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US ARMY WAR COLLEGE
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FLEXIBLE NATIONAL INTERESTS AND US FOREIGN POLICY

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STRATEGIC STUDIES INSTITUTE
US ARMY WAR COLLEGE
Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania

FLEXIBLE NATIONAL INTERESTS AND US FOREIGN POLICY

by

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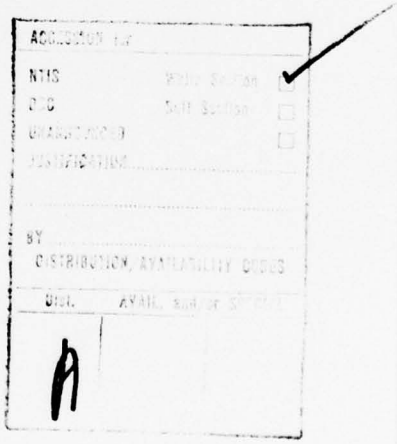
7 March 1977



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The views of the author do not purport to reflect the position of the Department of the Army or Department of Defense.

FOREWORD

This memorandum discusses the abandonment of a US vital national interest, that being the prevention of the expansion of communism wherever and whenever possible. The author perceives our surrender of Viet Nam, "vacillation" in the Middle East, and unwillingness to "get involved" in Angola as being interpreted worldwide as a loss of national resolve in general and, specifically, as abandonment of a national interest. He concludes that the remedy for our malaise is not simple, but asserts that, as the only nation with the physical and moral potential to ensure the right of all people to self-determination, we must resume our position of world leader in supporting peaceful development and world order.

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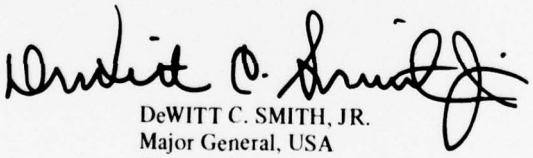
This memorandum was prepared as a contribution to the field of national security research and study. As such, it does not reflect the official view of the College, the Department of the Army, or the Department of Defense.



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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF THE AUTHOR

DR. ALWYN H. KING joined the Strategic Studies Institute in 1973. He earned master's degrees in physical metallurgy from Columbia University and in economics from Babson College. He received his doctorate in physical science from the Stuttgart Institute of Technology in West Germany. Prior to 1973, Dr. King was an industrial research and management consultant for A. D. Little, Inc., and a group leader in the Brunswick Corporation Research and Development Laboratories.

FLEXIBLE NATIONAL INTERESTS AND US FOREIGN POLICY

A nation's interests are, in the words of Collins, "highly generalized abstractions that reflect each state's basic wants and needs."[1] Although these interests may cover a wide range of categories and may vary greatly with time and with changes of political climate and leadership, there exists for each nation an irreducible core of interests defined as "vital."

It has often been stated that the only *vital* national security interest is survival; however, that definition has also been expanded to encompass "survival of the State, with an acceptable degree of independence, territorial integrity, traditional life styles, fundamental institutions, values, and honor intact."[2] When one attempts to quantify 'an acceptable degree' in this statement, it becomes obvious that the question as to just which of a nation's interests are in fact vital is often open to much controversy.

DEFINING VITAL INTERESTS

The identification and classification of national interests are relatively simple in totalitarian states, where the party in power can rule by decree. In a democratic society, however, agreements are difficult to

reach and special interest groups often subvert the above definition of national interest by demanding an inordinate role in determining the presence and importance of the nation's wants and needs. Despite difficulties in articulating and classifying national interests, those which are truly vital[3] are relatively fixed facts of life, and are dictated to a great extent by international political, economic and military realities. Such interests must be supported to the utmost; the alternative is, by definition, a possibly long-term but nonetheless real threat to the national security. Although policies in support of a national interest may vary with changing international scene and available resources, the interest if vital must still be pursued. A vital national interest is not flexible, changes gradually if at all, and cannot be eliminated by congressional fiat, nor Presidential decree, nor even with fluctuations of public opinion.

