FUTURE INTERNATIONAL POLITICS
AND NATIONAL INTERESTS OF THE FUTURE

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by

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Composition of this memorandum was accomplished by Mrs. Lisa A. Ney.
FOREWORD

This memorandum charts the broad tendencies of change in the nature of the state (the world's basic political unit) and in the international system, so as to speculate on the types of objectives, or national interests, which the governments of states are likely to pursue in the future. The author analyzes the characteristics of the state and the international system, then presents a brief overview of their evolution to the present time. From this framework he indicates trends which the state will take in the future and the kinds of objectives which states will pursue. He concludes that the logic of the trends in the international system is for more cooperation and less physical conflict, although states (including the superpowers) will continue to maintain large armed forces and occasionally use them.

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BIODEGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF THE AUTHOR

DR. THOMAS L. WILBORN has been with the Strategic Studies Institute since 1974. He earned a bachelor's degree in journalism and master's degree and doctorate in political science from the University of Kentucky. In addition to teaching political science and international relations at Madison College and Central Missouri State University, his professional background includes a position with the University of Kentucky educational assistance program at Bandung, Indonesia. Dr. Wilborn is the author of several research memoranda on nuclear strategy and Southeast Asia and has written book reviews published in professional journals.
FUTURE INTERNATIONAL POLITICS AND
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There is general agreement that international politics primarily involves the interaction of states pursuing their respective national interests, even if consensus on the definition of "state" and "national interest" might be hard to obtain. Practitioners and academic observers alike would also agree that the characteristics of states and the processes of interaction among states are continuously changing, even as they argue about the directions of change. The nature of international politics, then, is normally in flux, and therefore the objectives which states attempt to attain or maintain are also always in a condition of change.

The purpose of this paper is to try to chart the broad tendencies of change in the nature of the state (the world's basic political unit) and in the international system, so as to speculate on the types of objectives, or national interests, which the governments of states are likely to pursue in the coming decades. The instruments available to international actors in their attempts to exercise influence—military force, economic power, diplomatic skill, etc.—are considered only to the degree that the choice of objectives is limited or expanded by the availability of means and the expected costs of success.
In the discussion which follows, the characteristics of the state and the international system will be analyzed, with a brief overview of their evolution to the present time. Then the principal task of the paper, indicating trends which the state will take in the future and the kinds of objectives which states will pursue, will be attempted. Much of the essay is speculative theorizing, a hazardous and probably foolhardy activity under the best of circumstances, but one which is necessary if the opportunities of the future are to be anticipated. I have been encouraged to make the effort by two contemporary theorists, Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, who have written:

Academic pens [dealing with theory] . . . leave marks in the minds of statesmen with profound results for policy . . . 'practical men who believe themselves to be quite exempt from intellectual influences' [are] unconscious captives of conceptions created by 'some academic scribbler of a few years back'. . . . Inappropriate images and ill-conceived perceptions of world politics can lead directly to inappropriate or even disastrous policy.

THE EVOLUTION OF THE STATE AND THE INTERNATIONAL SYSTEM

The state, whose legal characteristics are essentially the same as they were in 1648 when the Treaty of Westphalia ending the Thirty Years War was signed, made a great deal more sense in earlier periods than it does now. With relatively large (compared to the fiefdoms of medieval Europe) territory and clothed with the concept of sovereignty, which at least meant that the rulers of the state were required to recognize no legally superior temporal authority (particularly not the Pope in his secular roles or the Holy Roman Emperor), European kings could exploit the inventions of money and gunpowder to establish the "impermeability" of their kingdoms: they developed "hard fortifications" around the periphery of their domains, and with professional armies and bureaucracies to carry out royal decrees, insulated their territories from undesirable external influences and established law and order internally. The emerging commercial middle class could not profitably exploit the advances in transportation and manufacturing technology under feudalism. However, the state provided a larger territory and market, and relatively secure, uniform conditions made possible by centralized authority. The
state, then, was also an improvement over feudal institutions in providing for the economic needs of the population. However, the independence of each state also meant that the international system was in a state of potential anarchy. Indeed, states did resort to the use of force to settle disputes. But in 1648 and for many years thereafter, it was “a time when political communities and regions were in fact largely cut off from one another,” and, therefore, did not engage in conflict. In any case, existing conditions after the Thirty Years War were a definite advance over the chaos of the war years.

The environment of the state system in this century, and therefore the functioning of it, is obviously very different from the environment of the 17th century when the state as the dominant form of political organization was legitimized. There has been a knowledge explosion with scientific and technological developments which affect all aspects of politics, domestic and international. The impermeability achieved with less sophisticated technology has been replaced by total permeability because of aircraft, missiles, and space satellites. Fortresses once providing relative security for European kingdoms are now only anachronistic artifacts: with nuclear weapons and modern military technology, even the superpowers—especially the superpowers—are vulnerable to greater devastation than any societies have ever before faced. Moreover, modern states can no longer isolate themselves from one another. Modern economies require active foreign trade if they are to prosper, while developing states, seeking industrial economies like those of the older nations, have even greater needs for technology transfers and economic exchange. Moreover, problems of the “ecosystem” such as the possible depletion of renewable resources, pollution of the oceans, and the survival of certain species of wildlife, have increased the incentives for international cooperation, or even supernational authority, over those that ever existed before. And the ease of transportation and communications has made it extremely difficult—perhaps impossible—to prohibit the movement of people and ideas across political boundaries.

The knowledge explosion has contributed to the complexity of the contemporary international system in other ways. In the 17th century, international politics was the concern of the chancelleries of a few European kingdoms, all governed by aristocrats in fairly
close agreement about the legitimacy of monarchy and the superiority of Western civilization. Now some 152+ governments preside over states in all parts of the globe ranging in size and capabilities from the United States and the Soviet Union through Niger and Barbados to tiny microstates which are not even dots on the maps in standard atlases. Their governments are extremely heterogeneous, composed of people with varied social backgrounds and motivated by disparate value systems. Moreover, virtually all of these states claim, in some fashion, to be democracies. Even in the many nations where Western democratic institutions do not in fact operate, ruling elites must be sensitive to strongly-held aspirations and demands of important groups in their constituencies. And, especially in industrial societies, diverse and often incompatible demands, stimulated by TV and other communications media, are pressed upon harassed governments by elements of their populations which would have been totally quiescent in an earlier age.

