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The Forum

The Seventy-Five Years' War, 1914–1989: Some Observations on the Psychology of American Foreign Policy-Making During the 20th Century

Lee E. Dutter¹

Several developments during the 1980s, especially events in 1989, suggest not only that we have reached the end of an era, but also that the 20th century of international relations may be over. If this proposition is accepted, or at least entertained, then four questions of special pertinence to American foreign policy are immediately relevant: What "paradigm" has guided American foreign-policy-makers during the 20th century? What are the likely characteristics of the new international environment which is now emerging and what factors are likely to shape it in the 21st century? How, if at all, should the American foreign policy-making paradigm be modified to deal effectively with this new environment and these factors? How might these changes be effected? This paper takes a first cut at question one. In this context, a policy-making paradigm has four major components: a "perceptual prism," or belief system, based on historical and current experience; a set of goals or objectives, which can be subdivided into the categories of fundamental and instrumental; a set of rules or guidelines for operational policymaking; and a set of model problems and their solutions, which not only help in the development of present and future policy, but also in the socialization of new individuals into the paradigm. Each of these components is examined in some detail, thus setting the stage for addressing the remaining questions in subsequent research.

KEY WORDS: international relations; American foreign policy; paradigm; perception; policy goals; policymaking; learning.

INTRODUCTION

By any standards the year 1989 was an extraordinary one. It witnessed a cascade of seminal events, not the least of which were the death and burial of

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Hirohito; the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan; the final passing of the Stalinist generation of Soviet leaders with the retirement and death of Andrei Gromyko; significant changes in Hungary and Poland; major anniversaries of the two world wars; the opening of the Berlin Wall, perhaps the single-most important development in East-West relations since the Cuban Missile Crisis; the first stirrings of change in Bulgaria; the "Prague Fall"; the first Bush–Gorbachev summit meeting; and the revolution in Romania.

As Eastern Europe continues to reverberate with the sound of crashing dominoes, we are clearly witnessing the end of an era. Indeed, it may not be too far-fetched to say that the 20th century of international relations is over. If this latter proposition is accepted, or at least entertained, then the question of how American foreign policy-makers will psychologically and intellectually, as well as operationally, adjust to the 21st century ought now to be addressed. In order to do so more effectively, however, we should first take stock of where we have been, which is the principal focus of the present paper.

We begin this stocktaking with another premise which must be initially conceded. Namely, policy-makers typically perceive the present and the near-term future through the prism of the past. For example, in their survey of a wide cross-section of historical cases of strategic surprise, Knorr and Morgan (1983, p. 233) observed:

The tendency in analyzing strategic surprise is to depict governments as *learning* systems, gathering and processing information as a guide to, or basis for, action. This directs our attention to governmental perceptual processes in themselves, somewhat apart from their larger context. But we should remember that governments are primarily *action* oriented, aiming to impose on their environment rather more than understanding it. This means that learning about the world is often a second order process and perception is skewed accordingly. To concentrate on a government's perceptual/analytical processes subtly distorts things, for a government is self-centered and action-oriented and it does its perceiving and learning within that narrow frame of reference. Action (and planned action) shapes perception as much as perception guides action. Governments lack the time and inclination to perceive and learn in ways an academic observer normally understands.

This perspective helps clarify why a government's perceptions can be badly flawed; why it is often reflexive and seldom reflective, how it can be so embroiled in its own plans as to ignore even first-rate information about what an opponent is planning.

Thus, the key question becomes: What have been the major components, in particular the most operationally consequential components, of the "perceptual prism" which has evolved in the minds of, and been employed by, American foreign policy-makers during the 20th century? In dealing with this question, analytical discussions of the foreign-policy behavior of nation-states explicitly or implicitly focus on two key factors subsumed under what have been called the "personal characteristics of leaders" (Hermann, 1978).² First is the *historical*

²By "personal" characteristics, Hermann means the *psychological* characteristics shared by the "high level policy-makers" in a nation-state. For our purposes, the most important component of these characteristics are high-level policy-makers' beliefs, which "... represent the leader's fundamental assumptions about the world" (Hermann, 1978, p. 59).

experience, including cultural development (Sampson, 1987), of the nation-state as internalized in the collective memory of its leaders and citizens. Historical experience can be interpreted to mean those experiences, and the “lessons” drawn from them, which typically predate the physical existence of the current generation and may, in fact, stretch back over many generations or centuries.

