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The Emerging Structure of International Politics

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Kenneth N. Waltz

For more than three hundred years, the drama of modern history has turned on the rise and fall of great powers. In the multipolar era, twelve great powers appeared on the scene at one time or another. At the beginning of World War II, seven remained; at its conclusion, two. Always before, as some states sank, others rose to take their places. World War II broke the pattern; for the first time in a world of sovereign states, bipolarity prevailed.

In a 1964 essay, I predicted that bipolarity would last through the century.¹ On the brow of the next millennium, we must prepare to bid bipolarity adieu and begin to live without its stark simplicities and comforting symmetry. Already in the fall of 1989, Undersecretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger expressed nostalgia for the “remarkably stable and predictable atmosphere of the Cold War,” and in the summer of 1990, John Mearsheimer gave strong reasons for expecting worse days to come.²

For almost half a century it seemed that World War II was truly “the war to end wars” among the great and major powers of the world. The longest peace yet known rested on two pillars: bipolarity and nuclear weapons. During the war, Nicholas Spykman foresaw a postwar international order no different “from the old,” with international society continuing “to operate within the same fundamental power patterns.”³ Realists generally shared his

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1. Kenneth N. Waltz, “The Stability of a Bipolar World,” *Daedalus*, Vol. 93, No. 3 (Summer 1964).

2. Lawrence Eagleburger, quoted in Thomas Friedman, “U.S. Voicing Fears That Gorbachev Will Divide West,” *New York Times*, September 16, 1989, pp. 1, 6; John J. Mearsheimer, “Back to the Future: Instability in Europe After the Cold War,” *International Security*, Vol. 15, No. 1 (Summer 1990), pp. 5–56.

3. Nicholas J. Spykman, *America’s Strategy in World Politics: The United States and the Balance of Power* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1942), p. 461.

expectation. The behaviors of states, the patterns of their interactions, and the outcomes their interactions produced had been repeated again and again through the centuries despite profound changes in the internal composition of states. Spykman's expectations were historically well grounded and in part borne out. States have continued to compete in economic, military, and other ways. The use of force has been threatened, and numerous wars have been fought on the peripheries. Yet, despite deep ideological and other differences, peace prevailed at the center of international politics. Changes in structure, and in the weaponry available to some of the states, have combined to perpetuate a troubled peace.⁴ As the bipolar era draws to a close, we must ask two questions: What structural changes are in prospect? What effects may they have?

The End of Bipolarity—and of the Cold War

The conflation of peace and stability is all too common. The occurrence of major wars is often identified with a system's instability.⁵ Yet systems that survive major wars thereby demonstrate their stability. The multipolar world was highly stable, but all too war-prone. The bipolar world has been highly peaceful, but unfortunately less stable than its predecessor.

Almost as soon as their wartime alliance ended, the United States and the Soviet Union found themselves locked in a cold war. In a world of two great powers, each is bound to focus its fears on the other, to distrust its intentions, and to impute offensive intentions even to defensive measures. The competition of states becomes keener when their number reduces to two. Neorealist, or structural, theory leads one to believe that the placement of states in the international system accounts for a good deal of their behavior.⁶ Through most of the years of the Cold War the United States and the Soviet Union were similarly placed by their power. Their external behaviors therefore should have shown striking similarities. Did they? Yes, more than has usually been realized. The behavior of states can be compared on many

4. On the causes of multipolar-conventional war and of bipolar-nuclear peace, see esp. Waltz, "Stability," *The Spread of Nuclear Weapons: More May Be Better*, Adelphi Paper No. 171 (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies [IISS], 1981); and Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1979). John Lewis Gaddis and Mearsheimer have offered similar explanations. See Gaddis, "The Long Peace," *International Security*, Vol. 10, No. 4 (Spring 1986), pp. 99–142. Since the reasoning is now familiar, I refrain from summarizing it here.

5. I made this mistake in "The Stability of a Bipolar World," but have since corrected the error.

6. Neorealist, or structural, theory is developed in Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*.

counts. Their armament policies and their interventions abroad are two of the most revealing. On the former count, the United States in the early 1960s undertook the largest strategic and conventional peacetime military buildup the world had yet seen. We did so while Khrushchev tried at once to carry through a major reduction in conventional forces and to follow a strategy of minimum deterrence, even though the balance of strategic weapons greatly favored the United States. As one should have expected, the Soviet Union soon followed in America's footsteps, thus restoring the symmetry of great-power behavior. And so it was through most of the years of the Cold War. Advances made by one were quickly followed by the other, with the United States almost always leading the way. Allowing for geographic differences, the overall similarity of their forces was apparent. The ground forces of the Soviet Union were stronger than those of the United States, but in naval forces the balance of advantage was reversed. The Soviet Union's largely coastal navy gradually became more of a blue-water fleet, but one of limited reach. Its navy never had more than half the tonnage of ours. Year after year, NATO countries spent more on defense than the Warsaw Treaty Organization (WTO) countries did, but their troops remained roughly equal in numbers.

The military forces of the United States and the Soviet Union remained in rough balance, and their military doctrines tended to converge. We accused them of favoring war-fighting over deterrent doctrines, while we developed a war-fighting doctrine in the name of deterrence. From the 1960s onward, critics of military policy urged the United States to "reconstitute its usable war-fighting capability." Before he became secretary of defense, Melvin R. Laird wrote that "American strategy must aim at fighting, winning, and recovering," a strategy that requires the ability to wage nuclear war and the willingness to strike first.⁷ One can find many military and civilian statements to similar effect over the decades. Especially in the 1970s and 1980s, the United States accused the Soviet Union of striving for military superiority. In turn, the Republican platform of 1980 pledged that a Republican administration would reestablish American strategic superiority. Ronald Reagan as president softened the aspiration, without eliminating it, by making it his goal to establish a "margin of safety" for the United States militarily. Military

7. Melvin R. Laird, *A House Divided: America's Strategy Gap* (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1962), pp. 53, 78–79.

competition between the two countries produced its expected result: the similarity of forces and doctrines.

Comparison on the second count, interventionist behavior, requires some discussion because our conviction that the United States was the status quo and the Soviet Union the interventionist power distorted our view of reality. The United States as well as the Soviet Union intervened widely in others' affairs and spent a fair amount of time fighting peripheral wars. Most Americans saw little need to explain our actions, assumed to be in pursuit of legitimate national interests and of international justice, and had little difficulty in explaining the Soviet Union's, assumed to be aimed at spreading Communism across the globe by any means available. Americans usually interpreted the Soviet Union's behavior in terms of its presumed intentions. Intentions aside, our and their actions were similar. The United States intervened militarily to defend client states in China, Korea, and Vietnam, and even supported their ambitions to expand. The Soviet Union acted in Afghanistan as the United States did in Vietnam, and intervened directly or indirectly in Angola, Mozambique, and Ethiopia.

David Holloway quotes a Soviet work, *War and the Army*, published in 1977, as follows: "Before the Socialist state and its army stands the task of defending, together with other Socialist states and their armies, the whole Socialist system and not only its own country." Beyond that broad purpose, Soviet forces were to help liberated countries thwart counterrevolution.⁸ America assumed similar missions. Defending against or deterring attacks on the United States required only a fraction of the forces we maintained. We mounted such large forces because we extended defensive as well as deterrent forces to cover Western Europe, the Persian Gulf area, Northeast Asia, and other parts of the world from Central America to the Philippine Islands. We identified our security with the security of other democratic states and with the security of many undemocratic states as long as they were not Communist, and indeed even with some Communist ones. The interests we identified with our own were even more widely embracing than those of the Soviet Union. At the conclusion of the Second World War, the Soviet Union began edging outward. In response, one finds Clark Clifford advising President Harry S. Truman as early as 1946 that America's mission was to be not merely the tiresome one of containing the Soviet Union but

8. David Holloway, *The Soviet Union and the Arms Race*, second ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), p. 81.

also the ennobling one of creating and maintaining “world order.”⁹ We zestfully accepted the task.

Before World War II, both the United States and the Soviet Union had developed ideologies that could easily propel them to unilateral action in the name of international duty: interventionist liberalism in the one country, international Communism in the other. Neither, however, widely exported its ideology earlier. The postwar foreign policies of neither country can be understood apart from the changed structure of international politics, exercising its pressures and providing its opportunities. More than the Soviet Union, the United States acted all over the globe in the name of its own security and the world’s well-being. Thus Barry Blechman and Stephen Kaplan found that in the roughly thirty years following 1946, the United States used military means in one way or another to intervene in the affairs of other countries about twice as often as did the Soviet Union.¹⁰

The Soviet Union’s aim was to export its ideology by planting and fostering Communist governments in more and more countries, and America’s was to plant and foster democratic ones. President Reagan thought that we should worry about the Soviet Union’s establishing a “military beachhead” in Nicaragua “inside our defense perimeters,” thus threatening the safe passage of our ships through the Caribbean.¹¹ Throwing the cloak of national security over our interventions in Central America hardly concealed our rage to rule or to dictate to others how to govern their countries. Vice President George Bush, in February of 1985, set forth what we expected of Nicaragua and the signs of progress we looked for. He mentioned these: “That the Sandinistas bring the Democratic leaders back into the political process; that they hold honest, free and fair elections; that they stop beating up on the church, the unions and the business community and stop censoring the press; that they sever control of the army from the Sandinista party; and that they remove that most insidious form of totalitarian control, the neighborhood spy system called the ‘SDC (Sandinista Defense Committee)’.”¹² According to a senior official, the Reagan administration “debated whether we had the right to

9. Arthur Krock, *Memoirs* (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1968), appendix A, p. 480.

10. Barry Blechman and Stephen S. Kaplan, *Force Without War: U.S. Armed Forces as a Political Instrument* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings, 1978).