ABANDONMENT OF NATIONAL INTERESTS

Although the interests of a nation comprise a dynamic set of interlocking and overlapping concerns and desires, discernible changes in national interests are evolutionary and seldom abrupt. Any sudden shift in emphasis or support of a nation's demonstrated interests will surely be noted by its neighbors. If such an interest has been perceived or represented as vital, the change, particularly in the case of a great power, may be grounds for concern and perhaps suspicion among the other nations of the world community. In the limit, the apparent abandonment of a vital national interest, or one that has clearly been represented and supported as vital, can easily be interpreted as evidence of a loss of national strength and resolve; if accompanied by abandonment of allies or abrogation of treaties or alliances, formal or implied—a clear invitation to adventurism!

A VITAL INTEREST OF THE UNITED STATES

The prevention of the development of a Communist world hegemony is essential for the survival of the United States with its democratic form of government and institutions intact. National survival of any lesser degree would, it is hoped, be totally unacceptable to most Americans. There is still a sizable body of opinion in the United States and elsewhere supporting the belief that the strategy of containment, or prevention of the expansion of communism, wherever

and whenever possible, is the only viable way to insure survival, and is of vital importance to the long-term interests of the United States and the Free World. Although muted by detente at the moment, this point of view has been strongly supported and clearly demonstrated by US policies and actions in the past. The frequently-heard opinion that, because communism is no longer monolithic, the threat is illusory, has no bearing on the subject. Whether founded on Marxist-Leninism, Maoism, or Castroism, or any multicolored variation of these or others, a Communist world would provide a hostile and eventually fatal environment for the United States as presently constituted. A few excerpts from the keynote address of Leonid I. Brezhnev, general secretary of the Soviet Communist Party, at the party's 25th Congress in February 1976, give some insight into what might be expected:

> No impartial person can deny that the socialist countries' influence on world affairs is becoming ever stronger and deeper. That, comrades, is a great boon to mankind as a whole, to all those who aspire to freedom, equality, independence, peace and progress.
>
> The Soviet people take pride in having rendered considerable aid to Vietnam in its struggle against the imperialist invaders.
>
> * * * * *
>
> Take the People's Republic of Angola. Barely constituted, this progressive state became an object of a foreign intervention, the handiwork of imperialism and the South African racists, the mortal enemies of independent Africa, and also of those who undertook the unseemly role of their henchmen. This was why Angola's struggle for independence was supported by the world's progressive forces, and its success testified once again that nothing can crush the people's aspirations to freedom.
>
> Our party supports and will continue to support peoples fighting for their freedom.
>
> * * * * *
>
> Development of socialist countries, their greater might, and the greater beneficial influence of their international policy – this is now the main direction of mankind's social progress.
>
> Now everyone can see that one of the main myths created by reformists and bourgeois ideologists has collapsed – the myth that present-day capitalism is able to avert crises.
>
> It is farthest from the Communists' minds to predict an automatic collapse of capitalism. It still has considerable reserves. Yet the developments of recent years forcefully confirm that capitalism is a society without a future.

> We Soviet Communists consider defense of proletarian internationalism the sacred duty of every Marxist-Leninist.[4]

These words echo loudly and clearly the essence of Khruschev's statement: "We will bury you!" The avoidance of this burial by all available means must be nothing less than the abiding vital national interest of the United States!

THE CURRENT SCENE

We are today witnessing the international repercussions of a series of events widely perceived as the abandonment of the above US national interest, which had long been represented by word and deed as vitally important to the United States and its allies. Our unconditional surrender of Viet Nam, vacillation in the Middle East, and unwillingness to "get involved" in Angola are interpreted worldwide as a loss of national resolve in general and, specifically, as abandonment of this national interest. Questions which have been raised, at home and abroad, about our wisdom and our steadfastness have contributed to disarray in NATO and disillusionment and discouragement among our allies in Asia and elsewhere. Australia has reconsidered its policy of forward defense. Thailand has requested all US armed forces to leave the country. There is an uncomfortable feeling in many Asian countries that communism may be "the wave of the future." Israel, with reason, questions the durability of US assurances. Leaders in Zaire and Zambia feel that the United States has abdicated its task of stemming aggressive Soviet penetration of Africa. The "crumbling process," predicted long ago by President Eisenhower, has clearly been set in motion.