In the American case, these elements have long since been identified and analyzed (Hoffmann, 1989; Hunt, 1987, pp. 19–45, 92–124; Spanier, 1987, pp. 385–430; Vlahos, 1988). These include a Puritan religious and moral tradition dating from the earliest days of colonial America; politics, especially international politics, as an idealistic, moral crusade of (the American) good versus (almost everyone else’s) evil; a sense of exceptionalism and mission to remake the world in the American image by active intervention, as well as by example; the American Civil War as a model of the just war, both in terms of why and how it should be fought; the relative peace of the Eurocentric, 19th-century world as the American nation matured and emerged as a world power, contributing to a belief that international peace and harmony are the norm and that conflict and war are abnormal, as well as immoral; and an abhorrence of (violent) revolution, based on observations of revolutionary upheavals from France in 1789 through Russia in 1917, which contributed to a preference for strong-man rulers who keep order and preserve stability, often regardless of how they come to power or how they treat their own people.

The elements which can be subsumed under historical experience form the foundation for the operationally more important elements contained within the second key factor, *current experience*, that is, major events and their lessons within the lifespan of the current generation, which have significantly shaped the perceptions of high-level policy-makers. Here, things get a bit more complicated as it is difficult at best for the members of an extant generation not only to recognize such elements, but also how these consciously and unconsciously influence thinking, policy formulation, and actual foreign policy behavior: difficulties which are compounded when the issue of overlapping generations is considered.

In the American case, the appearance and development of these elements can be reasonably dated from the European explosion of 1914, the beginning of what we call the “Seventy-Five Years’ War,” to which we turn in the next section. Moreover, our efforts to understand and to explain the key elements of current experience and related factors are aided by borrowing and adapting a term from the history and philosophy of science, namely, the concept of a “paradigm” (Kuhn, 1970).³ In this context, the components of the perceptual prism which forms the core of the American foreign policy-making paradigm can be regarded as analogous to measures of central tendency in statistics, in particular the mean

³In adopting and adapting this term, we do not intend to suggest that high-level American policy-makers explicitly used it, or related terms, in their debates on the articulation, formulation, implementation, and effectiveness of actual policies. We use this concept, and the things which we subsume under it, as helpful analytical and explanatory devices.

or median views held by high-level American policy-makers, principally the president and his inner circle of advisers.⁴

By way of clarification, two additional comments are also in order. First, this paper is specifically concerned with the psychology of American foreign-policy-making. It is not, strictly speaking, a work in the field of comparative foreign policy. It is perhaps a step down the road to a comprehensive "theory" of American foreign policy-making. There is, however, no intention to convey the impression that anything said is, in principle, uniquely, or even primarily, "American." Indeed, anything said or implied about the analytical or critical usefulness of identifying policy-making paradigms could potentially apply to a wide cross-section of nation-states. This paper presumes that given suitable and sufficient information, its method and approach could be applied with equal force to the foreign policy of the Soviet Union since its creation; the British Empire in various periods; France, Germany, and other European nations in modern times; or any other international actor in any historical period. Again, no effort to single out America for special criticism is intended.

Second, high-level policy-makers may not always be consciously aware of the fundamental psychological underpinnings of their attitudes, beliefs, opinions, values, perceptions, and behavior, especially how these may affect a particular decision or policy initiative. Thus, these would not always be reflected in their responses to interviewers' questions or public and private writings, not to mention the fact that high-level policy-makers and others who may influence policy are not always entirely candid about their roles, especially in retrospective writings about possible misperceptions or mistakes.⁵

Moreover, it is often said that even at the highest policy-making levels, Americans are profoundly ahistorical. Certainly cases of this can be found in the conduct of American foreign policy (e.g., the 1979 "crisis" over the Soviet brigade in Cuba, which, everyone seemed to forget, had been there since the early 1960s). It is, however, perhaps more accurate and more relevant for our purposes to note that Americans, especially the citizenry at large, generally lack detailed knowledge of history and more important, a conscious awareness of how

⁴While perhaps secondary to the policy-making process, this does not mean, however, that we exclude or necessarily ignore others who have influence on policy outputs, namely, career officials in the Departments of State and Defense and the intelligence community; Congress; consultants; the media; academics; opinion leaders; and of course, the public at large.

⁵Regarding this issue, Cottam (1986, p. 20) observed:

Policy makers may not openly express some important beliefs either because they are publically unacceptable or because they are so universally accepted that they need not be expressed. Further, some beliefs may be inordinately important for non-rational reasons but would not appear on the map as crucially important.

Consistent with these possibilities, we rely heavily on interpretation and interpolation, both our own and those of other observers, a variation on the Delphi technique, in the discussion which follows.

American history, from the arrival of the first colonists, has an impact on contemporary American thinking about domestic *and* foreign affairs.