11. “Excerpts from Reagan’s Speech on Aid for Nicaragua Rebels,” *New York Times*, June 25, 1986, p. A12.

12. “Excerpts from Remarks by Vice President George Bush,” Press Release, Austin, Texas, February 28, 1985.

dictate the form of another country's government. The bottom line was yes, that some rights are more fundamental than the right of nations to nonintervention, like the rights of individual people. . . . We don't have the right to subvert a democratic government but we do have the right against an undemocratic one."¹³ The difference between the United States and the Soviet Union has been less in their behaviors than in their ideologies. Each sought to make other countries over in its own image. Stalin said of World War II: "This war is not as in the past. Whoever occupies a territory also imposes on it his own social system. Everyone imposes his own system as far as his army can reach. It cannot be otherwise."¹⁴ The effort to impose one's own social system continued into the Cold War, with the aim to be accomplished by peaceful means if possible.

Rooted in the postwar structure of international politics, the Cold War for more than four decades stubbornly refused to evolve into a warm peace. The Cold War could not end until the structure that sustained it began to erode. Bipolarity worked against détente in the 1970s. The changing structure of international politics worked for détente in the 1980s.

Structural change begins in a system's unit, and then unit-level and structural causes interact. We know from structural theory that states strive to maintain their positions in the system. Thus, in their twilight years great powers try to arrest or reverse their decline. We need to look only at the twentieth century for examples. In 1914, Austria-Hungary preferred to fight an unpromising war rather than risk the internal disintegration that a greater Serbia would threaten. Britain and France continued to act as though they were great powers, and struggled to bear the expense of doing so, well into the 1950s.¹⁵ At the end of that decade, when many Americans thought that we were losing ground to the Soviet Union, John F. Kennedy appealed to the nation with the slogan, "Let's get the country moving again." And Defense Secretary Dick Cheney resisted a 50 percent cut in defense spending spread throughout the 1990s with the argument that this "would give us the

13. Quoted in Robert W. Tucker, *Intervention and the Reagan Doctrine* (New York: Council on Religion and International Affairs, 1985), p. 5.

14. Quoted in Josef Joffe, "After Bipolarity: Eastern and Western Europe: Between Two Ages," in *The Strategic Implications of Change in the Soviet Union*, Adelphi Paper No. 247 (London: IISS, Winter 1989/90), p. 71.

15. *The Economist* apparently believes that Britain and France were great powers well into the 1950s, claiming that the Suez Crisis of 1956 "helped destroy Britain and France as great powers"; June 16, 1990, p. 101.

defense budget for a second-class power, the budget of an America in decline."¹⁶

The political and economic reconstruction attempted by the Soviet Union followed in part from external causes. Gorbachev's expressed wish to see the Soviet Union "enter the new millennium as a great and flourishing state" suggests this.¹⁷ Brezhnev's successors, notably Andropov and Gorbachev, realized that the Soviet Union could no longer support a first-rate military establishment on the basis of a third-rate economy. Economic reorganization, and the reduction of imperial burdens, became an externally imposed necessity, which in turn required internal reforms. For a combination of internal and external reasons, Soviet leaders tried to reverse their country's precipitous fall in international standing but did not succeed.

The Rise and Fall of Great Powers

In the fairly near future, say ten to twenty years, three political units may rise to great-power rank: Germany or a West European state, Japan, and China. In a shorter time, the Soviet Union fell from the ranks, making the structure of international politics hard to define in the present and difficult to discern in the future. This section asks how the structure of international politics is likely to change.

The Soviet Union had, and Russia continues to have, impressive military capabilities. But great powers do not gain and retain their rank by excelling in one way or another. Their rank depends on how they score on a combination of the following items: size of population and territory, resource endowment, economic capability, military strength, political stability and competence. The Soviet Union, like Tsarist Russia before it, was a lopsided great power, compensating for economic weakness with political discipline, military strength, and a rich territorial endowment. Nevertheless, great-power status cannot be maintained without a certain economic capability. In a conventional world, one would simply say that the years during which Russia with its many weaknesses will count as a great power are numbered, and that the numbers are pretty small ones. Although Russia has more than

16. Michael R. Gordon, "Cheney Calls 50% Military Cut a Risk to Superpower Status," *New York Times*, March 17, 1990, p. 4.

17. "Succession in Moscow: First Hours in Power, Gorbachev in His Own Words," *New York Times*, March 12, 1985, p. A16.

enough military capability, technology advances rapidly, and Russia cannot keep pace. In a nuclear world, however, the connection between a country's economic and technological capability, on the one hand, and its military capability, on the other, is loosened.

With conventional weapons, rapid technological change intensifies competition and makes estimating the military strengths of different countries difficult. In 1906, for example, the British *Dreadnought*, with the greater range and firepower of its guns, made older battleships obsolete. With nuclear weapons, however, short of a breakthrough that would give the United States either a first-strike capability or an effective defense, Russia need not keep pace militarily with American technology. As Bernard Brodie put it: "Weapons that do not have to fight their like do not become useless because of the advent of newer and superior types."¹⁸ Since America's nuclear weapons are not able to fight Russia's, the strategies of the two countries are decoupled. Each country can safely follow a deterrent strategy no matter what the other may do.¹⁹ In contrast, the development of either a first-strike capability or an effective strategic defense would carry the world back to conventional times: weapons would once again be pitted against weapons. All of the parties to the strategic competition would again become concerned over, or obsessed with, the balance of advantage between offensive and defensive forces. Worry about the possibly uneven development of weapons would drive competition to high intensity. A country with a decisive but possibly fleeting offensive advantage would be tempted to strike before another country could find ways of safeguarding its forces. A country with an effective defense, fearing that an adversary might find ways to overcome it, would be tempted to launch a preventive blow. Fortunately, as far ahead as the imagination can reach, no offensive or defensive breakthrough that would negate deterrent forces is in sight.

So long as a country can retaliate after being struck, or appears to be able to do so, its nuclear forces cannot be made obsolete by an adversary's technological advances. With deterrence dominant, a second-strike force need only be a small one, and it is easy to say how large the small force needs to be: large enough to sustain a first strike without losing the ability

18. Bernard Brodie, *War and Politics* (New York: Macmillan, 1973), p. 321.

19. Some Soviet commentators understand this. See, especially, Andrei Kokoshin, "The Future of NATO and the Warsaw Pact Strategy: Paper II," in *The Strategic Implications of Change in the Soviet Union*, Adelphi Paper No. 247 (London: IISS, Winter 1989/90), pp. 60-65.

to retaliate with some tens of warheads. Both the United States and the Soviet Union have long had warheads and delivery systems that far exceed the requirement of deterrence. Moreover, deterrent strategies make large conventional forces irrelevant. They need only be big enough to require an adversary to attack on a scale that reveals the extent of its aggressive intentions. A trip-wire force is the only conventional component that a deterrent nuclear strategy requires.²⁰

Nuclear weaponry favors status-quo countries by enabling them to concentrate attention on their economies rather than on their military forces. This is good news for a country in straitened circumstances. By relying on deterrence, Russia can concentrate on turning resources in the military sector of her economy—a favored and presumably rather efficient one—to civilian uses.

Nuclear weaponry widens the range within which national economic capabilities may vary before the boundary between the great and the major powers is reached. Nuclear weapons alone do not make states into great powers. Britain and France did not become great powers when they became nuclear ones. Russia will not remain a great power unless it is able to use its resources effectively in the long run. While it is trying to do so, its large population, vast resources, and geographic presence in Europe and Asia compensate for its many weaknesses. Russia's vulnerabilities are low, as is its need for Third-World intervention forces. The ability of Russia to play a military role beyond its borders is low, yet nuclear weapons ensure that no state can challenge it. Short of disintegration, Russia will remain a great power—indeed a great defensive power, as the Russian and Soviet states were through most of their history.

How does the weakened condition of Russia affect the structure of international politics? The answer is that bipolarity endures, but in an altered state. Bipolarity continues because militarily Russia can take care of itself and because no other great powers have yet emerged. Some of the implications of bipolarity, however, have changed. Throughout the Cold War, the United States and the Soviet Union held each other in check. With the waning of Soviet power, the United States is no longer held in check by any other country or combination of countries. According to Herbert Butterfield, François Fénélon, a French theologian and political counselor who died in

20. For fuller treatment of this and other strategic questions, see Waltz, "Nuclear Myths and Political Realities," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 84, No. 3 (September 1990).

1715, was the first person to understand balance of power as a recurring phenomenon rather than as a particular and ephemeral condition. He believed that a country wielding overwhelming power could not for long be expected to behave with moderation.²¹ Balance-of-power theory leads one to predict that other countries, alone or in concert, will try to bring American power into balance. What are the possibilities?

Because nuclear weapons alter the relation between economic capability and military power, a country with well less than half of the economic capability of the leading producer can easily compete militarily if it adopts a status-quo policy and a deterrent strategy. Conversely, the leading country cannot use its economic superiority to establish military dominance, or to gain strategic advantage, over its great-power rivals.