Whether any, or all, of the contributing events were in themselves of vital importance to the United States may still be debatable; however, if affirmative, by the time the answer is clear to all, the debate will unfortunately be purely academic.

A LOOK AT HISTORY

One need not go too far into the past to find historical parallels, in which a nation failed or refused to recognize an interest as vital, with disastrous consequences. Chamberlain's government did not support the containment of Nazi Germany as would befit a vital national interest. Subsequent events clearly demonstrated the vital importance of halting

the Nazi push for *Lebensraum.* Although Britain survived as a nation, it is safe to say that much of her "territorial integrity" [the Empire], "traditional life styles," and "fundamental institutions" were victims of the world holocaust which resulted from the neglect of this vital British interest.

In an earlier century and a different vein, the fledgling United States failed to recognize that it had a vital interest in insuring that all its citizens should be free and with equal opportunity, as implied in the Declaration of Independence [but not provided for in the Constitution.] Again the nation survived, but at the cost of a devastating civil war and disruption of traditional values and institutions, with lingering effects to this day.

Possibly the closest historic parallel to the present day US-Soviet political-economic-military situation was the ancient cold war confrontation between Carthage and Rome [201-146 B.C.], whose similarities with today's conditions have been brought out with chilling clarity by Brigadier General Donald Armstrong in *The Reluctant Warriors.*[5]

Carthage, formerly the leading sea power of the Mediterranean, had gradually relinquished that power to Rome. With a relatively democratic form of government compared to Rome, the Carthaginians maintained civil control over their armed forces. Although intermittent conflict continued between the two great powers, by 236 B.C. Carthage had a peace party in power with a "peace at almost any price" policy. More interested in buildup of her commerce, industry and agriculture, and amassing greater wealth, the Carthaginian government did not recognize the fact of life that the defeat, or at least containment, of Rome's drive for world conquest was of vital importance to Carthage's national survival.

After Hannibal's great victory at Cannae [216 B.C.] during the second Punic War, he sent word to the Carthaginian Senate that supplies and money were needed at once to complete the conquest of Rome. But suffering from internal social and political disarray and an ineffective foreign policy, Carthage's Senate was divided between Hannibal's supporters and a pro-Roman antiwar faction, to whose members prosperity was more important than victory. After much debate the Senate voted to send some aid to Hannibal; however, according to Livy, neither supplies, money, nor reinforcements ever reached the general in the field.

After loss of the second Punic War [201 B.C], terminated by a most

disadvantageous treaty with Rome, Carthage again became wealthy through her commerce, and again gained considerable power and influence. She had abandoned war as an instrument of national policy, and placed complete confidence in the integrity and good faith of the Romans. Rome, however, had not abandoned her design for world domination, and this fact eventually became clear even to "prosperous, passive, peaceful Carthage." After a much belated, but heroic 3-year struggle in the third and last of the Punic Wars, Carthage was razed to the ground in 146 B.C. It was finally obvious, to the few survivors in slavery, that the containment of Rome had long been a vital national interest of Carthage.

In the words of Armstrong:

> The Roman pattern of conquest has a startling relevance for our own time. For more than 40 years prior to the final conflict, Rome conducted a cold war that weakened Carthage materially and spiritually. This cold war included all the tactics used today by Communist nations against the Free World: proxy warfare, terror, blackmail, psychological warfare, deception, subversion and propaganda.6

It is not even too difficult to find a parallel between Castro of Cuba and Masinissa of Numidia, who from 191 to 151 B.C. progressively seized Carthaginian territory with Roman connivance, while Rome ostensibly continued to observe her peace agreements with Carthage.