Relations of interdependency—a condition in which both parties to a bilateral relationship would incur serious (but not always equal) costs if the relationship were broken—exist among many states, and the incidence and importance of such relationships are on the rise. The networks of interdependency interactions, already extremely broad and significant for the more developed nations, should expand and become more entrenched as the economies of less-developed countries become more diversified (a process which some less-developed countries partially complete with each passing year) and as the demand for nonrenewable resources inevitably becomes more intense. Concomitant with the increase of interdependency, the interrelationships between domestic, particularly economic, policy and foreign policy have become—and should continue to become—more obvious and more salient to the participants in the political processes of more and more states. The impact of this phenomenon has been most obvious in pluralist societies like the United States, where competing elites, mindful that the interests of their constituencies are affected by foreign policy decisions, try to influence them. Those American observers hoping for a return to the relatively simple arrangements when the president and a self-perpetuating foreign policy establishment decided on policy which Congress, in the spirit of bipartisanship, then ratified, are likely to be disappointed. Instead, they probably
will be confronted by even greater intervention by Congress (and other nonmembers of the old establishment) in the process of formulating and executing foreign policy. In nonpluralistic nations, in accordance with the unique vagaries of their respective political processes, similar developments occur, and will continue to occur, although they may be less obvious to outside observers. The increasing awareness of all populations of conditions in other parts of the world, and their increasing political sophistication caused by that awareness, will result—indeed, is resulting—in less docile and more demanding citizens.

In addition to destroying the impermeability of the state, developments in military technology have increased by several levels of magnitude the possible destructiveness of war and the expense of maintaining armed forces. Only the United States and the Soviet Union apparently have the resources to develop nuclear weapons extensively—deploy second strike capabilities—and only China, France, and the United Kingdom are also known to have deployed nuclear weapons at all, although India has detonated a nuclear device. Reports persist that Israel possesses a number of bombs, and Pakistan apparently is moving toward exploding a nuclear device. Modern conventional weapons systems are also too costly and sophisticated for the many governments of the world which have serious scarcities of foreign exchange and skilled personnel. The most destructive and complicated conventional military technologies, then, have been limited to the major powers; oil nouveau riche Iran (before the revolution) and Saudi Arabia, both of which have had problems with absorbing technology; and a number of nations with unusual security problems, such as Israel, Egypt, and North and South Korea. These latter nations, except for Israel, only have been able to handle the sophisticated technology because of the assistance of their suppliers.

It can be argued that the costs and levels of sophistication of military technology have served as imperfect but significant restraints on the use of force by some nations at the same time that they have increased the devastation which others can threaten or impose. The destructive potential of each superpower's nuclear arsenal, even after absorbing a first strike, apparently has deterred the other (and the alliance partners of each in Europe) from using nuclear weapons, or, out of fear of escalation, from any use of force directly against the other superpower or its allies in Europe.
The United States and the Soviet Union have not ruled out force altogether, however. On the other hand, the leaders of a large number of Third World states seem to have concluded that their nations face no threats which have to be met by modern armed forces, or at least have been deterred from resort to force by the inability, due to requirements of funds and skills, to establish and maintain an effective military force that could be used against other nations. In any case, many regimes of developing nations have chosen only to organize relatively less expensive and relatively less sophisticated armed forces developed for internal security and border control missions. The governments of other nations, however, have been provided weapons, technology, and funds by the superpowers when their disputes were perceived as segments of the cold war. The Korean War, the Vietnam War, and the various conflicts between Israel and its Arab neighbors are examples of such disputes. Neither superpower may any longer automatically provide military support for the adversary of a state aided by the other superpower, but the arms for many Third World conflicts still do tend to come from the superpowers, each supporting opposing sides.

There will no doubt be continuing improvements in both nuclear and conventional military technology, making weapons more accurate, destructive, and complicated than they are now. More than the new developments in military technology, however, the diffusion of that technology to a larger circle of states will probably have the greater impact on international politics. The proliferation of nuclear weapons and the capability to produce nuclear weapons even though the United States and the Soviet Union try to prevent it is virtually inevitable. No set of rulers would likely employ them deliberately except in desperation, but many may believe that threats of use will be an effective deterrent against attack by others. In any case, there is prestige and status associated with being a “nuclear power.” With many more fingers on the trigger there will be an increased potential of accident, miscalculation, escalation, and irrational decisionmaking that will not tend to increase the stability of the international system of the future. The acquisition of increasingly sophisticated conventional weapons by many nations is more certain and probably will be more destabilizing than the proliferation of nuclear weapons. What appear to be the more salient barriers to the diffusion of modern military
technology now (scarclties of money and skills) will slowly but increasingly be less restrictive for the elites of many states as their economies improve and the technical sophistication of their populations gradually rise. This is not to say that these governments will seek out opportunities to use their relatively more sophisticated capabilities where they acquire them, but that when disputes do arise, the capabilities to seek military solutions will be available more frequently than in the past and could be used if leaders want to use them. Other constraints, such as possible adverse reactions of other nations and potential costly disruptions of beneficial interdependency relationships (increasingly salient as economies diversify), will still operate, but they may not be effective when important interests are involved and national passions are aroused.