Can one then say that military force has lost its usefulness or simply become irrelevant? Hardly. Nuclear weapons do, however, narrow the purposes for which strategic power can be used. No longer is it useful for taking others' territory or for defending one's own. Nuclear weapons bend strategic forces to one end: deterring attacks on a country's vital interests. Partly because strategic weapons serve that end and no other, peace has held at the center of international politics through five postwar decades, while wars have often raged at the periphery. Nuclear weapons have at once secured the vital interests of states possessing them and upheld the international order.

Nuclear countries can neither gain nor lose much in military conflicts with one another. Winning big, because it risks nuclear retaliation, becomes too dangerous to contemplate. George Ball has labelled the retaliatory threat a "cosmic bluff,"²² but who will call it? Nothing that might be gained by force is worth risking the destruction of one's cities even if the attacker somehow knew that the attacked would be unlikely to retaliate. Nuclear weaponry solves the credibility problem; put differently, nuclear weapons create their own credibility. The mere possibility of nuclear use causes extreme caution all around. Logic says that once the deterrent threat has failed, carrying it

21. Herbert Butterfield, "The Balance of Power," in Butterfield and Martin Wight, eds., *Diplomatic Investigations* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1966), p. 140. Fénelon may have been first, but the idea was in the air. See Daniel Defoe, *A True Collection of the Writings of the Author of the True Born Englishman, Corrected by himself* (London, printed and to be sold by most booksellers in London, Westminster, 1703), p. 356.

22. Quoted by David Garnham, "Extending Deterrence with German Nuclear Weapons," *International Security*, Vol. 10, No. 1 (Summer 1985), p. 97.

out at the risk of one's own destruction is irrational. But logic proves unpersuasive because a would-be attacker cannot be sure that logic will hold.

Nuclear weapons produced an underlying stillness at the center of international politics that made the sometimes frenzied military preparations of the United States and the Soviet Union pointless, and efforts to devise scenarios for the use of their nuclear weapons bizarre. Representative Helen Delich Bentley remarked in the fall of 1989 that, "after having spent more than \$1 trillion for defense in the last 10 years, we find ourselves not stronger but greatly weakened."²³ She was right. Our most recent military buildup, beginning with the Carter administration and running through most of Reagan's, was worse than irrelevant because it burned up resources that could have safely been put to constructive use.

If the leaders of a country understand the implications of nuclear weapons, they will see that with them they can enjoy a secure peace at reasonable cost. Because nuclear weapons widen the range of economic capabilities within which great powers and would-be great powers can effectively compete, the door to the great-power club will swing open if the European Community (EC), Germany, China, or Japan knock on it.²⁴ Whether or not they do so is partly a matter of decision: the decision by Japan and Germany to equip themselves as great powers or, in the case of Western Europe, the collective decision to become a single state. But in political as in other realms, choices are seldom entirely free. Late in the nineteenth century, the United States faced such a decision. Economically it qualified as a great power; militarily it chose not to become one. Some observers thought that the Spanish-American War marked America's coming of age as a great power. But no state lacking the military ability to compete with other great powers has ever been ranked among them. America's ability to do so remained latent. We entered World War I belatedly, and then we depended heavily on the matériel of our allies. In his memoirs, Lloyd George remarked that in the great battles of April to June 1918, American aviators flew French planes. He added that the "light and medium artillery used up to the end of the War by the American Army was supplied by the French. The heaviest artillery was supplied by the British. No field guns of American pattern or manufac-

23. Helen Delich Bentley, letter to the *New York Times*, November 20, 1989, p. A18.

24. Earlier I said the opposite, arguing that for would-be great powers the military barriers to entry were high. As nuclear technology became widely available, and warheads smaller and thus easier to deliver, second-strike forces came within the reach of many states. See Waltz, "The Stability of a Bipolar World," pp. 895–896.

ture fired a shot in the War. The same thing applies to tanks."²⁵ At the end of World War II, the United States dismantled its military machine with impressive—or alarming—rapidity, which seemed to portend a retreat from international affairs. Quickly, however, the world's woes pressed upon us, and our leaders saw that without our constructive efforts the world would not become one in which we could safely and comfortably live.

Some countries may strive to become great powers; others may wish to avoid doing so. The choice, however, is a constrained one. Because of the extent of their interests, larger units existing in a contentious arena tend to take on system-wide tasks. As the largest powers in the system, the United States and the Soviet Union found that they had global tasks to perform and global interests to mind.

In discussing the likely emergence of new great powers, I concentrate on Japan as being by population and product the next in line. When Japan surrendered on August 15, 1945, Homer Bigart of the *New York Herald Tribune* wrote that, "Japan, paying for her desperate throw of the dice at Pearl Harbor, passed from the ranks of the major powers at 9:05 a.m. today."²⁶ In 1957, when Carter, Herz, and Ranney published the third edition of their *Major Foreign Powers*,²⁷ Japan was not among them. In 1964, projecting national economic growth rates to see what countries might become great powers by the end of the century, I failed even to consider Japan. Yet now Japan is ready to receive the mantle if only it will reach for it.

Much in Japan's institutions and behavior supports the proposition that it will once again take its place among the great powers. In most of the century since winning its Chinese War of 1894–95, Japan has pressed for preeminence in Asia, if not beyond. From the 1970s onward, Japan's productivity and technology have extended its influence worldwide. Mercantilist policies enhance the role of the state, and Japan's policies have certainly been mercantilist. Miyohei Shinohara, former head of the economics section of the Japanese Economic Planning Agency, has succinctly explained Japan's policy:

The problem of classical thinking undeniably lies in the fact that it is essentially "static" and does not take into account the possibility of a dynamic change in the comparative advantage or disadvantage of industries over a

25. David Lloyd George, *War Memoirs, 1917–1918* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1936), pp. 452–453.

26. Quoted by Richard Severa, "Homer Bigart, Acclaimed Reporter, Dies," in *New York Times*, April 17, 1991, p. C23.

27. Gwendolyn M. Carter, John H. Herz, John C. Ranney, *Major Foreign Powers* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1957).

coming 10- or 20-year period. To take the place of such a traditional theory, a new policy concept needs to be developed to deal with the possibility of intertemporal dynamic development.²⁸

The concept fits Japan's policy, but is not a new one. Friedrich List argued in the middle of the nineteenth century that a state's trade policy should vary with its stage of economic development. He drew sharp distinctions between exchange value and productive power, between individual and national interests, and between cosmopolitan and national principles. Free trade serves world interests by maximizing exchange value, but whether free trade serves a nation's interest depends on its situation.²⁹ States with primitive economies should trade their primary products freely and use foreign earnings to begin to industrialize. At that stage, protective tariffs work against the development of manufactures. A state at an intermediate level of development should protect only those infant industries that have a fair chance of achieving a comparative advantage. Such a state should aim not to maximize "value" but to develop its "productive power." Exposed to competition from states that are more advanced economically, a state's industries may die in infancy. Where potential productive power exists, a state should use tariffs to promote its development. List likens nations who slavishly follow "the School's" free-trade theory to "the patient who followed a printed prescription and died of a misprint."³⁰ To clinch the point that cheap imports work against the development of a nation's industries, he observed that "the worst of all things" would be for American farmers to be given their manufactured goods by England.³¹ Exchange value would be maximized at the

28. Miyoei Shinohara, *Industrial Growth, Trade, and Dynamic Patterns in the Japanese Economy* (Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 1982), p. 24. Shinohara says that List was the first to develop "the theory of infant industry protection," but thinks that he would be surprised by Japan's thorough application of it. List, however, did not invent the theory. Instead, he applied it to developing countries and used it to attack economists' belief that free trade serves the interests of all nations. The belief that Japan invented what is sometimes called "strategic trade theory" is widespread. See Bruce R. Scott, "National Strategies: Key to International Competition," in Scott and George C. Lodge, eds., *U.S. Competitiveness in the World Economy* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 1985), pp. 95, 138. To give another example, Paul R. Krugman describes as a "new trade theory" what in fact was anticipated by List in every particular. "Introduction: New Thinking about Trade Policy," in Krugman, ed., *Strategic Trade Policy and the New International Economics* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1986).

29. Frederick List, *National System of Political Economy*, trans. G.A. Matile (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1856), pp. 74, 79, 244, 253.

30. Margaret Hirst, *Life of Friedrich List And Selections from his Writings, 1909* (New York: Augustus M. Kelley, 1965), p. 289. "The School" refers to Adam Smith, David Ricardo, and their followers.

31. *Ibid.*, p. 51n.

expense of America's future productive power.³² At the final stage of development, attained in List's day only by England, free trade is again the sensible policy. "For such a country," he wrote, "the cosmopolitan and the national principle are one and the same thing."³³ With rapid technological change, one must wonder whether the final stage ever arrives. List, however, appeared to believe, as Smith did earlier and Keynes did later, that in a distant day nations would have accumulated all of the riches to which their resources entitled them.³⁴

The United States acquiesced in Japan's protectionist policies when Japan was in List's intermediate stage of development, but objected more and more strenuously as its economy became more fully developed. Some Japanese and American voices have joined in urging Japan to loosen its economic policies, although most of the Japanese voices have been muted. A policy report of The Japan Forum on International Relations suggested that the government modify its policies to overcome its mercantilist reputation, to divorce its overseas development assistance from commercial interests that appear self-serving, and to drop "infant industry policies."³⁵ But will Japan do so? Major changes of policy would be required. Japan's imports of products that it manufactures have, according to Clyde Prestowitz, been "nearly nil." According to Lester Thurow, rather than allowing foreign companies to establish a Japanese market for products of superior technology, the Japanese have welcomed such products "only when they have lost the technological edge."³⁶

Japan might take effective steps toward opening her economy, but I doubt it. Shinohara accepts that as "a new major economic power" Japan has an obligation to work "for stable growth of the world economy." But doing so,

32. Cf. Shinohara: "The 'comparative technical progress criterion' pays more attention to the possibility of placing a particular industry in a more advantageous position in the future. . . . The term could be called the 'dynamized comparative cost doctrine'." Shinohara, *Industrial Growth*, p. 25. Cf. also Scott, who wrote that an interdependent world calls for "emphasis on baking relative to distributing the pie"; Scott, "National Strategies," p. 137.