Admittedly, a favorite hobby of historians is to search for parallels, or contrasts, between then and now, and there is danger in overanalogizing. It is difficult to ignore, however, the lessons we could, or should, have learned from the history recounted above. Especially pertinent it seems are the drive for world domination and the multiple strategies used by Rome [and the Soviets], and the wealthy, materialistic, peace-loving and irresolute nature of Carthage [and the United States?].

Also pertinent, indeed, are General Armstrong's concluding words:

> If history teaches one lesson which is unchallengeable, this is the truth of Vegetius's exhortation: 'Qui desiderat pacem, praeparat bellum.'7

US COMMITMENTS

It is beyond the scope of this paper to delve into the reasons for our decline [or that of Carthage] to the state in which we now find

ourselves.[8] More helpful would be an attempt to determine what can be done to improve the situation. Since there should be some sort of cause and effect relationship between national resolve and national treaties and alliances, it may be useful as a starting point to examine some of our international agreements and commitments for clues as to the political philosophy behind recent and current US foreign policy.

Our most important multilateral treaty commitments are:

- Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance [Rio Pact] of 1947.
- North Atlantic Treaty of 1949.
- Security Treaty between the US and Australia and New Zealand [ANZUS] of 1951.
- Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty [SEATO] of 1954.

In addition, the following bilateral treaties are in effect:

- Mutual Defense Treaty with the Philippines [1951]
- Mutual Defense Treaty with South Korea [1953]
- Mutual Defense Treaty with China [Taiwan] [1954]
- Treaty of Mutual Security and Cooperation with Japan [1960]

CHARACTERISTICS OF US FOREIGN POLICY

All or Nothing. The very fact that the above treaties exist [not to mention innumerable congressional resolutions, executive agreements and policy declarations on mutual security matters] reveals a certain "all or nothing" characteristic of US foreign policy.

Just 50 years ago, then Secretary of State Frank B. Kellog, in discussing US foreign policy of 1926, declared that ". . . . the United States has come to the conclusion that offensive or defensive alliances, political or military, are not in harmony with the principle of our government or in the interests of the people."[9] From that extreme position we have now come to the point where the United States has world-wide security agreements and military assistance pacts, involving nations in all continents except Antarctica.

One of the consequences of Viet Nam has been a critical review by a number of "Monday morning quarterbacks" of the overall conduct of US foreign policy since 1945. Strong pressures have resulted for a return to a policy of noninvolvement reminiscent of that of 50 years ago. Although, as pointed out by Walter Laqueur, isolationism in its extreme form is very rare, "moderately phrased under the label of

noninterventionism, it has gained wider currency."[10] Given the present mood of Congress, there is a real danger that isolationism and noninterventionism, may in fact by synonymous. If the all-or-nothing foreign policy pendulum swings again to the "nothing" extreme, the analogy between ancient Carthage and modern United States may become too convincing for comfort.

It must be noted at this point that, in today's international environment, the degree of US mutual security involvement is no longer solely at the option of US policymakers. A new and complicating factor, that of US dependability which heretofore had not been questioned, has been introduced into the foreign policy equation. Illustrative of this fact is the SEATO ministers' agreement on September 24, 1975 to phase out that organization in view of the "new realities of the region."[11] In a clear and concise analysis of the realities of the post-Viet Nam era, Colonel Lloyd J. Matthews states:

> With respect to the elaborate edifice of mutual security pacts erected by the United States and over 40 allies since World War II, the least we can conclude at this point is that it has been weakened as a result of Vietnam and that it demands shoring up. But it is possible to go further: one can now argue rationally that a categorical treaty obligation by the United States–namely, that an attack upon its ally is to be considered the equivalent of an attack upon itself–will not in the foreseeable future be taken at face value by America's security partners.[12]

Flexibility. An examination of the wording of our various treaty agreements reveals considerable built-in flexibility.[13] The Rio Pact and the North Atlantic Treaty agreement seem to commit us to doing something in the event of attack–e.g.,

> Rio Pact: "... an armed attack by any State against an American State shall be considered as an attack against all the American States . . .each one . . . undertakes to assist in meeting the attack . . . ."

