign policy actions following World War II.<sup>33</sup>

This might have been expected had Americans truly understood the international environment they were trying to save. Armed with their ideals, convinced that those ideals were beneficial and desired by all men, American crusaders set out into the world lacking only one important understanding. That was, an understanding of reality itself.

<sup>33</sup>For a more detailed discussion of foreign policy actions, see K. J. Holsti, International Politics, 154-174.

For a nation whose values are shared by few other peoples, and whose ideological system itself is an expression of a prosperity most other nations have never enjoyed, this misunderstanding led to inevitable anxiety for the United States.

For example, the introduction of democratic values into Latin America does not imply that those values will be accepted simply because they are "right". Americans, nonetheless, seemed convinced that they could undermine centuries of other peoples' history by simply preaching the benefits of America's values. After all, the United States stood as a gleaming example of the prosperity such values produced. Had the task been so simple, I doubt if the American cavalry would have ever had to do battle with the American indians when we were conquering our own frontier. It might also be noted that some of America's prosperity was a direct result of American exploitation of the very people we were hoping to keep free.

When Americans found that their attempts to spread these values abroad were not meeting with success, their own moralism posed a serious dilemma. The question boiled down to something like; Can you spread self-determination from the cockpit of a B-52? Questions of this nature helped to produce what I feel is the biggest obstacle that American moralism has ever encountered.

"...It is inevitable that some nations must seek security at the disadvantage of others."<sup>34</sup> This is the primary reason confrontations are such an integral part of international relations. When the United States tied her own freedom and security to the security of so many other nations, the likelihood of these confrontations could only have increased.

To many Americans, the terms strategy and morality represent antonyms. This is hardly the case. Agreeably, it is difficult to envision someone teaching another the difference between right and wrong at gun point. Yet America found herself in just such a position several times during the Cold War.

Usually, security and morality both represent choices made at the expense of some other value. For example, in the case of security, America maintains a huge overkill capability in nuclear weapons at the expense of her economy. The fear of nuclear attack, and our desire to maintain parity with the Soviet Union, have usually been valued as more important than sound economics. In the case of morals, Red China represents a clear example. Though diplomatic relations with Peking might well have made negotiations during the Korean War easier and perhaps even helped us avoid several other policy mistakes that we made in Asia,

<sup>34</sup>Robert Osgood, Ideals and Self Interest in America's Foreign Relations, 13.

we refused to recognize the Peking government throughout the Cold War. This was a decision based upon our moral obligation to Nationalist China, long considered our ally.

When strategy is explained in moral tones, any compromise is likely to be considered immoral. This is partly because neither strategy nor morality imply a high degree of flexibility. There are few clear cut cases of good or evil, or few nations that will risk their security to achieve any compromise. Once the United States declared her intention to defend democracies from communism, she soon realized that many of the countries she felt were vital to her interests were not democratic. Consequently, she supported several dictatorships that were also fighting communism. Such a policy, obviously a compromise, has been construed as immoral. Yet would it have been more moral to support only democracies and perhaps risk her own national security?

Attempts to spread freedom by curbing communism combined our morals with force to an unprecedented scale in American history. Whereas "the moral problem is over, what the national interest is thought to include..."<sup>35</sup> the problem addressed to strategy is the best means to achieve it. The American combination of morality in theory and force in practice rested upon "...the assumption that force could be

<sup>35</sup> Joseph L. Allen, "The Relations of Strategy and Morality", Ethics, LXXIII (1963), 169.

productively wedded to diplomacy."<sup>36</sup> Such a wedding could not be expected to come about easily for the United States. Americans began to realize however, that attempts to reach our objectives "...by inducing other governments to sign up to professions of high moral and legal principle..."<sup>37</sup> would meet with resistance. America then began a turn towards militarism.

This process actually began with the Truman Doctrine, but it did not become truly accepted in America until the Korean War. Perhaps it has been stalled by the fall of Vietnam. Yet the years in between were marked by a militaristic moralism that was new to the United States in both scope and objective.

Normally a reliance upon force in foreign policy denotes a diplomatic failure. American response during the Cold War was to usually disregard this possibility and instead blame escalation on our adversaries. This was to some extent a realistic charge by Americans, but United States' failure to accept her part in such escalations was also quite common. This inability to accept diplomatic failures may also rest in part in American moralism. It is indeed difficult for a proud people to accept a failure that may in turn suggest some shortcomings in their own

<sup>36</sup>Nathan and Oliver, United States Foreign Policy and World Order, 3.

<sup>37</sup>Kennan, American Diplomacy: 1900-1950, 49.

values. This may well be one of the dangers of combining statesmanship with morality.

In a real sense, morality is "...imbedded in the nature of strategy."<sup>38</sup> Both moralism and strategy emphasize an economy of force. Moralism and sound strategy both condemn overkill or senseless destruction. Moralism increases sensitivity, which may in turn limit a government's militarism. Moralism and strategy both accept - to varying degrees - the futility of nuclear holocaust. For today "...the potential for doing evil to large numbers of people...",<sup>39</sup> is greater than ever before in mankind's history.