33. List, *National System*, p. 79.

34. On Smith and Keynes, see Robert Heilbroner, "Reflections, Economic Predictions," *New Yorker*, July 8, 1991, pp. 70-77.

35. *Japan Forum on International Relations*, "Japan, the United States and Global Responsibilities," April, 1990, pp. 18-24.

36. Clyde V. Prestowitz, Jr., *Trading Places: How We Allowed Japan to Take the Lead* (New York: Basic Books, 1988), p. 76; Lester C. Thurow, "Global Trade: The Secret of Success" (review of Michael E. Porter's *The Competitive Advantage of Nations*), *New York Times*, Book Review Section, May 27, 1990, p. 7.

he adds, does not require Japan to drop policies designed "to nourish infant industries over a span of 5–10 years." A "degree of protection may be justified." In a dynamic world, "competition tends to become brutal," and theories "framed in a surrealistic and hypothetical world when Adam Smith and David Ricardo were predominant are no longer applicable."³⁷ Whether culturally ingrained or rooted in the structure of government, Japan's economic policy is not likely to take a new direction. Why should more than marginal concessions be made, when the policies Japan has followed have been so successful? If a country has followed one road to success, why should it turn onto another one? The United States may accuse Japan of unfair trade practices, or the United States may instead, as Bruce Scott suggests, recognize that Japan has a strategy of "creating advantages rather than accepting the status quo." Simply put, its "approach may be more competitive than ours."³⁸

The likelier course for Japan to follow is to extend its economic policies regionally. Thus the policy announced by Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI) Minister Tamura in Bangkok in January of 1987 called for integrating other Asian nations, especially the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), more closely with Japan's economy. The five-year economic plan, released by the Economic Planning Agency in May of 1988, calls, in the words of David Arase, "for the construction of an international division of labor through more imports, more FDI, and more ODA (Foreign Direct Investment and Official Development Assistance)." Japan now uses ODA, not simply to develop new sources of supply and to open new markets, but more broadly "to integrate the Asian-Pacific region under Japanese leadership." The "flying geese" pattern of development and the notion of an "Asian Brain" that manipulates "capital, technology, and trade to construct a regional division of labor tightly coordinated from Tokyo," are made explicit in a major Economic Planning Agency policy study.³⁹

Japan's successful management of its economy is being followed by the building of a regional economic bastion. Quite a few Japanese talk and write as though this represents their future. Other leading states have taken notice. The United States made a defensive gesture of despair by putting the "Super-301" retaliation trade-sanction clause in the 1988 Omnibus Trade and Com-

37. Shinohara, *Industrial Growth*, pp. 113, 118–119.

38. Scott, "National Strategies," p. 100; cf. p. 131.

39. David Arase, "U.S. and ASEAN Perceptions of Japan's Role in the Asian-Pacific Region," in Harry H. Kendall and Clara Joewono, eds., *ASEAN, Japan, and the United States* (Berkeley: Institute of East Asian Studies, 1990), pp. 270–275.

petitive Act to be used as a lever for the opening of Japan's economy more widely to America's—and of course to others'—exports, and the EC strove to achieve economic unity in 1992 partly out of fear that a disunited Europe could not stand up to Japanese and American competition. Economic competition is often as keen as military competition, and since nuclear weapons limit the use of force among great powers at the strategic level, we may expect economic and technological competition among them to become more intense. Thus, as Gorbachev reminded the Central Committee in May of 1986, the Soviet Union is "surrounded not by invincible armies but by superior economies."⁴⁰

One may wonder, however, why less concern for military security should be followed by more concern for the ability of one's country to compete economically. Should one not expect reduced concern for security to go hand-in-hand with reduced concern for one's competitive position? Among many negative answers that can be given to this question, I emphasize four strong ones.

1. Despite changes that constantly take place in the relations of nations, the basic structure of international politics continues to be anarchic. Each state fends for itself with or without the cooperation of others. The leaders of states and their followers are concerned with their standings, that is, with their positions *vis-à-vis* one another. Michael Mastanduno has related the results of Robert Reich's asking various groups whether they would prefer that over the next decade Japan's economy grow by 75 percent and America's by 25 percent, or that Japan's economy grow by 10.3 percent and America's by 10 percent. Of six different audiences, only the one made up of economists preferred the former, and they did so unanimously.⁴¹ (Clearly, Friedrich List and Bruce Scott were not present.)

2. One may wonder why, with worries over military security reduced, and with the disappearance of the Soviet Union, concern for relative gains should take precedence over concern for absolute ones. With a 75 percent and 25 percent increase in production respectively, Japan and the United States would both be markedly better off at the end of a decade. With a 10.3 percent and 10 percent gain, both countries would be just about stagnant. On the

40. Quoted by Dusko Doder and Louise Branson, *Gorbachev: Heretic in the Kremlin* (New York: Viking, 1990), p. 207.

41. Michael Mastanduno, "Do Relative Gains Matter? America's Response to Japanese Industrial Policy," *International Security*, Vol. 16, No. 1 (Summer 1991), pp. 73-74.

face of it, the preference of five out of six groups for the latter condition appears to be irrational. But the "face" is merely a mask disguising international-political reality. Friedrich Engels's understanding that economic competition is ultimately more important than military competition is reflected in his remark that industrial espionage was in his day a more serious business, and a business more fiercely conducted, than military espionage. Technical and economic advances accumulate. One technological breakthrough may lead to others. Economic growth rates compound. By projecting adjusted national growth rates of gross domestic product (GDP) from the period 1950 to 1980 into the year 2010 using 1975 international dollars, William Baumol and his associates arrived at an expected GDP per capita of \$19,000 for the United States and of \$31,000 for Japan. That disparity will result if the United States grows at 1.90 percent yearly and Japan at 4.09 percent. Yet if the United States should raise its average annual rate from 1.90 to 3.05 percent, the two countries would be tied for first place among the sixteen countries for which calculations are shown.⁴²

3. Prosperity and military power, although connected, cannot be equated. Yet with the use of military force for consequential advantage negated at least among nuclear powers, the more productive and the more technologically advanced countries have more ways of influencing international outcomes than do the laggards. America's use of economic means to promote its security and other interests throughout the past five decades is sufficient illustration. The reduction of military worries will focus the minds of national leaders on their technological and economic successes and failures.

4. Uncertainty is a synonym for life, and nowhere is uncertainty greater than in international politics. Anarchy places a premium on foresight. If one cannot know what is coming, developing a greater resource base for future use takes precedence over present prosperity. Reflecting Reich's informal finding, a *Newsweek*/Gallup poll of September 1989 showed that 52 percent of Americans thought the economic power of Japan was a greater threat to the United States than the military power of the Soviet Union.⁴³ Whatever the limitations on the national use of force, the international political realm continues to be an intensely competitive one. Concern over relative gains continues to be the natural preoccupation of states.⁴⁴ If Japan's methods

42. William J. Baumol, Sue Anne Batey Blackman, and Edward N. Wolff, *Productivity and American Leadership: The Long View* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1989), Table 12.3, p. 259.

43. "The Perceived Threat: A Newsweek Poll," *Newsweek*, October 9, 1989, p. 64.

44. For incisive analysis of the relative-gains problem, see Joseph M. Grieco, "Understanding

continue to prove successful, other countries will emulate or counter them. Many have argued that, as Richard Barnet has put it, with the "globalization" of the economy, states have "lost the power to manage stable economies within their frontiers."⁴⁵ Japan certainly has not and is not likely to do so. To manage "globalization," leading states are likely to strengthen their economic influence over states on which they depend or to which they are closely connected. Since incentives to compete are strong, the likely outcome is a set of great powers forming their own regional bases in Asia, Europe, and America, with Russia as a military power on the economic fringe.⁴⁶ Japan will lead the east Asian bloc, now forming; questions about China's and northeast Asia's roles are as yet unresolved. Western Europe, including the EC, trades increasingly among the countries that the EC comprises, while its global imports and exports are gradually declining.⁴⁷ And if the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) succeeds, the United States will be at the center of the world's largest economic bloc with presently about six trillion dollars in annual trade. Countries and regions that lag in the race will become more and more dependent on others.

National Preferences and International Pressures

Economically, Japan's power has grown and spread remarkably. But does that indicate a desire to play the role of a great power? Japan's concerted regional activity, its seeking and gaining prominence in such bodies as the IMF and the World Bank, and its obvious pride in economic and technological achievements all indicate that it does. Confidence in economic ability and technical skill leads a country to aspire to a larger political role. "Both Britain

the Problem of International Cooperation: The Limits of International or Neoliberal Institutionalism and the Future of Realist Theory," in David Baldwin, ed., *Neorealism and Neoliberalism: The Contemporary Debate* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993); and Robert Powell, "Absolute and Relative Gains in International Relations Theory," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 85, No. 4 (December 1991) pp. 1303-1320.