Increasingly sophisticated weapons, conventional and nuclear, will be developed and deployed by the major powers, with or without arms control and limitations agreements. The effect of these developments through the midrange is highly controversial, especially as they pertain to the balance of nuclear forces. But assuming that there are no catastrophic events which eliminate or drastically weaken the principal participants of today, and that no state or alliance of states obtains strategic dominance in the system, the present situation of mutual deterrence between the superpowers and armed confrontation between NATO and the Warsaw Pact along the inter-German border will probably continue, even if both sides agree to limits on their perspective forces, with the junior members of both alliances frequently asserting their rights to independent action as both Western and Eastern states continue to reduce their political and economic dependence on the leaders of their respective alliances. While a complex net of interrelationships involving all NATO and Warsaw Pact nations will continue to evolve, and continue to decrease the cohesion of both alliances, the fundamental divergence of interests and ideological orientations should be sufficient cause for both sides to view the other as putative enemies, and for the military structures to be retained. In Asia, some changes in power relationships are more likely. China will modernize its armed forces, and deploy ICBMs and SLBMs capable of reaching both the Western sections of the Soviet Union and at least the west coast population centers of the United States. It will be many years into the future, if at all, before there will be
much chance of China achieving essential equivalence with either the Soviet Union or the United States, but China's developing nuclear capability will complicate their deterrence postures. The Soviet Union especially will increasingly refer to the Chinese threat as justification for a large and versatile nuclear arsenal. With more sophisticated armed forces, China probably will also be perceived more as a potential threat by the leaders of other Asian nations, especially in Southeast Asia, than is now the case. Expansion of the Japanese Defense Forces, possibly beginning relatively soon as a result of Soviet and American behavior, will be further stimulated because of China's force modernization, even though Sino-Japanese relations remain relatively cordial. The disruptive effect of China's enhanced military position will depend on the political context in which it occurs, especially the kinds of national objectives which China appears to be pursuing, and the ultimate size and structure that is achieved. At a minimum, in addition to the response from Japan, there will be reactions from the Soviet Union and Taiwan, assuming the latter retains its de facto independence from mainland China.

In addition to introducing sophisticated technologies and complicating the international system, the expansion of knowledge has also led to ever increasing demands for the earth's limited resources. Because of phenomenal developments in medical technology, the death rate in much of the world where it once equalled or surpassed the birth rate is now only a fraction of its former level, and the population of the planet is roughly doubling every 35 to 41 years. More people mean more needs for agricultural, mineral, and manufactured products, which result in a rapid rate of depletion of nonrenewable resources and various forms of pollution of the earth and elimination of whole species of its inhabitants. Specifically, the population of the world may be denying itself

... essential and irreplaceable free services. 'Public service' functions of ecosystems include the maintenance of the quality of the atmosphere, the generation and preservation of soils, the disposal of wastes, the recycling of nutrients, provision of food from the sea and the control of the vast majority of potential pests of crops and carriers of human disease.

This situation sharpens competition for access to relatively high quality sources of supply which remain, not only on land but also
in and under the oceans of the world, and focuses on a range of issues, similar to the problems of interdependence, which are not contained within the territorial jurisdiction of any state, but include several, and, sometimes all, states.

In the view of some analysts, these forces changing the contours of the international system in the ways just described have weakened, and are continuing to undermine, the significance of ideology in politics. The major domestic and international political problems, they argue, have been imposed by technology, and are subject to technical solutions; differences of value systems have lost their relevance. The confrontation between the Soviet Union and the United States, then (according to this view), is evolving into a "simple" great power rivalry without doctrinaire overtones and evangelistic zeal. "Detente," it is said, better characterizes Soviet-American relations than "cold war," a concept which will be completely abandoned in the years ahead.

Without doubt, the common interests of the superpowers in avoiding nuclear war and the logic of interdependence, among other things, have led to a pragmatic tone in many superpower relations. But a number of recent developments—Margaret Thatcher's victory in Britain, the Islamic revolution in Iran, the dogmatic anticommunism of the regime in Chile, the French Communist Party's return to the Soviet orbit, and the attitudes of many Senators toward detente—caution against assuming that ideology will cease to be a motivation for foreign policy in the foreseeable future, or even necessarily become less important than it is now. It seems more reasonable to expect that ideological differences will remain, not only between the West and Communist states, but among a variety of different groups of states with differing value systems. Issues which are heavily affected by ideological factors will coexist with other questions which seem to be only marginally related to ideology, if at all. The ideological content of issues in Soviet-American relations, which has been decreasing, may continue to decrease. (The ideological content of the foreign policies of other states, e.g., those with Moslem elites, on the other hand, may increase at least in the short term.) But the ideological differences between Soviet and American leaders today, or any set of leaders imaginable in the foreseeable future, involve very basic cultural distinctions which will continue to influence both camps' attitudes toward each other.
forces sustaining the state

The increasingly complex webs of interdependency relationships, the uneven distribution of scarce and apparently essential natural resources, the inability of any government to successfully prevent the penetration of other international actors, and the threats to the earth's ecosystem, among other things, all challenge the logic of basing political organization on a unit geographically too small to have jurisdiction over the most important variables affecting the most important international problems. In logical, objective terms, the state is probably obsolete. Moreover, the discrepancy between the reality of the world and the incompetence of the state is likely to become greater. Yet, barring a general nuclear war or other comparable tragedy, the nation-state is also likely to remain, and likely to continue to be the basis of almost all political organization and the focus of the loyalty of overwhelming majorities of the populations of most nations of the world. For the tie between most of the people of the earth and their nations is not based entirely or even primarily on logic or material self-interest, but rather on sentiments deeply imbedded in the culture of societies and the psychology of individuals, which are inculcated into peoples' minds throughout their lives. These sentiments—nationalism—may be as primitive as "persistent narrow tribalism," but they are nonetheless the dominant political force of this century, and they are expected to persist and justify the state, being in turn nurtured by the state. With the passage of time, populations should become measurably more sophisticated (especially where the incident of literacy is now low), and many presently rigid nationalisms may become more flexible. They will not, however, thereby necessarily become less significant.

The ability of the international system to respond to changes in its environment, particularly compensating for the legal and territorial inadequacies of the state, has also facilitated the survival of the state. A principal development which has enhanced the ability of the international system to cope with problems spawned by modern technology has been the invention and de facto inclusion of nonstate actors. While in principle and often in fact they lack the capabilities of states, nonstate actors have provided a means of dealing with some of the incongruities between the scope of problems and the jurisdictions of governments, and may assume
larger roles in the future. In the decade or so after the end of World War II, in fact, it seemed possible that the state was to be completely supplanted as the basic political unit of the system by two alliances or blocs of states, one led by the United States and the other by the Soviet Union, which would eventually divide the entire planet. Whether the “Communist Bloc” and the “Free World,” or either of them, would have had the necessary size, resources and other capabilities to effectively cope with 20th century technological problems will remain unknown, because before either bloc developed the necessary capabilities and/or integration to act in such a capacity—and before all nations were absorbed into one or the other—centrifugal forces set in. The control of the superpowers over their respective alliances has now become unreliable and it is no longer appropriate to speak of a bipolar world, even though superpower competition is still, in many ways, the most significant dynamic of international politics. Moreover, the trends now in process suggest that nothing like monolithic coalitions of states will be likely to emerge (or reemerge) in the future.