There is yet another relationship between morality and strategy, but it is somewhat frightening. That is, when inflexible morals are tied to uncompromising violence. With this mix, the potential for man to destroy is perhaps brought to its highest level. Such destruction quite often takes on a religious fervor that produces a blind passion for violence instead of a necessary response. When a nation defines its role as that of the defender of freedom and allows the entire world to become the stage for this defense, it is indeed accepting a considerable task. Besides insinuating that it can clearly distinguish freedom

<sup>38</sup> Allen, "The Relations of Strategy and Morality," Ethics, 176.

<sup>39</sup> Holsti, International Politics, 427.



from a lack of freedom, the nation in question must be willing to accept that freedom regardless of its consequences. American militarism, and as a result American moralism, seems suspect on both of these accounts.

Examples for exploration of our ability to clearly perceive the necessary defense of our values are many. In 1954, C.I.A. agents helped organize and train a group of Guatemalan refugees in Honduras. The purpose of this group of Guatemalans was to overthrow the government of Jacobo Arbenz Guzmán in Guatemala City. Arbenz was considered a communist by Washington. The Guatemalan leader had also infuriated the United States when he nationalized the United Fruit Company's holdings in his country.

With C.I.A. piloted jets, the Guatemalan rebels overthrew the democratically elected government of Arbenz. The new government became a ruthless military dictatorship and immediately disenfranchised some 70 percent of the Guatemalan population. Nonetheless, the first year of this new regime was marked by roughly fifty times the American financial aid than the one million dollars Guatemala had received from Washington since 1944.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>40</sup>For a more detailed account of the Arbenz intervention, as well as the Bay of Pigs and Santo Domingo crises, see Nathan and Oliver, United States Foreign Policy and World Order, and Fontaine, History of the Cold War, Volume II.

American support of the invasion of Cuba at the Bay of Pigs is one more example of the United States resorting to military methods in shaping her new world order. President Johnson's decision in 1965 to send American Marines to Santo Domingo is yet another example of America's increasing reliance upon force. The most blatant example of America's use of force was in Southeast Asia, an area where American interventionism faced its most important task.

Direct interventions were not the only examples of America's reliance on force. In 1953, C.I.A. agents successfully organized a coup to overthrow the Mossadegh government in Iran. In its place the Shah was returned to power while American and western companies divided up Iranian oil holdings.

By the mid-1970's, American militarism and moralism were both being condemned at home and abroad. More importantly, many foreign states considered American moralism as no more than a cunning camouflage for blatant militarism and imperialism. Even more distressing was the fact that many of our allies joined in this condemnation.

As a result, militarism in our foreign policy proved to be an utter failure. The use of force became less and less effective because each time we applied violence in obtaining some objective, the objective itself was called into question. Likewise, force in our foreign policy has

become increasingly costly in any of a number of areas.

For example, American military expenditures, even after the end of the war in Vietnam, are still considerably higher than they were at the outset of our postwar crusade for a new world. Besides the expense in terms of dollars, American prestige has suffered considerably. This is evidenced in today's United Nation's debates, where American views are often in the minority and American values are often times received with vociferous hostility.

No matter how desperately a people believes they are fighting for freedom and liberty, the "...maiming and killing of men...cannot in itself make a positive contribution to any democratic purpose."<sup>41</sup> The failure of America's moralism to reach its goals may be partially attributed to her failure to recognize this reality. For "force, like peace, is not an abstraction..."<sup>42</sup> It is difficult in any situation to intervene on the side of peace and liberty by the means of war.

Another shortcoming of American foreign policy action during the Cold War was that all too often American interventionism was simply a response to some alleged Soviet intervention. This resulted, rather curiously, in American

<sup>41</sup>Kennzy, American Diplomacy, 88.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., 88.

foreign policy being somewhat decided by Moscow. For each time the Soviets chose to act, we were forced to counter. This also clouded the reasons for many of America's struggles from Americans themselves. We found ourselves fighting in areas where it was very difficult to find any resemblance of American values worthy of our defense.

More important, militarism led to a situation where America had "...lost the remainder of her freedom to act or not to act without suffering the consequences."<sup>43</sup> Our violence became somewhat cyclical, with each intervention only confusing our goals and hampering our ability to truly shape a world order based upon our values. Unfortunately, we began to use too many of the tactics we condemned our Soviet and Chinese adversaries for using.

The American shift toward a "diplomacy of violence"<sup>44</sup> was perhaps the most critical change in American foreign policy during the Cold War. Our very definition of national objectives contributed to this violence. When we embarked on our mission of bettering mankind we allowed ourselves no alternative plan. The situation was viewed as a life or death struggle for both capitalism and democracy. We abandoned compromise with communism because of

<sup>43</sup>Osgood, Ideals and Self Interest in America's Foreign Relations, 436.

<sup>44</sup>Nathan and Oliver, United States Foreign Policy and World Order, 5.

our moralistic conviction that it was an evil philosophy and because it represented a major obstacle in our path to shaping a better world. As time has progressed, this failure to compromise during the early years of the Cold War has made each future compromise more costly.

In a sense, our morality was both our banner and our burden. Our lack of command of reality, of the actual workings of the world politics we were trying to shape, and our conviction of our righteousness, blinded us to our failures until those failures became so great we could no longer ignore them. With the collapse of South Vietnam, so may have collapsed many of the myths Americans have held since 1945. Perhaps now we can accept Third World nationalism as just that. Perhaps today we understand the dangers of linking ideology with force.