45. Richard J. Barnet, "Reflections, Defining the Moment," *New Yorker*, July 16, 1990, p. 56.

46. Krugman among others has argued that the postwar free-trade system is giving way to regional trading blocs. This outcome, he believes, "is as good as we are going to get" and has the advantage that regional pacts "can exclude Japan." Louis Uchitelle, "Bloc Seen as Imperiling Free Trade," *New York Times*, August 26, 1991, p. D1. Cf. Steve Weber and John Zysman, "The Risk That Mercantilism Will Define the New Security System," in Wayne Sandholtz, et al., *The Highest Stakes* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 167-196.

47. Wayne Sandholtz and John Zysman, "1992: Recasting the European Bargain," *World Politics*, Vol. 42, No. 1 (October 1989), pp. 122-123.

and the United States," Yojiro Eguchi of the Nomura Research Institute remarked in 1974, "created and ran international systems with themselves at the top when they were leading creditors." Noting that in ten years Japan's external assets would far exceed America's at their peak, he concluded that "now it is Japan's turn to come up with an international system suited to itself."⁴⁸ No country has a better claim than Japan to being a larger partner in managing the world's economy.

Like Japan, Germany has recently shown an inclination to play a more prominent role in the world. President Bush described the Houston meeting of heads of government held in July of 1990 as the first economic summit conference of the "post-postwar era." Chancellor Kohl emerged at the summit as a dominant leader, and Prime Minister Thatcher noted that, "there are three regional groups at this summit, one based on the dollar, one on the yen, one on the Deutschmark."⁴⁹ The terms of German unification, which were to have been worked out by the four victors of World War II together with the two Germanies, were instead negotiated by Kohl and Gorbachev at a meeting in the Caucasus. West Germany is the leading state in Europe in both economic and conventional military power. East Germany added a gross domestic product only one sixth as large as West Germany's, but this is far short of its potential. For some years the eastern part of Germany will be a drain on its economy. For Germany's place in the world, how much does that matter? We often underestimate the economic disparities among great powers now, as we did in prenuclear days. To cite a striking example, Japan and the United States in 1940 had GNPs of \$9 billion and \$100 billion, respectively, and per capita incomes of \$126 and \$754.⁵⁰ In the prenuclear era, a poor country aspiring to a place among the great ones had to discipline its people and harness its resources to its military aims. In the nuclear era, countries with smaller economic bases can more easily achieve great-power status. Although a united Germany's GDP is smaller than Japan's, in one

48. Quoted by Richard Rosecrance and Jennifer Taw, "Japan and the Theory of International Leadership," *World Politics*, Vol. 42, No. 2 (January 1990), p. 207.

49. R.W. Apple, Jr., "A New Balance of Power," *New York Times*, July 12, 1990, p. A1.

50. Figures expressed in current prices. U.S. data from *Historical Statistics of the United States: Colonial Times to 1970*, Part 1 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, 1975), p. 224. Japanese data derived from B.R. Mitchell, *International Historical Statistics: Africa and Asia* (New York: New York University Press, 1982), p. 732; *National Income and Statistics of Various Countries 1938-1947* (Lake Success, N.Y.: Statistical Office of the United Nations, 1948), Appendix III, pp. 246-247; Thelma Liesner, *Economic Statistics 1900-1983: United Kingdom, United States of America, France, Germany, Italy, Japan* (New York: Facts on File, 1985), p. 117.

sense Germany is already more of an economic presence globally than Japan, and even rivals the United States. In four of the seven years from 1986 through 1992, Germany's exports were larger than America's, and they were always larger than Japan's. (See Table 1.) Moreover, Germany is in the best position to play a leading role in eastern Europe, Ukraine, and Russia. *Newsweek* quoted a top adviser to Chancellor Kohl as saying, "We want to lead. Perhaps in time the United States will take care of places like Central America, and we will handle eastern Europe."⁵¹ Ironically, Japan in Asia and Germany in eastern Europe are likely in the next century to replay roles in some ways similar to those they played earlier.

The effect of national economic capability varies over the centuries. Earlier, enough national productivity to sustain a large military force, however much the people had to stint themselves, could make a state a great power. Now, without a considerable economic capability no state can hope to sustain a world role, as the fate of the Soviet Union has shown. In the mercantilist era, international economics was national politics. During the nineteenth century, the link was weakened, but no longer. Oligopolistic firms care about relative gains and market shares. Similarly, states in today's international politics are not merely trying to maximize value in the present but also to secure their future positions. As I have said before, the distinction between high and low politics, once popular among international political economists, is misplaced. In self-help systems, how one has to help oneself varies as circumstances change.

Table 1. Exports In Billions of U.S. Dollars.

	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992
U.S.	227.16	254.12	322.43	363.81	393.59	421.73	447.47
Germany	243.33	294.37	323.32	341.23	410.10	402.84	422.27
Japan	210.76	231.29	264.86	273.93	287.58	314.79	340.00

SOURCE: These data are based on 1975 (Japan), 1980 (Germany), and 1987 (U.S.) prices as indexed by the IMF, *International Financial Statistics*, Vol. XLV, No. 1 (Washington, D.C.: International Monetary Fund, January 1992), p. 72; and Vol. XLVI, No. 4 (April 1993), p. 58.

51. "The New Superpower," *Newsweek*, February 26, 1970, p. 17.

The increased international activity of Japan and Germany reflects the changing structure of international politics. The increase of a country's economic capabilities to the great-power level places it at the center of regional and global affairs. It widens the range of a state's interests and increases their importance. The high volume of a country's external business thrusts it ever more deeply into world affairs. In a self-help system, the possession of most but not all of the capabilities of a great power leaves a state dependent on others and vulnerable to those who have the instruments that the lesser state lacks. Even though one may believe that fears of nuclear blackmail are misplaced, will Japan and Germany be immune to them? In March of 1988, Prime Minister Takeshita called for a defensive capability matching Japan's economic power.⁵² Whether or not he intended to, he was saying that Japan should present itself in great-power panoply before the nations of the world. A great power's panoply includes nuclear weapons.

Countries have always competed for wealth and security, and the competition has often led to conflict. Why should the future be different from the past? Given the expectation of conflict, and the necessity of taking care of one's interests, one may wonder how a state with the economic capability of a great power can refrain from arming itself with the weapons that have served so well as the great deterrent.

Since the 1950s, West European countries have feared that the American deterrent would not cover their territories. Since the 1970s, Japan has at times expressed similar worries. The increase of Soviet Far Eastern Forces in the late 1970s led Japan to reexamine its view of the Soviet threat. It is made uneasy now by the near-doubling of China's military budget between 1988 and 1993. Its three-million strong army, undergoing modernization, and the growth of its sea and air power-projection capabilities produce apprehension in all of China's neighbors and add to the sense of instability in a region where issues of sovereignty and territorial disputes abound. The Korean peninsula has more military forces per square kilometer than any other portion of the globe. Taiwan is an unending source of tension. Disputes exist between Japan and Russia over the Kurile Islands, and between Japan and China over the Senkaku Islands. China and Britain have had trouble agreeing on the future of Hong Kong. Cambodia is a troublesome problem for both Vietnam and China. Half a dozen countries lay claim to all or some of the

52. Arase, "U.S. and ASEAN Perceptions of Japan's Role in the Asian-Pacific Region."

Spratly Islands, strategically located and supposedly rich in oil. The presence of China's ample nuclear forces and the presumed development of North Korea's, combined with the drawdown of American military forces, can hardly be ignored by Japan, the less so since economic conflicts with the United States cast doubt on the reliability of American military guarantees. Reminders of Japan's dependence and vulnerability multiply in large and small ways. In February of 1992, Prime Minister Miyazawa derided America's labor force for its alleged lack of a "work ethic," even though productivity per man-hour is higher in America than it is in Japan. This aroused Senator Ernest F. Hollings, who responded by fliply referring to the atomic bomb as, "Made in America by lazy and illiterate Americans, and tested in Japan."⁵³ His remark made more Japanese wonder whether they indeed may require a nuclear military capability of their own. Instances in which Japan feels dependent and vulnerable will increase in number. For example, as rumors about North Korea's developing nuclear capabilities gained credence, Japan became acutely aware of its lack of observation satellites. Uncomfortable dependencies and perceived vulnerabilities will lead Japan to acquire greater military capabilities, even though many Japanese may prefer not to.

In recent years, the desire of Japan's leaders to play a militarily more assertive role has become apparent, a natural response to Japan's enhanced economic standing. Again the comparison with America at the turn of the previous century is striking, when presidents wanted to develop America's military forces (and also to annex more countries). Congress served as a brake;⁵⁴ in Japan, public opinion now serves the same purpose. Yet the key question is not whether the Japanese people wish their country to become a great power. The key question is whether its people and its leaders will begin to feel that Japan needs the range of capabilities possessed by other countries in its region, and in the world, in order, as Andrew Hanami has put it, to cope defensively and preventively with present and possible future problems and threats.⁵⁵ The many American voices that have urged Japan to carry a larger share of her security burden, and the increasing tilt of American public

53. David E. Sanger, "Japan Premier Joins Critics of American's Work Habits," *New York Times*, February 4, 1992, p. A1; "Senator Jokes of Hiroshima Attack," *New York Times*, March 4, 1992, p. A12.

54. Fareed Zakaria, "The Rise of a Great Power: National Strength, State Structure, and American Foreign Policy, 1865-1908" (Harvard University, PhD dissertation, forthcoming November 1993), ch. 3.

55. Andrew Hanami, "Japan's Strategy in Europe," unpublished conference paper, October 1992, p. 2.

opinion against Japan, have led her leaders to wonder how far they can count on the United States for protection. In the emerging multipolar world, can Japan expect to continue to rent American military forces by paying about 60 percent of their cost, while relying on the American strategic deterrent? The great powers of the world must expect to take care of themselves.