We also generally avoid use of the terms *unanimity*, *consensus*, *majority*, or *minority* in our references to policy-maker and citizen opinion. While theoretical and empirical, this is not a quantitative work. It is not that these terms and their implications are unimportant in assessing the impact of policy-maker and citizen opinion, but in addition to the reasons just suggested, very often relevant measures will be lacking or inaccurate.⁶

Finally, it could be argued that much of what follows may be most applicable to the period of so-called “bipartisan consensus” in American foreign policy from the late 1940s to the early 1970s, the last phase of the Vietnam War. As we shall argue, while this consensus appears to have been broken, or at least significantly damaged, by that war and seems unlikely to return in the foreseeable future, many of the components of the American foreign policy-making paradigm, which crystallized in the late 1940s and early 1950s, live on, in some cases modified in form, and continue to influence policy, especially through their institutionalization and the continued prominence of many key advisers, inside and outside government, who acquired policy-making positions or influence during this so-called bipartisan period and whose thinking in many important respects remains consistent.

THE EUROPEAN CIVIL WAR

In hindsight, the main strand of American thought on the outbreak of the European “civil war” in the summer of 1914 viewed it as not only the final, perhaps inevitable, degeneration into a cataclysmic war of the 19th-century, balance-of-power, Eurocentric international system, but also the fundamental intellectual and moral bankruptcy of that system.⁷ We can cite a number of reasons for thinking about this subperiod as a whole, rather than as two different wars with an interval in between. Among these reasons are that both wars were fought by the same basic protagonists for the same basic reasons; that as a result, Europe essentially destroyed itself as a center of world power and influence, not to be measurably regained until recent years; that the international system after

⁶For example, it has long been recognized (e.g., Mueller, 1973) that in the American public at large, the wording of questions in surveys can significantly affect response patterns to questions on foreign-policy issues. This, in turn, would increase the probability of erroneous inferences about belief systems or attitudinal structures behind individuals' specific responses, reinforcing the argument for supplemental, qualitative studies such as this one.

⁷Reference to the period from 1914 to 1945 as a civil war, sometimes as the “Second Thirty Years' War” (Bergesen, 1983, p. 256), is made by Neustadt and May (1986, p. 234), a term that we adapt, however, for a different purpose.

1945 was radically different from the one in existence before 1914; and most important for our purposes, that American thinking about the world and the United States' role in it were fundamentally different after 1945 as compared to the period before 1914.⁸

Thus, planted in the minds of many Americans, and nurtured, of course, by Woodrow Wilson, was the psychological seed of the belief, which germinated at the close of this civil war in 1945, that the world had to be remade (e.g., via the United Nations) in order to avoid a replay of these horrific 30 years. The long "truce" (1919–1939) in this civil war also provided two major, additional lessons, which came to be spoken, as well as unspoken, articles of faith for an entire generation of American policy-makers and citizens; that is, the principal lessons of current experience which were incorporated into the American perceptual prism.

While the economic, political, and social chaos of the early 1920s did give way to a fragile stability in the late '20s, that stability was, of course, destroyed by the Great Depression of the 1930s, which was aggravated by "beggar thy neighbor" trade policies, and the long slide to the second phase of the European civil war began. Based on this course of events, the first major lesson which eventually crystallized in American thinking drew a clear link between economic conditions within and between nation-states, political instability, and war; that is, bad economic conditions, including restrictions on international trade, "cause" political instability of the type which leads to internal violence and extremism. This violence and concomitant extremism "inevitably" lead to the rise of dictators and the establishment of authoritarian or totalitarian governments which, in turn, commit "aggression" against their immediate neighbors, thus significantly increasing the probability of systemic war.

There is, of course, evidence to support this belief, not only before the period on which it is based, but also on the contemporary world scene. We can find innumerable examples of a correlation between bad or worsening economic conditions and political instability, which contribute to the rise of dictators whose whims lead them to challenge their neighbors, either for self-aggrandizement or to divert attention from internal problems (e.g., the Argentine junta and the Falklands, Saddam Hussein and Kuwait).

On the other hand, there is also considerable evidence to question this belief, especially as an ironclad "law" of political behavior, even in the period on which it is based. For example, while the bad economic conditions of the immediate post-World War I period and, of course, the late 1920s and early 30s, did pave the way for the rise of Mussolini, the Japanese militarists, and es-

⁸For example, Kennedy (1984, pp. 30–37) argued that World War I had a less immediate impact on the international system than has typically been assumed and suggested that the changes that we now regard as important, while partially seen after the first war, were not clearly and profoundly manifest until after the second.

pecially Hitler, they also contributed to the rise of the Democratic Party in America, the Conservatives in Britain, and the Popular Front in France. In other words, protest over economic conditions in the latter three countries was largely contained within the existing governmental and political institutions.