It is not solely America's moralism that explains why her policy took such a radical shift toward violence. Realists may quickly counter that American militarism was warranted by the nature of Cold War international affairs. Yet many Americans believed very strongly that we were supporting freedom and self-interest during this period of our history. "...National self-sacrifice" is indeed the ultimate idealism.<sup>45</sup> Each time an American soldier

<sup>45</sup>Osgood, *Ideals and Self Interest in America's Foreign Relations*, 7.

was killed defending a moral obligation to freedom in another land, just such a self-sacrifice was made.

The question of whether American values themselves contain some basic flaw that might lead to this emphasis on violence, or whether the world is simply so inhospitable to America's values that moralism can lead to such force, are questions that America must address today. We have reached a watershed in our foreign policy that resembles our position at the end of World War II. We must examine our past mistakes and successes, for as Henry Kissinger says, "The lessons of history, as of all experience, are contingent: they teach the consequences of certain actions, but they leave to each generation the task of determining which situations are comparable."<sup>46</sup> The key to our continued prosperity in the future may well lie in our ability to grasp an understanding of our past.

<sup>46</sup>Henry A. Kissinger, Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy (New York, 1969), 16.

PART III  
A CHANCE TO RECONSIDER

INTRODUCTION

Thus far my discussion has concentrated on some of the effects of the incorporation of moralism in American foreign policy. Moralism alone cannot be blamed for the several failures in America's foreign relations since World War II. Our inability to accept world circumstances that ran counter to our ideological goals, also had an effect upon our policies' success. Likewise, America's failure to grasp both the scope and the limits of her power resulted in several detrimental effects upon our foreign policy.

Yet moralism's part in our foreign policy cannot be ignored. It led us to tie our own security to the security of distant lands that we considered outposts of American values. It also allowed us to attempt to shape a world order based on our values, by using ideological standards that - at least on the surface - appeared to endorse our actions. Finally, our moralism encouraged a degree of inflexibility in our policy. This inflexibility led to a more moralistic American stance as international developments frustrated our attempts to reach our goals.

It is an exaggeration to consider American policy since 1945 a total failure. As long as the United States remains free and independent our foreign policy will have succeeded in accomplishing its most vital task. I would agree that American foreign policy has been less than a glittering success. Our credibility has suffered, as has our ability to lend a positive influence to international developments in many corners of the world. A reversal of these trends may depend upon a re-evaluation of the nature of moralism in our foreign policy.

The Vietnamese War, the Watergate scandal, and numerous public disclosures of government irregularities both at home and abroad (such as, C.I.A. "snooping" on American citizens, and the secret Cambodian bombings ordered by President Nixon), have shaken faith in our values. It therefore becomes critical that we examine the present condition of those values before we continue to export them abroad. Also, the very question of whether we should export those values becomes an issue we should settle today. We must decide whether or not moralism should be included in our future foreign policy.<sup>47</sup>

<sup>47</sup> Though the Carter administration has already embarked on a moralistic foreign policy, this policy is by no means irreversible. Public pressure and Congressional support could well alter Mr. Carter's stance.



Such an evaluation would serve several purposes: First, it might enable us to avoid hurrying into a policy that may again have ill effects upon American goals and interests. Second, there is always an immediacy in our foreign policy. Today might be a better time to review that policy than was the case in 1945. This is because we are still at peace, we have at least a good dialogue with the Soviets, and we still wield a considerable influence in international affairs. Third, many changes in world relations have taken place since 1945, and these changes compel us to review our foreign affairs strategy. For example, there are many new independent states involved in today's world community. New institutions, such as multinational corporations and terrorist groups, have also placed new pressures on relations between states. Finally, new problems in world economy, access to resources, and living standards have altered the nature of international politics.

What does the realist and moralist debate have to do with future American policy? It may well be that this debate is even more important now than it was earlier.

## CHAPTER IV

## THE REALIST ARGUMENT

Realists are undoubtedly unsympathetic to President Carter's new stress on American humanitarianism. The realist contingent probably was most eager to see a continuation of the American goals expressed in the Nixon Doctrine.

This doctrine, which was introduced before the Water-gate scandal destroyed Mr. Nixon's credibility, announced that, "We will help where it makes a real difference and is considered in our interest."<sup>48</sup> Though many observers felt Mr. Nixon's statement was too ambiguous to be considered a foreign policy doctrine, realists felt it was a recognition of the fact that "American idealism cannot be exported like American machinery and weapons."<sup>49</sup>

Realists hoped the United States would finally admit that other people's self-determination was only a secondary interest of American foreign policy. Realists hoped that

<sup>48</sup>Richard M. Nixon, U. S. Foreign Policy for the 1970's- A New Strategy For Peace (Washington, D. C., 1970) 2. For a further discussion of the Nixon Doctrine, see John Spanier, American Foreign Policy Since World War II, (New York, 1973), 276; and, Nathan and Oliver, United States Foreign Policy and World Order, 397-405.

<sup>49</sup>Osgood, Ideals and Self Interest in America's Foreign Relations, 451.

instead, American policy would begin to base its actions on real national interests and utility.

