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Social Rules and  
the State as  
a Social Actor  
[1975]

# SOCIAL RULES AND THE STATE AS A SOCIAL ACTOR

[1980]

The analysis of foreign policy has yet to satisfy the ambitions of its theorists. Side by side with elaborate chronologies, typologies, and correlations, a variety of competing approaches still stands. This “open” — or unsettled — quality has had at least one advantage: it has made room for occasional new concerns. One of the more recent of these has been with the domestic sources of foreign policy, and in particular, of national security policy. The idea that the state is like an opaque billiard ball which reacts to the pressures of the international environment has proven unsatisfactory. It is now a commonplace that foreign policy is a domestic or political “product.” Unfortunately, this new emphasis has left unanswered as many questions about the nature of state action as it has resolved. The problem of how we should conceive of the relationship between the state and the domestic social structure in a particular instance remains virtually innocent of any serious discussion. The authors of most case studies, studding their accounts offhandedly with domestic “factors,” domestic “determinants,” and domestic “causation,” have instead proceeded in a loose, improvisatory fashion. Empirically, valuable evidence is generated; conceptually, the old confusion reigns.

In this essay, I will attempt to clarify some of these relationships and to elaborate a perspective which might be used in the explanation of foreign policy in social terms. Such a perspective is badly needed. Merely to ask these questions is to signal the practical impossibility of answering them successfully from the present literature. Though a term like “the national interest” provides a comforting familiarity, it can rarely be understood as only a reflection of the international “sources” of policy, a calculation of self-evident security

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needs, or a deduction from a strategic calculus. Something more is required. I hope that this analysis will at least partially fill the gap by beginning to sketch out a conceptual model for the political sociology of state action.

## CONTEXTS AND CONVENTIONS

If the behavior of states could be reduced to the status of physical events, and if unintended consequences appeared to overshadow the importance of purposiveness, we could fashion our explanation from the concepts of observers alone. But following the canons of the natural sciences so far as to dispense with the aims and self-understandings of the actors has little to recommend it. If, as seems more appropriate, we regard foreign policy as a series of largely purposive actions and not simply as physical happenings, we assume that the actions can be interpreted in terms of a shared set of reasons and intentions, rather than merely explained causally in terms of the antecedents which necessitated them. But even where we accept the value of a purposive understanding, it will usually fall short: actions are simply not the unique project of the policymakers. In state action, even where the consequences are intended, both purposive and “conventional” elements are generally involved, and the purposive element will frequently require its own explanation in terms of underlying domestic conventions.<sup>1</sup>

Too often, however, the domestic underpinnings of a state’s frame of reference are neglected. In a narrow, decision-making approach to foreign policy, the meticulous descriptions and encyclopedic typologies tend toward self-enclosure, as does a strict emphasis on the point of view of the actors involved. Exclusive reliance on a purposive vocabulary can prove disabling, insofar as

<sup>1</sup> For an extended treatment, see Andrews, “Foreign Policy: Explaining and Understanding State Action,” mimeo (1975), and John G. Gunnell, “Social Science and Political Reality: The Problem of Explanation,” *Social Research*, xxxv (Spring 1968). “An action is first made intelligible as the outcome of [or, actually, as the expression of motives, reasons, and decisions; and is then made *further* intelligible by those motives, reasons and decisions being set in the context of the rules of a given form of social life. These rules logically determine the range of reasons and motives open to a given set of agents and hence also the range of decisions open to them.” Alasdair MacIntyre, “The Idea of a Social Science,” in Bryan R. Wilson, ed., *Rationality* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell 1970), 115-16.

the frame of reference of the actors remains unintelligible in social terms. The entire labyrinthine structure is left hanging in mid-air, for a list cannot by itself provide a social context and is not an explanation.

A similar shallowness has characterized the new analytic stress on bureaucratic factors. When outcomes are treated as resultants rather than as purposive actions, the policies underlying them are not always understood through reference to a shared outlook or a more basic set of values. The larger informing policy, and indeed the state apparatus itself, begins to take on an arbitrary or asocial existence.

This neglect can be avoided. As a first approximation, we might *redescribe* the purposive aspects of state action which are assumed to be important. Usually, state actors will articulate their aims in international terms; for example, American policymakers may speak of intervening in order to prevent the overthrow of anti-communist regimes or the collapse of a regional status quo. Especially when the use of force must be justified the actors tend to cast their reasons in the language of national security or international considerations. Yet, except in the rare instances where a nation's survival is unambiguously at stake, these considerations cannot be understood satisfactorily as a strategic deduction or reaction, and must be interpreted at another level. The purposes of states are not autonomous phenomena. Quite the contrary, they rely on a network of domestic conventions, boundaries, and meanings that provide a framework for both the goals and considerations of the actors.

The redescription I would suggest is as follows. In most cases, even considerations of national security are not intelligible apart from a specific conception of the domestic order which is to be protected or advanced. The international aims of a government, in other words, are very rarely either self-explanatory or ends in themselves (leading to actions performed for their own sake). For a complete account, they must eventually be redefined as *means* toward a more inclusive set of *social purposes*. Through this "second-order" purposive relationship, a government policy can be understood in an instrumental or contextual way. As a result, what might have been considered a mere idiosyncrasy or a purely international project is transformed into a conventional and social action. It also allows for the state's policies to be monitored

by society, while specifying a measure of reciprocity between the social and the political world.

Most of a state's significant (or signifying, meaningful) foreign policies can be thought of in this way — guided and constrained by an array of domestic expectations which are considered legitimate, and by social conventions which both define and delimit those broader social purposes. If “meaning is use,” then these social rules are rules of usage — for domestic society. They are both defining and constitutive (in that they suggest which ends the government must aim at if a particular domestic “act” or purpose is to be effected) as well as constraining (in that they regulate conduct by ruling out certain international ends which would jeopardize those social purposes). A kind of social entitlement or warrantableness enters in, because the state becomes in some way responsible to the interests of the domestic society, or representative of them. When these expectations are brought to bear on the actors in a restrictive fashion, they give them a reason to act in certain ways and not others; they give a domestic bearing to their international aims and values and specify some of the conditions for their domestic success. Any historical course (or matrix, or lowest common denominator of actions, such as that old sawhorse, the national interest) is not therefore simply followed. Rather, the state actors make it up as they go along, as they pursue certain policies in accord with, or as delimited by, the domestic rules. Their goals reveal the rules, and to a certain extent, the rules constitute their reasons for acting. “Every convention or rule that I accept is an intention that I declare.”<sup>2</sup> International actions thus become domestic acts—regularized, socialized, and conformative. Foreign policy, in this conception, is a domestic social policy.

#### THE ROLE OF RULES: STATE AIMS AND SOCIAL PRACTICES

As a first approximation, we could say that the rules suggest a pattern of prescribed or proscribed behavior, resembling a canon of appropriateness or

<sup>2</sup> Stuart Hampshire, *Thought and Action* (New York: Viking 1959), 99.

*social paradigm*. Metaphorically, we might speak of the way in which a society maintains its conception of itself, and of the attributions and roles which it forces upon the governmental actors. In doing so, the outer boundaries of both international choices and “non-decisions” are set and legitimated. Rather than determining a specific choice, the rules tend to narrow the range of possibility to a realm in which state policies appear “pre-shrunk” or pre-interpreted.<sup>3</sup> By helping to structure the policymakers’ hierarchy of preferences and values, these norms and expectations will in turn come to structure their presuppositions about the international setting — foreshortening the range of perception, desired objectives, and alternative paths of action. Agendas are shaped, universes are delimited, and actors are provided with a rough explanatory framework within which their own international actions can be understood.

This way of looking at state action leads us to other unfamiliar issues—in particular, those of reference, meaning, and semantics. For some writers, norms and meanings appear to be so tightly interwoven in the realm of action that “rule-guided” becomes synonymous with “meaningful” (i.e., full of meaning). Actions, like language, form a surface layer beneath which a pattern of social rules and expectations can usually be discerned—an underlying content or “deep structure” which both guides the actions *and* gives them their social significance. If we extend this argument to the level of states, a similar proposition may be advanced: without these rule-guided elements, state behavior would be socially unintelligible, even where it might be causally predictable. Unlike the more “horizontal” procedures of correlation and deduction, a social explanation would then resemble a process of excavation

<sup>3</sup> If, for example, we find a domestic rationale for an international action that opens with an untested assumption such as ‘It goes without saying that ...,’ the presence of such constraining rules should be suspected. For example, Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* (New York: Macmillan 1958), #231: “But surely you can see . . . ? That is just the characteristic expression of someone who is under the compulsion of a rule.” A similar theme is nicely treated by Peter Bachrach and Morton S. Baratz, “Decisions and Non-Decisions: An Analytic Framework,” *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 57 (September 1963). “Indeed, the more important the rule, the greater is the likelihood that knowledge [of the nature of rule-guided activities and the consequences of breaching the rules] is based on avoided tests.” Harold Garfinkel, *Studies in Ethnomethodology* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall 1967), 70.

by means of which purposive actions can be understood as social practices.<sup>4</sup>

Domestic norms make up one of the *referential dimensions* of a state policy. They are patterns (outside the regularities provided by the actions themselves) which those actions both point to and implicate—in a symbolic or representative guise, for example. They take on their importance not as causal antecedents or background conditions in a deductive generalization, but as a setting of constraint and guidance for both the aims and the reasons of the actors. Instead of the bare “syntax” of state behavior which a naturalistic account can provide, we would look for an interrelated network of social as well as political processes in which to locate an action—a network which will reveal this semantic or referential dimension.

If a domestic rule “stands there like a signpost,”<sup>5</sup> then a rule-guided action will stand there like a signpost as well. It refers back not only to the rules but to the domestic social purposes which underly them. In this respect, state actions resemble language. The significance (or “motivation”) of words, for example, is not intrinsic. It derives from their place within a framework of governing rules and expectations. Like counters in a game, they are emblems or signs that express (and reveal) the deeper patterns. Actions and the commitments which inform them can just as easily be regarded as such a form of communicative behavior, rather than merely the mute physical objects with which the natural sciences have dealt. To understand them, we would therefore refer back to the canons (of definition, logical connection, permissiveness, etc.) which are present behind them. In other words, no realm of discourse can be understood apart from its underlying conventions. For foreign policy, these conventions are domestic ones, not merely those of the international system.

<sup>4</sup> For a discussion of the synchronic nature of such an analysis in other fields of inquiry, see Frederic Jameson's important work, *The Prison-House of Language: A Critical Account of Structuralism and Russian Formalism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 1972), and *Marxism and Form* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 1971). Compare Peter Winch, *The Idea of a Social Science* (London: Routledge 1958); Alan F. Blum and Peter McHugh, “The Social Ascription of Motives,” *American Sociological Review*, xxxvi (February 1971), 98-109; R. Harrh and P. F. Secord, *The Explanation of Social Behavior* (Totowa, N.J.: Littlefield, Adams 1973); and Gerard Radnitzky, *Contemporary Schools of Metascience* (Chicago: Henry Regnery 2973).

<sup>5</sup> Wittgenstein (fn. 3), #85.

This will be our next task, and a particularly difficult one. At times, the purposes and reasons of state actors can be understood only vaguely. On the surface they may remain opaque; they may make no sense to us in the strictly international-strategic terms in which they are articulated. Yet even in those cases, what the international goals embody may be clear: the informing social purposes, or the distortive picture of the nation and the interests whose “security” is being protected. They can often be discerned through historical research and through a reconstruction of the policy frame of reference, enabling us to grasp the limits of choice which the rules have enforced and, in a sense, to comprehend the international claims by “translating” them into a domestic language. Unlike an additional element which is somehow tacked on, these international aims may at times be nothing more than a political channeling or articulation of a domestic expectation. We encounter this phenomenon on a national level just as we do on a personal or psychological one — whenever the conscious goals of an actor are simply forms devised for the expression of an underlying trait or an internal demand or aspiration.

The social conventions must still be explicable, however, for they form the linkage between governmental “means” and domestic “ends” in the second-order purposive relationship between state and society. They cannot simply be extrapolated from a foreign policy, for that policy embraces the very actions which the rules would help us interpret. The circularity is obvious. Too often the study of operational codes or “decision rules” falls into just such a trap, revealing regularities which are merely descriptive, and whose normative and explanatory status in relation to the actors’ purposes is in grave doubt. Daniel Ellsberg’s rules for generating predictions of American escalations in Vietnam could serve as an example: their achievement lies in a controversial reconstruction of a frame of reference, not in explaining it in substantive social terms.<sup>6</sup> Such accounts have a tendency to degenerate into a list of subsuming typologies.

<sup>6</sup> See Daniel Ellsberg, *Papers on the War* (New York: Simon and Schuster 1972).



Though regularities often alert us to the existence of rules, the two phenomena are logically distinct. There is some confusion on this point, because many assume that if a rule or law “for” action is adhered to, it will become a law “of” action from which predictions can be made. A regularity, however, can exist even where there are no domestic rules with the power of sanctions behind them; and a rule can remain in place even in cases of deviance, or where there is little regularity to illustrate it. A “rule” account simply responds to a different kind of question than a deductive or predictive one. The connections involved are often conceptual rather than causal ones — more like the relation of a part to a whole than of “exogenous variables” to a separate or literal happening. At times, they resemble the connection between a word and its use or referent, or even the connection between statements in an argument. Naturally, a substantial gap divides norms and actions. With state actions, we can nevertheless say that where rules are revealed, the regularities should be better understood, and when regularities present themselves, we would do well to look for the guiding rules. Otherwise, even predictable behavior may remain opaque.

Statements about a state elite’s commitment to social rules and guiding domestic purposes do lend a different sort of intelligibility to its actions — a normative expectedness that differs from a causal retrodiction. Behavior may fit into predicted patterns of causal regularity. On the other hand, actors may do what we expect “of” them by following their articulated goals along the lines of domestic conventions, or by substantiating our account of the international aims of a state as a choice of means toward a more inclusive domestic end. Unexpectedness will also come in these two varieties. State behavior may diverge from (and become an exception to) causal laws of behavior, or state actors may deviate from normative or customary rules of conduct and engage in socially unintelligible actions. The two varieties should not be confused, nor should we attempt to assimilate them to an Inappropriate style of explanation. In discussions of the domestic sources of foreign policy, this is too often forgotten.

One vital distinction still separates an explanatory rule from one which is merely descriptive. Someone can *intentionally violate* an explanatory

rule. Correct and incorrect ways of acting in the light of rules must therefore be distinguishable, even if the actors cannot put them eloquently into words. The reason is simple. Rules cannot be applied (and are not explanatory) if the notion of misapplying them makes no sense. If there is no chance of intentional deviation on the part of state actors, a meaningful pattern of rule-guidance cannot be ascribed. As Wittgenstein's discussion of "private language" suggests, a bundle of purely idiosyncratic rules, or rules that are not *external* to the actions themselves, cannot be violated. Because they provide no stable constraint or guidance to the actor (or to his reasons and goals), they are of little explanatory use. As in the case of the use of "misperception" as an answer to "why-questions" in regard to an action, we cannot get beyond the actors' frame of reference with them. Unlike an observer's descriptive generalization (which can brook only exceptions but not contraventions), explanatory rules are not simply made up after the fact as a way of subsuming all that has happened. Instead, we must be able to conceive of the government going against the social rule, of failing to follow it, of choosing an alternative, of violating the network of expectations or showing them to be unwarranted. Rules are made to be broken.

Perhaps in more normal circumstances, whenever state actors step beyond social conventions, their scope and outer limits will be highlighted. We need not rely totally on these boundary conditions in order to locate them, however, for a mixture of other evidence can back up our attributions. This evidence would include the domestic bearing of the actors' conduct, plans, beliefs, and perceptions, the regularity with which (and the ways in which) conformative acts are undertaken, the parade of admissions and denials on the part of state leaders, and a more detailed analysis of whether the constraints on particular kinds of action are real or imagined. It would also take into account how the supposed norms are supported and reinforced within the social system, apart from simple inertia or long-term socialization — whether by sanctions for deviance or rewards for conformity. Once the content of the rules is specified, the range of permissible interpretations can be sketched out.

Without the presence of sanctions and reinforcements, we can easily

be misled. What may at first glance look like an important convention may turn out to be simply an ingrained “decision rule” without the weight of social expectation behind it, or it may be a self-serving bit of deception. Such a difference is not trivial, for it has important political implications. One example would be the various prescriptive claims embedded in the literature on imperialism. If imperial policies, for example, rest only upon historical habits or misperceptions that are no longer anchored in present-day social relations and institutions, they may be far more open to change than before. The pressure of influential elites or groups would not stand as squarely behind them. Also, in the absence of potential sanctions, the so-called rules might be indistinguishable from the sorts of national ideals which modern governments are so adept at ignoring when it suits their needs. The idiosyncratic intentions of the actors might overshadow the apparent conventions, and the latter would then be of little help in interpreting the former.

#### STRENGTH OF RULES: ALTERNATIVE POSSIBILITIES

We find out very little by merely positing explanatory conventions in regard to a particular policy. Do they resemble statutes which rigorously constrain the aims of states, or are they more like permissive “stylistic canons” which only guide the way or offer a kind of legitimation? This question will parallel another important concern: the *degree* to which the policies of a government can be said to be socially-grounded and referential, or rule-guided and conventional.

There are two conceptions in sociology—a “normative” and an “interpretative” model<sup>7</sup>—whose contrast might give some outline to this discussion

<sup>7</sup> See Thomas P. Wilson, “Concepts of Interaction and Forms of Sociological Explanation,” *American Sociological Review*, xxxv (August 1970). See also Ralph Turner, ‘Role-Taking: Process versus Conformity,’ in Arnold M. Rose, ed., *Human Behavior and Social Process: An Interactionist Approach* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin 1962), 23, cited in Wilson, p. 700: “The idea of role-taking shifts emphasis away from the simple process of enacting a prescribed role to devising a performance on the basis of an imputed other role. The actor is not the occupant of a status for which there is a neat set of rules — a culture or set of norms — but a person who must act in the perspective supplied in part by his relationships to others whose actions reflect roles he must identify.” The literature on the “level-of-analysis” problem in international relations is also relevant.

and allow us to group the alternatives around two opposing poles. We might, as I have said, assert that the foreign-policy behavior of the state actors is largely governed by a set of domestic rules as well as by the requirements of a pre-established role. Or at least this is what a normative model would imply, if we transferred its insights into social behavior onto the realm of state action. Or we could say (following the contrasting interpretative model), that the state elite is given a free hand in devising its role in relation to domestic society. In that case, when specific roles are hammered out by the actors rather than simply embraced or negotiated, the social rules which underlie them can define the state's action only tentatively. There will be less constraint, as well as added space for improvisation.

At this second pole we would have a conception of state behavior which disregards the domestic social context while in turn emphasizing the importance of international interactions and of the autonomy of the government. Here the most illuminating setting for a state's deeper purposes and constraints would be located in the actions of other, comparable states. The state, according to this contrasting model, moves in and out of roles which are freely developed through its interactions in the world environment rather than through contact with a pre-established and powerful social field—the domestic social context. Aside from these international interactions, the domestic order seems to provide little of the content of foreign policy, and knowledge of domestic processes does not make the policy significantly more intelligible. Not only would the international setting provide a referent for the objectives of the state in such a case, but it would largely supply their meaning and explanation as well. In the justificatory arguments about contemporary American policy, for example, we find these assumptions at work — where “national security” becomes a literalism, without reference to the particularities or divisions of domestic society. The actions of other states demand an obvious *reaction*, and very little else is thought to inflect the frame of reference of the government or its conception of the national interest. Instead of international leeway, we might find international compulsion. Instead of a kind of domestic embeddedness, a free-floating or anomic sphere for state behavior would prevail.

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Both of these conceptions may be partially relevant, of course: elements of domestic rule-guidance do exist side by side with the creation of more specific roles during the interactions among states. But the distinctions are not devoid of value. In the purest, most extreme case for an interpretative conception, where they could shape the domestic purposes (or ignore them) in accord with the self-evident demands of the global environment, state actors might be making up or changing “the rules” as they go along, relying on improvisation rather than attempting to follow a set of pre-existing norms explicitly. The avowals of diplomats, perhaps nostalgically, have often been oriented toward such an ideal, where domestic constraints or deeper purposes lose their force and the international “game” can be played for its own sake. An “emergent situation” could be defined in this way. One could try out new roles for a foreign policy in relation to domestic society, or visibly violate the old ones. It is an artist’s situation in regard to aesthetic canons<sup>8</sup> — where norms are far from being unchanging, unified, obvious, or automatically applied. For the artist in an aesthetic setting (unlike the political actor standing in a less authoritative relation to a domestic order), actions may need *less* “contextualizing” of a social sort to make them intelligible. Their significance is often more intrinsic, more autonomous, more self-enclosed.

The tentativeness of the roles, along with the actors’ ability to improvise or manipulate the rules, may evaporate much more quickly in the political sphere. Here the demands and the reciprocal as well as warranted expectations of society are usually registered more sharply, thus giving state actions a distinctiveness not always found among the moves and gestures of individuals. Whenever the guiding rules of policy are social and not exclusively technical in nature, and whenever the goals of the state can be interpreted as domestic practices, the original normative paradigm will be illuminating. In

<sup>8</sup> See, for example, Morris Peckham, *Man’s Rage for Chaos: Biology, Behavior, and the Arts* (New York: Schocken 1965), 76 ff, 80: “The artist’s role is to violate the rules, though he may fail to violate the rules enough to interest a particular perceiver.” Or compare Hanna Fenichel Pitkin, *Wittgenstein and Justice* (Berkeley: University of California Press 1972), 50-53, for a discussion of common law, where the rules are somewhat refashioned with each case, and are derivative of particular cases or are abridgements of the activity itself, not something completely prior to it.

these cases, the state is no longer allowed to act as independently, or to devise its own role — occupying it tentatively or even improvising one new role after another. Its aims cannot be as oblivious to the underlying domestic interests which they will advance or inhibit. The perspective of this normative model, in other words, will roughly parallel the conception of state behavior as rule-guided or socially-grounded purposive action which I have suggested.

A scale of relative strength might be constructed. At one end of the scale would be the state policies which are *totally dominated by domestic norms* and are close adaptations to very explicit domestic ends or pressures. Here we might find instances of domestic “necessity” expressed in a variety of ways: in political terms (as electoral opinion might necessitate a role — for example, the defense of long-term allies whose plight evokes nationwide sympathy and identification); in social-structural terms (insofar as an international course undermines important class interests — for example, a governing elite may not tolerate it); or, articulated more vaguely (for example, a refusal to accept an international loss, which is seen as a grave threat to domestic stability or national self-esteem, even though it would have little impact on the prospects for national survival — such as France’s resistance to colonial devolution in the postwar years). These norms may come in the form of demands and requirements, as well as of prohibitions, negative choices, or nondecisions. In the foregoing instances, the social rules stand there self-evidently like a set of orders to be obeyed, so that deviant actions appear unthinkable and governments may follow the dictum: “When I obey a rule, I do not choose. I obey the rule *blindly*.”<sup>9</sup>

A second point on the scale might be the state policies that are only *rule-guided* (or rule-nourished, or rule-dependent). The international aims would be given more flexibility by the rules that articulate the deeper domes-

<sup>9</sup> Wittgenstein (fn. 3), #219, #206-7. Domestic rules and expectations about state aims are rarely this explicit or unproblematical. They will therefore diverge somewhat from an analogy with linguistic rules, which “are much more often than not applied correctly without their correct application being an issue at all.” Hector-Neri Castafieda, “The Private-Language Argument,” in E. D. Klemke, ed., *Essays on Wittgenstein* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press 1971), 228. In addition, see A. R. Louch’s list of Increasing departures from a game model in his *Explanation and Human Action* (Berkeley: University of California Press 1966), 212.

tic interests and purposes. There would be more leeway, and more chance for the government to engage in conscious manipulation or willful neglect. For instance, in the relationship between recent American policy and the public, there might have been no significant danger of a mobilized mass backlash if the crusade against Third-World revolution had been rejected, but some risk of retaliation might still exist — especially from corporate elites or a conservative “attentive public.” The “reasons of state” might be more asocial, the domestic expectations might be weaker, or the government might feel that the expectations are less warranted. Concerning these social rules, this intercrossing of the scales of strength and entitlement is worth noting.

Third on the scale are those actions or goals which are simply *permissible* under the rules, but not at all constituted by them. At this point, the policies are referential simply by their circumscription; only at their outer limits do they implicate the rules. The state elite, as one example, might have a virtually free hand in its dealings with the public. It would be at liberty to neglect the overall domestic bearing of its aims, to respond to narrow social pressures or even exclusively to its own (institutional or personal) fantasies, values, and inclinations — up to a point. Yet even here, state actors take notice of the broad limits of valuation, perception, and behavior provided by the norms, for the domestic society is never entirely “put to sleep.” Its interests and felt needs continue to serve as both an audience and a gauge.

As long as these limits and meanings are reflected, the domestic norms should figure in our interpretation of the actors’ frame of reference and in our explanation of state action. The instance in which they matter in a largely negative way represents the other end of the scale — a case of social deviance, where the linkage between governmental aims and the legitimated social norms and purposes breaks down. Here the government disregards whatever pre-existing domestic rules may stand in its way. By going beyond their province, it pays the price, which may be disruptive social change, or a visible and dangerous loss of public support for the nation’s foreign policy. In many cases, the desire to put off paying such a price accounts for the government’s hesitancy to deviate. Adherence to the norms may preserve its legitimacy or its tenure.

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Even so, the passage between conventions and actors is not a one-way street. Only in rare cases do norms specify their own interpretations or provide an endlessly specified role for the state to occupy, any more than they do on another level for the most conformist individuals. Because most social norms (and domestic needs) can be interpreted with a certain degree of freedom, state actors will frequently try to take advantage of these ambiguities as they adjust to the changing international realities. The degree of rule-guidance or “requiredness” is therefore never a constant. It differs among periods, among issue areas, among issues, among situations, and among the perceptions of different actors.

Because of the way political power is distributed within a society, and because social norms are related to material processes and not merely to idealizations of a nation’s experience, these norms take on a considerably greater force than that associated with vague moral admonitions. Invasions may be launched, diplomatic provocations staged, and opportunities bypassed, but rarely at the price of destroying domestic welfare or of utterly alienating the most prominent social forces and conceptions. State actions are not merely locatable within a set of cultural norms, for there is often some apparatus of enforcement that has attached itself to these rules. In a more direct way, they *count*.

The social settings are more often assigned than suggested, and the expectations of the policymakers (at least according to democratic theory) are perennially influenced by the threat of sanctions or domestic setbacks. In cases of contravention, the consequences on an overtly *political* level might include electoral punishment, disastrous declines in public acquiescence, or a growing intransigence of countervailing political forces. It has been asserted, for example, that American presidents in the postwar era incorporated such fears very prominently into their foreign policy choices, particularly in regard to a visible loss of South Vietnam to the communists. A closer examination of the literature on public opinion and electoral behavior,<sup>10</sup> however, suggests that this

<sup>10</sup> For a fuller treatment, see Andrews, “Of the People, By the People, For the People: Public Constraint and American Policy in Vietnam” (Sage Professional Papers in International Studies, forthcoming).



danger was consistently exaggerated, and that some other form of domestic “embeddedness” will have to be found if we are to interpret the international apprehensions of these policymakers in substantive social terms.

As this example suggests, however, we may find a cluttered array of rules, several of which are relevant to the situation — where “for every convention in the hand, there are two in the bush.”<sup>11</sup> Shifting balances of conflict and harmony can occur among them, just as they do among the differing domestic interests affected by an international policy in the absence of a national consensus. In consequence, state actors may find it difficult at times to integrate their bearings and sustain a set of international aims which can thread its way through their definitions and prescriptions. At other times, when the linkages in this relationship are much looser, state actors may be able to pick and choose among them, to make elaborate compromises, or find backing for their own autonomous objectives. As bureaucratic conceptions of foreign policy have intimated, what appears as a departure from one social norm may express something entirely different. It may be strategy in a narrower, organizational game, as in Seymour Melman’s suggested explanation of the Vietnamese war as an attempt on the part of America’s “state-management” to enlarge its “decision-power.”<sup>12</sup> An elite will occasionally split — some parts of it trying to steer policy in accordance with one rule or one aspect of a rule, and other parts with another or with none at all. Some aspects of the rules may also be inconsistent or have contradictory or even “double-bind” implications, as for example Ellsberg’s treatment of the “Indochina Bind,” where U.S. policy was supposedly caught between public prohibitions against loss on one hand and certain kinds of escalating methods on the other. The international role or broad policy may thus represent a negotiated coherence within domestic expectations. But while this variety will complicate any analysis or “decoding,” the complications should not prove insurmountable. The unity, strength, and limits of the relevant norms cannot be uncovered through a yearning for premature generality, but through a close and contex-

11 Louch (fn. 9), 164.

12 Seymour Melman, *Pentagon Capitalism: The Political Economy of War* (New York: McGraw-Hill 1970), chaps. 6 and 7.

tual examination of the particular cases. An explanation of a state's actions, and an interpretation of its policies in social terms, will usually depend upon such an understanding.

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Unless we can “see through” the rules,  
we only see through them. <sup>13</sup>

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### SOCIAL RULES AND SOCIAL STRUCTURE

Rather than tracing a few parsimonious premises under which many divergent actions could be subsumed and shown to be causally necessitated, we need to reveal a network of rules that is large enough to show the relationship of government actions to the purposes and constitutive meanings of domestic society and to make actions intelligible in social terms. At this point we might employ another metaphor: *a series of concentric circles*, the smallest of which represents the policy to be understood, and the outer circles expressing the various contexts in which that action can usefully be located for an explanation. Our problem becomes one of how far outward to proceed with the explanation. A purposive account which considers the intentional side of the action from the actors' perspective would take us outward a certain distance. For example, a puzzling state action can often be roughly understood by reference to the actors' prior plans. These plans may be placed in the trajectory of the longer-term international goals of the state; these, in turn, could be illuminated by the frame of reference shared by the principal actors, which is likely to concentrate on the international reasons and considerations behind a choice. A purely purposive or phenomenological account will most likely come to rest here, in a sort of court history, giving the impression that international “determinants” or international “motives” are all that is behind a pol-

<sup>13</sup> R. D. Laing, *The Politics of the Family* (New York: Pantheon 2969), 105. 535

icy, or that they are sufficient for our understanding.

But there are outer “circles” which surround these intentional elements and help us interpret the international actions which they inform. The international values and aims of the state elite are often “givens” for the actors, presupposing a whole series of assumptions about the nature of the domestic society and its needs, but they need not be “givens” for the analyst. Such presuppositions must be examined. The international environment offers barriers and opportunities to a state and excludes certain choices. But a knowledge of its processes often provides us with only the shallowest of interpretive accounts. Rather than giving rise to warrants for legitimate mutual expectations, its rules are more *ad hoc*, fragile, transient, and pragmatic. Domestic society, on the other hand, can often be said to provide the interests and values to which the international considerations are geared and in whose terms they can be redescribed.

#### THE STATE AS A SOCIAL ACTOR

This discussion suggests at least one approach to the political sociology of state action: a Social Actor Model. This starting point stands in contradistinction to the rather disembodied “Rational Actor Model” that Graham Allison has reconstructed, and should help us interpret even the technically rational policies which the latter leaves essentially unexplained.<sup>14</sup> The baseline, from which various lapses could be charted, would be formed by the broad policies of a state which are guided by and appropriate in the light of the domestic society’s consensual norms and expectations—the policies that can be successfully redescribed as means toward more inclusive social ends. No single “literal” notion of rationality would be sustained; all such definitions would be importantly contextual.

Once we identify the relevant social norms and can locate the policies

14 In spite of its reluctance or disinterest in extending its analysis to the deeper domestic levels and linkages which I suggest are essential to any completely adequate account, Allison’s work remains one of the few sophisticated treatments of the problem of explanation in the study of foreign policy. *Essence of Decision* (Boston: Little, Brown 1971).

and international role and outlook of a state within them, we can advance a deeper contextual account of the kind I have suggested. At this stage, the temptation to take these social norms for granted is understandable. But, it cannot be maintained too strongly, an explanation should not and need not stop when someone can interpret an instance of behavior as being rule-abiding. *The rules are themselves referential.* They point beyond the level of technical rationality with which earlier theorists have dealt (i.e., the relation between the ends and means of government policy itself), and extend into the underlying social context. Their restraints, attributions, and warranted expectations resemble what Habermas has called the realm of symbolic interaction. And, as he has said, “Symbolic interaction is as much a form of *representation* as is linguistic communication”<sup>15</sup> By locating a relevant rule or custom, we need not halt the excavatory process of explanation, the “expansion” of an act into a succession of concentric circles.

A *breach* of custom naturally presents us with a puzzle. But on many occasions so does the custom itself: a particular action may illuminate the custom just as the custom may illuminate the action. “A deviation is not a sin but a clue.”<sup>16</sup> It seems logical that once we are given an intentional action, our first task is to sketch out the rules which give to government action its socially conformative character. But knowing the rules does not necessarily tell us why governments are guided by them, just as the rules of a game do not elucidate the reasons for playing it. We cannot presuppose any particular form of linkage between the rules and the state, or between the rules and the underlying social fabric. There is a variety of possibilities; it is to be hoped that they will reveal themselves as we locate the place of the rules within a social structure, by reference to the values, aspirations, contradictions, constitutive mean-

<sup>15</sup> Jürgen Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interests* (Boston: Beacon Press 1971), 165; emphasis added. Compare his impressive “Technology and Science as ‘Ideology’” in *Toward a Rational Society* (London: Heineman 1971). As David Braybrooke warns, ‘action investigations easily degenerate into complacent and self-limiting recitations of cultural peculiarities: they readily impute to the fabric of the world the concepts and norms associated with contingent social arrangements and in spite of the lessons to be found in history and anthropology find it difficult to envisage any basic variations on these arrangements.’ Braybrooke, ed., *Philosophical Problems of the Social Sciences* (New York: Macmillan 1965), 16.

<sup>16</sup> Pitkin (fn. 8), 19.

ings, or historical formation of a particular society.

To understand why government actors follow (and find legitimate) the substantive norms of the domestic social order, we must go to the heart of the national distribution of power.<sup>17</sup> In this connection, it is important to make at least one point: when given a broad international policy (which in and of itself can partially explicate an action), it is necessary to search for social rules that delimit it and provide it with a domestic signification. When given such a rule, we should look for the underlying social interests and ends (and not an artificial “national interest”) of which it is an expression or precipitate. Once this is done, we can investigate those causal mechanisms which generate unintended lapses from the policies that are to a varying degree guided by the social rules—for example, the procedures of large organizations and the personal psychology (or psychopathology) of a country’s leaders. Critical analysts, recognizing the almost “anthropological” nature of their task, will not be satisfied with tracking down these causal encumbrances, however. State goals and stated policies should not be seen as self-explanatory, as they often are in a Rational Actor Model. Nor should these elements of error or miscalculation be allowed to assume center stage. In recent years, with the growing popularity of examining organizational processes and bureaucratic politics, this problem has too often been disregarded. Great stress has instead been laid upon the departures from a technically “rational” model which bureaucratic or social-psychological deformities may have fostered — for example, in comparisons of the American involvement in Cuba in 1961 with that in the Dominican Republic in 1965. What gradually recedes from view is the stubborn fact that the broad policies and premises, and even the “national interest” itself, may be far more intransigent and at times even pathological — inspired as they often

<sup>17</sup> This is a closely interrelated task which I must unfortunately defer. Compare Wittgenstein (fn. 3), #564: “The game, one would like to say, has not only rules but also a *point*.” For some recent discussions applicable in the case of the United States, see Walter Dean Burnham, “Crisis of American Political Legitimacy,” *Society*, x (November/December 1972); Gabriel Kolko, “Power and Capitalism in Twentieth Century America,” in J. David Colfax and Jack L. Roach, eds., *Radical Sociology* (New York: Basic Books 1971); Milton Mankoff, “Watergate and Sociological Theory,” *Theory and Society*, I (1974); Trent Schroyer, *The Critique of Domination* (New York: George Braziller 1973), chap. 7.

are by their relationship to “irrational” social processes. We should not only be interested in *incompetent* actions that violate *technical* rules (the rules that connect government tactics with government policies); but, more importantly, we should investigate the areas of conformative behavior and social deviance — where the consensual norms of a society are violated or pursued.

Some remaining questions center around what sort of social actor the state can be considered to be. We have to learn to what extent the state and its actions are “socialized” and to what degree they adhere to more than the state’s own technical rules for the success of its strategies. We need to know how self-conscious the pattern of rule-guidance is and exactly of what the character of these rules consists. How contradictory are the attendant demands? In what way are the rules transmitted or reinforced or subverted, and in what way are they formed? Also, how fragile are they, or how deeply entrenched? The relationship they bear to the regularities of culture and of socioeconomic organization as well as to the political behavior of the public should also be revealing. Finally, we can probe the ways the rules have been adjusted or accommodated to the changing international realities of an individual period, as the world environment provides a focus for the state, as well as a sometimes conflicting and sometimes reinforcing set of obstacles to its behavior. In some cases international pressures are so great that only the survival of the nation can be assured through foreign policy: there is no room for domestic “deflection” or for expansive conceptions of national needs. In many other cases, however — especially in instances of international insulation, great-power behavior, or hegemony — a purely international or “national security” account of state aims will be hopelessly inadequate.

Once the explicit demands of national survival are interpreted and satisfied, the state is granted a range of possible movement, corresponding to the spectrum of the strength of the social rules. At one end of this range would be an autonomous “self-referential” or “non-referential”<sup>18</sup> state actor, capable of

<sup>18</sup> Terms adapted from recent art and literary criticism. See, for instance, the related discussions in David Antin, “Some Questions About Modernism,” *Occident*, viii (Spring 1974), 7-38; Michael Fried, “Art and Objecthood,” *Artforum*, v (June 1967); Alain Robbe-Grillet, *For a New Novel* (New York: Grove Press 1965); and Andrews, “Surface Explanation,” *Ironwood*, III, No 1 (#5, 1975), and “Index: On Reference, Objects, and Language,” in *Open Letter*,

virtually unfettered maneuver and planning in relation to domestic society, oblivious to larger social needs, and evolving its own guidelines as it goes along. Consensual norms or rules of domestic “usage” would decline drastically in importance relative to the technical rules of the governmental subsystem of “purposive-rational action.”<sup>19</sup> The result may be a further debilitation of domestic needs and a bolstering of traditions of governmental irresponsibility. The behavior of the state would be self-contained, self-motivating, and even self-explanatory, based more on the problems of specific goal attainment defined in terms of an unquestioned ends-means relationship and less on a conformity to social roles, whether internalized or externally sanctioned. That may be the result of willful contravention or of the decline of seemingly shared and warranted expectations stemming from the domestic society. At its extreme, the state’s international policies would appear completely anomic and unintelligible in domestic social terms.

At the opposite end of the range would be a completely referential and socialized policy, the “socially instrumental” character of its aims being guided by reciprocally shared expectations that take the form of social norms. Such norms and expectations define a domestic role for foreign policy, and place it in direct contrast to “objectless dispositions” or to actions performed and valued for their own sake. There is then invariably a trade-off, which our style of explanation should reflect, between international policies that can be characterized as ends in themselves (such as Schumpeter’s famous definition of imperialism as expansion which is its own “object”), and those that can be successfully redescribed as rule-guided means toward more inclusive social ends.

Second Series (forthcoming 1975). I will treat this issue more extensively in a future monograph, “The Social Embeddedness of State Action.”

<sup>19</sup> Habermas, *Toward a Rational Society* (fn. 15), 91-94, 113-20, and passim. A fragmented social order may parallel the “decline of the referentials” (to borrow Henri Lefebvre’s term), so that the government can attempt to Jorje the rules rather than refer (and defer) to them. Lefebvre, *Everyday Life in the Modern World* (New York: Harper & Row 1971), chap. 3. Compare Roland Barthes, *Mythologies* (New York: Hill & Wang 1972), 109-59; Jeremy J. Shapiro, “One-Dimensionality: The Universal Semiotic of Technological Experience,” in Paul Breines, ed., *Critical Interruptions* (New York: Herder and Herder 1972); Sheldon Wolin’s discussion of rules and Leviathan in *Politics and Vision* (Boston: Little, Brown 1960); and Habermas, “Toward a Theory of Communicative Competence,” in Hans Peter Dreitzel, ed., *Recent Sociology No. 2: Patterns of Communicative Behavior* (New York: Macmillan 1970).

Between these extremes lies the complex variety of relationships connecting the state and society. They can be usefully understood in terms of the degree of rule-guidance, social meaning, and conventionality which is involved.

The Social Actor Model therefore appears to offer a means of interpreting an individual foreign policy or role by locating it within the array of “concentric contexts” which can be specified by reference to domestic rules and purposes, and which can serve as a framework for our explanations, both of particular state actions and of non-decisions. Primary emphasis would in this way be placed squarely upon both the purposive and the conventional side of state behavior, rather than on the “microchronology” of its bureaucratic planning or the psychohistory of its leaders, or on taking the international aims and outlook of the policymakers at face value. Finally, by penetrating the taken-for-granted domestic world within which policymakers often operate, we can create a kind of emancipatory perspective on the present and future policies of a state. The domestic society’s norms and interests, the broader social ends to which even an elite’s conception of national security will ultimately refer, might then come to be revealed and better understood.



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02

Explaining and  
Understanding  
State Action

[1976]

# EXPLAINING AND UNDERSTANDING STATE ACTION

[1976]

*Précis:* Conflicting interpretations of state action reflect, often unwittingly, the confusions and disputes that arise among opposing views of explanation. The aim here is to clarify the explanatory process, particularly in individual studies of foreign policy. It presents a purposive model of explanation which, compared with the injunctions of naturalistic models, appears better attuned to the descriptions and answers we request in such studies. In the end, however, a critical assessment is made of this model, for purposive accounts may remain on the surface; they are not self-explanatory. Even though grounded in actors' self-understandings and shared frames of reference, they often require their own translation or explanation — to excavate the domestic context which is presupposed. Yet such a contextual treatment need not take a naturalistic form, emphasizing the antecedents which determined the purposive dimensions. It can instead supplement a purposive understanding by treating the shared projects of a state elite as social acts, embedded within (and intelligible in the light of) a particular domestic setting.

We speak of explanations as though we all know what explanation consists of. Here, it seems, we have beguiled ourselves — by depending upon a level of agreement which does not exist, or by taking from the natural sciences a model of explanation whose appropriateness to the tasks we set for ourselves is open to serious doubt. And it might, as a start, be said that these difficulties have a familiar source. Investigators have dealt with one of the most basic matters of political inquiry in a glancing fashion, leaving whatever

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clarification needs to be achieved to others — who are, in turn, rarely consulted. The necessary conceptual efforts and controversies continue, but are rarely allowed to guide or “impede” the empirical work except in the most tangential of ways. In studies of international behavior these tendencies are pronounced. So are the confusions which usually accompany them. Yet, even granting this, such impairment need not be inevitable. Or at least: this is a claim I would like to entertain in this essay. For instead of relying upon apparent orthodoxies in the philosophy of science, or proceeding in an unself-conscious or ad hoc way, newer models of-explanation might be developed. It is no use digging our heels in unless we can be sure we are on solid ground.

One approach, instantly familiar, has been to follow the methodological injunctions of a naturalist style of inquiry.<sup>1</sup> We have tended, for example, to identify as explanations only those accounts in which the behavior to be explained is made to seem regular, predictable. The light at the end of the explanatory tunnel illuminates the behavior by showing us why, given certain initial conditions, it had to happen. It was necessary, or at least — in a statistical way — very likely. Also, from the presence of broader generalizations or laws, these statements about the regularities involved can be deduced. It is from this additional covering element that our causal expectancies gain their explanatory power. The objective is always to specify the antecedent conditions to the point where (in light of the generalization) as few other outcomes as possible could have resulted. From the pre-existing generalizations and the specified set of background conditions, we could have forecast the event, for it is tied to them by a process of logical entailment.<sup>2</sup> Retrodiction thus becomes the gauge of success.

One question quickly arises, however: is this the gauge with which we are concerned in attempting to understand an individual state action or foreign policy? To answer this question, we must examine at close range the interests presupposed by the form of our explanatory questions and our notions of understanding, as well as the limitations of a naturalistic description of international behavior and the style of interpretation that frequently accompanies it. The assumptions and implicit theses involved here must be brought to the surface.

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By analyzing the special vulnerabilities to which the familiar models are subject, I hope to demonstrate the need for a different approach to explanation and to give some indication of its possible range and format. In so doing, I will be mining and sifting some of the contemporary work in the philosophy of action in order to see to what extent its insights may be of use. Many of these issues are of course familiar; some are not. Nevertheless, I have not found nearly enough attention being paid to them specifically in the literature on international politics; instead, partially as a result, great confusion reigns, muddying the problems of explanation as they apply to an individual state action. Conflicting interpretations of foreign policy reflect, often unwittingly, intellectual differences on these matters — differences that have been too casually papered over in the hopes of protecting a consensus. No such consensus exists, nor can we evolve one from the lip-service which a neo-positivist epistemology has commanded. Stances concerning the level-of-analysis problem, bureaucratic models of decision-making, as well as discussions of the political economy of imperialism have been tangled in these matters. The demands of guidance and clarification are immense.

#### ACTION AND BEHAVIOR

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And the problem arises: what is left over if I subtract the fact that my arm goes up from the fact that I raise my arm.<sup>3</sup>

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Certain treatments of international behavior are notable for disregarding not so much the immediate aims of state leaders as the purposive nature of state action. Even as they acknowledge that the goals of state actors are important elements worth examining, this widely shared acknowledgment goes on curiously to the side. It does not appear to affect the prior conception of the phenomenon at hand. Although, unlike much analysis in the natural

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sciences, the purposive features are not usually excluded in a stipulative way, what this conception does not accredit is the idea that these features — the intentions, goals, and reasons of state actors, for example — are defining, or distinguishing characteristics of social conduct.

At times even the more limited acknowledgment is not made. The regularities which a causalist predictive account will highlight may be cast in an exclusively behavioral language of description. The policies of a state, for example, are sometimes said to resemble a series of physical events that occur in the environment. The hope of the analyst, then, lies in their prediction or control, in gaining power “over” their physical manifestations. Graham Allison, for example, has made this denigration of purposive elements rather explicit:

From the basic conception of happenings as-choices to be explained by reference to objectives (on analogy with the actions of individual human beings), we must move to a conception of happenings as events whose determinants are to be investigated according to the canons that have been developed by modern science.<sup>4</sup>

Now I do not wish to deny that there is any value at all in this sort of recommendation. But I think it is important to show that the conception involved proves much more quarrelsome than some have commonly assumed. When we narrow our attention so that only the behavioral aspects of these happenings fall within it, we stumble over obstacles which the orthodoxies of our method have failed to remove. For the most common ways in which we ask an explanatory “why?” question and for much of our point in asking, we will be frustrated. An answer would be forthcoming, but phrased in a form of locution quite different from that of the question. Those questions usually presume that we are talking about dealings and doings and deeds — actions performed by someone in accordance with their purposes — and not merely about occurrences or something that happens. Actors are thought capable of consciously monitoring and directing their performance and not simply of

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responding to environmental contingencies. Notice also that our questions often presume that actors had goals in mind and that they had reasons for achieving those goals. They presume in addition that these are some of the most important things one wants to reconstruct. Yet that presumption does not stay to one side; instead, it takes center stage. Action and behavior are not terms to be used interchangeably. The purposive or intentional aspects are essential, constitutive ones — for an *action* as different from an instance of *behavior*, which remains the more inclusive category. From such general distinctions, in fact, there have evolved opposing traditions of social inquiry, ones which can help guide us toward a more fruitful conception of what represents an understanding.<sup>5</sup> For a preliminary distinction in the case at hand, one difference would be between *international behavior* and *state action* and between the ways in which we might approach their analysis.

To a “why?” question encountered in everyday life, for instance, a probabilistic account of causal sufficiency may seem largely irrelevant, for the sort of understanding that is being requested can rarely be satisfied by a prediction. It may in fact preclude a predictive treatment. We will want to know what the actors had in mind, or what frame of reference they shared in the face of their situation. Our interest in these things sheds light as well on the differences in perspective between agents and spectators and the questions appropriate to each. Those points of view are not identical, nor should those of the actor be sacrificed to, or identified with, those of the spectator. Actors’ conceptions, for example, are rarely cast in terms of the antecedents that would be, in some unacknowledged way, sufficient to generate their behavior or even their purposes. A reconstruction framed in such causal and spectatorial terms would surprise the respondent, perhaps as much for its virtuosity as for its superfluity.

An action is in fact generally regarded as a means to some end, as something an actor engages in “for the sake of” that end, rather than as an unintended consequence or the physical effect of some cause, or the predictable response to certain stimuli. In the problems at hand—those of an individual account of a state action — a “why” question carries with it a similar demand: for an answer cast in purposive form, grounded in the concep-

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tions and aims of the actors, rather than in the background phenomena that enable us to predict the event. “Why did you — or they, or even: we — do that, or not do that, or plan to do that, or plan on doing that?” Elaborate hypotheses may have at their heart little more than abstracted versions of such questions. A naturalistic description framed “according to the canons that have been developed by modern science” might be beside the point. Many of our constructs must instead be “second order” ones, fashioned from those of the actors involved,<sup>6</sup> and the form of explanation would follow suit.

The action of a woman taking her life, as one example, would not be understood simply in terms of the regularities involved in a body approaching and then hurtling down a mine shaft. The description would seem perverse. Nor can we comprehend the distinctive character of most state actions by treating them as though they are simply physical happenings. If purely behavioral accounts of this sort are more familiar to us than in the case of individual human action, in many ways they seem no less perverse. Of course alternative descriptions are always possible. But while they may not cancel out each other, some are clearly more useful for what we want to know and how we want to understand something. And there is a price to pay, especially when certain ways of characterizing behavior prove intractable, or impossible to translate into other terms.

Purposive descriptions, for example, cannot be extracted from a naturalistic treatment, or one which deals with international behavior solely as an environmental occurrence. This is partially because any one outcome could be consistent with a host of different purposive descriptions. Outcomes are in this sense equivocal. By letting them monopolize our attention, we can often find out what “happened” in a topographical sense, but still remain far from comprehending what was done, or what was intended, let alone the reasons that surrounded the aims involved. As one example, the most obvious overt features of different foreign policy interventions may appear quite similar (troops landing on the beachheads, bombers strafing the countryside, etc.). Although the horrors of such conduct may threaten to blur any further distinctions, this blurring can easily mislead. However hypnotic the outcomes, they are still not sufficiently revealing or differentiating. The behavior

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involved might have been characterized by different or even opposite considerations in the minds of the actors (those of the policymakers and their domestic constituencies, for example). Phenomenally similar events, on such an occasion, may be accorded an entirely different status as deeds or actions.

Examining the aims and reasons for state action will be useful in another, perhaps less obvious way: the project of a state elite is rarely exhausted by any single outcome. That outcome may even be stimulating, rather than definitive. Doesn't this sort of continuity provoke our concern for the blueprints and the aspirations of state leaders, for the "rehearsed thing" as well as the 'done thing!?' Actions do not of course flow unproblematically or in a directly determined way from the "definitions of the situation" which actors hold. Nevertheless, such goals and frameworks give us insights into the realm of possible conduct—conceivable actions that could be located coherently within the actors' agenda in the past as well as in the future. One should also not neglect "negative actions," or intentional refraining from action, or especially the phenomena of "nondecision-making" which can operate in the policy arena without showing up except as an implicit exclusion.<sup>7</sup> Yet abstention and forbearance may be much more difficult to recognize within a purely spectatorial perspective.

Also, not only do goals exist apart from any specific fulfillment, they extend in time beyond any one action, not as a separable but as an intrinsic element or form of meaning. Therefore they encompass a whole series of actions — some tried, some untried, some to-be-tried. In politically complacent (or amnesiac) times, such a fact is conveniently overlooked. In fact, a disastrous outcome can often be persuasively and rhetorically unhinged from its underlying structure of goals, even when those goals have outlasted the disaster. Official interests may find great use in such a persuasion, especially if the outcome is a recent one, and many might otherwise suspect that the goal has not been exhausted at all. United States policy in Southeast Asia affords many instances of this. Continuities can be sometimes an excuse (as they were for Lyndon Johnson), and sometimes an embarrassment (as the Nixon administration later learned). The analyst, on the other hand, may find in such continuities of intent an illuminating record, even more so than the patterns we



can discover among the outcomes.

A generalizing behavioral treatment, thought to represent the building block for a more general theory, is tempted to ignore these differences in the intent and outlook of actors. Such an emphasis may be misguided. One could say, in elaboration, that knowing the way the overt behavioral aspects are patterned over a range of diverse cases is neither a sufficient nor even a necessary condition for understanding a particular policy. A commitment to act in a certain way, for example, might exist and demand an explanation even without being put into motion. Under other circumstances, it might take a vague form that could suggest, at the surface level, some quite different phenomenon.

The term “different,” as used here, cues us into a larger descriptive problem in which it figures: the problem of translation and synonymy. These are issues which can, I think, eventually shed a great deal of light on the conceptual basis of political inquiry but which have scarcely begun to be considered. What are the criteria for positing relevant differences? To take a preliminary position, I think it can be argued that two state actions are not “the same” unless we can find in them a similarity of intent and not only of appearance. The purposes and reasons are what differentiate them, what make them an instance of one action rather than another — of military provocation or intelligence gathering, for example, in the case of America’s patrols in the Tonkin Gulf in mid-1964.<sup>8</sup> This is just as true in foreign policy as it is with language. To go beyond the equivocal nature of happenings in the environment, and to avoid bystepping the vexing issue of *what* is being done, the conceptualizations and understandings and reports of the actors themselves must be taken into account — whether in the state’s action is direct (on the part of leaders, advisors, etc.) or indirect (by the electorate, pressure groups, classes or elites). Analyses that blithely separate the outcome from the actors’ specific aims and reasoning, on the other hand, proceed differently: however great their ingenuity, the artificial nature of the original descriptions cannot be concealed. Actors’ conceptions and discourse do not simply ornament an action. They are an integral part of an action’s makeup, and therefore of its description, and therefore of its explanation. One should follow from the other.

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To a certain extent, the situation in the social sciences would appear to be the converse of that obtaining in physical science: the more universal the laws, the more devoid of content they become or rather: the less explanatory value they have.<sup>9</sup>

The difference is precisely analogous to that between being able to formulate statistical laws about the likely occurrence of words in a language and being able to understand what was being said by someone who spoke the language. The latter can never be reduced to the former.<sup>10</sup>

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#### PURPOSIVE EXPLANATION

In the way we usually think about them, as I have said, the important behavior of states is characterized by the preconceived aims of state actors, or at least grounded in the framework of a broader intentional project. We do not usually treat them as a series of physical episodes that happen to occur according to some regularity which could subsume them, yet of which the actors are unaware. As such, they lend themselves to a purposive style of interpretation, resembling in many ways the kind of ordinary language account we receive when we ask someone why they did something. Now the pattern of choices and assumptions and reasons which surround a state action may be quite complex and untidy, much more so than in everyday life. Yet if we wish to understand this action (in the ways we customarily use that term), our task involves elucidating a project or policy in which it can be located.<sup>11</sup> The action is embedded in that pattern. We might for example ask the actors (and we might attempt to discover through documents and other revealing expressions) what reasons they shared for engaging in a particular activity. What were the contours of the *purposive consensus* within which bureaucratic bargaining and compromise took place. This may imply that although we know

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what the behavior was, we are not exactly sure where it was intended to lead. We sometimes ask for the reasons behind an action when we are not sure what goals were being sought. We also tend to ask this when the aim is fairly clear but the reason for pursuing it (the “why” of an aim) is not.

When we ask a “why” question of an actor, the answer customarily comes to us prefaced with “because.” Even so, a Humean conception of causation is rarely implied. Rather than reporting on those independently specifiable factors that were sufficient for their movements to be generated, actors usually give us their reasons for acting as they did. Spokesmen from the American policy elite, to repeat a previous example, claimed that the U.S. intervened in Indochina because they could not afford the local balance of power being placed in jeopardy, because they wanted to stop the contagion of communist aggression and social revolution, because America’s reputation and credibility in other areas had to be protected, and so on. These reasons are not cast in the form of separable antecedents; instead, they are given as interpretative elements of the actions planned, as an inseparable part of the mosaic that we call a deliberate act. They help constitute it or make it what it is. The action displays a plan; the plan expands the description. By providing the reasons behind their conduct, the actors have already begun to make the action intelligible by locating it within a larger “reasoned” policy. They have transformed it into what I would call an *interpreted action*.

By showing the fittingness of the actions in light of the goals and reasons which the actors had entertained, a degree of intelligibility is provided. Set against the orthodox style of causal explanation (which appears to do violence to the way actors conceive of their own conduct), this is a procedure which can yield a purposive explanation. It allows us to look at and characterize state actions rather differently, to appraise goals (and not merely the means one uses to achieve them), and to assess certain areas of responsibility which are sometimes shielded in more naturalistic accounts. Also, though it may pose needless complications for those who want simply to generalize about environmental happenings, a purposive treatment can help us discern intentional patterns across a host of physically dissimilar actions (and even inactions) that one state may sponsor. It does not hope to fill in the “black

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box” of the national actor with a developmental sequence of inner mechanisms or intervening determinants. Instead, such an explanation lends itself to another form of accounting and explanatory concern — a variety we associate with the textures of everyday life and sometimes with the process of social or political understanding itself.

There are of course other sorts of explanation, of which the causal and deductive varieties seem by far the most common. A causalist account of individual behavior, for example, tends to be offered, sometimes metaphorically, when the purported actor does not wish to take responsibility for the behavior. Not infrequently we even hear someone invoke a causalist account to “cover” himself, in the dual sense which that term has taken on — of subsumption and the avoidance of blame. People do this by reciting a list of factors that would, in the presence of certain regularities, aid an observer in framing either a prediction or retrodiction of their behavior. We hear this especially when someone does not want to be associated with what they “did,” but, instead, would like to have it felt as something that “happened,” or, as it is often said, “just happened.” This frequently takes on a quietistic tone. The very ideas of responsibility and political appraisal, even as metaphors, begin to lose their solid moorings when we subject them to this contrary form of discourse—to the assumptions we make about happenings as different from those with which we treat purposive action.<sup>12</sup>

“It was not our fault., actually; we were forced into it.”

“No one can in fact be blamed, for the real lesson of this disaster was that of unintended consequences and the tragedies of inadvertence.”

“No one *chose* the outcome; it simply happened. It was just the result of certain standard operating procedures over which no one had any real control.”

“It just grew like topsy, and that was that.”

“A is not at all responsible. B said this to C, and C convinced D and E and F of its merit; B, then, with his great persuasive powers, prevented the disaffection of G and H and kept them on board for valuable support; and so, finally, A was

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faced with a consensus he could not refuse. The policy was merely the resultant.”

In all such cases the shared intentions that underprop the broad contours of a policy are slighted, even though many of the component happenings are dependent on those very contours for their significance and often enough make very little sense without them.

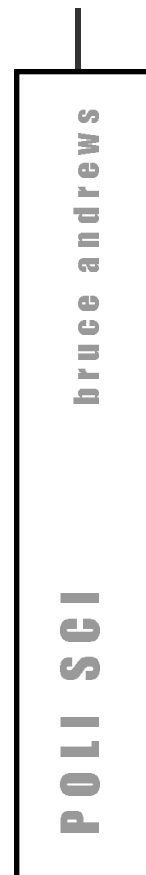
Now perhaps because of their emphasis on habitual unreflective behavior or on consequences that are unintended, explanations in the social sciences have often ascribed neither responsibility nor conscious goals to the actors. This point is worth stressing, but it is not one which can carry the argument a great distance. If a policy seems puzzlingly haphazard, we may wonder if it has a “point.” We may ask if it makes sense in terms of any conscious aims, or if any significant calculations were involved. As a prominent example, the behavior might resemble a collage, a sum of disparate events with no single locatable repository of responsibility and without a *raison d'être*. A search for causal mechanisms, obstructions or sidetrackings might enter into the analysis at this stage, whenever the intentional elements seem unable to account for the conduct or when actors invoke compulsions as a form of alibi. Yet the temptation arises: this stress on causal mechanisms, even of a supplemental nature, may come to undermine the original characterization of the phenomenon as purposive conduct. If behavior is equivocal, such outcomes may threaten to appear simply mute — and be allowed to remain so.

This has been one of the major failings of the bureaucratic conception of foreign policy,<sup>13</sup> or of accounts making such claims as the following, which was presented to account for the most significant outcomes of American policy in the 1960s: “But the inertial dynamics of the bureaucracy is the major explanation of the disasters of the decade.”<sup>14</sup> Such “explanations” have received their share of criticism, Even so, all too often the entire issue has been obscured or cast in terms of the level-of-analysis problem. Causalist explanations which stress organizational processes, for example, are rightly set against a purposive form of analysis which stresses the shared goals and reasons of the policy elite. At this point, however, concern with levels of analysis frequently

takes over, so that much of the emphasis comes to be placed on the topographical location of the action described (is it at the level of the nation-state, or is it inside the black box in the institutions which comprise the state, etc.). Actually, in disputes such as this, the most important distinction for political analysis is that *two quite different forms of explanation are involved*. The degree of self-consciousness about these matters unfortunately remain slim — a fact not unrelated to the hegemony of the orthodox causalist style. This, in turn, merely encourages the attempt to clear away all the interpretative tangles while staying within the boundaries of that style. Can't actors' objectives be assimilated to the language of causation and determinants? Can't reasons for acting? Can't desires or motives; can't intentions?<sup>15</sup> In fact those tangles may simply result from a prior, and arguably suffocating, intellectual confinement.

Now this is not to deny that some things are carried out unwittingly, accidentally. Events do have a "senseless" dimension. As different "microscopic" courses of action come together, they may lead to a larger-scale result which no one intended and for which no one can be held responsible. Yet if naturalistic analysis has often satisfied the social sciences, there have always been exceptions. The study of foreign policy may be one, for the important state actions which seem to warrant a specific accounting do not bear enough of the insignia of senseless happenings. Conditions and consequences have rarely sufficed. When we request a purposive account, our very asking in fact presupposes that the action had a "point." Therefore we want to set the action squarely within a network of plans and aims, which are located in a wider setting of reasons and interests. In this concentric movement, environmental happenings are replaced by purposive conduct; instances of conduct are in turn replaced by (or elaborated into) what I have called interpreted actions.

Also notice that in political systems, the idea of representation is one which further codifies these assumptions of intended and responsible conduct. Among the countless interpretations of American foreign policy, for example, most rely heavily on some notion of a national actor or national actors, along with a close regard for their concerns and reasons. They do so even as they mix such interpretative terms carelessly and inappropriately with the language of compulsions and determinants. Of course purposive conduct



often takes the form of learned and, thereafter, habitual dealings with familiar situations — where no conscious process of calculation may arise. Many such deeds are simply ... done; they leave no trail of public reasoning or accounts. Nevertheless, the thing to be noticed about governmental actions is that these habitual moves, and the “learning” process that preceded them, are much more commonly monitored — not only by the state actors themselves but by kibbitzing domestic constituents. For their actions, leaders are supposedly held responsible and, like unpardonable conspirators, sometimes even for their goals and plans. The political character of state action makes these articulated deliberations more familiar to us. It therefore facilitates the task of reconstructing the perspectives and self-understandings of those who have been centrally involved.

To elaborate further through the use of an analogy, in a therapeutic model, we find a somewhat related process, but one in which the actor assumes a different role: she or he becomes the interlocutor. Psychoanalytic theory provides examples. Here, quite unlike the opposing model of a completely somatic or physicalist medicine, behavior is not something that happens “to” the patient.<sup>16</sup> To simplify drastically, it is a pattern of action that a person desires and wills, for which she or he has uncoverable reasons. The actor-questioner then attempts to ferret out and bring to self-consciousness those latent purposes and reasons which lie behind an activity and give it its point. An analogy might lie with reducing the temptation to deflect responsibility toward the international or bureaucratic environment and its apparent determinisms, with regarding that environment as a nexus of incentives for acting in various ways rather than as a structure of compulsions. In this way, things which had just previously seemed to happen in the “natural” course of events or with a certain regularity (i.e., in causalist or deductive imagery) are transformed into arenas of conscious conflict or (admittedly somewhat vague) purposive responsibility. As Mischel puts it, “The difference between free and compulsive behavior might then be construed as the difference between acting in accordance with one’s aims and intentions, and being ‘driven’ by aims and intentions which one cannot (without therapy) acknowledge as one’s own.”<sup>17</sup> The word “driven” belongs largely to a causalist, not a purposive lex-

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icon. It implies that the realm of hidden intentionality may even operate quite mechanically, and in a subterranean way, as determinants. These are unwitting compulsions from which an emancipatory therapy would hope to set the patient free, or, carried to the plane of governments, which social analysts or the proponents of *Ideologiekritik* would try to uncover. Changes in perception or representation might be effected through *influence*, rather than the changes in “contingencies of reinforcement” which a model of *power* would suggest.<sup>18</sup> An acceptance of responsibility, at both the personal and the political level, might come to replace projections or excuses of inevitability that are little more than “self-service.”