> North Atlantic Treaty: "... an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all; . . . each of them . . . will assist the Party or Parties so attacked . . . such action as it deems necessary . . . to restore and maintain the security of the North Atlantic area."

However, such phrases as "undertakes to assist in meeting," and "such action as it deems necessary" allow broad interpretation of just what action will be taken. The other agreements listed above are even less

precise, with statements to the effect that the United States "would act to meet the common danger in accordance with its constitutional provisions and processes." As Collins puts it: "Most of the treaty obligations that this country vows to honor in Asia have edges as fuzzy as the Nixon Doctrine."[14]

This is not to say that flexibility in foreign policy statements is bad. A certain vagueness of wording in treaty agreements is desirable; it confuses the potential enemy and allows necessary freedom of action in meeting potential and actual aggression. What is needed, however, is the flexibility of a steel spring—not that of a marshmallow! In more precise physical terms, a viable foreign policy should have the characteristic of elasticity—not plasticity.

Nonunanimity. Consensus is, in a way, the essence of democracy. Nevertheless, the great difficulty experienced in democratic governments in arriving at a consensus in foreign policy matters is well recognized, and has been commented on by authors from de Tocqueville:

> In the conduct of their foreign relations, democracies appear to me to be decidedly inferior to other governments. Foreign policies demand scarcely any of those qualities peculiar to a democracy; they require, on the contrary, the perfect use of almost all of those in which it is deficient.[15]

to Earl Ravenal:

> . . . it is not the fall of US positions in Southeast Asia that directly affects the decisions and dispositions of nations halfway around the globe; it is the evidence of American attitudes and the demonstration of the operation of the American policy-making system.[16]

It is obvious that this is not a new problem. Recent events make it equally obvious that it is vital to the success of the democratic system that some formula be found for reaching a foreign policy consensus at some point in our national deliberations. Our internal fears, doubts, and disagreements must be kept internal; we must project a united front toward the outside world and, above all, toward our potential or actual adversaries.

Strangely prophetic were the words of Walter Lippman, written during World War II:

> The spectacle of this great nation which does not know its own mind is as humiliating as it is dangerous. . . . Our failure now to form a national

policy will, though we defeat our enemies, leave us [in the post-war period] dangerously exposed to deadly conflict at home and to unmanageable perils from abroad 17

QUO VADIS?

Though an essential step in the scientific process, defining a problem is unfortunately not tantamount to its solution. The foreign policy problems briefly mentioned here have been adequately defined by expert analysts in numerous publications; yet they have defied solution for many years. Nor have we the temerity to suggest that solutions are to be found in this memorandum. A few thoughts will be expressed, however, which may be of use to those who will ultimately find the solutions—and find them we must, or—[at the risk of overworking our analogy] – the United States will surely follow ancient Carthage into the dust-bin of history.

The problems we face, and the solutions sought, involve a complex of interdependent issues, none of which can be properly treated in isolation. For the purpose of this discussion, however, the overall dilemma will be viewed, separately, from a political, economic and military perspective.

POLITICAL

A basic requirement for an effective foreign policy is a national government acting from a position of strength, and assured of the full support and unity of purpose of the American people. This has been singularly lacking in our recent history. Opinion polls have begun to register a growing public concern, however, about our dwindling military and technological strength relative to that of the Soviet Union. Although agonizingly slow at times, there is hope that the democratic process will succeed in reversing this trend in time to avert disaster. There are also encouraging signs on the economic front and, although certainly too early for general rejoicing, an upturn may be in the offing, signalling a gradual resurgence of economic health and strength.