One of the distinct differences between the position of realists and moralists is the nature of our allies. Both sides demand that American influence be used to protect our allies when necessary. Realists would be most apt to limit which allies are covered by this protection. For example, the realist would be much less concerned with an allies' type of government than he would the projected costs and benefits of any intervention on the behalf of a regime. This might mean sacrificing a distant democracy with which we shared little economic or political interaction. On the other hand, it could also mean supporting a fascist dictator who might supply the United States with some vital raw material.

One good example of the realist overview of intervention is the Indian-Pakistani War of 1971-72. This war broke out when West Pakistan refused to accept a referendum in East Pakistan favoring the latter's independence. West Pakistan began a policy of genocide against the predominantly Hindu Easterners. India, which lay between the two Pakistans, has always been an adversary of the Moslem Westerners. To protect their Hindu brethren, Indian troops invaded East Pakistan and crushed the West Pakistani army. East Pakistan then became the independent state of Bangladesh.

American humanitarian interests were definitely on the

side of the Indians. Large scale genocide, the starvation of a whole people and the burden placed on the already overcrowded Indians by the influx of millions of refugees, moved American moralism to the support of India. Yet American arms were sent to Pakistan and an American carrier hurried into the Indian Ocean as a show of our support for the Pakistanis.

The reasons for this American response can be understood by the nature of power politics - or bloc politics - as the case may be. India had alienated Washington by opening new friendship and trade ties with the Soviet Union. This apparent threat of growing Soviet influence in Central Asia led to American support of Pakistan. In this case, policy was not obstructed by humanitarianism concerns but was instead based primarily upon our perceptions of national interest.<sup>50</sup>

The realist believes his theory expresses "...the general limitations on statecraft, not the specific limits on policy."<sup>51</sup> The realist feels it is an unwise policy to force statesmen to interject their societies morals into

<sup>50</sup>A more detailed discussion of the Indian-Pakistan War, and American response to this crisis is found in Nathan and Oliver, United States Foreign Policy and World Order, 409-10.

<sup>51</sup>Robert W. Tucker, "Political Realism and Foreign Policy," World Politics, XIII (1961), 63.

their diplomatic dealings. The realist points out that few other nations ask similar commitments of their diplomats. Consequently, the realist feels the moralist is putting American diplomats at a serious disadvantage. To the realist, "...our own national interest is all that we are really capable of knowing..."<sup>52</sup> Therefore, the pursuit of these national interests is all that we should demand of our statesmen.

Further, the realist contends that in today's nuclear age, moralism adds a degree of inflexibility to our policy that is very dangerous. The realist will argue that "moral arguments cannot be resolved by compromise..."<sup>53</sup> without expending considerably more energies than would be the case of a less moralistically oriented foreign policy.

Perhaps the most important aspect of the realist argument is the nature of international relations itself. Realists argue that few nations share our cultural values. But for economic and political reasons we should have bilateral relations with many who do not. Such a dilemma was obvious in our recent decision to stop buying chrome from Rhodesia when the only other major supplier of chrome is the Soviet Union. This belief on the part of realists seems to imply that in some cases morals actually contradict our basic needs and goals.

<sup>52</sup>Kennan, American Diplomacy, 100.

<sup>53</sup>Allen, "The Relation of Strategy and Morality", 300.

Furthermore, realists point out that foreign policy, at root, is politics. It is the politics of men attempting to influence other men. Politics, the realist contends, is basically power and power "...at root involves the use of man as means to the end of another man."<sup>54</sup> This in itself is basically immoral argues the realist, because the use of men for any benefit that does not better all men is a "denial of the very core of Judaeo-Christian morality."<sup>55</sup> Man cannot be used as a means unless he shares the benefits of the action, yet the realist points out that this is not the case in international relations. Therefore, morals themselves have little value or place in the arena of world politics.

The realist sees no future of success in the establishment of "...formal criteria (of a judicial nature) by which permissible behavior of states could be defined."<sup>56</sup> The very nature of world politics with many varying cultures and sets of values, as well as the many differences in nations' size, wealth and types of government, makes such an attempt hopelessly difficult.

There is one more important aspect of the realist

<sup>54</sup>Kenneth W. Thompson, Ethics and National Purpose (New York, 1957), 14.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid., 14.

<sup>56</sup>Kennan, American Diplomacy, 94.

argument. That is, the matter of methods. President Lyndon Johnson echoed the realist feeling when he said, "We are not a people so much concerned with the way things are done as by the results that we achieve."<sup>57</sup> The realist feels the only real aspect of foreign policy that can be gauged is a policy's accomplishments. If these accomplishments better our national interests, then other considerations are meaningless.

Hans Morgenthau presents several other reasons for the denial of moralism.<sup>58</sup> Morgenthau argues that the nuclear age, the limited resources of any state, the long range commitments of any moralistic task and the failure of one moralistic victory to ease the battle for values elsewhere, all add to the futility of moralism in foreign policy. Other realists join Morgenthau in pointing out that many of the failures since World War II can be blamed on the "...irrationality of ideologically oriented foreign policies..."<sup>59</sup>

And what is the realist hope for the future? Basically, a combination and realization of all these arguments - that is, an American foreign policy directed solely at bettering our own national condition. It is foreign policy revolving

<sup>57</sup>Walter Lafebes, America, Russia and the Cold War, 1945-1971, (New York, 1967), 247.