Such differences are not trivial, aside from whatever merit they show when it comes to describing the actions that are to be understood. A purposive account, for example, sheds light also on the ways that the reigning goals and considerations of a foreign policy might come to lose their significance and transparency, as the reasons that are offered for an action begin to appear inappropriate or incoherent. The unintelligibility of a continuing action can presage a breakdown in whatever domestic consensus may support it. Even though uncovering the goals and reasoning behind state behavior may therefore be of great moment if we are to transform the policy, some have ignored this lesson. Unlike the manipulation and technical exploitability of objectified processes that has been an aspiration guiding much of the natural sciences, a *dialogue* is suggested between social actors (or subjects). In some ways, the normative implications of political or social prevention and shared understanding therefore would differ from those of behavioral forecasting; the differences (and the advantages) show up within the corresponding styles of interpretation.<sup>19</sup> Now, in very sketchily stating the case for this one style, I do not question the value, even great value, of others. But the use of this approach, in keeping with the character of most state actions, is the logical first step and, in any event, an essential one. In light of such considerations for the task of understanding state policy, a purposive model can be relied upon.

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BENEATH THE GOALS:  
EXPLANATION AND SOCIAL CONTEXT

EXPLAINING  
AND UNDER-  
STANDING  
STATE ACTION

Some of these remarks may be readily accepted. In fact, most analyses of foreign policy have accepted at least implicitly the value of a purposive *description*. At the same time, though, they have — often without careful thought and, I believe, inappropriately — pledged their allegiance to more naturalistic models of *explanation*. My arguments are aimed therefore at bringing these assumptions to the surface so that the confusions that bedevil our choice of explanatory styles might begin to be dispelled. At least where we undertake studies of an individual foreign policy, some of the talismanic value of more predictive or deductive models will have to be sacrificed if the overall self-monitoring character of the actions is to be respected. To summarize: the logic by which we explain foreign policy simply cannot be divorced from the purposive way in which we characterize it.

Unfortunately, even this model leaves dangling a number of questions which deserve an answer. The difficulties involved in reconstructing aims or reasons are legion, and the problems implicated here have only begun to be systematically addressed. But what I have been concerned to show are the kinds of tangles which arise when it is imagined that these problems can be avoided by bypassing the realm of intentionality or subordinating it to the concern for causal necessity. Such a “cure” is worse than the difficulty; the problems will not go away.

While dealing with an action from the actors’ point of view has been a hallmark of the diplomatic literature, its fragmentary and often uncritical nature should serve as a warning. Too often it degenerates into other popular genres: court history, justification, advocacy. Actors can for example be deficient in their understanding of their own moves. They do not always know where they stand in regard to their situation. Supposedly trained in reading the beliefs of others, they can be hopelessly illiterate in the presence of their own. Here, the hypotheses of psychoanalytic theory (or of cognitive dissonance theory) should caution our enthusiasm over an account that relies too heavily on publicly articulated reasoning. Though political actors may decline

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the option of silence, frequently they disguise the springs of their action, “beautifying” their objectives in an effort to soothe particular audiences. Rhetoric must therefore be treated seriously, but not innocently. If given a critical eye, actors’ accounts at times reveal an artful arrangement of sublimations, rationalizations, pretexts and lies which themselves demand an explanation.<sup>20</sup>

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“Actions lie louder than words.”

\*

Even if we are confident about the prominence of a particular aim or plan, our problems are far from solved. For, except in rare cases, an explanation will demand more than reconstructing the actors’ shared frame of reference. The interpreted action may remain intelligible. The mere presence of some recognizable goal or reason does not in and of itself rid the actions of all opaqueness. As artists have learned, it is hardly enough to say that “the question of clarity is one of intention.”<sup>21</sup> This has also been the signal failing of Rational Actor models of foreign policy<sup>22</sup> — much more crippling, in fact, than their reliance upon assumptions about a unitary actor. A purposive model need not be a rational model, but neither one may make an action sufficiently intelligible. Both give us a way of accounting for decisions *in terms of* the objectives and reasons which an actor could present (or, more problematically, which an analyst can infer). Yet knowing the deeds were appropriate to certain purposes will not do, unless we ascribe to those purposes a quality of self-evidence. One deficiency is clear: the shared purposes are in no way accounted for.

In the received conception, the adequacy of an individual explanation is thought to depend upon our ingenuity in contriving a broader generalization—a generalization that can subsume, and thus account for, the regularities which the explanation has revealed. The adequacy of a purposive treat-

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ment, on the other hand, might be gauged by the fittingness of the actions in terms of those objectives and reasons which the actors entertained. The “practical inference”<sup>23</sup> rather than the deductively-interrelated set of causal hypotheses, lies at the heart of the aspiration. By “describing the end or the intention which the action realizes, we [are said to] explain why the action was performed.”<sup>24</sup> But isn’t this overstated? The same deficiency is revealed. The major premise of such an inference pattern (the characterization of a future state of affairs as a highly valued one) may be inexplicable.

It is just not convincing, even in cases of rational conduct, to contend that a person’s “behavior can be fully explained in terms of the goals he is trying to achieve.”<sup>25</sup> Too much would be taken for granted or withheld from scrutiny. Why were those objectives ones which the state actors intended to realize? *Goals themselves are problematical. Reasons are not self-explanatory.* The intentional qualities of an action, once uncovered, may continue to strike us as odd or even pathological. Because of its surface nature a purposive account therefore often *requires its own explanation.* It is a necessary first step, but it need not be the final one.

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Intending something... involves selecting or accepting a context.<sup>26</sup> Context is everything.<sup>27</sup>

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If the purposive elements of an action appear “reasonable” to us (taking our criteria from some presupposed context or shared cultural background), we often accept the actors’ reasons<sup>37</sup> as a very offhand account, one which can at least partially answer the question of why they did what they did. A plausible statement of the intended effect of an action may satisfy us: an interpreted action may suffice. This will in fact be the tendency of an official account: to try to stay on the surface, thereby *avoiding* certain types of transparency. The role of justification would overwhelm that of revelation, Yet, giv-

ing this last point some finer detail, I want to say: if the purposes and reasons which inform a foreign policy are not comprehensible in light of the domestic circumstances, a purposive action may remain as opaque as an author's use of an unfamiliar word. Why — or, in what context — is a particular foreign policy objective so desirable? As one writer put it, "To discover empirically what someone is doing we have to discover what *sense* is attached to his action in the society or cultural framework within which he is acting."<sup>28</sup> These are questions we might well address. And several related issues come to mind. Often we will want to ask why a national concern is played out in a particular arena, why (or how) it has come to be defined in this way, and what significance we might attach to these facts. A fuller understanding would require us to ask what exclusions are taking place between the state and domestic society, as well as which representations. We should also find some way of accounting for the intensity of the nation's purpose in relation to its possible costs, to alternative courses of national action or inaction, and to alternative social projects or competing social goals which the state could have entertained in its stead.<sup>29</sup> In regard to the sources of this intensity — and, along with it, the entire process of "nondecision-making" — many questions are left unanswered.

There are also other issues to which our eventual answers might respond. Explanation is, first of all, a matter of translation. The actions dealt with in a study of foreign policy will depend upon a particular social setting for their meaning as well as their significance. In order to get beyond the face value of either an expression or an action, it must be seen as more than a project. Something that is already meaningful in terms of a purposive framework needs to be translated into substantive social terms, by giving attention to its particular use and role in its domestic situation and not merely to the actors' international aims.<sup>30</sup>

Such a reference will be needed even if we are to successfully differentiate the actions, one from the other. With this assertion, I am going beyond the earlier purposive approach to the problems of comparison and synonymy by suggesting the adoption of an approach which underscores the *conventional* as well as the intentional nature of these actions:

Two things may be called 'the same' or 'different' only with reference to a set of criteria which lay down what is to be regarded as a relevant difference. When the 'things' in question are purely physical the criteria appealed to will of course be those of the observer. But when one is dealing with intellectual (or, indeed, any kind of social) 'things,' that is not so. For their *being* intellectual or social, as opposed to physical, in character depends entirely on their belonging in a certain way to a system of ideas or modes of living. It is only by reference to the criteria governing that system of ideas or mode of life that they have any existence as intellectual or social events. It follows that if the sociological investigator wants to regard them as social events (as, *ex hypothesi*, he must), he has to take seriously the criteria which are applied for distinguishing 'different' kinds of actions and identifying the 'same' kinds of actions within the way of life he is studying. It is not open to him arbitrarily to impose his own standards from without. In so far as he does so, the events he is studying lose altogether their character as *social* events.<sup>31</sup>

A search for explanations, as already noted, need not be seen as a demand for a nexus of causalities, for separable antecedents sufficient to generate the happening in a predictable way. Nor need it be grounded exclusively in a view which sees the actors' self-understandings as an absolute source of signification. On the contrary, in many ways it resembles a search for the most revealing social context in which an interpreted action can be placed and in the light of which it can be rendered transparent. Even the tasks of differentiation and description will suggest such an approach. It allows for a more expansive characterization of *what* is being done, and a context in which the logic (or incoherence) of doing such a thing moves more clearly into the foreground. "The action needs explaining because there seems to be no 'connection' between the situation confronting the agent and what he does about it, at least when we describe the situation and appeal to commonly accepted rules of conduct concerning the thing to do in such a situation."<sup>32</sup> "Why?" may, in

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other words, be a request for knowledge about a situation whose conventions make our specification of “what is being done” appear appropriate. We might first look for a particular domestic context which underlies the state’s actions and its official definitions, one that provides a setting of constraint and intelligibility — especially in instances where the constraints of the international environment do not seem so overwhelming that we would be satisfied with a prediction of the “behavioral externalities.”<sup>33</sup> That context (often meaning: the organization of socio-political reality) gives us insight into why certain reasons are felt to be “good reasons,” and why what the actors are *intending* to do are things which they are also *intended* or expected to do. Such a setting is often *presupposed* by the actors’ self-understandings. It would help us specify whatever other features of a situation will need to be “taken into account” (and cease to be taken-for-granted) before a reconstruction of the actors’ shared frame of reference can make conduct understandable. This becomes, then, an account of an account.

At this point, many suggest instead that we seek the causes of a set of goals or reasons, possibly in a historical narrative or chronology of determinants. “Even when the reasons for an action are quite credible,” as one writer put it, “the explanation they provide is bound to be incomplete. After all, there are reasons and causes for reasons, and there are causes of causes ... The explanatory chain (or, more accurately, network of chains) is endless.”<sup>34</sup> Such a demand is often related to a search for the sources of domestic *power*. Power is frequently seen in mechanical terms as a property of an event, or series of events, which necessitate the intentional features of behavior — which are then given the status of dependent variables. Much of the discussion centering around the domestic sources of foreign policy has been inhibited by this approach. The relationship between goals and “causes” takes the form of instances where there has been a determinative change in sanctions or in “contingencies of reinforcement” in such a way that the frame of reference of the actors begins, paradoxically, to lose its prominence. The purposive aspects tend to submerge themselves within a nexus of antecedents.<sup>35</sup>

Actually the demand for the causes of purposes and reasons suggests an unregenerate attempt to get the purposive form of our ordinary language

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discourse back onto the solid ground of event-causation. Yet the supplementation we really require may be quite different. It may represent a request for the social conventions behind the purposes: not the causes of, but the rules and reasons for, the actors' reasons. In this case, the explanatory chain is not endless, if it is a chain at all.

If the reasons are credible on their surface, in terms of what (presupposed) domestic context are they credible? By giving greater weight to the perceptions of the actors, the relationship those intentional features bear to that context appears closer to that of influence than to power. In such a case, the setting achieves its prominence by being the source of the incentives and information which are provided to the actors. Such things neither determine objectified regularities nor compel events; rather they affect the state actors' calculations and predictions as they ask themselves questions about what is likely to occur. Rather than a set of separable independent variables, the social context allows for varying degrees of "sociability" and influence. The explanatory task would then involve tracing out an argument through which those purposive dimensions ("for the sake of which" the action was undertaken) can appear intelligible. *The actions would be made to seem socially and situationally comprehensible, rather than causally predictable.* Why under the domestic circumstances (and what were the circumstances) did the action count as "the thing to do." <sup>38</sup>

In this conception, the social context is said to provide considerations and interests that delimit state action in a particular fashion, by standing "between" the actors' goals and their perception of the international setting. They give to those goals their "illocutionary force."<sup>39</sup> They allow their necessity and domestic logic to be made apparent, perhaps with a different sense applied to those words than usual.<sup>40</sup> Here I have in mind a relationship between national goals and domestic society which can be seen as a vertical one — of degrees of fittingness and embeddedness and coherence, rather than of causal sufficiency. At all times, what should be recognized and not merely evaded is the contextual nature and constitution of state policy. Rather than simply weighting the different considerations of the policymakers, as if that were sufficient, we would want to see how they are interwoven with (and rep-

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representative of) a particular domestic system and its distribution of values, images, and interests. Much of our discussion of terms like “the national interest” or “national security” demands a similar repertoire of questions.

In this light, the tasks of understanding and analysis appear rather differently than they have in the received conceptions. And a number of related issues assume a different character as well. More importantly, a recommendation has been made: that we refocus our view of foreign policy and, when it comes to explaining state action, significantly redirect the questions we are concerned with asking and the ways in which we ask them. Those questions have for too long been either ungrounded in any articulated model of explanation, or they have tried to draw sustenance from an orthodoxy into which they did not easily fit. Neither approach has been able to provide the kinds of guidance and clarification that are needed. Those needs require close attention. In this essay, by emphasizing a concentric movement outward, from purposive description to interpreted action to contextual explanation, an alternative procedure has been suggested. Understanding foreign policy, viewed in terms of this argument, involves not only a statement of the purposive aspects of an action, although this is where we must begin. It also recognizes the importance of expanding the action, of placing a policy perspective within a setting which might be wide enough to render it intelligible in substantive social terms. It becomes a continual locating of relevant contexts.

## NOTES

I'd like to thank those people who commented on an earlier paper covering some of the material included here; in particular, Terence Ball, Owen Flanigan, Robert Jervis, Charles Lipson, Donald Moon, Vernon Van Dyke, and Kenneth Waltz.

1. For perhaps the most subtle and far-ranging presentations, see the work of Carl G. Hempel, collected in his *Aspects of Scientific Explanation* (New York: Free Press, 1965). For excellent critical treatments, see John G. Gunnell, “Social Science and Political Reality: The Problem of Explanation,”



*Social Research*, 35 (Spring 1968), and J. Donald Moon, "The Logic of Political Inquiry: A Synthesis of Opposed Perspectives," in Fred Greenstein and Nelson W. Polsby, eds., *Handbook of Political Science* (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1975), vol. 1, pp. 134-154.

2. At this point it is impossible to go into the labyrinthine problems raised by the deductive (or covering law) model of explanation — especially in regard to the status of case studies, statistical or inductive accounts, intentional and purposive descriptions, practical inferences, etc. — without getting lost. These are, nevertheless, issues well deserving of an extended treatment in regard to the study of state action and international relations.

3. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* (New York: Macmillan, 1958, Third Edition), §621.

4. Graham Allison, *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis* (Boston: Little, Brown, 19.71), p. 255. No clearer statement of the longevity of positivist categories of thought need be hoped for. It is possible, in fact, that the popularity of a reductive physicalism for international relations scholars may have been underestimated. It would be helpful to examine such a proposition in the light of the efforts in events data analysis, studies in comparative foreign policy relying upon aggregate data or on a schema of "mediated stimulus-response" or other formal modeling attempts, and in generalizations made about the economic causes of hegemonial behavior. The status of purposive elements may have become more precarious than many assume.

5. For help in charting a path through this literature, see Georg Henrik von Wright, *Explanation and Understanding* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1971); Gerard Radnitzky, *Contemporary Schools of Metascience* (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1973, 3rd edition); R. Harré and P.F. Secord, *The Explanation of Social Behavior* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1972); Jurgen Habermas, Appendix to *Knowledge and Human Interests* (Boston: Beacon, 1971); Theodore Mischel, "Psychology and Explanations of Human Behavior," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 23 (June 1963) and "Pragmatic Aspects of Explanation," *Philosophy of Science*, 33 (March-June 1966), A.I. Melden, *Free Action* (New York: Humanities Press, 1961); Richard

Taylor, *Action and Purpose* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1966), William Dray, *Laws and Explanation in History* (London: Oxford University Press, 1957); Gunnell, *op. cit.*; Moon, *op. cit.* and “In What Sense are the Social Sciences Methodologically Distinctive?” (Prepared for delivery at the 1974 Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association). Von Wright, Moon, and Radnitzsky have especially wide-ranging bibliographies.

6. For discussions, see Roy Turner, “Functional Analysis and the Problem of Rationality,” *Inquiry*, 9 (Autumn 1966) on the distinction between participant and observer transcriptions of scenes. Also, see Harold Garfinkel, “Common-Sense Knowledge of Social Structures: The Documentary Method of Interpretation,” in Jordan M. Scher, ed., *Theories of the Mind* (New York: Free Press, 1962), Hanna Fenichel Pitkin, *Wittgenstein and Justice* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972), chapters 11-12; Gunnell, *op. cit.* and “Political Inquiry and the Concept of Action,” in Maurice Natanson, ed., *Phenomenology and the Social Sciences* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1973); as well as Stanford N. Lyman and Marvin B. Scott, *A Sociology of the Absurd* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1970), chapter 1.

7. On these points, note Alfred Schutz, “Concept and Theory Formation in the Social Sciences,” *Journal of Philosophy*, 51 (April 29, 1954), Peter Bachrach and Morton S. Baratz, “Decisions and Nondecisions: An Analytic Framework,” *American Political Science Review*, 57 (September 1963), and K.W. Kim, “The Limits of Behavioral Explanation in Politics,” in Charles A. McCoy and John Playford, eds., *Apolitical Politics* (New York: Crowell, 1967), p. 47ff on “non-events.”

8. See the controversial discussion in Peter Dale Scott, *The War Conspiracy* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1972), chapter 3, which stresses the complicated quality of the leadership process and highlights some features of it that have gone unnoticed.

9. Albrecht Welimer, *Critical Theory of Society* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1971), p. 35; also, see p. 37. Compare John G. Gunnell, “Deduction, Explanation, and Social Scientific Inquiry,” *American Political Science Review*, 63 (December 1969).

10. Peter Winch, *The Idea of a Social Science* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1958), p. 115.

11. A *policy* might best be defined as a combination of aims and reasons.

12. See Harré and Secord, *op. cit.*; J.L. Austin, "A Plea for Excuses," *Philosophical Papers* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961); Marvin B. Scott and Stanford M. Lyman, "Accounts," *American Sociological Review*, 33 (1968), reprinted in Lyman and Scott, *op. cit.*, and, for a related application, Stephen D. Krasner, "Are Bureaucracies Important?," *Foreign Policy*, No. 7 (Summer 1972), esp. pp. 159-169.

13. Allison, *op. cit.*; Graham T. Allison and Morton H. Halperin, "Bureaucratic Politics: A Paradigm and Some Policy Implications," *World Politics*, 24 (Spring 1972), Supplement; Raymond Tanter and Richard H. Ullman, eds., *Theory and Policy in International Relations*; Morton H. Halperin and Arnold Kanter, "The Bureaucratic Perspective: A Preliminary Framework," in Halperin and Kanter, eds., *Readings in American Foreign Policy* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1973); Morton H. Halperin, *Bureaucratic Politics and Foreign Policy* (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1974); Krasner, *op. cit.*; and Robert J. Art, "Bureaucratic Politics and American Foreign Policy: A Critique," *Policy Sciences*, 4 (1973) represent the more prominent discussions.

14. John Kenneth Gaibraith, "The Plain Lessons of a Bad Decade," *Foreign Policy*, No. 1 (Winter 1970—1), p. 42.

15. For the outlines of a persuasive negative response, see Melden, *op. cit.*; Taylor, *op. cit.*, chapter 10; Mischel, "Psychology," *op. cit.*; Alan F. Blum and Peter McHugh, "The Social Ascription of Motives," *American Sociological Review*, 36 (February 1971). A complex debate continues to surround the issue of the explanatory status (and compatibility) of goals and causes. I hope to show its relevance to foreign policy analysis in a future piece.

16. See Radnitzsky, *op. cit.*, pp. 233-250 for an interesting analysis on which I am drawing. In somatic treatment, the "patient" need not understand, so a sublanguage is used which diverges from that of the participant. He is not "brought around" as an agent; rather, he is acted upon. At its extreme, we have

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“veterinary medicine.”

17. Mischel, “Psychology,” *op. cit.*, p. 591.

18. David V.J. Bell, *Power, Influence, and Authority* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975); Terence Ball, “Power, Causation & Explanation,” *Polity*, 8 (Winter 1975).

19. In particular, see Habermas, *op. cit.*; and Radnitzsky, *op. cit.*

20. One study worth noting is F. M. Kail, *What Washington Said* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973). Compare Scott and Lyman, *op. cit.* Also Gardner’s distinction deserves consideration: “by a man’s ‘real reasons’ we mean those reasons he would be prepared to give under circumstances where his confessions would not entail adverse consequences to himself..” Patrick Gardiner, *The Nature of Historical Explanation* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961; originally published in 1952), p. 136, fn. 1. Yet while actors may be deficient in their understandings of their actions, here we must distinguish between levels or kinds of deficiencies. I owe this point to a comment by Donald Moon. There is a vast difference between the behavior of a psychotic and the policies of a government leader adhering to a world view rooted in a specific social structure. Notice that in the former case, we may be left with scarcely any interpretative handle on the behavior without engaging in some further supplementation of a causal variety. (Radnitzsky’s idea of “tacking” between the hermeneutic and the quasi-naturalistic levels suggests one way in which this supplementation might be carried out). In studies of foreign policy, however, such cases are not the norm on which we can construct a satisfactory model. Yet if no such distinction were made, and the impression left that the deficiencies in the reportage of actors were uniform, then the entire case for beginning with actors’ self-understandings might be noticeably weakened. In this latter case, on the contrary, we can make a purposive reconstruction that is shallow, but which can nevertheless be expanded.

21. Barnett Newman, cited in Donald B. Kuspit, “A Phenomenological Approach to Artistic Intention,” *Artforum*, 12 (January 1974), p. 52. Compare Rosalind Krauss, “Sense and Sensibility,” *Artforum*, *Ibid.*, especially pp. 46—50,

22. See Allison, *op. cit.* At some point the argument should be

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extended to show the connection between the explanatory status of Allison's Rational Actor model and Dray's notion of "rational explanation." This would also allow us to see the significance of the "disaggregating" efforts of bureaucratic analysts and their attempt to create a model of the chronology and narrative of decisions. This differs quite a bit in its epistemological assumptions from the project of deciphering and contextually "reading" a shared frame of reference.

23. Von Wright, *op. cit.*, also, Moon, "Logic of Political Inquiry," pp. 156-166.

24. *Ibid.*, p. 162.

25. John Harsanyi, "Some Social Science Implications of a New Approach to Game Theory," in K. Archibald, ed., *Strategic Interaction and Conflict* (Berkeley, 1966), p. 139, cited in Allison, *op. cit.* 31. Also, note Rolf Gruner, "Understanding in the Social Sciences and History," *Inquiry*, 10 (Summer 1967) for a discussion of such a denatured "rational understanding," where a previous focus on an entire "mental habitude" becomes an exclusive concern with ends/means relationships.

26. Terry Fenton, "An Exchange," *Artforum*, 7 (April 1969), p. 61. See also Roman Jakobson, "Concluding Statement: Linguistics and Poetics," in Thomas A. Sebeok, ed., *Style in Language* (Cambridge: M.I.T. Press, 1960), p. 353 and *passim* for an important discussion. A message *implicates* a context.

27. Frederic Jameson, *The Prison-House of Language: A Critical Account of Structuralism and Russian Formalism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972), p. 17.

28. Arnold Levison, "Knowledge and Society," *Inquiry*, 9 (Summer 1966), p. 142.

29. How articulately those other interests must be demanded is a more complicated question. Here see, for example, Bachrach and Baratz, *op. cit.*, and "Power and Its Two Faces Revisited: A Reply to Geoffrey Debnam," *American Political Science Review*, 69 (September 1975); Isaac D. Balbus, "The Concept of Interest in Pluralist and Marxian Analysis," *Politics and Society*, 1 (February 1971).

30. Compare Erving Goffman's analysis in *Frame Analysis* (New York:

Harper & Row, 1974), chapters 1-3, where one looks to see what “keying” or transcription the deed can sustain.

31. Winch, *op. cit.*, 108. The conventional nature of these criteria is underscored. Compare Wittgenstein, *op. cit.*, §225: “The use of the word ‘rule’ and the use of the word ‘same’ are interwoven.”

32. Mischel, “Pragmatic Aspects,” p. 54. The request is therefore for the elucidation of a *pattern*, not a history of causes. See Quentin Skinner, “‘Social Meaning’ and the Explanation of Social Action,” in Peter Laslett et al., eds., *Philosophy, Politics and Society*, Fourth Series (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), Melden, *op. cit.*, chapter 9, and D.S. Shwayder, *The Stratification of Behavior* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1965), pp. 183-200.

33. Singer, *op. cit.*, 82. Compare Arnold Wolfers’ famous essay, “The Actors in International Politics,” reprinted in *Discord and Collaboration* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1962), esp. pp. 12-19.

34. Vernon Van Dyke, *Political Science: A Philosophical Analysis* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1960), p. 25; also, p. 28.

35. See the criticisms of this approach in Ball, *op. cit.*, and Bell, *op. cit.*, on which I am relying in these brief remarks.

37. Bell, *op. cit.*, p. 34.

38. Although there will be pressure for it to do so, such an attempt should not degenerate into an exercise in justification. Fitting a repertoire of goals and self-understandings into a particular domestic context may mean rehearsing the calculations of the actors, but it will also transcend such activity, particularly to the extent that observer is able to gain some distance from the prevailing premises. Otherwise the analyst may not even see the need for such a contextual approach; the goals may seem “obvious” and the explanation may remain on the surface. See Ernest Gellner, “Concepts and Society” and Alasdair MacIntyre, “The Idea of a Social Science” in Bryan Wilson, ed., *Rationality* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1970); and Frederic Jameson, *op. cit.*, chapter 3 on “contextual hermeneutics.” Finally, Mischel’s remarks are suggestive: “If the criteria in terms of which the agent decides what sort of situation confronts him, and what to do about such situations, are similar to ours, then redescribing his action is likely to explain it.” (“Pragmatic Aspects,” *op.*

*cit.*, p. 54). This sort of explanation is the kind of which the salesmen of policy are fond.

39. These provide us a glimpse of the intentions *in* acting, the social “point” of an act, rather than the intentions *prior* to acting. See Skinner, *op. cit.*, pp. 141-146, relying on J.L. Austin’s famous distinction in *How to Do Things with Words*, ed. by J.O. Urmson (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965), lecture viii, ff. Compare William P. Alston, *Philosophy of Language* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.; Prentice-Hall, 1964), pp. 35-49, and 73ff; and the different emphasis in Moon, “Logic,” *op. cit.*, pp. 167-182 and “In What Sense,” *op. cit.*, pp. 9-15, 22-26, 32; as well as Gunnell, “Political Inquiry,” *op. cit.* pp. 243-265.

40. “The notion of historical necessity,” as Frederic Jameson put it, “is therefore something like a historical trope, the very temporal figure of the process of historical understanding;” not a deterministic connection so much as a grasp of the appropriateness of a policy in a setting which is in no way natural or self-evident or inevitable. It “presupposes an ever closer approximation of the concrete, an ever greater enlargement of the context of the historical mediation, such that the alternative feeling of chance is not so much disproven as it is rendered inconceivable and meaningless.” *Marxism and Form* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), p. 41. He also notes that “The concept of historical necessity or inevitability [as an explanatory metaphor] is therefore operative exclusively *after the fact*..” It is not, in other words, a retrodiction so much as a corrigible interpretation.

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03

Public Constraint  
and American  
Policy in Vietnam  
[1976]



# PUBLIC CONSTRAINT AND AMERICAN POLICY IN VIETNAM

[1976]

## I. SOCIETY AND FOREIGN POLICY

If foreign policies are also domestic products, we will want to know what the connection was — in the case of Vietnam-between the limits of foreign policy and the role of the American public. Several explanatory questions immediately suggest themselves. Why did American policymakers feel the results of the Vietnam conflict would be so overwhelmingly important? Why were they allowed to continue, and to escalate, for so long? Why was disengagement excluded from all possible agenda, even in the early years of the involvement? Also, what relationship will our answers have to America's political structure or to the currents of its domestic opinion? These questions, formerly the preserve of critics, now confound the students of American policy in the 1960s. The apparent inadequacy of official national security accounts has set the stage for a large and diverse cast of critical interpretations. While more apologetic analysts stress the role of exception and irresponsibility, others have begun to locate the apparent sources of responsibility and continuity — especially within the framework of American society. When (or to the extent that) the demands of the international environment were neither self-evident nor compelling, what will we need to know about this domestic society to make sense of America's commitment in Vietnam?

I intend to suggest one way in which we might examine a social interpretation of American foreign policy, characterizing the state as a purposive social actor guided to a varying extent by domestic social rules. The role these rules play is both descriptive and explanatory.<sup>1</sup> To the degree that the govern-

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ment represents or is responsive to a political constituency, for example, domestic rules will delimit the conduct or policy. If, on the other hand, the elite was acting without serious constraint from the public, we might still describe its goals as means toward some broader domestic end, and, in this “second order” purposive relationship, we might locate domestic rules of a different sort: constitutive rules which define that relationship (Andrews, 1975b). Usually when we hear discussions of the role of the public in foreign policy, however, it is *constraints* that are being talked about.

One view of American policy, exploring this emphasis in political terms, has claimed that the prospect of an American disengagement in the 1960s was “ruled out” by the likelihood of a right-wing backlash — the danger of political tarring, if not feathering, at the hands of disgruntled hawks and erratic masses. This is a controversial view, and in evaluating it, several strands must be unraveled. The public may have been an objective barrier to disengagement in the 1960s (a volatile and fervently anticommunist popular opinion with a good potential for being mobilized), or the president may have systematically misread both its character and strength. The entire “public” conception will be misleading insofar as the goals of the policymakers were governed by felt constraints which bore little relationship to domestic opinion. We should ask, for example, if the general public represented a serious constraint “downward” (preventing disengagement), or if it could easily have accommodated (and made sense of) a quite different policy. Were state actions responsive to popular preferences (or permitted in the face of popular inertia) in a way that makes the public the unseen protagonist of the drama? Are there public rules; or, in a parallel fashion, does the general public rule?

The careful reader will note that such questions can not lead us to an authoritative record of the policymakers’ views; this may well be a shortcoming, especially for those whose interest goes no further than the actors’ frame of reference and who would willingly and abruptly end their account once some mixture of strategic and political considerations is posited. But even their positing must remain tentative, for no one pretends, or should pretend, that the evidence such accounts rely on (memoirs, interviews, and so on) can be advanced to the point where certainties are allowed. Different styles of

inquiry simply have different aims.

This paper will attempt to discover what features of the American commitment, particularly in the early years, can be clarified by using the lens of domestic opinion — by seeing if that policy can be successfully redescribed as a preventive measure in the face of public barriers and encouragement. It will confront the received descriptions with some of the (admittedly fragmentary, though too infrequently studied) literature on the American public, both as electoral participants and as a source of backlash. With this as the groundwork, it will examine the shape and distribution of opinion and opposition on Vietnam, as well the ability of the American political system to overcome those tendencies toward insulation and elitism that stand in the way of expressing the articulated will of the people. I also want to more fully spell out the implications of both the standard arguments and the empirical evidence for the problem of the democratic control of foreign policy. Finally, such an inquiry can respond to some of the explanatory questions about American policy. It can hope to learn whether the public has been the source of the rules of conduct by means of which American policy might best be understood — as a series of socially-conformative actions that make sense in the light of their political setting.

Needless to say, this analysis will be guided by some of the prescriptive and normative implications of a public account (one that assumes the political necessity for refusing to disengage in Vietnam, perhaps the most tragic and dramatic nondecision in the postwar era). Perhaps we could say that the public got what it deserved, rather than getting what we would have predicted. At least one proponent of a political treatment of the war, for example, has said that “domestic politics couldn’t excuse it” (Ellsberg, 1973: 37). Although this is very likely, the dialectic of blame and justification is not so easily ignored. As Boyd (1972: 441) notes, “severe public constraints on policy is a *necessary* condition for holding the public responsible for a policy.” Failing to examine the *validity* of the domestic claims can therefore mislead us. One begins by acknowledging the calculated and purposive nature of policy (and stepping away from the idea that Vietnam was an accident, created by advisors and bureaucrats who became unwittingly lost in a “quagmire”). One ends

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up by casting the net of responsibility toward the president and then, in a partial and perhaps improper backtracking, toward the role of public opinion or a domestic political culture described as the “sustaining sources of policy” (Alperovitz, 1970: 75).

## 2. THE “PUBLIC CONSTRAINT” INTERPRETATION

I conclude reluctantly that we have elected and have been led by presidents who... were willing to kill large numbers of Asians, destroy Asian societies, imperil American society, and sacrifice large numbers of Americans from time to time, mainly for the reason that their party and they themselves would be in political trouble if they did not [Ellsberg, 1971: 136].

To go from the high-toned strategies of international statecraft to the grubbier calculations of domestic politics is not an easy step, nor is it a familiar one. Recent experience has nevertheless helped revive such a focus. No longer placed exclusively on a strategic or geopolitical plane, foreign policy has become seen as “an integral and subordinate element of domestic politics.”<sup>2</sup> To a degree not sufficiently appreciated, policies are shaped by reference to the political environment, not only by the demands of the international arena. Domestic politics do not stop at the water’s edge. The makers of policy overlap with the political leadership, and leaders are on probation.

After Korea and the scars of McCarthyism, for example, many claimed that Democratic administrations have had a marked and warranted sensitivity to political extortion, whether the band of blackmailers could be identified (as a conservative minority) or, more often, imagined (in the form of an unruly or demagogic mass). Perhaps the spectre of the last conflict governed behavior in the present. Some analysts maintain that domestic politics *required* not only the containment of communism but also a series of concessions in the form of a tough and indiscriminatory globalist stance, and a willingness to wait (and wait and wait) before making new diplomatic departures toward China, Russia, Cuba, or Third World insurgents. Innovations were

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postponed until the proverbial next term, even though for both Johnson and Kennedy these full second-terms would never arrive. The Asian Cold War was thought to be domestic dynamite; to underplay America's role of resistance or to attempt to negotiate its way out was therefore unthinkable. The tolerance of the general public would stretch only so far before it snapped.

In one view of Vietnam, it is such "U.S. political imperatives" which can account for the desire to postpone defeat there at virtually any cost. As failure became a symbol of politically (and not only strategically) disastrous repercussions, it implied that choices had narrowed to the point where "This is a bad year for me to lose Vietnam to communism" could become a "*recurrent* formula for calculating Presidential decisions on Vietnam realistically, given inputs on alternatives" (Ellsberg, 1972: 101)<sup>3</sup> The president could be seen to be relatively powerless — a follower. With victory an impossible dream in Vietnam, the escalating stalemate might therefore be attributed to "the almost neurotic quality which had provoked a country to reach beyond its own real interest because of domestic fears which had been set up at home" (Halberstam, 1972: 293).<sup>4</sup>

Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge's famous meeting with the new president on November 21, 1963 provides an interesting elaboration of such an outlook.<sup>5</sup> After a briefing on the deteriorating Asian state, Johnson's immediate reaction came in three phrases:

- (1) "I am not going to lose Vietnam;"
- (2) "I am not going to be the President who saw Southeast Asia go the way China went;" and
- (3) "I don't think Congress wants us to let the Communists take over Vietnam" [Halberstam, 1972: 298].

Several things are worth quickly noting. First, the almost reflex-like quality of the response; second, the invocation of tough resolve on Johnson's part; third, the way a predominantly civil war or war for national unification was fitted, without hesitation, onto a Procrustean Cold War framework-of communist aggression and of the "loss" by the U.S. of something that, by

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implication, it possessed; fourth, the analogy of China and probably a memory of the domestic costs which Truman had been forced (or allowed himself) to pay for that policy; and last, the implications of failure for Johnson's dealings with Congress (an old stomping ground whose support was a critical one he did not wish to lose). The responsibility of the president is to a certain extent projected onto the public.

After John Kennedy's death, Johnson supposedly saw political (and not merely international) safety in continuing with the Asian objectives of his predecessor. Vietnam was to be kept quiet, kept out of political debate and Republican hands. Such a setting would therefore rule out the abandonment of old commitments, however insignificant, as well as the launching of adventuresome new policies, such as the attempt to set up a coalition regime in Saigon which might risk spurring an American exit and complicating matters domestically. These political factors are said to lie behind Johnson's expressed aim in March 1964 of "knocking down the idea of neutralization wherever it rears its ugly head" (Pentagon Papers, 1971: Vol. III, p. 511).<sup>6</sup> The "primitives" were not to be provoked.,

In this interpretation, the memory of McCarthyism (and perhaps MacArthurism as well) takes pride of place. If communist incursions were not met, if the United States declined the chance to do battle without first having unleashed its arsenal, if insufficient toughness were revealed, the Johnson administration would be vulnerable to a fanatic backlash. The loss of China, handed down to American politicians as the legacy of the 1950s, also became the legacy of the 1960s: "soft on communism" was a term to conjure with. To avoid such a dangerous attribution, success on the battlefield was not necessarily needed, but a visible and ungraceful defeat had to be postponed at all costs. Otherwise it would open the floodgates to the darker currents of America's political culture: the scapegoating and repression, the demagoguery, the know-nothingism and untutored emotions of the mass, the vicious refusal to admit that America had its limits and was unable to control events. As an earlier memo of 1961 by the secretaries of State and Defense had put it (Pentagon Papers, 1971, Vol. II, 111): "loss of South Vietnam would stimulate bitter domestic controversies in the United States and would be seized upon

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by extreme elements to divide the country and harass the Administration.” If Atlas lowered the Free World from his shoulders, trauma would likely result.

Another related fear and prediction found occasional voice. Should the American effort end in humiliating failure, the quietism of the public might again come disastrously to the fore — combining a shrill and divisive concern for domestic problems with a public indifference toward the ever more complicated demands of the international realm. Disengagement might bring on a dangerous and irresponsible isolationism. Such a turning inward or “never again” sentiment would in fact make future interventions more difficult, more prone to involve nuclear weapons, and more likely to require setting aside democratic ideals at home.

Concern with the public also expressed itself in more direct political terms. We might acknowledge, along with Geib and Lake (1973: 184) that “the root restraint on Democratic Presidents all along had been fear of a right-wing Republican reaction.” On foreign policy, the political Left was largely contained (having nowhere else to turn), but the Democrats would somehow have to “handle” the Right. There was talk of being bested by those who were better positioned, better equipped to exploit the public’s tendency toward (an occasionally hysterical) anticommunism. The choice for Lyndon Johnson might have been between reelection and electoral punishment, for as the president foresees the dominoes falling, “the one significant domino is clearly his own administration” (Committee of Concerned Asian Scholars, 1970: 160). Shrinking campaign contributions or popular disgruntlement could dim the prospect of reelection, as could overt challenges from the G.O.P. in 1964, 1966, or 1968, or (another persistent fear on Johnson’s part) even from Robert Kennedy assuming his brother’s mantle and castigating any weakness, any abandonment of the struggle. These domestic apprehensions have been codified by Daniel Ellsberg (1972: 132) as “Rule 1. Do not lose South Vietnam to Communist control-or appear likely to do so-before the next election.” One implication might be that such fears were warranted ones.

A spring 1963 meeting reportedly took place between Senator Mansfield (who had argued for removing American forces from Vietnam) and an unexpectedly responsive President Kennedy. I will quote one account of it

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at length (O'Donnell, 1970) for it gives such a rare characterization of the perceived domestic restraints:

The President told Mansfield that he had been having serious second thoughts about Mansfield's argument and that he now agreed with the Senator's thinking on the need for a complete military withdrawal from Vietnam.

"But I can't do it until 1965 — after I'm reelected," Kennedy told Mansfield.

President Kennedy felt, and Mansfield agreed with him, that if he announced a total withdrawal of American military personnel from Vietnam before the 1964 election, there would be a wild conservative outcry against returning him to the Presidency for a second term.

After Mansfield left the office, the President told me that he had made up his mind that after his reelection he would take the risk of unpopularity and make a complete withdrawal of American forces from Vietnam. "In 1965, I'll be damned everywhere as a Communist appeaser. But I don't care. If I tried to pull out completely now, we would have another Joe McCarthy red scare on our hands, but I can do it after I'm reelected."

Once again, certain features of this account deserve a careful look, for the quotation goes beyond a blunt expression of the president's belief in the barrier to present a few intriguing ambiguities. It mentions the risk of unpopularity. Was it felt only to be a risk, and a risk that might be "manageable" after a reelection—certainly, we might wonder, after an electoral triumph like that of Lyndon Johnson? How many Vietnamese and American lives would be sacrificed to avoid that risk? Also, the problem of McCarthyism is imagined to occur only *before* an election; perhaps it needs substantial partisan "fuel" provided by a party which is a serious presidential contender. One other sugges-



tion from the last quoted sentence would be that certain things can be “got-ten away with” after a reelection, that a “red scare” might materialize now but not necessarily then.

There are other elements to this alleged constraint. One final one, especially important to Lyndon Johnson, stemmed from the danger of “losing” the Congress, of stimulating its hostility, or of forfeiting its backing and respect. Johnson’s sensitivity about Congress in the early years was legendary. It remained to a large degree both his reference group and his gauge of public opinion, as well as the arena in which his historical mission might be performed: advancing the Kennedy program by means of a grandiose domestic offering. In the face of an international retrenchment, his 1964 legislative plans could have been jeopardized. A disgruntled military might have relied on its conservative backing in Congress to undermine Johnson’s control, thus compounding the “emasculatation” of an international loss with that of domestic recrimination. We should also note that insofar as legislative concerns rather than electoral worries became the major focus, two points follow. Any public constraint that existed would be free from the cyclical nature of elections; it would be continuously present. And finally, ironically, the greater the liberal ambitions which the president harbored in the domestic sphere (comparing Johnson to Kennedy, Nixon, or Eisenhower, for example), the more intensely this political pressure on foreign policy would be felt. The larger the domestic consensus demanded, the more foreign policy concessions required. In the spirit of compensation, Vietnam might, almost literally, be tossed to the wolves — or to the hawks. “Essentially political reasons” would make 1964, like 1963, still another year of lost possibilities (Ellsberg, 1972: 210; Gelb, 1971: 143).

Combining these elements (increasing the likelihood of trauma, backlash, and demagoguery, of electoral defeat and legislative troubles, of population isolationism or of a general swing to the right on the part of the mass), the resulting barrier might be powerful, and even explanatory. In light of such prohibitions, perhaps even a stalemate in Vietnam during the early Johnson years could be thought of as a prophylactic one — at least it could allay the impression of softness or defeatism, holding the public back from trauma, and

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saving the valuable political skins of the policymakers. In general, the frequency with which these convictions are cited <sup>7</sup> gives them a degree of prima facie weight. It allows us to assume that they were expressed to some extent at both the executive and the bureaucratic levels, but not to assume their significance. Pronouncements by political leaders, for example, may be largely an exercise in ideological control, a way of emphasizing certain permissible attributions which do not fall within the dominant taboos.<sup>8</sup> The plausibility of these pronouncements, their implications for the democratic control of foreign policy, their relative significance, and, most important, their ability to explain the elite's commitment and frame of reference in domestic social terms: all these things remain in question.

### 3. PUBLIC CONSTRAINT: PLACATING A MIRAGE

This emphasis on the role and responsibility of the general public should not seem farfetched; it has, in fact, become a familiar analytic "move." Even apart from its application to the policy in Vietnam, a loose consensus has grown up around the idea of the constraining role of popular opinion in the arena of foreign policy, a consensus so widely and complacently shared that evidence has given way to presumption; assertions have taken the place of careful thought.<sup>9</sup> In this general view, public opinion (usually painted in extremely unbecoming colors) acts to hem in the makers of policy, fixing the outer limits in which they can maneuver, setting broad policy criteria, and imposing its demands. As Dean Rusk put it in 1965, "the long-range foreign policy of the United States is determined by the American people" (cited in Cohen, 1973: 9). But we are right to ask *how* these public attitudes exert their powerful impact on foreign policy. Perhaps the public, acting in accordance with the dictates of consumer sovereignty, buys or declines the "policy products" of its national leaders (Almond, 1960: 5-6)-or perhaps the public's views are taken by osmosis. Do they prompt or compel certain state actions or non-decisions? Must they be reckoned with? Are they effective "in the final analysis"? Or do they in some way influence, intimidate, and set the stage? Though the conventional picture tends to throw these possibilities together in a reck-

less way, we can tease out some central contentions with relative ease.

Aware of what has been called the public's "latent veto," government leaders concern themselves with the configurations of power at home as well as abroad. And, in a democracy, while public attitudes may not dictate future decisions, they can express a threat to certain policies that will tempt the government elite toward caution and strenuous avoidance of a visible failure. Rather than a detailed prospective control, a post hoc reproof might be a weapon in the hands of the public. As an uneducated Southerner put it years ago:<sup>10</sup> "I ain't ax no man what him *will* do I ax him what him *hab* done." The government must therefore look to the future, at times shelving, diluting, or restructuring its adventurous innovations, and at other times being encouraged in its belligerence. Its scope of discretion is limited, in one familiar image, by the system of "dikes" which public opinion is said to resemble.

Regardless of how familiar these images are, we still have the right to be skeptical. In the case of American policy in Vietnam, for example, how broad a scope of discretion was the public allowed? How dilapidated were those dikes? How many mass "fingers" were needed to prevent the momentum of government policy from crashing through them? Suspicion is even great enough to put forward what may be a more apt analogy for public opinion: the *sieve*.

In response to this question of whether the level of public constraint has generally been exaggerated, several writers have given a resounding yes.<sup>11</sup> Such an answer comes in several parts: it asserts that the government's concern for public opinion has been overrated or contrived, and that the permissiveness or malleability of popular opinion has been ignored. In many if not most cases in the making of American foreign policy, popular opinion is largely disregarded, manipulated, or redundant. Because of their limited scope and their penchant for unenlightened fantasizing, the discussions in the public arena can often be summarily dismissed. Governmental secrecy will only facilitate this irrelevance and exclusion. As a Public Affairs Bureau official in the State Department put it (see Cohen, 1973: 157), "Even on Vietnam no significant public opinion enters U.S. policy as far as the State Department is concerned."<sup>12</sup> Remarks such as these would indicate that domestic attitudes,

especially at lower bureaucratic levels where incrementalism reigns, tend to remain unnoticed or be heavily depreciated.

If these patterns continue (and there is a wide body of supportive evidence to elaborate), the policy elite would not need to cater so strenuously to the hard-line attitudes of the public — certainly not as much as some of the familiar descriptions might claim. A study of opinion on Cold War issues from 1955-1964, for example, showed the impossibility of deriving the attitudes of the policy elite from earlier mass views, but significantly, did not rule out the reversed relationship (Peterson, 1972). In general, substantive evidence which supports the idea of public rulership or inhibition is quite thin. As Bernard Cohen (1973: 19) puts it, public attitudes may not be “dikes” or “hedged” at all, but *clouds*. at times “one can move right through them . . . without even knowing it. They are a figure of speech.” But they are a figure of speech which, when employed in an account of a foreign policy, has very striking implications-of a prescriptive sort, for example.

In a public account or in the way a member of the foreign policy elite understands himself, elements of fakery and self-deception are also likely to have been involved, for policymakers may just naturally assume that their demonologies and fears about the world are shared, even more crudely and thoughtlessly, by the general public. This is only compounded by a habit of not openly debating these domestic political considerations within the government. The result, it seems fairly certain, would be to increase the awareness of risks and strengthen the indifference to whatever opportunities for change the international environment might provide. This plea of “what can I do, the public being what it is” suggests a president with much less power than the contemporary era has granted him; it implies a relatively paralyzed, rather than an imperial, presidency.

The government’s perception of public opinion, in fact, may have largely amounted to an externalization of its own assumptions: an attempt to make the unlikely the impossible, and to deflect or rule out its own responsibility. Choices which are said to be made in the light (or under the shadow) of public conservatism can go quite far in legitimating the policies that result. For not only is a democratic patina acquired, but the innovative ideas of crit-

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ics are left without a leg to stand on—because, it is easily assumed, they could never expect to gain the support of the public or to avoid the threat of backlash. In this way, official excuses are provided; choices are simplified, as well as justified. If a decades-long policy of containment and intervention is to be allowed to continue, it can carry with it a decades-old reading of its continuing political necessity — as “protection.” As Huntington (1961: 251) wisely notes, “The true success of an Administration is revealed by the extent to which informed and articulate critics of its policies accept its image of public opinion.” Once this occurs, criticism can be incrementalized.<sup>13</sup> Yet in our explanations, the place of such images may be quite different. We should *expect* policymakers to say these things about popular control, to make these periodic offerings at the altar of democratic theory. Rather than taking them at face value, however, we can take them seriously in another way—as signifying features of the context in which they are projected, or as a reflection of the background expectancies of their audience.<sup>14</sup> It would perhaps be better to characterize them as more of a symptom or mirage, and less as a pressure. To a large degree, a national security policy *creates* its public. But as long as the public determination (or delimitation) of state policy remains one of the country’s imposing myths, these images of public opinion can be self-validating or wish-fulfilling. They can smooth the path the elite would have taken even without them.

Another possibility could be considered: whatever public restraints exist may be self-created ones, for the policy elite can generate the very vulnerability that later hems it in. To fight a Cold War, for example, you need a Cold War public. But with a continuing “oversell,” you also leave yourself open to certain public demands, especially in regard to the tactics that are used to insure the agreed-upon goals. In order to safeguard public support for massive military budgets and an expansive world role, a need for a seamless web of anticommunist militancy may be created at the cost of precluding certain tactical choices and forms of retrenchment. Yet even so, we should remember that the escalation of rhetoric which may create these problems is not undertaken or maintained for its own sake. It is more likely to be grounded in a set of pre-existing international goals. For unless these are more than just *avoid-*

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*ance* goals, more than short-term strategies aimed at simply evading the domestic repercussions which the foreign commitments made possible, then the oversell (and the created vulnerability) makes little sense. To the extent that these elements are present, they will cast a shadow over any public interpretation of American policy, and particularly of instances of intervention in the Third World.

What a model of domestic political necessity has failed to deal with successfully has been the element of misperception on the part of the elite, and the ways in which the elite's so-called vulnerability can be contrived (occasionally even deserving characterization as a deft piece of stagecraft). The prescriptive bearing of such a model is also worth noting. Unless the style of inquiry goes beyond the frame of reference of the elite and looks at the domestic context that might make that policy outlook intelligible in social terms, there will be a temptation to unfairly attribute responsibility for the policy. The public, without further ado, may be mistakenly cast in the garb of the villain.

Changes in the public (or the willingness of leaders to be responsive to it) may, in other words, need to precede any radical restructuring of American policy. The policy elite may need to become more insulated from the polity in order to resist its pressures. On the other hand, this "prerequisite" could merely amount to a distraction, a kind of red herring, for significant departures in policy might have been politically acceptable at the tune they were proposed. This could be the case if public opinion in no way pushed the government toward aggressive action and even if an expansive policy were passively supported. Of course, policy goals will often be grounded in (that is, be means toward) more inclusive domestic ends, but an actual restrictive role on the part of the general public in "monitoring" that linkage may be nowhere present. Decisions can derive from broader policies, and policies can perhaps rely on the assumption that where policymakers lead, a permissive mass will follow. The notion of a constrained or a democratic foreign policy may be simply a pleasing myth, one which gives solace and recommends silence to the general public, and provides the policy elite with legitimacy and self-serving excuses. Given a new lease on life, metaphors and alibis can be mistaken for

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reality. At times they may even come to replace reality in our political perceptions.

#### 4. BULLETS AND BALLOTS: PUBLIC OPINION AND THE AMERICAN ELECTORATE

Fed a steady diet of buncombe, the people may come to expect and to respond with highest predictability to buncombe [Key, 1966: 7].

The more statesmen absorb from social scientists, the more cynical they are apt to become about “the public will” [May, 1964: 118].

As an interpretation of America’s goals, the idea of a public restriction begins to seem less persuasive. Perhaps at this point a closer look at the political characteristics of the American public could tell us what elements of this view might be salvaged and which elements will be still further undermined. In the first place, we need to see if the public is even capable, let alone likely, of playing the role that has been attributed to it. Questions such as these will help organize the discussion, for they bear not only upon the explanation of America’s refusal to disengage from Vietnam, but also on the prospects for a representative foreign policy.

Guiding me here, of course, is the assumption that a broad portrait of the general public can cast some light on the particular features of Vietnam. The *salience* which the problem of disengagement later acquired and the polarizations it gave rise to, for example, should be placed into perspective: Americans have generally been little engaged by international politics, let alone by national policies. Normally, indifference reigns; involvement is superficial or sporadic. If concern with world affairs is higher than we often presume (relative to domestic affairs), this is perhaps because less concern is given to domestic policies than we expect. In these instances, consensus and compliance may become hard to distinguish, as the hierarchy and routines of everyday life are recreated in the acceptance of the state’s policies as well as its interpretations of what is occurring.

One thread of analysis running through a vast literature on the American electorate has in these ways emphasized the incapacity of the pop-

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ulace. It finds a general public made up of a cast of inattentive, apathetic, or sheep-like characters, largely unable to find coherence among their own unstable and superficial attitudes, and relying instead on habit, irrelevant party cues, or the manipulative lead of others. The electorate, especially on matters of foreign policy, in other words, does not even faintly resemble the theoretical ideal of an attentive and articulate citizenry. Instead, the interests of influential elites or the idiosyncratic visions of the leaders have their own way amidst the privatism and conformity of the mass. This would be “a movement of unreasoning pawns” (Hamilton, 1972: 54). “They look upon politics as news to be consumed, a drama to be watched” (Hacker, 1971: 73). In such a view, mass attitudes are as uninspiring as they are irrelevant.

In general, political perceptions remain unclear, for what the mass public lacks is an ability to place foreign policy in any kind of meaningful perspective. The remoteness of international affairs has supposedly given rise to “black and white” attitude structures, as well as an overreliance on simple analogies unfettered by sophisticated thinking or by any reference to concrete experiences. In this view:

Minimal information about the world will yield a simple uni-dimensional cognitive structure, which is most conducive to aim ethnocentric attitude of maximum psychological distance from things foreign. This can manifest itself in isolationism, a disliking of foreign nations, a fear of them, or a desire to fight them with slight provocation [Scott, 1965: 86].

“Dark areas of ignorance” still prevail.<sup>15</sup> There is also a penchant for Manichean simplifications. Because their levels of information and attentiveness about world affairs are often scandalously low, many writers have seen a dangerous *volatility* in the general public — one that might make more understandable the elite’s desire to exclude them, control them, or muffle their demands. They have largely found the public too emotional and belligerent, too intolerant of ambiguity, and too little concerned about other nations to be safely given much influence over the nation’s goals or policies in the interna-



tional realm.<sup>16</sup>

According to the received claim, the general public has been largely innocent of attitudes that are structured in ideological terms (Converse, 1964). Lacking interest as well as information, their level of conceptualization is not a high one; they are thought to be unable to apply whatever broad political assumptions they may have to particular issue concerns. As a result, their policy preferences tend to be undifferentiated, unpredictable, vague, or simplistic: logical consistency and the stability of their opinions over time would be less the rule than the exception. Particularly among lower-income groups where the time perspective is apt to be grounded upon short-run concerns and expectations, there is little possibility of a reflective stand on long-term foreign problems. Political opinions would more likely be “psychological epiphenomena” or “aggregated Pavlovian responses” to the political stimuli of the moment (Hennessy, 1970: 471,476). What dominates is an erratic superficiality.

In Gabriel Almond’s classic analysis (1960), as one example, the less well-educated citizens’ views displayed the characteristics of moods. Inflexible attitudes had a habit of giving way to unreasoned overreactions when faced with a crisis event. This broad picture is a bleak one, and once we grant its realism, certain “hard” prescriptive implications begin to show their face. It has been from the mass that an intrusive and irrational wave was expected. Insofar as it was forced to acknowledge this body of opinion, the policy elite would therefore be aware of its “legitimate” need to contain, rather than inflame it. Traumatic events which might trigger a volatile reaction would be carefully skirted. One conclusion seems to follow. If the character of mass opinion remained the same, the prospects for a disengagement from a commitment like that of Vietnam would be critically affected. The character of the mass public might rule them out.

A bulwark against such irrationalism could supposedly be found in the small “attentive public,” that thin layer made up of concerned and well-informed citizens, relatively well-educated, cosmopolitan, and economically advantaged. But was this a reasonable assumption? It would seem to be only if a sizable gap existed between the quality of mass attitudes and those of the

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attentive or “elite” public. In an older view, based squarely on survey data from the 1950s, a clear split does exist (Converse, 1964). Only among the better-educated public, for example, would we be likely to find consistent ideologies (a principled binding together of attitudes that can guide more concrete choices). Only a small minority with their greater knowledge and perspective on political issues could approximate a model of “rational decision” (see Smith, 1968), with its stress on object appraisal, alignment of ends and means, and a broad contextual and time perspective. By expressing viewpoints that are more stably anchored (and thus more stable), this knowledgeable and ideologically-guided elite public could thus provide a buffer zone of more “responsible” opinion—even if perhaps not a large enough one to guarantee the success of innovation.

This is, however, one point of view we need not accept at face value, for some of its time-bound features make it unable to guide an analysis through the more turbulent waters of the 1960s. Premature certitudes are always worth guarding against. On many fronts, the burden of recent evidence from the 1960s has been shifting against the older views, and moving toward a more sanguine updating (Brown, 1970; Pierce, 1970; Lipsitz, 1970; Lane, 1962; Wilker and Milbrath, 1970; Cobb, 1973; Miller et al., 1973). For example, the gap between the attentive public and the mass— while undeniably present—has very likely been overstated. The level of attitudinal consistency for both groups also seem to have increased rather dramatically in the 1960s, and especially *before* 1964 (Nie, 1974; Nie et al., 1975: ch. 8-9). According to some of these newer “populist” accounts, stable belief structures and an ideological directedness of opinion can be found during this period even among the less-well-educated (who are, admittedly, less adept at articulating their views). Nor have reasonably strong and well-anchored political opinions been all that uncommon. On the contrary, in the mass public, the stability of underlying orientations over time has recently been considered quite substantial. And to the extent that this has been the case, the analytic usefulness of singling out the mass as a volatile source of constraint or pressure becomes suspect.

The swings in mood and salience that were found several decades ago

have since been flattened out. No longer volatile in response to international events, as Deutsch and Merritt suggest (1965: 183), public viewpoints are now quite stable except in very special circumstances: “Almost nothing in the world seems to be able to shift the images of 40 per cent of the population in most countries, even within one or two decades.” These special circumstances (the likelihood of which we should bear in mind when considering the chance of a “trauma”) would probably require the *mutual* occurrence and reinforcement of several elements: persistent state activity aimed at redirecting opinion, along with the pronounced impact of “spectacular” events that would occur in the absence of important cross-pressures and against a background of other events. A negotiated disengagement from Vietnam in, for example, 1964 or 1965, may well not have been capable of bringing about such a confluence of factors.

Nor have Almond’s findings of rigidity (in normal periods) and over-reaction (in times of crisis) been reaffirmed in the light of more recent evidence. In one account (Peterson, 1972), American mass opinion on Cold War issues (from 1955 to 1964, for example) was found to be relatively unaffected by evidence of conflict behavior that the Soviets initiated—even by those actions which should have confirmed or triggered the basic predispositions of the public. As for the instability of attitudes, these have been found at times to be *greater* among the college-educated than even the grade-school graduates (Richman, 1972). Certainly this would alert us to a weakness in the older “elitist” perspective, for while this variability in opinion on the part of the better-informed might denote a sensitivity to events, it might also be merely an erratic response. As this study found, significantly, the responsiveness to events in the international realm was *not* noticeably different among the different groups. Instead, a kind of sluggish permissiveness may be widespread across all levels.

Related to these claims is the Mainstream Model that Gamson and Modigliani (1966) have set forth. Here, a familiar connection is underscored—between an attachment to society, with an acceptance of its social and normative influences, and a general support of official views. The two are linked closely, though perhaps counter-intuitively, for higher levels of educa-

tion and awareness come to “socialize” the citizenry in a variety of ways, often blunting criticism and generating consistent increases in support for the actions of the state. By encouraging a better awareness of what the government is doing, “sophistication” and greater media exposure creates, paradoxically, a greater willingness to support it, or remain within the intellectual limits of its policy. A description of the government’s actions will be taken not only from its overt behavior, but also from an official account which includes a recital of the government’s purposes and reasons for behaving as it does. This account therefore plays, at least in part, a dual role: that of explanation and justification (see Scott and Lyman, 1968; Edelman, 1964, 1971). If these accounts are successfully manipulated, the attentive public will come to “understand” the policy, yet in an uncritical way: by accepting not only the government’s account of what it is doing, but also of why it is doing it (phrased in terms or in alibis which the audience will accept). The talismanic value of national security arguments has played a special role here, one that might fit quite handily with the contentions of the Mainstream Model. Unlike an opposing Cognitive Consistency model that would predict a greater national polarization of opinion at higher levels of education, here (reinforced by additional knowledge) the underlying predispositions of the public would point more and more in a similar direction: toward consensus and acquiescence. Especially in response to the initiatives of a president, official policy could catch most opinion in the middle of its net.

Regarding the likelihood of a backlash, one related element will only add to our skepticism: the great and increasing salience of the presidency for the general public during this period. As a leader, a cue for the acceptance of policy as well as for attitudinal conformity and the widespread desire to be located “in the mainstream,” his position was unmatched. The likelihood of a major independent shift in mass attitudes was thereby lessened, especially on international issues where events are farther from the referents of concrete everyday life and where the role of the executive is more easily seen. It only underscores once again the substantial elasticity, conformity, and permissiveness of opinion.

The role of deference, particularly in a crisis situation, has (until

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recently) been pronounced. With the average citizen also relying on governmental information, rises in public support tended to follow the moves of the president *in any direction* (see Waltz, 1967: 272-273). Such patterns help produce the great resistance to untutored changes in opinion that I have mentioned, as people try to subsume their basic outlook under an official viewpoint, and assimilate to it the impact of international events. This means, finally, that the chances for a domestically successful change in policy must be rehabilitated, for if most citizens support the official foreign policy because (or as long as) it is official policy, changes in that policy might easily carry the public along with them. The majority is a susceptible majority. And we would predict this especially in a case where the general public was neither highly-informed nor greatly involved psychologically in the symbols of success. “He who has the bigger stick has the better chance of imposing his definition of reality” (Berger and Luckmann, 1966: 109). Even a knowledgeable public deduces its views and defers more readily than if often presumed. Taking all of these elements of opinion into consideration, what is more and more likely to materialize is a great degree of governmental leeway—as long as the state actors (unlike the early Vietnam years) are interested in taking advantage of it.

If a man’s vicarious experience with events that concern him, as far back as he can remember, consists of emergencies, crises, and hazards followed by new crises, what influence will this have upon his behavior? It may well induce helplessness, confusion, insecurity, and greater susceptibility to manipulation by others [Edelman, 1964:14].

*The President makes opinion, he does not follow it* [Lipset, 1966: 115].

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Even if mass public opinion offers neither a threat nor a serious source of constraint, perhaps this is a task for the periodic intervention of the voters. Doesn’t the notion of electoral accountability bring with it an ever-present

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chance of punishment at the polls? Is this not the mechanism by which the voice of the people insinuates itself into the highest policy. making circles? An answer to these broad questions should evolve from the answers to a number of subsidiary ones—concerning such matters as partisanship, the importance of issues, the cues of official policy, and so forth. Once these matters are evaluated, we can begin to step forward more confidently to an assessment of the domestic context, of the extent to which it warrants the attributions that some have been prone to give it.

The character of electoral choice has been much discussed in recent years, and several alternative descriptions are possible. Voters' disillusionment, first of all, has not been the free-floating phenomenon on which the fears I have mentioned are usually based. As I have said, attitudes are frequently prompted by policy, and similar guides are present in the electoral arena. What guides the electorate in its voting decisions, according to the standard view, is the compass of party loyalty, as well as broad attitudes toward the candidates and a more limited role for the appraisal of issues. in the 1952-1964 period, for example, the overall totals for party identification changed scarcely at all. Rates of "defection" were fairly constant. What helped domesticate the elections, then, were widespread and habitual commitments to the political parties, commitments that were the major correlate of electoral choice. At the individual level, few forces remained more stable. The 1964 data (Pomper, 1968: 85) indicate, as one example, that less than one quarter of the voters had shifted party loyalties during their lifetimes. This has not exactly been an unruly electorate. Because of this stabilizing element, the risks of failure could be softened — or at least the risks of an erratic and unmediated popular response.

But an important question remains, one which has recently attracted a great deal of attention: the extent to which *issue* concerns break through these stable patterns of partisan loyalties, or cause them to loose their grip on the determination of voting choices. For if issues have little weight, at least the likelihood of an electoral disaster spurred by the polarization of issues would be slight. But, on the other hand, a less sophisticated and "issueless" mass might be more easily mobilized to punish the incumbent or his party, with-

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out the *restraining* role that issue concerns might represent.

The standard view, again based securely on earlier data, tended to denigrate the importance of issues (see Sears, 1969). It claimed that policy concerns have been slight and changeable, usually surfacing in areas that impinge quite visibly upon the people's daily life or upon the most salient interest of the groups with which they identify. Rarely referring to policy stands, the public's articulated likes and dislikes about candidates show a tendency to personalize instead, or lean heavily on partisan cues. Such an electorate has by and large been assumed not only to be relatively uninformed about specific issues, but also to be unable to differentiate between the parties' stands regarding them. To complicate matters further, those who were most attentive to the policies were thought to be the very voters least likely to change their minds during the campaign: the party loyalists. Without these loyalties as a guide, opinions were more unstable, and interest seemed to decline. As for the way issues are articulated at the level of policymaking, most voters apparently know very little about them.