Yoichi Funabashi has praised Japan for fulfilling its international responsibilities in non-military ways. In his view, Japan is a "global civilian power," taking its place in a world in which humane internationalism is replacing the heavily military politics of the Cold War.⁵⁶ One wonders. The United States put its security interests above its concern for economic competitiveness throughout the years of the Cold War. It no longer does so. As military worries fall, economic worries rise. Competition continues, and conflict turns increasingly on technological and economic issues. Conflict grows all the more easily out of economic competition because economic comparisons are easier to make than military ones. Militarily, one may wonder who is the stronger but, in a conventional world, will not find out until a war is fought. Economically, however, the consequences of price and quality differentials quickly become apparent. Decreased concern over security translates directly into increased concern over economic competitiveness because the United States is no longer so willing to subordinate the second concern to the first one.

For a country to choose not to become a great power is a structural anomaly. For that reason, the choice is a difficult one to sustain. Sooner or later, usually sooner, the international status of countries has risen in step with their material resources. Countries with great-power economies have become great powers, whether or not reluctantly. Japanese and German reasons for hesitating to take the final step into the great-power arena are obvious and need not be rehearsed. Yet when a country receives less attention and respect and gets its way less often than it feels it should, internal inhibitions about becoming a great power are likely to turn into public criticisms of the government for not taking its proper place in the world. Pride knows no nationality. How long can Japan and Germany live alongside other nuclear states while denying themselves similar capabilities? Conflicts and crises are certain to make them aware of the disadvantages of being without the military instruments that other powers command. Japanese and German nuclear

56. "Japan's Better Example," Editorial, *New York Times*, April 20, 1992, p. A16.

inhibitions arising from World War II will not last indefinitely; one might expect them to expire as generational memories fade. The probability of both countries' becoming nuclear powers in due course is all the higher because they can so easily do so. There is only one nuclear technology, and those who have harnessed the atom for peaceful purposes can quickly move into the nuclear military business. Allocating costs between nuclear and conventional armaments is difficult, the more so since some weapons systems have both conventional and nuclear uses. Everyone agrees, however, that nuclear weaponry accounts for the lesser part of a country's defense budget.

For Germany and Japan the problems of becoming a nuclear power are not economic or technological; they are political. In time, internal inhibitions can be overcome, but other countries will be made uneasy if Germany or Japan become nuclear powers. We have been through this before. Americans treated the prospect of China's becoming a nuclear power as almost unthinkable. Yet China and other countries have become nuclear powers without making the world a more dangerous one. Why should nuclear weapons in German and Japanese hands be especially worrisome? Nuclear weapons have encouraged cautious behavior by their possessors and deterred any of them from threatening others' vital interests. What reasons can there be for expecting Germany and Japan to behave differently? Some countries will fear the effects that may follow if Germany or Japan go nuclear, but who will try to stop them? A preventive strike, launched before any warheads can possibly have been made, would be required. Israel's destruction of Iraq's nuclear facility in June of 1981 set the precedent. Would anyone want to follow it by striking at Germany or Japan? The question answers itself.

Moreover, the internal and external problems of becoming a nuclear power are not as great as they once were. Israel for years denied the existence of its nuclear forces, but no longer bothers to lie about them. One may wonder whether Japan, now stockpiling plutonium, is already a nuclear power or is content to remain some months or moments from becoming one. Consistently since the mid-1950s, the Japanese government has defined all of the weapons of the Self-Defense Forces as conforming to constitutional requirements. Nuclear weapons purely for defense would be deemed constitutional.⁵⁷

57. Norman D. Levin, "Japan's Defense Policy: The Internal Debate," in Kendall and Joewono, *ASEAN, Japan, and the United States*.

Japan has to worry about China, and China has to worry about Japan, while both are enmeshed in the many problems of their region. Yet one often hears this question asked: Why should Japan want nuclear weapons? To argue that it does not misses the point. Any country in Japan's position is bound to become increasingly worried about its security, the more so because China is rapidly becoming a great power in every dimension: internal economy, external trade, and military capability.

From 1965 to 1980, China's annual economic growth rate averaged 6.8 percent and from 1980 to 1990, 9.5 percent. Western economists estimate that China can sustain growth rates between 6 and 9 percent without serious inflationary problems. An economy that grows at 8 percent yearly doubles in size every nine years. The World Bank estimated that China's GDP in 1990 was \$364,900 million.⁵⁸ Data on China are suspect, but to any periodic visitor the rapidity of its material progress is obvious. If it manages to maintain an effective government and a measure of economic freedom for its industrious people, within a decade it will be in the great-power ranks. Modernizing its three-million-strong army, buying ships and airplanes abroad and building its own as well, China will rapidly gain in power-projection capability. America, with the reduction of its forces, a Cold War-weary people, and numerous neglected problems at home, cannot hope to balance the growing economic and military might of a country of some 1.2 billion people while attending to other security interests. Unless Japan responds to the growing power of China, China will dominate its region and become increasingly influential beyond it.

Although most Japanese now shy away from the thought that their country will once again be a world power, most Chinese do not. Balance-of-power politics in one way or another characterize all self-help systems. Nations have to make choices. They can always choose not to develop counterweights to the dominant power, presently the United States, or not to balance against a rapidly growing one, such as China. India, Pakistan, perhaps North Korea, and China all wield nuclear military force capable of deterring others from

58. World Bank, *World Development Report, 1992: Development and the Environment* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 220, 222. Recalculating GDP according to the purchasing power of its currency at home, the IMF concluded that China's GDP in 1992 was \$1.66 trillion. The World Bank, applying purchasing-power parity differently, arrived at a figure of \$2.6 trillion, a bit higher than Japan's. But one must remember that China's GDP is shared by a huge population. Using the new method, the IMF estimates America's per-capita income at \$22,200, Japan's at \$19,100, Germany's at \$19,500, and China's at \$1,450. Steven Greenhouse, "New Tally of World's Economies Catapults China Into Third Place," *New York Times*, May 20, 1993, A1.

threatening their vital interests. Increasingly Japan will be pressed to follow suit and also to increase its conventional abilities to protect its interests abroad.

Two points about nuclear weapons remain. First, some commentators have asserted that Japan and Germany cannot become nuclear powers because they have too little land and too great a concentration of targets on it. Roger Hilsman has claimed that "no nation with territory that is less than continental size can now play the nuclear game." He argues that Japan, Germany, and England have "come to understand this."⁵⁹ But direct access to the oceans solves the problem of force vulnerability for all three of the countries mentioned, and target concentration does not matter since it is easy to make enough warheads to cover the targets one cares to, no matter how dispersed they may be. Territorially small countries are no worse off than big ones. Invulnerability of delivery systems, not dispersal of targets, is the crucial consideration.

Second, an argument of a different sort holds that by monopolizing certain technologies, Japan can manipulate the military balance to its advantage. It can substitute economic for military means. Diet member Shintaro Ishihara is one of the authors of *The Japan That Can Say No*, a work that became famous in the United States before it was published in Japan. He advanced the notion that if "Japan sold chips to the Soviet Union and stopped selling them to the United States, this would upset the entire military balance." But because nuclear weapons resist obsolescence, the act he imagines would not have the effects he foresees. Ishihara, nevertheless, asserts more broadly that "economic warfare is the basis for existence in the free world," and believes that in that kind of struggle there "is no hope for the U.S."⁶⁰ Countries naturally play their strong suits up and play their weak ones down. Both Stalin and Mao belittled nuclear weaponry when only the United States had it. Neither superiority in the chip business nor a broader technological lead will enable Japan to secure the sources of its oil. Nor will conventional forces, along with economic superiority, substitute for nuclear deterrence.

The case of Western Europe remains. Economically and militarily the possibilities are easily drawn. The achievement of unity would produce an instant great power, complete with second-strike nuclear forces. But politically the European case is complicated. Many believe that the EC has moved

59. Roger Hilsman, "How Dead Is It?" *New York Newsday*, March 18, 1990, p. 5.

60. Quoted in Flora Lewis, "Japan's Looking Glass," *New York Times*, November 8, 1989, p. A21.

so far toward unity that it cannot pull back, at least not very far back. That is probably true, but it is also probably true that it has moved so far toward unity that it can go no farther. The easier steps toward unity come earlier, the harder ones later, and the hardest of all at the end. Economic unity is not easily achieved, but the final decision to form a single, effective political entity that controls foreign and military policies as well as economic ones is the most difficult, made more so because the number of states the EC comprises has now grown to twelve, and an additional four have candidate status. Especially in Britain and France, many believe that their states will never finally surrender their sovereignty. Indeed, the Maastricht Treaty on European Union had trouble securing the assent of Denmark and France, and its economic and social provisions remain controversial in Britain. Common foreign and defense policies are to be concluded only by heavily qualified majorities, and the defense policies "of certain member states" are to be respected.⁶¹ The Community's external policy thereby becomes nearly a cipher. Germans may ultimately find that reunification and the renewed life of a great power are more invigorating than the struggles, complications, and compromises that come during, and would come after, the uniting of Western Europe.

Despite severe difficulties, three factors may enable Western Europe to achieve political unity. The first is Germany, the second is Japan, and the third is the United States. Uneasiness over the political and economic clout of Germany, intensified by the possibility of its becoming a nuclear power, may produce the final push to unification. And West Europeans, including many Germans, doubt their abilities to compete on even terms with Japan and America unless they are able to act as a political as well as an economic unit. Indeed, without political unification, economic unity will always be as impaired as it is now.