<sup>58</sup>Hans J. Morgenthau, A New Foreign Policy for the United States (New York, 1969).

<sup>59</sup>Ibid., 243.

around national self-interests that are realistic responses to economic, political or security needs. It is policy that admits we cannot find "...in one theme both a central evil...and also the clue to its eradication."<sup>60</sup> If we are successful in developing such a policy, the battles of conscience and confusion caused when ethics are interjected into foreign policy, will no longer plague us.

The realist also believes that once Americans realize that though "peace is a value...so are security and honor,"<sup>61</sup> American foreign policy will be on the path to success. Or, in the words of one of the most widely read of all realists, Machiavelli,

"...it is well to seem merciful, faithful, humane, sincere, religious and also to be so, but you must have the mind so disposed that when it is needful to be otherwise you may be able to change to the opposite qualities."<sup>62</sup>

Therefore, such values should not be institutionalized within our foreign policy.

<sup>60</sup>Dean Acheson, "Morality, Moralism and Diplomacy," The Yale Review, XLVII (1958), 485.

<sup>61</sup>Thompson, Ethics and National Purpose, 17.

<sup>62</sup>N. Machiavelli, The Prince, trans. Luigi Ricci, revised by E. R. P. Vincent. (New York, 1952), 93.



## CHAPTER V

## THE MORALIST ARGUMENT

Whereas the realist is unsympathetic to our new emphasis on human rights, the moralist believes this shift in American policy represents a victory for humanism. To the moralist many of America's failures in the past thirty years can be specifically blamed on the United States' failure to live up to its own morals. The moralist believes that one of the primary goals of American foreign policy should be the general improvement of the world's condition.

Moralists disagree with the realist contention that "...politics neither follows nor reflects a simple national scheme..."<sup>63</sup> The moralist believes that one of the most dynamic forces in politics is the ability of man to mold nature to his liking. Moralists feel that if man directs his energy towards bettering his virtue, the world he is active in will become a better place for all men to live. Moralists do not consider the interjection of values into foreign policy an alternative; they consider it a necessity.

Moralists argue that the realist view of international politics is not in itself realistic. They point to the

<sup>63</sup>Tucker, "Political Realism and Foreign Policy", 462.

United Nations as an example of the world community attempting to establish basic criteria in which to conduct international relations. Furthermore, the moralist feels the inclusion of values is instrumental in world politics to help guard against abuses of power.

To the moralist "...there is no absolute contradiction of human interest... ." <sup>64</sup> Though different cultures may reflect different value beliefs, such rights as equality and liberty are basic to all societies. This is an expression of the belief that certain values transcend governments or as it is embodied in American culture, the theory of natural law. The moralist believes that the reason these values are not externally visible in some parts of the world is because these cultures are in different stages of development. Therefore, it should be America's goal to aid in the development of these ideals and to exert pressure against other ideals that might slow this development. It is the moralist who expresses the belief that one of America's main objectives should be the "...end that every individual may share the material benefits essential to a full and happy existence on earth." <sup>65</sup>

<sup>64</sup>Allen, "Relations of Strategy and Morality," 300.

<sup>65</sup>Osgood, Ideals and Self Interest in America's Foreign Relations, 7.

One of the most common arguments leveled against the moralist is his belief that "...the whole world...should be a reflection of the United States."<sup>66</sup> Moralists refute the belief that this is an usual point of view. Moralists point out that any man's pride in his nation and culture normally lead him to view the rest of the world in terms of that culture. Thus, such a view is not an exercise in conceit to the moralist, but a normal condition of human patriotism.<sup>67</sup>

Moralists feel that "...man is much more than a political creature."<sup>68</sup> The moralist argues that the acceptance of moralistic justifications for American policy is itself a reflection of the public desire to have these values included in our foreign relations. Moralists also point to the fact that all cultures have some religious orientation as further proof that there is a place for values in the political interactions of men.

Since such relationships are not purely political, moralists feel values must be included in foreign affairs so as to help the entire world realize liberty and democracy.

<sup>66</sup> Ambrose, Rise to Globalism, 21.

<sup>67</sup> Reinhold Niebuhr has an excellent discussion of the relationship between the individual and his national government, as well as this relationship's effect upon both individual morals and the morals of society in Moral Man and Immoral Society: A Study in Ethics and Politics (New York, 1932).

<sup>68</sup> Ernest A. Gross, "Moral Power in International Relations, "Journal of International Affairs, XII (1958), 133.

The moralist argues that "...actual prospering occurs only when something happens in a man's mind... ."69 Therefore, to not include values in our policy is to rob American policy of its potential to reach other men's minds. To base our policy on purely realistic interests does not allow us to address the primary task of foreign relations, i.e., the security of our own values through increased understanding between men of different countries. If this understanding cannot be accomplished through foreign policy, the moralist feels our foreign relations will be hopelessly confined to responding to short range and immediate problems. Consequently, the real causes of these problems (for example; distrust, misperceptions, and lack of communication) remain unsolved.

The moralist further argues that "historically, religion ...has provided the one firm base from which to view man's moral dilemma."70 Moralists feel that politics alone cannot overcome this dilemma between what is right and what is wrong. So, a combination of moralism with politics becomes a beneficial means to bettering both interests and values.