We should also look at the strength of the relationship which is said to exist between electoral choice and policy preference. Compared to the role of party identification or candidate image, issues have tended to leave only a marginal imprint on voting behavior. In one case, reexamining Key's data from 1936-1960 on the consistency of issue positions and stances toward the president, strong relationships were found only where the so-called issue question was a transparent vote of confidence in the candidate. When policy issues were phrased without explicit reference to parties or candidates, the correlations dropped precipitously (Sears, 1969: 361-363; also, Key, 1966; Miller, 1967: 226). Especially in regard to foreign policy, elections have not been won or lost on the issues. Quite the contrary, voters' policy attitudes, we are told, either derive from or are assimilated to their more stable allegiances toward party or candidate. These attachments provide an anchor for their opinions.

Such an interpretation, though well grounded in survey data from the 1950s—the somnolent (or “issueless”) Eisenhower years — need not be taken as gospel. Important revisions in it have been suggested, the cumulative effect of which has been to grant the electorate of the 1960s a more responsible and

issue-oriented style of action than had previously seemed justified.<sup>17</sup> Even the older characterizations of party loyalty have been amended to allow it more of a self-interested and rational quality, so that party identification becomes less of a rigid and autonomous antecedent. In these views, party attachments are deflected by, and at times even derived from, the long-range impact of issues and the accumulation of broad issue positions — whose stability over time may account for some of the stability in party allegiance (Jackson, 1975a, 1975b; Price, 1968; Pomper, 1972: 467). Undergirding the electoral decisions may be higher levels of cognitive support and ideological clarity than were once thought possible. Such a transformation might decrease the likelihood of an irrational or thoughtless response to international events.

After 1960, a more *general* kind of thinking about parties and candidates becomes more prevalent, and the evaluating of candidates takes on ever larger doses of sophistication—as measured by the increased references to issues and ideological distinctions, as well as by the willingness to tie the two together (see Nie, 1974; Nie et al., 1975; RePass, 1974; Miller et al., 1973). One view of what has happened is that changes in the political environment in the 1960s generated new stimuli to which voters have responded with greater interest and concern for the issues. As attitudinal consistency increased, references to stances of the candidates on the issues began to take on a more substantial and coherent form. And with the parties taking on stronger and more distinct identities on certain issues, issue polarization and the electorate's ability “to tell the difference” between the parties has also grown. On issues important to them, voters in 1964 and 1968 surveys. For example, were surprisingly better able than before to discern (and be concerned with) these distinctions. With relatively clearer issue stands, “issue partisanship” and a more ideological orientation on the part of the voters were more prevalent. Perhaps most impressive have been the rather strong relationships between voting choices and policy preferences on salient issues—appearing to be as important a factor in 1964, for example, as the role of party identification, and able at times to displace it (RePass, 1971: 400). Not only had the salience of issues increased, but so had the electorate's ability to use their issue preferences in their voting (especially when the inertial tendencies of



party allegiance were temporarily deflected).<sup>18</sup> Such trends were gathering strength even before the “choice not an echo” atmosphere of 1964.

At this point, one may have some greater familiarity with the elements of the problem (and the new importance of issues in this counter-interpretation), but still be quite unpersuaded of their overall substantive importance for the area of foreign policy. How much of it can be applied there? At least in the past, foreign policy concerns in particular have formed only a small component of electoral choices, especially when compared to the powerful role of party loyalty. For the most part, they have affected those without such strong cues, as well as the rare party loyalists who happened to find their views on these issues greatly at odds with the stance of their party. The relationship between stands on foreign policy preferences and electoral choice, as a result, has not been impressive. A tradition of bipartisanship has added its effect, helping to homogenize the issue preferences; to a large extent, party divisions have not structured them.

On the shape of earlier presidential victories, these stands did have a slight yet noticeable impact, providing decreasing *advantages* of 3%, 2 1/2%, and 2% to the Republicans in 1952, 1956, and 1960 (Miller, 1967: 226).<sup>19</sup> In part, a changing perception of the parties’ relative ability to keep America out of war accounted for the declining advantage of the G.&P. During the 1950s, the Republicans acquired a peace-and-hard-times label which, on the Democratic side, was matched by an image of war-and-prosperity. During the late 1950s and early 1960s, this war-prone attribution gradually left the Democrats as public evaluations made a dramatic reversal. By 1964 *only 12%* felt the Republicans would do a better job in keeping the U.S. out of war—an issue that has been of continuing significance to the public. Nor was this shift simply an epiphenomenon of the Goldwater candidacy. By mid-1962, the Democrats were even with the G.O.P.; they were favored by a small margin on this issues in early 1963. By 1966, however, the escalation and protraction of Vietnam had taken its toll: Republicans somewhat overcame their negative image and a slight majority favored them on this concern (Waltz, 1967: 282; Miller, 1967: 220; Mueller, 1973: 117).

Yet even in acknowledging this broad issue preference, or the fact that

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there has been a substantial increase in the correlation between issue attitudes and electoral choice, we are left with vexing problems. The significance of patterns like these even among domestic preferences is uncertain, for the recent analysis of ‘issue voting’ has failed to clearly distinguish between prospective and retrospective evaluation.<sup>20</sup> We may find an electorate which, in forming its voting preferences, is critically concerned with future policy choices which the government will make. We would more likely expect on the other hand, that no such prospective capability for gauging goals and reasons exists, but only an ability to react to results, perhaps in some vague relation to the issues (compare Key, 1966; Pomper, 1968; Brody, 1968; Boyd, 1972; Brody and Page, 1972; Kessel, 1972).

When we ask whether the voters look forward as well as backward, we can give a relatively blunt answer. Rather than reflecting carefully thoughtout expectations about the candidates’ abilities to handle particular issues in the future, voters’ evaluations have largely been made in retrospect, as judgments about past performance—the narrow successes and the ambiguous failures. While this may in some ways narrow the candidates’ electoral accountability in the face of change, it might also give material form to the fears of an incumbent as he considers putting a visible “failure” on the agenda. When policies go sour or deviate from widely held preferences, the public may decide a “house cleaning” is overdue and punish the candidates or party that they associate with the past.

Yet does even this represent a serious hurdle? To the extent that the public gives any injunction to its leaders on matters of foreign policy (or at least on all but the most salient matters), this injunction may turn out to be little more than the mandate to *succeed* (Brody, 1971; Stone and Brody, 1970); it is a mandate for the government to avoid a serious failure in achieving the goals that it sets for itself. Prior issue commitments are difficult to translate into prospective guidance, and even the dangers of retrospective punishment might seem largely to revolve around the success or failure of government policy *in its own terms*. International events and media presentations, in other words, would be read by reference to the administration’s objectives: to a great extent, success is policy specific and cued by officialdom.

But even so, the hypothesis of such a limited electoral mandate has its limitations. It does not address itself precisely to the idea of a public pressure of a potential backlash, nor to the likelihood that the mass public will loose itself from the guidelines of official policy. This is an important lacuna in such an interpretation, at least for the purpose of this paper, for we will want to know the degree to which, and the freedom with which, the administration *can* in fact define the criteria of success in its own terms. How much constraint would present itself in the face of a government effort to reverse course, rather than to persevere without success in a protracted intervention? Until now, most of what has been said about popular and electoral opinion suggests that an administration can set its own criteria with considerable freedom, especially in a period such as 1964-1965 when the public's awareness of those criteria had not yet reached a high level, and where a higher propensity toward followership in the face of remote international problems was coupled with the almost oligopolistic impact of bipartisanship in international affairs.

The chances of an 'uncontrolled' reaction are lessened. From the recent evidence I have discussed, the mass electorate would deserve an upgrading in the status we give it — a newer and more responsible view of party loyalty is possible, amid the public's increased sophistication has shown up in other ways as well. In particular, the growing importance of issues in the 1960s (even before 1964) should be considered, as well as the rise in the consistency of attitudes and the ways in which some of the inertial force of partisan attachment has been undercut in the formation of voting choices. Yet, particularly in the area of foreign policy where the level of issue polarization had not been great — at least compared to the domestic side of the ledger — these changes need not increase the likelihood of an unsophisticated response or pressure. On the contrary, we might recall the implications of the Mainstream Model (Gamson and Modigliani, 1966). These changes may well have lessened the possibility of an irresponsible backlash and narrowed some of the gap between the mass and the attentive public.

What, then, is left? The threat of great electoral punishment on the heels of inaction or retrenchment (rather than continuing failure): this seems to have little place in a reading of the electorate. Rather than a selfconscious

public in matters of foreign policy, the picture well into the spiral of Vietnam is that of a relatively acquiescent following, a public anchored by symbols and attachments that helped to offset the prospects for polarization. Without striking cleavages in opinion, the stability of voting preferences was high and acted as yet another buffer against the effect of events and results, for these could be at least partly reinterpreted in terms of one's deference toward the president, confidence in his vision, long-standing partisan loyalties, or a simple desire for peace. In the realm of voting, as in the realm of opinion, these elements prepare the way for a quite diluted measure of accountability, especially for the president and particularly a Democratic president. They also help to subtly complicate some of the restrictive bearing of the new importance of issues in the 1960s, by creating a more responsible (and yet not intensely polarized) public in the realm of foreign affairs. As I will discuss in more detail later, it is also possible to suggest that certain *domestic* concerns, now increased in salience, may have represented still another resource in the hands of the policy elite, should it have attempted (or desired) to disengage. Prospective guidance and serious retrospective constraint give way to a "cueing" by the president's policies and initiatives. As long as no great sacrifices are demanded of the people, we are left, it seems, to expect compliance.

One serious objection still stands. We may not be able to extrapolate such *general* findings into the arena of Vietnam, for either the fervency of the consensus, the opposition to the war, or the communicated resolve of American leaders may have made this an exceptional issue even at its outset. After all, we are interested in examining the *specifics* of the relationship between policy and opinion in the Vietnam years, and not only in these broad hypotheses about the public and its permissiveness. We will want to know to what extent public pressures and preferences aligned with government policy in such a way as to cast the public, if not in the role of culprit and protagonist, then at least in that of a chorus or an "accessory to the crime." The next task should therefore be to examine the structure of opinion and opposition in this case — as a way of reflecting back on the general discussion and of laying some guidelines for the future.

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## 5. THE LANDSCAPE OF VIETNAM OPINION

Although Americans are certainly not known for their attentiveness to public concerns, especially in the area of world affairs, exceptions do occur. Vietnam has been just such an exception. Levels of interest and salience ran unexpectedly and increasingly high during the late 1960s — high enough toward the end of the Johnson era, to foster the impression of a “kibbitzing” and restrictive public. But here, caution is in order. Before the massive escalations of the Johnson years, the people’s concern was quite narrow: the domestic leeway of the president was at its most spacious. In these years, the public expressed a kind of “inattentive tolerance” toward American actions in Vietnam; its attitudes toward the government’s broad goals there would deserve the same characterization—not only in the early years, but right up to the present as well. Before Johnson’s victory over Barry Goldwater, Vietnam ranked only thirteenth on the public’s list of concerns. As of late May 1964, almost two-thirds of a Gallup Poll’s respondents claimed to have paid little or no attention to what was happening there (Free and Cantril, 1968: 52, 59-60; compare RePass, 1971, 1974; Patchen, 1966).

Although the range and quantity of the political signals handled by the public has been desperately low, Vietnam once again displays its exceptionalism (Verba et al., 1967). Fairly high levels of information were reported in the years following the dispatch of American troops. While this too goes against the grain of many expectations, we must take care in considering it. Very often, the question asked as a gauge of information about the war were gauges of unenlightening facts about a spectacle, and not of the sort of information one would need to make a critical choice among the policy alternatives “in the air.” The real issues (apart from the details of a spectacular “event”) revolved around some quite different, if less commonly demanded, questions: was, for example, America’s national security or way of life enough at stake for the government to harbor the goals, employ the means, or create the carnage that resulted, or, under the circumstances, might one more appropriately escalate, deescalate, or attempt a withdrawal. It seems as though a more specific concept should be introduced, that of *issue information*. For the

average citizen, it is fairly certain that in the early stages and very likely in the later stages of the war, this issue information did not exist. For the most part, an acceptance of the government's justificatory account of its behavior served to divert the demand, on the part of the public, for certain kinds of knowledge and critical understanding. They were replaced to a large extent by slogans, unexamined assumptions, or by taking the word of the officials.

Support for the war ran quite high. Popular attitudes on this matter were partly orderly and partly inconsistent: in regard to tactical choices, for example, many people presented themselves simultaneously as hawks *and* doves. What did not materialize, however, was what some of the older evidence might have led us to expect: the erratic, event-prone oscillations. Instead, inertia and a decline in support for the administration highlighted the Johnson years. As the war became a more immediate concern, inattentive inconsistency was gradually swept aside. By the fall of 1964, for example, after the American attack arising from the incidents in the Gulf of Tonkin, popular responses had begun to display a mixture of supportiveness and pugnacity, possibly combined with cues from the candidates' stands in the campaign for the presidency (Free and Cantril, 1968: 200; Wright, 1972). But, as always, it is hard to distinguish this policy support from a predictable and unreflective backing of the president, especially one who has benefited from a landslide election and from the emotions surrounding John Kennedy's death. Well into Johnson's own term, this approval predominated. In March 1966, as a single example, only 8% of a poll's respondents claimed they would counsel withdrawal even if Red China intervened with "a great many troops" (Mueller, 1973: 86; 82-90). Serious questioning about the nation's aims had either not yet begun, or a measure of patience and trust had temporarily replaced it.

Looked at broadly, popular opinion seemed to harden fairly gradually during these years, as support for the administration kept a high profile. But even with this familiar pattern of support, its significance is not always so clear. Several alternatives emerge. It could represent a passive followership or, on the other hand, a reckless escalation-prone public that was continually tugging at the bit of official moderation. Is there any reason to credit this latter possibility? Insofar as an escalation sentiment emerged, we are surely right in

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attributing much of it to a “war fever (inn Senator Fulbright’s words) which was generated by the government’s already provocative and seemingly “legitimate” escalations. It also suggests a willingness to accept official goals (or a scaling down of them) combined with a much less expansive desire: to be free of the Asian albatross, to get the involvement “over with.” Support for a stronger stand expresses a choice of tactics, a way of calibrating certain means with pre-existing ends, and not necessarily a symbol of the public’s determination to stay in Vietnam in the face of official reluctance. While pro-escalation sentiment recorded in national polls did increase from about one-fifth to one half of the public in the 1964-1967 period before dropping back to about one-third and less after the Tet offensive, it cannot therefore be treated simply as a potential backlash. The links are too complicated to afford us the simplifying luxury of such an attribution. It is not at all unlikely that even this sub-population could have gone along with a government that was systematically reevaluating its aims in Southeast Asia.

We should not fall into a trap whereby solidity and inflexibility are mistaken for one another, for not all majorities are barriers to change. More often, as long as the routines and comforts of everyday life are not jeopardized, they represent a flexible or, at times, even an “Oedipal support” (Hamilton, 1972: 123) for official policy, especially on the part of the better-educated and more informed inhabitants of the “mainstream”— those most exposed to the media and the claims of the government. For instance, it was often assumed, quite mistakenly, that opposition to American policy during the later Johnson years stemmed from hawkish attitudes which constituted a serious restraint (downward) on policy change. The Stanford data reveal, however, that at least as of 1966, those who withheld support were more likely to be *dovish*. They tended to reject escalation options, while accepting the idea of a deescalation. Respondents who basically approved of Johnson’s position, on the other hand, were more likely to favor a stepping up of the violence than was the much smaller group of opponents. At that time, therefore, if a restriction or potential backlash had existed, one would have looked for it among Johnson’s backers (Verba et al., 1967; Mueller, 1973: ch. 5; Gamson and Modigliani, 1966). But in this case, because followership has been so wide-

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spread (*especially* among the higher socioeconomic brackets) it gave the administration an extra cushion of support — a more flexible one than if the hawks had been an important oppositional element rather than the loyal camp-followers which they appeared to be. For not only could the president rely on a striking “global approval of the government” and a “bias toward positivity,”<sup>21</sup> but also upon the strategic role of the presidency and the strong leaning toward the Democrats in measures of party identification amid preferences on the issues.

This places several things in perspective. Although respondents in the Stanford survey might have accepted some escalation or reduction in the fighting, at that point and *before* the options were sanctioned officially, they seemed to balk either at a major escalation or an abrupt withdrawal. Also, many of the more resistant hard-line attitudes were undoubtedly low in intensity, perhaps relying on old Cold War slogans or on signals from the 1964 campaign — the kind of simplifications that last so long in part because they are so redundant with the appeals of the government. Not only did a permissive majority exist in these years, but it may well have afforded considerably more leeway for the president to move in a dovish, rather than a hawkish direction. Hawks can at times be sheep.

Americans did of course exhibit anticommunist attitudes which helped shape their ideas when it came to foreign policy. But again, however well documented, this is one fact we should not overplay. When the people are bewildered or are not intensely involved (these are the usual cases in foreign policy), they may allay their confusion by echoing what they think to be official and therefore reasonable, responsible views. But the general public may not have shared an “addictive fear” of communism, nor phobic feelings toward it which could be cathected onto a variety of representations whenever and wherever an elite would sanction them. It could therefore have been both inaccurate and self-serving to assert, as did one interviewed State Department official, that “most Americans are kind of sublimated hawks” (Cohen, 1973: 123; Parenti, 1969: 32, 72).

Nevertheless, the Cold War attitudes of Americans are not just a myth. According to a Harris Survey three-fourths of the public approved of the

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American invasion of the Dominican Republic in mid-1965, feeling that the US. should use military force to keep the communists out of the Western Hemisphere. The escalations in Vietnam had perhaps made these tactics (and the determination that lay behind them) an acceptable, understandable, and perhaps even fashionable alternative. In the spring of 1966, strong sentiment of this sort was again registered when only 5% of the respondents to a N.O.R.C. study felt that American policy toward Russia, China, and Cuba was “too tough” (Lipset, 1966: 103; Free and Cantril, 1968: 79). Yet we might also recall that in the American culture of that time, the phrase “too tough” was virtually a nonexistent term, bereft of significance and meaningful reference. By the spring of 1966, with the symbolic commitment of American effort having become quite visible, 81% disapproved of the idea of a presidentially-sponsored withdrawal from Vietnam leading to a communist takeover. We might conclude that as long as it skirts disaster and heavy casualties, military interventionism would be regarded as an acceptable tool in the service of those aims that the government had defined. But in spite of such findings (which could be multiplied endlessly), the idea that these attitudes are obsessed, or would give rise to obsessive or volatile demands does not find solid backing. For the public, more immediate and concrete problems are likely to take precedence. Habits of deference are strong. Besides, a willingness to accept certain kinds of violence is not the same thing as a demand for it, nor is it necessarily an opposition to scaling down the nation’s goals in a way that would make that violence unnecessary. Dislikes and phobic fears cannot be equated.

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At this point, though many questions about the allegiance to a policy remain unanswered, we can perhaps gain a clearer idea of what support and constraint were involved (and where we might look for its explanation) by disaggregating the pro-war majority. By probing the differences of opinion within it, we can give up some of the abstractness that comes from flattening out a complicated situation. We can also see what light these differences shed

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upon the possibilities which were present in the public for a restructuring of American aims, particularly in the early years of the Vietnam involvement.

We note one thing right away: within the supportive majority on Vietnam, internal cleavages were surprisingly small. This was especially true later on (Verba et al., 1967; Rosenberg et al., 1970: ch. 3; Verba and Brody, 1970: 329; Patchen, 1966: 294; Wright, 1972: 137-138; Hamilton, 1969: 57-58; Rosenberg, 1965: 330). White men, known for showing their pro-Cold War colors more strongly and distinctly than American women, tended to dominate the hawkish group of activists. Blacks and women, on the other hand, were somewhat less likely to lean toward military alternatives. Regional differences were marginal. What the Cold War seems to have brought with it has been a kind of demographic homogenization on the national level, sweeping aside many of the factors which an older literature on public opinion had made so much of. The age groups most clearly affected appear to be the young and the early middle-aged, a combination Munich-Cold War generation, growing up on the appeals for preparedness. But aside from the substantial and surprising “oversupport” of youth (even in 1964, a majority of non-Southern whites aged 21-30 backed a stronger stand in the war even if it meant invading North Vietnam), the demographic differences among the supporters were not, or did not remain, impressive.

Social-structural cleavages might be more promising. Partly because of the importance of a Marxist tradition in both political sociology and revisionist history, considerable attention has been given to class-based differences in the support for American policies, including Vietnam. At one extreme, we might look for a predatory social order presided over by higher-income elites, who are usually able to exercise hegemony and insure the compliance of the less-advantaged. At the other extreme, more conservative students and policy-makers might expect, even from the beginning of the involvement, to find a broad national consensus with no decisive differences among classes—except for the ever-present danger posed by a belligerent subordinate class against which the consensus was to be protected.

The first important analysis of attitudes on the war in 1966 (Verba et al., 1976: 323-324) discovered, rather unexpectedly, that standard variables of

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social status (income, education, occupation) had by that time virtually no relation to policy preferences on Vietnam. Any attempt to locate responsibility for the support of the war in the upper (or lower) reaches of the class structure, this implied, would serve only to obscure the breadth of the national consensus. Other findings, however, have made such an hypothesis more and more difficult to accept, or at least to extrapolate into all periods of the conflict.

It appears now that higher income groups, as well as better-educated and more attentive Americans displayed the attitudes which many had attributed to the mass. Those of *higher* status showed stronger support and less negativism for the conflict than did the poorly-educated and the less well advantaged. Such a pattern, present also during the Korean conflict, appeared in attitudes toward military spending as well (Modigliani, 1972; Hamilton, 1968, 1969, 1972: 118-129, 452-454; Mueller, 1973: ch. 5; Russett, 1972). Although more contradictory findings are sometimes present, support for escalation reveals a similar pattern, with hawkish or belligerent attitudes disproportionately cluttering the higher, and not the lower reaches of the social scale. It was college-educated Americans in the spring of 1964 who most strongly supported the use of American troops. Acceptance for this overt form of intervention increased with higher levels of formal education although not, in a consistent fashion, with higher family incomes. A small margin of high income respondents and a majority of the college-educated recommended escalation (Patchen, 1966, 1970). A similar constellation of support was found in the 1964 election study, a fall 1964 polling, a 1966 Detroit study of escalation sentiment, a February 1967 Gallup survey concerning the aerial bombardment of North Vietnam, a far-reaching spring 1967 analysis, in local referenda, and in a January 1968 study requesting self-designation as hawk or dove (Free and Cantril, 1968: 82; Wright, 1972: 137-138; Converse and Schuman, 1970: 23; Modigliani, 1972: 960, 963-964; Hamilton, 1969: 57-58; Hahn, 1970a, 1970b; Brody and Verba, 1972). Also as the spring Survey Research Center study shows (Patchen, 1966, 1970), individuals of higher social status (whether measured by levels of education or family income, and even when controlling for age) were more likely to reject the options of with-

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drawal or neutralization Among younger respondents, this relationship was especially strong.

There was eventually a shift away from hawkish attitudes among higher status groups as the war progressed, which helped weaken the stronger correlations found earlier between support and socioeconomic position. It seems possible (see Wright, 1972) to attribute this change to a sensitivity to the mass media and the shift in media stance toward a more dovish or skeptical position, especially since much of the change took place among those who claimed to pay the most attention to the media. If some explanation were sought for the original class differences, we might look for it in a similar condition: a greater willingness to follow official assumptions and a greater exposure to the appeals of the media (in which those assumptions are aired). These are tendencies that, in the earlier years of the conflict, not only pointed in a similar direction, but were closely related to levels of education, information, and class. During these years, it appears that “the tough, hard line is a proclivity of established, educated, upper-middle-class white Protestants” (Hamilton, 1972: 454). This places the potential opposition into quite a different light, for the smallness of this core group and the unlikelihood of their mobilizing a mass backlash (which will be treated in more detail later) would run at cross-currents with the received claims about the general public. And such claims have not even had to consider the consequences of an actual desire to disengage on the part of the policy elite. Had such a desire ever been important, it could have led the administration to exert its powerful countervailing influence in the public arena and increase its leeway accordingly.

As we sum up these admittedly scattered findings, the apparent consensus of the mid-1960s is found to be more equivocal and more susceptible to differentiation by social status than was once presumed. Especially before the narrowing of the relationship between preferences and status in the later years, the “responsible” nature of the better-educated and attentive public, and the solidity of the support for U.S. policy, seem less pronounced.

In fact, studying public opinion and electoral behavior, both in a general way and in regard to Vietnam, few reasonable grounds have been found for strong fears of a backlash or for an attribution of constraint. Much has

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been found, on the other hand, to suggest a radical discounting of these claims. Such a conclusion does not mean that a variety of participants did not believe, or could not have believed, in such a restriction. But to the extent that such beliefs were prominent (and here the evidence is overly sketchy and usually overdrawn), these presidential and elite accounts can be thought of — not as a reflection of an objective popular barrier or pressure for continuing—but as something different: a self-vindicating and at times perhaps willful misreading both of public opinion and the domestic political future — a kind of surface discourse that finds little warrant in the deeper rules or shared expectancies of its context. We simply cannot neatly translate the levels of support for intervention, anticommunism, or escalation into something they may not have amounted to: a potential and vigorous resistance to disengagement. As we have seen, there is little in the character of popular opinion that calls for such a reading.

If there were few domestic restrictions, can the public be held in any way responsible for the war, and for the refusal to withdraw? In a strictly representative or democratic guise, it cannot. But are there other forms of responsibility? Actually an affirmative answer suggests itself here, for permissiveness and acquiescence can go in more than one direction. Although the general public may not “prohibit” a deescalation or “necessitate” a continuing conflict, it might also not prohibit an escalation or necessitate a withdrawal or a quicker negotiated end to the war. Certainly a form of responsibility can be located in these facts. The arguments and evidence I have rehearsed to show the political *weakness* of the public will cut both ways. Even as they may make a backlash unlikely, they undercut the possibility of a “frontlash” as well. A viable opposition to current policy will, as a result, be inhibited — except in the relatively rare cases where the elite is already seriously divided and can give leadership and respectability to the dissent. These are possibilities which should be considered to see if the weakness of the restraint “downward” was paralleled by an equally feeble “upward” restraint, and to attempt to gauge the implications.

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## 6. CONSENSUS AND OPPOSITION

Later on, of course, support for the war did waver, as opposition (or dovish sentiment) expanded, became legitimated, and erupted into dramatic displays and attempts at influence. But looking through the lens of the Vietnam experience, we need to know to what extent domestic concerns played a restraining role, or if the permissiveness of the consensus papered over serious hesitations about America's aspirations in the world or its globalist view of its national security needs and international role.

One interesting measure of popular opposition, and one largely immune to a mere acquiescence in official policy, is the "mistake" question. Respondents were asked periodically if the U.S. should have become involved with its troops in Vietnam, or whether they thought the intervention was a mistake. From mid-1965 on, response declined in support — from the 61% in August 1965 who asserted that the intervention was *not* a mistake to the 61% in May 1971 who thought it was. In mid-1967 the narrow majority denying its mistaken character became a minority, and from mid-1968, a majority actually classified it as a mistake (Mueller, 1973: ch. 3; Schuman, 1972). Although this question is a narrow one, with its focus on the problem of troops rather than on the guiding premises of policy, it nevertheless affords us some measure of the consensus and its fragility.

In these years, followership was gradually eroded, for unlike more distant foreign policy issues, wars are felt directly, thus making it more difficult to manufacture a legitimation or to manipulate the popular reluctance and anxiety about international conflict. The injunction for policies to succeed in their own terms was not being met, and some of the originally hawkish supporters (in the attentive public in particular) were being influenced by shifts in the media and by the accumulation of bad news (Brady, 1971; Stone and Brody, 1970; Wright, 1972; Hamilton, 1972: 4849, 453454, 526). By 1968, particularly in the wake of the Tet offensive, patience and optimism about a military solution to the war had weakened still further. January showed self-designated "hawks" with a 56% to 28% edge over the "doves;" by March that margin had vanished. Doves outnumbered hawks 42% to 41%, and public

approval of Johnson's handling of the war had dropped to 26% — an all-time low.

Yet the opponents of the war were not doves perching comfortably on a single line of opinion. As late as the 1968 election study, while almost three-fifths of those interviewed would characterize the intervention as a mistake, their policy preferences continued to take a more erratic form (Converse and Schuman, 1972: 20). Almost as many showed a desire for taking a stronger stand as for total withdrawal. Disaffection in this later period, in other words, cannot be equated with dovishness, nor did either attitude necessarily involve any appraisal of America's goals or the legitimacy of its efforts. But, at least, it shows that quiescence and hegemony need not be identical. At many points majorities did express support for a variety of deescalations if not for withdrawal itself, deluding themselves perhaps that these options could still salvage the goals of the government. According to the Stanford data, 88% of the 1966 respondents claimed to be willing to negotiate with the National Liberation Front, 70% would accept a negotiated truce, and narrow majorities agreed to admit the NLF into a coalition government or abide by free elections which the NLF might win. Yet even where options ruled out by the government found a receptive audience among the public, we should be cautious in our interpretation. Not only could these proposals have been impossible and therefore irrelevant, but the majority support that underpropped them could have expressed war-weariness far more than a principled stand against intervention. It was often not associated with any skepticism about the Cold War or about the relationship between American security and the containment of communist insurgents. For the most part, these larger premises went unquestioned, and preferences were made known on tactics alone, perhaps accounting for the willingness to escalate on the part of many respondents who were still not sure that Vietnam was worth a protracted war.

Disaffection was occasionally, but not always, coupled with support for withdrawal. In a poll in the late spring of 1964, for example, less than three-fourths of the respondents claimed to know of the conflict. Of these, the surprisingly high figure of 28% favored disengagement; 53% were opposed (Patchen, 1970, 1966: 295). After the much-publicized political turmoil in

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South Vietnam in mid-1966, and given a simple choice between continuing and withdrawing, less than a majority (48%) favored sticking it out; 35% embraced the idea of withdrawal. When given a question about a compromise agreement with China that might neutralize Vietnam, those in favor substantially outnumbered the opponents, 46% to 29%, with a sizable “no opinion” segment (23%) providing an additional cushion. Several years later, should the South Vietnamese government have decided to stop fighting, 72% of the respondents recommended withdrawal; a mere 10% of grade school graduates, 15% of the high school and 28% of the college educated wanted the United States to continue alone (Patchen, 1966: 296; 1970: 657-658; Mueller, 1963: 86-87).

More importantly, this hesitation in the face of a growing, if covert, American commitment was largely untutored, for disengagement had not yet gotten the kind of high level backing and legitimation that are usually needed for a foreign policy alternative to gain widespread appeal.<sup>22</sup> Few political figures at *any* point during the Johnson years went so far as to counsel withdrawal, or to admit that it may well have been, from the very start, the only alternative to an escalating and destructive stalemate. Even as late as 1968, Eugene McCarthy limited his recommendations to a general bombing halt, a push for more conciliatory negotiations, a coalition government, and so forth.<sup>23</sup> This fact is crucial, for how well can the evidence of disapproval be sifted and deciphered? How clearly will a suggestion for change be revealed? Rarely does a sizable chunk of the electorate ever call for an unproposed course of action. Their forte, as many have said, lies elsewhere: in retrospective judgment, not in the imaginative articulation of new options.

When asked vaguer questions about “what we should do next,” the responsiveness to the idea of withdrawal was on the whole quite muted during the early years of the conflict, but, with some deviations, continued to grow during the later 1960s (Mueller, 1973: 81-92). Throughout 1966 and 1967, for example, when a communist takeover was accurately cited as the consequence of a U.S. withdrawal, support for withdrawal totaled between 15% and 19% of the public. Only later did this option acquire political power and shed its status as the unlikely wish of a small minority. By March 1968,

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given a simple approve-disapprove question about a gradual withdrawal sponsored by the government, and with no mention of a communist takeover, 56% approved. Two years earlier, 56% had *disapproved*. Looked at broadly, therefore, disillusionment and disaffection with the war ran high in Johnson's later years and the "unprimed" support for withdrawal showed a certain strength, which we should be careful not to exaggerate.

Even so, as in the case of support, these national figures may be misleading, for they cover over the constituent elements and splits within the opposition. By disaggregating the opposition, we can hope to see with greater clarity where the national consensus broke down, and where it was shared with unequal intensity — in a sense, to see what the social roots of "nondecision" were. Although the opposition to the war could have been randomly distributed, there could also have been important differences — with something to tell us about the interests that were represented, and those that were ignored, by military interventionism. There might also have been embedded within the opposition a latent social conflict with implications for the future of American policy.

Race, sex, and age present possible axes of differentiation. Blacks, for example, countering the relative hawkishness of whites, proved less supportive both of the war effort and of its escalation. The arguments for the war were less well heard, or proved less convincing. When queried, they were considerably more willing to accept the alternative policies of deescalation and withdrawal (Verba et al, 1967; Shuman, 1972: 527; Hamilton, 1969: 57). Mueller (1973: 143) shows the substantial differences between black and white men in 23 polls taken from 1965-1971.<sup>24</sup> This willingness, found during Korea and World War Two as well as Vietnam, was even stronger when information levels were held constant — perhaps displaying the ability of the media and of government rationales to homogenize much, but not all, of public opinion.

Women also tended to take more dovish stances and express more negativism about the war. This finding is not unexpected; it fits nicely with earlier evidence that women have been less prone to accept war with slight provocation, and less likely to embrace hard-line Cold War viewpoints. They have also been less intolerant of pacifist demonstrations, less optimistic

about the outcome of a possible nuclear war, and more worried about the chance of nuclear attack. As Rosenberg et al. (1970: 76) have phrased it, “It seems clear that males are more willing to temporize with human life as an ultimate value than are women.”<sup>25</sup>

Among demographic variables, age was also significant. Americans of 50 and over consistently gave less fervent backing to the war and, as measured by the Mistake question in 22 A.I.P.O. polls from 1965 to 1971, were more prone to negativism. This likely reflects their hesitance about “internationalism” in the way it had come to be defined, along with a relatively stronger feeling that the problems of the nation at home should have top priority—a sentiment taking root in their experiences from the 1930s. In contrast to the younger Munich-Cold War group, this was more of an inter-war generation.

In an interesting 1971 survey question on the willingness to come (with military supplies, U.S. troops, or neither) to the aid of 11 different countries attacked by communist-backed forces, the prospect of *even NATO allies or Mexico being attacked* could not summon a majority in favor of sending American troops (though we must remember that this was after years of disillusionment with the ongoing war in Vietnam and in the absence of government exhortations or appeals to a threatened national security, and so on, which would surely have increased the support). If we look at possibilities somewhat comparable to South Vietnam — Thailand, Brazil, Nationalist China — the same pattern appeared, only more stubbornly opposed to involvement. In the case of Thailand, to highlight some of the demographic variance, only 6% of those 50 and over (compared with 17% of those age 21-29), only 4% of nonwhites (compared to 12% of the whites), and only 9% of American women (versus 13% of the men) were willing to send troops in the case of attack (Cantril and Roll, 1971: 86-89; compare Russett and Hanson, 1975; Schuman, 1972).

The last cleavage is more provocative; it concerns differences of opinion linked with income levels and class situations. Several studies that I have already reviewed converge on a similar finding: poorer and less well-educated Americans were more likely to express dovish sentiments. They were not as likely to support U.S. interventionism, and they were more likely to oppose

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it. This dovetails neatly with the earlier findings about the war's support among the upper strata; it is largely based on the same studies. Hahn's census tract analysis (1970a, 1970b) of local referenda between 1966 and 1968, for example, found opposition to the war centered squarely in the working-class rather than upper-middle class sections of the communities involved, and also — in an interesting sidelight — revealed that the disapproval expressed in referenda was considerably higher than in supposedly comparable opinion surveys. This may well indicate a disguising of the levels of opposition in standard polls due in part to the interpersonal dynamics of the survey situation. A Survey Research Center study (from spring 1964) uncovers a similar pattern of opposition (Patcheri, 1966, 1970). Asked whether more American troops should be sent to Vietnam (even risking war with China), only one-third of those with a grade school education assented, but 53% of the supposedly more sophisticated college graduates endorsed the action.

Lower income and lower status Americans (and those with less formal education) were not only more likely to favor negotiation and neutralizing settlements to the war (options that some proposed from time to time with little avail), but also to accept the idea of a complete withdrawal. It is significant that in the late spring of 1964, only 38% of those with a grade-school education opposed withdrawal (compared to three-fourths of the college graduates). Support for the idea of "Trying to make some compromise agreement with Communist China on this — like making all Vietnam neutral" was also greater among high school or grade school graduates and persons of less prestigious occupational status (Patchen, 1970: 657-658; 1966: 296-301). This, we should recall, was the much-denigrated uninformed minority from which some thought a backlash would arise. Other studies (in the fall of 1964, in June 1966, 1968, in the various Vietnam referenda, and in mid-1969) suggest the same conclusion (Free and Cantril, 1968: 82; Wright, 1972; Hamilton, 1968, 1969, 1972; Rosenberg et al., 1970: ch. 3; Mueller, 1973: ch. 5; Brody and Verba, 1972; Hahn, 1970). Support and opposition to the war, and to the withdrawal of American troops, was far from homogeneous. On the contrary, it broke down quite plainly along the major fault-lines of the social structure.

Lower-status groups thus went beyond hesitance in the face of a seem-

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ingly needless war and, in doing so, offered an extra cushion of support for any American leader contemplating withdrawal or a negotiated disengagement — particularly in the early years of the conflict. To account for this, we can raise a variety of possibilities. Partly it was because these groups articulated a different sense of priorities and were less “internationalist” (for example, less concerned with protecting the expansive international position which the U.S. had secured in the course of the Cold War, or “in the honor and prestige involved in successful completion of foreign wars” (Hamilton, 1972: 454). It was also, in part, because with less formal education, political attentiveness, and media involvement, they were saved from the full brunt of Cold War appeals during the 1950s and were, as a result, inadequately socialized into the anticommunist world view. Also, in accord with a Mainstream Model, they were less affected during the war itself by the prevailing norms of interpretation and by the arguments used (by officials or in the media) to justify the government’s role.

It is worth exploring this matter in some detail. A supplementary interpretation would find in these same groups (blacks, the poor, the less well-educated, older people, and so on) a large reservoir of neo-isolationist sentiment. While some of the social sources remain the same, this sentiment tends to be regarded quite differently than the isolationism of the past. No longer stigmatized as a barrier to America’s responsible leadership of the Free World, their attitudes came very gradually to be seen as a justifiable reluctance in the face of a costly and even genocidal interventionism. But regardless of whether we relate this new reluctance to an older ostrich-like variety of isolationism, to a new self-centered atomism that has deflected energy away from public concerns and obligations, or even to the predictions of a long-term cyclical swing in attitudes, such as Frank Klingberg (1952) and others have rather far-fetchedly suggested,<sup>26</sup> one thing is certain. The sentiment was not randomly distributed in the general public; it was centered in the lower realms of the social structure. And such a concentration could be found throughout the period of escalation — at least until the late 1960s when much of the attentive public became disaffected en masse.

This concentration might even help account for the extremism of

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some responses to the war, which appeared to display an uneasy mixture of disaffection and even support for disengagement with a surprising willingness to escalate. A feeling of “*either get in or get out*” (RePass, 1974: 32-33) may have been expressed, as opinions on the war ranged themselves on two different dimensions: the readiness to accept official goals, and the acceptance of violence when it came to the means. For this reason, as I have said, hard-line stances should not be taken at face value: they may have exhibited less of a blocking force against disengagement than an obstacle to a costly and protracted war. Perhaps this underlies the fact that Barry Goldwater’s Southern victories came from the least “internationalist” states and that in 1964, half of all those who favored disengagement from Vietnam also claimed to back stronger measures against Cuba (Free and Cantril, 1968: 58,67, 82; Patchen, 1966,1970: 661-662).<sup>27j</sup> In any event, in the neo-isolationist sentiment as well as in the opposition to the war and the expressed support for policies of deescalation and withdrawal, we do find, again and again, that the same social and demographic groups were disproportionately represented. Contrary to earlier interpretations, an important social issue might be found submerged in the currents of public opinion.

\* \* \* \* \*

The only way to help the poor man is to get out of that war in Vietnam. . . . These taxes — high taxes — it’s going over yonder to kill people with and I don’t see no cause in it.<sup>28</sup>

\* \* \* \* \*

There is one such possibility we might consider: namely, that the high intensity of certain *domestic* preferences could restrain America’s expansiveness (or leeway) in the world arena. This might underlie one exceptional quality of public attitudes regarding Vietnam — their progressive divergence from official viewpoints. Such a divergence seems to have proceeded *pari passu* with the intrusiveness of the war on American domestic life and interests. It became a

*domesticated* issue (see Rosenau, 1967: 46-50; Brody and Verba, 1972) — competing for attention and resources with essentially domestic concerns in such a way that anti-interventionist attitudes would become related to liberalism on domestic social issues, and hawkishness to conservatism. Nor was this increasing consistency between domestic and international attitudes merely an artifact of the war and the opposition to it. Recent studies find the most dramatic increase to have occurred between 1960 and 1964 (Nie, 1974; Nie et al., 1975: ch. 8; Russett and Hanson, 1975: ch. 4), which suggests that foreign policy and Cold War attitudes had become somewhat domesticated already — several years before such a connection broke through the constrictions of bipartisanship and began to be placed on the political agenda in an active way.

Some of the apparent isolationism does seem related to the different sense of priorities that has been gestating since the height of the Cold War; we can see this by comparing the domestic focus of national concerns in 1964 with the more internationally-centered ones of 1960 (RePass, 1971: 391-393; Hamilton, 1972: ch. 2). Later findings point in the same direction. Attempting to tap a trade-off between domestic and international concerns, for example (a trade-off that American political leaders are reluctant to stress), surveys have asked for agreement or disagreement with the statement: “We shouldn’t think so much in *international* terms but concentrate more on our own *national* problems and building up our strength and prosperity here at home” (Free and Cantril, 1968: 75; Cantril and Roll, 1971: 43,78-79). On this question, agreement shows a steady rise from 1964 (55%) to 1968 (60%) to 1971, when 77% agreed and only 16% disagreed. The majority has never been a national cross-section; it decreases in size with rising levels of both income and formal education.<sup>29</sup> Other studies sketch a similar picture of lower-income Americans, with a domestic “bread and butter” perspective and the feeling (singled out spontaneously) that some of their most deeply felt needs have been continuously ignored by a government with a quite different set of priorities. This has been coupled, quite understandably, with strong desires to have some voice in the decisions concerning Vietnam and with greater unwillingness to delegate responsibility.

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Even on surveys of Vietnam preferences, this domestic focus could be detected. As the conflict progressed, majorities showed considerable reluctance to foot the increasing domestic bill for the war. A suggestion of raising taxes to pay for the intervention was opposed, for example, by two-thirds of the respondents in the 1966 Stanford study as well as in a 1967 Gallup poll. Supporters of deescalation were more likely to oppose it (Verba et al., 1967; Converse and Schuman, 1970). A feeling of wasting money and of ignoring domestic priorities was occasionally even linked directly with a desire for escalation, as a way of getting the American involvement "over with." Solutions such as Vietnamization, negotiation, or jettisoning the burdens of war by turning the problem over to the U.N. also gained wide support for roughly similar reasons. At this point, and in the light of what might be seen as the submerged domestic issues and potential conflicts regarding the war, we should look for a response to Daniel Ellsberg's question: "How could we have let them, with so little protest?" Most of the previous discussion of the public's political weakness stakes out at least one line of response. But even the existence of strong disaffection and differing priorities among the public did not find representation in the higher circles until fairly late in the conflict. As a result, it made for only a small dent in the obstinate consensus that enshrined the goals, if not always the tactics, of American policy.

Several things can be stated straight off. First, the opposition to the war was slow in developing. In 1963-1965 (a period of considerable domestic leeway before the major escalations) no significant public pressure for disengagement can be found. As President Nixon and the proponents of the "electronic battlefield" were to learn, invisibility is an ingenious defense against opposition. So is an acquiescent populace, but there we should remember that "silence is not necessarily a lifetime occupation" (Lipsitz, 1970: 142.143). Even so, the sometimes intense disaffection with the war did not seem to center around any of the broad aims or conceptions that lay beneath U.S. policy. Instead, except for a relatively ignorable minority, it took on another tone, characteristically pragmatic and incremental, highlighted more by a tired impatience than anything else. Under these circumstances, success would probably have been a solvent of all but the most principled disenchantment.

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The failure of the opposition then becomes one component in a “how possible?” explanation of the war’s prolongment.

Analyzing this failure with the depth required will be an important job, but well beyond the scope of this paper. Only a few brief remarks can be made, only some of the implications considered. We should be aware, for example, of the disadvantages that the voices of opposition faced. For not only did the government command remarkable resources in defining the terms of the Vietnam debate, but any full-scale criticism took on the dangerous overtones of *lèse-majesté* or even disloyalty. This only further reduced the scope of issue conflict as well as the likelihood of assertion. At the point where contrary views might have influenced policy, there were other limitations. Public pressure, for example, is likely to pry a foreign policy loose from its normal grooves only when a partial collapse of the consensus within the elite is paralleled by the disaffection of the public. On Vietnam, these two processes did finally begin to work in tandem, but only partially (based on quite divergent considerations) and only then after years of effort. Before that time, the elite continued to exhibit strains of that unflinching militancy which many have attributed to the mass.

Diluting matters further were the negative attitudes toward war protesters which most Americans seemed to share, often expressing them with great fervor. There was an often overlooked discrepancy, in other words, between growing popular opposition to the war and popular feeling against demonstrators. Even when they themselves opposed the intervention, citizens were frequently, even pathologically opposed to any visible means of registering that dissent. In the later years, of those that felt the war was a mistake and even of those favoring complete withdrawal, a *majority* rated war protesters negatively.<sup>30</sup> For many people, if one disagreed with the policy, personally there was nothing to be done — or nothing that ought to be done. National security policy simply was not an arena for public display. Instead, war protest was widely perceived to be threatening, or illegitimate, or both.

Demographic factors also entered in. Many of the most probable critics — women, for instance — were also the most passive, their dovishness expressing itself in a diminished support for the war and its escalation, but not

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necessarily in visible opposition. In spite of the dramatic efforts of the anti-war movement, activism was generally limited. As one study in fact suggests, “doves” were *less active* in their disapproval of policy than were “hawks” (Verba and Brody, 1970; Schuman, 1972). Had the role of popular opinion been pronounced, this could have made an official misreading of the general public more understandable. As some have noted (Rosenberg et al., 1970: 61), “outside of the relatively rare situations of one-man, one-vote, people of limited education essentially lapse into political invisibility.” With many of the war’s potential opponents falling into this category, the voice of the opposition (with its contrary domestic priorities) was further muffled.

## 7. INTERNATIONAL HEGEMONY, DOMESTIC HEGEMONY

Politicians will continue those policies which result in popular approval and revise those which lead to popular condemnation [Pomper, 1968: 97; Boyd, 1972].

[A] ruling class makes its policies operate, even when the mass of society cease to endorse them [Kolko, 1969: xii, also 13].

To any discussion of the representative quality of American policy or of the responsibility of the general public for prolonging it, the character of public opinion and electoral behavior can serve as a skeptical preface. But though it may undermine certain arguments about the domestic roots of policy, the nature of public opinion does not exist in a vacuum. There are structural conditions to consider which make the possibility of a constraint on either disengagement or escalation even more improbable, and which affect the second possibility I mentioned much earlier — that while no constraint may be present, the policy could be constituted by the interests that the general public expressed. Its interests might monitor or define the “second order” purposive relationship between international aims and domestic purposes (Andrews, 1975b). Yet the public’s ability to be heard depends upon the political structure through which popular demands are mediated or given voice. If

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the policymakers cannot easily be held accountable to the people, then the people cannot easily be held responsible for the policymakers. Muteness and impotence preclude constraint.

They also preclude any prospective role, while clouding over the significance of any post hoc evaluation. The impact of elections on Vietnam policy, as one example, has always been problematic. Partly due to the nature of the electorate and the diluted role of foreign policy issues, elections (even of the feared future variety) have not been contests or debates which could provide the elite with a kind of verdict. Neither John Kennedy's narrow "squeaking by" nor Lyndon Johnson's landslide gave them any reason, nor made it seem necessary, to change America's goals in Southeast Asia. Electoral opinion was either too vaguely expressed or, as in 1964, gave the president a margin of leniency that he chose to ignore.

To start with, elections tend to be poor gauges of policy preferences and equally poor mandates. This is true even where several positive elements are present — in particular, an overriding issue which generates carefully articulated opposing views on the part of the candidates. Certainly in 1964 Vietnam was not an overriding issue in the eyes of the general public, and even in 1968 a striking divergence of views on the part of the candidates did not materialize. Elections, in other words, are not referenda. Victories are equivocal, and in the 1960s they were as equivocal as ever.

In an election, we know that a simple choice between two parties cannot express a complex array of different preferences that are held with differing strength. A majority coalition (perhaps fashioned by aggregating a series of minority issue publics) therefore says nothing whatever about the support that an individual policy might garner among the electorate, or even about the support for it that a victory is often said to express.

Other elements only compound the matter, limiting still further the role of the electorate on questions of foreign policy. Party preferences, for example, have historically shown little relation to the Cold War consensus or to positions on other foreign policy issues, including Vietnam (Miller, 1967; Cantril and Roll, 1971: 38; RePass, 1971: 389-390; Rosenberg, 1965: 319-320; Boyd, 1972: 432). The "compass" of party loyalty will thus prove an

inadequate guide. In wiping out the signals by which one learns the implications of various policy choices, bipartisanship has tended to distort the distribution of attitudes and inhibit public debate. The basic commitment of the nation in regard to foreign policy became relatively nonpartisan; partisan issue polarizations were not impressive ones. What Johnson's 1964 victory could register, in other words, was not majority preference on the campaign issues so much as a vague overall orientation that different issue publics created as they swelled or made dents in the governing coalition. And, during the later Johnson years, it was only with the greatest difficulty that policy preferences and opposition to the war could influence electoral outcomes, not to mention changes in the goals of the state.

We can naturally unearth some differences between the parties, especially in 1964, but even here the sole choice lay between the firmness of Johnson and Goldwater's less predictable belligerence.<sup>31</sup> Because of the Johnson landslide against an essentially minority figure within a minority party, the election could not act as a mandated disapproval of Goldwater's hawkish views, nor as a trial balloon for President Johnson. Nevertheless, many war critics have misunderstood this situation. Some have been surprised, and even outraged, that after a resounding electoral triumph Johnson turned around and began to emulate his opponent, putting into action plans of escalation which had already been conceived. This outrage rests on a common yet distortive reading of American elections. If voter evaluations are predominantly retrospective (if they react to past performance more than they offer future guidelines), then an explicit mandate on foreign policy would not exist. Johnson captured a clear majority of those who supported each of the Vietnam options given in the 1964 SRC election survey: 63% of those favoring withdrawal, 52% of the escalators, and 82% of those who wanted to stop the fighting (Pomper, 1968: 251). And, to some extent, these policy preferences may have been an artifact of party loyalty or a readiness to follow the foreign policy views of a candidate favored for other reasons. More significantly, if a mandate does not exist, it cannot be violated.

Partisan differences did emerge among the electorate, but their importance is far from clear. In a war fought under Democratic auspices, those iden-

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tified with the Democrats were less willing to claim that the U.S. had made a mistake in sending its troops. According to the 1966 Stanford data, they had slightly *higher* mean escalation scores than Republicans, though this difference did not achieve statistical significance. It may only mean that an aggressive American policy held the allegiance of the party loyalists. After the aerial bombing of North Vietnam, not only was the current policy accepted by an almost two to one margin, but Johnson's 1964 supporters were *more* likely to approve of his 1966 actions than were Goldwater's supporters — though at first glance, the latter group might have been expected to constitute the backlash or the pressure group for escalation, or at least to see the wisdom of Johnson having taken a page from Goldwater's tactical book (Pomper, 1968: 252-253). There is nothing in these early years to show how Johnson violated a mandate to avoid escalation, but much to indicate the prevalence of followership — whether of official policies (as in the Mainstream Model) or of party cues.

In a broader sense, the “Democratic” nature of the war played a preventive role, in forestalling the rise of an important public restraint, even if it was much less successful in inhibiting the rise of dissatisfaction or the “domestication” of the war issue. It made it improbable that any socially-structured opposition would arise, for such an opposition could no longer rest on the (perhaps increasingly shaky) moorings of party loyalty in the late 1960s. As long as party leaders maintained their allegiance to the Democratic president, they could not champion the sources of disaffection (especially among lower-income brackets) that might in another circumstance have been their constituency. The breaking away of figures such as Kennedy and McCarthy came very late, and only after considerable hesitation. Had the war visibly begun (or visibly failed) under Republican auspices, an RFK-style coalition could perhaps have rallied against the war as it did much later in the chronology. Kennedy's murder, Humphrey's nomination, and McGovern's inability to capture this broad constituency in the midst of a “lower profile” 1972 conflict ruled out this possibility.

Other structural factors combined with these situational ones. Voters, for example, have in recent years been unable to rely on cues of social class in a way that would make elections an “expression of the democratic class strug-

gle.” Although this is often thought to be unimportant in questions of foreign policy, the distribution of opinion on the war which I have discussed should make its relevance more persuasive. Class differences did exist in the support and opposition to the war, particularly in its critical early stages. One must, therefore, ask if such differences had any available means of expression. It is true that class polarization among the party identifications of party loyalists did not appreciably narrow during the 1960s as it seems to have during the Eisenhower years. But, on the other hand, class-based *voting* outside the South has declined rather steadily since the late 1940s (see Glenn, 1973). Without such class signals, the less well-educated may be at a particular disadvantage, especially insofar as they are less able to guide their choices by a clearly articulated set of principles. With a downplaying of the social interest differences in party appeals, the potential electoral resistance to a policy of intervention was (and has been) left with even less of a “handle” than before. The recent trend toward Independence among certain groups and away from stable party identification (without a compensating rise in new group-based cues) would merely complicate the matter (Schreiber, 1971; Nie et al., 1975: ch. 5), giving even a partisan opposition a less secure ground.

This pattern can be put in historical perspective. An exclusion of the country’s subordinate strata from meaningful political participation has evolved over time. The effect, when combined with the elements already mentioned, will be to undermine still further the idea of a broadly representative policy. For nonparticipation is not a randomly distributed phenomenon. Instead we find it clustered in the lower part of the social structure, characterizing many of the same groups which were disenchanting with the war on the basis of neo-isolationism, or a reverence toward domestic priorities. This phenomenon will also imply something fairly definite about the interests to which a policy must pay attention, especially insofar as it denotes “the suppression of the options and alternatives that reflect the needs of the nonparticipants” (Schattschneider, 1960: 105). These needs become ones which a foreign policy is no longer required to represent.

Such a pattern can be traced back historically to the sociopolitical system that evolved after the 1890s and that is said to have “displaced” the real-

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ities of democracy and a highly politicized electorate as these came to conflict with the interests of the rising capitalist elites. The popular foundations were eroded. The realignment of the 1890s achieved this result by effectively depoliticizing a large portion of the electorate: “political stability and elite insulation were brought at the price of partially liquidating political democracy” (Burnham, 1974: 1052; also Burnham, 1970, 1972).<sup>32</sup> From this point on, slippage in party loyalties and electoral “disaggregation” as well as steep rises in partisan volatility became in some ways the legacy. Another has been the increasing irrelevance of the party system for certain purposes. Decoupled from the polity, parties could no longer serve as vehicles of collective action or as an effective way of transmitting the oppositional demands that those at the lower end of the American socioeconomic scale have been prone to voice. Insofar as these domestic demands conflict with an expansive foreign policy, the foreign policy may be protected at the cost of its representative quality.

Nor have these patterns been merely historical. In the 1960s, the bias of participation has been turned sharply against the lower strata, muting the articulation of their discontent and, at the same time, overrepresenting the better-educated and wealthier citizenry within the formal political system (their overrepresentation in the informal processes of influence and mediation are of course also well known). In international matters, these patterns are particularly pronounced. For example, of those who claimed to be paying attention to Vietnam in 1964, the ones who supported withdrawal were considerably less likely to voice their choices through voting (60%) than those who wanted to escalate or stay in the conflict (77-78%). Comparable figures exist for 1968 and for 1952, the election year of the Korean conflict (Schreiber, 1973: 94; Dawson, 1973: ch. 4). This is not all. Depressive factors of sex, race, and low income were all combined on Vietnam, compounding the failure of the political parties to present an anti-interventionist alternative in the early stages of the involvement.

Some of the formal political constituents of this pattern are well known. Normally, for example, the political universe is a fragmented one, with policy concerns distributed across a variety of narrow “issue publics.” Without propulsive leadership on the foreign policy front in Johnson’s early

years, the issue public concerned with Vietnam was a small one: small enough to let a rigid policy ambition be held in the absence of gravely upsetting *international* events. And America's power allowed it to skirt the latter, it seems, as long as the direct involvement of the Soviets and the Chinese could be moderated, and, as the Tet offensive showed, as long as the appearance of a large-scale defeat could be avoided. Without such a fortuitous international "redundancy" (with the international events acting in an almost "harmonic" fashion), the potential opposition to the war might have been considerably weakened. Particularly in the early years it was largely unable to link its grievances and symbolic attachments (which were often of a domestic nature) to the complex international choices, to a reevaluation of priorities, or to concrete policy options in regard to Vietnam. Atomization and disorganization in these years led, essentially, to irrelevance.

Bipartisanship, biases in participation, inattentiveness, a relatively issueless" electoral history, the prevalence of nonideological voting (the list could be extended): all of these patterns indicate that no ready political means were available for inhibiting the exercise of American power abroad. Instead, tremendous domestic leeway was granted to what Walter Dean Burnham (1972: 31) has called "a state with an explicitly clearly defined ruling class based upon an oligarchy of syndicalist elites"<sup>33</sup> Just as on the domestic front, the policy elite could exclude many of the public's concerns and claims from the agenda, could give them minimal attention, or could respond to them belatedly, half-heartedly or in the spirit of manipulation (see Cohen, 1973: ch. 5) and "conflict management."

In the mediating linkage between polity and policy in regard to Vietnam, one of the most significant aspects is that as important policy options were discarded at the highest levels, portions of the public found their interests excluded from the policy process. This is neither uncommon nor surprising. If "democracy" acts to socialize conflicts (Schattschneider, 1960: ch. 1), then limitations on (or exclusions from) democracy should act to privatize or suppress potential conflict, if "administration" contracts participation, then stabilizing the political community would be a powerful way of preserving the current shape of the consensus. Unlike domestic policy—where the govern-

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ment may have to take account of, and at times even represent, the demands of a wide range of domestic actors and coalitions (including the poor, disadvantaged minorities, the working class, and so on)—on foreign policy it has fallen back on the older distinctions between the mass and the attentive public. And it has used them to justify a shrinkage of the political universe — in which only the latter can safely be represented. Yet it is worth mentioning that this attentive public amounts to only a thin strata, largely composed of better-educated and better-off Americans, with a proclivity toward internationalist and interventionist views (or with at least a willingness to follow the guidance of the state and the media). Except where foreign policy issues become heavily politicized and “domesticated” for the mass, this skewing of the government’s attention can mean that only a minority domestic interest will be promoted, or used as a referent for foreign policy. Those minority interests would then alone give rise to the domestic rules that regulate the relationship between foreign policy goals (seen as social means) and the broader social ends and needs toward which even a “national security” policy may be instrumental. Any domestic demand that would conflict with and constrain the resulting conception of the national interest could be conveniently damped.

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Although many of the conclusions have been prefigured, some final remarks are in order. In considering the notion of a public constraint on American intervention, I have tried to see how permissive public and electoral opinion have been, and if they therefore allow us to understand American policy as a representative or delimited “domestic social policy” which can be understood by referring to the context of public opinion. Finally, I have assessed the public’s responsibility for the failure to disengage, both as a potential backlash and as an immobilized restraint. In all of these areas, by looking at the political character of the public and by analyzing the support and opposition to the war, I have tried to offer serious qualifications in the face of what seems to me an overdrawn picture of the role of the public in American foreign policy. Other related questions await further analysis—as only a few

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examples: why, without proof or plausibility, the unrealistic fears of domestic recrimination were said to have been retained; why the bias of apparent misperception leaned systematically, rather than randomly, in one direction (toward the unbegrudging acceptance of the idea of a danger from the right and from the mass); why policymakers reinforced and periodically breathed life into these apprehensions in the later years of the conflict; why domestic feedback of a “goal-sustaining” kind might have predominated over the “goal-changing” variety; what domestic interests were at stake in the war’s continuation and served as its referent; and why the policy engendered the particular constellation of social support (or *constitutive* domestic norms) that it did.<sup>34</sup>

The vulnerability of the Democrats to charges of insufficient “toughness” has been noted, but not overstressed. Certainly this issue had a diversionary impact, but much of it could very probably have been blunted if the Democratic party had attempted to capitalize on a different set of *domestic* priorities. It was a potential disadvantage, in other words, which could be compensated for in a variety of ways. In 1964, we should recall, the Democratic party was in a position of almost unparalleled advantage — favored on measures of party identification by 51% to 24% (up from the already commanding 46% to 28% lead of 1962), and only 12% of the respondents in 1964 favored the Republicans on the war-and-peace issue (the relative ability of the parties at keeping the U.S. out of war). In the case of Vietnam, the attractions of peace in the short run, if skillfully exploited, could have undercut much of the domestic risk of disengagement.

Also, while a virulent form of McCarthyism may have given rise to crude stereotyping and recurrent apprehensions, one could actually say that a milder version of it was employed as a resource during the course of the war. It helped to “muzzle” the liberal critics and widen the government’s scope of discretionary action. As long as a greater evil could be convincingly portrayed, many lesser evils could be perpetrated under the guise of a “prophylactic” intervention: this was true at the international, the domestic, and the bureaucratic levels. The gap between the useful and threatening varieties of anti-communist nationalism, in other words, should not be exaggerated. As studies of McCarthyism have shown (see Rogin, 1965, for an impressive analysis),

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support was not so much found in a bipartisan mass of lower middle-class voters threatened by status anxieties, but instead it appealed strongly to conservative elites within the Republican establishment. If such sources remained the same in the 1960s, however *weakened*, a very different light will be cast on the idea of a constraint from the general public. Insofar as the president and his advisers shared this expansive and strongly anticommunist outlook on the world, the source of proscription should be reconsidered. By the mid-1960s, it is better thought of as a redundancy of little importance to the explanations we might set forth.

Nor can the “China lesson” be given pride of place. The growing and increasingly legitimate and politically channeled protest against the Vietnam war is too easily ignored. Its existence, and the gradual erosion of Cold War militancy, argue that any belligerent backlash would have been more moderate, even if one had occurred. In fact, well before the discontent over the protracted Korea-like conflict became public, there was considerable reluctance about the involvement. Administration spokesmen seemed aware of this. McNamara, considering the possibility of initiating direct action in March 1964, spoke of the “problem of marshalling the case to justify such action” (Pentagon Papers, Vol. III: 504), just as William Bundy recommended “an urgent U.S. information effort [to] get at the basic doubts of the value of Southeast Asia and the importance of our stake there” (Pentagon Papers, Vol. III: 177). One of Johnson’s chief foreign policy advisers noted later in an interview that although the basic decision to hold onto Vietnam was made well before the 1964 election, at that point “a more proximate nationally understood rationale for commitment did not yet exist” (cited in Eidenberg, 1969: 94). This failure to convince the public that a Vietnam disengagement or neutralization would have threatened American security gave grounds for expecting much less serious domestic consequences or recriminations in the face of a negotiated withdrawal, for example. William Bundy even argued in January 1965 that if the situation in Vietnam came apart, and ended in a “Communist Vietnam,” that *“the American public would probably not be too sharply critical”* (Pentagon Papers, 1971, Vol. III: 265, 685, my italics). Domestic opinion was one of the *hurdles* that had to be overcome in this peri-

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od fore the escalation could proceed, not one of the immediate factors pressuring it along.

What has in fact tested the boundaries of public compliance in the post-war era is not the abandonment of dubious commitments, but the occasions of protracted intervention. Frustrating land wars in Asia may create problems, one of which is an excessive willingness to escalate, to demand that the great military might of the country not be husbanded in too niggardly a way. This readiness is in a way the reverse side of the public's reluctance (or of what some have called its anti-interventionism; others, isolationism or immoderation). As William Bundy noted, this is still the danger of using the tactic of a "slow squeeze," as he put it, "under the klieg lights of a democracy" (Pentagon Papers, 1971, Vol. III: 616; 593, f53f

Even so, the kind of thinking involved here should be noticed, both in the case of an apprehension about pressures to escalate, and in the worries about rekindling an isolationist tendency that I mentioned at the beginning of this paper. Such fears are not neutral or "literal;" they make no sense apart from their setting. We should, more specifically, notice what assumptions are being made. They take their place in a relatively unchanged picture of America's vital interests abroad. Let us, in other words, not put the cart before the horse. For it was the official disinterest in turning away from a policy of intervention and from a fairly expansive (and expensive) idea of what constituted its national security that made the public's compliance so needed in the first place. They wanted to avoid a constraint from the public, or from part of the public, that is true, but this was a constraint on the *tactics* of the war, not so much on the goals. Even a public prone to escalation need not be prone to backlash and trauma; and to the extent that such a backlash was feared — it was the wrong backlash.