If the EC fails to become a single political entity, the emerging world will nevertheless be one of four or five great powers, whether the European one is called Germany or the United States of Europe. The next section asks what differences this will make in the behavior and interaction of states.

61. Council of the European Communities, Commission of the European Communities, *Treaty on European Union*, as signed in Maastricht on February 7, 1992 (Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 1992), Title V, Articles J.8, No. 2; J.3, No. 3; and J.4, Nos. 3 and 4.

Balance of Power Politics: Old Style, New Style

The many who write of America's decline seem to believe that its fall is imminent. What promised to be the American century will be halved by Japan's remarkable economic resurgence, or so they say. Yet the economic and technological superiority of Japan over the United States is not fore-ordained. Technologically, Japan and the United States are about on a par; but in economic growth and technological progress the trend favors Japan. We should notice, however, that, with a low birth rate, essentially no immigration, and an aging population, productivity is the only road to growth unless more women can be effectively used in the workforce. And to increase production becomes more difficult as Japan approaches the limit of what present technology offers. Under these circumstances, high growth rates threaten to bring inflation. And since aging populations consume more and save less, Japan and the United States are likelier to converge in their growth rates than to diverge, with Japan moving rapidly to a position of economic superiority. One may expect the economic gap between America and Japan to narrow further, but more slowly, given America's impressive resource base and the tendency of countries to respond energetically to intimations of decline. One must be careful: American voices of doom in the 1950s had little effect on our policies until Sputnik was lofted in 1957. In the 1970s, the Soviet Union did not move to check its declining fortunes but tried, only to fail, in the 1980s. The United States in the 1980s concentrated on competing militarily—and pointlessly—with a moribund Soviet Union. In the 1990s, it will surely heed the economic and technological challenges of Japan.

The structure of international politics is changing not because the United States suffered a serious decline, but because the Soviet Union did so, while Japan, China, and Western Europe continued to progress impressively. For some years to come and for better or worse, the United States will be the leading country economically as well as militarily.

What about Germany? If Germany should become a great power, it would be at the bottom of the list. Japan, with about 60 percent of America's gross domestic product, can easily compete militarily. But can Germany, with about half of Japan's, do so? I believe that it can for two reasons, easily adduced from the second part of this essay. First, offensive and defensive advantage has been transformed by nuclear weapons into deterrent strength easily achieved. Second, an adequate economic base together with the ability to

develop an area of operations beyond one's borders is enough to enable a country to vault into the great-power category. Germany is better placed than a British-French combination would be to achieve the second. Many possibilities are open. Germany's beginning to act as a great power may, instead of goading Western Europe to unite, cause Britain and France to do so. But the second possibility is even less likely than the unlikely first one.

Changes spawn uncertainties and create difficulties, especially when the changes are structural ones. Germany, Japan, and Russia will have to relearn their old great-power roles, and the United States will have to learn a role it has never played before: namely, to coexist and interact with other great powers. The United States, once reflexively isolationist, after 1945 became reflexively interventionist, which we like to call "internationalism." Whether isolationist or internationalist, however, our policies have been unilaterally made. The country's involvement became global, but most of the decisions to act abroad were made without much prior consultation with other countries. This was entirely natural: Who pays the piper calls the tune. Decisions are made collectively only among near-equals.

Events have rent the veil of internationalism that cloaked America's postwar policies. Watching the Germans directing Western policy toward the Soviet Union in the summer of 1990, Representative Lee Hamilton remarked that "this is an example of the new multi-polar world that's going to make us learn a new meaning for the word 'consult.' These days it doesn't mean us going to Europe and telling them what to do."⁶² In the spring of the same year, the United States tried to shape the charter of a new Bank for Eastern Europe because we would not enjoy there the veto over policies that we had in such organizations as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. This prompted a *New York Times* correspondent to remark that for "the first time in the postwar period, Washington is participating in the establishment of a multilateral lending institution that it will not control—reflecting the decline of this country's relative global weight."⁶³ The old and the new great powers will have to relearn old roles, or learn new ones, and figure out how to enact them on a shifting stage. New roles are hard to learn, and actors may trip when playing on unfamiliar sets. Under the circumstances,

62. R.W. Apple, Jr., "As Bush Hails Decision Many See Bonn Gaining," *New York Times*, July 17, 1990, p. A9.

63. Clyde H. Farnsworth, "U.S. Threatens Not to Join Bank for East Europe If Soviets Benefit," *New York Times*, March 15, 1990, p. A1.

predictions about the fates of states and their systems become harder to make.

Units in a self-help system engage in balancing behavior. With two great powers, balancing is done mainly by internal means. Allies have been useful and have therefore been wanted, but they were not essential in the security relations of the big two. Because one of the foundations of the postwar peace—nuclear weapons—will remain, and one—bipolarity—will disappear, we have to compare the problems of balancing in conventional and nuclear worlds. In a bipolar-conventional world, a state has to estimate its strength only in relation to one other. In a multipolar-conventional world, difficulties multiply because a state has to compare its strength with a number of others and also has to estimate the strength of actual and potential coalitions. Moreover, in a conventional world, no one category of weapons dominates. States have to weigh the effectiveness of present weapons, while wondering about the effects that technological change may bring, and they have to prepare to cope with different strategies. "To be sure," Georg Simmel remarked, "the most effective presupposition for preventing struggle, the exact knowledge of the comparative strength of the two parties, is very often only to be obtained by the actual fighting out of the conflict."⁶⁴ In a conventional world, miscalculation is hard to avoid.

In a nuclear world one category of weapons is dominant. Comparing the strategic strength of nations is automatically accomplished once all of them have second-strike forces. Even should some states have larger and more varied strategic forces than others, all would effectively be at parity. The only way to move beyond second-strike forces is to create a first-strike capability or to put up an effective strategic defense. Since no one will fail to notice another state's performing either of those near-miracles, war through miscalculation is practically ruled out. Since no one has been able to figure out how to use strategic nuclear weapons other than for deterrence, nuclear weapons eliminate the thorny problems of estimating the present and future strengths of competing states and of trying to anticipate their strategies. And since nuclear states easily generate second-strike forces, they do not need one another's help at the strategic level. Strategically, nuclear weapons make alliances obsolete, just as General de Gaulle used to claim.⁶⁵

64. Georg Simmel, "The Sociology of Conflict," *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 9 (January 1904), p. 501.

65. Waltz, "Nuclear Myths and Political Realities."

Nuclear weapons eliminate neither the use of force nor the importance of balancing behavior. They do limit force at the strategic level to a deterrent role, make estimating the strategic strength of nations a simple task, and make balancing easy to do. Multipolarity abolishes the stark symmetry and pleasing simplicity of bipolarity, but nuclear weapons restore both of those qualities to a considerable extent. Nuclear weapons have yet another beneficial effect on the relations of the nations that have them. Conventional states shy away from cooperating for the achievement of even large absolute gains if their uneven division would enable some to turn their disproportionate gain into a military advantage. Because states with second-strike forces cannot convert economic gain into strategic advantage, an important part of the relative–absolute gains problem is negated. And since nuclear countries cannot make important gains through military conquest without inviting retaliation, the importance of conventional forces is reduced. The elimination of one and the reduction of another military concern means that the relative–absolute gains problem will be rooted much more in worries about how the distribution of gains from joint ventures may affect the economic and technological progress of competing states. Economic competition will provide plentiful sources of conflict, but we should prefer them to military ones.

Balance-of-power theory leads one to expect that states, if they are free to do so, will flock to the weaker side. The stronger, not the weaker side, threatens them, if only by pressing its preferred policies on other states. John Dryden gave the thought poetic expression:

But when the chosen people grew more strong,
The rightful cause at length became the wrong.⁶⁶

Though this was written three centuries ago as a comment on Great Britain, according to Anthony Lewis, the Israeli government found that the couplet fit its case closely enough to merit proscription for Arab readers. Even if the powerful state's intentions are wholly benign, less powerful states will, from their different historical experiences, geographic locations, and economic interests, interpret events differently and often prefer different policies. Thus within NATO, Western European countries differed with American interpretations of the Soviet Union's behavior, the nature of the threats it entailed, and the best means of dealing with them.

66. From John Dryden, "Absalom and Acitophel."

In a multipolar world, the United States as the strongest power will often find other states edging away from it: Germany moving toward Eastern Europe and Russia, and Russia moving toward Germany and Japan.⁶⁷ Yet despite the collapse of the Soviet Union and the dissolution of the WTO, American policy continues to bank on NATO's continued cohesion and influence. In the words of Secretary of State James Baker, NATO "provides one of the indispensable foundations for a stable European security environment."⁶⁸ But we must wonder how long NATO will last as an effective organization. As is often said, organizations are created by their enemies. Alliances are organized against a perceived threat. We know from balance-of-power theory as well as from history that war-winning coalitions collapse on the morrow of victory, the more surely if it is a decisive one. Internal and external examples abound. In Britain, large parliamentary majorities make party discipline difficult to maintain. In Poland, Solidarity struggled to prevail; once it did so, it split into various factions. Coalitions formed to counter Napoleon defeated him twice and collapsed both times. Victory in World War II turned wartime allies into peacetime adversaries.