The most established type of nonstate actor is the international organization. There are now over 278 separate intergovernmental agencies, some with virtually universal membership and others with selective membership, basically autonomous from one another, although the activities of many are loosely coordinated by the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations Organization and the informal consultations of their bureaucracies. These institutions, supplemented by 2,318 nongovernmental transnational organizations, seem to deal with virtually every public concern, from “peace and security” (the United Nations) to mailing letters (the Universal Postal Union). The more diverse their membership and politically sensitive their purposes, the more likely they are restricted to the passive but sometimes critical roles of serving as a forum through which states interact and providing a convenient neutral framework for settling disputes. Governments have only grudgingly granted power to this kind of international institution. If the assumption of increasingly complex international problems is correct, many states will have to seek to channel their bargaining activities through international organizations with relatively broad jurisdictions such as the United Nations more often, as they are forced to confront a variety of interrelated issues.
which involve a large portion of the governments of the world and cannot be effectively handled through orthodox diplomatic practice. They also are likely to more frequently resort to international organizations as relatively impartial instruments for resolving conflicts related to the complex issues of interdependence. International agencies with narrow, technical jurisdictions, a few of which now have quasi-governmental authority, will progressively take on more of the characteristics of supranational institutions, strengthening their bureaucracies and asserting rule-making authority. These institutions have tended to introduce personnel into the formulation and execution of foreign policy who normally possess technical (rather than liberal or military) educations, represent government departments traditionally not involved in international politics, and have not experienced normal diplomatic assignments. The incorporation of these people in greater numbers will further broaden participation in international politics, and may also introduce new perspectives and institutional orientations.

Three economic organizations with potentially important political consequences—the multinational corporation, economic community, and resource cartel—operate in the contemporary international system. The multinational or transnational corporation is a large economic enterprise which typically engages in a broad range of activities in many different states. "Transnational" is probably a better descriptive term than "multinational," because most of these giant businesses are controlled by boards of directors who operate in and are citizens of only one nation, often the United States. In the sense of stimulating international economic activity, transnational businesses have doubtlessly been effective. Whether they have established the best priorities or contributed to even economic development in the world is another matter. As corporations organized under a single state, with no authority in existence to coordinate or regulate the activities of all of them, transnational businesses cannot be expected to satisfactorily make or even reflect political decisions for the international system as a whole. Transnational corporations should continue to prosper, sometimes exploiting the gaps in jurisdictions which inevitably arise as they operate simultaneously in a number of different states. They are also likely to be subject to increasing and conflicting national regulations, causing them to
become more active participants in the politics of all of the nations in which they operate.

The only functioning regional economic community, the European Economic Community (EEC), is likely to assume more ambitious and significant roles as interdependence deepens. With complex interdependency, bargaining units with an extremely large variety of assets will have an overall advantage over smaller and more homogeneous ones, especially when dealing with other large, complex entities. Therefore, the incentives for the EEC to develop a common currency and common economic policies, and take other integrative steps, will become more attractive, and are less likely to be resisted. While the goal of political union desired by devout Europeans may not be realized for an extremely long time, if at all, EEC members should also coordinate more closely their positions on noneconomic issues. Moreover, more modest successes, and more marginally enhanced political roles, may be expected from other regional economic entities such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and possibly the Andean Pact, which at present are at a much lower level of integration than the EEC. New efforts at regional economic cooperation may appear elsewhere.

The newest species of actor in the international system is the resource cartel, the predominant example being the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), which represents the nations which account for 70 percent of all crude petroleum in international trade, including all of the major exporters. It was formed in 1960, but was not widely recognized as a powerful international agency until 1973, when the Arab members of the Organization imposed an embargo, limited production, and started an escalation of oil prices. The average price of a barrel of crude climbed from less than $2 in 1973 to $27 in 1979. The demand for oil by the developed nations had increased so dramatically throughout the 1960's and early 1970's that OPEC, acting in this instance for all suppliers, could effectively determine price, and, at least for a time, also require that high energy industries be located in OPEC countries to provide an infrastructure for future industrialization and a source of income when the supplies of oil for export will be exhausted in the early 21st century. And the larger producers among the members have used the increased earnings to finance extremely rapid modernization of their economies and expansion and modernization of their armed forces.
Petroleum is not the only commodity becoming scarce, but it is unlikely that there will be other producer cartels which are as effective and powerful as OPEC. No commodities, except perhaps chromium and manganese, approach the criticality of petroleum to modern industrial economies and are as difficult to substitute for in the short term. In 1975, it was estimated that known resources of manganese on land would last for approximately 200 years at 1975 consumption rates, with much larger quantities (over 10 times more) distributed over wide areas of the seabed. The most immediate effect of a manganese cartel, then, would probably be to spur the exploitation of the seabeds, and quickly destroy the position of the present producing countries. There is also a generous supply of chromium available (over 200 years reserves at 1975 demand), with an additional amount on the seabed. Over 90 percent of the known supplies of chromium, excluding those on the seabed, are found in South Africa and Zimbabwe-Rhodesia, however, so that there is the possibility of a chromium cartel in spite of the large quantity available. Yet, because only relatively small quantities of chromium are required in the manufacture of stainless steel; because the United States and other nations stockpile chromium, making it possible for them to resist economic and political pressures for an extended period; because both South Africa and Zimbabwe would have to sacrifice the loss of needed foreign exchange earned by chromium; and because South Africa and probably Zimbabwe need whatever political support they can obtain from the principal western consumers of chromium, the formation of an effective chromium cartel also is far from probable. A change in existing political conditions could alter this judgment, assuming that the seabeds do not provide a usable alternative source of supply, especially if there were a serious crisis or war.

Associations of raw material producers, probably not integrated enough to be called cartels, will probably become more important in the international economic system as they become more unified in their quest for higher and more stable prices. But they probably will not attain much political significance. In other words, the formation and successful operations of OPEC do not necessarily indicate a trend.
STATE OBJECTIVES IN INTERNATIONAL POLITICS OF THE FUTURE

The kinds and quality of objectives pursued by governments are determined by the nature of the state and other actors and the characteristics of the international system in which they operate. Therefore, with the developments described in this essay, there have also been changes in the nature of objectives or interests pursued by actors in international politics.