These fears become more implausible still — of Johnson's situation in 1964-1965, for this was a special situation, both before and after the landslide at the polls. Neither the Congress nor the public were ever expected to be in a mood more receptive to change — a fact that cut both ways, however. Yet by failing to take advantage of this leeway on the domestic side (except as a permit for escalation), the actions of the policymakers suggest that things

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much stronger than domestic political prohibitions were at work. For not only was the Great Society largely yielded up in the end to avoid jettisoning the war effort (since Congress was less enthusiastic about expensive domestic legislation in the midst of a war), but so were Johnson's political career, and even the prospects for a Democratic triumph in 1968. A stalemated war seemed to place these things in jeopardy more than a negotiated withdrawal might have, and with an immensely higher cost.

It is reasonable to say that policymakers lost touch with the public in the aftermath of a supposed 1964 mandate. The self-encapsulation of bureaucracies and decision-making groups played a role here, as did the special and slightly paranoid presidential style of Lyndon Johnson. The conventional wisdom would be largely upheld in the face of the public's indifference or its disaffection, as long as the domestic "antennae" of bureaucrats and policymakers could be employed in what were essentially self-serving ways. Domestic signals or sources of negative feedback came to be ignored, often contemptuously. As one office director in the State Department put it, "To hell with public opinion.. We should lead, and not follow" or, from an official in the Public Affairs area: "We are looking for public *acquiescence*" (Cohen, 1973: 62, 64).<sup>35</sup>

In these circumstances, aided and abetted by the impotence of public opinion, the *vox populi* is faintly heard, if heard at all. The state may become less of a broadly representative national actor, and more responsive to narrower interests or private visions — and even more "self-referring" (Andrews, 1975b) in the face of an acquiescent mass. The idea of a significant role played by the public in the continuation of the war, in other words, seems more at home in the realm of myth than in that of explanation. In the way of prescriptive implications, the policies may need to be less, not more, insulated from the interests of the general public.

As these findings are elaborated, what should be seen is the very small yield in trying to understand American policy in terms of popular opinion or as a representation of the limits beyond which the mass public would not go. For an explanation of policy in substantive social terms, these imagined public constraints will not suffice, nor will they indicate to us the domestic rules that constitute the aims of policy and their domestic significance, as well as

their value as means toward broader domestic ends or interests. Had it not violated the demands of the international role which the policymakers sought to protect and advance (and therefore the vision of domestic order and what might be called the national self-image), a different policy would seem warranted and domestically comprehensible. This was especially true in the early years, the years of covert escalation and readiness to escalate further, before the idea of political necessity had received much attention. Later on, it did begin to be heard more often, though by this time in a confusing mixture, in which the discourse of justification seemed to outweigh that of revelation, and in which alibis and motives started losing their distinctiveness. Particularly earlier, a redirection of American policy had a very good chance of being popularly accepted — even if it risked dispensing with some of the international (and, by implication, domestic) “honor” by which the additional years of the American involvement were to be explained.

#### NOTES

1. To pursue such an interpretation, we must look beneath the goals and aspirations of the policy. Too often, critics have looked upon these purposive elements (the goals and accounts of the policy elite, for example) as either self-explanatory or hopelessly opaque. A good working assumption would on the contrary be that they point beyond themselves to the character of the underlying domestic society. This “referential” or at times representational aspect helps make them socially intelligible. We would need to locate a social context in which the state actions are embedded or, more specifically, a set of informing social rules and purposes which both delimit and make sense of the goals of the elite. See, for example, Andrews (1975a), Gunnell (1968), and the literature cited therein.

2. Hoopes (1969: 24, 29) gives what he calls Lyndon Johnson’s “instinctive premise.” In addition, see Ellsberg (particularly 1972: 77-1 32, 209-212); GeIb (1971); Halberstam (1972, 1973); compare Alperovitz (1970: ch. 6); Prewitt and Stone (1973).

3. A domestic politics interpretation of the war could take several

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forms. First to see whether the public setting was a decisive part of the situation to which the makers of policy referred and which could make sense of their refusal to disengage. A second explanatory approach is the more familiar subsumptive-nomological kind in which one presents a hypothetical model of domestic constraint that can with some accuracy *generate* American choices and performance in Vietnam. An action is understood in the first approach when a goal is uncovered, certain reasons are found for the goal, and a social context can be located in which those reasons fit. The second approach explains *what happened* by giving laws and background conditions that, had they been known beforehand, could have *predicted* some of the physical features of the state's behavior.

The most complete presentation of the domestic constraint view has taken the second approach — see Ellsberg (1972: 107, 77; 101; 123; compare 127, 93; 132-135). A set of decision rules is sketched out (Rule One: Do not lose South Vietnam before the next election) which can apply to all periods of postwar American policy, and thus can *subsume* any specific outcomes. In a deductive sense, this model “seems sufficient to explain behavior,” for even in periods where other matters were less pressing, the systemization of domestic political factors into decision rules can be seen as “sufficient underpinnings” for policy outcomes. “There may be other reasons, but that alone would be compelling” (Ellsberg, 1971: 135). A predictive style of explanation (of which this is a particularly clear example) can thus tell us. “how to bet” Unfortunately, this style of explanation is limited — as a way of plotting the process involved or of locating reasons and purposes within a real (as opposed to a hypothetical) framework of social rules and needs. A kind of social intelligibility or transparency has been sacrificed; in its place we are given some measure of predictive ability. A rule-guided conception of behavior, on the other hand, will not be deductive in this way, for the relationship between society and state action can be thought of differently: a relationship of relevance rather than causal sufficiency. Policies cannot be deduced from domestic rules, for the latter are rules (and not laws of behavior) precisely because the actors can dislodge them. They allow for contraventions, rather than exceptions; for delimitations, and for a way of seeing how the domestic sig-

nificance of an international act is constituted.

4. The explicitly causal language is worth noting. Compare GeIb (1971: 152); Alperovits (1970: 89); Committee of Concerned Asian Scholars (1970: 162).

5. Also see the discussion in Eidenberg (1969) that rightly stresses the role of the viewpoint and its early crystallization in narrowing the range of choice, and in making future escalations all but inevitable. Johnson's fear of softness was characterological as well as situational. In this sense, an imagined domestic setting could serve as a stage for playing out a personal psychological drama.

6. Johnson's desire to camouflage the Vietnam issue in 1964, to keep it out of the arena of partisan conflict, is illustrated by an attributed remark: "If you have a mother-in-law with only one eye and she has it in the center of her forehead, you don't keep her in the living room" (Halberstam, 1972: 424). Or note Hamilton's remarks (1972: 55): "The Republican party..., in essence, is an unrepresentable party. They must, given their peculiarity, avoid the issues, or find some that are easier to fake, such as nationalism, patriotism, foreign policy, subversion in government, and subtle degrees of 'softness' on communism."

7. This is only a partial listing: Ellsberg (1971, 1972, 1973); Brodie (1973: 137, 206-207); Halberstam (1973, 1972: 355): "Johnson himself did not take the domino theory seriously; he was far more worried about the loss of a country to the Communists and what this would do to him in terms of domestic politics;" GeIb (1971: 166-167) referring to enlarging the prospect of "the nightmare of a McCarthyite garrison state;" Taylor (1972: 402); Rostow (1972: 270); Hoopes (1969: 120); Cooper (1970: 6, 9, 455); Kearns (1974: ch. 9) where a later conversation with Johnson is recorded:

And I knew that if we let Communist aggression succeed in taking over South Vietnam, there would follow in this country an endless national debate — a mean and destructive debate — that would shatter my Presidency, kill my Administration and damage our democracy. I knew that

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Harry Truman and Dean Acheson had lost their effectiveness from the day that the Communists took over in China. I believed that the loss of China had played a large role in the rise of Joe McCarthy. And I knew that all these problems, taken together, were chickenshit compared to what might happen if we lost Vietnam.

The *Pentagon Papers*, quite predictably, contain little evidence of these considerations. That the person responsible for their availability should be the one most associated with a domestic politics perspective on the war is a small irony. Eilsberg's own views on this problem (private conversation, 1975) now diverge significantly from the interpretation he has presented in his earlier writings. From a different reading of American opinion and the proclivities of the mass public, such as the one presented here, he no longer accounts for his "Rule One" prohibition in terms of correctly perceived public pressures, but instead by giving a much more decisive role to corporate interests and the insistence of dominant social elites.

8. A comment suggested by Noam Chomsky.

9. I am indebted to Cohen's lucid treatment (1973: Ch. 1) of the conventional wisdom for this brief analysis. For several examples, see Rosenau (1961: 41); Wallace (1971: 44); Alperovitz (1970: 77); Kelman (1965: 581).

10. George B. Tindall (1952) *South Carolina Negroes, 1877-1900*. Cited in Pomper (1968: 255).

11. Conclusions pointing in this direction are not uncommon. See, as examples, Rosenberg (1965, 1967); Waltz (1967); Miller (1967); May (1964: 117, especially 121-122 on "fictions"). Also note Huntington (1961: ch. 18) for a study of the permissiveness of opinion on the subject of defense spending, possibly comparing it with Russett (1972); in addition, see Caspary (1970) and Peterson (1972).

12. It would be risky to generalize too much from Cohen's study of the State Department, however. At higher levels in the executive branch, more notice is undoubtedly given to the public, though often in a distortive or engineering fashion. Notice, for example, the manipulative as well as antidemocratic



ratic sentiments expressed by Maxwell Taylor (1972) in the final chapters of his memoirs.

13. I have followed Kelman (1965), Cohen (1973), and Huntington's analysis in developing these points. For example, Cohen (1973: 21):

This is not necessarily a conscious and deliberate subterfuge; it could as easily be an automatic set of euphemisms and rationalizations, an institutionalized response to the felt necessity of saying *something* about ultimate responsibility for decisions, wise or unwise.

Also, see Hamilton's remark (1972: 136) about the "stylization of a false majority."

14. A similar approach to the problem of motivation is persuasively advocated by Blum and McHugh (1971). In addition, see Scott and Lyman (1968); or Huntington (1961: 248): "Their images of public opinion derived from their policy preferences."

15. Here, the academic consensus is extensive. See, among many others, Smith (1970); Sears (1969: 327, 337); Lane and Sears (1964: ch. 6); Richman (1972); Wilker and Milbrath (1970: 488491); Free and Cantril (1968: ch. 4); Patchen (1966).

16. This view dovetails neatly with older views about the proclivity of the working class (or mass) toward authoritarianism—views which stressed the dangers of short-run time perspective, primitive forms of conceptualization, diminished levels of ego stability, intolerance, and absolutism. The two strands seem interestingly intertwined. Hesitations about mass politics among certain scholars can be shown to parallel the worries voiced by certain policy-makers concerning the threat of a right-wing or mass "intrusion" into the arena of American foreign policy. Compare Lowi (1969: 185); Rosenau (1961: 35); Galtung (1964). For helpful correctives, Bachrach (1967); Hamilton (1972: ch. 11); Brody and Verbs (1972); Lipsitz (1970); Cobb (1973); and Wright (1972) should be considered.

17. There is a large and rapidly growing literature on this topic. Note,

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for example, Pomper (1972); RePass (1971, 1974); Brody and Page (1972); Hamilton (1972: cit. 2-3); Jackson (1975a, 1975b); Nie (1974); Nie et al. (1975); Boyd (1972); Pierce (1970); Key (1966); Miller et al. (1973). Kessel (1972: 459) cites a particularly extensive list of relevant work.

18. Pomper (1972) and Nie et al. (1975) have stressed the importance of such a “political” explanation for a shift that demographic changes cannot easily account for. On pure policy positions in 1964, for example, Johnson was found favorable by a remarkable 80-20 margin, considerably larger than his 69-31 advantage on “total image.” See Converse et al. (1965: 331, 323-327), and compare RePass (1974).

19. The findings are from a decomposition of the electoral decision, performed by Donald Stokes, based on multivariate analysis of attitudes expressed in open-ended answers. For later elections, see RePass (1971); Kirkpatrick and Jones (1970: 698); Brody (1968). Kessel (1962) warns, however, that this may be a veiled measure of general party preference having little cognitive content.

20. A point suggested to me by Richard Brody.

21. This level of approving acquiescence is something we may easily forget in the later Vietnam-Watergate era. See Sears (1969: 420, 424-431) who reviews some of this literature. Also, note Rosenberg (1965: 318) and Murray Edelman’s important work (1964, 1971) for one sort of interpretation (in terms of acquiescence in dominant symbols). The importance of symbols, myth, and ideology takes us well beyond the focus of this analysis, but I hope to deal with it in a future essay.

22. RePass’s study (1974) of responses to open-ended questions in the fall of 1964 gives a compilation of issue comments used to illustrate points on a scale of Issue Cognizance (to see what intellectual grounding they had). The following are all the comments he listed (of what the respondent would like to see done about Vietnam). They could, I think, be seen as illustrative, if not representative (1974: 24-30):

- (a) I don’t know, but I hate to think of our boys getting killed when it isn’t any of our business;
- (b) Bring our men back home;

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- (c) Get in good and finish it or stay out;
- (d) Try to find out how we can help them, give the help and get out. The place isn't worth the lives of our boys;
- (e) Get out of it. Because in the first place they took up something that France threw aside;
- (f) I'd like to see an end to the fighting even if it meant pulling out. Some feel that's losing face, but I don't think we are accomplishing anything with the position we now have;
- (g) Our handling of Vietnam was wrong but not necessarily that we should have stayed out. I really don't know — we're not well enough informed — I've heard mainly conflicting reports. If it could be ended by air attack, I wouldn't be against it, but it's my understanding that the problems are indigenous to the South. I don't necessarily believe we will lose all of Southeast Asia if South Vietnam goes.

23. And note Converse et al. (1969: 1093) on the lack of information and the hawkishness that underpinned McCarthy's support in the 1968 New Hampshire primary. Also Page and Brody (1972).

24. Another finding sheds light on the level of alienation. Black respondents in one study (Schuman, 1972: 530-533) showed greater use of the word "they" when referring to the U.S. government's involvement (41% compared to 15% for whites), and less frequent use of the identificatory "we."

25. Rosenberg (1965: 305-307) reviews the earlier findings and speculates on its connection with such male social traits as aggressiveness, feigned invulnerability, etc. Converse and Schuman (1970: 23) note the interesting fact that as early as 1964, when comparable males were quite hawkish, women from "quality" colleges and universities were already harboring negative views about the war. Compare Wright (1972: 137-138); Hamilton (1969: 57); Mueller (1973: 146-147); Patchen (1966: 294); Cantril and Roll (1971: 7249).

26. See Samuel Huntington's uncritical endorsement in Pfeffer (1968: 2,4041): "not even Lyndon Johnson could successfully buck Frank Klingberg" and "The swing to introversion in the Klingberg cycle is clearly a fact, and it

is precisely this fact that caused the national trauma over the Vietnamese war.” Also, Rostow (1972: 709-710).

27. One could suggest that a kind of xenophobic isolationism was at work. Though more prone to favor escalation in 1968, Wallace voters were also less “internationalist” than supporters of either Nixon or Humphrey, and were more likely to feel that the U.S. had made a mistake in its troop involvement. His support in the South was clustered in rural areas, and in the North his supporters did not choose Vietnam as the most important national problem. See Kirkpatrick and Jones (1970), and Patchen (1970: 661-662) on the isolationism of lower-status respondents in a spring 1964 survey, with an unnecessary attempt to relate this to authoritarianism.

28. From an interview cited in Lipsitz (1970: 157). Yet see Verba et al. (1970: 324), “The conflict, after all, does not involve domestic status politics.”

29. The question is confusing because, of course, the real trade-off is not on the plane of thought, but of action. “Building up our strength” might be a domestic alternative with great appeal for tough-minded conservatives. Compare Lipsitz (1970) and Dawson (1973: ch. 6).

30. See Schuman (1972: 516-517); Rosenberg et al. (1970: 4445), and Robinson (1970). Robinson cites the paradox: it was more probable that less well-educated respondents would favor disengagement, but at the same time feel less warmly than better-educated ones (on a feelings thermometer) toward war-protesters. He interprets this as showing that war-protesters for them “represented such an overt threat to the existing American value system.” The intriguing implication is that disengagement from Vietnam was *not* seen by them as such a threat to U.S. values.

31. These differences may, of course, have made a difference. RePass (1974) cites several statements on foreign policy from interview protocols in the 1964 Election Survey (which he used for illustrative purposes about levels of rationality in candidate evaluation). Concerning Johnson:

- (1) I don't think he's taken a firm enough stand in Cuba and Vietnam;

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- (2) He's going to take his time on an issue and not 'cock his gun' too fast and get us in war;
- (3) He's not too strong on foreign policy;
- (4) He has taken care of flare ups which have threatened our peace;
- (5) He has been holding up strong against aggression in Vietnam; and
- (6) He's not a war-monger as Mr. Goldwater is.

Concerning Goldwater:

- (1) His foreign policy is crazy;
- (2) He'll have us in war in nothing flat if he were to get elected;
- (3) He has a very rigid foreign policy based on force. He would not be likely to compromise or give a little in foreign affairs; and
- (4) He would employ preventive aggression in countries where we don't belong and have no right, where our actions in those countries would be criticized and get us further into hot water.

32. Note also Schattschneider (1960: ch. 5-6). Several recent critiques place this complex issue into a quite different perspective, in particular by highlighting the role of electoral mechanics and intervening legal or rule variables after 1890 in accounting for such changes, or by putting forth doubts about the politicized character of the nineteenth-century voting universe. See Price (1968) and Converse (1972). Burnham (1974), with Comments by Rusk and Converse, as well as Burnham's Rejoinder, gives good coverage of the present stage of the discussion.

33. Hennessy (1970: 476):

Policymaking becomes something like the thieves' midnight distribution of booty while the victims remain asleep; as long as those with interest, attitudes, and shared power bargain suc-

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cessfully among themselves, the deed is done without any wide social or cultural constraints being invoked.

As Edelman (1964: 28) overstates it, “Policies severely denying resources to large numbers of people can be pursued indefinitely without serious controversy.” Or, finally, as Petras reminds us (1970: 198), “The policy of maintaining the status quo entails the immobilization of the populace.”

34. We might also want to speculate on the impact of these recent experiences on the next interventionary episode, especially insofar as Vietnam has stimulated such extensive discussion of the levels and sources of policy support and opposition — possibly the first time these questions have been researched with any care. Opposition groups, in particular, may in the future be able to accelerate the sequence of events somewhat, as potential audiences are located, and mobilized, at a more rapid pace, and as some of the assumptions of a “downward” public constraint are placed in question. An unprecedented public intervention may be added to the agenda. Complications arise, however, if we think of several possible “recapitulations” of the involvement, under different circumstances — for example, a competitive intervention by the U.S. and the Soviet Union, in which the former, but not the latter, might be operating under a considerable “upward” public constraint—or in a case where the anti-war coalition arising from Vietnam might split, with ideological allegiances taking precedence for some over a reluctance to intervene or a desire for neutrality (such as a civil war breaking out in Chile, a facsimile of the Spanish Civil War, an intervention in the Middle East, and so on). The Vietnam findings, in other words, may add up to a rather special case, out of which a distinctive coalition arose but not necessarily in a permanent fashion. These suggestions are ones I owe to Richard Hamilton.

35. Though Rostow (1972: 532) can speak euphemistically of Johnson’s “stoic disregard of short-run political costs,” the nondemocratic implications of American policy cannot be so easily ignored.

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04

Representation and  
Irresponsibility  
in Foreign Policy  
[1977]

# REPRESENTATION AND IRRESPONSIBILITY IN AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY

[1977]

1.

In American foreign policy the role of the public — the mass public remains a problem. It is thought by some to have been the problem with the interventionary policy of the 1960s. Certainly some of us harbor different dreams today, as we did then. What was to be done? By the mid — 1960s, was it the *institutional structure* which had grown unwieldy.... distant? Was it the lack of responsiveness of executive to legislature, of ruler to ruled, of head to body politic? Did this attenuation of democratic access prove conducive to irresponsibility in the higher circles: for example, to a policy in Indochina which “got out of hand,” or which at least went beyond the limits of its rational container? And did this irresponsibility in turn help to attenuate the American body politic itself, consigning it to chronic passivity and occasional spasmodic reactions?

Not the lack of participation, but of representation or accountability.

Disembodiment.

The sublimation of the body politic.

2.

As solutions, we find: a variety of prescriptions. Each is hinged to a different view of the dramas of repre-

Descriptions containing explanations, which in turn imply prescriptions.

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sentation and accountability as they apply to the relationship between the public and the state. One is populist. For it, a more direct role and “voice” for the mass public can serve as a beneficial restraint. It envisages the spread of democratic practice — this time, into that most jealously guarded of all state domains: “national security” policy.

By means of a less dominant Executive (an erosion of the prerogatives of the Imperial Presidency) and a stiffened Congress.

Yet is this what is actually desired? Traditional views of the relationship between mass public and ruling elite proceed quite differently. Therefore we need to chart its implications, both in general (on what has become familiar expository terrain) and in regard to the specific preconditions for maintaining a policy of global intervention.

Questions revolving around the “primacy of foreign policy” and the separation of foreign and domestic policy considerations.

3.

Public opinion plays a marginal role. This much is accepted. Variation centers instead around a normative concern: how is this to be regarded?

In a traditional view, the separation between policy and mass public has been cause for *relief*, not for dismay. We are saved from calamity by this lack of mass representation. Expanding public control over security policy would have been ruinous. Vital affairs of state had to continue to be insulated from the sentiments of the mass public. Only in that way could the rationality of the policy-making process be preserved.

A positive stress on executive prerogatives.

Locke an exemplar etc. here — followed by Lippman. Almond, etc.

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4.

How is the character of the mass public to be regarded? Here we discover a familiar litany:

It is lacking in knowledge and information.

It is deficient in its attentiveness.

In the electoral arena, party loyalties dominate and little space is left for choices to be guided by preferences on the issues.

Besides, by and large, such policy preferences are ephemeral and uninformed.

The mass electorate's concerns are centered more on domestic matters. International issues are remote. They are also prone to exaggeration.

Public attitudes are oversensitive to changing patterns of events which are beyond their comprehension.

*Mood* characterizes the quality of these opinions as well as the shifts and volatility among them. In particular, such views are likely to oscillate back and forth between a yearning for isolation and a taste for aggressive overinvolvement.

The authoritarianism found among the working class would also color their response to foreign policy questions. A lack of sophistication remained, even in the sphere where such sophistication was most needed: the use or contemplated use of violence as an instrument of policy.

Hard-line anti-communist attitudes continued to dominate in the mid-1960s, narrowing the flex-

A characteristically punitive reading, especially of the lower middle class and working class.

For example:

"On the rare occasions when it does awaken from its slumber, the mass public, being no more informed than previously, is impulsive, unstable, unreasoning, unpredictable, capable of shifting direction or of going in several contradictory directions at the same time... An air of uncertainty and intolerance is introduced into the 'climate of public opinion'.

—James Rosenau, *Public Opinion and Foreign Policy* (N.Y.: Random House, 1961), p. 36.

This image of a war-like or jingoist working class is an *inversion* of a previous European image of a reluctant or pacifist (and sometimes radical) mass public resisting the blandishments of an expansionist elite. It is also a characteristic and revealing inversion.

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ibility of state actors in so far as they were considering more conciliatory policies in instances like Indochina. A proneness toward war or vigorous intervention had been bred in the bone.

5.

The conclusion drawn from such a portrait would be that the mass public should exert only a marginal influence over foreign policy. This implies a need for restrictions on their influence over the means as well as the larger purposes of policy. Their exclusion from the actual formation of post-war policy has run in tandem with this viewpoint, and with the notion that the mass public was incapable of taking on either a larger role or substantially expanded responsibility. It needed to be led and should indeed continue to be led — by the “elite” or educated public and by the leaders. In the speculation of classical theorists as well, this has been a *general* conclusion, unaffected by the kinds of policy under scrutiny. This *generality* is especially worth looking at.

6.

In this traditional conception, an unbridgable gap exists between the educated or elite public on the hand, and the mass public on the other. Only the former are thought to have the characteristics needed to allow for even a limited infusion of democratic norms into the domain of foreign policy. The sentiments of the elite or educated public

Or did the conclusion precede and help to shape or reinforce the nature of the portrait?

The *discourse* of security policy transcends such a responsiveness, such a public dialogue.

Otherwise, the executors of policy will find themselves paralyzed, unable to apply their expert knowledge.

And with the “nuclearization” (and therefore the “psychologizing”) of U.S. policy, a chink in the national armor might register as a chink in the nuclear armor — as a breach in security.

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could be listened to, with some confidence. It would also act as a buffer against the mass public's more irresponsible and erratic currents.

Yet, as I have argued, this way of characterizing the mass public in the 1960s will not stand. Recent analysis lends to the mass public some of the characteristics which had once been thought to exist only among more elite groups. The portrait of the mass public taken from survey research data in the somnolent 1950s does not fit the evidence from the more politicized 1960s. And we would therefore need to revise the overall conception of public capacity *upward*. Once we have done so, the prescriptive implications will need rethinking as well. The argument that for example one needs to use the better educated or elite public as a "responsible" buffer becomes suspect.

7.

Further, the character of the educated (and middle or upper-middle class) public in the 1960s has been badly gauged. This is particularly true when we look at opinion at the early stages of Americas escalation of the Vietnam war in 1964, at a point where such opinion was, at least in comparison with later years, relatively untutored. Did the best educated Americans and those at the upper ends of the social scale exhibit the kind of responsibility which classical theorists would lead us to expect of them? Actually, at this stage, they were the ones who exhibited a lack of sophistication about mili-

In *Public Constraint and American Policy in Vietnam* (Sage Professional Papers in International Studies, 1976).

Also, see Gerald W. Hopple, "Public Opinion and Foreign Policy" (presented at the 1976 Annual Meeting of the International Studies Association).

[Not so unreliable]

These cognitive liabilities have been greatly overstated.

Such misreadings, it might seem, are as much the result of wishful or expedient thinking as anything.

[No.]

Those most likely to be attracted by

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tary force and the dangers of overcommitment. They were the ones most prone to aggressive responses to the threatened collapse of the Saigon regime. In their preferences in regard to the means for achieving American goals, they were *more* likely to be attracted to escalatory options.

Nor did they display the stability in opinion which is said to distinguish them from the more volatile mass. Actually, unlike the mass public, their opinions underwent a massive shift after 1964, from hawkish belligerence to a more skeptical moderation. Although official doctrine had remained stable, the shift in media argumentation had been dramatic. And the better-educated and higher income Americans, as a group, overlapped substantially with those who were paying close attention to the media. The change in their opinion — in comparison with the more stable mass views — might therefore be attributable to the effects of the media.

## 8.

If this is what we mean by responsibility, it is not a responsibility with neutral overtones. The attribution of responsibility to such opinions derives instead from the way they mirror the shifts in official policy, or in the media. (*The responsibility of followership?*) Or else its allegedly admirable qualities derive, more broadly, from the way such opinion mirrored the globalist and aggressively interventionist character of U.S. policy toward the

the tougher stance and the escalatory options — in 1952 as well as 1964 — were:

Highly educated,  
High income,  
White  
Protestants, with high attention to the print media.

The opinion shift took place particularly among those paying the most attention to the media:

“the manipulated persons happen to be from the upper middle class masses.”

— Richard Hamilton, *Restraining Myths* (New York: Sage Publications and Halsted Press, 1975), p. 20; stress added.

Or — a responsibility in a camouflaged literal sense: the ability to *respond?*

In 1964, of those expressing opinions, 58 percent of the college edu-

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Third World in the 1960s. (An “imperial responsibility” — paralleling the allegedly fated or necessary imperial responsibility which the United States had taken on?) Neither of these variants are quite what the traditional conception had in mind — or are they? Perhaps its prescriptions are much less general than is customarily admitted. Perhaps they are much more closely hinged to a particular pattern of U.S. policy *and its political preconditions*.

9.

Going beyond the general character of its opinion and its electoral activity, the mass public displays a much different pattern in regard to Indochina policy during this same period. Those segments of the public most interested in the options of withdrawal and deescalation in 1964 were actually more likely to occupy the lower ends of the social scale and the more peripheral regions of the American political universe.

These same groups — the poor, the working class, nonwhites, women, the elderly — also exhibited a larger tendency toward *isolationism*, a tendency within which their specific choices on Vietnam appear to fit. This shows up in a general reluctance to accept the risks of armed conflict, in a greater fear of war, in a failure to see the relevance of expansive internationalist concerns to their personal situation, in a more inward-looking perspective, and in a priority given to domestic concerns

cated and 56 percent of those with incomes of \$10,000 or over favored taking a stronger stand in Vietnam. Among Protestants in this income range, the figure rises to 78 percent. And, within this category, it exceeds 80 percent for the ones paying close attention to newspapers and magazines.

(see Hamilton, *cited*, pp. 194-200)

More complicated than simple followership. Rather, a social structural cleavage of a kind which was thought not to exist.

[Scapegoating.]

Of respondents expressing an opinion in 1964, only 40 percent of those with incomes of \$6,000 and under favored a stronger stand; and of those with less than 12 years of education, only 37 percent did. The rest from those categories — that is to say, a majority — favored either an American pullout or an effort to end the fighting.

(computed from figures in Hamilton, pp. 194-5)

“Poorer and less-well educated Americans, in other words, were more likely to express dovish sentiments. They were not [at this point] as likely to support u.s. interventionism, and they were more likely to oppose it.”

— *Public Constraint*, cited, p. 39.

This reluctance in the face of foreign

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and domestic changes. On the other hand, the “restrained” nature of elite opinion arose only later in the involvement, in 1967 and 1968, as the elite public gradually swung around to views which important (and denigrated) portions of the mass public had projected from the beginning.

10.

Even so, some have argued that American leaders’ actual policy was designed as a response to mass constraint, that it was grounded in a fear that failure, withdrawal or conciliation in Indochina were unacceptable to the American people. To embark in these policy directions would only result in calamity: taking the form of electoral punishment, mass backlash, disaffection, delegitimation or a poisoning of the American political atmosphere.

One can counter this. Particularly in the early period of the escalation of the war, the mass public was simply not engaged enough to pose an enormous problem or a serious constraint “downward.” At times, in 1964 and 1965, policymakers registered an awareness of this. Actually, if a constraint existed at that point, it was a constraint “upward” rather than downward — a constraint on escalation, rather than deescalation. The mass public (and, at that juncture, the mass electorate) was, if anything, reluctant. And the overcoming of that reluctance was felt as a policy problem — a desired *achievement*. No “chafing at the bit” appears. An “educational campaign” had to be

expansion and intervention continues to appear in a variety of poll findings, well into the 1970s. It seems to reflect a much less well defined appreciation of America’s foreign interests, and of the seamless interdependence which has informed the heart of the official postwar U.S. vision.

The idea that there was a political *imperative* behind the escalations, and, accordingly, that the mass public might be held responsible for these official actions. Responsibility is in this way shifted away from the state actors themselves and also away from the taken-for-granted character of a continuing policy.

Official discussions in September 1964 spoke of “a unity of domestic American opinion in support of such presidentially authorized” strikes as a precondition. During the November debates, “it is openly conceded that such [escalatory] action is likely to evoke opposition in both domestic and international public opinion.” — *Pentagon Papers*, Gravel Edition, Vol. III, p. 116.

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launched — one which in retrospect seems to have included the Tonkin Gulf incident — before a comfortable cushion of mass acceptance was to appear.

But does this worry over backlash appear later? Perhaps it takes its shape from the gathering escalation itself. *Once* the mass public has come to embrace the outlines of policy, we find that it does arise — in some form, if not in the form envisaged. But still, the evidence on public attitudes reveals no fervent clinging to particular foreign policy *goals* in the absence of official backing. Instead, when we come to these goals, we find a rather permissive and acquiescent mass.

11.

Then is it the *means* of U.S. policy around which the public constructs its famous system of confining dikes? This would make more sense. Let us frame it more exactly to clarify a few of its implications.

A relatively domestically-oriented or isolationist public would, expectedly, be more prone to attach itself to a “WIN” strategy in a situation like that of Indochina: to “get off and get out,” or, if not that, to get out *tout court*. This would especially true of a public which was not well-educated or was unsophisticated in its handling of official notions about military doctrine and global risks. Once the mass public had accepted the official definition of U.S.

Still, deliberations in 1964 and 1965 were taking place within a fairly comfortably consensual framework.

Not a pressure system.

Not a Roll-back sentiment.

Instead: a diluted accountability in regard to official definitions of security.

As the November 1964 NSC Working Group noted:

“As we saw in Korea, an ‘in-between’ course of action will always arouse a school of thought that believes things should be tackled quickly and conclusively. On the other side, the continuation of military action and a reasonably firm posture will arouse sharp criticism in other political quarters.”

— *Pentagon Papers*, Vol. III, p. 617.

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interests (something which they were more reluctant or less concerned about doing in the war's early stages), they would prove less willing to accept a limited war strategy. In this orientation, they provided a constraint on the *means* of policy. A strong constraint of this sort would not necessarily preclude a more conciliatory strategy aimed at negotiation, if such a strategy projected an alternative conception of American aims and interests. But it might well preclude a protracted war, fought disproportionately with their own casualties.

Where does this leave the previous and assured negativism about the role of the mass public? First, the hesitation over letting the mass public determine the means of policy — the means appropriate to achieving a taken-for-granted set of policy goals — finds some backing. These calibrations of actions to goals may, with much justification, remain in the hands of the state actors. Beyond this, varying degrees of public access will seem appropriate — depending upon the situation and upon the political capacities of the mass public in making specific demands and having those demands patterned in an institutional way.

12.

More significantly, in the realm of *ends* and in the domain in which policy ends are determined, the mass public's role as culprit appears to have been dramatically (and again, expediently) overplayed.

[IMPATIENCE]

Even the mass public's anti-communism can be interpreted as a version of isolationism.

Thus, it is misleading to draw an empirical connection between the isolationism/ internationalism and the hawk/ dove divisions of opinion.

On the formulation of specific means, the mass will require expert guidance.

The problem of too many hands on the lever, as distinct from which lever to choose, as distinct from when and why the lever should be chosen at all.

The play of competing forces might be tolerated because it does not confront the limits of policy, which are presupposed.

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Here we go *beneath* the level of technical rationality to the social context in which a relationship of *appropriateness* would exist: between the ends of policy and the underlying domestic social purposes to which they are instrumental. This “second order” relationship of social ends and policy directions (recast as social means) would be open to the political involvement of the mass public.

Yet at this level, mass views and reflexes do not appear to pose the biggest problems. Their interventionism, their acceptance of imperial goals for the United States, formed a shallow current. Would they have resisted an officially-projected alternative conception of American aims and interests? Persuasive evidence for this (commonly accepted) idea remains lacking. Mass opinion was not so much a pressure or demand as a contingent phenomenon, dependent on the cues and coaxings of the state elite. It might well have accepted another relationship between domestic social purposes and global role. For those intent on a transformation of American aims toward a *less*-interventionary stance, they might well have seemed part of the solution, rather than part of the problem.

Unless the policy can persuasively be regarded as an instance of national defense, as the intervention in Vietnam in 1964-65 could not be, does any obvious reason exist for excluding the mass public from influence over the choice of policy *ends*? Or at least, does any reason exist apart from a taken-

But with military policy, severe *tactical* limits exist as well. This is distinctive. The legal or constitutional system does not help to delimit tactical choices in the foreign policy realm as it does domestically.

Even so, leaders must be led.

The socialization of the public.

A rather deferential mass public can be seen to exist in the 1960s, in spite of the more isolationist preferences which it expressed.

In capability, it differed from the public of the 1950s. But also, it differed substantially from the suspicious and less-well-anchored public of the 1970s.

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for-granted commitment to a certain range of internationalist aims and the fear that the mass public might “lapse” into an irresponsible isolationism? In their relationship to democratic theory, are foreign policies which have little to do with a circumspectly-defined concept of national security really radically different from domestic social policies? Certainly, at least in the past, these domestic spheres were ones in which the role of mass demands had gained much greater acceptance and legitimacy. Yet the two spheres have always been thought to be different, even when the claims of foreign policy went well beyond the protection of the nation’s sovereignty and territory, and therefore well beyond the point where domestic debate might have seemed irrelevant. The jealous way in which the choice of larger foreign policy goals has been guarded in the postwar period only underscores this point, and this difference.

13.

We can go further. In the postwar period, preventing the mass public from exerting significant influence over policy goals went hand in hand with the creation of a unique *constellation of political forces* in regard to security issues.

In particular, influence on the part of the public was subsumed within the creation of a bipartisan internationalist coalition in the late 1940s — one which persisted well into the years of the

Masses never appear to choose, or to articulate preferences. On the contrary, they “lapse.”

On what grounds should the public be excluded from the rank ordering of broad foreign policy goals?

Depoliticization — an additional requirement for a strategy of crisis-avoidance ?

Do not underplay the decisional autonomy of state actors in the face of societal groups, especially when it comes to security policy.

But also: do not forget that this autonomy has internal political coordinates and preconditions. These are neither assured, nor permanent.

[The “imperial alliance”]

In 1948, by jettisoning the left wing

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Indochina war. To have dramatically increased the scope of mass influence would have either required going outside the bounds of this coalition, or would have weakened its cohesion. The state actors orchestrated a rough agreement on America's goals, and gradually located themselves on the common ground between a Democratic constituency on the one hand (with its ties to organized labor as well as to the oligopoly or internationally-oriented sectors of the business class) and the more limitationist, fiscally-conservative Republican elements on the other. The history of this coalition, of its increasing solidity and break-away elements, would be a history of the domestic political basis of the American empire — yet to be written.

As America's global stance took form, these latter segments of the coalition embraced the consensus once concessions were made through a parallel emphasis on containment in Asia. Such concessions made an evenhanded globalism somewhat harder to sustain. The former segments were kept within the coalition in part because of the state actors' acceptance of a commitment to continuous economic growth, which would in turn insure the possibility of a sizable "fiscal skim-off" for domestic social legislation. There were other side payments, some of which involved the intangible aspects of symbolic reassurance condensation symbols, national pride. Anti-communism, liberal mission, and the claims of national security and national "self-image" provided the glue.

of the Democratic party, as well as the conservative South, a "smallest winning coalition" was pieced together electorally.

Partisan differences were fought out on several terrains: first, over isolation/internationalism; second, over nuclear policy; third, over counter-insurgency and limited war.

A subsiding split: a sectoral conflict between more conservative interest-group orientations and more nationally or systemically-oriented liberals.

Yet not just a surface idealist change in thinking; a reflection of underlying changes in American society.

[Conservative prerogatives]

Growth imperative: legitimation, and the "political business cycle."

Insures mass loyalty, the protection of profitability, and the defusing of social tensions.

Public impression management. Amnesia.

They offered a way of overcoming

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14.

Such coalitions are not free-standing. With a loose web of agreements and shared perceptions cast over its disparate elements, an institutional foundation was needed. On foreign policy issues, a particular *state structure* proved helpful in keeping it solidified. In addition, the state structure as well as the coalition structure kept key policy matters insulated and out of the hands of the general public. This pertained not only to the choice of means, but also to the process by which ends were determined and critically evaluated.

A full listing of the elements of this structure, as it pertained to policies like those in Indochina, would include the following:

(A) A slow withering up of countervailing power on the part of the legislative branch, proceeding hand in hand with the slow erosion of isolationist Republican sentiment in the halls of Congress — an “educational” achievement for which the Eisenhower administration is often given credit). This shifted the responsibility for America’s policy goals away from the institutions most open to organized public or interest group pressures. It was a trend applauded by those who worried over restraints on the development of a more “progressive,” if more expansive and expensive policy stance — whether those restraints came from radicals, isolationists or military Neandrathals.

the contradictory nature of group interests, helped to legitimate the coalition and confer additional advantages on it.

A high level of consensus, embodied in the Postwar coalition, made a high level of central control politically feasible. And the latter reinforced the former.

State structure as a Structural solution — a way of meeting the problem of incomplete consensus.

It would help this coalition fend off attacks, making it more difficult for an alternative coalition (for example, a populist/isolationist grouping) to have been constructed. In a different context, Peter Gourevitch’s argument follows a similar logic; see his paper “International Trade, Domestic Coalitions, and Liberty” (delivered to the International Studies Association, February 1975).

[The Chastened Periphery]

Also, the site of isolationist sentiment which would otherwise hold *any* President, but especially a liberal President, hostage.

A weakening of accountability, along with a loosening of the “deadlock of democracy.”

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(B) Throughout the Cold War period, a growing consolidation of power in the hands of the Executive branch developed in tandem with these changes in the role of Congress. Applauded by liberals in the early 1960s as a counterweight to an overly cautious and nonreformist Congress, this took on the trappings of the Imperial Presidency in later years. In doing so, it carried with it certain dangers from the standpoint of insuring technical rationality: that America's policy might come to reflect or be inflected by the "Imperial Personality" — in the cases of Johnson and Nixon; or that those tending the institutions of government, basking in their power and autonomy, might lose touch with the public and thereby undercut its assurances of support and legitimacy. At the time of the first dramatic escalations of the war, however, these problems did not loom large. Instead, the advantages of a powerful executive seemed apparent.

(C) Other elements of the political system and structure provided additional barriers to public access. Bi-partisanship effectively took many of the most potentially contentious issues involved in security policy out of the realm of political debate. The mass public was therefore unable to use a *partisan* platform for launching demands of an anti-interventionist or conciliatory variety throughout the Cold War period. Nor would "political entrepreneurs" have found it easy to use this platform for mobilizing mass support and articulating a dif-

Not an uncommon relationship: between foreign expansion or the taking on of imperial responsibilities and the aggrandizement of executive power at the expense of legislative or popular control.

In a generally more fragmented political system, like that of the United States, greater Executive power was needed — not simply to create a "coherent, orderly" policy process, but to underprop this coalition.

[From Camelot to Agonized Nixon]

The policy: Presidentialized and Bureaucratized.

Also, leading to a weakening of constitutional constraint and legality in general.

[Ceremonial competition]

Gradually, the internationalist coalition came to dominate both parties. They had been given the first boost by Roosevelt and World War Two, which helped discredit the anti-interventionists.

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ferent stance. This went hand in hand with the trajectory of the Democratic party from the “purge” of its left wing by the Cold War-liberals in the late 1940s, followed by its acquiescence in the official viewpoint. This pattern continued up until the slow-motion breakup of the liberal camp in the late 1960s, prefigured by the lone votes against the 1964 Tonkin Gulf Resolution before being given voice by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearings in early 1966, and fueled by the shifts in the media in the business community and in the primary campaigns of 1968 as well as by the larger public forces they both mobilized and responded to.

15.

State structure therefore acted as a bulwark against access in the early years of the escalation. By keeping this access limited, a variety of functions could be served. In the 1964-1965 period, the case of Indochina displays the successful workings of this insulated state structure and of this relatively cohesive political coalition.

In contrast by the 1970s these functions could no longer be painlessly achieved: with the debacle of Vietnam, the debasing of the currency of “national security,” the rise to prominence of more divisive foreign economic issues, the apparent decline in the utility of military force applied in unstable Third World settings, the growing awareness of the tradeoffs and conflicts which could be posed

For the Democratic party would have been the logical platform for articulating the reluctance found at the periphery.

The parallel development of anti-communism and bi-partisanship.

Institutional fragmentation or a lack of societal Coherence did not prove to be major problems in the beginning.

Nor was there an underdeveloped administrative system presenting severe limits to society’s steering capacity in regard to foreign policy,

At the time of the escalations, a “rationality crisis” did not appear.

Later the Process had become more “allocative” — where the state faced diverse and competitive demands and where it could, or was forced to, derive its guidelines for policy from “politics.”

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between international and domestic priorities. At times these functions could not be achieved at all. The once-stable relationships began to break down, both at the level of technical rationality (the choice of policy means to maximize previously-decided-upon-ends) and of domestic social context (the relationship between broader policy goals and underlying domestic purposes and interests). At the very least, these relationships became more fragile, more open to contrary influences.

In the earlier Period the barriers against the representation of a fore isolationist and more conciliatory orientation on the part of the domestic “periphery” enabled the state:

(A) To provide policymakers with remarkable latitude as they confronted a permissive public which grounded itself on traditions of followership — as leaders choreographed the movements of official policy in the face of a receptive and uncritical audience.

(B) To maintain a liberal internationalist and interventionist orientation in policy without accruing any substantial political risks in the process,

(C) To protect a hegemonic international stance, contingent more upon the permissiveness of the global than of the domestic political environment. This leeway was protected, even though such a stance looked much more adept at protecting the

Johan Galtung “Foreign Policy as a Function of Social Position” *Journal of Peace Research* 3-4 (1964), p. 231:

“let us summarize conditions that would contribute to a stable, peace-oriented and effective public opinion in the field of foreign policy:

“1. Elimination of the periphery [those of lower status, those less well-informed] from influence on foreign policy, for instance through a party-structure that does not adequately reflect periphery foreign policy orientations.”

Although an alternative reading of the evidence would dispute the “peace-oriented” dimension (see *Public Constraint* for such a reading), the argument about “stability” can be sustained once it is clear how conservative an argument this really is.

The relationship between the state’s domestic and international roles.

System-wide concerns, such as that of maximizing the deterrent.

[Selectivity of effect]

[Differential benefit]

Not necessarily a “public good” or

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interests of the business class than at proving accountable to the needs of the general public, the working class, the poor, etc. That is to say, closing off certain channels of access helped to safeguard the *partiality* of policy at the same time as its neutrality was officially proclaimed. It helped maintain a system of *nondecision*-making, a particular mobilization of bias.

(D) Finally, these barriers helped keep security from becoming *domesticated*— that is, from being regarded as similar in structure to a domestic social policy and therefore treated accordingly at a *political* level. It forestalled the day when it might come to be regarded as something which competed with domestic concerns, or which ought ideally to reflect those concerns and the constellation of domestic political forces which underlay them. It delayed the point where a “domestication” which exists conceptually (or as part of an analyst’s explanation) would come to exist politically (as part of the understandings shared by the mass public). The increasingly artificial distinctions between “high” and “low” policy, between domestic and international concerns were reinforced.

16.

This brings us full circle. The political basis of the 1964 and 1965 foreign policy system proved incapable of being maintained. Its functions began to give way:

the expression of “generalizable interests”.

Such partiality presented political problems. It had to be veiled.

Limitations on the democratic control of foreign Policy, going so far as the exclusion of mass preferences, provided a way of reducing the capacities of those groups whose interests or preferences were under-represented.

[Where the linkages became apparent]

Americans may not be accustomed to this brand of “high politics,” a fact which foreign policy spokesmen have at times stylishly lamented. Yet the choice of global role required such an acceptance,

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In the glare of critical scrutiny;

In the face of a revival of popular concern with foreign policy issues and of the public's new ability of *linking* foreign with domestic priorities;

Of the defection of portions of a previously secure support on the part of the elite and educated public;

Of the rise of an anti-interventionist and protectionist sentiment which punctured a liberal imperial consensus that had already been stretched thin;

Of the further rise of issue voting and the erosion of party loyalties, which thereby made the bipartisan "container" that much more fragile and opened the consensus to new conflicts;

Of the flexing of Congressional muscles, in response to the growth of Executive power and the atrophy of legislative control;

Of a general, if temporary disaffection with governmental institutions on the part of the general public;

And of the rise of serious international constraints — here, in particular, we might mention the heightening of the difficulties involved in marshalling military force, the weakening in the position of the dollar and the deterioration in America's balance of payments position, and the growth of more plural and destabilizing forces within the Western alliance structure.

*Therefore*, if we are to speak of enlarging the scope of public representation, we must acknowledge this backdrop. If that scope were to be enlarged in

The withholding of information had been important as in 1964, even where such active exclusions were couched in other terms (deriving from the inability of the mass public to understand the complex "necessities" of international life).

With the Cold War "lid" having been substantially removed, the process of domestication accelerated.

Even during a period of U.S. assertiveness (1963-1968) the nation's "advantage" in "domestic policy base" was said to be declining. Conservative opinion-makers would speak of the 1960s in terms of a U.S. "disadvantage". — See, for example, Z. Brzezinski, "How the Cold War Was Played," *Foreign Affairs* (October 1972)

A policy for which depoliticization was a precondition helped to weaken that very depoliticization.

A more plural international order was also likely to be more domesticated

Wasn't one precondition of restricted public access — of the ability of state actors to avoid having issues being domesticated in divisive ways — a willingness on the part of America's allies to abide by a hegemonic liberal order?

Thus, it may be true, but in a differ-

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conjunction with this *already weakened* political coalition and an *already embattled* state structure, the consequences appear quite different than they would have in the 1960s. It is no longer a question of increasing constraints or of compounding the asymmetry between open and closed political systems. Instead, the preconditions for maintaining a liberal imperial policy orientation may be at stake.

Could this be the real danger implied in increasing the access of the mass public? If so, arguments against such an increase should not be couched in terms of some broad incapacity on the part of the mass public or the risks of some “objectively” irresponsible intrusion on their part. Rather, the issue should revolve around a quite different point: the way in which “incapacity” and “irresponsibility” are conceived. These are political conceptions, reflecting a significant conflict of interests or divergence of concerns. The mass public’s incapacity may only reflect their unwillingness to remain within the world of the mid-1960s, or to extend their hand (with their blank check in it) toward policymakers intent on maintaining an ambitiously interventionist policy.

17.

The prescriptive implications we draw from a portrait of the mass public no longer look quite the same. No longer do they inhabit the rarefied atmosphere of classical democratic theory. Instead, they involve the specific connection between

ent sense than the one intended, that: “the prevalence of the mass public’s passive mood introduces a factor of stability into the foreign policy-making process.”

— Rosenau, *cited*. p. 37.

The stability, however, is specific to a particular range of policies.

“The policy of maintaining the status quo entails the immobilization of the populace.”

— James Petras.

Depoliticization does relate to nuclearization (a formal element — the facts of life and deterrence in a nuclear age) but it also relates to a specific societal content.

These formal elements are not autonomous. They are intertwined with, and constituted by, a social content.

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expanding the scope of representation and forcing changes in the character of policy. Had the representation of mass preferences been increased in the earlier period, wouldn't the choice of official goals have been more restrained? Would it have encouraged a shift away from a pattern of globalist intervention in cases where national security did not appear to be at stake? This link needs emphasis: between excluding the public from the determination of ends and safe-guarding the continuation of America's postwar hegemonic role.

This policy-specific relationship should occupy the foreground with the relationship between the role of the public and some general implications for the quality or rationality of any foreign Policy remaining in the background. Unfortunately, it is this a-political background which has received most of the attention. It is as though the character of desired policy had been so taken-for-granted for so long, that is problematic nature and specific political preconditions had ceased to be visible. These dimensions were simply assumed away in the discussions of "rationality" and the ways of insuring it. However, like the concept of "the national interest," the notion of rationality too often serves to submerge our awareness of these latent political conflicts and differences of interest. In fact, the intrusion of the mass public is said to threaten the technical rationality of policy in part, one can argue. because of the divergence between the scope of taken-for-granted goals and the preferences of that public. It remains a social and

It becomes difficult to complain about the dominance of a particular elite or coalition and yet argue for another, more responsible elite. Historically, the content and form are interdependent.

Rationality — one requirement for which was the separation of the administrative and political spheres,

It threatens the "craftsmanlike conformity" of state policy to established interests.

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political question and not simply a technical one.

18.

To the extent that blocking the representation (or insinuation) of mass concerns in the foreign policy arena is *functional*, the space actually given to that representation will not be determined autonomously. It will instead be *dependent* on that for which the blocking is functional.

And, in this case, it is fair to say that the blocking has not merely been functional for the “quality” or “rationality” of the policy process. Rather, it has been a domestic political precondition for the continued stability of a specific pattern of policy: a liberal internationalist orientation, with a penchant for foreign intervention and massive military budgets. And, in turn, this orientation has been thought to be a precondition for reproducing a specific pattern of domestic social life — for following the rules of a *specific* domestic “paradigm.” If this mass public representation had been increased without other “compensating changes,” one of the props of America’s postwar hegemonic role would have been kicked out from under it. And, in turn, this would have had a bearing on the reproduction and steering of the domestic social system. In this light, the arguments for expanding or contracting the role of the mass public or the representation of its preferences seem much less general. Their air of neutrality begins to be dispelled. On the contrary, they appear much more

Just as the state structure itself may be functional or dependent — in regard to a property order, a set of shared values and beliefs, etc.

It is part of an interdependent system.

The actual structure may be occluded, even while it is being reproduced.

Such a paradigm may not be embodied in politics in any explicit way. The latency of politics, or the subordination of politics to administration, may be a precondition of its successful functioning.

State structure, as well as a particular policy, may express a partiality or selectivity of effect simply by expressing previous political victories.

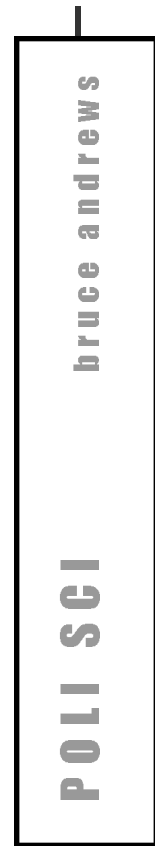
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contingent and secondary, much more imbued with the coloring of politics and of social conflict.

It would therefore have to be decoded. denaturalized, “defamiliarized.”

REPRESENTATION AND  
IRRESPONSIBILITY  
IN FOREIGN  
POLICY



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05

The Piecing  
Together of  
Humpty Dumpty  
[1978]

# THE PIECING TOGETHER OF HUMPTY DUMPTY: GRADUATE EDUCATION IN INTERNATIONAL FOREIGN POLICY

[1978]

## 1. PREMISES, GIVENS AND BANALITIES

We can take for granted that there is a substantial need, in American graduate education, for programs which emphasize the intertwining of the economic, political, and sociological factors that affect the global environment. We have entered (in 1965? 1973? 1450?) an era in international relations during which political conflicts are commonly understood to be centered in economic relationships and in domestic social life. These social and economic politics and the behavior of private institutions such as multinational corporations do not take place in a vacuum; they are increasingly affected by complex social calculations, which are determined in turn by the character of domestic society and the world system.

We recognize that the pursuit of certain social goals and values will lead to political innovation or failure, depending on the constraints and structures involved. The process of social change, modernization, or stability is affected by — or is a *part* of — the way the economic system operates, at the national as well as international level. As the role of the state has expanded, the once heralded autonomy of economics seems more and more an illusion. National “development” can be viewed as a seamless web, without clear lines of distinction among its social, economic, and political strands. As extensive international involvements have brought new vulnerabilities, economic and social issues have become politicized as well as internationalized. The inter-



national relations of countries are tied up with their domestic political choices and social structures, so that the distinction between domestic and foreign concerns (& problems) has become blurred — if not “erased,” as in a fashionable characterization. The complacency of many in recent years and stability, consensus and control over the international environment has therefore proven to be something of a cruel hoax. Uncertainty and tension are pervasive. They are likely to remain so.

Environmental changes of this sort predictably generate new perspectives, new approaches, new syntheses — as well as a wrench being thrown into the domain of “normal science,” an anarchic competition between alleged paradigms, confusion, immobility, denial, etc. A great deal of official and quasi-official thought is given to: what is needed to fully comprehend this newly perceived (or differently characterized) global environment? Certainly the traditional, compartmentalized approaches which have pervaded American universities since the Second World War will not suffice. Policies and problems cannot be fully seen through the perspective of social science disciplines or forms of professional training which are hermetically sealed off from each other.

While the graduate curriculum of most American social science departments generally include a variety of internationally-oriented courses, these are often regarded by students as only marginally related to the rest of the curriculum. Programs in international studies have therefore developed somehow independently of the analytic mainstream of these disciplines, with frequently deleterious effects. At the same time, they have kept the distinctions of their origins: in a theoretically-inclined international economics or technically-oriented international business, on the one hand, and in international diplomacy on the other. Many have been interdisciplinary in name only, by making available an unassimilable “smorgasbord” of courses but without providing a sturdy underlying framework to unify them.

At this point in the scenario: the stage is active with the development, or planning, of multidisciplinary graduate programs in international political economy. In direct contrast to the highly specialized nature of usual graduate-level study, proposed programs will likely cut sharply across traditional dis-

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ciplinary lines (to the extent that they can overcome all the administrative hassles involved and the obsessions with academic territoriality). They will combine study of the various subjects into a singly program, aiming at maximum coherence and the avoidance of needless duplication.

In recent years, there has of course been a profusion of interdisciplinary graduate programs aimed at candidates for the public sector, who are to be trained in the evaluation and planning of national policy. By stressing administrative process, organizational dynamics, and program management, many of these programs have provided their students with little more than a narrow job-oriented training for entry-level generalist positions. Graduate business schools have served much the same function for the private sector. In both cases, the larger social, economic and political *contexts* in which policies are carried out are neglected. Public and private managers often find that their junior staff lack perspective and understanding of the larger structure of international transactions or national development, of why government and private institutions behave the way they do. What is needed is a better grasp of the character of differing social structure and cultures, of the changing dynamics of the global political and economic order, of the behavior and transformations of economic institutions, of the nature of policy-formation processes and domestic politics. Without this, students often emerge with a narrow technocratic view of the relevant national and international settings. For many, this knowledge can be gained through years of working experience. Still, there may be a way of developing a graduate program which could give one the frameworks and materials needed for constructing that understanding.

Combining the advantages of a graduate liberal arts education with more career-oriented profession training, it might hope to avoid a narrow vocational and technical training and yet, through greater attention to contemporary political issues and development, to avoid at the same time any exclusive focus on the more abstract and theoretical concerns which characterize existing graduate programs in the separate disciplines.

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## 2. THE PIECES DO NOT APPEAR TO FIT

THE PIECING  
TOGETHER  
OF HUMPTY  
DUMPTY

Such a program involves a number of problems. Some of these are most sever at the Ph.D. level, where ht need for a more sophisticated (and also coherent) theoretical perspective is quite clear, and as yet unfulfilled. (It remains unfilled even as the theoretical approaches of mainstream economical and radical economics do battle, and as the theoretical pretensions of political science attempt to appropriate a new domain).

Other problems are political and normative. As Patrick McGowan has already noted: “I fear that teaching International Political Economy in the United States will overwhelmingly become defined as a vehicle for servicing the interests of the American state structure and the internationally oriented sector of the American business community.” This problem seems especially likely to distort or undermine the value (into to mention the emancipatory potential) of Masters-level graduate program whose design is forced to parallel the existing needs of the Market-place. Narrow technocrats may not emerge, but uncritical “generalists” may. (And, here, the definition of “generalist” may simply blur into that of a graduate who has failed to gain sophisticated technical training — as Bruce Russett asks: “A nagging question: Is IPE attracting a disproportionate number of students who need some economics, but can’t handle ‘real’ (quantitative) economics as taught at better places?”)

The problem I want to devote some attention to here is somewhat different: it concerns the integration of faculty perspectives and intellectual emphasis.

We speak easily and fluidly of the need to combine the study of domestic political processes with the study of economic processes with the study of international politics. This will enable students to grasp the multi-faceted nature of the global & national problems which are arising, to grasp the intertwined strands of politics and economics, etc. And here the *variety* of faculty may appear to be an unambiguously positive feature: for, surely, the comparativist, the economist, and the internationalist may all contribute a piece of the puzzle. In true participatory fashion, the student then assembles the finished work: understanding.

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Yet in dealing with different arrays of problems, each of these intellectual perspectives could also claim to provide an overview which is comprehensive enough to suggest that it might suffice. So that, rather than pieces of a puzzle, we have alternative and strongly-held ideas about the correct approach to puzzle-assembling. In other words, we face the old problem of incommensurability or competing paradigms, except this time it is *across* sub-fields in political sciences, or between political scientists and economists (and therefore putting across lines which have been subject to prior processes of professionalization, institutionalization, and bureaucratization). Not different approaches to different problems and different outcomes (for such a divergence could give rise to compromise of inattention or complementarity or territoriality); but occasionally hegemonic attempts to specify the contours of the same terrain. And, in the midst of this, one is asked to develop a coherent program for graduate study.

#### AN EXAMPLE: CONCEPTUALIZING THE SOURCES OF FOREIGN ECONOMIC POLICY

An extended example may bring out some of this (a portion of what follows derives from a paper I presented at the 1978 Annual Convention of the International Studies Association: "Surplus Security & National Security: State Policy as Domestic Social Action"). It concerns the ways we conceptualize the domestic sources of foreign policy. As well it categorizes those ways in a familiar fashion — showing their relationship to the more general emphases of *liberal*, *radical*, and *statist* (or *neo-mercantilist*) analysis.

The liberal analysis may be characterized, or caricatured, as that which bears the closest resemblance to the stress on the domestic political process as the source of policy; in so doing, it can serve as a stand-in for analysis originating in American politics or Comparative politics (as academic subfields). The radical analysis, in many of its varieties, is ground in the perspective of economics — or at least of a reconstructed economics, one that presently stands at the margin of American academic life (sometimes finding a safer berth among sociologies). The statist, or neo-mercantilist analysis can be located

more easily in the separate, and often separatist stress of traditional international relations theory, with its characteristic emphases and persistent themes. There is no easy way to assimilate these modes of attention. More important, each has limitations which are not always complementary.

The sources of foreign economic policy: a relatively new concern. The different emphases I've mentioned each stem in part from a similar unwillingness to grant the old assumption about a transcendent state apparatus whose managers look only to strategic or military necessities to chart the main lines of policy in an unambiguously rational way. Some domestic translation is needed. Ideally this would hope to reveal the more inclusive social purposes and definitions that were implicit in state aims. I would ask what domestic representations the aims excluded, and which ones they accredited. Yet this is not what the stress on domestic sources has usually asked: its concerns have been phrased differently. So, the analytic field seems divided in two: between a surface perspective on the factors involved in policy and a perspective which acknowledges the role of domestic factors but forces that into a causalist or mechanical model.

First, one can sight the liberal stress on the combined impact of the changes taking place in the low policy realm (its domestication, for example, and the internationalization of domestic issues areas which accompanied it). This is accompanied by a pluralist stress on the policymaking *process*, eventuating in the well-developed edifice of bureaucratic analysis. The bureaucratic theorists, for the most part, were dunned for their neglect of the factors emphasized in older traditions: the shared nature of policymakers' worldview, the agreement on fundamentals by competing bureaucratic players, the dominance of national, rather than organizational interest. Typically, these factors are thought to figure most prominently in the high policy realm. Foreign economic policy, on the other hand, might be set apart. Especially in the United States, it might well exhibit the disaggregation which bureaucratic theorists have claimed as well as a considerable porousness in the state apparatus (a sizable openness to the direct influence of domestic interests). Without the sheltering umbrella of American hegemony, and the "discipline" of a hierarchy of issues opposed by military concerns, these factors might appear all the more

insistently. To accommodate this setting, liberal perspectives display an instrumentality/causal focus on the direct relationship between policy outcomes and the interests of specific societal groups. Detailed analysis of or external pluralism predominate. Linear chronologies of the events which precede a decision are to be constructed. “How did the nation come to make this decision?” becomes the model question, as it as in the study of domestic policymaking.

One of the fruits of the fraternization with economics has been the awareness, on the part of many, of the relevance of the radical analysis of foreign policy. In both the scholarly and political worlds, and in regard to both domestic and foreign policy, many great tired of asking “who decides?” and “how?” They have asked instead: “who benefits?” from these decisions to protect a hegemonic order, for example, and how do these groups get what disproportionately benefits them. From these question came a stress on the direct influence of corporate interests on foreign policies like those of the Unites States. It derives sustenance, more generally, from the growing literature on the economic sources of imperialism and an appreciation of the interconnected nature of “social problems” in capitalist society.

For the radicals, the interests of capital often predominate over any identifiable nation interest. The state is not autonomous, nor does it marshal its power to serve interests of its own. Instead, it is part of the domestic and the world political economy, not something which transcends it in order to act, unsoiled, in accord with a set of universal dictates about international security. If not directly revealed in official statements, an economic logic could nevertheless account for the contours of policy.

Now, this second emphasis is in many ways an advance on the more surface readings prevalent in political science. It does accept the notion that state action and state power are not autonomous; they are *significations*. The meaning of content of a foreign policy is understandable only within a *motivational* context. Generalizations about the nature of the world system cannot supply this. But neither can crude, unmediated models of representation. Foreign policy behavior cannot always be reduced to a schematic relationship between, for example, specific economic actors and policy choices, or to

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extrapolations based on “the objective needs of America’s institutions.” It is often just as unenlightening to see it as a precipitate of the world system and division labor. In high policy this is especially true, for an overall purposive perspective will generally encompass such politics (and we should remember that “foreign economic policy” often becomes “high policy”). This official perspective, what I have called the surface discourse of state action, must be interpreted and decoded. It cannot simply be banished from the field of attention by means of a virtuostic reduction. To do so violates our common-sense assumptions about the nature of human action as well as the requirements of an explanation which is specific to it. Economic models here cut against the grain of any political analysis which has learned the lesson that a satisfactory *explanation* must be an *interpretation*. Some of the problem has been the instrumentalist emphasis of the political thinking which derives from radical economics: where, like liberal=pluralist analysis, one attempts to show the direct relation between policy outcomes and the interests of specific classes or class fractions. Here, the stress on predicting outcomes will at times eclipse any concern with tracing the actual process involved in arriving at politics. The most sophisticated recent work on the importance of domestic structures in constraining the foreign economic policies of advanced capitalist states (and in accounting for the divergences between them) reflects a blending of the radical and liberal traditions. It also shows some blending of the insights of economics and the study of domestic politics from a comparativist perspective.