Even with the restoration of the military and economic elements of our national strength, we still face the perplexing and perennial problem of achieving consensus in a democracy, without which our foreign policy will always rest on a less than secure foundation. The question is: How can we determine, with a reasonable consensus, just what are the important US national interests? –and even more

critical—what do we consider the irreducible minimum [vital] interests which we will support at all costs, not subject to whim of Congress or President, and with some confidence in broad popular support?

One institutional modification which might help us to achieve some valid answers would be an expanded National Security Council, tasked to address these very questions, and then to study in detail ways and means of supporting the selected national interests with available resources. The emphasis would be on anticipating and preparing for developments in advance, rather than reacting to unexpected threats or opportunities as they appear out of the unknown.

This concept is not entirely new. A similar body has been suggested by Maxwell Taylor,

> . . . . charged with dealing with all forms of security threats, military and nonmilitary, and having access to all elements of government and to all relevant resources capable of contributing to this broad task.[18]

and by Winters, in the form of a National Academy of Defense and Diplomacy whose mandate would be:

> to exercise political foresight.[19]

The deliberative body envisioned here would be similar in composition to the present National Security Council, but expanded to include chairmen of key congressional committees, to insure closer consultation and coordination during the early stages of policy formulation. Influential and reputable representatives of labor, management, news media, and others would be given observer or advisor status to afford maximum possible input from all public sectors.

The task facing this council would be a formidable one, but also one of great significance for the future well-being of the United States. It is hoped that, before commencing deliberations, members would all be familiar with Clausewitz's admonition:

> Woe to the Cabinet which, with a policy of half-measures and a fettered military system, comes upon an adversary who . . . knows no other law than that of his intrinsic strength . . . . If a bloody slaughter is a horrible sight, then that is a ground for paying more respect to War, but not for making the sword we wear blunter . . . until someone steps in with one that is sharp and lops off the arms from our body.[20]

ECONOMIC

The ability of a nation to adequately support its important national

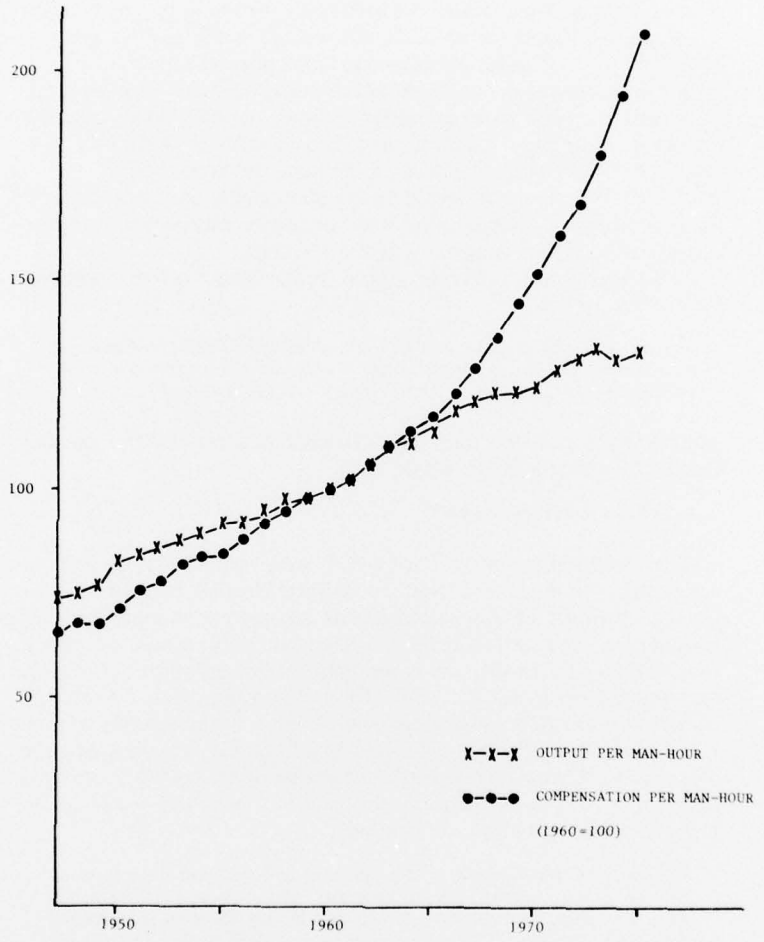

Figure 1.--US PRODUCTIVITY INDEXES: - 1947 - 1975

(Data From: - "Economic Report of the President - Jan 1976.")