The moralist argument implies long range objectives. Thus, the moralist argues that gauging such ideological

<sup>69</sup>Kennan, American Diplomacy, 88.

<sup>70</sup>Thompson, Ethics and National Purpose, 14.

policies by their immediate accomplishments or failures denotes a lack of understanding of the moralist philosophy. The development of a world based on American ideals cannot be accomplished overnight. American policy should thus be a patient but steady pursuit of our ultimate goals.

One of the most basic aspects of American moralism, one that has caused us considerable hardships in the past, is the belief that American values at home are directly related to the values of the rest of the world - that is, that world communism is a dangerous threat to America's own liberty. This belief leads the moralist to argue that the values of foreign states are directly related to our own security. Therefore, moralists would echo Mr. Nixon's hope that "...the American people have the moral stamina and courage to meet the challenge of free world leadership."<sup>71</sup> For if the American public doesn't, the security of the United States will be jeopardized.

Moralists argue that America has no history of naked self-interests in her foreign policy. The moralist feels that our history itself demands a moralistic tone in our foreign relations. As Henry Kissinger has said, "A society can survive only by the genius that made it great... ." <sup>72</sup>

<sup>71</sup>Richard Nixon in Ambrose, Rise to Globalism, 18.

<sup>72</sup>Marvin and Bernard Kalb, Kissinger (Boston, 1974), 251.

For American society that genius is embodied in the principles of equality, liberty and self-determination. To deny American values in our foreign policy is, to the moralist, a denial of the basic political philosophy that has made the United States the most prosperous nation on earth.

The moralist is not convinced that means are unsequential, but he too gauges his choice of methods to the nature of the stimulus. He defines various stimuli differently than do realists. But several times during the Cold War, moralists found themselves in agreement with realists that saving democracy at home meant "...imposing it abroad."<sup>73</sup>

Finally, the moralist contends that as long as foreign policy is carried out by men, their moral values will always be a part of that policy. As a consequence, to deny policy makers the ability to reflect their societies' values onto the international scene, is to impose unrealistic restraints upon statesmen. Moralists note that our very perception of reality is influenced by our traditional moral values and therefore these values are already integral parts of our foreign policy. To deny our foreign policy its moralistic roots is, to moralists, a denial of the relationship between our government and our society.

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<sup>73</sup> Ambrose, Rise to Globalism, 18.

The moralist is therefore convinced that American foreign policy should continue its present ideological direction. As Henry Kissinger stated, this "...requires a consistent and bold program to identify ourselves with the aspirations of humanity."<sup>74</sup> Moralism is much more than the best foreign policy for America; it is also the only policy that will assure the "...gradual development of a common moral standard (which) is necessary for survival."<sup>75</sup>

<sup>74</sup>Henry A. Kissinger, Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy (New York, 1969), 3.

<sup>75</sup>Stephen D. Kertesz, The Quest for Peace Through Diplomacy (Englewood Cliffs, N. J., 1967), 169.

## CHAPTER VI

## CONCLUSION

MY OWN OPINION REGARDING  
MORALISM IN AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY

One of the primary reasons for my choice of this topic as an area for research was my own desire to gain a further understanding of the controversy surrounding America's moralism in her foreign affairs. My research has concentrated on the effects of moralism on American Cold War policy, the different philosophies of realists and moralists and general background information regarding foreign policy formulation, man's reliance on values and world politics in general.

Though I do not feel one year of research allows one to investigate the question of moralism in complete depth, I do feel my research has enabled me to form my own conclusions regarding the worth of America's moralism.

My conclusion can be best summarized by two seemingly antagonistic statements. First, I do believe that America's foreign policy strategy should incorporate a moralistic tone within it. On the other hand, I believe that limits must be placed on that moralism. These limits will protect us against the evils caused when ideology runs rampant. To avoid this



latter situation, I feel that realism is also vital in our foreign policy. This realism will help protect, and assure the success of our moralism.

In regard to the first matter of the inclusion of moralism within American foreign policy, it should be noted that practicing one ideology abroad and yet another at home is not consistent with the nature of democracy. Beliefs like liberty and equality lend themselves to extensions across American borders. This is because we have long considered such values universal to all men under the theory of natural law which was so important in the development of the American philosophy.

As Lyndon Johnson said, "...our foreign policy must always be an extension of our domestic policy. Our safest guide to what we do abroad is always what we do at home."<sup>76</sup> I agree with Mr. Johnson's statement. It is my feeling that so long as America remains free, she must lend a portion of her energy to help other nations achieve this freedom.

This does not mean that I endorse a policy that is wholly moralistic. I believe that since we have little alternative today but to accept our position as a world leader, we must continue to carry on international relations

<sup>76</sup>Lafeber, America, Russia and the Cold War, 1945-1971, 247.

at a high level.

Therefore, we should realize that where totalitarianism reigns, or where human rights are ignored, we should be affronted by these states of affairs. The reason for this indignation should rest in America herself, not overseas. If Americans ever accept torture, or dictators or slavery abroad without some feeling of indignation, our very liberty at home may be in jeopardy.

There are few individuals who would not agree that one of the most moral tasks of today is the maintenance of peace. This is not only because peace is a better condition for man, but also because in today's nuclear age the alternative of war has so drastically changed. Nuclear weapons have destroyed the ability of man to limit his destruction, and have instead led to a situation where nuclear war may well destroy all of mankind. Undoubtedly, one of the most immoral of all acts would be the action that triggered such a war.