As the Soviet Union began to unravel, Josef Joffe, an astute observer of American and European affairs, saw that the United States would soon be "set to go home." He asked, "who will play the role of protector and pacifier once America is gone?"⁶⁹ Europe and Russia may for a time look on NATO, and on America's presence in Western Europe, as a stabilizing force in a time of rapid change. In an interim period, the continuation of NATO makes sense. In the long run, it does not. The presence of American forces at higher than token levels will become an irritant to European states, whose security is not threatened, and a burden to America acting in a world that is becoming more competitive politically and economically as it becomes less so militarily.

How can an alliance endure in the absence of a worthy opponent? Ironically, the decline of the Soviet Union in Eastern Europe entailed the decline

67. Karl-Heinz Hornhues, deputy majority leader of the Bundestag, reported that Russian leaders suggested that Germany and Russia form a counterweight to the United States. Marc Fisher, "Germany Says Russia Seeks a Policy Ally," *International Herald Tribune*, February 3, 1993, p. 6.

68. James Baker, "Euro-Atlantic Architecture: From West to East," Address to the Aspen Institute, Berlin, Germany, June 18, 1991, *U.S. Department of State Dispatch*, June 24, 1991, p. 439. For an incisive analysis of the roles and relations of the United States, Western Europe, and the Soviet Union, see Christopher Layne, "Toward German Unification?" *Journal of Contemporary Studies*, Vol. 7, No. 4 (Fall 1984), pp. 7-37.

69. Joffe, "After Bipolarity," pp. 75-76.

of the United States in the West. Without the shared perception of a severe Soviet threat, NATO would never have been born. The Soviet Union created NATO, and the demise of the Soviet threat “freed” Europe, West as well as East. But freedom entails self-reliance. In this sense, both parts of Europe are now setting forth on the exhilarating but treacherous paths of freedom. In the not-very-long run, they will have to learn to take care of themselves or suffer the consequences. American withdrawal from Europe will be slower than the Soviet Union’s. America, with its vast and varied capabilities, can still be useful to other NATO countries, and NATO is made up of willing members. NATO’s days are not numbered, but its years are. Some hope that NATO will serve as an instrument for constraining a new Germany. But once the new Germany finds its feet, it will no more want to be constrained by the United States acting through NATO than by any other state.

Conclusion

A number of scholars have written suggestively about the relation between the standing of states and their propensity to fight. A.F.K. Organski and Robert Gilpin argue that peace prevails once one state establishes primacy. The hegemonic state lacks the need to fight, and other states lack the ability.⁷⁰ Some states, however, may concert to challenge the superior one, and when leading states decline, other states rise to challenge them. Unrest at home may accompany the decline of states, tempting them to seek foreign wars in order to distract their people. Or they may take one last military fling hoping to recoup their fortunes. Japan, China, and Germany are now the rising states, and Russia the declining one. But even if they wished to, none could use military means for major political or economic purposes. In the presence of nuclear weapons, any challenge to a leading state, and any attempt to reverse a state’s decline, has to rely on political and economic means.

John Mueller believes that war among developed states became obsolescent after World War II for reasons that have little to do with nuclear weapons. War has lost its appeal, and “substantial agreement has risen around the twin propositions that prosperity and economic growth should be central national goals and that war is a particularly counterproductive device for

70. A.F.K. Organski, *World Politics* (New York: Knopf, 1958); Robert Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

achieving these goals."⁷¹ Norman Angell was not wrong, but merely premature, when he concluded that wars would no longer be fought because they do not pay.⁷² John Mearsheimer, however, makes the telling point that, "if any war could have convinced Europeans to forswear conventional war, it should have been World War I, with its vast casualties." But then if Mearsheimer is right in believing that an "equality of power . . . among the major powers" minimizes the likelihood of war, World War I should never have been fought.⁷³ The opposing alliances were roughly equal in military strength, and their principal members understood this. Yet, as we well know, war is always possible among states armed only with conventional weapons. Some rulers will sooner or later convince themselves that subtle diplomacy will prevent opponents from uniting and that clever strategy will enable them to win a swift victory at an affordable price.

Peace is sometimes linked to the presence of a hegemonic power, sometimes to a balance among powers. To ask which view is right misses the point. It does so for this reason: the response of other countries to one among them seeking or gaining preponderant power is to try to balance against it. Hegemony leads to balance, which is easy to see historically and to understand theoretically. That is now happening, but haltingly so because the United States still has benefits to offer and many other countries have become accustomed to their easy lives with the United States bearing many of their burdens.

The preceding paragraph reflects international-political reality through all of the centuries we can contemplate. But what about the now-widespread notion that because there may be more major democratic states in the future, and fewer authoritarian ones, the Wilsonian vision of a peaceful, stable, and just international order has become the appropriate one? Democratic states, like others, have interests and experience conflicts. The late Pierre Bérégovoy, when he was prime minister of France, said in 1992 that a European power was needed "because it's unhealthy to have a single superpower in the world."⁷⁴ He believed this not because the one superpower is undemocratic, but simply because it is super. The stronger get their way—not always, but

71. John Mueller, *Retreat from Doomsday: The Obsolescence of Major War* (New York: Basic Books, 1989), pp. 219, 222.

72. Norman Angell, *The Great Illusion* (London: Heinemann, 1914).

73. Mearsheimer, "Back to the Future," p. 18.

74. Quoted in Flora Lewis, "Europe's Last-Minute Jitters," *New York Times*, April 24, 1992, p. A35.

more often than the weaker. Democratic countries, like others, are concerned with losing or gaining more in the competition among nations, a point richly illustrated by intra-EC politics.

If democracies do not fight democracies, then one can say that conflict among them is at least benign. Unfortunately there are many problems with this view. Few cases in point have existed. When one notes that democracies have indeed sometimes fought other democracies, the proposition dissolves. The American-British War of 1812 was fought by the only two democratic states that existed, and conflict and bitterness between them persisted through the century and beyond. In the 1860s, the northern American democracy fought the southern one. Both parties to the Civil War set themselves up as distinct and democratic countries and the South's belligerence was recognized by other countries. An important part of the explanation for World War I is that Germany was a pluralistic democracy, unable to harness its warring internal interests to a coherent policy that would serve the national interest.⁷⁵ One might even venture to say that if a Japanese-American war had occurred in recent years, it would have been said that Japan was not a democracy but rather a one-party state. From Kant onward, it has been implied that democracies do not fight democracies, but only if they are democracies of the right sort. Propositions of this type are constants in the thinking of those who believe that what states are like determines how they behave.

And there is the rub. A relative harmony can, and sometimes does, prevail among nations, but always precariously so. The thawing of the Cold War led to an expectation that the springtime buds of peace will blossom. Instead it has permitted latent conflicts to bloom in the Balkans and elsewhere in eastern Europe, in parts of what was greater Russia and later the Soviet Union, and in the Middle East. Unity in Western Europe has become more difficult to achieve partly because there is no real threat to unite against.

Yet in placid times, and even in times that are not so placid, the belief that power politics is ending tends to break out. Brent Scowcroft has written recently that balancing "interests off each other" is a "peculiar conception that was appropriate for certain historical circumstances." He foresees instead a world in which all pursue "the same general goals."⁷⁶ John Steinbruner

75. See Waltz, "America as a Model for the World? A Foreign Policy Perspective," *PS*, Vol. XXIV, No. 4 (December 1991), pp. 667-670.

76. Brent Scowcroft, in "Geopolitical Vertigo and the U.S. Role," *New Perspectives Quarterly*, Vol. 9, No. 3 (Summer 1992), pp. 6-9.

envisions a world in which people accept a "configuration of cooperative forces" because militarily "they cannot manage anything else." He adds that an "arrangement that does this" must be open to all who wish to belong.⁷⁷ These ideas are among the many versions of the domino theory, so long popular in America. Once the bandwagon starts to roll, it collects the bystanders. Stephen Van Evera believes that if we get through the present difficult patch, meaning mainly that if democracies emerge in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, then "for the first time in history, the world's major countries would all share common political and economic systems and enjoy the absence of ideological conflict." The major causes of war would be "tamed," and "possibilities for wider great power cooperation to prevent war worldwide would be opened."⁷⁸ In contrast, this article has used structural theory to peer into the future, to ask what seem to be the strong likelihoods among the unknowns that abound. One of them is that, over time, unbalanced power will be checked by the responses of the weaker who will, rightly or not, feel put upon. This statement, however, implies another possibility. The forbearance of the strong would reduce the worries of the weak and permit them to relax. Fareed Zakaria has pointed out that two countries, when overwhelmingly strong, did not by their high-handed actions cause other powers to unite against them—Great Britain and the United States in their heydays.⁷⁹ Both exceptions to the expected balancing behavior of states can easily be explained. Britain could not threaten the major continental powers; its imperial burdens and demographic limitations did not permit it to do so. The United States was held in check by its only great-power rival.

What is new in the proclaimed new world order is that the old limitations and restraints now apply weakly to the United States. Yet since foreign-policy behavior can be explained only by a conjunction of external and internal conditions, one may hope that America's internal preoccupations will produce not an isolationist policy, which has become impossible, but a forbearance that will give other countries at long last the chance to deal with their own problems and to make their own mistakes. But I would not bet on it.

77. John Steinbruner, "Defense Budget Priorities," *Institute of International Studies, Currents*, Vol. 1, No. 4 (Supplement), March 30, 1992, p. 3.

78. Stephen Van Evera, "Preserving Peace in the New Era," *Boston Review*, Vol. 17, No. 6 (November/December 1992), p. 4.

79. Fareed Zakaria, "Is Realism Finished?" *The National Interest*, No. 30 (Winter 1992/93), p. 24.