The third tendency, taking a “statist” or “neo-mercantilist” stance, will show the most obvious blindspot in the first two focii: their neglect of the overall policy frame of reference shared by the state actors, and their view of the state as an aggregation of private interests. Even in dealing with foreign economic policy, state actors often share a perspective that transcends any visible links between the nature of state action and particular domestic group of class interests. This overall and independent *state* perspective is thought to deserve more attention; policy makers often frame it in terms of “the national interest” or some other category overarching the more limited and particularistic interests of domestic non-state actors which are subordinated to it.

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This is especially likely to be the case where a “state-centered,” as distinct from a “society-centered” policy framework can be found: where the state apparatus can maintain considerable power in relation to important domestic interests. The state, by acting in the national interest, is thought to be capable of defining and protecting an autonomous perspective of its own.

This third analytic tendency presents itself in opposition to the first two. It either implicitly or explicitly downgrades the importance of direct domestic influences on policy. The emphasis on the state actors’ frame of reference can substitute for any attention to the domestic sources of policy, beyond the obligatory discussions of “ideology.” In place of those influences, it foregrounds the role of the government itself. In doing so, it comes much closer to the assumptions of the unitary actor model of foreign policy derived from traditional international relations theory — just as a view which emphasizes the porousness of the state (in regard to societal groups) may go hand in hand with a more disaggregated view of state power and the traditions of mainstream political science. It suggests the lineage this third neo-mercantilist tendency has found in Realist theorizing: about the nature of the world environment, the conditions of war and insecurity, the desire to maximize state power, and the dominance of high policy within the hierarchy of state concerns.

To downgrade the importance of direct domestic inputs in this way seems especially striking given the nature of the issue are. For, after all, one would suppose foreign economic policy to remain the site of sharply conflicting domestic interests attempting to “capture” the policy process, and where it would prove difficult to generate any overall domestic consensus or ideological “hegemony” in regard to specific policy directions. It would therefore also be more likely to throw up obstacles in the path of any political regime as it attempted to assert its overall dominance or carve out a space for the articulation of a unitary national interest. At the level of domestic coalition-building, and at the level of state structure, one might expect low policy to be distinguished by greater degrees of fragmentation and incoherence. At the level of policy, coherence would be expected to give way *in the face* of a great intensity of domestic influences. This should cue us into the controversies which have surrounded the neo-mercantilist or statist arguments: they cut against



the grain of may expectations. They stand in especially sharp contrast to the more fashionable (“liberal”) stress on the implications of interdependence and modernization.

Foreign policy is not merely a plane on which a series of instrumental pushes and pulls will produce a result, or where the direct intervention of members of a dominant class is determinative. In this policy realm, the power of *the state itself* (vis-a-vis constraining domestic groups) will often be quite substantial. In and of itself, this will make a purely behavioral reading seem much more problematical. In this area, even though the state may nevertheless be forced to act within a capitalist definition of economic reality, the level of state autonomy is quite large. And the greater the degree of state autonomy, the more we will need to pay attention to the articulated purposes and reasons of the state actors themselves. Even if we acknowledge the determinative importance of the historical development of the modern world system, this holds true. And, for this reason, the insights of traditional international relations theorists does not become mere outmoded baggage in the carting of the political economy.

But to acknowledge the importance of the state’s autonomy does not mean we are stuck with the neo-mercantalist and Realist neglect of the domestic sources of policy. The state has independent political power, not necessarily independent *explanatory* power. It is still embedded, still a sign and a representation. If we are to get beyond the surface, and into the constitutive features of the social structure, something more is required. And it is not something which traditional international relations theory is capable of supplying. It is as if close attention to the surface actually *dissolves* depth. Such a theory (and theorist) is unequipped to specify the domestic content of those policies which are directed at the international arena but in turn reflect the particularities of the domestic context. That context illuminates that content.

A “stronger” state and a more “overall” state motivation may exist but not a less *particularized* domestic motivation.

The emphasis on the independent role of the state, in other words, may be as disabling as it is insightful. For how far does it take us, even in analyzing foreign policy, to note that the state “is an organic unit in its own

right,” or that “national interest determines foreign policy”? In this policy realm, it may be true that power is not easily reducible to the interests of any single class, or class fraction, or even any permanent coalition. Such a critique of instrumentalist arguments may clear the air, bringing with it an acknowledgement of the relative autonomy and the independent objectives of the state — in the sense that the state is not coercively constrained by direct societal pressures or an uncontrollable bureaucracy. The study of domestic politics will not take us far enough. But in the riposte by the neo-mercantilist *these state* objectives are left unexplained, just as they are in a Rational Actor Model of foreign policy. They are also left unrooted from any domestic ground.

Such a perspective provides as with its emphasis on overall state objectives, but the emphasis is opaque. The door opens, but there is only a wall behind it. The explanation leaves us precisely at the point where a stress on the domestic sources of policy began to seem necessary: where “the anarchic organization of the international system of states” or “the distribution of power among states” were no longer either compelling or persuasive points of reference for the analysis of policy. State autonomy, or the absence of constraint or direct outside determination, does not mean state policies are contentless. For if they are, they are socially unintelligible as well.

One can suggest other alternatives, and other approaches (I have made such an attempt in “Surplus Security & National Security: State Policy as Domestic Social Action”), but they diverge just as far from these components of a subfield: domestic politics, economics, the nature of international politics. Approaches based on theories of each of these three have been discussed. Beyond the lack of communication among disciplines (especially when they are housed in departmental fiefdoms), we have the problem of competition and mutual contradiction. If we are trying to explain foreign policies (and there are certainly other tasks involved in the study of IPE), a bland eclecticism made up of the present pieces is not an acceptable answer: As currently shaped, they do not fit. No less acceptable is a theory-less obsessions with the minutiae of current events, where the fetish of description is justified by reference to market-place relevance. This attempts to solve a problem by self-consciously ignoring its existence we can devote our attention to a mapping

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of the historical record, or of the structural setting as is implicit in much of the literature on the world system, inequality, underdevelopment, and dependence. Yet neither a chronology nor a setting can answer all of our interpretive questions about foreign policy. Here one can only suggest that such questions will be answered by reshaping the familiar pieces of the puzzle (the study of domestic politics, economics, and int'l relations) and *even* that process may give rise to just as many competing and self-righteous approaches. Meanwhile, graduate programs will be fashioned in a more helter-skelter way.

THE PIECING  
TOGETHER  
OF HUMPTY  
DUMPTY

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06

Economic Diplomacy  
and the New

Economic Order:  
Rhetorical Questions

[1979]

# ECONOMIC DIPLOMACY AND THE NEW INTERNATIONAL ORDER: RHETORICAL QUESTIONS

[1979]

1. Is it better to speak of the need for a new theoretical model in international relations to explain the presumably new occurrence of economic turbulence and mercantilism — or should we be speaking of the need for a better theoretical model to explain old *and* new patterns: like, for example, the standard operation of the political economy of world capitalism as an integrated whole?
2. Is a new model most needed when the hierarchy of nation-state power in the international political system is rapidly changing — or is it needed most to explain stability or the reproduction of the status quo as a typical phenomenon, so that we can understand (for example) the relationship between U.S. hegemony and, the older normative order of liberal trade and investment<sup>1</sup> rather than be surprised as they are simultaneously weakened?
3. Is a new theoretical model most needed to measure tensions among isolable national economic actors in the political order — or do we most need to explain the typical *positioning* and *roles* of national actors within the world system and how those roles are reproduced?
4. To say that international relations theorists have been surprised by a decline in the autonomy of nation-states and now wish to acknowledge the influence of the international system on national units: does

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this indicate a new problem for us, or does it simply suggest the bankruptcy of older theorizing?

5. We might talk about how the autonomy and ‘impermeable sovereignty’ of the nation-state has been reached, but hasn’t it *always* been breached? If we acknowledge this, doesn’t it allow us to recognize 2 things: first, the national political and economic *policy preferences*, are trimmed to match the requirements of the international market, as we now see as followers of current events; but second, that domestic political and economic systems developed historically in *line* with changes in world productive practices and market forces — again, as a recurrent, typical, and predictable phenomenon.
6. If we say that a ‘system dominant order’ has emerged, are we talking about a new phenomenon, or simply beginning to apply (in a self-congratulatory way) an alternative analytical perspective which has always been available to examine the world system?
7. Is it better to speak of the postwar decline in faith in a liberal order as a response to weaknesses in international organizations engendered by economic turmoil — or should we see this rejection of liberalism and growth of economic nationalism as a phenomena paralleling the decline in U.S. *political* and *military* hegemony?
8. Is the problem that the ‘hidden hand of the international market cannot still the thrust to protectionism and trade war’ — or is the so-called ‘*belle epoque*’ of postwar world trade expansion coterminous with, and virtually indistinguishable from, U.S. imperialism?
9. If there is no reliable methodology to predict system outcomes that will result from this economic turmoil, isn’t this *because* there is usually no overall perspective offered in which to analyze the system as a world-wide phenomena — & instead there is simply the old liberal-

pluralist emphasis on the interaction of so-called separable so-called political and so-called economic so-called forces?

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ORDER

10. Does the emphasis constantly given to policy prescriptions and policy recommend actions become *ad hoc* irrelevance to the precise extent that it is not grounded in a systematic analysis of the *apparatus* of capitalism as a historically evolving social system at the world level?

Phrases quoted are from Walter Goldstein (Graduate School of Public Affairs, State University of New York at Albany)'s "Economic Diplomacy and the New International Order."

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07

The Language of  
State Action

[1979]



# THE LANGUAGE OF STATE ACTION

[1978]

“Language as a model! To rethink everything through once again in terms of linguistics! What is surprising, it would seem, is only that no one ever thought of doing so before... (Jameson 1972, p. viii)

“The deeper justification for the use of the linguistic model or metaphor. . . lies in the concrete character of the social life of the so-called advanced countries today, which offer the spectacle of a world from which nature as such has been eliminated, a world saturated with messages and information, whose intricate commodity network may be seen as the very prototype of a system of signs. There is therefore a profound consonance between linguistics as a method and that systematized and disembodied nightmare which is our culture today.” (Jameson 1972, p. ix)

To propose that we think of foreign policy *as a language* may seem preposterous. Yet that is the proposal which guides the following analysis. It stimulates a number of analogies which can help us conceptualize, or recast some controversies about, a wide range of important issues. In the study of foreign policy, these issues include: (a) the nature of explanation and understanding; (b) the epistemological issues surrounding the role of the modern world system or capitalist world economy in dictating state action; (c) the importance of domestic forces and motivation in shaping state action; (d) the competition between mercantilist or statist models of analysis and those which lie closer to a much maligned economic reductionism; and (e) the development of alternative ways of conceptualizing the domestic basis of state action — according

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to social rules, and notions of competence, reference, meaning or context. Often enough, conceptual confusion and superficiality have been so rampant that many of these issues have not even been raised, let alone satisfactorily articulated. None of them has been satisfactorily resolved. For that reason, even a preliminary probe into uncharted territory may be of use.

1. We can characterize foreign policy in a variety of ways; each of these ways carries with it an implicit epistemology and style of explanation which fits it. Most common, perhaps, is to analyze it as a series of *events*, as *behavior*, and therefore as that species of objectified processes subject to technical control (Peterson 1975; Hermann 1971; Rosenau 1974). Behavioral explanation, or retrodiction, thus becomes the order to the day. It attempts to follow the trajectory suggested by the natural sciences, and during its attempt it is within range of all the criticisms launched against mechanical or “naturalist” models.

2. Foreign policies are even more appropriately cast as purposive actions, which in turn demand a different logic of interpretation than that which has played a domineering role in the literature on events. A purposive explanation is called for: one which acknowledges that significant actions are both intentional and pre-described. Because they are constituted by the purposes and self-understandings of state actors, these elements must be included in the explanation of practices. Actions are means to a specifiable set of ends for which actors have reasons, and therefore cannot be understood without reference to guiding purposes and reasons. We will need to start with purposive descriptions, with the “proto-interpretations” of the actors themselves; we begin with “interpreted actions,” and must evolve an appropriate mode of interpretation (Andrews 1976, Taylor 1971). The retrodiction of behavior or the subsumption of events under covering laws will not provide this understanding; a more phenomenological or hermeneutic approach is needed. In many ways, such an approach will appear as an advance over purely behavioral accounts because of the fit between the mode of analysis and the characterization of the things which are to be explained. Recent work in the philosophy of action and the philosophy of the social sciences provides it with a relative-

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ly firm grounding in an alternative epistemology.

3. A purposive account carries with it its own debilities. In foreign policy studies, both the unitary actor model and the more disaggregated studies of bureaucratic politics display these quite clearly. They arrest the analysis. We may be able to render intelligible the specific choice of means (or action) by setting it against a backdrop of definable purposes, but the purposes themselves are left free-floating. They either remain unintelligible, or else they are taken for granted. The self-understandings of the actors can be probed with the help of a hermeneutic or intentionalist interpretation, but, at that point, such an interpretive account tends to ground to a halt on the surface. How might that surface be penetrated, interpreted? — by reference to the antecedent conditions which apparently caused or determined its appearance? Or by reference to a broader context (of meanings, institutional practices, and norms) which constitutes it and renders it intelligible? The former (causalist or naturalist) mode of going beyond a purposive account would only recapitulate the problems of a behavioral account — to isolate elements rather than look at them as a whole, to think of meaningful actions as the culmination of causes which are not integrated into the frame of reference of the state actors.

4. Yet the meaning or significance of a policy is not always revealed in the purposes; those purposes may be opaque. A hermeneutics of restoration is not *suspicious* enough (Ricoeur 1976). It does not probe vertically in a way that would make the purposes themselves intelligible. Perhaps the kind of intelligibility which can be brought to those purposes is similar to the relationship between ends and means which a purposive explanation would highlight: a mutual entailment, a conceptual link, a normative requiredness or appropriateness, the implication of a context into which ends fit. A *contextual interpretation* is called for, which interprets the surface (of purposes and reasons) against a frame provided by its social context. “To understand a particular action, we must grasp the beliefs and intentions which motivated it, and this further requires that we know the social contexts of practices and institutions which specify what the action in question ‘counts as,’ what sort of action it is”

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(Fay and Moon 1977). If actions are intended and reasoned, our purposive characterizations will acknowledge this, but an explanation will have to go beneath the action to uncover the structure of meanings and conventions which it can disclose.

Action is a text. Its understanding is “scenic” (Habermas 1970), for while intentions may specify what kind of action it is, conventions and contexts specify what kind of intention it is. They give to texts their coherence or sense. These will constitute and distinguish a state action, giving it the more internal criteria of intelligibility which allow us to see it not only as a purposive action but also as a communicative action. The notion of a fit between action and context parallels the fit between a pattern of policy and a domestic social context in the light of which that pattern would be intelligible. The fit is both meaningful and explanatory. A contextual interpretation would therefore assimilate and, at the same time, point beyond a purposive or hermeneutic account.

5. Here, as a way of specifying the trajectory of a contextual treatment, the analogy with language becomes attractive. Certainly the characterization of state policy as intentional, meaningful, and rule-governed already points in this direction (Andrews 1975). Just as with language, instances of foreign action cannot be comprehended by being grouped together in terms of behavioral similarities, in a context-free fashion; instead, their “social use” or functioning within a social context should guide even our *descriptions* of what they are, not to mention the explanations that must rely upon these descriptions as their starting point. The context will specify what is to “count as” an instance of what; it provides us with an implicit code on which to hinge our characterizations.

Explanation would attempt to grasp the meaning of a pattern of purposive action: to make sense of it. If the aim is comprehension, one set of analogies then comes into view. Foreign policy projects itself as a text, a form of writing. At the same time, interpretation resembles reading, for meaning is not located within the text so much as it is produced by the shuttling back and forth between action and frame (Goffman 1974). Interpretation therefore

aims at transparency: to uncover the relationship between action and context, or the translatability (but not the dissolving reduction) of action into context. That context would specify the meaning which is enmeshed within an underlying grid of convention. Language can serve as the model: context is the referent (Jacobson 1960).

6. If we can regard language as a quarry from which we might extract our concepts, perhaps the analogy can be pushed all the way into structuralism. For certainly there is a resemblance between a contextual explanation of an act and the approaches to language which have been dominant in the structuralist schools of criticism and social theory. Context, or at least one way of characterizing the relevant context, occupies a central role within the structuralist enterprise.<sup>1</sup>

What distinguishes the structuralist perspective is its insistence on locating elements of language within a larger system. The phenomena to be studied can be dichotomized, in Ferdinand de Saussure's terms, as *langue* (the language, the overall sign-system) and *parole* (speech, or individual utterances). The former comprises a structure against which instances of the latter are to be framed. Such a structuralism, with its determinedly holistic emphasis, will transcend the more atomized or disaggregative bent of empiricism. In order to show the interrelation of parts of a whole, it refuses to subsist on correlations of regularities found among the bits. The meaning of the part — or, in this case, the individual policy — can only be defined by “the postulation and repostulation of wholes” (Merleau-Ponty 1975).

Individual units are actually dissolved back into a total sign-system. By describing that system and specifying its workings, one can penetrate the opacity of the parts. The system's rules or laws prevail over the autonomy of its elements; the attention given to their individual properties is downgraded. At times, even their very independence becomes suspect. The system becomes that context or language in light of which individual instances can come to seem transparent. The focus of analytic attention shifts from individual phenomena to the self-regulating entity which overarches them. One locates instances in a relational system, rather than in a sequence of causes and effects

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or inputs and outputs. It is a synchronic rather than a diachronic movement.

7. One does not look for external causation, for, once this systemic perspective is constructed, the relevant factors are internal to the phenomenon at hand. The historical antecedents of the phenomenon cannot capture its signification. Its identity is defined by its place within a system, rather than by its history. And it is worth noting that Saussure's structuralist emphasis did come to the fore after the dominance of a more historical methodology in linguistic studies — where histories of individual language elements were charted or reconstructed. The structuralist project told us what these elements were to “count as.” They asserted that identity was relational. The system itself was what distinguished or constituted the signs. Explanation would come through a synchronic study of the overall system seen as a functional whole.

Like the phonological system (whose study generated the “phonological revolution” which Levi-Strauss found so instructive for his structuralist anthropology (Levi-Strauss 1963)), the relevant rules of this system are both hidden (from the standpoint of the actors) and formalizable (from the standpoint of the analyst). They provide an unconscious infrastructure capable of supplying to the actors the crucial distinctions and meanings which are needed in usage and action. Motivation, and therefore explanation, will not be confinable to the conscious level at which a phenomenological account will operate; it may appear only when we construct or postulate a systemic whole.

This whole, in a similar way, will be a structure encompassing the signifiers (Saussure divided the sign into two parts: the signifier — or acoustic image, material form; and the signified — the concept, or mental representation). By stressing the arbitrary nature of the relationship between signifier and signified, the signifier itself is foregrounded. And the identity of those signifiers is relational.

The structuralist in fact projects a type of formalism in which “content” almost seems to disappear into a nexus of relationships; the interest lands upon differences rather than on individual properties — on a grid of relations among signifiers, on a system, which then runs the constant risk of being hypostasized.<sup>2</sup> The familiar emphasis on the subject is rejected. Neither cau-

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sation nor signification resides in the subject — or in the conscious frame of reference or articulations of actors. The subject is “decentered” (Foucault 1972), for the real guides for an explanation lie outside it: in systems of rules and relations. This may look something like a Copernican revolution.

8. What does this have to do with the study of foreign policy? Two things. First, it bears a striking resemblance to the recent focus on the modern world system (or world economy) as a preferred vantage point from which to view individual nations’ policies and development. Second, the *limitations* of the structuralist approach relate fairly closely to the emphasis on domestic social structure in complementing a world system analysis. By extending the metaphor between language and state action, and by acknowledging some of its complexities, several of the conceptual puzzles which surround the analysis of foreign policy and world politics might be clarified. This is the task at hand. Certainly the sophistication with which crucial epistemological and theoretical issues have been posed by the structuralists (and their critics) might yield some insights for interpreting state action. At the same time, the familiar (or mainstream) models by which we study international phenomena are not so conceptually satisfying as to make this task seem irrelevant.

9. In the study of international relations, a pronounced shift has led attention away from the interaction of single units in the economic sphere (whether firms or nations), and toward the overall global system. This represents a break with a more state-centered approach in which the analyst deals with disaggregated national terms. The transnationalization of the global environment which a liberal perspective sees occurring as a result of interdependence and modernization is seen in a related historical approach to be the continuing product of the development of capitalism as a modern world system in the period following the Renaissance and the break-up of world empire (Wallerstein 1974).

Stress on the politics of international economic relations has partially given way to a stress on the capitalist economic system as a world-wide phenomenon. Once this “translation” of thought occurs, what appear on the sur-

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face as voluntaristic interactions might profitably be seen as the embodiment of a world system and its structural constraints. Nation-states are not separable systems of economic production. They are only parts of globe-girdling mode of production: the world economy as a single organic entity. A pattern of individually-motivated interactions is thus recast as the determinative quality of a single capitalist network, which impinges upon individual states through norms and incentives.<sup>3</sup>

10. The world system approach — brought into contemporary discussions most forcefully by the work of Wallerstein — parallels the theoretical project of the structuralists, as well as the underscoring of “totality” by Lukacs. (After all, the analogy between systems of exchange and systems of language was made years ago by Levi-Strauss in his structural anthropology of kinship systems.) Signification, and also the determination of key national and sub-national features, derives from the world system itself. A recent discussion of Levi-Strauss reveals the similarity of conception: “For he is concerned not with the meanings myths have for individuals who know only the myths of their own society but with the meanings myths might have within the global system of myths: within mythology as an institution” (Culler 1975).

The same way of thinking could apply more generally — to signs, or communicative actions. A focus on the frame of reference of state actors would very closely resemble, and share the limitations of, a concern for “individuals who know only the myths of their own society.” These are individuals who are trapped within the limits of a narrowly-gauged language as their actions are being guided by a system of global rules which is no more readily available to them than the full complexity of phonological rules are to competent native speakers. The context posited by structuralism is not one which we can find embodied in (or fully comprehended by) the subject itself: “Linguistics is not hermeneutic” (Culler 1975). It looks for a system overarching the policies or events, not a different context for each policy in the light of which particular state choices could be socially intelligible or “make sense.”

11. If the *parole* or speech of state policy must be located within a larger con-

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text, in something like a sign-system or global system of myths, then the modern world economy might serve as that language (*langue*). By a series of historical transmissions, policy and national development or underdevelopment would be normalized by its place in that global totality. And the interdependent system of exchange and the world division of labor resembles the overall sign-system in another way, for it is conceptualized in such a way that its contractual principles do not seem readily modified by individual actions. Like the language (*langue*):

“As a social institution, it is by no means an act, and it is not subject to any premeditation. It is the social part of language, the individual cannot be himself either create or modify it; it is essentially a collective contract which one must accept in its entirety if one wishes to communicate” (Barthes 1970).

12. The world system would enable us to postulate the content and the context, of policy. The moves between policy and referent would be lateral rather than vertical ones — just as they are in structuralist studies of language. Another facet of the analogy is relevant here. Among the distributional relations of linguistic units, as distinct from their integrative relations, a significant measure of homogenization would be expected. In a sense, the interrelations absorb the distinguishing features — “tout se tient,” in Saussure’s classic maxim.<sup>4</sup> This resembles the linguistic process of *neutralization*, where an individual differentiation of a unit ceases to be significant as it is cancelled out by the encompassing “syntagm” and the pressure which is derived from it. The most apparent analogy here is between state activity in the world system and the syntagmatic variety of distributional relations. The absorption of distinguishing characteristics into the dictates of the world economy again suggests the lateral nature of the relationships involved. What would be analogous to the paradigmatic axis — the axis of substitution, rather than combination — is neglected, as are the vertical relationships between state policy and domestic structure.

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13. In the analysis of language as a system, this draws sustenance from the “anti-humanism” of the entire structuralist project (Jameson 1972, p. 139-140), and its subordinating relocation of the subject as a relay point within a systemic grid. Substantialist thinking gives way to relational thought; “content” dissolves into pure relationism. Substance is reconceptualized into form, as the signifier (analogous to form) is emphasized over the signifieds (content). For that reason, language has been analogized to units of exchange, for in both cases the idea of distinguishing particularities would be out of place. Here is a situation “where a given unit of currency has the same function whether it be gold or silver coin, assignat or wooden nickel: in other words, where the positive nature of the substance used is not as important as its function in the system (Jameson 1972). The same would be true of a world system approach: the formalization of the rules of the system is rather indifferent to the substance of its elements. Extending the analogy, states would resemble currency — again, in different “denominations,” depending on the role they occupied globally. The very concept of the nation-state as a source of value is problematized.

14. This stress on the priority and formalizability of the signifier relates to the structuralist conception of models<sup>5</sup>—in which individual thoughts are determined or framed by a problématique or complex of problems and ideations and conceptual limits or “clôture.” The uniqueness of a single overall system (a model, a *langue*, a world economy) is outlined, and everything resides within. The relationship of forms can be defined without reference to phenomena outside the system. The analyst’s ability to locate a part within this model may be thought to be sufficient for its understanding; there are no obstructions to the analysis in the guise of relationships of a vertical or semantic or non-arbitrary kind (no such verticality is “imprinted” on the formalization of the signs). A single overarching grammar, or set of grammatical rules, sets the frame. For recent theorizing about the nature of the global political economy (about international regimes, and foreign economic policy, for example), the modern world capitalist system as it developed from the Sixteenth Century would provide that model. It projects the basic grammar within which

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national actions and developments can be understood.

15. Quite a bit is missing from this perspective on language; even more is missing as we transfer it to the conceptualization of state policy within the world system. Some of this derives from the implicit identification of nation-states or state policies with speech (*parole*)—the individualized aspects of the sign system. They would represent mere *manifestations* of the system, as individuals select and actualize the possibilities inherent within a language of which they are the “transient document.”<sup>6</sup>

It is not at all clear, for example, that the structuralists’ downplaying of essence (or, in this case, the nation-state as an independent social unit) can be sustained. Their opposition to idealism may be carried too far. The subject does seem substantial, and not merely a series of relays which dissolves the actor into sheer relationality. Extreme variants of liberal theorizing (or fantasizing) at times approach the same perspective: where national political orientations are thought to be uniformly subordinatable to the dictates of the market, to a global structuralism, to a triumph of “interdependence.” In a world economy approach, states are seen as the system’s “concrete precipitates,” rather than its “component units” (Gourevitch 1977).

16. A holistic orientation of this kind does not acknowledge the way meaning and differentiation are affixed at the national level. Like certain variants of economic determinism, it is curiously pre-semantic or pre-semiotic. It is as if all the relevant differentiation took place *through* the system (through its syntagmatic or combinatorial relations), rather than (in an analogy with literature) there being ways in which the paradigmatic/vertical axis protruded onto the syntagmatic/horizontal axis. For *domestic* signification will be vertical in just this way. As a form of individualized writing, it will be projected *onto* the syntagmatic relational operations of the sign-system/world-system in a way that creates a “thickening” or “palpability” (Scholes 1974, p. 26-31).

Now in dealing with systems of myth and the binary oppositions contained within them, the constructs one uses are aimed at structuring “differences” which are not themselves communicative. The method derives from

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Saussure's notion that language contained only differences, without positive terms. But in transferring this method to the study of action, we run the risk of mischaracterizing the things we wish to explain. (This is, as well, one of the most damning and frequently commented upon flaw in "naturalistic" accounts of foreign policy regarded as events or behavior.) With communicative actions — a category to which I am assimilating state action — "the structural and the semiological cannot be dissociated: the relevant structures are those which enable sequences to function as signs" (Culler 1975, p. 49). Formal differences are not only aspects of structural or systemic patterning; they are communicative as well.

17. The distinction is between: (1) a study of syntax — of the rules which govern units whose particularistic signification is ignored, at least for the moment, and (2) a study of semantics, of words or actions used as symbols — which cohere not only in an intellectual construction with a set of rules, but in a purposive and meaningful *game* which is played by actors for particular reasons. In the former, even semantic *description* of the units is bypassed, for that would demand reference to something like linguistic competence. It would depend upon a set of expectations and conventions which provide a standard by which we could particularize states, so that they could be described as more than occupants of global roles (core, semi-periphery, periphery) in a formalized system with abstracted rules. Signification of this kind would come from the domestic level. To the global syntactical relations, we would need to add domestically-grounded semantic configurations.

Are the linkages "arbitrary" or "unmotivated" in the linguistic sense? Are syntagmatic relationships all that we are concerned with? Conceptualizing state action as *symbolic* would suggest that the relationship is not arbitrary in quite so straightforward a way, but that the domestic structures of individual states provide another sign-system (*langue*) and a domestic "naturalization" against which particular actions gain meaning. A semanticist emphasis implies an appropriateness, rather than an arbitrary link between word and referent. What particularizes states (for example, their internal class relations) (Brenner 1977; Petras and Trachte 1978) will give meaning to their very insertion into

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the world system at a particular point, as well as to the role which they occupy within it. Without a sensitivity to this element of domestic reference, to a signification which is not simply generated by our analytic construction of a system of rules which encompasses states, we are left with only a relatively abstract and static schema of grammatical imperatives.<sup>7</sup>

18. Constraints and opportunities may come from outside — from the world economic system, for example. From a description of those external conditioning factors, we might derive a grammar or a set of regularities which we could use to predict broad ranges of state behavior or developmental patterns. But to characterize foreign policy as purposive and significant (significative) action, and then to frame such a characterization in a contextual (or referential way), something additional is required. We will need to plumb the particular motivation of states. Questions of *usage* and *desire* need to supplement the charting of formal systems of rules. And while it makes sense to argue that the external environment provides a hierarchy of rewards and obstacles, it makes much less sense to argue that it is the source of motivation. Motivation — as a term so closely bound up with the nature of signification — is internal. The terms “context,” “referent,” and “motive” bear a family resemblance, and inform us that there is something more to be examined.

19. A systemic view always risks projecting a static description of its units, at the same time as it may shun the job of examining those units’ internal constituents. Both a world economy approach and an international systems approach (concentrating on configurations of military power and its balancing within an overall framework of “self-help”) are tempted to ignore the domestic sources of national policy.

A strategic system, if we regard it as an organized and even organic entity, might suggest that it is appropriate to postulate one characteristic motivation for states: that of protecting the territorial integrity and political sovereignty of the national unit. This is what can be called “basic security” (Andrews 1978). Beyond this alleged imperative, however, we are in the realm of “surplus security” — and need a specification of domestically-grounded

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interests, purposes, and motives: of a *semantic* or vertical or paradigmatic dimension, in other words. Even where the rules of a system are “learnable” (Cowley and Laitin, p. 11) (in situations of tight bipolarity, for example), we still need to specify motivation beyond basic security. The traditional usage of “national security” will prove disabling precisely because it projects a context-free and invariant language,<sup>8</sup> seemingly independent of domestic particularity or dissensus.

From a capitalist world system approach, one might also deduce a pattern of motivation for individual states; in fact, if it is to answer the relevant questions, it will be tempted to project a *characteristic* motivation for all elements of the system. This may concern the maximization of the economic position of the national capitalist class within the overall system: thus using political power to help maximize profits (by expanding national resources and minimizing the uncertainties derived from the market). This characteristic motivation would assume that we could conceive of something like a nation as “a normative individual, chosen for her canonic generality, and who consequently represents a ‘speech’ which is fixed and devoid of all combinative freedom” (Barthes 1970, p. 27). Such a state would also be devoid of all unformalizable meanings or domestic linkages, so that rather than an idiolect or individual innovation, we would be dealing with a kind of institutionalized speech.

20. But what is striking is the way individual motivations are either assumed or are felt to be determined by the grammar of the system itself. The question of domestic motivation, and often even of national purpose, has been subordinated to the interest in predicting the regularities of development or of plotting a historical trajectory of determination.

Now one could claim that the world economic system was or is decisive in determining the nature of the domestic social formations involved within it: that the world market or division of labor largely shaped the domestic structures which would lay the foundation for any particularized national purposes. The role of different areas in the division of labor in the world economy would generate different class structures and modes of labor control or

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surplus extraction which would lead, in turn, to differing politics and state policies. This would signal one exit from the analytic problem: the importance of the domestic sources of policy or development could be granted, but the sources of the relevant domestic referents could be found in the relational structure of the world system.

The problem, however, is that such claims are either not forthcoming or are not entirely convincing. Wallerstein's arguments along these lines seem to underestimate the degree of indeterminacy involved: class relations, for example, cannot be derived so schematically from the structure of the world market as it developed historically. We must distinguish between global determinants and the national motivations of state actors; between the *performance* of states and the *competence* derived from both global and domestic structures. Otherwise we may have an overall vantage point from which to analyze behavior, but no way to contextually interpret domestic motivation, and no assured means of analyzing the sources of system change.

21. One alternative to a systemic determinism — with its “humiliation” of the parts — would be highlight the importance of individual states. The setting does not transform actions into mere consequences; they remain projects. A “scenic understanding” need not imply scenic determinism; global rules do not dominate so coercively. States are not reducible to the status of ventriloquist dummies; rather, they have voices or an “internal coherence” of their own — and domestic motives and referents which underprop those voices. And the reference need not adhere to single decisions so much as to an overall *role* which the state takes in regard to its *domestic* social order (Andrews 1978). For purposes of explanation, we may have a decentered system, composed of politically autonomous units, each attempting to reproduce their particular domestic systems.

This would allow us to break out of a conception of a confining world grammar, or series of syntagmatic distributional relations, so that a semantic dimension might be brought into sight. At the same time, we will also want to defer a premature or mechanical reductionism, where we are catapulted from sign to referent (from policy to economic or class structure, for example)

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without giving full attention to the purposes and self-understandings of state actors. The state itself can be emphasized — as in statist or neo-mercantilist perspectives; but *at that point*, questions of underlying and particularizing domestic motivation come to the fore. And to answer these questions, the referential or semantic issues (which is one way to regard the issues involved with the domestic sources of policy) will have to be raised. This is the order in which it seems appropriate to proceed.

In this way, three major deformations can be avoided:

(a) the singular stress on the grammar of the world system, which downgrades the autonomy of individual units and makes striking presumptions about both the sources and motives of state action;

(b) the complementary emphasis on individual states, which acknowledges the importance of state purposes. Here one regards those purposes or “national interests” as a content (or “signified”) of the systemic formalism, but fails to analyze the second-order domestic motivation (or referent) which underpins this surface state role (if we reinterpret it as a “signifier”) (Andrews 1978; Gourevitch 1977; Katzinstein 1977; Gilpin 1975; Barthes 1972).

(c) a stress on the domestic referents which nevertheless resembles an overly rapid analytic movement from “word to referent,” which leaves the relative autonomy of signs (of state activity, in other words) too far in the background. Here the danger is one of collapsing the distinction between competence and performance, relying on instrumentalist or elitist or “personnel” characterizations of the domestic sources of policy, or using a parsimonious predictive model which skirts the articulated purposes and reasons of state actors altogether.

22. If policy can be characterized as communicative action, as individualized instances or articulations of speech (*parole*), one question serves to stage the controversy: which is the relevant sign-system (or *langue*) on which we can

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base our explanation? A holistic world-economy approach enters at the level of the global system and develops a formal modelling of *parole* behavior based on “internal causation.” The alternative to this systematizing would place its emphasis on the semantic dimension located within individual domestic systems. This would provide us with something like a *domestic structuralism*. Here, the subject (the autonomy or opacity of policy) is eroded: not from “above,” as in a global systems approach, but from “below,” by domestic norms. It would begin with policies and with “interpreted actions,” but the analysis would work downward; the movement would be one of *depth*, rather than an attempt to ferret out lateral relationships or historical origins.

23. If we arrest this downward movement, often we are left with a fixed gaze on the surface (and the implicit suspension or “naturalizing” of the historical which is the site of one-dimensionality or of myth) (Andrews 1978; Shapiro 1972). Viewing state policies as signs, once we go beyond the pure relationalism of a system and acknowledge the substantialism involved, we will again gain a crucial advantage: “by taking linguistics as a model one may avoid the familiar mistake of assuming that signs which appear natural... have an intrinsic meaning and require no explanation” (Culler 1975, p. 5). They may have essences which obtrude, but as meaningful signs, they should be denatured. Such an analysis, as Barthes put it, takes us to where “the ‘natural’ begins to stir, to signify (to become once again relative, historical, idiomatic); the (abhorred) illusion of the self-evident chips, cracks, the machine of language starts up. ‘Nature’ shudders with all the sociality compressed, sleeping, within it” (Barthes 1977).

Such a model is synchronic in a way that resembles the systematizing of the global approach, but it takes the domestic level as its key. If we proceed by *layers*, an apparently self-sufficient or “natural” surface meaning (at the level of policymaking) becomes emptied at a second, underlying level. A taken-for-granted conception of the nation’s interests can be reconceptualized as a symbol, which points to an underlying social formation of some specifiable type. Symbols of this sort are not self-sufficient. They overextend themselves, by standing for — or standing in for — another set of relations. The

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significations do not reside directly *in* the symbol (as a hermeneutic analogy might tend to imply); nor are they literal and uninflected by the domestic context in which they appear. They are particularized and “indexical.” As a result, symbolic analysis will be a social analysis which takes account of these features — placing policies “in a new semantic row.”<sup>9</sup>

24. Language such as “national security” and “the national interest” tends to deny, or represent a repression of, this underlying layer. It does not straightforwardly disclose the aspects of domestic reference which are found in national policy. In high policy, for example, we might include here the attachment of state actors to a conception of “security” which extends well beyond the protection of territorial integrity and political sovereignty — tasks which might be thought to derive from the grammatical “imperatives” of the modern state-system, or from the abstracted rules of a Realist theory. The more expansive conception of security characteristic of hegemonic powers, for example, can be regarded as *surplus security* — the securing or reproduction of the features of a particularized domestic social order.<sup>10</sup> The specific nature of policymakers’ conception of “the nation” also suggests that “the national interest” cannot be made synonymous with the complexity of domestic motivation. A *domestic paradigm* is involved, which comprises the policymakers’ modelling of the domestic social order, or our own reconstruction of what may be an implicit or taken-for-granted (inherited) modelling on the part of state actors. It bears a relationship to the paradigmatic plane of language — where items are related to each other by potential substitution, thus, the degree to which their individual domestic orders provide a *differentiating* context.

25. By going beneath the taken-for-granted surface, or the plane of technical rationality which yokes together the ends and means of policy, we can investigate the domestic signification of a pattern of policy. Because meaning derives from convention as well as intention, it may be disclosed by probing the relationship between state policies and domestic norms. A study of the surface would be followed by an activity of deciphering, by going beneath the

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official frame of reference or “critically exceeding the self-interpretation of acting subjects” (Wellmer 1971). The relevant context or language (*langue*) is domestic, articulated by social norms. For the context is not an external system of other states and other market phenomena. It depends upon a set of rules which enable the policy to function as a sign with domestic meaning (and therefore to “make sense” and be plausible or appropriate or successful in domestic social terms). These rules specify a form of policy “competence” to which specific policies (or parole) stand as “performance.” Poetics, for example, depends upon notions of literary competence (Culler 1975): one’s ability to *naturalize* the forms of writing available to it in a different way than that in which they are presented. A domestic “translation” of the sort being proposed will likewise depend upon a domestic paradigm or notion of domestic competence. This will show how an action *has been* naturalized by state actors, as policies are related to particular conceptions of the domestic order.

26. These social norms provide a context that can make state purposes intelligible. Rules are not merely *constraining* — as we might expect from a pluralist or instrumentalist theory of the state. To adopt a related vocabulary, they are not regulative rules, constraining forms of state behavior of which they are independent. Instead, they are constitutive rules and distinctions (Taylor 1971; Searle 1969, pp. 33ff). They specify what policies “count as” in the domestic context, and what policies are appropriate for doing one thing rather than another, or playing one domestic role rather than another. The very characterization of state action as having a domestic character — the translation of foreign policy into a domestic language — is logically dependent on these rules. They constitute state purposes and are not simply a set of obstacles pressuring state actors into actions in the way that causal antecedents will determine future courses of behavior. They generate meaning, just as “the semantic structure of a language may be regarded as a conventional realization of a series of sets of underlying constitutive rules . . . (Searle 1969, p. 37).

27. To stay strictly on the purposive level, never looking at the domestic underpinnings or translatability of policy is not sufficient. But neither is it suf-

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ficient to conceptualize the link between state and civil society as a set of causal arrows. In those cases, one customarily finds a substantial degree of state autonomy from direct public constraints or direct (instrumentalist) class pressures and is then tempted to ignore the question of domestic motivation altogether. What drops from sight is the question of *what* the state is using its relative autonomy for, and why.

Constitutive rules define a second-order relationship between foreign policy purposes and underlying domestic social purposes toward which those state ends are means. Those rules distinguish or differentiate the policy. For the study of comparative foreign policy, these paradigmatic relations between state and society, between policy as signifier and domestic paradigm as signified, between state *parole* and domestic *langue*, determine the “functional contrasts” of substitution and similarity.

28. The “first-order” signifier<sup>11</sup> suggests the component parts of the world system itself — a series of signs related to each other in a combinatorial or syntagmatic fashion, but without a semantic/vertical/paradigmatic dimension of any decisive importance. States are merely subordinate signifieds, *through which* the system conveys meaning. One can maintain an interior focus on the sign because it is global and all-encompassing. Without clearly articulated boundaries, context is everything — for everything is apparently contained within the interior.

A statist or neo-mercantilist focus would reconceptualize the states as signifiers in their own right. This may reestablish the states as positive terms within a system of signifiers, but, at the same time, it fails to give them a signified or content. The domestic sources of policy are withheld from view. The purely lateral relationships of a world system are arrested, yet no vertical or semantic relationships appear in the analysis to complement it.

At this point, to come closer to a comprehension of policy, we can posit a domestic paradigm which is implicit or articulated in the policymakers’ world view. This functions as the relevant “second order” signified which is attached to the signifier of policy. The distinction between signifier/policy and signified/domestic paradigm thus assimilates the word/referent relation-

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ship within the internal coherence of the policy framework itself. It interiorizes it.

29. The analysis can therefore emphasize the signifying of policy. It need not proceed from signified “up” — to stress the fixed meaning of policy by reference to a single set of domestic interests. In fact, the attachment to a “final signified” — like that of the unconscious, or the mode of production, or ruling political coalition — may stimulate an overly-rapid reduction of signifier to signified, or policy to referent. Bypassing the actors’ frame of reference can only be justified if we accept the legitimacy of a rather sharp break between our explanatory concepts and those which are employed by the relevant actors themselves. Yet this is precisely what is hard to accept; an alternative procedure is concretized in the idea of the domestic paradigm. We simply do not have the freedom implied by a “naturalist” perspective, where concepts can be developed and actions classified without regard for the way actors undertake these same tasks. Such a dizzying and often mechanical vertical move may deny what one variant of the theory of the state has called the relative autonomy of state action,<sup>12</sup> and, on a linguistic level, what has been called the “surplus of signifier.”<sup>13</sup> State policy may be more than a representation; it may resemble an articulation and modelling of otherwise “formless, sprawling” referents (Jameson 1972, p. 131-135).

30. Criticizing reductionism has long been fashionable in intellectual circles. Yet we should keep in view the equally obtrusive stumbling blocks in other directions—in the path which a global structuralism has followed, and the counterposed path taken by those who ascribe policies to the autonomy of state power. In both cases, one finds an overestimation of the signifiers. (This is true whether the signifiers constitute the world system itself, or the interior focus on state actors: holism, on the one hand; a statist perspective, on the other.)

Even the notion of a domestic paradigm—perceived as the second-order signified (or content) inscribed in state policy—may appear too limited, or shallow. It may continue to reinforce idealist tendencies, isolating the

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state in a theoretical way from society, without ever really getting outside of the heads and concepts of the policymakers.<sup>14</sup> In a sense, the very idea of a domestic paradigm suggests that the concept of a more direct representation of societal forces has become problematical. This may occur because of a “decline of the referentials,” and a new “self-referentiality” on the part of the state (Andrews 1975; Lefebvre 1971; Shapiro 1970). Or it may be due to the prominence of the state’s articulations of social reality as the state assumes more prominence, as both the pluralist and the instrumentalist variants of the theory of the state seem less persuasive. In either case, the stress on the domestic paradigm, or signified, may oversubjectivize the relationship between the state and society — a criticism which has also been levelled against the structuralist theory of the capitalist state.

31. At this point, it is worth recalling that there are always *three* elements involved in the linguistic metaphor: not only a signifier and a signified but a *referent* as well. Even signifieds (or domestic paradigms) remain forms of meaning; they should not be wielded analytically in such a way that their “pointing” function drops from sight. Possibly the original (hermeneutic) focus on the subject — on the state actors — has the effect of dissolving the referent, by making the policymaking system look relatively self-enclosed, as if “in the field of the subject, there is no referent.”<sup>15</sup>

That is, the constitutive rules of a domestic paradigm may enable us to translate a foreign policy into domestic terms and thus perceive it as domestic social action, as the actualization of a domestic social role. But even these rules or distinctions will function symbolically in relation to a domestic social order. The analytic process is not a reduction but a projection — a reading *through*, a transparency.

32. For the signified is itself atop a signifying system of its own. It can be reformulated as a *signifier*, pointing beneath it to a deeper organization at the domestic social level. Without this underlayer, it might remain an “undefined mass of concepts, which could be compared to a huge jellyfish, with uncertain articulations and countours.”<sup>16</sup> Without this deeper political formation and

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reinforcement, there would be too little *solidity* to the signified. It would be a concept shifting or floating on the surface, contaminated by an undue reliance on idealist assumptions.

Referents may be sought: first, to find out if, and in what way and to what degree, the policymakers' modelling of the domestic social order involved in the domestic paradigm is congruent with the domestic frame. Second, we will want to know how this particular "official" conception arose historically or became consensual, or at least how it is being reinforced in the time period under investigation and how fragile the relevant process of non-decision and legitimation has been.<sup>17</sup> The underlying referent — the domestic social *system*, the historical process by which political conflict evolves or is repressed or preempted — would be another layer existing beneath the paradigm. As in systems of myth, it may be rent with contradictions, to which the "binary oppositions" of the domestic paradigm or the trajectory of national policy are an attempted response.

33. Examining this referent will help in another way. It can provide an understanding of the reasons why (and the method by which) the signification of state policy is systematically distorted or occluded. At those junctures, a more surface-oriented hermeneutics will prove inadequate, for it cannot grasp the meaning of those distortions; it is relatively helpless before the attempts of policymakers to *naturalize* a particularized domestic social action. The process by which the referent is "desymbolized" — a process of hegemony and legitimation, in this case — will be related to the *partiality* of state policy, for this is generally the aspect most in need of being naturalized (Habermas 1975; 1971; 1970; McCarthy 1973).<sup>18</sup> Depoliticization may also be required, for desymbolization involves a refusal to allow political forms to be experienced as the projection of a particularized (and therefore problematic) content; it often implicates the need to keep the understanding of social action at a relatively shallow level. Uncovering the latent structure, or the relevant context in which policy is embedded, will therefore require more than a surface reading. It suggests the value of a persistent critique: in which the explanation of communicative action inspires us to look at the reasons or systemic imperatives

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behind its distortion. The task

“is not to redouble the text’s self-understanding, to collude with its object in a conspiracy of eloquence. Its task is to show the text as it cannot know itself, to manifest those conditions of its making (inscribed in its very letter) about which it is necessarily silent. It is not just that the text knows some things and not others; it is rather that its very self-knowledge is the construction of a self-oblivion” (Eagleton 1976).

34. The process of interpretation can thus proceed in layers — not by chronology, and not by the depiction of causal arrows. From the global organization of signifiers to the emphasis on the state; from state policy regarded as a signifier to the concept of the domestic paradigm by which national policy models the particular features of the domestic system it attempts to reproduce.

The sign has a “double functionality” (Jameson 1972, p. 145ff; Barthes 1970, Section IV) or identity, a duplicity: “Every figure . . . carries its translation . . . like a *watermark* or a palimpsest, under its apparent text.”<sup>19</sup> Actions are organized by their place in the code of the global system (which they then signify) as well as by their relationship to a domestic paradigm which motivates them. As well, that domestic paradigm, or signified, has a double functioning: to articulate or point to a particularized conception of society, and to “carry” a meaning from below, from a domestic social formation (or referent). This domestic system forms a language, a system of contractual values from which the state selects and actualizes. It is no more open to easy modification than the global system (or sign-system) — no more than states can exist in mid-air, capable of transforming or improvising their domestic contexts. For understanding foreign policies, that domestic order will eventually have to be examined: to specify its features or physiognomy, and its historical formation (both by global currents and domestic conflicts), and, finally, to grasp the process of political coalition-building and maintenance by which certain domestic paradigms are attacked and superseded while others are able to survive intact. At this point, the layering comes full circle: connecting the surface with the context. The comprehension of state purpos-

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es in a contextual way begins to verge on the examination of the domestic pre-conditions of policy. The analysis of motivation joins with the analysis of legitimation.

## NOTES

1. The literature on this subject is forbiddingly vast, often provocatively contentious, and sometimes stylistically inaccessible. Four recent introductions have alleviated some of the problems of mapping a path into the literature, both by the lucidity of their exposition and the comprehensiveness of their bibliographies. See Jameson (1972); Scholes (1974); Culler (1975); Hawkes (1977). Anyone exploring this area for its relevance to the social sciences will be indebted to them; my own work assuredly reveals that debt.
2. This is Jameson's critique. Jameson (1972).
3. We might see this as "downward causation." but the structuralist stress on part/whole relationships and internal systemic causation might be more appropriate. Duvall and Rudrud (1978); Cowhey and Laitin (1978); Ruggie (1978), and Petras and Trachte (1978).
4. To extend and complicate the analogy, it might be admitted that the integrative relations among linguistic units are much more differentiated. The parallel, in statecraft, would be toward the distinguishing features of the "roles" that states occupy in the world system; these do depend on state differences, especially in so far as roles and state power are interrelated.
5. Jameson (1975) stresses this in Part 3. Also relevant here is Thomas Kuhn's work, and Jacques Derrida's idea of "deconstruction" — see the latter's *Of Grammatology*, Derrida (1976), translated after ten years.
6. Barthes (1970), p. 18; also note his discussion of "idiolects" on p. 21.
7. I would add that this has also been a failing in much of the early work on international "regimes" and "regime change.'
8. This can have disturbing domestic consequences going well beyond the problem of legitimation. See, for example, Bruce Andrews,

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- “Privacy and National Security,” in William Bier, ed., *Privacy* (in press).
9. As the Russian Formalist Viktor Shklovsky put it; cited in Jameson (1972), p. 60.
  10. Andrews, “Surplus,” *cited*. Also, compare John R. Searle (1969), pp. 26-28 on definite and indefinite “referring expressions” and pp. 86-90 on “identifying descriptions.”
  11. See Barthes’ *Mythologies* (1972) for the fullest development of this spatial metaphor, derived from the work of Hjelmslev.
  12. The best recent discussion is Fred Block, “The Ruling Class Does Not Rule: Notes on the Marxist Theory of the State” (1977).
  13. See Andrews, “Surplus” (1978). Also: Bruce Andrews, “Text and Context” in Steve McCaffery, ed., “The Politics of the Referent” (1977); Jameson (1972), p. 130ff, and Jeffrey Mehlman, “The ‘Floating Signifier’: From Levi-Strauss to Lacan,” in *French Freud: Structural Studies in Psychoanalysis* (1972).
  14. See Jameson (1972), pp. 105-6 for a related criticism of structuralist thinking. Wellmer’s (1971), pp. 77-78, distinction between an effective grammar of a language and a manifest grammar (“an ‘apparent’ usage serving legitimation purposes”) intersects the argument at this point. Wellmer goes so far as to assimilate theorizing to phases in an historical process of language criticism.
  15. Barthes, *Roland Barthes* (1977), p. 56; italicized in the original.
  16. Roland Barthes, cited in Jameson (1972), p. 145.
  17. Here, an ethnomethodological perspective — where rules are found to be “worked out” by an ongoing process of interaction between actors — would parallel a stress on the role of political conflict and coalition-building in determining and institutionalizing, perhaps at a much earlier point, the relevant domestic paradigm. See, for example, Gourevitch (1977), p. 47: “Reductionism is not the only alternative to structure. Showing how politics and institutions affect struggles between social forces is also possible, and preferable.” Compare Gosta Esping-Andersen, et al., “Modes of Class Struggle and the Capitalist

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- State" (1976), on "political class analysis."
18. Compare Culler, *cited*, on "vraisemblance"; Bruce Andrews, "Representation & Irresponsibility in Foreign Policy," paper presented at the Annual Convention of the International Studies Association, March 1977, #13-18; and Andrews, "Privacy" (in press).
  19. Genette, cited in Scholes (1974), p. 161; emphasis added.

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Privacy and the  
Protection of  
National Security

[1980]

# PRIVACY AND THE PROTECTION OF NATIONAL SECURITY

[1980]

Perhaps it is a universal truth that the loss of liberty at home is to be charged to provisions against danger, real or pretended, from abroad.

James Madison to Thomas Jefferson  
May 13, 1798

The relationship between privacy and national security is more tangled than most. In recent years, it has taken on a new complexity, as the claims of security have expanded to fill most crevices of national life and as new and more efficient means for infringing upon people's private lives have been developed. In the postwar American social order, privacy has been under vigorous attack, fueled by the alleged imperatives of foreign policy. Those imperatives, occasioned by the nature of the international environment and the character of America's enemies, have been thought to prescribe continuous vigilance. Abroad, they have suggested the need for an interventionist and hegemonic foreign policy; at home; they have accompanied the intrusions of the government into the private lives of its citizens.

These intrusions have been made possible by, and have helped to sustain, a widespread popular indifference or caution. In subtle and in not so subtle ways, a foreign policy has been able to generate one of its own domestic preconditions. The infringements on civil liberties, on the constitutional framework, and on established political institutions have therefore seemed all the more insidious. At times, of course, official policymakers acknowledge the trade-off between national defense and the protection of democratic liberties. Their rhetoric still induces the public to sacrifice some of the latter in order

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that the former might be better protected. But the general public has been less conscious of what or how much it is sacrificing. The corrosive impact which prevailing definitions of the national interest have upon a sensitivity to civil rights and civil liberties has not been fully acknowledged. Until recently, the public has accepted many of these trade-offs and many of these official definitions without a great deal of thought. Such a political somnambulism has been helped along by an atmosphere of confusion, secrecy, consumerist fulfillment, and Cold War hysteria. In the process, limits on state power and bulwarks against tyranny have been removed. The political changes engineered in the name of security have led to widespread personal insecurity. Political defenselessness and the cancellation of constitutional rights became the price of foreign policy achievement.

#### THE PROBLEM

Each aspect of this relationship between security and privacy bears examining. Because the record of secret state activity has finally been disclosed in recent years—if only by fits and starts—we can now begin to deal with it more openly and more analytically. The problem is not whether electronic surveillance and other attacks on privacy are legal or constitutional, but whether they are socially intelligible—whether they make sense in view of the society which spawned them. Also, the problem is not whether honorable men can strike a balance between national defense and constitutional restraints, but whether the requirements of a social system like that of the United States—in regard to a foreign policy aimed at advancing its interests, for example—will tend to sweep those restraints aside. A brief look at the empirical record of state activity in this sphere will therefore be helpful. Besides serving as a “negative role model” with a capacity for inducing shock and reform, it can set the stage for a discussion of the larger issues which need to be explored. These include: the use of security as a “totem” to justify police-like activity on the part of state actors; the connection between success in the foreign policy realm and the anesthetizing of the domestic public; the definition of national security and its relationship to a war in Indochina which was

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the occasion. in the Nixon years, for a dramatic increase in official invasions of privacy and attempts to stifle dissent. At the end, the connection between an interventionist foreign policy and the inhibition of democratic control will be considered.

## EMPIRICAL RECORD OF STATE ACTIVITY

It may well be that the national security of this country could be aided by acts which violate our Constitution.\*

### CIA TECHNIQUES ADOPTED BY FBI

As the status quo at home and in the empire abroad met with increased domestic resistance in the 1960s, the role of America's intelligence agencies assumed greater prominence. They took their cue from the growing centralization of power in the executive branch and from an implicit theory of virtually limitless executive prerogative in the realm of foreign affairs. The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), in particular, acted as the domestic counterpart of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), mimicking that agency's cloak-and-dagger operations with a campaign of surveillance, "counterintelligence," and covert activity all its own. No longer were operations limited to suspected foreign agents or violent criminals, although this was their statutory and programmatic rationale. Now they were directed against an entire spectrum of organizations and individuals opposed to official government policy, encompassing such civil rights groups as the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, free universities, the feminist movement, Students for a Democratic Society, the Jewish Defense League, the American Friends Service Committee, and a host of anti-war groups opposed to America's interventions in Southeast Asia.

Access to confidential sources of information was central to these operations and was acquired through contacts with college registrars and

\* Department of Defense memorandum, supporting a motion for summary judgment in *Bennett v. Dept. of Defense*, 75 Civ. 5005 (LFM) (S.D.N.Y.)

deans, telephone company employees, banks, landlords, and the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). The FBI undertook *hundreds of thousands* of separate investigations of groups and persons who were placed in the “subversive” category. Although this should apparently imply a strong potential on the part of these subversives for planning or advocating actions to overthrow the government, no one has been prosecuted under the laws covering such crimes in the last 20 years. Nevertheless, the spying, the “trespassory microphone surveillance,” and the warrantless wiretaps continued. The attorney general could even claim, in retrospect in October 1974, that “the public record is sufficiently clear that there has been no serious abuse of discretion over the years of national security wiretaps installed for foreign intelligence purposes” (U. S. Senate Judiciary Committee, 1974b, p. 236). In a typical case revealed by the disclosure, through the communications media, of Pennsylvania FBI documents, a meeting of the pacifist Conference of War Resisters was watched to see if “it will generate any anti-U. S. propaganda.” These were the sorts of activities justified under the rubric of foreign intelligence purposes. No stone could safely be left unturned. A “preventive detention” list was maintained in FBI field offices specifying the people who might jeopardize the nation’s safety in a crisis situation. More than 200,000 names appeared. In all, 500,000 domestic intelligence files were gathered on more than 1,000,000 Americans (U. S. Senate Select Committee, 1976).

#### DOMESTIC EXPANSION OF CIA ACTIVITY

The CIA followed suit, spying on radical and civil rights groups and antiwar newspapers. installing wiretaps and engaging in break-ins without warrants, building close ties with state and local police, and infiltrating activist organizations of all kinds to solicit intelligence (Halperin, Berman, Borosage, & Marwick, 1976). Such domestic snooping and covert activity have always been excluded from the CIA’s legitimate functioning. Nevertheless, in the so-called “crisis atmosphere” of the late-1960s and early-1970s, such operations snowballed. The Domestic Contact Service expanded its coverage. Links with college communities continued to threaten the sanctity of academic freedom.

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Operation CHAOS, as it was called, managed to generate 13,000 files covering 1,000 domestic organizations, after its creation in August 1967. A computerized index of 300,000 names resulted. Along with the 100,000 entries in the army's intelligence dossiers, this information was used to discredit and complicate the work of student dissenters, as well as the draft resistance and anti-war movements.

Other violations of statutes and federal regulations continued apace. The CIA, in its secret HTLINGUAL operation spanning a 20-year period, became heavily involved in tampering with the mail. As many as 28 million pieces of mail sent by or addressed to Americans were screened; 2 million were photographed; almost a quarter of a million were opened and photographed. Another computerized index resulted—this time, involving nearly one and one-half million names. Howard Osborn, the CIA's director of security, agreed with the Rockefeller Commission report: "This thing is illegal as hell" (U. S. Senate Select Committee, 1976, Bk. 3, p. 605). Heavily shrouded in secrecy, the rather mysterious National Security Agency (NSA) added its own contribution. As part of its Project SHAMROCK, it intercepted all the private cables leaving the country, analyzing 150,000 messages a month, and distributing the information to other government agencies. Through the course of the post—World War II period, the NSA characteristically shifted its focus from suspected foreign agents to groups and individuals engaged in anti-war activities which supposedly were under the protection of the law. In Project MINARET, using a "watch list" of such names, it systematically scanned all their international wire, cable, and radio communications. Files on 75,000 Americans were maintained. The Fourth Amendment restrictions on illegal searches and seizures, which certainly applied in these cases, were expediently ignored.

COUNTERINTELLIGENCE: GROWTH TOWARD POLICE  
STATE

But domestic surveillance alone did not satisfy the officials responsible for protecting the nation's defense and reproducing the social system. The

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actions of radical dissenters and anti-war activists were to be counteracted, inconvenienced, and disrupted. More and more sections of the federal apparatus devoted themselves to this task. “Counterintelligence” shifted into a manipulation of the domestic political process on an unprecedented scale. Much of the manipulation took its direction from the highest reaches of the executive branch; other actions were sanctioned by zealous officials at the middle levels. It is without any unwarranted melodrama to say that these actions reveal the basic contours of an authentic “American police state” (Wise, 1976)—one which was kept from its full flowering only by vigorous detection, unexpected disclosures, and administrative failure.

The illegal treatment of confidential tax returns provides another revealing example of this domestic thrust. In the Nixon years, groups and individuals involved in “leftist” dissent and “alleged peaceful demonstrations” were singled out for special treatment. As John Dean noted, the President specifically pressed for “the use of the Internal Revenue Service to attack our enemies”; for, according to a White House memo, “What we cannot do in a courtroom via criminal prosecutions to curtail the activities of some of these groups, IRS could do by administrative action” (cited in Lukas, 1976, pp. 29—30). Political criteria of an improper nature began to guide the IRS’s auditing of tax returns. Tax law enforcement became both selective and politicized—a weapon of harassment in the hands of the state, to be used against a secret list of adversaries. More than 8,000 individuals and almost 3,000 organizations found themselves in this category. Information gained through these improper investigations and field audits was then improperly distributed throughout the intelligence apparatus—to serve as a spur for additional political counterthrusts.

Grand juries provided another tool in this arsenal, and another officially sanctioned invasion of privacy. They offered an umbrella for the gathering of confidential information which could be more easily obtained under threat of subpoena or coerced from subpoenaed witnesses reluctant to be jailed for contempt. Nearly 2,000 people were subpoenaed in the Nixon years alone. Constitutional safeguards in these instances were held in abeyance, as the privileges of the prosecution were abused; an “accusatorial” system was

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subtly transformed into an “inquisitorial” one (Copelon, 1977; Mead, 1976). The constructive work of dissenters was derailed or undermined; whole categories of lawful political behavior and even interpersonal association were stigmatized. As with their functional predecessors—the congressional committees investigating “un-American” activities—an atmosphere of suspicion resulted.

Moreover, not all the contributions to this repressive climate originated at the federal level. As recent lawsuits reveal, state and local police formed home-grown “Red Squads” in order to spy on and harass local citizens engaged in political actions to alter the status quo, either at home or abroad (“Lawsuits against Federal, State and Local Red Squads,” 1977). Assisted in many cases by federal authorities, these squads provided the local counterparts of the disruption and surveillance undertaken by the CIA, FBI, NSA, IRS, and the Pentagon—in many cases “targeting on” the same individuals. The Mississippi State Sovereignty Commission, as one example, accumulated the names of 10,000 Mississippi individuals and 270 organizations in its “intelligence files”; Chicago police claim to have indexed over 200,000 names from the fruits of their local spying. What cannot be quantified, however, and what is devilishly difficult to gauge, is the contribution which these governmental programs made to inhibiting the movements for peace and for radical social change—for this, after all, was their purpose. The invasion of privacy served as a mere instrument.

#### COINTELPRO TACTICS

Still the most infamous of all these invasions were those which made up the FBI’s systematic Counterintelligence Program (named COINTELPRO, and pronounced in four syllables). Desirous of continuing and expanding the same “preventive actions” which had worked so well to hamper the Communist party, the FBI found that the mid- and late-1950s provided a less hospitable climate of opinion than the more virulent heyday of Senator McCarthy, the Smith Act, and the omnipresent Loyalty Boards. When COINTELPRO began, 20 years ago, it “transformed McCarthyism into an underground operation” (Halperin et al., 1976, p. 113; Atkins, 1976;

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Blackstock, 1976; U. S. Senate Select Committee, 1976). In doing so, it sustained its coverage—against other Communist organizations, against groups advocating Puerto Rican independence, against the Socialist Workers Party—and then widened it to include the civil rights, student protest, anti-war, and radical movements of the 1960s and early-1970s. “The purpose of this new counter-intelligence endeavor,” as the Final Report of the U. S. Senate Select Committee noted (1976, Bk. 3, p. 5) was “to expose, disrupt, misdirect, discredit, or otherwise neutralize” these political activist organizations and individuals. To this task, the tactical virtuosity of the FBI was applied. Although the full record of evidence is only now trickling out in court cases and by means of the Freedom of Information Act, what is already revealed is enough to make the much more publicized crimes of “Watergate” seem rather pale by comparison.

Intensive surveillance of these domestic groups shaded over into harassment, burglaries, and theft (“second-storey jobs” and “black-bag jobs,” as they were called). More than 2,000 separate FBI COINTELPRO actions have been acknowledged. Besides the extensive burglaries and break-ins, these included the supplying of derogatory material (often of questionable accuracy) to fuel attacks by a compliant “free press” on specific groups and individuals. To show such things as the “depravity of the New Left,” “articles showing advocacy of the use of narcotics and free sex are ideal” (cited in Halperin et al., 1976, p. 128). They also worked to discredit political activists by means of anonymous letter campaigns to parents, employers, school officials, etc., and more direct pressure on employers to get their targets fired. At times, activists were “roughed up” in order to disturb and deter them. At other times, more direct intervention was utilized. Agents relied on forged documents and letters to discredit influential individuals *within* their own organizations—to mark them as informants, to destroy their effectiveness, to generate confusion. As one FBI official put it, “you can seed distrust, sow misinformation.” The family lives of certain activists became a governmental target. Some radical groups were turned against each other, occasionally by using them as quasi-official spies, occasionally as a way of provoking violence.