The most obvious differences between the objectives sought by states at the beginning of the state system and those of today and the probable future have to do with quantity and variety. In the simpler environment of the past, there were relatively few national goals whose achievement required interaction with other states, and, as noted above, there were few transactions beyond contacts among members of the various royal families. As a matter of fact, international politics of the era predominantly was concerned with dynastic issues, with occasional colonial questions and even rarer problems related to trade. The most significant characteristic of the international system of today, compared to those of the past, on the other hand, is the extremely high rate of interaction among a large number of states and other actors over a broad range of issues. Now, for any state, there are typically goals of national security, prestige, status, economic well-being, cultural achievement, and ideological expansion, among other things, as well as objectives related to the residues of colonialism, especially in southern Africa; only dynastic issues have disappeared as a significant type of issue to the system as a whole.

The variety of objectives in today's international system is so great—and will be even greater in those of the future—that it is extremely difficult to adequately analyze them within a single conceptual framework. Recognizing this, Keohane and Nye, in a relatively recent work, recommend that two very different ideal-type models be used, depending on the kinds of objectives involved. One, labeled the realist model and based on the conceptual framework of Hans Morgenthau, assumes that the state as a coherent unit is the only important type of actor in the international system, that it may be appropriate and effective to pursue objectives by using force, and that there is a hierarchy of issues in world politics, headed by questions of military security.
The immediate purpose behind every foreign policy, according to this ideal-type model, is the maximization of power (especially military power), for the final arbiter of international politics is held to be physical force. This realist model is a distortion of reality, as is any ideal-type model, but Keohane and Nye claim that it does help make sense out of activities that relate to military security, national honor and prestige, the balance of power, etc.—the high politics of statecraft in the classical tradition. According to Keohane and Nye, when issues of this sort are involved, participants in a nation’s decisionmaking process (who are likely to be diplomats and soldiers) do tend to view each state as a coherent entity rather than a collection of groups, and are likely to believe that solutions to international problems depend on the mobilization and deployment of power. The realist model is no help in making sense out of international politics when the more numerous objectives which have very little directly to do with national security are at issue. For them, another ideal-type model, the model of complex interdependence, is recommended. This latter model is almost the opposite of the realist model. It assumes that participants in the decisionmaking process represent a wide variety of interests and government agencies, and tend to see the state as a collection of diverse groups rather than a coherent whole. According to the rationale of complex interdependence, the decisionmakers see little relevance between the use of force and the goals they are interested in, and each of them operates on the premise that whatever group or agency position he represents is as entitled to incorporation into the national interest as any other. These largely economic goals, already by far the more numerous in international politics, should become even more numerous and complex as the preindustrial economies of the world modernize and develop. Unfortunately, Keohane and Nye do not relate these two constructs to each other, even though, in the real world, realist and complex interdependence objectives are clearly connected in the same system of interactions. The use of two discrete conceptual frameworks tends to underestimate the complexity of the international system and to inhibit the search for comprehensive explanations and reliable predictions in international politics. But in the absence of adequate theory or more isomorphic models, Keohane’s and Nye’s models do provide a good starting point for a commonsense understanding of the quantity and variety of foreign policy objectives in international politics.
The relatively few goals of states which conform to the realist model in today's international system are normally considered to be more important than the more numerous but undramatic issues of interdependence, however. The "core" values or interests of a nation—those objectives which a state's leaders, reflecting the attitudes of their constituents, are willing to make heavy sacrifices of national resources to attain or defend (very close to the "vital" interests of military planners)—historically have been dealt with in accordance with "realist" logic. Thus, governments enter into military alliances, develop and deploy costly weapons, and threaten and engage in warfare, in order to check the perceived power of real or imagined enemies who might or do threaten territorial integrity or national political institutions and values. As the realist model suggests, these objectives are usually given priority over other government concerns. US experience in Vietnam, and, to a lesser extent, in Korea, are either exceptions to this rule (the national security objectives were not uniformly given priority over other government concerns) or examples of the folly of attempting to mobilize a nation's resources in defense of a cause which has not been accepted by vocal and influential segments of the population.

Although foreign policy objectives which engage core values and interests are probably diminishing as proportions of the total number of objectives, the proportions of resources which leaders are willing to allocate to the procedures anticipated by the realist model of the international system have probably increased. The reasons for this are implicit in the high cost of military technology and weapons systems. To many of the leaders of European nations (all relatively highly industrialized), of the United States, and possibly of the Soviet Union—generally the nations of the world which are most able to mobilize large numbers of people and volumes of resources for foreign policy purposes—the probability of an action which would directly threaten their nation's most cherished core values or interests is perceived as extremely low, and, apparently, declining. But the magnitude of the ultimate risk—the devastation of a general nuclear war—is so great that governments annually spend billions of dollars and maintain armed forces with millions of people even though at any given time none may be actually employed. As noted above, leaders of other states with unusual security problems also have heavily mobilized to defend and/or attain core value foreign policy goals, and the
resources they allocate are not infrequently used. Armed forces in all nations have functions not directly related to these high priority objectives, but it still seems safe to conclude that, both in relative and absolute terms, more human and material resources have been committed to the defense of core values and interests, basically following the rules of the realist model, in the post-World War II international system than in any previous era when major powers were not at war. Of course, the amounts of money and numbers of personnel fluctuate over the years, and will continue to do so. But as long as the world is primarily organized into states or other autonomous units, expenditures of resources at very high levels should be expected. In the future as now, the superpowers and their closest allies probably will not use any of the extensive resources they have accumulated against each other, at least not directly. But as indicated previously, many smaller states which presently cannot press objectives if military capabilities are required will have the means as their internal development succeeds. Thus, there is the possibility of more resources committed to defending and pursuing core values and interests, and relatively more frequent and intensive uses of force as instruments of policy with respect to a declining ratio of realist objectives.