interests depends, in the final analysis, on the state of its economy. While apparently improving, the condition of the US economy with inflation climbing at over 6 percent and unemployment near 8 percent is still not good. It is not the prupose here to discuss in detail current US economic problems and possible solutions. It will be instructive, however, to look briefly at one important indicator of economic health, the productivitity of the system, and the factors determining past and future trends.

For many years the United States enjoyed the highest productivity of any nation in the world. This changed abruptly, and during the period from 1960 to 1973 our annual rate of growth in productivity was among the lowest of the major industrial nations. This drop has been attributed to a failure to reinvest enough of our GNP in capital goods and technology to increase our productivity at a rate sufficient to maintain the economic standards of our society.

It has been fashionable to blame our involvement in the Viet Nam War for the low rate of capital formation, and productivity, during this period. The productivity data illustrated in Figure 1 show that explanation to be, at best, only part of the story. While output per man-hour is seen to increase at a fairly steady rate over the entire period from 1947 to 1975, a sharp increase in the rate of change of compensation per man-hour began in the 1960's also reaching a fairly constant, but very high, annual rate of increase by 1975. The actual figures for the period 1968-73 show that productivity gained by a mere 12.5 percent while wages rose 63 percent. Rising wages in excess of productivity gains have been the primary cause of high rates of inflation in recent years. Correction of this continuing imbalance is essential if we are to deal successfully with inflation and recession over the long term. One has only to look at the present economic chaos in Argentina to see the alternative—the result of an extreme continuation of the trends clearly evident in Figure 1.

MILITARY

Despite contemporary concern regarding a possible decrease in the utility of military force in international politics, the basic mission of the military establishment remains the winning of wars, and in peacetime the maintenance of sufficient strength and readiness to create a deterrent to war. The additional requirements needed for the United States armed forces to regain and maintain an adequate level of

strength to insure accomplishment of this basic mission have been well documented. Increased R&D, additional stocks of vehicles, weapons and ammunition, a revitalized Navy, and larger, well-trained mobile ready forces have all been spelled out in detail in annual Defense Department reports and elsewhere. All depend on congressional action for sufficient funding. Before his removal from office, Secretary of Defense James Schlesinger argued convincingly for such funding, and there have been encouraging signs that his arguments were heard and remembered in the Congress.

Making the optimistic assumption that funding is forthcoming and a position of superior military strength is regained, one more subject bearing upon the firm but flexible support of our national interests and alliances deserves attention. That is the question of when to commit our forces and the control of military operations after commitment. Although no quarrel is intended with the fundamental concept of overall civilian control of the military, US history records a number of examples of inadequate use of military expertise in arriving at political decisions, and even some military decisions, related to the initiation and conduct of hostilities. The point to be made here is: Although the initiation of warfare is a political decision, to be made by the civilian-political leadership [with the advice of the military], the conduct of warfare should be strictly a military endeavor. Once the political limits and boundary conditions have been established, military leadership should insist on full authority in the detailed conduct of operations. This is especially true in "limited war," since the civilian mind tends to equate "limited objectives" with "limited means," which invariably leads to an unnecessarily protracted war.

The assertion by a military commander of his prerogative to "run his own war" is not without risk, when opposed by influential members of other government agencies. Daring individuals have attempted it, with varying degrees of success; General MacArthur in Korea was no doubt the most famous—and perhaps the least successful. When support of a vital national interest is in the balance, however, a commander who has demonstrated his willingness to give his life for his country should show no less courage when only his next promotion is at stake.