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Through the use of informers, the government infringed upon the sanctity of political association and even of judicial proceedings. Harassment became an *inside job*, a highly valued way of distorting the internal politics and interpersonal relations of groups in order to destroy them or orient them toward the sorts of public violence which might undermine their legitimacy in the eyes of the community. These contacts were officially designed, as the agency's "New Left Notes—Phila." memo of September 16, 1970 put it, to "enhance the paranoia endemic in these circles and further serve to get the point across that there is an FBI agent behind every mailbox."

As one official with the FBI's internal security section in San Francisco put it: "It's very nice to know that the people you're chasing are afraid to use telephones" (cited in Navasky & Lewin, 1973, p. 307). In the same context, reference might be made to the cynical remark of a top-ranking general:\*

If any citizen of this country is so concerned about his mail being read or is concerned about his presence in a meeting being noted, I'd say we ought to read his mail and we ought to know what the hell he has done.

In another example, it was recently revealed that in a six-year operation against the Institute for Policy Studies, a prominent radical research organization in Washington, D.C., more than 60 paid informers were put in place. The Socialist Workers Party injunction against the more than decade-long FBI campaign of burglary, wiretapping, mail tampering, harassment, and the use of informers is also revealing (*Socialist Workers Party v. Attorney General* 73 Civ. 3160 [S.D.N.Y.]). The party's offices were burglarized at least 94 times during the 1960s, and up to 1,000 informers were used at various times to collect the 8,000,000 pages of files which the FBI admitted accumulating. In such cases, the protection of the Fourth Amendment (for example,

\* General George Brown, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, cited in *The Washington Post*, March 27, 1977.



the prohibition against general warrants which do not particularize the items to be seized) went by the boards.

Still more darkly, these paid informers took on the clandestine role of *agents provocateurs*. They supplied weapons and explosives, took part in violent crimes, and encouraged the internal *policies* of crime and violence which were supposedly what the government had wanted to quell. Entrapment and negative “public relations” resulted, or at the very least a diverting of these organizations into unproductive or self-destructive channels.

Informers were used in an attempt to destroy the Black Panther Party, even to the point of provoking violent confrontations and setting up key members for political assassination (Cantor, 1976). They were also involved in funding and arming the ultra-rightist paramilitary Secret Army Organization, which was active in threats, break-ins, beatings, bombings, and shootings intended to disrupt anti-war protest activities in southern California. Other recent lawsuits portray a similar range of activity: illegal surveillance and disruption of the Women’s Liberation Movement, the Vietnam Veterans Against the War, the use of undercover police agents as “students” in campus unrest, the attempted inducement of campus bombings at Kent State University, etc. One recent study persuasively concludes that “the hand of the secret agent was responsible for a great deal of the political conflict [and campus violence] of the last decade and a half” (Marwick, 1977). The salience of the targets which provided the rationale for these actions could be created by the actions themselves.

#### VIOLATIONS AT EXECUTIVE LEVEL

An expansion of the efforts involved in eavesdropping, wiretapping and bugging, illegal mail opening, the use of college campus informants, burglary: all these received the executive imprimatur with Richard Nixon’s approval of the “Huston Plan”—which “amounted to nothing less than a blueprint for a police state in America” (Wise, 1976, p. 154). In July 1970, presidential assistant Huston proposed that: “Present procedures should be changed to permit intensification of coverage of individuals and groups in the

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United States who pose a major threat to internal security” (Weissman, 1974, p. 321). On “surreptitious entry,” his famous memorandum stated, “present restrictions should be modified to permit selective use of this technique against other urgent security targets. ... Use of this technique is clearly illegal: it amounts to burglary.”

In spite of this admission of criminality, H. R. Haldeman soon informed Huston that the President had approved the proposal in its entirety. Only J. Edgar Hoover’s hesitation over the formal decision memorandum of July 23, 1970, led to the merely “piecemeal” implementation of the plan (Lukas, 1976, p. 49), using the techniques described above. Even so—or perhaps as a result—five years later, FBI Director Kellev could still say of the illegal break-ins: “I do not note in these activities any gross abuse of authority.” The Bureau, he felt, had “acted in good faith with the belief that national security interests were paramount.”

## SOME SALIENT BROAD ISSUES

### USE OF SECURITY AS A COVER

Dean: You might put it on a national security grounds basis.

Haldeman: It absolutely was.

Nixon: National Security. We had to get information for national security grounds. . . . With the bombing thing coming out, the whole thing was national security.

Dean: I think we could get by on that.\*

Does this argument about the claims of national security let the government off the hook so easily? In their most familiar form, encountered with increasing frequency in the postwar period, the requirements of national security are said to be: (1) clear, objective, unproblematical; and (2) overriding many competing claims of personal freedom or civil liberties. Such an argu-

\* Discussion in the Oval Room of the White House relative to the burglary of the office of the therapist Daniel Ellsberg, March 21, 1973.

ment has been *embodied* in the state practices cited above. Moreover, it attained prominence because it was used whenever the occasion arose for justifying those activities—whether in public or within the confines of the bureaucracy. The frequency of those occasions was not unrelated to the fact that the legal warrant for these practices was a house of cards. The secrecy which customarily enshrouded these matters of security also had an impact, as did the compliance of the media. It made these public accountings much less common. President Kennedy’s displeasure with the press over the handling of the Bay of Pigs invasion suggested one mechanism by which these public defenses might be avoided. As he argued on April 27, 1961 (cited in Aronson, 1970, pp. 161—162):

In times of clear and present danger, the courts have held that even the privileged rights of the First Amendment must yield to the public’s need for national security. Today no war has been declared . . . [nevertheless] Our way of life is under attack.... If the press is awaiting a declaration of war before it imposes the self-discipline of combat conditions, then I can only say that no war has ever imposed a greater threat to our security.

As foreign policy issues became increasingly “domesticated” in the late 1960s and early-1970s, the recourse *in public* to the claims of national defense did, of course, become more common. At the same time, it proved no less revealing. President Nixon even went so far as to use those claims to justify the Watergate cover-up: “since persons originally recruited for covert national security activities had participated in Watergate, an unrestricted investigation of Watergate might lead to an expose of those covert national security operations” (Lukas, 1976, p. 462). Without having those operations specified, one simply had to take on faith the idea that such an expose would be disastrous.

This account has a long lineage. Franklin Roosevelt’s original rationale for wiretapping, presented to the attorney general on May 21, 1940, limited it to “grave matters involving the defense of the nation” and “persons sus-

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pected of subversive activities against the Government of the United States.” In addition, he noted his agreement with section 605 of the Federal Communications Act of 1934 which had said, “Under ordinary and normal circumstances wiretapping by government agents should not be carried on for the excellent reason that it is almost bound to lead to abuse of civil rights” (cited in McClellan, 1976, p. 223). Yet times and foreign policies change, and, with them, domestic policies of this kind. As the Cold War unfolded, Attorney General Tam C. Clark requested on July 17, 1946, that the wiretapping procedure be extended to “cases vitally affecting the *domestic security*” (cited in Theoharis, 1974; emphasis supplied), thereby authorizing the surveillance of political dissidents. President Truman concurred. Even so, FBI Director Hoover had already informed an uncomplaining Congress as early as 1939 that the Bureau was compiling indices of people engaged in “any activities that are possibly detrimental to the internal security of the United States” (Halperin et al., 1976, p. 97). As time went on, Americans discovered just how broad and elastic this characterization could be.

Popular activities threatening the internal security: in this, we find the same category for which the Huston Plan sought “intensified coverage” over 30 years later. COINTELPRO, in addition, would disrupt those “subversive elements seeking to undermine our nation,” as Assistant FBI Director Sullivan put it in 1966. In the late-1960s, the Special Service of the IRS was also thought to be carrying on this “overall battle against persons bent on destruction of this government” (U. S. Senate Select Committee, 1976, Bk. 3, pp. 881482). Surveillance of the Women’s Liberation Movement was accounted for in a similar vein, as were the campaigns against Martin Luther King, Jr., the Black Panthers, the Socialist Workers Party, and dozens of other domestic groups pressing for social change—and sometimes for dramatic, though non-violent, transformations of America’s foreign policy and domestic status quo. The intelligence agencies characterized these groups as a “subversion force,” whose activities justified the officially sanctioned espionage and trampling of civil liberties. Legitimate political dissent seems to have become indistinguishable from the kind of subversive activity which truly jeopardized the nation’s military defense. That a distinction is in order may be recognized in

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the following statement of Chief Justice Earl Warren:

This concept of “national defense” cannot be deemed an end in itself, justifying any. . . power designed to promote such a goal. Implicit in the term “national defense” is the notion of defending those values and ideas which set this Nation apart. . . . It would indeed be ironic if, in the name of national defense, we would sanction the subversion of. . . those liberties which [make] the defense of the Nation worthwhile [In *United States vs. Robel*, 389 U.S. 258, 264].

#### CAN FOREIGN POLICY SILENCE ALL PUBLIC DISSENT?

When a conception of the domestic social order or the status quo had achieved something approximating a consensus among the ruling groups, a map of “the nation to be defended” could then be derived.\* “The nation,” at that point, could be seen as a bundle of distinguishable characteristics. The idea of national security had acquired a specific social content. As I have remarked elsewhere:

In most cases, even considerations of national security are not intelligible apart from a specific conception of the domestic order which is to be protected or advanced. The international aims of a government, in other words, are very rarely either self-explanatory or ends in themselves. For a complete account, they must eventually be redefined as means toward a more inclusive set of social purposes [Andrews, 1975, p. 523].

National security thus takes on an instrumental form; it can be derived from the reigning conception of the domestic society which is to be protected or advanced. If the particular “moves” of policy can be seen and acknowledged as means toward the end of security, the idea of security itself

\* For several treatments of the historical evolution of such a mapping in the American case, see Dowd, 1974; Johnson, 1968; Kolko, 1976; and Williams, 1961.

can be located in a deeper or “second order” relationship of ends • to means. But what is interesting for our present purposes is the fact that this “second order” derivation tends to go unrecognized. In postwar American policy, except in periods of crisis or dramatic transition, it has largely been taken for granted. With rare exceptions, the “official” conceptions of the valued status quo have not been an occasion for sharp political division. Nor have the broad conceptions of national security derived from them, at least insofar as we find them inscribed in America’s postwar international policy. Instead, domestic debate and political struggle have centered largely in the tactics to be used to protect those shared conceptions.

Because these deeper matters were not heavily politicized, they afforded the policymakers a great deal of leeway in particularizing their conception of the nation, in defining the potential threats to its defense, and in specifying the best means to meet or pre-empt them. Eventually policymakers came to mistake this leeway for the nation’s security itself; the maximization of state power, both at home and abroad, was identified with the minimal requirements of security. This was a logical extension of the prevailing official “mind set,” since domestic as well as foreign tactics could be derived from a taken-for-granted idea of security, as long as it was well elaborated. And in the American case, because it was a fundamentally conservative and expansionist social system which was being protected, the exertions of state power would have to be both vigorous and successful. This carried with it rather exacting preconditions of both an international and a domestic variety.

For example, acceptable limits of political opposition and dissent were entailed. Groups or individuals who crossed these limits—whether from a disagreement over the nature of the desired society or over the policies recommended to protect it—found themselves in a virtual no man’s land. They became a threat to “internal stability,” a source of unrest or, increasingly, a target for political redirection through the use of paid agents and counterintelligence disruption. As the consensus over the need for an interventionary foreign policy began to break apart in the 1960s (Andrews, 1976, 1977; Russett, 1975; Tucker, 1972, 1973), these threats loomed larger in the eyes of the arbiters of orthodoxy. As the army’s general counsel candidly put it in 1974,

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“the people on the other side were essentially the enemy” (U. S. Senate Judiciary Committee, 1974a, p. 16).

#### RESULTANT INHIBITION OF THE PUBLIC VOICE

Counteracting the threat required that the state apparatus be mobilized in quite a far-reaching manner, as we have seen. In particular, it began to involve the inhibition of citizens’ willingness to exercise the political rights which were guaranteed to them. Not only did such things as surveillance and infiltration violate people’s Fourth Amendment right “to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures,” but the chance of these same things occurring helped to create a climate of fear and paranoia which, in turn, undercut the guarantees of the First Amendment. The use of grand jury proceedings against the Vietnam Veterans Against the War may serve as a case in point, for certainly this was “part of an overall governmental tactic directed against disfavored persons and groups . . . to chill their expressions and associations”—as noted in a Fifth Circuit Court decision of V 1975 (U.S. v. Briggs. 514 F 2nd 794, 805—806). The chilling effect also occurred as the by-product of a politically conservative climate, one which did not evolve accidentally but was a conscious creation of the federal government and the ruling elites. From their point of view, such a creation could be regarded as another entailment of the claims of security.

Like the international policies which overarched it, the domestic task was grounded on a notion of *deterrence*. The social sources of discontent would not be relieved; instead, a more coercive strategy would be followed. Enemies at home and abroad could be inhibited or would engage in avoidance behavior when they found themselves facing the concerted efforts of the state. “Aversive conditioning” and “stigmatization” would be the predictable results (Askin, 1973). Boundaries of acceptable political behavior were to be redrawn, both by means of the intrusions of the government and also as citizens came to internalize the new rules of the game. As Justice William O. Douglas phrased it in the so-called Keith decision in 1972 (*U. S. v. U. S. District Court*): “More than our privacy is implicated. Also at stake is the reach

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of the Government's power to intimidate its critics." Eventually, as the entailments of security expanded, this intimidation came to expand as well. In the end, the government targeted groups outside the established institutional nexus, but also seized upon the task of confronting the media, the Congress, and partisan opponents through officially sanctioned channels. This extension eventually brought down the wrath of the "establishment," as Nixon used to call it, just as it had undermined earlier political figures whose attacks had crossed a similar line: Joseph McCarthy and Henry Wallace, for examples from both sides. In the most recent case, the norms of electoral competition were transgressed by means of large-scale political espionage and disruption; harangues and planned threats of IRS investigation and anti-trust actions were to be effective in changing the views of the media; dissenters and foes in the Congress and the federal bureaucracy were assailed. John Dean's well-known memorandum of August 16, 1971, written at the request of the President's assistants, caught the spirit of this approach by discussing:

How we can maximize the fact of our incumbency in dealing with the persons known to be active in their opposition to our administration. Stated a bit more bluntly—how we can use the available federal machinery to screw our political enemies.

The isolated "commanding heights" had virtually declared war on all the lower levels of the political system, as if playing out the familiar script for a self-defined "crisis" situation. To combat a dangerous ideological adversary, in the eyes of state actors, appeared to mean that many of the covert tactics and repressive characteristics of that adversary would have to be adopted, at least in the short run. First incorporated into America's Cold War foreign policy, this lesson came to insinuate itself even more deeply into the fabric of domestic life. To combat the equally dangerous currents of social change and partisan opposition at home, these same lessons seemed appealing. When the response to domestic dangers would be wrapped in the flag, or tied to prevailing claims of national defense, the need for a determined counter thrust appeared all the more suggestive.

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NATIONAL SECURITY NEEDS MORE PRECISE  
DEFINITION

PRIVACY AND THE  
PROTECTION OF  
NATIONAL  
SECURITY

The maximization of executive power was ceasing to be merely a possibility, and certain statements of government officials were no longer naive slogans. Thus,

There have been—and will be in the future—circumstances in which Presidents may lawfully authorize actions in the interests of the security of this country, which undertaken by other persons or by the President under different circumstances would be illegal [Richard M. Nixon].

Everything is valid. everything is possible [White House Aide Tom Charles Huston, June 9, 1970].

*Experience in Indochina.* America's escalation of the war in Vietnam provided these enabling circumstances. By so doing, it brought many of these issues to prominence once again, as the needs of foreign policy seemed to warrant decisive domestic action—of a prophylactic sort. In the late-1960s, Lyndon Johnson had urged that the anti-war movement be investigated to determine whether the turmoil at home was being fomented from abroad—an interesting parallel to the Administration's "external" view of the conflict in Vietnam itself. Although no solid evidence turned up, the surveillance continued to grow. When Richard Nixon occupied the White House in 1969, the same domestic forces beset him and threatened to undercut his authority. The White House saw itself faced with a profound social crisis, one which might paralyze the government and endanger the security of "the nation" as it was officially conceived. Imagery of impotence abounded. But this time the threat would not be "appeased." Instead, it would be "managed," even if by techniques which did not respect constitutional limits and the niceties of the law. The gloves were off. As Egil Krogh, Jr. said at the time: "Anyone who opposes us, we'll destroy. As a matter of fact, anyone who doesn't support us, we'll destroy" (Lukas, 1976, p. 93).

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Yet *what* was in crisis? The abuses of surveillance and counter-intelligence cannot be put in a larger social context if we regard them simply as the deficient product of standard bureaucratic process (Halperin, 1975—1976, pp. 149—150) or of personal psychopathology at the top. They were not ends in themselves; nor did they unfold as a mere byproduct of bureaucratic autonomy and self-aggrandizement. Certainly the overall directions of domestic and international policy were intersecting and bringing with them the increasingly alarmist visions of American leaders. Speaking of the student rebellion and its opposition to the war on March 22, 1969, President Nixon claimed that: “It is not too strong a statement to declare that this is the way civilizations begin to die” (cited in Schell, 1976, p. 36). And we can regard this as a presidential way of speaking about America’s postwar empire or world leadership role and its exacting preconditions, as Nixon applauded Yeats’ insight: “‘Things fall apart; the center cannot hold.’ “ For the domestic turmoil faced by official Washington had come, in large measure, as a response to the continuing American war in Asia. And so it was the identification of national security with that continuing Asian involvement which helped to fuel the patterns of action under analysis: the expansion of state power into previously private spheres, the adoption of paramilitary tactics in the domestic arena, and the infringement of civil liberties. Those who opposed the established social order were undercutting the credibility of American foreign policy; those who struggled against that policy were doing the work of the enemy, whether they recognized it or not; those who were advancing the enemy’s cause deserved to be treated accordingly. If the war protected American security—and this was, of course, what the war’s critics refused to accept—then anything done to sap the opposition to that war would likewise help protect the nation’s security.

Or so the logic went, officially. In May 1969, America’s secret bombing of the supposedly neutral territory of Cambodia was revealed by *The New York Times*. The “violation of national security,” as Henry Kissinger would later characterize the publishing of such sensitive information, was not merely a diplomatic issue. Government officials also hoped to keep the anti-war movement at home from reawakening. This “extraordinarily damaging” disclosure (to use Kissinger’s modifiers) therefore precipitated a well-known

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series of warrantless wiretaps of 13 government officials and four journalists in an attempt to plug news leaks and quell the opposition. In several cases, the wiretaps were accompanied by what the attorney general called “the other business” (surveillance, etc.). As I. Edgar Hoover’s memo of a May 9 call from Kissinger records it, he “hoped I would follow it up as far as we can take it and they will destroy whoever did this if we can find him, no matter where he is” (Wise, 1976, p. 36).

By the time the Pentagon Papers were revealed and published in mid-1971, the anxiety of foreign policy officials simply added to an atmosphere of besiegement. Wiretapping had already been defended as a legitimate security action, designed to stop the public disclosure of information and to allow policymakers to play their cards close to the chest. A legal right would even be claimed for the wiretapping of groups whose activities jeopardized the smooth flow of diplomatic initiative, such as the Jewish Defense League’s harassment of Soviet embassy officials. COINTELPRO and the suppression of domestic dissent had been defended in a similar way, with a view toward the protection of “internal security.” Kissinger urged that the disclosure of the Pentagon Papers be kept from serving as a precedent, “at all costs.”

Sternier and more encompassing measures were to be tested out. In the summer of 1971, the White House set up the Special Investigations Unit or “Plumbers Unit,” taking its name from those other domestic professionals whose job it is to “plug leaks.” This allowed the men surrounding the President to skirt the hesitations of the intelligence agencies and move directly into political espionage. Among their other responsibilities, John Ehrlichman approved a “covert operation” to examine the medical files of Daniel Ellsberg’s therapist. “If done under your assurance that it is not traceable.” It was undertaken in September 1971; much later it proved to be traceable and its instigators found themselves open to criminal prosecution. Another, even more bizarre plan which was contemplated involved the theft of documents pertaining to the Indochina conflict from the Brookings Institution, a well-known liberal think-tank in Washington, D.C.—to be achieved by the planting of a fire bomb in the building and the retrieval of the documents “during the commotion that would ensue” (Wise, 1976, p. 157).

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And still the full record of the Plumbers' activities has not yet been revealed.

*Constitutional limits infringed.* Apparently these operations were regarded in much the same terms as the war in Indochina itself—exceptional, even distasteful actions which, however, were needed at the time to preserve America's interests. This at least helps to account for the positive ethical gloss which the nation's leaders were so intent on giving them. If need be, actions would be carried out *in the face of* established constitutional limits, rather than under their protective umbrella, for neither the public nor the guardians of legality could be counted on to understand the kinds of threats which officials saw all around them. As Donald Santarelli from the Justice Department observed in 1973, "Today, the whole Constitution is up for grabs" (cited in Schell, 1976, p. 314). It was as if the perspective of Dirty Harry, the Clint Eastwood character in Don Siegel's 1971 film, had become national policy—a violent individual at the center, butting himself up against legal restraints and attempting to protect an established social system from its own violent symptoms and contradictions.

Because of the endemic uncertainty of international affairs—and this has been a *leitmotif* in diplomatic thinking since the time of Thucydides — someone could usually build a case for aggressive action. When interventions into Third World countries were arranged (in Cuba, Cambodia, Chile, Angola, Zaire, etc.), and when their success depended on the American public's being either supportive or kept in the dark, special problems arose. In some ways, the issues remained constant throughout the postwar era, but the proposed solutions changed from time to time. By the late 1960s, the public depredations of McCarthyism and the more virulent strains of anti-Communism did not seem publicly acceptable. But if the enforced mobilization of the early Cold War period was no longer needed or even desirable in an age of limited wars and the "destabilization" of foreign regimes, an enforced silence or a lack of public scrutiny might yet prove exceedingly valuable. This was especially true as the priorities of the American public began to loosen up and show movement in the 1960s, and as a reluctance in the face of foreign interventions began to display itself (Andrews, 1976). At times, from the official vantage point, ignorance might still look like bliss. If information leaked

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out, on the other hand—to foreign audiences or to domestic enemies—U. S. leaders could claim that the high ground of diplomatic leeway had been encroached upon.

Not only did the uncertainty of foreign affairs have its counterpart in the uncertainty of domestic politics and civil liberties, the two were wrapped together. An inability to control the information process or to eliminate dissent would foreshadow an increase in a level of uncertainty which was already uncomfortably high. National insecurity would result. In these instances, someone could usually build a case for aggressive action—only this time on the home front as well. For, after all, without surveillance and occasionally some disruption of the “hostile forces” at home, how could one maintain the domestic preconditions for a foreign policy success with any certainty? How could one ever really know what breaches of security were occurring?

In 1974, thinking along similar lines, the Justice Department therefore argued that the warrantless wiretaps of journalists and former government officials had a counterintelligence dimension. Disclosures of “national security information” in the press enabled America’s enemies to obtain it without resort to spying—since foreign agents could simply read the newspapers! The way an unfettered free press operated might then be “tantamount to ‘foreign intelligence activity’ “ (Wise, 1976, p. 101). Similar motives lay behind the wiretapping of respected journalists in the foreign policy field such as Joseph Kraft, in 1969. Later on, Attorney General Levi noted that the burglary and “surveillance did not indicate that Mr. Kraft’s activities posed any risk to the national security.” Yet this was hardly the point; *for only the results of the surveillance* could indicate this in any definitive way.

Attorney General Saxbe testified in October 1974: “But as Voltaire said, ‘Has the hawk ever ceased to prey upon the pigeon?’ And I do not want to be the pigeon” (U. S. Senate Judiciary Committee, 1974b, p. 247). In these same hearings, Senator McClellan spoke of “disarming” the nation by outlawing electronic surveillance in domestic cases; FBI Director Kelley warned of “burning the house down to roast the pig,” and Saxbe claimed that it would be like “pulling the firemen off the ladder.” As I have said, in cases of uncertainty someone could always argue that the security risk outweighed the ille-

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gality. Moreover, the security risk could be determined only after the intrusion into citizens' private lives had occurred. The same was true of COINTEL-PRO, but here the dangers to domestic stability could always be contrived with the help of agents provocateurs to justify the counterintelligence operations.

## CONCLUSION

Just as many had feared, the loss of liberty at home was charged, in the American case, to the efforts made against dangers from abroad. The civil liberties protected by the Constitution, the freedoms embedded in a democratic political process, the privacy of citizens: these would often prove to be luxuries in the face of national security claims. And these national security claims, in turn, would be said to hinge upon the imperatives of world politics, the nature of nuclear deterrence, the need for credibility, and the exacting price of freedom in a hostile world (see, for example, Schell, 1976, chap. 6).

These connections bear examining. For, as I have argued, these security claims—and the infringements of liberty to which they are tied—are not simply features of the international environment which can be taken for granted. Rather, they spring from the requirements of a particular social system or domestic “social paradigm” (Andrews, 1975, p. 524) as government leaders interpret them. The idea of national defense, like the equally opaque or “mythic” ideas of national security and the national interest, will still retain this reliance on a particular domestic *context* and a specific domestic *content*. By retaining these features, or by locating a foreign policy in this “second order” relationship, we can help to make intelligible the expansive foreign policies which go well beyond the needs of direct territorial defense or the protection of sovereignty. In the American case, this will prove especially useful, for it also helps to make intelligible the domestic patterns of surveillance and infringement of liberties which have been uncovered. The expansive international policies and the “restraining” of domestic dissent go hand in hand.

The idea of protecting “freedom” from external threat, for example, may be another way of talking about the international preconditions for

reproducing a particular domestic status quo—and its most highly valued aspects of a political, economic, or cultural variety. As in the case of postwar America, those’ external preconditions may suggest the need for a hegemonic foreign policy, which entails a leadership role over a far-flung “Free World” alliance, the containment of ideological and military competitors, and periodic interventions throughout the system in order to safeguard a hegemonic control and access. In recent decades, this led first to an “imperial America” and then to official anxieties about the *domestic* preconditions of maintaining that hegemonic structure and that capacity for intervention. These foreign policy tasks have consistently been identified with the needs of national defense; the security claims which accompanied them helped to fuel the attacks on civil liberties. This was also true no matter how extravagant or wrongheaded those claims might be. In fact, the curbs on their extravagance—supplied by an active and critical public—were precisely what those security claims had helped to undermine in the postwar years. The depoliticization of the public and the depoliticization of “national security” were joined.

To get beyond the surface presented by the legal or constitutional issues involved in surveillance or wiretapping, we will have to recognize the links which connect foreign policy ambitions to their domestic requirements. In the American case at hand, this seems especially clear. Usually without their approval or even acknowledgment, a reluctant and often neo-isolationist American public has been encouraged to make dramatic sacrifices for such ambitions. The nation has sacrificed democratic freedoms at the altar of “credibility” and “defense,” without its being made clear just what is being advanced or defended, and without discovering if the public were willing to play its appropriate political role in sanctioning such an effort. Instead, we have witnessed the U. S. government behaving like the fabled Oroborus: the head devouring the body. Policies would be maintained “at all costs.” In the process, to protect a particular “paradigm” or concept of “the nation,” the body politic might be consumed. In this fashion, we can see that it would not be citizens’ privacy but instead the *privacy of state action* which would be secured.

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09

Surplus Security  
and the  
Domestic Paradigm  
[1980]

# SURPLUS SECURITY & THE DOMESTIC PARADIGM

[1980]

“... it is not to the great model of signs and language that reference should be made, but to war and battle. The history which bears and determines us is war-like, not language-like. Relations of power, not relations of sense ... “<sup>1</sup>

In what we could call the discourse of foreign policy, the question of security is central. In the process by which foreign policy is made, what often predominates is an official concern about security. The international aims of policymakers are often articulated in terms of national security. In the postwar American case, for example, these may overshadow any self-conscious desire to satisfy the needs of particular domestic groups, any explicit economic or business-oriented reasoning, any explicit electoral calculations, any real awareness of the redistributive effect that foreign policy outcomes may have at the domestic level. When they talk about the use of force, they talk about national security. When they talk about power politics, they talk about national security. What is signified by that talk is the concept of the nation and its interests, taken as a whole.

Where does this leave the analysis of the domestic sources of such non-economic foreign policies? It often appears as if the emphasis on national security is designed to downgrade the very relevance of this question, as if matters would be settled simply by announcing that the “national interest determines foreign policy.”<sup>2</sup> Is ‘the nation’ implied in ‘the national interest’ all that is needed as a ‘domestic source’? Is this the meaning of ‘the state’ implied in ‘state-centric’ models of foreign policy? The door opens slightly, but there

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is only a wall behind it. The analytic debates continue.<sup>3</sup>

Very often it is unexamined assumptions or a premature consensus that ends up disabling our analysis. This is particularly likely to be the case where explanations of state action are concerned. Here, the nature of security and the whole idea of the national interest get entangled in epistemological issues surrounding the domestic sources of policy and the relationship between state and society. In the discussion that follows, I want to explore some of the conceptual issues that bedevil these debates. Certainly the conceptual categories available to us in the established literature do not inspire the kind of enthusiasm that would preclude the need for further exploration or the search for replacements.

### NATIONAL SECURITY & BASIC SECURITY

Two items should run in tandem: the definition of a nation's security and the way in which the character of the nation itself is described. So we must decide where to begin that description. In the realm of security, what is the nature of the domestic referent, how is the nation signified or characterized in the minds of the policymakers? What specific domestic content can be found in the forms of international action?

These are questions which official spokespersons are reluctant to tackle; the more diffuse the answer, the greater its political effectiveness would be. Nor does the simple way in which they use the concept of 'national security' seem adequate; it turns domestic society into an unmarked body, in need of differentiation. To proceed with such a differentiation, we could begin by asking: what would the security of any nation-state consist of? What can be said to be shared in common by states, defining them by this characteristic?

We need some baseline that distinguishes what is general from what is particular in the nations that are being secured. When this is constructed, we can begin to explain why particular policies are carried out, or understand the motivation behind those aspects that are puzzling enough to make us ask about them in the first place. Otherwise, we are possibly going to fall into the trap of mythology,<sup>4</sup> where it becomes nearly impossible to figure out what the

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nation consists of, or what 'its' interest would be. No precise mental construction of the nation (or "signified") would exist. Instead there would only be the turbulent air created by the shifts and turns of a *justificatory*, official discourse. For policymakers are often excusing themselves; they are selling policies or garnering support (sometimes, where the degree of a nation's international credibility is linked to the ability of policy to speak with a single national will).

To satisfy this need for a baseline, and to prevent every possible domestic interest from being loaded onto the concept of security and included within its definition, I want to put forward the term *basic security*. Here the broad usage of "security" is differentiated — not by issue-area,<sup>5</sup> but by the implications of failure or success for domestic society. In this way, the conceptual distinctions are designed precisely to accommodate and improve upon the literature on the state and on the domestic sources of policy. *Basic security* would be defined as the protection of the most fundamental requirements of statehood, as the securing or reproduction of those features which define states as members of the international state system (rather than the features which distinguish one state from another). These fundamental requirements might be said to include: first, the maintenance of territorial integrity (pointing to policies that ward off violent attacks on the national territory) , and second, the maintenance of political sovereignty.

The responsibility (*and therefore the explanation*) for a devotion to basic security can be ascribed to the fundamental, defining nature of world politics. As long as the modern international political system retains its status as an anarchical society, there is no real prescription that would follow from such an explanation. Such national concerns are matters of choice only in a very non-idiomatic sense of that term. These are basic necessities, or preconditions for all other concerns and all other roles. The necessity is implicit simply in the state's definition as a member of the modern nation-state system.

This is a limited or even a minimalist definition of 'national' security. Certainly it is much more limited than anything the leaders of countries with great power status would be willing to accept. What comes quickly to mind are all the other points of reference, all the other interests and values at the

level of domestic society that can be used to justify the use of force. We know that statespersons do not limit themselves to policies which attempt to prevent threats to basic security. This is a commonplace. The dynamic of peace, and war in the interstate system, with all of its horrors and attractions, would have a much more subdued texture if states sought nothing more than basic security. The seemingly 'natural history of statecraft' is constituted by more expansiveness than that; even the "security dilemma,"<sup>6</sup> defined this narrowly, cannot account for it.

Some might argue that the focus of statecraft will widen in rough proportion to the quantity of power available to the state actors or to the nation's international position — as if the concept of national security should be equally elastic. If it were, it would respect the ways in which official discourse can take advantage of the notion of national security, even using it to account for acts of expansion or imperial intervention.

This way of broadening the definition needs to be rejected. The broader aims and referents which I have excluded from the definition of basic security are the *differentia* of official concerns. In the style of analysis suggested here, a differentiation does need to be made, but only as a second step. The preliminary definition is abstract. It universalizes. It departicularizes. Once this baseline is constructed, an explanation of individual policy can begin to particularize — without fear of complicity. The making of distinctions, so necessary for explanation, stands apart from that blurring of category boundaries that is so helpful for efforts at official persuasion or for inspiring compliance.

In a policy concerned with basic security, what is signified is a territorial unit with political sovereignty. This is the basic state. Often the signification of policy extends beyond this basic definition and comes to include some of the distinguishing features of the domestic order — for example, its mode of production or ideological cohesion. To characterize the policies that protect those features as 'national' security policies will only confuse matters. Everything is not basic, nor is everything that is not basic simply 'excessive'. Policy is often "overmotivated," but this needs to be sorted out. An encompassing term like 'national security' seems to suffocate rather than illuminate.

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It encourages us to accept a premature consensus about what constitutes a strategic necessity versus what constitutes a societal choice.

## THE ASSESSMENT OF NATIONAL RISK

How can we distinguish between these two phenomena — between the basic necessities of statehood and the more far-reaching concerns of particular societies? Any consensus we reach or any fundamental standard we devise for gauging security will have to rest upon an assessment of risk.

Here we can draw some sustenance from recent discussions of the concept of justice.<sup>7</sup> These center around the question of the design of a just social order, drawn up according to an identifiable set of principles. Any attempt we make to refine the concept of security might take a lesson from this and proceed along parallel lines. What we need is an analogous external standard. This would allow us to compare the implicit standards used by policy makers with a less particularizing baseline that could serve as a guide for explaining individual foreign policies.

In developing a conceptual model of justice, John Rawls first constructs a hypothetical “original position”. In this position, members of society would come to agree to a set of governing principles that would in turn undergird that society’s institutional arrangements. Such agreement takes place under a “veil of ignorance” — that is to say, in the absence of knowledge about the special interests, personal positions, or distinctions with which members might be marked. This veil of ignorance therefore allows for the pursuit of a more universalized interest on the part of society. The particular concerns that might unsettle that pursuit are hidden. Uncertainty therefore prevails; there is no way to predict beforehand what the effect will be of the institutional framework that is chosen upon each participant’s particular situation in the future. Rawls concludes that, under these circumstances, the individuals would adopt a special rule in order to evaluate the acceptability of the arrangements. This is the “maximin” principle. It would maximize the likelihood that a minimum share of justice would be available to each individual in the future. The logic of this derives from the fact that an individual cannot determine the particu-

larity of her future position in a manner that would make any other decision rule more advantageous.

What Rawls posits, in other words, is the acceptance of a strategy of minimal risk-taking on the part of these hypothetical individuals. These decision rules in regard to justice would safeguard the individuals in a fundamental way. They are constructed in the light of (and offer protection against) the worst possible outcome which could occur to those members in the actual societies that might result. In trying to decide which future system of justice would be most desirable, alternatives are ranked by reference to their worst possible consequences. This minimizes the risks for the individual. At the same time, it forms a rule which is constitutive of the social order that is designed. In its distribution of justice, it will be as abstractly neutral as possible.

By this point in the discussion, the parallel between the understanding of foreign policy and Rawls' analysis of justice may be apparent. To define a baseline for analyzing policies of security, an analogous model is needed. In treating the domestic sources of state action, we can posit an "original position"; this is the basic state, whose leaders concern themselves with the protection of territorial integrity and political sovereignty. The absence of particularity this posits is analogous to the veil of ignorance. It closely follows upon the minimal definition of states as members of the international political system.

The relevance of something like the maximin principle now appears. National policy alternatives, or alternative arrays of broad policy orientations, could be ranked by the degree to which they affect the likelihood of the worst possible outcome. Rules capable of governing this basic policy choice would be needed. As they guard themselves against being disastrously disadvantaged, a baseline is posited: state actors will want to minimize risk. They would therefore structure policy so that it protects them, if possible, against the worst possible situations likely to arise in the world environment. This would encompass actions designed to guard against actual physical attack on the national territory or wholesale loss of political integrity.

In this conception, behavior is oriented by reference to the most unfavorable contingency in order to minimize the likelihood of its occurrence. In



noneconomic foreign policy, such a minimization of risk would often make for a quite limited and non-interventionist policy, especially for the superpowers. The reason is clear: most junctures, however undesirable, would still not bring on the worst possible outcome (the outbreak of nuclear war, for example) except under the most extravagantly hypothetical of scenarios. Where there is no direct military connection to a threatened basic security, the state actors will require some additional source of motivation before acting.

The other side of the coin applies to explanations of foreign policy. Where a concern for basic security is not directly involved, we will need some knowledge of the distinguishing features of the nation's official preferences or utility function before we can make the policies intelligible. The inclination toward a low-risk maximin strategy serves as the baseline. For those in the original position within a Rawlsian universe, it also serves as the standard of rationality and prudential choice, at least of a formalistic kind. For questions of justice, this original position parallels the concept of basic security.

Now, the most striking part of such an analysis is the way it departs from particularizes states. It abstracts away any special purposes or desires of policymakers that go beyond the search for basic security. It therefore abstracts away from all of the substantive variety of domestic motivations. It turns its gaze at least momentarily away from all the concrete results of those historical developments that underprop particular national psychologies or conceptions of interest. A veil of ignorance is cast over the special features of the nation's political economy, class structure, political institutions, as well as of the interests of the groups which comprise the governing coalition. Even though official choices will be inflected by these domestic features, except perhaps in extreme cases of threats to national survival, the distinctions are needed.

An analytic procedure like this is naturally open to criticism. If we assume that providing for basic security constitutes a rational choice — in extending the Rawlsian parallel — haven't we smuggled into the formal picture some assumptions about "the special features of [individual] psychology"<sup>8</sup>? Is this what now stands disguised as rationality? Even in the face of uncertainty, how can rationality at the rational level be reduced to a no-risk predilection for basic security? How typical or intelligible would such a

predilection be? Would any nation really be satisfied with this, if more could be achieved or if there were an attractive chance that more could be achieved? Perhaps a moderate-risk strategy, one which simultaneously increases the risk of greater losses but at the same time expands the possibility of greater gains, would be more characteristic. As one critic notes:

Rawlsian man in the original position is finally a strikingly lugubrious creature: unwilling to enter a situation that promises success because it also promises failure, unwilling to risk winning because he feels doomed to losing, ready for the worst because he cannot imagine the best, content with security and the knowledge that he will be no worse off than anyone else because he dares not risk freedom and the possibility that he will be better off — all under the guise of ‘rationality’.<sup>9</sup>

This misses the point. With both individuals and states, the concept of the original position helps an analysis begin. It offers a model of formal rationality. It does not end the analysis. It simply posits the existence of a generalized or universalized interest in basic security that can be ascribed to any state, regardless of its leaders’ particular utility function or probabilistic calculations. This is derived from the character of the international environment and its inherent strategic imperatives. For the great powers, this basic interest has led to policies of creating or solidifying a balance of power as well as individual (and sometimes counterproductive) efforts at increasing putative power resources. In the nuclear age, it can be said to underlie certain aspects of the superpowers’ concern with nuclear deterrence as well as policies, for smaller states, that historically have been centered around the maintenance of alliance ties. Some of the more thorough-going variants of recommendations for a non-interventionist policy — for example, those affiliated with the libertarian tradition — might be limited to fit this conception (these are the sorts of policy recommendations that usually receive the epithets “irresponsible isolationism” or “Fortress America”). At the same time, those who envisage a transcendence of the anarchical qualities of international society can imagine a form of world government coming into being that could, in the event of uni-

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versal disarmament, begin to protect the security of states in an altogether different fashion. The key point is that the basic interest, in and of itself, animates a minimal strategy — of doing no more than guarding against the worst possible outcomes.

This entire idea might seem rather innocent. For aren't we all agreed that states have invariably projected a conception of their society's interests and needs that goes well beyond this modest original position? I am arguing only that this fact signifies something distinguishing about the official conception of the domestic features that are involved. This is a two step process. Prior to particularizing the instance at hand, or describing it in a naturalistic way, a 'plumb line' must be set in place. The preliminary task is one of depar-ticularizing. The original position is formalistic, but this is actually its strength. Some of its premises would be very problematical if we were engaged only in a policy-oriented effort aimed at persuasion -for example, the idea that "the person choosing has a conception of the good such that he cares very little, if anything, for what he might gain above the minimum stipend that he can, in fact, be sure of by following the maximin rule."<sup>10</sup> But these become part of a clarifying line of distinction when we are involved in explaining why some action is taken.

### SURPLUS SECURITY

At this point, a few additional elements have to be brought into the conceptual discussion. One distinction is crucial: between a depar-ticularized or abstract conception of the nation, on the one hand, and a specific social order, on the other. The state actors of a depar-ticularized 'basic state' would define the tasks facing the nation by deriving those tasks from the nature of the fundamental requirements of statehood, which are in turn derived deduc-tively from the unchanging nature of the world political system.

A particularized society, on the other hand, would be expected to project a different set of tasks for the nation's foreign policy. Its state actors' official risk calculus would entail more than just the avoidance of the worst possible outcome. It would project an altered risk calculus, one that is grounded

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in more expansive domestic desires and aspirations. This distinction should be acknowledged in the definitions we use. In talking about security, the real question, often neglected, is “*What* is being secured?” or “What is thought to need securing?”

Here we should distinguish between *basic security* and *surplus security*. By saying that a “surplus” is involved in certain conceptions of security, you are clearly distinguishing it from the idea of a self-evident defense of the state’s sovereignty or territorial integrity. The latter idea — as a minimal baseline — would be an obvious strategic necessity. The concept of surplus security, on the other hand, can be developed as a way to respond to the question of what is being secured at the *domestic* level – even by expansionist or hegemonic policies for which the term ‘national security’ seems inappropriate. Surplus security indicates a policy that, in its *signifying*, points beyond the minimal requirements of statehood; it reflects a concern for (or a dedication to) a particular set of national characteristics at home.

The conceptual distinctions which this term highlights are not new. They do bear a resemblance, for example, to the way Abraham Maslow distinguished between the “deficiency needs” of the individual, which must be satisfied first, and what he called the “being needs”<sup>11</sup> involved in the process of growth and self-actualization. The term has a more important lineage in critical theory; in particular, it brings to mind Herbert Marcuse’s concepts of “basic repression” and “surplus repression”, which he used to characterize the patterns binding together a particular society, in *Eros and Civilization*.<sup>12</sup> This enabled him to roughly gauge the price to be paid, in the quantity of repression needed, for such a society’s particular historical features to be reproduced. This is always a price in excess of the demands of basic repression — defined as the amount of repression required for civilization of any kind to persist.

The analogy is clear. Beyond the minimal demands of sovereignty, state actors are faced with an additional set of societal demands — of a historical or quantitative nature. This amounts to a felt obligation to put the state’s policy in the service of a specific historical form: a domestic social formation, in other words, with its distinguishing modes of *domination* and *coherence*. In order to secure that particular domestic social order, or to repro-

duce the essential features of the domestic status quo, policy makers must continually set out to prevent certain *international* futures from occurring. These are future scenarios which would not jeopardize the more limited strategic requirements of basic security, even over the long term, but which are often spoken of in terms of their adverse overall domestic effect. The relationship between domestic society and loss of empire would be one example.

The distinction should help us bring together two important topics which are intensively treated in their respective scholarly literatures, but almost never in the same breath. First is the emphasis on the development of concrete social formations, or political economies, taken as totalities. This usually entails an analysis of the role of the state apparatus and its capabilities in regard to the *reproduction* or *steering needs* of society (either nationally or as parts of a world political economy) . Second is the quite different focus that international relations theorists have given to strategic or ‘high’ policy, perceived in military terms. These two concerns should be on speaking terms. In an explanatory sense, ‘realpolitik’ might take on a more dependent status in an explanation. The former concern — with steering and reproduction — may take precedence. It may provide the context in which the latter issues can be understood.<sup>13</sup>

Is it possible that this puts priorities the wrong way round? Aren’t policies that seem to be involved with surplus security often necessary, in the longer run, even when it comes to survival and territorial defense? (And isn’t the “security dilemma” a reflection of this difficulty in decoding the motivation behind someone’s policy?) Isn’t uncertainty endemic to interstate relations, so that what looks at first like ‘excess’ might really be a form of long-term prudential behavior — and one that policymakers are reasonably self-conscious about? It should be possible, in individual cases, to sort these matters out, even though there are no cut-and-dried formulas for separating expressions of an actual policymaking consensus from the insincere gesturing of salesmanship. International conditions are uncertain. Policymakers do plan ahead. Nonetheless, conditions of uncertainty are *directed*, they have a differential impact. They implicate certain domestic outcomes rather than others. They attach themselves, as obstacles, to specific national desires and ambitions

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while at the same time leaving others unaffected. In a given situation, what is uncertain will not necessarily (or even usually) be the ability of officials to protect the nation's sovereignty and territory by military means. The use of force or the build-up of military power will often be palpably unrelated to this task. With great powers, uncertainty occurs much more commonly over whether the nation can achieve or maintain certain domestic outcomes that extend beyond basic security. The degree to which those concerns extend beyond the definition of basic security would signify — or even quantify — the surplus.

This surplus should not be confused with a question of geographical extension — for example: imperialism, hegemony, foreign control, world supremacy — even though geographical extension may be an attractive means to safeguard that domestic surplus. If the protection of an empire or a network of dependencies is equated with the security of the nation, this equation still needs to be translated into domestic terms. The explanatory “why?” question remains, no matter how elastic the terminology threatens to become. *Why* do policymakers feel that these geographical extensions or additional exertions are needed? Whether or not nations occupy a hegemonic position, and whether or not they behave in the way that diplomatic history suggests they usually behave, the analysis of motivation is not foreclosed. The *nature* and *content* of security concerns will distinguish one nation's foreign policy from another, even if national behavior (in some topographical sense) is similar. Expansiveness should not be homogenized or taken for granted from the standpoint of motivation. Nor can the question of motivation be settled by pointing to the international political system and the distribution of power contained there. That would only shrink the explanatory effort down to the size of questions of constraint and opportunity. Even for relatively weak states, this is not sufficient. For hegemonic powers, it is a mystification.<sup>14</sup> Without a distinction of the sort I have drawn between ‘surplus’ and ‘basic’, this danger arises; the concept of security would erase all traces of a policy's domestic content, pointing only to a carefully smoothed surface. Yet beneath the surface, many of the most significant domestic (and particularizing) elements are often being concealed at the same time as they are being presupposed and protected and reproduced by policy.

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THE NATIONAL INTEREST AS THE DOMESTIC  
SOURCE OF SECURITY

SURPLUS  
SECURITY AND  
THE DOMESTIC  
PARADIGM

The claims of national security may be useful for justifying policy; no matter — the project of explanation demands more. A concept like that of surplus security can serve as an analytic replacement. Yet at this point, a familiar argument comes into view. Can't this notion of foreign policy as a domestic social practice be cast into older, more traditionalist terms? If we want to locate a domestic basis for policy, isn't that what has typically been meant by *the national interest*? Clearly, to complete the changing of the guard, something must be done about this other sovereign remedy. We need a new way of defining it if it is to be of any use in exploring the domestic sources of state action.

The term “the national interest” has a checkered history. Policymakers and policy spokespersons would like to use it as a “super-ordinate criterion”<sup>15</sup> to size up international situations in order to assess the nation's stake in various outcomes. This would prevent a bewildering complexity of domestic values and interests from disarticulating or pulling policy apart after they have tugged at it from a number of different positions. Yet “the content of the national interest is anything but self-evident.... In fact, except within very broad limits, the national interest is no guide to policy at all.”<sup>16</sup>

The concept of the national interest has also been used to gain leverage in a series of analytical disputes. Some of these are familiar — for example, the debates between those who urged that policy be coordinated with the national interest rather than distract itself with internationalist dreams or putative global interests. The distinction between idealism and realism (or *raison d'état*) is rehearsed. In discussions of foreign aid, for example,<sup>17</sup> the self-regarding interest of the United States is sometimes thought to need protecting against the attractions of benevolence and moral concern.

More recently, the (much disputed) importance of interdependence is thought to confound our ability to apply such a criterion at all. As soon as security concerns are unable to impose a hierarchy or rank ordering of societal priorities upon state choices, the coherence of policy is affected. So are the

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classical verities. “The national interest — the traditionalists’ lodestar — becomes increasingly difficult to use effectively.... The state may prove to be multi- faced, even schizophrenic. National interests will be defined differently on different issues, at different times, and by different governmental units.”<sup>18</sup> Even the assumptions of a unified national actor seeking coherent national objectives come under fire. “For bureaucratic and transnational approaches, the state is not the solid mass of a billiard ball, but an egg whose yolk has been scrambled or whose shell has been cracked.”<sup>19</sup>

Extreme formulations of these newer perspectives inspired a critical reaction — from a mercantilist or statist point of view. This viewpoint has restored some of the luster to classical assumptions about a unified state, modeled along the lines of a purposive individual, in pursuit of coherent and consistent objectives. Discussion of “the larger interests of foreign policy” or “the larger foreign policy interests of the nation”<sup>20</sup> is used to counteract the claim that corporate interests might predominate in foreign policy making, or that the state is simply the handmaiden of economic interests at the domestic level. Liberal interest group pluralism and elite-instrumentalist arguments are opposed.

Still, this threatens to short-circuit any explanation of policy goals that would link them up with their domestic sources or specify their domestic content. It is especially troubling when a statist perspective attempts to bypass this obstacle through terminological improvisation. This would appear to be the problem with a “statist interpretation, which sees the state as an autonomous actor seeking to maximize the national interest.”<sup>21</sup> It is possible to argue that states pursue the national interest, sometimes very successfully, in the face of resistance from different domestic groups whose particularistic interests must be overcome. But how is the national interest being defined here? — “by inducting a set of transitively ordered objectives from the actual behavior of central decision makers.”<sup>22</sup> “The national interest is defined,” in other words, “as the goals that are sought by the state.”<sup>23</sup> The risk of tautology is overwhelming. As a leading exponent admits, “defining the national interest purely by reference to the preferences of state actors violates common usage that associates this concept with the enduring general goals of society.”<sup>24</sup>

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At the very least, and in spite of supplementary nuances, this definition would disable the project of explanation. It is too visibly marked, even in its construction, by its battles with those pluralist or instrumentalist arguments which have questioned the autonomy of the state apparatus. "The most satisfactory explanations for why a particular state has pursued one set of goals rather than another will almost certainly involve reference to the society within which the state is embedded.... Thus, [even] a statist analysis is likely, in the end, to reintroduce societal elements to complete its argument, to explain why the state has accepted one set of goals rather than another."<sup>25</sup>

The very term 'the national interest' should imply that policy can be analyzed at two distinct levels: the international goals, on the one hand, and overall domestic interests on the other. Yet still there is something homogenizing about the term that you can see when you look at the way domestic interests are treated. Too often, the idea behind the term is an obfuscation or an occlusion of the differentiated nature of domestic society; sometimes it even resembles an occultation. It fails to notice how important it is to examine the presuppositions of policy that define its content. *And the most fundamental content of a foreign policy is domestic.* It is the official conception of the nation or the character of domestic society that is being advocated or presupposed. This is its political program.

National interest and national security are twinned. Both serve to distract us from any attempts at conceptualizing the domestic sources of state action. Let me give one extended example. In examining postwar American noneconomic policy, there has been a notable readiness to accept the official abstractions at face value. This tendency is reinforced by the strength of the political consensus that has existed around the demand for an activist global policy. In the 1960s, if we look at the debate between supporters and critics of foreign intervention, very divergent opinions do appear over what is needed to protect various foreign interests of the United States and over the specific policies and tactics entailed by that need. Intervention in Southeast Asia, for example, seems either entailed or not entailed. It is a deplorable, possibly an incomprehensible act of official violence, or is it a regrettable but understandable necessity? Nevertheless, looking over these debates, there is still a

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great deal of agreement when it comes to specifying the foreign interests that are thought to be vital to America's future. These interests end up forming something like a consensus conception of security. More important, because of assumptions that are made about the domestic consequences of having those foreign interests jeopardized, the agreement amounts to a taken-for-granted political definition of the nation itself.

The normative thrust of many of the most stinging critiques of policy continues to rely on some such consensually-agreed-upon conception of the nation. Most policy discussions are also tethered in the same way. Even so, a critical analysis cannot be satisfied with such an anodyne vocabulary. The question is: what aspects of the domestic social order are felt to be threatened? What is the specific nature of the society that policymakers have in mind to protect? To constantly argue, as critics are prone to do, that government leaders are mistaken, or that they have miscalculated the security needs of the society, may put the political discussion of policy on the wrong footing. It glosses over what may be unavoidable, if latent disagreements about the kind of society in whose service a security policy should be placed.

The distinctive features of domestic motivation that are contained within official purposes have to be specified. Otherwise, we cannot distinguish doubts that arise over the efficacy or tactics of policy from doubts that are more deeply rooted in political disagreements and alternative conceptions of how society itself should be ordered. Criticisms get confined to questions of technique or coherence. National security policy then gets defined as a combination of two elements: the national interest, by reference to which international concerns are appropriately guided, and misperceptions or flaws in the decision-making process that seem to account for the deviations from this reference point.

Even if a wide agreement exists on what a nation should do or at least on what interests ought to be protected, this agreement has a domestic basis — an image of a particular society that is signified by this discourse. Any conception of the nation's welfare that goes beyond the presumptions of the baseline would fit into such a category. These agreements on the part of the policymakers are particular forms of discourse about the nature of society. And

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these are usually not 'closed' forms, in which the system of concepts (or signifieds) are cut off or disassociated from the actual society, the realm of the referents. The referents are the aspects of the domestic system which are being reproduced, the 'special features' which are open to political definition and, more rarely, to political redefinition.

Very often we hear the official argument that the nation's security would be unavoidably threatened by some future circumstance which therefore has to be prevented — if not at all costs, then at least at most of them. (You could fill a long nightmare with historical illustrations). This form of discourse should tip us off to the possibility that certain surplus security concerns may be receiving a justificatory gloss or account. It is the same account that is appropriately given to the more limited policies of basic defense. Yet in most of these cases, much more is involved than an appraisal of the requirements of basic security. It is not simply a gauge of the direct military threats that would be posed to a minimal definition or characterization of society. Instead, this vocabulary, by its very imprecision, attempts to ground a concern for surplus security in the national interest. Yet there is no such clearcut national interest that can withstand analysis, at least not one that goes beyond the minimally particularized concept of the nation which is involved in basic security. And most often this is not at all what is being referred to. Nonetheless, a clear and uncontested domestic grounding for policy is often assumed, even when the sorts of risk assessment which are involved go far beyond the baseline. In these cases, once this conceptual vocabulary is accepted, even expansionist or imperial policies can be made to seem less problematical. They take on the qualities of the natural, the universal, the taken-for-granted, the obvious, the tautological, the mythic.<sup>26</sup>

#### NATIONAL INTEREST, DOMESTIC PARADIGMS

We need another term to replace 'the national interest'. It must suggest the domestic content of a policy; if we use a topographical analogy, it has to reveal the domestic layer beneath the internationally-directed surface, the domestic grounding of an official conception of (surplus) security.

In my own analysis,<sup>27</sup> I have used the term *the domestic paradigm* to help fill the conceptual gap left to us by previous theorizing. If security lies at the heart of strategic policy and of a nation's official world view, the domestic paradigm provides the overarching canopy of meanings with which an explanation must contend. It is *the conceived social system*. It is the official representation or image (or 'signified') of the particular domestic system whose features are going to be made secure by means of a successful foreign policy.

The paradigm includes the conceived features of the social system that are to be reproduced. It is the essential domestic status quo relevant to a particular domain or policy or international role. If you take a case like America's postwar interventionism in the Third World, the government is safeguarding a global role and position that is felt to be connected to the task of protecting those societal features — at home and not merely, or even necessarily, abroad. A set of features and characteristics are being protected, not simply a set of disembodied domestic "values" that derive from the nation's past but which are not structurally located within the present social system.<sup>28</sup>

In a general way, the concept of the domestic paradigm should allow us to talk more frontally about the *domestic future* that is implicated by a particular vision of a desired international milieu, and by the desire to protect a particular international position. It should also illuminate the features of domestic society that are thought to be vulnerable to foreign policy failure — for recent examples, in the American case, the domestic results of failure to quarantine radical social change in the Third World or failure to protect the credibility of the nation's guarantees to its allies. This is not the national interest. To speak of it in those terms will merely lend a fraudulent air of self-evidence to the domestic paradigm that is felt to be at stake.

Once basic security is taken care of, policymakers may predictably incorporate more and more elements of the surplus (the domestic particularization) into the official conception of the nation and therefore of 'national' security. As one example, American leaders in the 1960s pay more and more attention to the Third World as those areas take on more importance — not simply as part of a seamless fabric of national defense, but as symbolic as well as material elements in an integrated world order upon which America's

domestic paradigm is felt to be dependent. The greater the degree to which surplus features are thought to be in need of securing, the more comprehensively the task of domestic steering and social reproduction becomes wrapped up with foreign policy roles. This is another way of talking about the societal function of the state apparatus — where it keeps as few elements as possible of the domestic order from being altered or adversely affected by global change. The reproduction of a domestic social order does involve military defense, as a minimum. But it also entails securing an external environment in which the *constitutive* and *distinguishing* features of the social order can be safeguarded, reproduced, and legitimated. We need a more differentiated concept of security, and the replacement of the concept of the national interest, to encompass these analytic concerns.

In the postwar American case, we can begin to talk about the definition of that domestic paradigm, as long as it is understood that any such effort will be fragmentary and suggestive at best. (Each of the elements proposed can be further subdivided and specified in relation to particular domains of policy or issue areas). The paradigm presupposed by consistent U.S. goals in the postwar era would comprise an official image of what is most important about American society — *a model of its development* — beyond its definition as a sovereign member of the international political system with an identifiable and secure territorial identity. Three elements can be suggested: 1) an advanced corporate capitalist economy. This constitutive economic structure could be specified in terms of: the historical arc or periodicity of American economic development in relationship to the world system, and the process of capital accumulation that helps animate it; the particular constellations of industrial and financial power that occupy a position of relative dominance in a given period; the constitution or fractionation of the capitalist class; the political articulation of the opposition to the interests of that class; the specific needs of maintaining business confidence and the conditions of profitability on which so much depends. 2) a liberal democratic political system at home, with a (comparatively) reduced level of government interference into certain realms of civil society. The constituent features of liberal democracy can be investigated in light of the ideological anchors of American liberalism

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and individualism; the relationship between state intervention and the prerogatives of capital; the relationship between economic and political freedom, as well as the desire to avoid more authoritarian solutions to societal problems. 3) an expansive and messianic societal 'self-image' that retains its hegemonic hold at the level of mass opinion — if we can speak somewhat metaphorically about the modes of legitimation and ideological coherence in American society. This could be further specified by reference to longstanding cultural traditions, to compensatory uses of this self-image as a deflection of energy or distraction from social conflict, etc.

This is merely a rough cut. But certainly if we look behind the American stress on 'world order' in the postwar environment, we will see the ways in which such domestic features are implicated, the ways in which they require or motivate certain policies. The ability to remake the world is a luxury related to the growth of a state's power. But this ability does not, in and of itself, create the motivation behind this refashioning. If American interventionism and even much of the dynamic of the Cold War can be understood in terms of world order concerns, this (admittedly, very schematic) portrait of the domestic paradigm might indicate the ways in which we can talk about those international concerns as something more than a narrow desire for material gain, on the one hand, and a disembodied liberal ideology, on the other.

To continue the American example, foreign intervention is often part of a conscious policy of security, just as the policymakers say it is. It is not simply an anachronistic ideological reflex or a victim of uncalculating "other-regarding" messianism. But these are *surplus* security policies. State actors are working 'in the interest of' a specific conception of the domestic society as a whole. Their international goals presuppose it. Unless pressed, their internal discussions take it for granted. This is an official political stance that can be extrapolated out of the state actors' statements and commitments by a process of decoding and corrigible interpretations. It comprises something like a deep structure governing both international desires and international apprehensions.

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Something that resembles this procedure is needed if we are going to be able to interpret the international goals of the state. Traditional international relations theory might attempt to derive those goals deductively from the interstate system and its distribution of power, but this makes sense only in cases where basic security is the overriding concern. Neither imperialism nor world order can be subsumed under that heading. More instrumentalist or pluralist approaches might attempt to treat goals by reference to the domestic political process that precedes them. A bureaucratic approach might follow the same epistemological trajectory, only this time operating inside the state apparatus itself. Yet a chronology is not an explanation. It does not place shared purposes into a context in light of which they might seem intelligible.<sup>29</sup>

Actions can often be analyzed as understandable choices of means toward an objective, but the objectives themselves must be explained. Here I would propose recasting the relationship between foreign policy ends and the specific actions that are taken as means to those ends. This ends /means relationship forms what could be called the surface discourse of policy — a surface layer, the domain of technical rationality, situated above the domestic sources of policy. The surface comprises the “first order” ends /means relationship, the one on which foreign policy analysts have so insistently concentrated their attention. Foreign policy objectives, however, do not sit in mid-air. Our analysis does not need to sit complacently on the surface.

The consistent ends of policy, the shared international purposes of state actors, can be reinterpreted as means toward the achievement of underlying (and often implicit) domestic social purposes — as part of the state’s domestic social role. With this conception, we can leave behind the inappropriate imagery of mechanism or reductionism often used to characterize the relationship between state and society. Behind the goals, in other words, we can specify something other than a diachronic sequence of prior domestic ‘causes’ or an arc of seemingly determinative historical development. We can locate a more synchronic relationship — in which state objectives are *trans-*

*latable*. They are situated within another underlying purposive relationship.

Immediately, we can see that the concept of the surplus (surplus features of the domestic society that are to be secured) is connected with that of the domestic paradigm and with the social rules underlying state action.

The distinction between this paradigm and the departicularized model of the nation implied by the concept of basic security is precisely analogous to the distinction between basic and surplus security. The surplus involved in surplus security is the specificity of the paradigm: the extent to which we can particularize the domestic system which is felt to be at stake in security policy by identifying its distinguishing features. These distinguishing features form the domestic basis of the policy. The domestic content of statecraft is embodied in a set of social rules. These guide the choices of goals; they help define the state's role. The rules are paradigmatic; they structure and govern what we can call a second order purposive relationship between policy goals and domestic purposes.

Choices of goals can be understood domestically, in other words, once we have gotten beyond the abstractions of 'the national interest'. In the present formulation, domestic rules are *constitutive* of security policy. This is not a model of domestic groups wielding power over state policy in such a way that certain broad international orientations are prohibited while others are imposed due to instrumentalist pressure. The domestic rules, in other words, are not simply rules of domestic political constraint. They define the domestic paradigm that is to be secured by the state's political or security goals.

By constitutive, I mean that they are essentially rules of domestic social success. In the absence of such criteria, there is no easy way to gauge the correctness or inappropriateness of a given policy perspective. Yet for a government to act with a measure of autonomy or independence, such criteria must at least be implicit in the policy. Otherwise, policymakers would be forced to rely on the reception that a policy receives at the hands of relevant political elites or coalitions in order to orient their most fundamental choices of goals. Such a degree of pragmatic 'followership' on the part of the state might be a more typical pattern when it comes to domestic policy. The weak state of America's liberal and pluralist tradition might orient itself in this



radar-like fashion. But security policy is usually thought to be distinctive, and precisely because of the reduced importance of pluralist or instrumentalist or democratic determination. It is more gyroscopic.<sup>30</sup>

In the case of security policy, this undercuts the relevance of some modes of analysis that have been imported from the study of domestic policy and applied, with varying degrees of relevance in recent years, to foreign economic policy.<sup>31</sup> In fact, state actors can gain a substantial edge if they are persuasive in situating a policy in the security realm. Once policies of intervention, or certain policies regarding balance-of-payments or free trade or energy are framed in this way, the level of domestic constraints derived either from the mass public or from obstructive interest groups can be reduced. (This is of course one reason why a distinction between basic and surplus security is so critical. Without it, our analyses of policy are liable to become mere echoes of the policy makers' discourse, with invocations of national security and the national interest taking the place of explanation).

Security policy is usually not an arena in which a series of domestic political pushes and pulls will produce a result, as a pluralist conception might lead us to expect. Nor should we expect the direct intervention of members of a dominant class to be the factor that determines the overall shape of policy goals.<sup>32</sup> The power of the state apparatus itself (relative to constraining domestic groups or electoral worries) is quite substantial. The "multicephalic" dispersion of power, the circumscription of state authority, the quality of underinstitutionalization: these are some of the elements which are thought to characterize America's political system. In many cases, they are said to create a "society-centered" policy network, where the "state is divided and controlled by a pluralistic society."<sup>33</sup> Security policy, however, seems devoid of many of these characteristics. It is as if 'security' can compensate for the fragmentation of power — creating a consensus or at least that "state-centered" policy process which a statist perspective has emphasized.