The realist model as outlined by Keohane and Nye does not apply only to core value or interest objectives, a concept explicitly developed by another author, K. J. Holsti. There are a number of "middle range" goals (goals which are important but will be pursued only if and when the price and risks are appropriately low) which the realist model seems to place in proper perspective. These include the "attributes of states:" prestige, commonly sought by deploying and displaying modern weapons systems and well disciplined troops (e.g., "showing the flag"), and by advertising technological accomplishments; and stature, as of a nuclear power, an industrialized state, a donor or recipient of assistance, a "great power." These middle range issues, in certain situations, could be reinterpreted by a leadership and become core value objectives, with appropriately heavy allocations of resources. They relate to the realist model because they all have to do with perceptions of power and influence. Long-range goals, defined by Holsti as images of a distant future in which the international system is completely or substantially transformed, and not merely objectives for the distant future, probably usually would be
analyzed in terms of the realist model also. Long-range goals place far-reaching demands on other states—by definition they would result in a different international system—and therefore must be highly disruptive if they are actively pursued. In fact, few if any states seem to allocate more than minimal resources toward reaching such images of the future. When the Soviet Union was still weak, Lenin apparently viewed world proletarian revolution, clearly a long-range goal, as the proper focus of Soviet foreign policy. However, after the Soviet Union developed the capabilities which allowed it to influence the outcome of international events, Lenin’s successors have apparently committed those capabilities to more immediate—and orthodox—foreign policy objectives, such as establishing buffer zones, developing powerful armed forces, and maintaining alliances. The long-range goal of world revolution now may provide a sense of direction and ultimate purpose for Soviet national policy, foreign and domestic, but the immediate interests of the USSR are given precedence over the interests of international communism. As the cohesion among Communist nations continues to weaken, and they assert their independence from the Soviet Union and China more routinely, the notion of world revolution as a practical goal of a state’s foreign policy will have fewer and fewer adherents.

Most goals which states pursue or defend do not relate to the pursuit of power, at least not as that concept is understood in orthodox, “realistic” analysis of international politics. For these, according to Keohane and Nye, the model of complex interdependence applies. Indeed, states may not adopt or have to defend any goals which require analysis by the realist model: their entire foreign policy behavior approximates complex interdependence.

Today, the Scandinavian states, Belgium, the Netherlands, Ireland, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and even some of the major powers hold no territorial or imperial ambitions. Their international prestige is established, their “core” interests have been secured, and they do not seek to promote or impose their cultural, religious, or ideological values abroad—though they might wish to expand their economic influence. Most international transactions in which they are involved concern technical and economic matters. These problems relate primarily to the interests of private business organizations and voluntary associations, and their promotion by government agencies seldom raises demands that conflict with “core” values or interests of other states. Indeed, a vast majority of transactions between
governments are today concerned with advancing and regulating what are essentially private concerns and relationships between individuals and groups in separate nations.

Interdependence objectives are not necessarily all middle range, however. The "essentially private concerns and relationships between individuals and groups in separate nations" may have a determining influence on the balance of payments, employment in important industries, the pace of economic development and modernization, the scope of foreign influences, access to energy resources, and other high priority concerns. That is to say, international interactions within the context of the model of complex interdependence may include core interest goals of critical importance which virtually all members of a society are willing to sacrifice for, but which cannot be obtained by the display or use of force. The Carter administration's campaign to reduce dependency on imported petroleum is an obvious case in point—or will be if and when a consensus among Americans that there is a critical oil problem has emerged. It also illustrates that the politics of the realist model and the model of complex interdependence are interrelated.

Achieving a substantially reduced dependence on imported oil, especially from OPEC states, is literally essential. Employment, life-styles, inflation, defense capabilities—virtually all aspects of American life—will be affected by the degree of success in meeting this challenge. But OPEC oil cannot simply be taken by force. Even if US armed forces deployed to oil rich nations were not challenged by other modern armed forces (probably from the Soviet Union), the enterprise would likely fail because oil wells, pipelines, and storage facilities could easily be destroyed by the proprietor nations. This very critical national objective must be achieved, instead, primarily by developing alternative energy resources and reducing energy consumption, and the armed forces of the United States can directly contribute relatively little toward either process.

Nonetheless, while the armed forces have little direct impact on the US effort to reduce its dependence on foreign oil, they are important in achieving the related goal of securing access to sufficient foreign oil as long as it is needed by protecting and appearing able to protect the transportation routes over which the oil must pass. US military capabilities also are apparently seen by some rulers of OPEC nations as barriers to the feared incursions of
Soviet influence. As the agencies administering security assistance to some of the nations which produce oil, US armed forces help fulfill needs that are considered urgent. They are partially responsible for creating conditions of interdependence between the United States, providing protection against the Soviet Union (in addition to providing technology) and some oil producers, providing energy for the American economy, instead of a very asymmetric relationship clearly favoring the producers of oil.

The many middle range goals with which the model of complex interdependence is primarily concerned may be of relatively limited national significance individually, but many of them are individually considered extremely important by persons, groups, and government agencies which are influential in their nation’s domestic political processes. In the aggregate, middle range interdependence goals have large and influential bodies of proponents, and their numbers and power should increase as interdependency interaction expands. All of the practical consequences of this are uncertain. Foreign policy decisionmaking should become more and more similar to domestic policymaking, both as to the procedures used and the participants involved. There will undoubtedly be more competition for national resources and claims on national budgets will have to be justified carefully and extensively, as they must be within many governments, including the United States, today. It seems reasonable that in the United States the proportions of funds allocated for national defense—the concern of the realist model of international politics—will decrease (although perhaps only marginally) if Soviet behavior begins to reflect the characteristics of the politics of interdependence, which it should if the hypotheses of this paper are correct. But if, in the view of influential groups in the American policymaking process, Soviet leaders continue to speak and act as if they were guided by “realist” propositions, the national support of armed forces will more likely be constant or increase, and policies designed to achieve realist model objectives will receive priority.

In spite of the influence of interdependency, it is difficult to imagine a time in the future when many, if not almost all, American political leaders will not view, with adequate justification, some Soviet behavior as threatening to US core interests, and respond by strengthening America’s military capability and shoring up its alliances. And Soviet leaders, also
with adequate justification—important goals of the two nations are in fact likely to be in conflict at least for decades and perhaps centuries—will doubtlessly view US policy similarly. At the same time, economic and security interdependence relationships will continue to proliferate, increasing the costs to both parties of action which might disrupt the ties. In short, superpower relations in the future—again barring some catastrophe—will be very similar to those of today, except that there will be more incentives (and they should increase with the passage of time) to place the priority of cooperation relatively higher than at present. It seems reasonable that these incentives will elicit less conflictual and more predictable relationships than in the past. Furthermore, because the interrelationships between East and West, and particularly the Soviet Union and the United States, will be so extensive, there will be many opportunities for each party to influence others—and compete with others—without recourse to military means. There have been relatively few alternatives to military means available in the recent past.