If "peace is the outcome of mutual confidence and respect,"<sup>77</sup> such respect must be the product of diplomacy. One would thus hope that a more perfect diplomacy and foreign policy would, in turn, produce a greater chance

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<sup>77</sup>Thompson, Ethics and National Purpose, 16.

for peace. Since diplomacy, like other forms of human interaction, rests upon some principle, America "... should consider among (those principles) those that reflect men's moral sensitivity... ." <sup>78</sup> That we do this is an acceptance of the very values which make up our culture. That we do this successfully is the task of diplomacy.

Henry Kissinger has said Americans "...face the challenge of demonstrating that democracy is able to find the moral certainty to act without the support of fanaticism and without a guarantee of success." <sup>79</sup> Our belief in our own values should produce this certainty in our action, for we cannot expect foreign states to accept values that we ourselves don't clearly practice.

I feel this is a second aspect of America's moralism that warrants that philosophy's incorporation into our foreign policy. That is, in the United States foreign policy should be more of a national phenomena than simply a chore of our government's officials. The use of American values to identify our goals and objectives helps develop the public's understanding of our foreign policy. Through the forum of domestic politics, American society helps to define those values for our statesmen. Also, the American

<sup>78</sup>Allen, "The Relation of Strategy and Morality", 173.

<sup>79</sup>Marvin and Bernard Kalb, Kissinger, 251.

public is more able to discern when those values have been violated - at least theoretically. This definitely seemed to be the case when it was disclosed in 1969 that American bombers had crossed the Cambodian border. Americans' reaction to this disclosure warned our government that policy makers would have to take into account such expressions of indignation in the future.<sup>80</sup>

However, the professional diplomat himself is often comfortably removed from public pressure. In this respect, moralism can help assure that our leaders base their decisions on our values. Our moralism may also be useful as an extra guard against future abuses of power by American leaders.

I agree with the position taken by Robert Osgood when he stated that the "...promotion of American power and interest," be they political, economic or military, cannot "...be an end in itself...It is but a means to an end."<sup>81</sup> If our sole purpose in foreign relations was to become the exercise of economic and political power in the internal affairs of other states, I am convinced that such a policy would ultimately lead to a lessening of freedom at home.

<sup>80</sup>Nathan and Oliver discuss the relationship between public opinion and American foreign policy in United States Foreign Policy and World Order, 542-80.

<sup>81</sup>Osgood, Ideals and Self Interest in America's Foreign Relations, 443.

I also agree with Mr. Nixon's opinion that America should strive for a world that "...promotes social justice and human dignity."<sup>82</sup> If moralism is properly applied, it would also help distinguish the means by which we achieve this order. We have already learned the dangers of combining crusades for freedom with force. Therefore, we should expect our morals to limit our forms of foreign policy actions in such a way as to limit our reliance upon violence. As Reinhold Niebuhr has said, "Moral reason must learn how to make coercion its ally... ." <sup>83</sup> We must accomplish this if we are not going to repeat our errors of the past. Our moralism must help us distinguish which level of response is necessary and adequate in the situations of the future.

Though I believe the United States should base its foreign policy objectives on moralism, I do not think that it is wise to rely solely on our morals when we formulate our foreign affairs strategy. This is because I have reservations resulting from America's inability in the past to temper her idealism and live up to her values when the going got rough.

Any policy, be it idealistic or moralistic, must be

<sup>82</sup>Richard Nixon in Nathan and Oliver's United States Foreign Policy and World Order, 398.

<sup>83</sup>Niebuhr, Moral Man and Immoral Society, 238.

based on a firm understanding of reality. This is an integral part of any successful policy. Ideology has sometimes clouded our view of reality. Consequently, a policy based on the most noble of objectives suffered at the hands of unrealistic premonitions regarding the world environment.

We must remember that "no government admits that it is anything but 'peace loving'."<sup>84</sup> We must learn to distinguish real threats to our security from threats that only casually affect our security but affront our ideology. This is all the more critical when one considers that with the extent of power we possess, rather minor conflicts can become world crises by the simple introduction of American influence.

We must remember that "...no group of idealists can easily move the pattern of history toward the desired goal of peace and justice."<sup>85</sup> We must guard against idealism twisting our understanding of both history and reality. We must never allow our moralism to override our own interests to the extent that our security becomes threatened. Realism is vital in our foreign policy simply because "...self delusion is nowhere more prevalent - or more disastrous

<sup>84</sup>Holsti, International Politics, 437.

<sup>85</sup>Reinhold Niebuhr, The Irony of American History, (New York, 1952), 2.

than in the realm of foreign policy... ."86

We should realize that realism is more integrated into moralism than many realists might wish to admit. Our moralism is an attempt to better our national objectives by helping to shape a world that is more inclined to the American way of thinking. The determination of where our national interests lie, which realists claim to be the backbone of their philosophy, is essential to the moralist as well. We have already witnessed some of the dangers that occur when moralism is based upon unrealistic definitions of self-interests. We cannot afford to allow this state of affairs to occur again.