We should make one more mention of our overly permissive social system, a subject peripheral to this discussion, but possibly critical to our national survival. In this respect, the Army—and the military services in general—can accomplish most by setting an example. With the traditions of discipline, strength, devotion to duty, honor, and

country, they should be in an ideal position to do this. A well-indoctrinated soldiery can demonstrate that these are more than just words, and recent trends of civilian vices infecting the military can be reversed to have military excellence become a source of inspiration to civilian youth.

CONCLUSION

We have in this paper discussed at length what should be done, but offered few specific suggestions on how to do it. If some part of this discussion stimulates thinking which leads to ideas or solutions to any of our problems by others, however, the writing will not have been in vain, and we will all be the beneficiaries.

In conclusion, then, if we are to overcome the myriad of problems we find in today's world, the following actions seem essential:

We must, as a minimum, regain a position of political and military strength in international affairs. We must through education, example, and by use of the democratic process restore self-discipline and national resolve, and eradicate corruption and self-indulgence in our internal affairs. As the only nation with both the physical and moral potential to ensure the right of all people to self-determination, we must resume our position, not of "World Policeman," but of world leader in supporting peaceful development and world order. Basically, and above all, we must determine and state publicly our vital national interests, not subject to whim of Congress or President but arrived at by consensus and assured of a substantial margin of public support.

ENDNOTES

1. John M. Collins, *Grand Strategy*, p. 1.
2. *Ibid.*
3. It is acknowledged that "vital" is overused, and often misused, in describing national interests. In the context of this paper, however, no other term seems appropriate.
4. "Excerpts From Brezhnev's Keynote Speech at Soviet Party's 25th Congress," *The New York Times*, February 25, 1976, p. 14.
5. Donald Armstrong, *The Reluctant Warriors*, pp. 54-76.
6. *Ibid.*, p. vi.
7. *Ibid*, p. 182.
8. The reason for our decline, though complex in detail, can be simply stated: As freedom weakens discipline, so total freedom [anarchy] destroys resolve. Our liberty has become license, no longer tempered with judgment and self-control. The symptoms of our malaise are widespread and clear to all, from a permissive educational system, to an indulgent judiciary, to the most dangerous of all—a pampered and irresponsible press.
9. "50 Years Ago," *The Evening Sentinel [Carlisle, PA.]*, February 23, 1976.
10. Walter Laqueur, "The West in Retreat," *Commentary*, August, 1975.
11. "Ministers Agree on Phase-Out of SEATO," *The New York Times*, September 25, 1975, p. 22.
12. Colonel Lloyd J. Matthews, "'Farewell the Tranquil Mind:' Security and Stability in the Post-Vietnam Era," *Parameters*, Vol. V, No. 2, 1976, p. 2.
13. US Dept. of State, *Treaties in Force*; see also: *Treaties and Other International Agreements of the United States of America 1776-1949* [Bevans] Vol. 4, pp. 559 and 828; and *United States Treaties and Other International Agreements*, Vol. 3, p. 3420; Vol 5, p. 2368; Vol. 6, p. 81.
14. Collins, p. 145.
15. Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, p. 243.
16. Earl C. Ravenal, "Consequences of the End Game in Vietnam," *Foreign Affairs*, July 1975, p. 662.
17. Walter Lippman, *Foreign Policy: Shield of the Republic*, p. 4.
18. Maxwell D. Taylor, "The Legitimate Claims of National Security," *Foreign Affairs*, April 1974, p. 593.
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This paper proposes that a nation's major national interests do not change abruptly, but instead are relatively fixed and are dictated to a great extent by international political, economic and military realities. The dangers of apparent abandonment, or failure to recognize the importance, of a nation's long-term vital interests are pointed out, and historical examples discussed.

Characteristic weaknesses of US foreign policy are elucidated and some corrective measures are suggested for the future.

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