The objectives of states which may devolve from what might be called ecological interdependence could be the most disruptive to the international system. With a few exceptions, there may be an adequate supply of strategically critical materials for many years, but high quality resources will become increasingly scarce and expensive, and eventually valuable nonrenewable resources will be depleted. Competition for agricultural products, especially food, also should become more and more intense, even if the rise in population growth rates is restrained and there is progress in developing higher yields. The consequences of these conditions could be very serious in the next few decades—and critical with the passage of time—if an effective international response is not forthcoming. Present disputes over fishing and pollution of the seas, now dealt with by most nations as routine, middle-range affairs, could be raised in priority to core value objectives. Even wars of conquest over areas of the seas and conflicts over the ecological balance of the seas do not seem infeasible. Industrial pollution and land erosion could join border disputes, ideology, national pride, and international trade as chronic causes of dangerous international disputes. Even without overt conflict, a failure of the world ecosystem, choking out much of the food supply of the planet and poisoning air and water, could be the
catastrophe which might end the present international system and
destroy the state as the basic political unit of the world.

Authorities argue about the extent and urgency of ecological
problems, but it seems incontestable that they cannot be solved by
any single, sovereign nation.

How to cope with the diverse, cumulatively enormous, still proliferating, and
mainly destructive changes in our earthly habitat, poses problems of the
future quality of life and even survival upon the planet earth, problems that
no single political community is likely to solve by itself in the 'anarchical
order of power' that is still the essence of contemporary international
politics.'""""

Harold and Margaret Sprout, the authors of the preceding
quotation, believe that the severity of these problems, and their
resistance to solutions formed and executed with existing political
institutions, will eventually lead to ""revolutionary changes in the
governance of the planet earth,"" and they are extremely
pessimistic about the survival of society if radical changes do not
occur. But radical structural change is foreign to international
politics and might result in undesirable, unintended outcomes if it
did occur. Alterations in the environment of the international
system occur differentially, affecting some states sooner than
others and some states more than others. While partial steps to deal
with segments of the overall problems of the earth's ecosystem
appear to be more advisable than radical transformations of
international politics, it is true that there is an urgency: if radical
solutions are to be avoided, moderate changes must begin at once.

Fortunately, mechanisms in the form of nonstate actors which
could produce partial solutions to the problems of scarce resources,
pollution of atmosphere and water, deforestation, elimination of
species, and all the rest, already exist so that the normally slow
process of system adaptation can probably be compressed. These
agencies are somewhat cumbersome, and require strong, even
aggressive leadership from advanced nations, but they can begin to
formulate solutions to the problems. The states whose populations
have the most to lose from a failure of the ecosystem—that is, the
United States, Western European nations, and Japan—must soon
announce and pursue as a matter of the highest priority the
establishment of a regime, or regimes, through which governments,
private groups and businesses, and international organizations can
mobilize resources for that purpose. This is not the type of
objective which states typically pursue, because it is not limited to
the narrow interest of states or groups within states. Establishing
this goal and getting it accepted by other international actors may
be comparable to the creating of the United Nations system after
the Second World War, and therefore, a task which does have
precedence. Very recent experience, such as the failure to achieve
consensus at the Conferences of the Law of the Seas and the
breakdown in communications in the North-South debates on
international economics, are not encouraging. But a major
ingredient has been missing: the nations with the greatest resources
have yet to accept the solution of these problems as high priority
core interest objectives.

SUMMARY

The changes in international politics since the 17th century have
followed patterns forged primarily by developments in the
intellectual environment of the international system. The
knowledgeable explosion, spawning sophisticated technologies and
thought processes, has transformed international politics from a
game played by a few courts in Europe over relatively few issues to
an extremely complicated enterprise which taxes the energies of
thousands (with millions more as interested observers and indirect
participants) in over 150 governments and concerns itself with a
wide variety of important and sometimes critical public questions.

Ironically, the state, established as the basic unit of the
international system by the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648, still has
almost the same legal attributes, the fact that there have been
enormous changes in international politics notwithstanding.
Among the most important changes have been the development of
frequent contacts among states (instead of each state being
relatively isolated) and the invention of increasingly more
sophisticated and destructive weapons systems. But the state
remains, even though there are many problems which surpass the
competence of any single one, partly because of the force of
nationalism and the flexibility provided the international system
through the introduction of nonstate actors.

The complexity of international politics and the persistence of
the state are reflected in the objectives pursued in the contemporary
international system. They are varied, and cover both issues of the
high politics of traditional statescraft and the more mundane questions of economic interdependence. The relations of interdependence account for most objectives, and the prospect is that they will increase in number. Included among them are objectives related to the world’s ecosystems. Indeed, ecological questions may become critical if they are not met by determined efforts.

Interdependence objectives and “realist” objectives are likely to continue to be pursued by states, at least the more developed and stronger ones, well into the future. But interdependence does create incentives for cooperation, and raises the cost of disruptions of relations. The logic of the trends in the international system, then, is for more cooperation and less physical conflict among states, even the superpowers. As far as the superpowers are concerned, ideology will continue to influence, but not necessarily dominate, international interactions.
ENDNOTES

1. In this paper, national interests are defined as the objectives or goals which policymakers adopt for their state. See James N. Rosenau, "National Interests," International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences, Vol. 11, David L. Sills, ed., New York: The MacMillan Company and the Free Press, 1968, pp. 34-39, for a discussion of the many ways in which the phrase has been used in the literature of international relations. Donald E. Neuchterlein, "The Concept of 'National Interest': A Time for New Approaches," Orbis, Spring 1979, pp. 73-92, is an effort to define the concept so as to be useful in foreign policy analysis.