Furthermore, we must remember that "...religious and ethical values are never the sole support for a more tolerable collective order."<sup>87</sup> Realism will allow us to interject the economic and security objectives that are so vital to our own self-interests and that may not be included in our moralistic objectives.

Realism will also help us to decide what degree of activity will be necessary to shape this improved world order. Realism is most important in tying our long range moralistic goals to our short range objectives. The ultimate and long range goals of moralism will help us define

<sup>86</sup>Thompson, Ethics and National Purpose, 21.

<sup>87</sup>Thompson, American Diplomacy and Emergent Patterns, 46.

our short range objectives. Likewise, our short range goals will prompt us to decide what compromises we must accept in those long range objectives so that our present security is not jeopardized.

It is my belief that one of the most important causes of our problems during the Cold War, was a failure to include a degree of realism in our moralistic objectives. We have, at times, been unable to refute charges of American imperialism because the very act in which we were involved could not measure up to our own ideals. In the future, we must accept the risk of being condemned for our values; but we cannot afford to be caught ignoring the very values we use as a basis for our entire foreign policy.

I feel we must be moralistic in our foreign policy because it benefits both our nation and our foreign policy. I feel we must tie realism to our moralism because, as men, our "...virtue and knowledge are limited;" thus our "moral valuations are fragmentary and partial."<sup>88</sup> Our understanding of our own morals requires a constant process of redefining those values in the face of new circumstances. It is therefore our imperfection as men that demands realism be combined with our moralism.

<sup>88</sup>Thompson, Ethics and National Purpose, 7.



It is not my contention that foreign policy should be a 50-50 mixture of realism or moralism. For that matter, there is no possible way Americans can develop a clear and scientific formula that will result in a healthy balance between these two philosophies. It is instead the duty of our democracy and our freedom to discuss and express differing opinions, that must answer the problem of degree for each generation. Our Founding Fathers based our entire government upon the wisdom of the American people to decide such crucial questions. It is our duty as a people, and not the duty of our statesmen as our representatives, to supply the direction for and scope of American foreign relations.

That our policy be based upon a practical wisdom that leads us "...to choose the most moral of several alternatives through which both ethics and expediency can be sewed,"<sup>89</sup> is my conclusion. That we train and direct our statesmen "to recognize the coincidence between national self-interests and supranational ideals...",<sup>90</sup> is one of America's greatest tasks today to assure the prosperity of America tomorrow.

We must recall Saint Augustine's contention that,

<sup>89</sup>Ibid., 27.

<sup>90</sup>Osgood, Ideals and Self Interest in America's Foreign Relations, 23.

"All love peace but all want it as they will,"<sup>91</sup> and direct our energies in such a way as to secure our national objectives within that framework of peace. When we accept our own limitations, the limitations of all government, and successfully wed our morality to realism, the possibilities for American successes will far outweigh our past shortcomings.

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<sup>91</sup>Thompson, Ethics and National Purpose, 27.

## SUGGESTED READINGS

For my discussion of the development of American foreign policy, I used Thomas Bailey's A Diplomatic History of the American People, (Prentice-Hall, Engelwood Cliffs, 1974). For an understanding of World War II, I recommend Stephen Ambrose's Rise to Globalism, (Baltimore, Penguin Booles, Inc., 1971).

There are many good accounts of the critical postwar period. James Nathan and James Oliver have an extensive discussion of American foreign policy throughout the Cold War and up to 1975 in United States Foreign Policy and World Order, (Boston, Little, Brown and Company, 1976). Andre Fontaine also discusses the Cold War from his viewpoint as a Frenchman in History of the Cold War, Volumes I and II, (New York, Vintage, 1969.). William A. Williams offers the "radical" viewpoint of American foreign policy after World War II in The Tragedy of American Diplomacy, (New York, Dell, 1972). Finally, Walter Lafeber's America, Russia and the Cold War, 1945-1971, (New York, Wiley and Sons, 1967) is also a good account of postwar American diplomacy.

For a discussion of strategy Henry Kissinger's Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy, (New York, W. W. Norton, 1969) is an excellent discussion of the effects of nuclear weapons on today's foreign policy and governments. K. J. Holsti's International Politics: A Framework for Analysis, (Englewood Cliffs, Prentice-Hall, 1972), is a detailed examination of what makes up a foreign policy and the various pressures statesmen must face in the international environment.

For a discussion of the realist and moralist positions, many good accounts are available. Reinhold Niebuhr has several, including The Irony of American History, (New York, Scribner's Sons, 1952), and The World Crisis and American Responsibility, (Westport, Greenwood Press, 1958). Mr. Niebuhr discusses the problems of individual morals and their relationship to the society in Moral Man and Immoral Society, (New York, Scribner's Sons, 1932).

Kenneth Thompson also has several works on this topic. Amongst these are American Diplomacy and Emergent Patterns, (New York, New York University, 1962) and Ethics and National Purpose, (New York, Council on Religion and International Affairs, 1967). Hans Morgenthau discusses the realist position in many of his works, one of which is A New Foreign Policy for the United States, (New York, Praeger, 1973). Robert Osgood's Ideals and Self Interest in America's Foreign Relations, (New York, University of Chicago, 1953), and George Kennan's American Diplomacy 1900-50, (New York, Mentor, 1951) are basic readings in any investigation concerning ideology in America's foreign relations.

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