We can acknowledge the importance of the state's autonomy. We can therefore acknowledge the importance of a hermeneutic reading of policy that pays close attention to the goals and self-understandings articulated by policymakers. Yet this does not mean we have closed the door on the domestic

sources of policy. A security policy may display the relative autonomy of the state,<sup>34</sup> but what is this relative autonomy being used for? The state apparatus has independent political power,<sup>35</sup> but not necessarily independent explanatory power. The state may be an autonomous actor, in that its most fundamental long-range goals are autonomously formulated. But that does not make those goals self-explanatory. Identifying objectives is not explaining objectives. The state is still embedded; in another vocabulary, it is still a sign and a representation.

A tacit concern for reproducing the domestic social system may predominate in the minds of the policymakers. If it does, the debate between those ascribing 'strategic' objectives to the state and those ascribing economic objectives to the state could come to seem misguided. Narrower concerns for economic gain may be overridden by the larger need for system reproduction. And yet, for the satisfaction of the material interests of powerful economic groups, nothing more may be required than to have a state concern itself with reproducing the essential features of the domestic status quo. The realities of surplus security policy, in other words, may demand that we give up some of the theoretical divisions which have been the stock-in-trade of established scholarship.

The self-understandings of policymakers and their way of describing what they do as protecting the nation's security does not, for example, eliminate the economic component of policy so that a strategic component can replace it. If the 'signifiers' of policy discourse are tied to the attainment or avoidance of political effects at the international level, the domestic 'signified' which provides the content might be a social totality, an integrated political economy. If the state has sufficient international power, the domestic society's particular economic structure and needs will very likely be part of the domestic paradigm that is being secured. In a capitalist setting, if the state actors see their task as that of protecting the societal status quo, it will be devilishly difficult to deny that "state behavior is ultimately linked to preserving a set of exploitative economic relationships that benefit a particular class"<sup>36</sup> — unless someone is prepared to deny that such relationships are centrally part of domestic reality. Debates on the explanation of classical imperialism, as well

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as over more recent patterns of interstate domination, have not sufficiently acknowledged this. The familiar complaints about theories which attempt to connect capitalism with foreign expansion cannot rest on the invocation of security interests or of strategic or 'political' goals, as distinct from economic ones. The analytic status of strategic objectives cannot go unchallenged. Once we are beyond the dictates of basic security, those objectives are instrumentalized. They can be subsumed, very often, under this larger concern for domestic reproduction.

To carry this analysis one further step, "that domestic order will eventually have to be examined: to specify its features or physiognomy, and its historical formation (both by global currents and domestic conflicts), and, finally, to grasp the process of political coalition-building and maintenance by which certain domestic paradigms are attacked and superceded while others are able to survive intact."<sup>37</sup>

The prescriptive implications of this way of conceptualizing security policy point to official images of the nation and to the actual nature of domestic society, as an arena of conflict, conflict resolution and conflict-avoidance. What look like errors and contradictions in policy may in fact be quite intelligible actions that are connected, through a second-order purposive relationship, to a domestic order in the grip of its own contradictions. Leaving aside the character of the international environment for a moment, fundamental changes in foreign policy behavior would require fundamental changes in national goals. Both the diagnosis and the prescription point in the direction of domestic society. To look forward to fundamental changes in security goals, we must look forward to fundamental changes in motivation and in the character or needs of the domestic paradigm. A full discussion of this matter would require extensive treatment of the changing preconditions of policy success and of alternative theories of the state. But it is probably fair to say that theory and practice point in the same direction. To expect fundamental changes in the domestic paradigm would very likely require fundamental changes in the nature of domestic society itself. There is no conclusion.

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## NOTES

1. Michel Foucault, *Power, Truth, Strategy* (Sydney, Australia 1979), 33. Yet, see Bruce Andrews, "The Language of State Action," *International Interactions*, VI (November 1979), 267-89. An earlier version of portions of the present essay was presented at the 1978 Annual Convention of the International Studies Association.

2. Robert Gilpin, *U.S. Power and the Multinational Corporation: The Political Economy of Foreign Direct Investment* (New York 1975), 28.

3. The section head for International Relations for the 1981 Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association claims that "the relative impact of state-centric versus non-state-centric explanations of national policy and systemic behavior", is "perhaps the major debate in the field over the last decade." "1981 Annual Meeting Program, Stephen Krasner," *APSA Program 1980*, 95.

4. Roland Barthes, *Mythologies* (New York 1972), 109-159.

5. For a recent discussion, see William C. Potter, "Issue area and foreign policy analysis," *International Organization*, 34 (Summer 1980), 405-427.

6. The best recent treatment is still Robert Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics* (Princeton 1976), chapter 3.

7. The focal point of these discussions remains John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge 1971). It has inspired a bookshelf's worth of commentary.

8. *Ibid.*, 137. Also, see Benjamin R. Barber, "Justifying Justice: Problems of Psychology, Measurement and Politics in Rawls," *American Political Science Review*, LIX (June 1975).

9. *Ibid.*, 665.

10. Rawls, *op. cit.*, 154.

11. Stephen D. Krasner, *Defending the National Interest: Raw Materials Investments and U.S. Foreign Policy* (Princeton 1978) also refers to this distinction, largely to cue his notion of a hierarchy of national goals. I want instead to stress its parallel at another level: to a hierarchy of domestic

contents or referents.

12. (Boston 1955), p. 32ff, 79ff. Something similar lies behind the analyses of Norman O. Brown's *Life Against Death* and Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*.

13. For examples, see Fred L. Block, *The Origins of International Economic Disorder* (Berkeley 1977), and Alan Wolfe, *The Rise and Fall of the 'Soviet Threat': Domestic Sources of the Cold War Consensus* (Washington, D.C. 1979), as well as the earlier work of Gabriel Kolko and William Appleman Williams.

14. Bruce Andrews, "Explaining and Understanding State Action," paper presented at the International Studies Association Annual Convention, February 1976. Krasner, *op. cit.*, makes a related argument against deductive accounts. Yet he also claims: "The distribution of power in the international system is the critical variable in determining the broad foreign goals sought by American central decisionmakers." *Op cit.*, 15.

15. Alexander L. George and Robert Keohane, "The Concept of National Interests: Uses and Limitations," in *Report of the Commission on the Organization of the Government for the Conduct of Foreign Policy*, Appendix (U.S. Government Printing Office 1975), Part II, Chapter VII, 64-74. Compare Klaus Knorr, *Power and Wealth: The Political Economy of International Power* (New York 1973), chapter 2.

16. Robert Packenham, *Liberal America and the Third World: Political Development Ideas in Foreign Aid and Social Science* (Princeton 1973), 325, 324.

17. *Ibid.*

18. Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, *Power and Interdependence: World Politics in Transition* (Boston 1977), 8, 35.

19. Stephen D. Krasner, "A Statist Interpretation of American Oil Policy toward the Middle East," *Political Science Quarterly*, 94 (Spring 1979), 78.

20. As one example, see Gilpin, *op. cit.*, 142-47.

21. Krasner, "A Statist...", *op. cit.*, 94.

22. *Ibid.*, 80.

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23. Krasner, *Defending, op. cit.*, 12.

24. *Ibid.*, 43.

25. Krasner, "A Statist...," *op. cit.*, 95. A refreshing admission. The inability to confidently choose between statist and 'structural marxist' interpretations at various points should itself suggest the need for further conceptual probing.

26. Barthes, *op. cit.*

27. *Empire & Society: Misinterpreting America's War with Asia* (in progress), and "The Language of State Action," *op. cit.*

28. George and Keohane, *op. cit.*, make the distinction between "self-regarding and "other-regarding" interests. Krasner, *op. cit.*, and Pakenham, *op. cit.*, following Louis Hartz, Stanley Hoffmann, and others, tend to slight the functional, self-regarding, and structurally-rooted nature of liberal ideology.

29. See Bruce Andrews, "Social Rules and the State as a Social Actor," *World Politics XXVII* (July 1975), 521-540, and "Explaining and Understanding...," *op. cit.*

30. See Bruce Andrews, *Public Constraint and American Policy in Vietnam*, Sage Professional Papers in International Studies (Beverly Hills 1976), and Bruce Andrews, "Representation and Irresponsibility in Foreign Policy," paper presented at the Annual Convention of the International Studies Association, March 1977.

31. See, for example, Peter Katzenstein, ed., *Between Power and Plenty: Foreign Economic Policies of Advanced Industrial Countries*, special issue of *International Organization*, XXXI (Autumn 1977) and "International Relations and Domestic Structures," *International Organization*, XXX (Winter 1976), 1-46; Peter Gourevitch, "The Second Image Reversed: The International Sources of Domestic Politics," *International Organization*, XXXII (Autumn 1978), 881-912; James Kurth, "The Political Consequences of the Product Cycle," paper presented at the International Studies Association Annual Convention, March 1977.

32. Although, see Laurence H. Shoup and William Mintner, *Imperial Brain Trust* (New York 1977), and Peter Dale Scott, "The Vietnam War and the CIA-Financial Establishment," in Mark Selden, ed., *Remaking Asia* (New

York 1974), 91-154.

33. Katzenstein, "International Relations...", *op. cit.*, 17.

34. For two recent formulations: Ralph Miliband, "The Relative Autonomy of the State," paper presented at the 1977 Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association; and Nicos Poulantzas, *State, Power, Socialism* (London 1978). I

35. The statist or mercantilist perspectives can lead to a blurring of these distinctions. See Andrews, "Social Rules...", *op. cit.*, on the question of self-referentiality in the state/society relationship. Gourevitch, *op. cit.*, 895, notes that "The difference between the neomercantilists and the state-centered Marxists lies not in their view of the autonomy of the state... Rather it lies in their view of the ends served by the state (national interest for the neomercantilists, partial interests for the state-centered Marxists)... On the role of the state, the interesting conflict at present is that between the neomercantilists, state-centered Marxists, and Gerschenkronians on one side and the liberals, *interdependencistas*, and the economic Marxists within the dependencia school on the other."

36. Krasner, *Defending, op. cit.*, 333. Compare Fred Block, "Marxist Theories of the State in World System Analysis," in Barbara Hockey Kaplan, ed., *Social Change in the Capitalist World Economy* (Beverly Hills/London 1978), 33: "of course, there are always capitalist special interests attempting to get the state to act in their favor, as, for example, the oil companies, lobbying for energy policies that would maximize their profits. But when we are talking about the strategic level, the kind of state policies that rise above specific industrial interests because they are oriented to maintaining the conditions necessary for continued class rule domestically and keeping open possibilities for economic expansion abroad, then such reductionism is unnecessary."

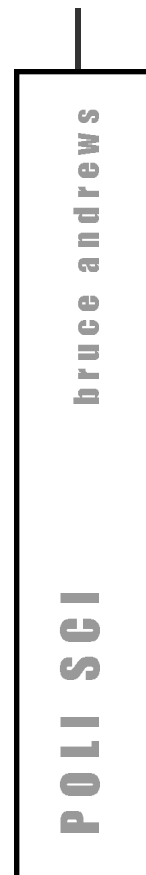
37. Andrews, "The Language...", *op. cit.* Once policy points back to a specific domestic paradigm, in other words, the construction and maintenance of that paradigm may call for further analysis. And so may the relationship between the paradigm and the actual character of domestic society, for that will tell us something about the 'social rationality' of policy. To acknowledge the importance of analyzing policy in terms of the domestic par-

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adigm, however, should help to postpone the attractions of a more reductionist mode of conceptualizing the relationship between society and state behavior.

SURPLUS  
SECURITY AND  
THE DOMESTIC  
PARADIGM





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10

Criticizing  
Economic  
Democracy  
[1980]

# CRITICIZING ECONOMIC DEMOCRACY

[1980]

“The Vietnam War Is Not a Mistake! Bring the War in Vietnam Home !“ These two clarion calls of the 1960s are on my mind, as I sit among 2,000 to 3,000 students. Tom Hayden and Jane Fonda are barnstorming this fall with their Campaign for Economic Democracy (CED). Today it’s at Fordham College amidst a lot of hoopla, controversy, and stirrings of the mixture that was so explosive ten years ago: student idealism and discontent (though this time the mixture is tempered with what some call “maturity” and others call self-centered passivity and cynicism)

“The next great reform on history’s agenda is the achievement of Economic Democracy.” The economy is governed by concentrated corporate power; our democratic political system is supposedly governed by popular will. The two principles are not compatible — one principle will gradually absorb the other (or has it already?). It’s corporate freedom *versus* democracy. Now, the two phrases about Vietnam seem relevant here. First, *Vietnam was not a mistake*. No, then and now, America’s problems are systemic — problems generated by a structure of power. Wars like Vietnam (or the development of nuclear power) are not mistakes, but are conscious policies, and typical consequences of a late capitalist system. A tight alliance between government and business exists. We don’t just see corporate pressures on government; there’s also a *structural delimiting* of the way the public interest is defined. Corporate priorities set the agenda of policy. And also: *bring the war home*. Didn’t this imply, stop avoiding these structural problems by focusing obsessively on foreign adventures (the great escape, the frontier)? Don’t let the energies needed for social transformation at home be siphoned off abroad. Don’t let patriotism or knee-jerk anti-communism be used as an excuse for the

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status quo or as an anesthetic. Awake from this terrible sleep.

Certain Fordham students would have none of it. They were bringing the war home another way — seemingly more intent on rewriting the history of the Vietnam war (to justify their patriotism? their insecurity?) than on hearing about our domestic troubles. The speakers were heckled and booed (visibly by young whites, wearing their uniforms of either military or athletic masculinity). A big “Go Home, Hanoi Jane” sign in evidence — and typically played up by the media. A barrage of questions about torture of U.S. POWs and the current policies of Vietnam — a continuing obsession. *Even at home*, the wounds of the war have not healed. Fonda finally had to interrupt a succession of anti-anti-war questions with “Don’t you care about America? Let’s concentrate on our own problems.”

At the end, many more-sympathetic students said it was all impractical—or asked, plaintively, What can we do?, complaining that Hayden and Fonda had given them no practical routes for political practice. These students had perhaps accepted the boundaries of the system under attack, so that “impractical” meant impossible, the way things worked now. The boundaries Hayden and Fonda were trying to alter had become taken-for-granted, accepted as fate, as natural phenomena. This is reification; it is also how mythology works. It helps our students look ahead to their individually styled careers, strutting with superiority in the face of such structural criticism. They can call it mere idealism, rhetoric, pie-in-the-sky, “not relevant.”

Such students are “going with the flow.” Today, conservative criticism of the very idea of structural change is fashionable. So is criticism of the liberal strategies and welfare-state measures derived from the New Deal. The political coalition which supported those strategies, as well as the Democratic Party which represents that coalition, is on the defensive. The recent period is characterized by a resurgence of corporate power and intolerance. The “principles” of corporate freedom are undermining the success of democracy. We see an active campaign by business (and conservative intellectuals) to demobilize an active public, to weaken any faith in the conscious political direction of society, and to roll back the hard-won gains of (in particular) the 1960s — for example, to value privatized, self-seeking behavior over community con-

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trol or political mobilization; to reduce the power of the working class, the poor, minorities, and women; to end the reluctance of the educated public to tolerate a costly interventionist foreign policy; and, business's greatest coup, to lay the blame for inflation at the door of government spending (thus immunizing oligopoly capitalism).

A campaign for economic democracy provides sharp contrast — calling as it does for a program of renewable energy, control over inflation, and regulation of the corporate world. Hayden and Fonda's analysis was structural. It centered on the task of freeing Americans from the exploitation of giant corporations. *Energy* and *public impotence* were keynotes. Nuclear power is at the target's center — a typical example of unbridled corporate power and profit-seeking at odds with the public interest and threatening an "Age of Total Catastrophe." It illustrates the larger problems: the government defends the priorities of big business almost like a reflex; it is impotent when it comes to directing a social system which is privately owned. At the heart of all the nostalgic references to competitive enterprise — the dictates of the market, the reality of individual freedom, and other blinding myths — is the fact that private ownership has become concentrated corporate power beyond the capacity of public or politicians to control. By determining prices, employment, and the flow of capital, it dwarfs even Presidential power (that tarnished liberal dream). It was indicted on these counts: centralized power, income inequality, loss of jobs, discrimination, pollution, cancer and other health hazards, product safety, consumer manipulation, decline of community, and inflation.

To combat this condition, a mass movement is needed — dedicated to gaining the power over the economic decision-process that we claim over the political one: hence, the pleasing tag, "Economic Democracy" (which they capitalize). It is designed to carry us into the "Age of Renewable Resources," to return a sense of purpose to public participation, and to give a shared vision and meaning to personal life. This is good old-fashioned anti-corporate sentiment and populist analysis. As one student said: "Sure, economic democracy sounds good — we all hate the corporations; but at the same time we're told to go out and get good jobs in them."

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The fatal flaw is not so obvious, and it may just be a predictable feature of political rhetoric (and here, the notion of many on the left that Hayden is on a self-aggrandizing ego trip or is playing stalking horse for Jerry Brown might account for their pulling punches, right and left). The flaw I'm talking about is *the gap between the explanation and the prescription*. Point blank, if the CED's analysis makes sense, their proposed remedies are hopelessly (helplessly) inadequate; and therefore, from the standpoint of education, misleading. As a coalition-building strategy for radical activists trying to build a majoritarian movement under the comforting banner of democracy, this gap between theory and practice might be a blessing. But for someone actually trying to grasp the structured complexity of the system we live under, and to draw from the analysis a clear idea about the changes that would be needed to transform it, the program of the Campaign for Economic Democracy is a tease.

On energy, they would promote alternative sources and conservation technologies, price controls, and divestiture. Yet the present condition may express a more basic (and intransigent) logic. Nuclear power, for instance, was developed because it fit, structurally, with the overall system that has come to depend on it; it promised profits, expansion, centralization, and a way of reducing competition. The growth of multinational corporate activity abroad (which they talk about restricting) makes sense in the same way. The *fundamental* qualities of both seem to call for more fundamental solutions than CED's ideas about price regulation or increasing participation by workers and consumers. Without a change of systems, wouldn't the broad horizons of decision be *roughly* the same? Would consumers or workers demand policies that cut dangerously against the grain of the system's principles? Wouldn't they become persuaded, as politicians have been, that these would lead to recession, inflation, and speedier economic decline?

When it comes to government, "accountability" becomes their criterion for change. As if the government's main problems lay in the *process* of policy-making and not in the limits which are placed on the *content* of policy by the need to reproduce the essential features of the. status quo (such as corporate freedom). Opening government up to middle-class reformers may be

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mere cosmetic capitulation. After all, in the absence of a new logic, wouldn't the "people" be just as dependent on the success of the system as the government is today? Isn't that dependence the Achilles heel of liberalism? "Accountability" as a panacea ignores this. Fetishizing process may help us forget the limits of the system itself. Personalizing things runs the same risks — like the CED's vague talk about the role of "rugged individualism," of how "we can be brave" and "thrust toward a larger victory" (quoting Vince Lombardi!). "One can be a pioneer — by bringing the new energy age into one's life" As if solar energy or "taking the people into consideration" would erase the uncomfortable fact that our society is divided into classes and that class interests conflict. Taking collective control over more and more areas of your social life means more than being taken into consideration.

The situation they draw attention to is not some separable sideshow: it seems intrinsic to a system of private ownership and control over investment and production. If they're serious in their analysis, some way of placing investments completely under social control would be required — to direct them away from the maximizing of private profits. For example, it's misleadingly superficial to talk like Hayden about the oil companies: "We want them to be in business to make a profit; O.K., but their primary function is to deliver gas and oil at prices we can afford." False. Profit and expansion is their primary function — and if that function is harder and harder to carry out, even reform politicians may cave in. Unless someone is willing to contemplate more drastic changes, they can be blackmailed by corporate warnings of "capital shortage," "stagnation," and the loss of "our competitive position" abroad. The result of this may be a new New Deal: a reformed private economy with a modernizing style of administration, this time requiring certain prerogatives of certain firms to be curtailed (for instance, the energy industry) so that the *national* interest of capitalism can be satisfied. This looks like an attack on big business, as the New Deal of the 1930s did, and it helps channel anti-business sentiment into less dangerous paths. In the end, it can bring about a systemic "tune-up" with a few particularist interests forced to curb their predatory instincts. With the current fiscal crisis, however, only the harsh curtailment of the government's social spending seems persuasive as a "solution" *within the*

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*system's limits*. And this can take place under the counter-cultureish “small-is-beautiful” auspices of a post-1960s white middle class as well as under the more militarized dictates of the (current) older patriarchs.

O.K., but they might create a mass movement. Maybe any popular outburst demanding control over social life is to be welcomed — even if it's pragmatic and narrowly issue-oriented. The implications of what looks like a new political culture may be far-reaching enough to necessitate more dramatic change later. Nevertheless, misleading analysis breeds false hopes. Beyond electing a few progressives and speeding the demise of nuclear power, does the mass movement have any place to go? After all, throughout U.S. history waves of popular mobilization tend to be “solved” with newer forms of what we could call prophylactic institutionalization. As Hayden admits: “If the Establishment reluctantly accepts the basic minimum demands of the movement, it will mean a setback for certain privileged groups, but the general status quo is maintained. The movement subsides with the coming of victory, the moderate wing of leadership is brought into the system and the more radical leadership is isolated, discredited, or destroyed.”

A clearer-headed movement might be smaller, but it wouldn't burn its members out or be absorbed so easily if its prescriptions fit its analysis. The maintenance of “the general status quo” may well be the source of the discontent: discontent which allows the movement's leaders to enter the system and then defend its institutions. And if the problem is the *principles* by which a privately-owned economy operates, then wouldn't those principles have to be changed? Capitalism itself and the corporate control over society would have to be transcended; a true economic democracy would be a radically democratic form of socialism. A real across-the-board democratization would require such an economic system. Otherwise, faced with the trade-off between public control over politics and corporate control over the economy, the former will give way to protect the latter.

For logic's sake, the CED's rejection of “socialism” makes little sense. What can it mean? They talk as if socialism meant “equality” and as if this required a giant bureaucratic albatross around our necks (both notions designed to put off the middle class). Either they think a slightly different

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form of capitalism will not keep generating the same problems they've built their campaign around (in which case their efforts are relatively trivial), or they don't understand that the real implications of the needed reforms are incompatible with the nature of capitalism itself (in which case their analysis is naive). Maybe they understand this, but are simply trying to test the limits and mobilize discontent. But then, how to explain their embrace of that perennially complacent view that criticizes bureaucracy and politicians and thinks the system can solve problems intrinsic to its nature? Their disavowal of socialism helps reinforce the conservative cliché that since state socialisms abroad are unresponsive to popular action, an American version could be no different. You would expect socialism to be the logical prescription, given their own analysis of the inherently undemocratic nature of a capitalist economy. Is the medicine too frightening? Is an overall vision being reduced to the few components that can be easily marketed? As Freud once said, "I like to avoid concessions to faint heartedness. One gives way first in words, and then little by little in substance too."



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The Political  
Economy of  
World Capitalism  
[1982]

# THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF WORLD CAPITALISM: THEORY AND PRACTICE

[1982]

Albert Bergesen, ed. *Studies of the Modern World-System*. New York: Academic Press, 1980.

John W. Meyer and Michael T. Hannan. eds. *National Development and the World System: Educational, Economic, and Political Change, 1950-1970*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1979.

Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Capitalist World-Economy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1979.

The mere appearance of all this work on the political economy of the world-system should tell us something. Capitalism has been analyzed as a relatively well-integrated social system with its own distinctive and internal dynamics, but the old insistence that it is integrated and internally governed at the national level is now being questioned. Its forms of organization are worldwide: it has organized the world.

To comprehend this increasingly visible phenomenon, a “world-system perspective” is being developed outside the confines of the existing community of international relations scholars. This perspective aspires to offer a new way of conceptualizing capitalism. On this terrain Marxist theory has already established a secure beachhead, even if it is one that remains largely outside the perspective of conventional social science. The terrain is now being contested on the Left. as the analysis of development by dependency theory has been carried back into the origins of the European world-system and forward into the present. The issues raised deserve serious attention.

This perspective does not form a single, rigorous theory. The literature

surrounding it is quite extensive and precludes simple summary.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, the books listed above are loose and often disjointed collections of disparate types of analysis. No systematic overview is possible. This essay will be a tentative, suggestive probe, proceeding by several stages. First, we take a brief look at the conceptualizations, features, trends, and contradictions of the world system, as they are summarized by Immanuel Wallerstein and others. Second comes a presentation, accompanied by considerable methodological skepticism, of some of the recently-anthologized empirical applications of dependency or world-system analysis to the contemporary period. Third, we summarize a conceptual critique of the world-system perspective that questions its characterization of capitalist production and class relations. We then confront the task of building a perspective more nearly adequate to the analysis of world capitalist development. The contribution offered here involves, fourth, a recasting of the relationship between national societies and world-system, as well as between economic and political processes at the national and interstate levels; and fifth, a discussion of the constitution and normalization of states within this structural whole, with a conceptual bow in the direction of the recent analysis of power by Michel Foucault. Finally, we need to ask about the perspective's implications in regard to predictions that can be made about the future of this system, as well as in regard to political practice oriented toward social change.

## 1. A WORLD-SYSTEM PERSPECTIVE

As a collective reality, the modern world-system is presented as the central arena for social action — in the past, the present, and the future. Originating in Europe in the “long” sixteenth century of 1450-1640 as a solu-

<sup>1</sup> Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Modern World System* (New York: Academic Press, 1974), is the major historical statement. Beyond the three works noted at the head of this essay, recent anthologies include the first three volumes of the Political Economy of the World-System annuals (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1978, 1979, 1980): Barbara Hockey Kaplan, ed., *Social Change in the Capitalist World Economy*, Walter Goldfrank, ed., *The World-System of Capitalism: Past and Present*, and Terence K. Hopkins and Immanuel Wallerstein, eds., *Processes of the World- System*. Also, see W. Ladd Hollist and James N. Rosenau, eds., *World Systems Debates*, a special issue. of *International Studies Quarterly* 25 (March 1981).

tion to the crisis of feudalism, the defining processes and relations of this world-system are economic. Conceptually, we can recast domestic and international politics, as well as the social processes underlying them, so that they reveal themselves as parts of this global whole, rather than as autonomous wholes.

The accumulation of capital structures society. For world-system theorists, however, capitalism is no longer the national mode that appears in more classical versions of political economy — rather, the transnational scope of capital is a defining characteristic. Even more idiosyncratically, world-system analysts presuppose a capitalism in which the exploitation of free labor by capital is no longer the defining feature; it represents only one type of proletarian status. Combining several forms of labor control, capitalism is seen as a mode of worldwide exchange relations and production for profit in a market. It has created a worldwide division of labor and productive specialization, stratified into zones and fragmented into national units. Exploitation involves a relationship between *nations* or groups of nations, between a “world bourgeoisie” and a “world proletariat.” Exchange is the unifier, linking the market to the process by which capital is accumulated.

The world market system is reconceptualized as a hierarchical totality. There is, for example, no single path of national development that can be specified and held up as a model. The late-starters cannot all follow the path marked out by the early risers. Many nations are peripheralized through incorporation into a world division of labor. “Development” thus acquires a new meaning: the attainment of a more advantageous position within the world-system. The unit of analysis is no longer the single nation-state or national society, and, for social-change strategies aimed at the transcendence of capitalism, the nation is no longer the focus. Instead, a pattern of global stratification is a consistent feature: the world economy is divided into core areas (the beneficiaries of capital accumulation) and peripheral areas, which are disadvantaged when it comes to appropriating the surplus. The division of core and periphery is a relationship of domination. Primary accumulation and the transfer of value from underdeveloped to developed areas are *persistent* features of capitalism (their fruits solidify the system by subduing class ten-

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sions in the core).

Within this world-system, the key disjuncture is thought to be the one that separates economic organization and processes, on the one hand, from political arrangements, on the other. The market is global but the polity is not. With the failure of the Hapsburg and Valois attempts at creating a global political empire, the world's political structure has been organized by an inter-state system of sovereign political units. The political practices and institutions of the system, and of its various units, are not autonomous. They develop in accordance with market opportunities, economic trends, and conflicting economic interests. Within a national setting, groups will attempt to strengthen and gain control over the national governmental apparatus (as well as over less institutionalized aspects of the state) in order to improve their position in the world market. State formation and political development therefore acquire a kind of teleology or functionalist significance. They are intimately related to the task of distorting the normal, and too often idealized, operation of the world market.

In Wallerstein's rereading of world history,<sup>2</sup> the strength of a nation's state apparatus will parallel the position of the society within the global division of labor. Core areas will spawn strong states, peripheral areas are likely to be characterized by weak states. With respect to global market opportunities, there is constant change in the states' relative positions. Nations will typically seek to protect their position and to improve their status within the international pecking order of surplus extraction. What looks like national development will actually consist of a successful attainment of the domestic and international preconditions for social mobility within the world-system.

The system seems rather tightly knit, or perhaps "over-integrated."<sup>3</sup> For that reason, and because of its implications for social change, Wallerstein's

<sup>2</sup> For very helpful summary statements, see Christopher Chase-Dunn and Richardson Rubinson, "Toward a Structural Perspective on the World System," *Politics and Society* 7 (1977): 453-76; and Terence K. Hopkins and Immanuel Wallerstein et al., "Patterns of World-System Development: A Research Proposal," *Review* 1(1977): 111-45.

<sup>3</sup> The term is Peter Worsley's. See his excellent recent essay, "One World or Three? A Critique of the World-System Theory of Immanuel Wallerstein," *Socialist Register 1980*, ed. by Ralph Miliband and John Saville (London: Merlin Press, 1980).

stress on *contradiction* is worth emphasizing. Contradictions will occur in three specific realms, each deriving from one of the world-system's defining features. The first two are familiar from classical Marxist theorizing about national political economies. One results from the imbalance between world supply and world demand. As long as productive decisions are made by individual enterprises, this imbalance will be the unplanned consequence of continuous mechanization and commodification. A continuous increase in productive capacity is not paralleled by those changes in national class structures and income distributions that would generate an effective demand sufficient to monetize the products of growing world capacity.

The longer secular trends are thought to derive from the expansionist economic logic of the system: increasing proletarianization in order to generate the needed demand to maintain profit rates, on the one hand, and, on the other, a more and more visible cash nexus and heightening political problems that result from the worldwide shift to wage employment. A second contradiction occurs between ostensibly "free" labor in the marketplace (at least in certain regions, concentrated within the core) and the authoritarianism of productive relations in the workplace. The costs of coopting workers and damping resistance will increase. But while effective demand may increase in the process, moderating the first contradiction, there is a snag at the political level. Because of the necessary extension of state control, and the problems involved in safeguarding political authority at an acceptable cost, state actors prefer to legitimate authority rather than resort to wholesale coercion. Yet the price of legitimation increases over time. Increasing costs of cooptation and increasing difficulties in maintaining class peace put a constraint on world-system development.

The final contradiction is set by that disjuncture between political form and economic content which characterizes the world system at several levels. "One might say: what the states try to unify, the world-economy tears asunder."<sup>4</sup> This is an aspect of any world economy not organized as a single political empire. The growth of state power, along with increasing politiciza-

<sup>4</sup>Hopkins and Wallerstein, "Patterns of World-System Development," p. 113.

tion. may bring about what Wallerstein calls a “Janissarization” of the ruling classes (increasing control of the economy by managerial elites may create a dispersion of the will to resist or coopt the so-called “world working classes”); core-state competition and conflict between weak and strong states; and conflicts between the interests of the state, as defined by government officials, and the interests of the dominant capitalists within the national setting. In each case, the political stability needed for economic growth and capital accumulation will often be absent. Meanwhile, economic transactions will add their own erratic complexities and cyclical patterns. The system as a whole expands and contracts. National political units jockey for position; state actors seek to retain statuses that are fossils of earlier action. Eventually, these contradictions may transform the system as a whole. The total freeing of factors of production and the approach of the limits of structural expansion will (supposedly) spell the doom of world capitalism. “The system will not be able to survive the light of day.”<sup>5</sup> We are said to be living in this transition to a “post-capitalist” world-system.

## 2. RESEARCH EXTENSIONS AND RESEARCH PROBLEMS

This is only the barest sketch of the world-system perspective, as set forth by Wallerstein, Terence Hopkins, and others. It has spawned two distinct research programs, the second of which is amply documented in the anthologies under review.

One body of recent work accepts the historiographic stance of the original exponents and attempts a case-study approach. The conceptual pointers of a world-system perspective help them chart specific economic, political, or cultural trends within a regional or national setting.<sup>6</sup> At its most concrete, this work verges on detailed historical description with taxonomic flourishes. For the most part, it seems derivative of existing theory — an appli-

<sup>5</sup>Wallerstein, *The Capitalist World-Economy*, p. 129.

<sup>6</sup>See, especially, studies collected in Kaplan, *Social Change*; Goldfrank, *World-System of Capitalism*; Hopkins and Wallerstein, “Patterns of World-System Development”; and those appearing since 1977 in the journal of the Fernand Braudel Center, *Review*.

cation or almost an upholstering of it — rather than forcing us to recast the perspective in creative ways. The scattered nature of its presentation prohibits any systematic overview here. Leaving aside the need for imaginative conceptual recasting, however, the perspective as it stands now does seem to lend itself to the narrowly-based studies of the Sage volumes as well as to Wallerstein's sweeping generalizations. The framework is tidy and schematic enough to accommodate both.

Methodologically, the implications of holism are controversial. The modern age, after all, contains only one world political economy (a universe of cases with an *N* of 1). As a result, even macrosocial changes at the national level may be so glacial that they do not register as intertemporal variations. It becomes difficult, if not impossible, to fill the real gaps in our understanding with the more atomistic style of research design that American social science currently vaunts. Can that atomism offer an alternative to the bold strokes or painstaking detail of an interpretative history pursued along more continental lines? Can the apparatus of crossnational comparative analysis escape it? The methodological risks remain.

Inspired by the way a world-system approach can conceptualize the key relationships, a second body of recent work in sociology has adopted state-of-the-art quantitative techniques to model institutional change. The value of portions of the Bergesen and much of the Meyer and Hannan volumes lies in this effort.

Causation and interaction, however, are supposed to be internal to the world-system; the system is not conceived of as a field of exogenous influences acting on atomized and separable phenomena. National societies are thought to be neither social wholes nor the kinds of self-contained entities whose domestic features are interdependent in a way that could generate real change internally. Internal institutions are partly aspects of world development, and in many ways they are responsive constructions of a wider system. To the extent they are such constructions, causal comparative analysis will have less obvious payoffs; its technical virtuosity may not redeem it. Its study of separable societies and separate independent and dependent variables rests on assumptions that a world-system approach must explicitly contest. Meyer and

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Hannan, for example, note at the outset, “Were we to begin afresh, we would have sought more systematically to link development at the national level with changes in the structure of the world system.”<sup>7</sup> Yet even where the operationalizations of these explicit linkages are pursued, they often seem mechanical. Being limited to available (national) data from 1950 to 1970 and a research design that analyzes change over time in measures performed on national societies (the units of analysis), the results included in the Meyer and Hannan volume are limited in their ability to illuminate the process of development. As various authors admit, the units—as well as the features glossed by specific quantitative indicators — are ongoing historical creations of the processes of a global political economy.

Several of the quantitative studies, for example, focus on the association of national economic dependence with the nature of a nation’s domestic institutional structure and economic performance. Some of the crossnational analysis in the Meyer and Hannan volume gives us more up-to-date evidence of these relationships. Societies can be meaningfully differentiated by degrees of dependence; however, the trends are not conceptualized in a consistent way. Sometimes they are cast along the lines of a fairly mechanical version of dependency theory and sometimes in accordance with the overall positional structure of the world-system. We may expect hybrids of these approaches to be awkward and insufficiently self-aware in the beginning, but the danger only increases when holistic assumptions about a global system must be filtered through the disaggregative screen of crossnational quantitative studies.<sup>8</sup>

Yet at the very least, this quantitative analysis adds detail to our description of the post-World War Two era. In spite of their mixed lineage, the studies reveal some interesting findings. The unequal distribution of income within national boundaries, for example, is more prominent in cases classified as investment dependence. Recent international relations between core and periphery could thus be said to reproduce or reinforce domestic inequalities. Less impressive records of economic development are also associated with

<sup>7</sup> “Preface,” Meyer and Hannan, *National Development*, p. viii.

<sup>8</sup> Is a 20-year period, for example, enough to make panel analysis and structural equation methods significantly more explanatory and less descriptive than the misleading cross-sectional correlations?

indicators of investment dependence, except with respect to production in mining.<sup>9</sup> These findings complement other recent studies showing similar relationships with export-partner concentration (used to measure trade dependence). Growth, however, does not seem necessarily to be affected by the concentration on categories of production (industrial goods versus raw materials, for example) that is supposed to reflect a nation's position in the world marketplace. By themselves, these national specifications are not the crux of underdevelopment.<sup>10</sup>

National economic dependence — arguably like peripheral status — should be associated with measures of reduced strength for the state apparatus. As these studies hypothesize, dependent areas would be characterized by states that are weaker yet which display a greater centralization of authority (as in one-party regimes, for example). State strength, when controlling for levels of economic dependence, should in turn be positively associated with economic growth. State weakness would therefore represent one vehicle by which dependence retards growth. Without aggressive state action — and even this is no panacea — 'late development' may prove impossible. Dominant interests in peripheral areas, however, may predictably resist government controls on the local economy in order to create an attractive investment climate. This is, of course, backed up by direct intervention on the part of core countries and by the stipulations that accompany loans and aid and investment. If we can accept the indicators, the findings at hand tend to support these hypotheses (once oil-exporting countries are excluded from the sample). Export-partner concentration and external public debt, for example, are both significant-

9 Christopher Chase-Dunn, "The Effects of International Economic Dependence on Development and Inequality," and Jacques Delacroix, "The Permeability of Information Boundaries and Economic Growth," both in Meyer and Hannan, *National Development*.

10 Jacques Delacroix, "The Export of Raw Materials and Economic Growth," in *ibid.* As we see a different international division constructed in the current period—based on production processes rather than differentiated by product—this will become more obvious. The categories used, grounded in international exchange relationships, may be diverting our attention from the (significantly internationalized) relations of production that underlie the international division of labor. Here, in accounting for underdevelopment, a Marxist stress on modes of production and national social formations may have a greater explanatory yield. See, for example, Susanne Jonas and Marlene Dixon, "Proletarianization and Class Alliances in the Americas," in Hopkins and Wallerstein, *Processes of the World-System*, John G. Taylor, *From Modernization to Modes of Production* (Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Humanities Press, 1979); and Ian Roxborough, *Theories of Underdevelopment* (London: Macmillan, 1979).

ly associated with government revenue (the crude indicator used to measure state strength). The degree to which state weakness elicits dependency, which in turn lowers state strength (in a mutually interactive pattern), should be addressed.

A significant amount of the quantitative work in the Meyer and Hannan volume highlights the domestic role of education. These studies show the relationship that economic development, state power, national independence, and political participation have with the extension of national educational systems, as well as the degree to which national economic development is associated with educational expansion.<sup>11</sup> To sum up the formulations, educational expansion below the university level is said to increase rates of economic growth. But crossnational societal differences play a smaller role than we might have imagined in accounting for the measures of the explosive growth of educational systems since World War Two. The analysis indicates the need to specify a more prominent and more uniform role for states within the dynamic of capitalist development. Educational growth, tightly controlled by national states, joins what these crossnational researchers claim is a tendency toward a homogeneous modernization of domestic social structures. An apparently independent logic of global social organization has become embodied in national institutions.<sup>12</sup>

These studies do highlight some of the world economy's constraints and consequences, but they cannot examine them as long-term features that have, over time, created the conditions of the present. Instead, in order to make inferences from existing data, social phenomena are transformed into quantifiable indicators with a demonstrable "causal efficacy" over the short term (1950-1970, for example). The key problem is clear: longer-term structural phenomena are not open to this kind of demonstration. By analyzing dependence as currently operationalized, we will be limited in what we can conclude about global dynamics. We cannot use active verbs to speak confidently of a nation's world position actively retarding development, reducing

<sup>11</sup> John W. Meyer et al., "National Economic Development, 1950-70: Social and Political Factors," in Meyer and Hannan, *National Development*.

<sup>12</sup> John W. Meyer et al., "The World Educational Revolution, 1950-70," in *ibid*.

state strength, creating growth, etc. For example, hypotheses about the impact of trade or investment dependence may be merely a static description of specific market relations among national societies at a period in time far along the historical trajectory of world capitalist development. Our studying the micro-dynamics of the present renders that trajectory collapsed or miniaturized. Here is a trap in which some of the attempted quantifications of the dependency perspective are snared. We can probably expect a similar fate for world-system analysis at the hands of methodologically advanced scholars of a more conventional stripe.

Even these quantifications of world-system analysis, by locating a wide variety of diverse phenomena within this global context, can stir up some interesting trouble in their respective scholarly domains. At least they avoid the presumptions of national autonomy or insulation from international processes that often bedevil conventional crossnational research. The national factors under study are dependent variables in more ways than one. Some can be related, conceptually and sometimes empirically, to the overall trends or patterning of the world division of labor regarded as a collective or organic reality. Customary interpretations built on domestic factors will fail to capture this relationship and may therefore prove unsatisfactory, especially when compared to a “world-system” account. In that sense, the world-system perspective serves at least to sensitize researchers to the crucial role of the global socioeconomic setting in structuring national phenomena. The demonstrations proceed by transforming the “part-whole” perspective into a more mechanical if more manageable form. I single out a few instances from the Bergesen volume.

In Robert Wuthnow’s analysis,<sup>13</sup> religious movements exhibit an interesting correspondence with changes in the world economy. (This makes sense insofar as a population’s position within the world division of labor helps define for its members what the central problems of existence appear to be.) Connections can be worked out between periods of international economic expansion, polarization, and reconstitution, on the one hand, and categories

<sup>13</sup>Robert Wuthnow, “World Order and Religious Movements,” in Bergesen, *Studies*

of characteristic religious activity, on the other. In order, those categories are revitalization and reformation, militancy and counterreform, and accommodation and sectarianism. Alterations in the world economic structure generate increases in religious activity. Periods of relative structural stasis — the late nineteenth century, for example — correlate with periods of relative calm among religious movements. Domestic changes do not comprise an equally persuasive independent variable.

The development of science within the European setting is also linked to national mercantilist policies, which vary in accordance with global economic dynamics.<sup>14</sup> Levels of scientific activity show a rough correspondence with national positions within the European world economy in the sixteenth to nineteenth centuries. Again, this occurs *despite* differences in domestic structure. (If domestic explanations cannot account for these patterns, a noneconomic international explanation — tying mercantilism to considerations of defense and configurations of military power — will eventually have to be compared or integrated.) Heightened national competition has been conducive to scientific competition; the institutional autonomy of science has been aided by the world-system's political decentralization. The claim is that it sets the stage for the dynamism of competing interests, the need for legitimating state authority, and the need to develop national resources in a context of rivalry.

Claims for the usefulness of a world-system account also inform the study of the interdependence of regions within a global social whole. Domestic explanations of core-state policies for controlling the periphery can be illuminated when viewed in this global context. Patterns of colonialism and imperial relations between core and periphery, for example, are found to covary with the degree of stability within the core. During times of core instability, explicit political regulation of core-periphery relations is reasserted; colonialism and mercantile regulation of trade are examples. If stability returns to the core, this regulation becomes less necessary. A free trade imperialism can replace extra-economic mechanisms: Integration of the system

<sup>14</sup> Robert Wuthnow, "The World-Economy and the Institutionalization of Science in Seventeenth-Century Europe," in *ibid.*

now resides with the more distinctly economic linkages of the world-economy and less with the more political linkages of colonialism.”<sup>15</sup>

Yet this integration is not guaranteed, nor is it demonstrated to be benign. Their inability to pursue autonomous policies adds to the legitimation problems of peripheral regimes. As Meyer and others suggest, once states are depicted as the necessary engines of progress within world politics, the criteria for legitimacy become unreachable. Among dependent states, one result may be a greater incidence of one-party regimes and weaker patterns of popular representation. Centralized regimes, in other words, can partially suppress the so-called revolution of rising expectations by delegitimizing claims for certain categories of remedial state action. When this is coupled with what we know of the economic mechanisms for controlling interdependence between global strata, the system’s integration at all levels seems more palpable.<sup>16</sup>

The logic of global social organization is the subject and its embodiments are national. With these studies, we move closer to a structuralist reading of global patterning, a reading that dilutes or “class-neuters” the political-economy language of dependency theory and the Marxist stress on exploitation to give us more magisterial sociological pronouncements about global norms and a functional division of labor. Further schematization may take us even farther, either to the trivialization of the perspective by building empirical work on inadequately theorized terrain, or to the self-enclosing dangers of a pure structuralist theory.<sup>17</sup>

### 3. CONCEPTUAL PROBLEMS AND CRITIQUE

We can safely predict that the most sustained critique of the world-system approach will take the form of complacent neglect. This will be

<sup>15</sup> Albert Bergesen and Ronald Schoenberg, “Long Waves of Colonial Expansion and Contraction,” in *ibid.*, p. 239.

<sup>16</sup> George M. Thomas and John W. Meyer, “Regime Changes and States Power in an Intensifying World-State-System,” in *ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> See the discussion of semiotics and structuralism in Bruce Andrews, “The Language of State Action,” *International Interactions* 6 (1979): 267—89. On this broad topic, several days could well be spent in the company of the brilliant dialogue between E. P. Thompson’s *The Poverty of Theory and Other Essays* (New York: Monthly Review, 1978) and Perry Anderson’s *Arguments within English Marxism* (London: NLB, 1980).

prominent among scholars who still display great confidence in conventional paradigms of developmentalism, comparative politics, and interstate interaction theorized along liberal-pluralist or realist-statist lines. Many will go on as if nothing has changed, holding these theoretical innovations at arm's length as if they were only minor irritants with which their less tradition-minded students and colleagues are distracting themselves. This is an uninteresting, self-protective response, which may preoccupy the mainstream.

More searching criticisms, designed to spur the development of this analytical perspective, can be put under two general headings: problems with a holism that is, at the same time, far-reaching and yet superficial; and problems with the stress on exchange relations, as distinct from the underlying social relations of capitalist production. These criticisms will allow us to go beyond our original framework in subsequent sections of this essay. We can redraw the picture of the state apparatus and the sources of domestic state action and signification, introduce a different analysis of modes of integration and core-periphery relations, and get beyond a structuralist holism and its attempt to characterize domestic social structures or domestic politics as “precipitates” of the world market.

The holism of the world-system perspective is striking; certainly, it is striking at first glance. Even so, as Albert Bergesen argues, it has not reached its logical conclusion.<sup>18</sup> If we model it according to a classical tradition of constructing models of social order, several stages seem to precede it; their limitations give us a hint as to how the perspective needs to be extended. Within the tradition most familiar to Anglo-American social thought, utilitarianism appears as the first overall conceptual framework for analyzing social phenomena. Its unit is the individual. The individual's instrumental acts are later institutionalized, coming to form relatively stable systems of contract, exchange, and specialization of labor. In the nineteenth century, the assumption that individual interaction can generate social order is gradually displaced by a more sociological viewpoint. Society is then conceived of as more than just an agglomeration of utilitarian interactions; it acquires a systematic life of

<sup>18</sup> Albert Bergesen, “From Utilitarianism to Globology: The Shift from the Individual to the World as a Whole as the Primordial Unit of Analysis,” in Bergesen, *Studies*.

its own. Social order actually contains a set of precontractual norms and understandings from which interactions *internal to it* are derived. Marx's critique of classical political economy follows similar lines: the Smithian emphasis on exchange is contextualized — that is, located in a determinate set of class relations. In each case, the sequence of individual and society is reversed.

From this vantage-point, the world-system perspective seems like a throwback. It resembles a more transcendent utilitarianism, where interaction among national units (or self-conscious class agents) generates a specialization of productive activities through trade. Interaction still takes precedence over social order; it structures the world division of labor, and it is determinative of order and exploitation at the world-system level. This emphasis on worldwide exchange relations (whether as key factors in the original transition from feudalism, in the expansion of the capitalist order, or in charting the future) can be criticized for being individualistic and based on interaction. After all, even these national interactions and exchange are not self-explanatory or free-standing — we can trace their emergence and reproduction back to a shaping social context. Unequal exchange, for example, is only the precipitate of social relations on a world scale. It is those relations that need accounting for.

If interaction can be recontextualized in this part-whole manner, we would then have a final encompassing view; the significance of the individual units would be drastically subordinated to the corporate whole. We could subsume the relations characteristic of a particular division of labor under the overall structure of world capitalism — not as a market or mode or circulation but, in terms closer to those of Marxism, as a world political economy, as a global mode of the production of material life, as a complicated, worldwide social formation. This system, in turn, would be inscribed by class relationships that seem to underlay such things as the self-reproducing quality of the core-periphery division. But however useful such a conceptual achievement might be, we have first to ask if the original world-system perspective can accommodate it.

Robert Brenner<sup>19</sup> has offered the most probing criticism of the world-

<sup>19</sup> "The Origins of Capitalist Development: A Critique of Neo-Smithian Marxism," *New Left Review* no. 104 (1977): 25-92. This remains an indispensable discussion.



system perspective by questioning its most fundamental definition (and conception) of capitalism. His attack centers on the perspective's neglect or misreading of the sphere of production. Like dependency theory, world-system analysis seems pre-Marxist in its neo-Smithian emphasis on the determinative importance of exchange relations. Can a division of labor (for example, the export specialization that ties the core and periphery together through coerced primitive accumulation and unequal exchange) actually define the social patterning of production and accumulation as processes of the world-system?

The Marxist answer would be "no." For Marxists, the focus on the sphere of circulation will remain this perspective's most disabling flaw. Capitalism as a mode of production requires more than a commercial class (or stratum of countries) able to appropriate surplus through trade. A class of workers selling labor power on the market is also needed, to create the disciplinary force of capitalist productive relations. For a society to participate in a worldwide network of exchange does not imply the domination of the capitalist mode of production in that area, nor does it mean that that area is a constituent part of the system of capitalist production. To extend the categories of exploitation and class struggle after the fashion of world-system theorists is therefore troubling.<sup>20</sup>

Still, in a critique based on the centrality of capitalist production, class gets anchored nationally in the relationship between industrial capital and wage labor in core countries. World-system theorists would still contend that the concept of class, like capitalist development itself, needs to be reconceptualized. A new lexicon might let us rethink social relations on a world scale and get beyond an exclusive focus on compartmentalized relationships within national societies. In this view, "class" relations of exploitation take place between (and connect) the core and the periphery; they are precipitated out

<sup>20</sup> Patrick McGowan, for one instance, homogenizes the definition of exploitation as "the process creating surplus value from unequal exchange" ("Imperialism in World-System Perspective," in Hollist and Rosenau, *World System Debates*, p. 46, fn. 2). Taylor, *From Modernization to Modes of Production*, chap. 3, attributes this conceptual slippage on the part of dependency theory to the use of an imprecise notion of "surplus" (derived from Baran and Sweezy) that precludes any adequate theorizing of the specificity of capitalist production based on wage-labor. This makes it difficult to grasp the uneven, contested *history* of world capitalism.

of a global division of labor. The structuring role of these relations in shaping unequal exchange and market phenomena, and the national ability to take advantage of or be vulnerable to market possibilities, might need to be given greater weight. Class struggle constructs politics, but classes may be world-wide.

Yet what is the analytical status of these “world classes”? This application of a term taken from the realm of production to combinations of nations preempts the possibility of applying it to social forces located within national boundaries and extending beyond them. It seems that, to be understood, extended capital accumulation on a world scale needs to be situated within specifically capitalist social relations of production (the commodification of labor power). To situate it outside any such system of social relations and locate it exclusively within a trade-based division of labor between the global core and periphery will distort the picture of capitalist development. Like dependency theory, it will also tend to shift the site of appropriate political praxis to the periphery.

A more classically Marxist view is persuasive here. Its critique suggests an alternative view of class structures of production, surplus extraction, and class struggle as elements that shape the development of national societies, politics, and state policies. We cannot comprehend international exchange in terms of functionalist imagery, nor can we comprehend it solely from the point of view of ruling classes that behave teleologically in order to maximize their position in a world market. Dominant classes do not introduce new, advantageous forms of labor control and state structure in a social vacuum; these processes do not occur without national resistance and conflict, nor do they happen without regard for changing relations of production. Such a “market-functionalist” view of national politics might follow logically from neo-Smithian definitions. But the market is not the calculator of production; the market is neither self-structuring nor autonomous. Detailed power over a nation’s accumulation process and its embodiment in domestic society and social practices is a crucial part of that process. To reduce so much of this to core-periphery exchange relations is question-begging. Accumulation operates, instead, through a complicated field of power relations, continuous class

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formation and deformation, and value-laden struggles over competing beliefs and needs. Praxis, in this reading, will rest on class divisions that derive from specifically capitalist production.

Almost as soon as an explanation based on core-periphery exchange is offered, it requires another explanation at a deeper level. Further analysis will have to accommodate the underlying production context of exchange relations. It will also have to take into account the intertwined role of state activity at the domestic level and the structure of the interstate system and configurations of strategic power.<sup>21</sup>

#### 4. THE STATE AND THE WORLD-SYSTEM

After so much scholarly attention to seemingly self-enclosed domestic systems, it is refreshing to find the realities of international capital and imperialism given such prominence. The essential boldness of the world-system vision lies in its very ability *pronouncedly* to conceptualize the connection between state or society and world economy as a phenomenon of part and whole. But the onesidedness of a view that posits so many phenomena as being internal to the global structure can be just as striking. The problems are twofold: they concern the role allotted to individual states, and the explanation of domestic structures by reference to global ones. In this section, with occasional assistance from the research under review, we can begin to clarify these conceptual issues.

The troubling assertion is that national units are “non-systems” and that the domestic politics of nations are constructed over time by world-market relationships. “Exchange generates power; the analysis and institutionalization of exchange generates authority.”<sup>22</sup> But how determinative is this gen-

<sup>21</sup> On the conceptual status of the interstate system in these conceptualizations, see Christopher Chase-Dunn's excellent recent piece. “Interstate System and Capitalist World-Economy: One Logic or Two,” in Hollist and Rosenau, *World System Debates*, pp. 19—42. There he answers the criticism of Aristide R. Zolberg, “Origins of the Modern World System: A Missing Link,” *World Politics* 33 (January 1981): 253-81. A comprehensive treatment of the perspective will have to come to terms with this issue; for now, this interchange between Chase-Dunn and Zolbert will have to suffice.

<sup>22</sup> John W. Meyer, “The World Polity and the Authority of the Nation-State,” in Bergesen, *Studies*, p. 135. Or compare Wallerstein (*Modern World System*, p. 157): “The different roles in the world division of labor led to different class structures which led to different politics.”

erator? Especially in the contemporary period, such an assertion neglects the realities of domestic sovereignty. It is also prone to neglect the significance retained by the conflict between capital and labor within a national context for the explanation of state policies and political development. The international realm is not autonomous. We need to see how the horizontal structuralism implied by the network of exchange and division of labor is intersected by a vertical dimension of state purpose, desire, and signification. It is, after all, this determination of world outcomes by national units that makes the economic sphere so much more competitive; certainly, the fashionable rediscovery of statism and neomercantilism among core countries tells us this much.

One key area for study concerns the ways in which a state attempts to organize society, as well as the forms in which resistance to that organizing is expressed. The need to organize and restructure society increases as the institutional preconditions for capital accumulation become increasingly severe. The politics involved are national; they help fashion the domestic institutional structure, a social structure of accumulation.<sup>23</sup>

A world-system perspective would expect these social contexts to be differentiated quite exactly in accordance with a state's position in the world economy. A process of global stratification and restratification is the conditioning factor. Dependency analysis gives us a hint of this: indicators for dependence in trade and investment are associated with the suppression of autonomous state policies. Domestic class formation anchors the process of peripheralization. as peripheral elites ally themselves with core interests. Peripheral economic structures fit the requirements of a global division of labor rather than the needs of the indigenous population. The internally generated surplus is siphoned off to support the accumulation of capital in the core, rather than being deployed for independent development and political institutionalization on the periphery.

To comprehend this arrangement fully, however, we have to investi-

<sup>23</sup> David Gordon, "Stages of Accumulation and Long Economic Cycles." in Hopkins and Wallerstein. *Processes of the World-System*, p. 17. Compare Thomas Weisskopf. "The Current Economic Crisis in Historical Perspective," *Socialist Review* no. 57 (May-June 1981), p. 13.

gate the social construction of national societies and politics. No form of exchange-reductionism will suffice. The economic realm is not autonomous and thus anything resembling an economic determinism will give us an overly schematic chart of both the domestic social structures included within the world-system and the state policies designed to represent them. The much-heralded “plurality of social time,” the complicated articulation of different modes of production within a single domestic society, and the dynamics of resistance will give way to something less differentiated. In particular, we must give greater weight to the *national* structuring role of class relations in shaping market phenomena and the ability to take advantage of, or be vulnerable to, market possibilities. These are domestic political abilities and disabilities, but not uniform ones. The linkage between relations of global production and the role of the nation-state still awaits adequate theorizing.

Certainly, the nation-state is increasingly dominant as a social form. As the essays under review note, state activities are more and more organized around a rationalized approach toward economic growth.<sup>24</sup> Again, success in world economic competition is not only a concern of economic elites. It will appear to governments as a virtual precondition for development. The organization of society becomes a variable resource in a worldwide economic game. This internal social dimension of world competition needs to be stressed, for the effects are reciprocal: from social formation and state to world-system and, continuously, back again.

In several of the studies under review, the growth in educational systems is claimed to be an example of such an articulation of world processes at the domestic level. It corresponds to the general expansion of governmental authority in all types of countries.<sup>25</sup> This expanding political reach is instrumentalized in relation to the state’s commitment to national economic progress. Government revenue since 1945 shows a positive relationship with gross national product; its positive association shows even greater strength for

<sup>24</sup> We also need to stress that this approach is sustained by certain domestic political and class configurations, which cannot be deductively derived from the global structure.

<sup>25</sup> Meyer et al., “National Economic Development,” and Richard Rubinson, “Dependence, Government Revenue, and Economic Growth, 1955—1970,” in Meyer and Hannan, *National Development*.

poorer countries. The state's ability to intervene in domestic social organization is positively related to economic growth. We might include, in other words, broad increases in state power as another form in which global processes are expressed: "Less developed states attempt forced mobilization and/or control in competing in the world system, while more developed ones tend to absorb (or be absorbed in) their societies through nationbuilding."<sup>26</sup> In order for a nation to advance or hold a place in the pattern of economic stratification presupposed by world-system theorists, aggressive national mobilization becomes a precondition.

Some recent studies suggest the need to recast discussion of the state along these lines, but the theoretical yield is still uncertain. From Wallerstein's analysis, we would expect to find a differentiation in state strength occurring along core-periphery lines, with the so-called semiperiphery occupying a middle position. Historically, export-oriented elites in command of primary production in the periphery are prone to resist strong state structures, for the existence of such state structures might catalyze demands for either national independence or indigenous development. State strength would be something like a dependent variable differentiated according to world-market position. The quantitative studies of the postwar period, however, show a consistent growth in state activity, state expansiveness, and centralization of authority across most countries. An explanation that locates this trend within the internationalization of capital, or as part of the dominant global mode of production, has not yet been fully worked out.<sup>27</sup>

Given the somewhat disabling stress on exchange relationships, what alternative account can accommodate these findings? In Meyer and Boli-Bennett's work,<sup>28</sup> the notion of a *world polity* is introduced to stand alongside

<sup>26</sup> Meyer et al., "National Economic Development," p. 90.

<sup>27</sup> This has made the world-system perspective vulnerable to exponents of a more conventional emphasis on the determinative pressures of the interstate political system. See Zolberg's interchange with Chase-Dunn, mentioned earlier. One alternative possibility for social-theory formation, as a way to get beyond the idiographic emphasis of the world-system perspective, is to take a comparative look at social class and state formation in the Third World. For two recent British attempts, see Taylor, *From Modernization to Modes of Production*, and Roxborough, *Theories of Underdevelopment*.

<sup>28</sup> See Meyer, "World Polity"; Thomas and Meyer, "Regime Changes"; and John Boli-Bennett, "The Ideology of Expanding State Authority in National Constitutions, 1870-1970" in Meyer and Hannan, *National Developments*, for this line of argument.

the sociological division of labor. It fills the analytical gaps that follow from an original unwillingness to characterize the world system in terms of specifically capitalist relations of production. A world political ideology and imperative is said to be at work; state actors are virtually required to expand their activities if they hope to protect the viability of dominant social interests. This world polity is said to contain world political rules, which underprop and legitimate the nation-state system. States are empowered by a world political culture that projects the ideology and organizational logic of the world economy. Global characteristics, rather than national ones, are, in other words, still determining.

A world polity is said to spawn national political systems as constitutive citizens. World political rules would actually precipitate sovereignties and, along with them, the universal goal of economic progress toward which state power is instrumental. This might help account for certain anomalies that an explanation focused solely on the world-system as an economic network cannot handle: the state system's overall stability as an organizational solution, the social modernization of the periphery, and the global shift toward politically constructed paradigms of value and social organization (i.e., postindustrialism). State constitutional authority, for example, does not simply mirror the reach of state power. It expands even more extensively in the periphery — possibly as a form of ideological overcompensation. An increasingly intense competition for the improvement of national status helps to homogenize the goals of individual governments.

Here we have something like a global political determinism or teleology to set next to economic versions. In this view, the social constitution of exchange (and of the units within which exchange takes place) is a reciprocal process. An institutional system of rationalized and bureaucratic power is not just a dependent variable, reducible to exchange relations. Instead, rationalized collective action serves to organize reality in its own right and on a global basis. “Economic systems, as they become stabilized, generate polities: accountings of value such that the exchanges make sense and are given legitimacy” and stability.<sup>29</sup> Recalling and reversing Polanyi, this argument posits a

<sup>29</sup> Meyer, “World Polity,” p. 113.

Great *Un*-transformation in recent decades. In national settings, the determination of value is now thought to be accomplished quite self-consciously apart from the force of markets and world price arrangements. It is legitimated by a world political culture, with its modernizing intellectuals and its forms of ideological hegemony.<sup>30</sup>

This extension of world-system theorizing is both provocative and problematical. Granted, the original literature leans heavily on assumptions about the dominance of exchange relations. Often it seemed as if world politics were simply a precipitate of economic interaction and not something that takes place in a context of existing social relations. Even so, the attempt to go beyond a marketplace determinism by speaking of the influence of a world political culture may create more problems than it solves. The great claims made for the determining role of a world polity may only mean that insufficient attention is being paid to the local political and class forces that lay behind it. This lack of attention makes it harder to link the shifting social and political currents inside a nation with the changing opportunities and pre-established constraints set by the prevailing organization of production at the global level. The two sides of this link are reciprocal and mutually constitutive; they define and shape each other. If we simply attribute national political phenomena to a worldwide ideology or culture, change is deprived of a motor and the sources of stability are dematerialized. We are left with a market-based determinism on the one hand, in which everything is reduced to the hierarchical structure of exchange, or else forced into an idealist analysis of “political modernization,” however globalized, on the other hand. We need fuller details about these coupled processes of change as they are anchored in different, smaller-scale settings.

##### 5. THE CONSTITUTION AND NORMALIZATION OF STATES AND SOCIETIES

How constitutive is this relationship between nation and world economic system? After all, even if we see the relationship less mechanically than

<sup>30</sup> Compare Chase-Dunn, “Interstate System.”



quantitative indicators can accommodate, we are still being asked to accept great claims for the priority of the whole over the part. Something like this is also implicit in the way that theories of imperialism or the internalization of capital try to appropriate the present. One major problem is visible: the role of individual units — nations — is likely to be neglected. So is the specific “topography” of the domestic society. It is as if the scope of structuralist homogenization could be extended to the point where the nation virtually disappears, except as a place-filler in the network. The state’s role as an independent site of signification and continuing national structuring and restructuring, is slighted. After all, we are not talking of a one-way relationship in which national political systems are globalized and defined solely by the principles of the market or the interstate system.

World economic relations are not autonomous. They have been politicized, and this political construction of economic reality has taken a national form. Domestic political measures and policies are constantly being taken up, precisely to insure some space for continuing national direction and maneuver (and therefore, societal patterning or self-constitution). We could, of course, think of these aspects of state action as merely instrumental and responsive, as if they were largely a means to succeed in orienting the society toward the world market. But there is no reason to confine our thinking about the state to such an instrumental view. We can often justifiably ascribe an independent “political technology of the self”<sup>31</sup> to the national unit, just as we can with the individual as a unit within a larger social whole; in this way, we avoid some of the extremes of functionalism, reductionism, and structuralism. Political forces at the national level, spinning out of class and other hierarchical divisions (divisions created by capitalism as a complicated mode of social organization), operate in a more free-standing way. And these, in turn, shape the nature of a very politicized and governmentalized world economy.