2. An exact definition of "future" has been deliberately avoided in this paper. The focus is well beyond the mid-range concept often used in military planning, but not into distant eras which are now only perceived by science fiction writers. Perhaps the most precise statement that can be made is that the future being considered extends as long as some form of the nation-state continues to dominate international politics, which will probably be a very long time (perhaps best measured in centuries—certainly decades), and as long as existing and presently theoretically feasible processes dominate technology. In other words, the speculations in this essay are not meant to have any validity if there are fundamental, revolutionary changes in international politics or science.


4. The thesis that "throughout history that unit which affords protection and security to human beings has tended to become the basic political unit," and that the state no longer can, was developed by John H. Herz in his influential article, "Rise and Demise of the Territorial State," World Politics, Vol. 9, 1957, pp. 473-491. Also see his "The Territorial State Revisited—Reflections on the Future of the Nation-State, Policy, Vol. 1, Fall 1968, pp. 11-34.


6. This was the size of the United Nations in the fall of 1979. There also are nonmember states, and the figure includes a number of microstates, tiny entities which can only be awarded the designation of state on formal, technical grounds. However, in reality, these tiny polities cannot even make the pretense of independence which is supposed to be the fundamental characteristics of a state.

7. It is generally assumed that the nuclear forces of the United States and the Soviet Union have deterred each other, or at least that the US forces have deterred the Soviet Union. Actually, all that is known is that (1) the forces have been deployed, and (2) there has been no fighting between the two nations. We can only speculate as to whether an attack would have taken place in the absence of either or both nuclear forces. See Alexander L. George and Richard Smoke, Deterrence in American Foreign Policy: Theory and Practice, New York: Columbia University Press, 1974, pp. 58-83, for a sophisticated discussion of this and other aspects of deterrence theory.

8. It does not seem unlikely that new weapons systems will also be more expensive. However, technological developments should also reduce the costs of many items and components, so that defense expenditures need not necessarily rise.
with technological improvements, especially for the armed forces of developing states which do not deploy the newest and most sophisticated weapons systems.

9. The argument is often made that nuclear proliferation would reduce the resort to force as a means of settling disputes, as many erstwhile adversaries entered into bilateral relations of mutual nuclear deterrence similar to the deterrence relationship of the United States and the Soviet Union. I reject this argument, at least when posed as a generalization, for several reasons: The deterrence relationship of the United States and the Soviet Union is considered stable because both nations have deployed second-strike capabilities, a feat which may be beyond the ability of every other nation in the world at the present time, and which could only be accomplished after a very dangerous phase in which only first-strike capabilities were deployed. The probabilities of accident, miscalculation, and escalation necessarily increase with each addition of a new set of decisionmakers controlling a nuclear weapon. See "Nuclear Proliferation: Prospects, Problems, and Proposals," edited by Joseph I. Coffey, The Annals of the Academy of Political and Social Science, Vol. 430, March 1977.


11. This estimate is based on the finding of World Population Estimates, 1977, Washington, DC: The Environmental Fund, 1977, that a population growth rate of 2 percent leads to a doubled population every 35 years, and 1.8 percent growth rate produces a doubled population in 41 years. In 1977, the Fund estimated the world growth rate at 1.8 percent, but other authorities suggest a higher figure. See "Food and Population," Asia Yearbook: 1979, Hong Kong: The Far Eastern Economic Review, 1978, pp. 58-59.


13. There is little consensus among scholars about the nature of nationalism, and the emphasis here on its affective, rather than instrumental, foundations is not meant to be a dogmatic assertion. In my view, the ability of a political unit to satisfy the expectations of its citizens probably affects loyalty to governments, parties, or leaders more than the nation-state itself. I do not deny that there are nationalisms which identify with units larger (the Arab world) or smaller (Quebec) than the nation-state, but normally the goal of such national movements is a state to embody their nationalism. In any case, most nation-states are based on nationalism, contrived if not in existence before the formation of the state. For discussions of nationalism, see the works cited in Hans J. Morgenthau, Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace, Fifth Edition, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1973, pp. 582-583, especially Karl Deutsch, National and Its Alternatives, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1969; Hans Kohn, The Idea of Nationalism, New York: MacMillan, 1961; and Boyd C. Shafer, Nationalism: Myth and Reality, New York: Harbinger Books, 1962.


15. These numbers are based on the Statistical Summary, Table 1, Yearbook of International Organizations: 1978, Seventeenth Edition, Brussels: Union of International Associations, 1978. Higher or lower totals are possible if the definitions are varied.
16. Hearings before a Subcommittee of the Committee on Government Operations, Ninety-Sixth Congress, First Session, June 20-21, 1979, p. 214. Non-OPEC, non-Communist nations account for 28 percent of trade, excluding trade among Communist states. Non-OPEC suppliers follow the pricing decisions of OPEC.

17. The United States is more vulnerable to a long-term chromium embargo than to an embargo of any other natural resource, according to National Materials Advisory Board, Contingency Planning for Chromium Utilization, Washington, DC: National Academy of Sciences, 1979, p. 16.


23. Ibid., pp. 140-141.


25. Holsti, pp. 142-150.


27. Holsti, p. 140. Holsti probably would modify the list of states with no objectives related to core values today. For example, Norway and Australia, according to their governments, are now confronted by threats to their national security, and they are engaged in activities best analyzed by the realist model.

28. The Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan after this paper was completed. That act, as well as other recent Soviet behavior, certainly does not support the hypotheses developed in this essay. Neither does the behavior of the religious zealots in Teheran. But these events by themselves do not refute the hypotheses either. These propositions will be difficult to uphold if such patterns of behavior seem to succeed and are increasingly repeated. At the present time, based on conditions which can be empirically verified, there is good reason to believe that the trends forecasted in this paper still should materialize.


30. Sprout and Sprout, p. 266.

31. Ibid., p. 375.
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### Strategic Issues Research Memorandum

**Title:** Future International Politics and National Interests of the Future

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**ABSTRACT:** This memorandum charts the broad tendencies of change in the nature of the state (the world's basic political unit) and in the international system, so as to speculate on the types of objectives, or national interests, which the governments of states are likely to pursue in the future. The author analyzes the characteristics of the state and the international system, then presents a brief overview of their evolution to the present time. From this framework he indicates trends which the state will take in the future and the kinds of objectives which states will pursue. He concludes that the logic of the
trends in the international system is for more cooperation and less physical conflict, although states (including the superpowers) will continue to maintain large armed forces and occasionally use them.