The real issue does not only involve the autonomy of nations as eco-

<sup>31</sup> The term is Michel Foucault’s, from a lecture given in November 1980, where he adds this set of techniques to his former emphasis on social control and the domination of the self by an external apparatus.

conomic units. By now, we all can see the ways in which economic dependence or peripheral status will limit this autonomy. In the present, as quantitative studies suggest, the penetration of societies by relations of external control may retard economic and political development. But is this more than a reinforcing impact? How significant is it when compared to the original social construction of reality at the national level? The crucial question about the operating rules of the world system may not pertain to the way those rules regulate preexisting state activities (activities whose existence is independent of the rules). Rather, the key question may involve the way in which national societies are created in accordance with those rules, the way they are originally constituted and defined by internalizing the structural principles and pressures of the worldwide organization of production. The very constitution of societies along national lines is important: it fragments the oppressed, and prevents system change by the formation of counteracting groups, and at the same time it fragments the oppressors, and by preventing world empire preserves the system's dynamism. It atomizes global reality.

Even where studies of dependence allot a larger current role to individual nation-states, they do not shed much light on the historical constitution of states and societies. Instead, they tend to examine short-term variations in a vacuum. Yet societies are not originally "self-constituted" (taking their shape from their own state policies), even if their central governments are now relatively autonomous in relation to specific domestic pressures. Recent findings may do nothing more than illustrate the marginal mechanics of reinforcement and readjustment. True, the recent concerns and practices of central governments are affected by domestic politics. But even the shape of domestic politics has been constrained and defined by what we might call the society's overall organizational principles. Finally, in decisive ways that need further conceptual clarification, the nature and reproduction of those societies have been defined over a very long span of history by a prevailing pattern of capitalist organization at the world level.

It is time to acknowledge that a much more complicated relationship exists between market forces and the role of social class, between economic and political determination, between global and domestic forces in the con-

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stitution of states and state policies. A structuralist purism about the operation of the world-system and its national “precipitates” will not work. Although these linkages have not been adequately theorized, a few remarks and extensions are worth making here.

To emphasize the independent role of state action complicates the theoretical picture. If we reject a structuralist homogenization in which states seem to disappear, or else appear only as derivatives of a world market, we must raise another set of questions if we hope to account for the *continuities* of world capitalism. Anything we might call global economic development requires modes of integration and surplus extraction that operate beyond the national level. Core-periphery relations can be considered an apparatus of control. The operation of this apparatus will be inscribed by social conflict, but in this context “social conflict” means conflict between interests and practices that cut across categories of nations. So, how is the periphery originally structured and then maintained in a subordinate position?

Two of the trends mentioned earlier are at cross-purposes. The increasing scope of national state activity does not seem to square with the continuing impact economic dependence is supposed to have on the subordination of peripheral societies. Older patterns of colonialism or neocolonial intervention to contain radical change (whether through direct physical punishment or a chastening deterrent) cannot always maintain global control. Yet capitalism, because it “is not primarily a normatively integrated system”<sup>32</sup> (contrary to the claims about a “world polity”), increasingly needs similar control mechanisms to stabilize core-periphery relations. Sometimes discipline is imposed through the direct economic necessities of wage-labor, but at other times through political coercions of a more “mercantilist” variety. “Extra-economic sanctions then were the norm until very recently in most parts of the globe; the cash-nexus the exception.”<sup>33</sup> Yet that exception, as Wallerstein claims, may well characterize the future of the world economy.

Coercion and repression, and even deterrence, are costly ways to regulate independently existing forms of behavior. Ideally, for capitalist develop-

<sup>32</sup> Chase-Dunn, “Interstate System,” p. 38.

<sup>33</sup> Worsley, “One World or Three?” pp. 312 and 302—3.

ment, these methods would give way to a subtler pattern of normalization based on capitalist relations of production. This involves a less contentious form of socialization or constitution (that is, a process of shaping the very definition and internal nature of societies), so that subsequently the more visible methods of outside control become less important. Historically and in the future, this would mean the construction and shaping of societies along lines that are conducive to accumulation on a world scale. If the relevant constraints and organizational principles are internalized, the need for continuing political intervention by core states is partially obviated. If the worldwide organization of accumulation is constitutive in that sense, it will allow the continuing facts of dependence and exchange to seem relatively depoliticized and self-perpetuating. Let me quote two complementary views.

During the early centuries this worldwide social formation was 'held together,' or constructed out of, social relations that were more political than economic. The self-perpetuating mechanisms of a world market and unequal exchange could not take hold as well during the earlier centuries because the infrastructures of peripheral regions were still being 'hammered' into the appropriate shape required for their dependent position in the emerging world economy. In this sense colonialism represents a means of primitive accumulation that precedes the more organic functioning of the self-perpetuating and self-reproducing core-periphery division of labor. . . . Sometime in the future [these extra-economic mechanisms] will disappear altogether, leaving us with a pure capitalist world economy capable of accumulation and reproduction of its social relations. . .<sup>34</sup>

Today, the dependent economies originally implanted by political force can continue to work according to the logic of the world capitalist market because they have become capitalist in their internal constitution; not merely because they are

<sup>34</sup> Bergesen and Schoenberg, "Long Waves," pp. 268-69, and Albert Bergesen, "Cycles of Formal Colonial Rule," in Hopkins and Wallerstein, *Processes of the World-System*, p. 123, comprise the quotation.

articulated in a world capitalist market.<sup>35</sup>

That internal constitution indicates a result of interaction and integration between social systems that goes beyond trade and creates the possibility of a division of labor and production based on something closer to a single system of value equivalence.

To think of a global mode of production as constitutive allows us to think of control in a less externalized fashion. In this way, we can complement the sometimes mechanical stress on the coercive aspects of “imperialist intervention” or “world market forces” with a more internal perspective. Michel Foucault’s recent theorizing about power is relevant here.<sup>36</sup> It helps us to see that the historical construction of *self-regulating* national units may be a reality underlying the apparent self-perpetuation of a division of labor. World capitalism is capable of relying on a sophisticated pattern of control and discipline, on what Foucault would call the positive aspects of power — power as a constitutive or productive feature — rather than on its negative or repressive aspects. Power makes a transition from the inflicting of penalties to a dispersed network that imposes continuous surveillance. It is internally and not merely externally imposed; at times it is closer to an inward “knowledge” than to an outward “force.” It becomes a synaptic technology of reform, exercised in a capillary form through (and not only above) the individual social body. It not only occurs through censoring, blocking, and repressing, but also through the creation of subjects, bodies politic, and national desires. Like the nation, “the individual is not a pre-given entity which is seized on by the exercise of power. The individual, with his identity and characteristics, is the product of a relation of power exercised over bodies, multiplicities, movements, desires, forces.” Global power circulates and creates peripheral subjects as units of its

<sup>35</sup> Worsley, “One World or Three?” p. 303. Worsley continues: “Yet political force is still needed because the dichotomy between the capitalism of the centre and the capitalism of the periphery creates new contradictions. The first of these is that the world was not simply integrated by imperialism. It was divided at the same time, between several major imperialist powers. The second was the resistance and counterattack provoked in the colonised countries. And the third was the decisive breach in a capitalist world-system that had only very recently become established: the Bolshevik seizure of power in 1917.”

<sup>36</sup> Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews & Other Writings* (New York: Pantheon, 1980), is now the best introduction to Foucault’s important work of the 1970s.

articulation. “We should try to grasp subjection in its material instance as a constitution of subjects,” Foucault writes: “The individual is an effect of power.”<sup>37</sup>

If a local society can be fundamentally refashioned and class forces realigned (for example, by incapacitating the groups that would demand political protection from foreign capital or from world market pressures), that society can be incorporated or normalized more cheaply. Its incorporation into a framework of global rules and roles can be maintained by means of an internalized conformity, by an *independently desired* national responsiveness to the world's economic dynamics. The negativity or direct coerciveness of power can be held in reserve. In its place we see what a “positivity” of power might imply: the socialization, or training, or disciplining, or normalization of the body politic. Once we give greater play to domestic class forces, practices, and relations, as well as the role of the state, we realize how uneven and contested this historical process can be.

The typical surface events of the world-system will be the movements of core policies and the policies of societies on the periphery — policies that are both the products and vehicles of normalization. Granted, these policies respond to world market forces and to coercive diplomacy. Yet they often project a specific domestic motivation in a way that the world-system perspective (with its subordination of part to whole) has been ill-equipped to grasp.<sup>38</sup> The analysis of state policy (seeing it, for example, as an instrument of the desire to reproduce a particular domestic pattern) will often mean an analysis of *self*-control and *self*-discipline: the reproduction, at the national level, of the prior results of a pattern of normalization unfolding unevenly throughout the world. The global political economy, in other words, is a *disciplinary* society. Power operates as an active constitution and continuous structuring of societies that accept responsibility for their own “normalcy,” for their own self-regulation as parts of world capitalism. This is an aspect of the world-system's dynamics that needs to be included in any comprehensive perspective.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., pp. 73-74, 97, 98.

<sup>38</sup> Realist or statist theorizing about state policies has a similarly difficult time accounting for the specificity of domestic motivation. For a discussion, see Andrews, “Language of State Action.”

Any treatment of normalization raises two complicated questions. First, what, in general, is the role or autonomy of the subject (that is, the part) within the overall organization of world capitalism as a social whole (that is, the totality)? This is a key conceptual issue, bound up with questions of epistemology. By sketchily negotiating some of these issues, the previous section has allowed us to focus on a second question: in the present and in the future, what are the opportunities for social change? What is to be done? The question is no longer limited to attaining power within a national political framework in order to reshape society. It becomes a question about the range of possibilities for a national society within the core-periphery division of labor.

One revealing area of world-system analysis studies the alterations in domestic political structure and alignment that have accompanied a nation's emergence into the world's core. If peripheralization involves normalization, this emergence involves something like a politically-orchestrated counternormalization. To be specific, what aspects of domestic class structure and conflicting class practices account for this political change? What are the domestic political preconditions for a long-term shift in world position — when it comes to institutional structure, political coalitions, class capacity, group mobilization, and cultural or ideological hegemony? For individual cases, nuanced and comprehensive studies of these preconditions would be a worthwhile avenue for further study.

Two recent (although brief and schematic) attempts are the comparison of the United States and Germany in the late nineteenth century and the treatment of the antebellum United States.<sup>39</sup> Chase-Dunn's study of the U.S. elucidates the way it avoided the fate of peripheralization as so-called core producers attained political hegemony in the period between 1815 and 1860. His analysis centers around the conflict between what he calls peripheral capitalists and core capitalists *within* the United States, using the politics of the

<sup>39</sup> Richard Rubinson, "Political Transformation in Germany and the United States," in Kaplan, *Social Change*, and Christopher Chase-Dunn, "The Development of Core Capitalism in the Antebellum United States: Tariff Policies and Class Struggle in an Upwardly Mobile Semiperiphery," in Bergesen, *Studies*.

import tariff as a reference point. He makes the claim that the usual distinction between core and peripheral “areas” is really a distinction between areas in which one or the other type of economic production is dominant; these areas are not coterminous with national economies. Chase-Dunn’s argument takes the following form. The upward mobility of the U.S. within the world system resulted from a political victory on the part of core producers. The interests of the peripheral producers, on the other hand, were increasingly frustrated. Their economic activities, directed to European markets, gave them little incentive to restructure state policy or state institutions in order to protect domestic industry against competition from core imports. This gradual dominance of core productive interests (and therefore of related methods of labor control) was not a natural or foreordained event. It was the multifaceted product of class struggle over the control of the state and its policies, capped by the Civil War and Reconstruction. Such a historical account cannot fully elucidate the dynamics of the organization of production at a world-wide level, dynamics that underprop the exchange relations which are often the conscious reference points of one nation’s politics. On the other hand, it at least transcends the splitting of the domestic and international aspects of social conflict that bedevils certain analyses of world capitalism.

From this overall perspective and such specific findings, what are we likely to conclude about the opportunities and preconditions for movement within the present system? What are the lessons to be drawn, by peripheral states, for example? First of all, this world-system perspective drastically complicates the project of social change. Its pronounced holism undercuts the complacent optimism of nationally-focused modernization theories on both the Right and the Left. What has been called national development is largely conditioned by (or is in fact synonymous with) national mobility within a world system of stratification. Yet mobility is limited by the number of national positions within the system. Real social change would have to be structural change, change that alters the system of control over the international division of labor and capitalist social relations of production. And yet, as the criticisms have indicated, those relations are decentralized. Further complicating the picture, we know that the site of those productive relations

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— in the actual body politic or national societies with their corresponding state policies — will be inscribed by domestic social conflicts and a variety of conflicting desires and interests. How can this circle be squared?

For most peripheral states, upward mobility into the core is not an available option. A more radical form of self-reliance and societal reconstitution at the hands of state power may seem like an attractive alternative. The resulting policies involve greater economic autonomy, a severing of existing bonds of investment and trade and debt dependence, as well as such things as “a policy of informational import substitution, especially as concerns value.”<sup>40</sup> Radical critiques of dependency often highlight this theme. As long as domestic social structures are seen in a reductionist light (as products of “penetration”), the only prescription seems to be that of deliberate abstinence. A troubling question sticks with us, however: does the prescription fit the basic (structural and holistic) explanatory logic of the world-system perspective? What are the preconditions for attaining national self-reliance, and what do they have to do with structural change? Recommendations for state action along the lines of self-reliance seem to reject the basic part-whole framework of the perspective. Even the emendations to this holistic structuralism that have been introduced in this discussion do not ease the problems of self-reliance.<sup>41</sup>

From the original perspective, the limits are clear. Mercantilist withdrawal (the relative concentration of commodity chains within national boundaries) is associated with contracting periods at the world level and an absence of political hegemony within the core. One precondition for peripheral states has been the achievement of a relatively strong state apparatus and therefore a conducive configuration of class forces. The ability to control a large internal market and at least a small industrial base may be another pre-

<sup>40</sup> Delacroix, “Permeability of Information Boundaries,” p. 183.

<sup>41</sup> As one reviewer of the first draft of this review essay noted: “This lapse into someone else’s utopianism may suggest another flaw in the world systems approach, namely its attachment to the ‘system’ concept. ‘System’ has teleological connotations which tend to undermine a sense of historical dialectic. I prefer ‘structure,’ which can be used to refer to the conditions shaping actions which persist over a certain period of time. These conditions are subject to transformation as components of a structure are challenged. Every structure generates its own contradictions, which lead to change, whereas ‘systems’ are thought of as restoring their own equilibrium, or else as ending (with a ‘big bang’).”

condition, making the experiences of China and the Soviet Union less relevant; recuperation still seems the most likely result.<sup>42</sup>

Another possibility, outlined by Meyer and acknowledging a greater autonomous role for individual states, concerns a postindustrial future as a “rational strategy for peripheral societies.”<sup>43</sup> Capital is scarce, after all; the costs of dependence on external trade with unequal exchange are high. This suggests the attractiveness of a scenario in which labor-intensive social services and politically-defined consumption and politically-constructed value become more dominant, combined with a minimizing of the use of external capital and commodities. The argument, in other words, is that a national leadership might be able to stimulate a redirection of a single society along postindustrial lines — even on the periphery. Still, there are sharp limits. The realities of military intervention by core states or local guardians in the semi-periphery should not be ignored. Also the need for world commodities will bring on the disciplining effects of balance of payments problems and world market prices. Food production may be diverted toward export, thereby creating characteristic risks of starvation and repression of the direct producers. Industrialization for export may carry similar risks for subordinate classes. A concern for minimizing costs (e.g., labor costs) can overwhelm the concern for building up effective demand within the home market.

The problem remains intractable, and any prescription offered at the national level seems unable to transform the dynamics of the system. Escape is almost impossible. Regardless of rhetorical verve or partisan compassion, world-system analysis often seems driven perilously close to an immobilism laced with pessimism. It is curiously apolitical. In the end, it can look like an updated version of those scientific laws of capitalist development that were once the stock-in-trade of orthodox Marxism. In the same way, the implications for political practice that derive from a structuralist view are likely to be

<sup>42</sup> See Richard Curt Kraus, “Withdrawing from the World-System: Self-Reliance and Class Structure in China,” in Goldfrank, *World-System of Capitalism*; and Edward Friedman, “Maoist Conceptualizations of the Capitalist World-System,” in Hopkins and Wallerstein, *Process of the World-System*. Wallerstein’s general neglect of the split between the First and Second Worlds often creates problems for inferences about appropriate praxis. On this point, see Worsley, “One World or Three?”

<sup>43</sup> Meyer, “World Polity,” p. 128.

prone to a crisis orientation and to apocalyptic visions of the future accompanied by self-lacerating immobilism in the present. As social movements attempt to project a persuasive alternative model for a society, the constraints look equally great.

What is likely to happen to the overall coordinates of the system? Is the system coming gradually to its inglorious end, as Wallerstein claims? Are we facing “late” capitalism on a world scale, or simply a temporary rearrangement of players and positions in a game whose rules and roles are relatively permanent?

In the coming years, the system faces contraction, and this creates urgencies in the reallocation and restructuring of productive tasks. The expansionist phase of a long wave peaked at some (controversially specified) point in the late 1960s. Because of general overproduction or insufficient worldwide demand, current predictions are for slower and more uneven world growth for at least the next few decades.

What are the implications? Another period of expansion (which Wallerstein tentatively expects to occur by century’s end) will require a realignment of interstate forces, a further proletarianization of world households, and reallocation of effective demand. In the meantime, there is a sobering contrast between the opportunities for a few advances in the intermediate, semiperipheral zone<sup>44</sup> and the likelihood of calamity in the periphery. As the studies under review show, core-periphery relations are affected by the nature of relations within the core. On the periphery, there is a greater likelihood that the national body politic can be normalized without direct external coercion in cases where hegemony prevails within the core. Extra-economic mechanisms would then be less necessary. Greater core competition, on the other hand, is associated with greater politicization of economic transactions, an upsurge of protectionism and mercantilist control, and tightened core-periphery relations.<sup>45</sup> Will greater core competition also be accompanied by a breakdown in patterns of discipline and normalization?

<sup>44</sup> Wallerstein, *The Capitalist World-Economy*, chap. 5.

<sup>45</sup> Christopher Chase-Dunn, “Core-Periphery Relations: The Effects of Core Competition,” in Kaplan, *Social Change*, Bergesen, “Cycles of Formal Colonial Rule”; Bergesen and Schoenberg, “Long Waves.”

The political sources of resistance to the overall dynamics of the system may continue to grow. They may elicit an even more determined response from the core and also from a semiperiphery that is predicted to expropriate a larger share of the global surplus at the same time as capital is becoming more concentrated within each of the system's zones. The creation of protected mercantilist realms and the search for opportunities in the peripheral zones (or the transfer of productive tasks out of the periphery) would be the challengers' typical responses. Core countries, on the other hand, may attempt to protect the process of accumulation by returning to strategies of punishment with regard to the periphery in order to compensate for a breakdown in the normal capillary processes of power and constitution. Revolutionary nationalism or even national disintegration and chaos may symbolize the breakdown.

Yet how likely is it that core countries will be able to make a compensatory return to these mechanisms of control? After all, as these studies emphasize, the extension of the internal reach of national governments is on the rise in a fairly general way, and that includes the periphery. The incentives for acquiescence may not register. They may not be anchored in any constellation of classes or political coalitions that could insure the requisite level of internal stability. Incentives toward autarky or isolationism may appear instead, as regimes on the periphery try to deliver on their promises in a way that continued integration into the capitalist world system would not allow. This would be likely to involve a variety of competitive interferences with world market mechanisms and attempts to regulate the anarchy of investment decisions. Societies may become increasingly absorbed by the state, in response to "technical and political imperatives for state control of society."<sup>46</sup> One response within core countries may be a reluctant "biting the bullet," as dominant interests feel forced to accommodate themselves to the demands of labor within the core. "If these trends continue, the two major forms of class struggle in the system — the struggle between capital and labor and the struggle between the core and the periphery — will reinforce each other and reduce

<sup>46</sup> John Boli-Bennett, "Global Integration and the Universal Increase of State Domimance, 1910-1970," in Bergesen, *Studies*, p. 104.

the profitability of private capital accumulation in the system as a whole.”<sup>47</sup>

As transnational class struggle grows, Wallerstein and his followers confidently predict that the world system of capitalism is in fundamental decline. In the future, a world socialism may arise. Claims are made that it would be characterized by the kinds of collectively hammered-out notions of substantive rationality, resource allocation, and balanced global growth that could only be made by a redistributive government on a world scale. The future of capitalist development on a national political scale might be recapitulated on the world level. A raw, less regulated, and less egalitarian capitalism on a world scale might give way to a more conscious control over the larger system by emerging political organization.

The final hope is one of global politicization and socialization. Taking a national form, this might be followed by a global contract among nations. New and explicitly political rules might be created on a global scale, replacing the determinative norms of capitalist development with something unforeseen. But how close to a “Big Bang” scenario of world socialist development, even if world-system theorists deny the analogy, would this be? Is it a narrative of the final arrival of the irresistible contradictions of capitalism, or is it a convenient *deus ex machina*? At the very least, the apocalyptic character of the prescription does seem to fit the somewhat one-sided diagnoses and explanations of this view. In this sense, socialism on the world level may seem like a necessary condition for the long-term enhancement of human progress on a more egalitarian scale, but it is obviously not a sufficient condition.<sup>48</sup> Class struggle and other counterlogics to capitalism cannot be derived in a law-like fashion from some logic of accumulation or exchange relations. “Political

<sup>47</sup> Christopher Chase-Dunn and Richard Rubinson, “Cycles, Trends, and New Departures in World-System Development,” in Meyer and Hannan, *National Development*, p. 294.

<sup>48</sup> There is, finally, a danger in the prescription itself (not to mention the dangers that will arise as the core caretakers of the patient attempt to forestall the prescription by military means). A world state apparatus, even if attainable, could be an Orwellian nightmare, centralizing the operation of a vast capillary network of power into an administrative apparatus, distancing itself from the possibility of popular control and accountability, reducing the incentives toward modernization, and finally coming to represent the dominance of a technocratic rationality at the expense of the various ways in which social reality is constructed through discourse and resistance at all levels. The last sentence in the Meyer and Hannan volume gives one pause: “A more highly organized world political system may do less to accomplish the ends that justify it than to weaken the legitimacy of demands for these ends.”

economy ends when theory seeks to specify the conditions of transcendence.”<sup>49</sup> It does not end when it seeks to specify the preconditions, however.

Given the complexity of the determination of social outcomes, a constant process of resistance to power, questioning of power relations, and restructuring of power relations will be required at all levels if substantial social change is to be achieved. Any praxis that derives from an analysis based on exchange relations or on overly-internationalized and reductionist analyses will prove unsatisfactory. An alternative praxis, admittedly vague but also more in keeping with the criticisms raised in this essay, would lead in another direction: toward an incessant, decentralized struggle over that never-ending constitution of the social body and over actions affecting inequality and surplus extraction.<sup>50</sup> Otherwise, at each and every level, social life will continue to be subordinated even more fully to the dictates of the accumulation of capital. If it is replaced by a world state without this precondition being continuously met — for example, as a desperate way out of the nuclear dilemma — the subjection to bureaucratic controls and unequal power relations may be just as oppressive. The efficient tyranny of Adam Smith’s market might give way only to the efficient tyranny of Jeremy Bentham’s Panopticon, this time operating in a disciplinary fashion on a world scale. The case remains open.

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<sup>49</sup> Stanley Aronowitz, “The End of Political Economy,” *Social Text* no. 2 (Summer 1979), p. 51.

<sup>50</sup> See Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, and Bruce Andrews, “Constitution/Writing, Poetry, Language, The Body,” *Open Letter* (Toronto, 1981), special joint issue with L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E (New York).

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The Prison-House of  
the Capitalist  
World System  
[1982?]

# THE PRISON-HOUSE OF THE CAPITALIST WORLD SYSTEM

[1982?]

The success of global capitalism has depended upon keeping the Third World in line, on the imperial Center's ability to control the periphery, on a stable pattern of North/South relations. In the world political economy, control over the South can take different forms. That is, imperialism or something like global 'class domination' can be insured by different means, different architectures of power. Different technologies. To get a grasp of this, we can take Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* as a model and try to mine his analysis of the development of different social practices of the power to punish, to see what it might yield for the study of imperialism. His historical division between a sovereign and more violent 'negative' form of power and a non-sovereign and yet more 'positive' and productive disciplinary form seems especially relevant.

What stands out in his analysis are two very different conceptions of control — both in its target and its purposes. In the first conception, characteristic of the classical or monarchic period, the power of the sovereign or of a system of sovereignty is expressed through the violence of its punishments. What comes to replace it in the modern bourgeois era is a second form of intervention and discipline, a subtler and more constitutive set of methods in which a multiplicity of bodies are trained and coordinated, increasing their compliant utility in a way that reduces the need for direct punishment. The modern prison system replaces the scaffold.

In the conceptions of power involved, Third World nations in the postwar era seem to be situated in much the same way as the punished or disciplined individuals which provide the focus of Foucault's work. Let's see.

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Here; in a very broad and preliminary way, I want to elaborate the parallels between different conceptions of how individuals are to be controlled and the methods by which the imperial Center has thought to control the Third World's future within the postwar system of world capitalism.

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“where on a scaffold that will be erected there, the flesh will be torn from his breasts, arms, thighs and calves with red-hot pincers, his right hand, holding the knife with which he committed the said parricide, burnt with sulphur, and, on those places where the flesh will be torn away, poured molten lead, boiling oil, burning resin, wax and sulphur melted together and then his body drawn and quartered by four horses and his limbs and body consumed by fire, reduced to ashes and his ashes thrown to the winds.”<sup>1</sup>

#### A. CLASSICAL PUNISHMENT

*Abandon all hope. It is obey. No future, remember. Modes of production, deduction, donation, oration. (Control needs)!*

A close parallel to Foucault's first mode of control is, in the postwar era of North/South relations, dear to the hearts of conservatives, hawks and Cold War fundamentalists, both inside the Pentagon and out. Here, international politics comes equipped with the trappings and nostalgia of sovereignty, of an authoritative global Leviathan, conveniently housed in Washington. An implicit social pact is presided over by this imperial state and held together by juridical notions of national sovereignty and international restraint. Control is centralized, unitary, focussed in a single point, a sovereign Center whose power can be possessed but also lost. If legal subjects form the constituency of sovereign power, the postwar era gives us imitation national subjects, with the agreed-upon structure of international politics and economics acquiring the force of law. Its dictates provide the code by which the behavior of the new

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nations of the Third World will be evaluated. When imperial power within the capitalist world retains its monarchic and legal aura, and when a central (imperial) state apparatus takes responsibility for safeguarding public life at the global level, Third World countries confront a fateful choice — either they subject themselves to the Center’s sovereignty or else they behave illegally, disloyally.

*Under penalty of law. The King Can Do No Wrong. Deduce the  
peg. Blood gravy monarch.*

“In political thought and analysis,” as Foucault puts it, “we still have not cut off the head of the king.” And the same is true of international relations. In this first conception, sovereign power will be exercised by those who can claim to possess it and exercise it by right — and in the absence of a more institutionalized authority at the global level, this means the imperial Center, the U.S.A. Power radiates outward and control functions like a miniaturization of the monarchic court. We have a despotic apparatus of control. The position of the imperial Center, expecting allegiance, determines the shape of the international political process and provides a point of absoluteness, a compass. Yet control over the periphery is not possible without grand and deliberate acts on the part of the sovereign. Right must be backed up by might.

*View-finder magnetized by what is not possible. Domain privilege. Dispossess the public. Wayward dead center. Loyalty decline. So, I’m damaged & you’re authoritarian, that’s your basic relationship.*

In conservative doctrine, this control presents itself as a life and death matter since it implicates the sovereign’s (or the empire’s) ability to defend itself. It is also either personalized, in the figure of the King, or else nationalized, in the figure of the imperial Center and its ‘national security’ needs confronted with criminal encroachments. When the law is transgressed or basic

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expectations are outraged, the basic allegiance to the monarchic center is put into question. Crime breaks the contract; violations appear to invert the power of the king. And power takes these transgressions for its target.

*Hang from a rope until socialism appears. Capital punishment for government officials only. Terrification. Blood is central of failure. We put the spectacle where the head used to be. Hideous in strength was less doctrinaire. Nameplate through terror it operates. Can't reason with a monster. Punishment is what others enjoy.*

Ferocity is characteristic of a sovereign infringed upon, of a legitimate collective order being breached. A certain absolutism can be seen in operation here. If the Center's power is unlimited, so are the punishments meted out in its name — for alleged enemy aggression or subversion, for example. Washington's military sanctions, for example, can be punishment by massive excess of violence — a vengeful and ostentatious terror whose agenda is omnipotence.

Military vanquishing can display and validate the power of the Center. Control works publicly, scenically, to create an international political order of the spectacle. Yet success depends on great expenditures and real military exertion to fill the amphitheatre with the ostentatious punishments required. Only a truly impressive showing of violence can solve the problems created by the very irregular staging of this theatrical spectacle by which sovereignty triumphs. Here the impermeability of the body of the guilty (individual or nation) needs to be sacrificed in order to safeguard the authority of the king (or the regional peacekeeping claims of the imperial power). Violation of the law and the spilling of blood form a single constellation.

*Neutral defilement. Harm that happens. Dress your wound in feelings of isolation.*

Designed to deal with exceptional rather than normal phenomena, this apparatus concentrates on the prevention of specific future crimes; it

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declines the job of shaping the overall social environment. It targets acts — misdeeds, in other words — since the nature (and therefore the inner nature) of all the societies involved is not on the agenda of intervention; to a large degree they can be taken for granted. Power punishes crimes, not criminals.

In its international version, states on the periphery are supposed to avoid acting in certain prescribed ways; it isn't necessary that they *be* a certain way. The body politic of the individual country can remain largely untouched. Power merely uses the nation as a convenient spot on which to stage an exemplary semiotics of violence. The peripheral states it fastens on are considered to be already-constituted individuals so that even the harshest treatment is not accompanied by much optimism about the possibility that enemies can be rehabilitated or remotivated. Instead, with their existing motivations intact, they are to be shocked and intimidated into legality.

*Shape blood, on consignment. Imperialism works hard for a living.*

Success is obedience, externally regulated. In this first 'regime,' power operates externally, applied from the outside or — like the ubiquitous helicopters and napalm — from above. And this makes sense insofar as classical control is merely prohibitive; what it prohibits are affronts to sovereignty, instances of disloyalty. Power operates restrictively, as a constraint, with Taboos and Codes of Law providing the model. It limits, blocks, refutes, prevents, represses, excludes, forbids. It comes clear only in its prohibitions, its grand list of what international behavior is disallowed. Its vocabulary is limited. The clichéd 'no' gets monotonous.

*War = a money tune-up. Stiffed in the brutal enough cop on beat does not dispense justice. Hardening armories. That's why the oppressed are so oppressed -they're always in relation to something that destroys. Defoliated hopes of the branding iron. I'm sure the decapitationists would agree.*

Specifically, power works through a punitive scenario of harm and

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possible future depredations. Nations (or social movements with national pretensions) can be attacked even if they cannot be transformed. But though power can harm, as violent measures are applied directly and painfully to the body of the offending nation, there is little else that it can do. Blunt and heavy, this negative and juridical machinery cannot penetrate very far beneath the skin. Its positive instructions are quite sketchy. We are reminded of the pre-modern scaffold, the public display of torture in which the law is enacted on the representative body of the criminal. At the extreme, the sovereign can impose the death penalty — eliminating the nation politically, stopping time, and erasing the substance of the crime by erasing the criminal as an independent actor. But what if military victory is ruled out?

*Quality reminds us of fear. Rent a scare tactic. Body light deters.  
Celebrity on the object. Obituary by comparison. Material life  
can kill again. Fires are fought by constructing a coward.  
Constant cause of contagion.*

Success will supposedly be achieved because punishment can celebrate and validate the sovereign's power by making a spectacle of itself, by directly inscribing the signs of its effectiveness on the offending individual. Ready at their receivers, national elites can pick up the transmissions of the law through the ritual marks left on the condemned. Death threats provide the currency of power: the social body of the attacked Third World 'citizens' will serve as a symbol, showing its scars to others as photographed or visited demonstrations. By displaying the signs of domination in spectacular fashion, an image of omnipotence is created by their very excess. Control rests upon a signifying practice, achieving its results from the force of example. Subjection is staged with signs, with a bloody representation.

*The kiss of reform. Inexact surgery. Arrogant obedience. Exposure  
of the puppets is threatening the puppeteers.*

Troubles. This first, 'classical' mode of military control is problemat-

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ic, even from the perspective of the executioners. The need for displays of unbridled violence suggests a serious deficiency in this methodology — especially for the statesmen at the Center, hedged in by all the hesitations appropriate to a nuclear age. Prohibitions can sometimes prevent countries or social movements from doing what the Center does not want them to do, but this arrangement is helpless to shape behavior in a more constructive way. A violent revengeful power leaves too many gaps and discontinuities which call out for compensation. A vicious circle: if only a few breaches can be punished, the punishment must be all the more severe and exemplary. And yet this only increases the costs and the risks which the imperial Center is forced to manage. Although the irregular exercise of this power may result from the impossibility of achieving a more formal administrative management of the post-colonial world, the discontinuities will also generate troublesome opportunities for the adversaries of the Center. Even if power can engineer a mechanical obedience in the short run, it is often, in the long run, only a defiant and embittered obedience, catalytic of rebellion and prone to backfiring.

Look how archaic and fragile this classical program of the conservatives seems to be. However involved with grandeur, the laws are skeletal, unable to penetrate into details, leaving enormous areas of international and domestic behavior overlooked and unattended. So much slips through its net. It is uncreative, unproductive, able to extract a modicum of obedience but never finely-tuned and detailed enough to create an overall order. To avoid these enormous gaps, the individual social body would have to be better known; the internal structuring of Third World societies would have to be mapped more closely. Otherwise, the application of power is too scattered.

Besides, in the face of these uncertainties and doubtful payoffs, the 'overhead costs' of this violence may get out of hand. And the spread of nuclear weapons posts another limit to the official acts of vengeance. If a deterrent is to work without mishap and engage the thoughtful consciousness of rationally calculating subjects, more than a literal military success is needed; official acts must be careful not to overwhelm the original misbehavior which inspired it. Also, just as the presence of the scaffold laid the ground for a violent popular resistance, coercion can breed distaste, a powerful question-

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ing of legitimacy and a dangerous counter-violence. To increase the violence may only breed resistance worldwide or spur a counter-intervention on the part of opposing superpowers or local adversaries which. do not respect the sovereign's rights.

In the post-World War Two era, these changing currents reveal themselves in Washington policy discussion; Critics of a conservative military approach to North/South relations have tended to question the simplicity and literalism of the 'aggression' model, the model of international illegality. The reformism of punishment which emerged in a previous century has also been reflected in the most basic tendencies of official U.S. policy — especially under the auspices of liberals oriented toward 'containment' and 'world order'. Except in periods of crisis, a more evenhanded and globalist deterrence tends to reflect the more moderate consensus at the center of the Center. The 'bomb them back to the Stone Age' mentality becomes a minority view. Excess and literalism in the local application of violence give way, in official doctrine, to a more generalized political effort at the global level (the Cold War as coexistence, the global management of interdependence). Even here occasional violent 'communiqués' are needed and yet, without a monolithic enemy (e.g., Moscow or a centralized World Communism), this more globalist variant of deterrence will not work; it too will prove incapable of controlling the periphery. For the periphery in the contemporary era can only be controlled if it is shaped, incorporated, trained. A prison- house of normalization will come to seem like the only alternative within a liberal political economy at the world level.

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(Instructions to American agents at the Algeciras Conference, of 1905). "The fundamental issue was to change Moroccan society so that the United States (and other rich countries) could transform that culture into a dependent part of the world capitalist marketplace: 'Intercourse with that country demands the existence of internal conditions favorable thereto. Security of life and property; equality of opportunities for

trade with all natives..., improvement of the condition of the people that will enable them to profit by the opportunities of foreign traffic... and the power to repress subversive disorder and preserve the public peace.... People shall be made in a measure fit and able to profit by the advantages [of being integrated into the imperial system].”<sup>2</sup>

## B. MODERN DISCIPLINE

*Expansion is a social construction and coercive reshaping of reality. Of immediate profiteering. Traditions actually threaten business. Wait for poverty to die down. Too circulationist?*

A second, ‘modern’ mode of controlling the periphery within the established structure of the political economy of the world system is imbued with distinctly liberal overtones: faith in the power of markets, economism, developmentalism. Punishment would give way to subtler and yet more comprehensive forms of control. And this control would be interwoven with the world economy and its modes of socialization and imposed learning. In this second constellation of power, the functions of the world political economy itself are supposed to take on clear political implications. A self-reproducing economic system would be the liberal dream come true. And Leviathan stops being a relevant metaphor for describing how this structure works as a system of power. The king can be dethroned. Official discourse at the Center begins to give much more attention to a different kind of order-keeping and environment-shaping — one which takes its shape from the nature and workings of the world market itself.

*They just believe in sovereign capital. Machines which can tabulate secrecy. Hardy Boys save the Third World in the comfort of their home.*

Power will not merely be exercised from above by familiar sovereign (which means, extra-economic — and therefore more politicizable) entities,

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like the Pentagon, Yankee imperialism, the C.I.A., etc. They can create control without the trappings of law and without being centralized or emanating outward in concentric circles from a single point. A successful postwar order will be built as a piece of economic machinery, operating according to the unquestioned dictates of technical reason and able to coordinate the movements of its constitutive units — nations, as details, as cogs. They can achieve a more anonymous control over North/South relations by multiplying its authorship.

In the post-World War Two system, the recently decolonized Third World gets glossed with this aspiration. Perhaps a stable periphery could emerge, with America's guardianship, carried along by the flowering of an interdependent world order headquartered in the industrial core. An economic system organized around liberal, 'open door' principles might, in and of itself and internally, produce the control mechanisms which could keep the Third World in line. (And Third World nations are more and more directly implicated in the future of world capitalism by this point. They've shed their limited role as sources of raw materials and the appropriation of already-constituted wealth to become key sites of capitalist production. And yet these sites of production (and of the commodification of life) are also prone to politicization — and to the building of antagonistic state power which could end the profitable differentiation of the public and private spheres of social life. To this problem, a liberal model of North! South control is supposed to respond.)

*Even money maddens. Laissez isn't fair. Decontrol. Slack off!  
When are crimes anonymous? I can't hear you, make a mistake.  
We punish repercussions. Declare war on sloth & nonconformity.  
Commercialization justifies the derelict. Do you want me to be  
sympathetic or do you want my money?*

Power's dream has gotten more ambitious; now it includes the fabrication of global prosperity and stability as well as peace. The world order liberals, by advancing a new agenda, are putting a set of encompassing norms at stake; social nonconformity or rule-breaking is what needs treatment.

'Crimes,' from the standpoint of the world system's optimal functioning, more often involve economic disruption or inward-looking and closed forms of mercantilism than they do national aggression or other obvious violations of sovereignty. E.g., placing stiff barriers in the way of profit repatriation, refusing to repay multinational corporations for property that is nationalized, placing political restrictions on trade or access to locally-extracted raw materials, engaging in redistributive or mobilizing forms of politics. The target is not so much the discrete crime as the constant repetitive possibility of deviance. (And if the nonconformity is predictable and likely to be repeated independently across dozens of countries, the force of example or violent representational forms of deterrence are likely to fail. Available external muscle cannot be in enough places enough of the time; it no longer seems frightening enough.)

When related (liberal) methods of social control became dominant in modern Europe, they were framed by a parallel shift from what Foucault has called "a criminality of blood" and violence to "a criminality of fraud" or crimes against property. Likewise, internationally, the growing incidence of less heroic crimes calls for a greater reliance on less heroic punishments. Developmental wrong- turns, insufficient adaptation, abnormalities, delinquency: these herogenous practices stir the worries and threaten a general decomposition. Little Hitlers are not the target as much as situations typified in the news by the Allendes, Manleys and Mossadeghs of the world. Conveniently, the trend is captured by McNamara's career line, as he moves from orchestrating bombing raids on Vietnam in the 1960s to channeling Third World development programs in the 1970s as head of the World Bank.

*Tips for totalizers. Business is not a business. Noun-like surveillance. Mercenaries for hire. If you can't get a stiff, get a foreign leader. Flags of convenience -so what else is new? Looks less malevolent. Support your local grammar. Pluralist disequilibria. Responsible hermits. Middle class saves up to buy its own colony. Psychology becomes multinational.*

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Control occurs through a national delegation of responsibility in which the *nature* of the individual units has become the main focus of concern. Power is more impersonal, adjusted to fit the nations involved and operating by means of a technology of subjectification which is really a technology of subjection. (It holds as true at the global level that “we must attempt to study the myriad of bodies which are constituted as peripheral *subjects* as a result of the effects of power.”<sup>3</sup>) The Center’s dominion needn’t subvert or transcend the sovereignty of the individual. It acts through it, respecting and affirming the national selves (and national governments) which, more and more, are constitutive features of a social structure of accumulation on a world scale. In the liberal view of ‘nation- building,’ local states become useful. And sovereignty is delegated, partially exercised within nations rather than from a central position above them, raining down exemplary violence.

*Time is money. Stable attitudes pump the nation. Who can grow the most organs without any desire to keep them? Too tipico for my communism. I chose to be a slave to increase my self-esteem. Control the dentures and you have them by the dentures.*

A world economic system needs to distribute global positions and insure their solidity, not just localize the effects of power on the behavior of a single exemplary victim. International control will therefore need to organize the ‘character’ and ‘sensibility’ of its parts — the very nature and habits of Third World societies — and not merely stipulate the international behavior of their governments or their foreign allies. Representation and the orchestrating of imagery give way to a direct and more comprehensive form of punitive intervention which permeates the national ‘body social’ and uses national political authorities for leverage. After all, national governments can help in the imprisonment of individual social bodies much more effectively than the threat of violence imposed from a distant center.

An overall world political order of bodies will be created through an individualization that normalizes. Deterrence, for example, appeals to a single sovereign repository of rationality, whereas socialization at the hands of the

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world system could serve to create or reinforce an internal (domestic) structure which can install the necessary foundation for such reason. Socialization does not add a constraining superego so much as it fashions an ego and promotes desire. It is constitutive rather than symbolic. The motivation of national states would be constituted in a much less ephemeral way.

Life is to be organized; threats of death or dismemberment are not enough. Individual societies will not be sacrificed or passively imprinted; instead, they are to be fabricated as members of the world system by a global network of power relations, by discipline. Any authoritative messages from on high that can affect the 'will' of Third World nations will have a fragile grasp unless the underlying bodies (or social orders) of those nations are readied. The prerequisite to so-called correct governmental decisions is a managed and disciplined society.

*Commerce cleanses. Not responsible.*

The flamboyance and exclusions of the first mode of control have left too many gaps. Now, regulation will be more internal and thus more continuous, working through almost invisible micromechanisms of power. Control acquires a more individualized corporeality. Power can derive from the bottom as well as the top, operating almost in miniature, in a more capillary arrangement, insinuating its way deep inside the individual units rather than taking up a secure position outside the borders. Social bodies are to be mapped in a more detailed fashion. Points of contact are multiplied in this nominalism. Control becomes more finely tuned, more polymorphous, ubiquitously emanating from all pores as the social relations of capitalist production seep into the intricacies of each social formation.

*Revolution means stability. Well-organized bureaucracies are hard to overthrow. Think rich., correctional. This is a business, how soon we change. Ambitious repair... Subservient makeup. Revenge ebbs. Don't wanna see no blood. Oooooe!, develop me! Normalize the help. Social change or die. Unrelaxed, self-contained. Social change is not going to be technical. We Shall*

*Retreat From Martial Law But Not From Public Discipline.*

THE PRISON-  
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To achieve control over the Third World in the interests of a smoothly functioning global accumulation process, the physical pain of external military sanctions no longer seems appropriate. The itchy trigger finger of the outraged sovereign begins to appear needlessly risky, an antique. Discipline comes in the form of more subtle corrective techniques that reduces the visibility and the provocativeness of the physical effects of power and therefore reduces the danger that an ostentatious use of extra-national force will backfire and leave disorder in its wake.

Criminals are to be transformed — ‘developed,’ along liberal capitalist lines — rather than vanquished. Military violence would no longer be power’s constant accompaniment even if it sits pertly in the background. Norms replace laws and help produce the disciplinary (national) individual. As repression gives way to training, control and obedience will become more axiomatic; almost indistinguishable from the socialization process. Nations in the Third World would no longer be reminded of correct behavior by a few selected depredations. No, correct behavior is to be practiced, constantly reduplicated. The bodies are machined, exercised, their movement harnessed in details. The rules of a normalizing international order are to be followed — and learned.

*Ventriloquism of slavery. Sunny disposition of exploitability. It’s a helpy-selfy! Self is no redeemer. Those who think socialism means government. We need our own spanking. Surplus less frolicsome. Peace detains leash. A bit of psy-war. Lapidary pacification. Money is style in a solid state. Totally modernized head & counterrevolutionary justice. Slip the noose to guarantee slavery. Instead of fighting losing battles, they profit by adapting.*

Control would be designed to serve positive pedagogic functions as societies learn to follow national political *authority*, not extra-national military force. Authority is to be internalized and followed more automatically. Power would not function as a constraint, regulating forms of behavior which it is

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unable to influence at their origin. It would actually constitute and define forms of acceptable behavior. As national political identity comes under surveillance, bodies can be politicized in a submissive way. The norms of the world economy would operate as judgments, or evaluations — those of the International Monetary Fund or the World Bank come to mind — to be taken individually to heart. As the ideology of liberalism reigns worldwide, publics can come to believe that the chains which bind them are matters of their own free choice.

*Penitentiary. Travelogues all the same. If you can't fight & you can't flee. Prisons are the spanking .machines. We Must Know & You Must Pay (Census et Censura). Oppressed are more futuristic. When did the liberals run out of your money? My life as an export platform. Tight money debt bomb. The meek shall inherit the I.O.U. Bring your dreams of harm8ny to meet the tax collector. Dangle debt to strip back nomination. Do-it-yourself bankruptcy -countries don't go bankrupt. The happy molecule of the multinational corporation. Your failures are our investments.*

The sequence of international control methods recapitulates the history of punishment. The sovereign's extravagant revenge, first, moderated by the techniques of deterrence with their appeal to a calculating rationality. Second, the prison system — with the world political economy expected to serve as a prison in which much more finely detailed control over actions and incentives becomes possible. In this second stage, societies will find it much harder to 'stay out of trouble'. They are not only expected to refrain from certain acts but also, on the positive side, to develop and 'be' a certain way.

A sovereign jealously guarding its rights dissolves into a system function, a tightly knit web of active shapings. A domestically positioned surveillance (reminiscent of Bentham's Panopticon) is to supercede the harsh extra-national punishment of yesteryear. Violence might be able to create silences, but the world system depends on the shaping of speech, of national political discourses and on the active composing of material production. A positive and productive deployment of power will *invest* these bodies to create a useful

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docility and allow for the extraction of surplus value and the dominance of an authentically capitalist model of development and government policy.

Economic capabilities are to be jointly developed with an eye toward the global division of labor. Enhancing the system's productivity will create a global collective good — an idea which fits very neatly within orthodox liberal doctrines of political economy and comparative advantage. But this means making national units more productive — productive of capital, that is — by expanding and harnessing their positive capacities as their bodies are activated, intensified and put to work. If collective improvement occurs, it will occur through the spread of self-improvement efforts, as national governments support the arc of capitalist development by helping to engineer their societies into the commodity form.

As social life is commodified, a pretense of national self-sufficiency can be retained at the political level — a miniaturized sovereignty, in other words. Meanwhile, the self-reproducing tendency of world market forces holds sway (articulated by international economic organizations like the I.M.F. and the World Bank as well as by U.S. diplomacy). The market is authoritative it seems to articulate the unavoidable 'facts of life'. It sets in motion and helps to institutionalize a constant stream of judgments based on the visibility of the success or failure of nations within the international marketplace and the continuous, almost automatic comparisons which result. Without needing to be told what to do, the individual can take responsibility -for its own normalcy and self-regulation in the face of these global economic currents. And since market success and success in attracting foreign capital depends upon the internal organization of society, surveillance is self-imposed once visibility extends downward into minutiae — specifically, the details of social life that stud the respectable discussions of risk assessment,' 'political stability indicators,' and 'investment climate outlook.' National politics can retain its 'relative autonomy' without harming — in fact, by *contributing to* — the progress of accumulation on a world scale. Violence and punishment are now indistinguishable from the operation of pro-corporate economic planning and local administration of a most interventionist sort. The disciplined and disciplinary nationalism of the Third World becomes the form to be taken

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by the global political domination of the Center.

*Our self doubt invites the marines. Utopia risks reprisals of defense fat. Social integration failed to make me grow. Rang from a rope until socialism appears.*

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Is this second conception of international power anything more than the economic utopia which expresses the self-delusion of liberalism within the imperial Center? Certainly the self-reproduction of bodily economic mechanisms depends upon political success at the local (national) level. Yet these nationalisms aren't always so well-behaved — especially in the face of popular mobilizations, outside revolutionary support, and the presence of an opposing anti-capitalist superpower. What then?

When these normalizing processes do not succeed, the Third World threatens to spin out of control — or to spin into the partially protective, partially vampirizing grip of the Second World. The sources of the 'problem' form a long list: the unevenness of capitalist development, the crushing spread of the global 'great transformation' of the world into commodification, with the resistances and radicalisms left in its wake, the appeal of non-liberal and non-capitalist forms of development, the resonance of pre-capitalist communal traditions and values, the presence of an antagonistic center of global military and diplomatic power, the indigenous appeal of revolution, sub-national separatism, religious identification, the impossibilities of a universal capitalist development everywhere in the Third World. Control over the Third World, by the industrialized core of world capitalism by the hegemonic apparatus at its Center, cannot be insured by socio-economic means alone. The Pollyannaism of the liberals stops short. Global integration seems to be inseparable from the continual efforts of the Center to reintervene in order to supplement the normalizing power of market forces or multinational enterprise. And this means reengaging the global political struggle to gain advantages, connections and direct neo-colonial control over local networks of domination.



When the second, more localized and nationalized mode of domination starts to fail — as in Vietnam in the early 1960s or in Central America in the 1980s - the leadership of the Center is in a bind. It can sit back, wringing its hands, and watch portions of the Third World slip out of the established arrangements and prescriptions of world capitalism. Yet this is unacceptable, because it would undermine the arrangements by which the capitalist social orders at the Center are reproduced. (Reformist critics are prone to forget this.) But what choice does the Center have? In the absence of a profound social transformation at home — a project to which we can bend our efforts' — the Center will still be motivated to maintain control. And in the absence of an enormous constraint imposed by an active public mobilized in opposition, the imperial Center may resort to the conservatism and militarism of external punishment. Rather than let the Third World occupy a new geopolitical space or anticipate a spreading independence from the First and Second worlds; rather than allow a difference, a nomadism, a refusal of incorporation, a non-parallel future, the Center seems most prone to attempt to return to more archaic methods of control and harassment. The supplementary nudges of diplomacy and economic aid give way to larger doses of counterinsurgency, destabilization efforts, boycotts, sanctions and the physical disfiguring of local politics. Blood replaces the cash- nexus.

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#### NOTES

1. Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* (New York: Pantheon, 1978), p. 3. See also Foucault's *The History of Sexuality* (New York: Pantheon, 1978) and *Power/Knowledge* (New York: Pantheon, 1980; edited by Cohn Gordon). Also, Bruce Andrews, "The Political Economy of World Capitalism," *International Organization* (Winter 1982), pp. 135-163; "The Language of State Action," *International Interactions* (1980), pp. 267-289; "Constitution/Writing, Politics, Language, 'The Body,'" *L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E*, Vol. 4 (New York, 1981); and "Self/Writing," *The L=A=N=G=U=MG=E Book* (Carbondale, Il.: Southern Illinois University Press, 1984). The italicized phrases at the

start of each subsection of this essay are taken from a recent manuscript, 'I Don't Have Any Paper So Shut Up (or, Social Romanticism,' 1982-1983.

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CAPITALIST  
WORLD SYSTEM

2. William Appleman Williams, *Empire as a Way of Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), p. 154.
3. Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, p. 98. Or: "The individual which power has constituted is at the same time its vehicle."

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The Domestic  
Content of  
International Desire  
[1984]

# THE DOMESTIC CONTENT OF INTERNATIONAL DESIRE

[1984]

Yes, a “grotesque mediocrity” reigns within our generally depoliticized professional life. So why aren't the complacencies of the orthodox even more embarrassing? Why does the overall agenda of research and conceptualization still tilt — either reflectively or unreflectively — toward the reproduction of a deplorable status quo? Certainly we should play havoc with neorealist orthodoxy — and also with the flashy timidity of its self-appointed successors. But what is actually being articulated in the discipline? An unexpected obituary for the structuralists, the cocksure neorealists and aficionados of old-fashioned *Realpolitik*? Titillating revisionism for the respected ghosts of classical realism? Or merely corrective mechanisms in the self-reproduction of a certain kind of white-gloved theoretical discourse?

There is another agenda to which even the most rarefied conceptualizing can bend its efforts. What makes a nation's attachment to its expansive global (or regional) position so obsessive? Why is a particular state leadership so anxious to flex its particular muscles in a particular way? Why does an imperial power consider its ability to exert control over the social relations that constitute an open world political economy so important? Why are a nation's commitments to the international status quo wrapped up so tightly in the flag, and sanctified accordingly? Do any of the analytical moves at hand, however trumpeted, help us comprehend the grounds on which the key acts of government foreign policy are erected, or the grounds on which they might be confronted or opposed? I am thinking, for example, of the brutal American intervention in Vietnam and, most immediately, the attempted subversion and violent harassment of Nicaragua. Those matters, those sorts of questions,

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are likely to ambush our little self-important academic scuffles. The “balance-of-power scheme” seems to have little to say about them.

Orthodoxy is undeniably confined to the surface, to a restrictive picture of individual ends-means rationality and self-interest, transferred to the realm of statecraft. It is largely designed to shed light on war policies as sets of tactics undertaken by states as units intent on calculating the means they must use to achieve their previously chosen (or inherited, or a priori) purposes, in light of the situation in which they find themselves. Strategic objectives, for example, are thought to be pursued “for reasons of state” or to serve the “national interest.” The fundamental purposes of the state therefore begin to seem like matters of general public concern. And if official concerns are said to articulate a public interest, this links the continuities of policy to the overall needs of the society, to the general welfare. Policy is considered holistic; it implicates the nation as a whole. In a hostile world, *raison d'état* seems to suit the public interest.

Technique predominates. The ends of state look pregiven, immunized from any questions beyond those of efficiency and “rational” calculation of means. Yet they are not arbitrary. Orthodoxy regards them as a structurally determined response to the intransigent structure of international politics. And for imperial powers, assumptions of technical reason and the “primacy of politics” can seem like the appropriate models for studying security policy precisely because there are so few constraints of an external and mechanical sort.

This primacy of international politics may also derive, ironically, from the limited role that a competitive political process at home plays in shaping the government’s basic aims in a case of foreign intervention. There is often no way to attribute the purposes of these efforts directly to domestic politics or to domestic political considerations. The state apparatus also seems more independent in issues of security than in other policy arenas, and better equipped to overcome the usual domestic resistance; authority is not as circumscribed, power is not as dispersed. Government is therefore much more capable of setting the terms of its interaction with the various political constituencies. In the American case, that cornerstone of democratic ideals, the

idea that the public retains control over government, becomes more of a scare story than anything else.

With this political arrangement, a state can often transcend most domestic claims and private interests; its goals will appear irreducibly national. Moreover, in form it begins to resemble an ideal self-governing agent representing the best interests of the nation but capable of acting independently and not just in response to domestic pressures. Although the state represents the substance of society, it can itself remain more abstract, uncontaminated by narrower interests. Policy makers no longer need to appeal to a higher reason based on divine ordination; the apparent rationality of policy is based on the appeal to a universality that the state embodies, and security is *raison d'état*.

Orthodoxy presents state purposes as substantively or normatively empty. An autonomy, a self-regarding, self-sufficient motivation, takes shape within the sphere of the state itself. Government becomes an extrasocial category, a virtually self-referring unit, tethered only rhetorically (or tautologically) to a society's general welfare. The state becomes hypostatized, absolutized, a carrier of social meaning only insofar as it becomes, in a sense, the author of its own domestic base. What the central government is consistently interested in (in one of the extreme formulations) achieves the status of the national interest.

The nature of domestic society could reveal a matrix of meanings underneath foreign-policy purposes. Yet in conventional theorizing, this entire sphere of meanings expressed by the relationship between society and policy has been energetically suppressed. Certainly policy makers will try to create the impression that policy has transcended all social contingency. They invert the policy, just like a camera obscura would, in order to displace its particular domestic dimensions and give us a kind of formalism of the society as a whole. And this is replicated by the orthodoxies of realist theory, in both its classical and new varieties. The domestic social relations that lie behind the broad purposes of policy are hidden; both official rhetoric and orthodox analysis transport them almost outside of history and the process by which the social and material life of society are reproduced. The record of the nation's policy becomes a chronology of fixations rather than an unfolding of a society's

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desire.

We are left with doctrines that, like that reification which is a central mark of ideology, deny their lack of relativism and their lack of eternity, and modes of analysis that do the same. They naturalize. By a process of removal and purification, a wholly “natural” appearance is bestowed upon the realm of the social. The result looks unspoiled and immaculate, like a carefully smoothed surface, beneath which, however, troubling interpretative problems are being hidden away. “Strategic imperatives” and “the national interest” act like antiseptic and chloroform, deployed to achieve a euphoric clarity. State actions begin to take on all the unglamorous stability of natural, self-explanatory facts. The basic lines of policy become the self-evident — proverbial, commonsensical, that which “goes without saying.” Everything seems obvious.

Policy thus receives the exalted status of the “codeless”; the idea of the national interest or of the international power struggle naturalizes (and dedomesticates) the intentions behind the state’s performance. Likewise, policy is presented as a “pure recording” of objective national needs; it claims something like verisimilitude for itself, a kind of photographic clarity. It becomes (obvious) content without the deflections or fabrications of form. It is as if a strategic logic of policy — an apparently literal denotation of international rules and needs — looms so large in the foreground that only the government’s intention remains in view, not its underlying motivation. This erases an entire domestic system of meanings that stands behind policy: a code, a language (or *langue*) in relationship to which foreign policy functions as speech (*parole*). This domestic (social) dimension is practically banished from thought.

International interests are commonly expressed in a desire, a calculated project. Consequently, in the explanations we make (of war policies, for example) we start by describing in detail the project and the implicit evaluation of national costs and risks and benefits that it involves. These underpin the commitments that often stand behind the state’s specific purposes in a particular arena. But what explains the desire? What is *its* content? The usual descriptive emphasis on the relationship between ends and means — the plane

of technical rationality — must give way to make room for a larger set of (explanatory) questions about the ends themselves.

True, strategic interaction is not just a matter of policies being determined by international rules that are external to practice. Nor is practice just a simple externalizing of autism, of entirely “private” states, of self-blind embodiments of technical reason battling it out on an emptied international stage. True, the interaction between states is elaborated by what some would like to call intersubjective understandings and consensus, by coreflectively shared protocols, by the specific generative or organizing schemes of diplomatic tradition. Of course, the detailed orienting of practice involves a self-reflective performative aspect, an acknowledgment of the moves of other states in a complicated game with significantly consensual aspects, not to mention a variety of forms of learning and creative adaptation and artful improvisation.

Still, to speak of competence and generative schemes and empowerment as strictly *international* phenomena is disabling. National organizing schemes are embedded in and constituted by more than these international protocols. This ethnomethodology of statesmanship merely replaces a statist idealism with an interactionist idealism. It rejects an international political structuralism only to fetishize a surface international political formalism — a power game pursued for its own sake, however “coreflectively.” Its hermeneutic commitment is a refusal of domestic depth, confining us to the surface.

Beyond the baseline of the protection of physical defense, how is practice to be explained? What motivates it? These interpretative questions cannot be easily answered by either neorealism or classical realism. The orienting schemes of governments are domestically embedded in very particularized ways, ways that we need to analyze. Otherwise, the surface description of official concerns is put into the foreground so insistently that we forget to ask what kind of society is implicated. What society would understandably project these purposes and schemes when it comes to the international arena?

Classical realism, footnoted into fashion by references to contemporary social theory, is just as inclined to deny this social basis of state power. It stands in the way of a more critical analysis. For example, what do we learn by the old realist sleight-of-hand in which the optimizing and accumulation



of power (even in its “fullest sense”) is equated with the national interest and with the successful internalization of balance-of-power principles? Why does a state orient itself toward this balance-of-power scheme? Why is this axial principle of the balance of power being followed? Why is this “instinctive”? Why does it seem as if even hegemonic practices are undertaken for strictly political purposes? This does little more than repeat the most glaring complacency of the classical realists: to idealize the search for power as an end-in-itself, and to encourage prescriptions for our troubles of the most dematerialized and passivity-inducing sort. (To claim that the state is motivated merely to produce or reproduce itself, or that the international balance of political forces is what produces or constitutes the state, is to offer us once again the same old disembodied idealism that has characterized the mainstream of the discipline. This is not news.)

For all the talk of the social basis of power, the domestic “subject” (or referent) of these international policies directed toward the balance of power is still the society as an undifferentiated whole. The universalism of these generative schemes, like that of the so-called national interest, begins to reek of an almost Hegelian vagueness and portentousness. A “scholasticism of material life,” as Marx called it, is being trotted out once again to serve as anesthesia. It seems to exonerate the fundamental purposes of policy, which are conveniently justified by the need to optimize power or to gain leverage in various subtheaters of the balance-of-power “game.” It neutralizes the domestic context and it dematerializes the societal “subject” to which policy makers refer.

We can talk about vital interests that extend beyond the nation’s physical security all we like — and this is often what is involved in discussions of the balance of power — but *why* are these interests vital? What motivates it all? Even a response to so-called international needs or to the protocols of international or Great Power statesmanship will carry a domestic significance (or signification), which we need to interpret. The purposes are particularized. Key actions are specific social practices on behalf of a specific society permeated by a particular set of social relations. For our part, we must decide how to conceptualize these domestic roots, this deeper domestic context. Before

they become fully intelligible, the purposes themselves — and the desire to enter into these international schemes and protocols — must be interrogated and put into context *at the domestic level*. To see how this context works to structure policy purposes, we need to analyze a mediating network of domestic concerns that stand behind policy; we need to reinterpret the international purposes and schemes as a set of messages, one that presupposes a domestic code as instances of writing and speech presuppose a domestic language.

Public doctrine pretends a lack of self-consciousness or awareness about its own existence as a discourse — in this case, intertwined with a language of domestic society. This is a pretending which we ought to penetrate. Implicit domestic social choices seem to be involved, since policies can be thought of as institutionalized social practices, as forms of official praxis (and speech) on behalf of society. A government's surface goals and commitments can be reinterpreted as means. Their successful attainment would be designed specifically to insure the security of the domestic environment in which the government is embedded — that is, the social relations and interests and representations that most matter, the ones around which this particular society is most centrally organized at this point in its history. This will give us an idea of what society is giving government policy to work with. A certain domestic context and societal future will specify the motivation behind the direction of policy — in other words, policy's "point."

Policies can be thought of as an articulation, a writing, either internally consensual or contested, of a particular society. To comprehend a language, a semantic realm will need to be uncovered. In demythologizing the purposes of the government, we can tear away that look of self-evidence, that oppressive obviousness which so often clings to them. The same holds true for national security, or balance-of-power schemes, or the search for power. Their mere mention does not make a policy self-explanatory (at least it should not). Instead, we must de-naturalize or de-fetishize them, resituating the nation's intentions within (or in relationship to) a specific societal context. This will help restore their ground of meaning (the connotations of policy), which is threatened by the usual process of myth-making and "counterexplanation." By revealing how this domestic content is articulated (or, really, fabricated) in

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foreign policy, we can get closer to understanding such things as imperial interventions and arms races that threaten to get out of control.

In order to grasp this domestic motivation, something like a national subject must be specified. And we are led to ask: what do we need to know about the domestic social order to make sense out of a nation's most sacred international commitments? We will need to uncover the weighted configuration of domestic interests that is implicated by the nation's international purposes—a specific domestic paradigm, in other words, a model of the domestic social system—so that we can grasp the reproduction needs of a social system, not only internationally but domestically.

We can think of the seemingly “political” and “strategic” purposes of foreign policy as being placed in the service of the distinguishing features of a domestic system (features that may, for example, center around the economy). Government's grasp of foreign policy's domestic “calling” articulates a sense of need and provides it with a set of identifiable rules, protocols, and criteria (in varying degrees of discursive formulation). Like the paradigms involved in scientific research, a conception of the domestic system provides policy makers with an implicit model for their problem solving; it codifies the existing social arrangements that they value. Moreover, it provides a government with a relatively fixed conceptual framework and thus places limits on the type of questions that are going to be asked about society's future, and about the ways in which the reproduction needs of that particular society are intertwined with the regional or international environment.

The domestic order or status quo presupposed by policy purposes (or by the willingness to devote such attention to balance-of-power schemes) is what we can think of as a domestic paradigm, as distinct from the complacent generalities of the national interest. Such a *domestic paradigm* will articulate the particular presupposed social system that gives policy its horizon of meaning. It will enable us to translate a state's international and strategic concerns into (usually less explicit) domestic ones. Foreign-policy purposes, in other words, can be said to grow out of the desire to protect (and deepen the specificity of) a domestic system. Success is particular. If global commitments are designed to protect a particular definition and agenda for the system at home,

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that becomes the main context in light of which the government's orientation makes sense. If we can specify the nature of this particularized domestic context, we can begin to pinpoint the motivation behind foreign policy. And faced with policies which we deplore, we can then begin to pinpoint the changes for which we need to struggle within the domestic social order in order to encourage a change in the state's motivation: a transformation of official international desire by means of a transformation of domestic content.

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