In addition to context or cultural dependency, these qualifications suggest a critical *psychological* dimension to such situations which limits the applicability of this line of reasoning outside the Europe of the 1920s and '30s. More specifically, people must realize that they are poor, either by comparison to their recent history or to other nations; that conditions can be improved; that political action can be the instrument of this improvement; and that they have nothing to lose by physically risky actions in pursuit of this improvement. Leadership, of course, plays a key role in raising such awareness and mobilizing people to action (Gurr, 1970; Tilly, 1978). In sum, while indisputably relevant, economic factors alone are rarely enough to trigger the chain of events specified in this line of reasoning.⁹

For this first lesson, as well as the second, the "Munich analogy," and their subtheses, such qualifications found little hospitality or room in the mainstream of post-1945 American thinking. This "economic deprivation argument" was accepted as a largely unchallenged, often unspoken, and occasionally unconscious assumption in the policy formulation process. We should note, of course, that it also complemented another important element of American historical experience, namely, that democratic governments in prosperous societies on the Western, if not American model are inherently peaceful and nonaggressive, while dictatorships, especially in poor societies, are the opposite. It also implied something else, namely, that various forms of American intervention, or stewardship, could radically change things (e.g., intervention aimed at the amelioration of bad economic conditions, which would then abort the march down the road of instability, dictatorship, totalitarianism, aggression, and war).

The second principal lesson of this long truce, one far more familiar, picks up the themes of aggression and war, with a particular focus on the 1930s. We need not say more except to note that the "march of the aggressors," from Manchuria in 1931 through Czechoslovakia in 1938 and Poland in 1939 to Pearl Harbor in 1941, led to the formulation of the Munich analogy and its post-1945 metamorphosis into the domino theory, with its special application to the Third World and the American fear of "power vacuums" there.¹⁰ Here, compared to the economic deprivation argument, less thought was given, on the whole, to

⁹For a discussion of recent examples in which economics alone has not been enough, see Midlarsky (1988), Momayezi (1986), and Muller and Seligson (1987).

¹⁰At this point, it is worth noting that there is a marked tendency in analyses of American foreign policy, in which the present paper occasionally indulges, to conceptualize errors, especially spectacular ones, as fiascos, debacles, or simply colossal blunders which, in turn, spawn analogies, theories, corollaries, and syndromes.

possible qualifications of this lesson, not to mention to the complex issue of why Chamberlain had pursued the policies that he did and what the “real” lessons of Munich might be (Beck, 1989).¹¹ Munich and the experience of the resulting war also had a number of subsidiary effects. Seven in particular stand out.

First, given that the slide to renewed war was so closely identified with Hitler, Mussolini, and the Japanese militarists, a psychological niche was carved into the collective American psyche for the presence of international “bogeymen” as the root of most, if not all, trouble in the system, a point made in a different vein by Morgenthau (1977, pp. 8–10). In the immediate post-1945 period, of course, Stalin and communists filled this niche, and by their actions, reinforced, if not expanded, its size and importance. Since his demise, a number of others have followed, the most notable of whom have been Mao, Castro, Ho Chi Minh, Qaddafi, Arab oil sheiks, Khomeini, terrorists, Japanese managers, Noriega, Saddam Hussein, and in the ultimate link between domestic and foreign affairs, drug smugglers.

One major policy implication of this perception is, of course, the belief that if you exorcise, or at least contain, these bogeymen, then you are a long way toward solving your foreign-policy problems. Sustaining and perhaps reinforcing this orientation has been the process by which high-level American policy-makers actively seek internal public support for major foreign-policy initiatives, especially those involving the threat or use of military force targeted at these bogeymen. Although he may exaggerate a bit, Maechling (1988, p. 47) suggested this when he observed:

American administrations have to “sell” their commitments to Congress and the public, and habitually do so by wildly exaggerating the threat, whitewashing their clients, distorting the facts, and consecrating their own actions as part of a crusade.

Second, the perception developed and took hold, even before 1945, that American abstention from European military and political affairs before 1939 had been a disastrous mistake, almost as if somehow, by its abstention, the United States had been responsible for the war, and that this mistake should not be made again. Thus, the United States went from limited involvement, or intervention, in world military and political affairs outside the Western Hemisphere in the late 1930s to involvement nearly everywhere by the early 1960s. Starting with Truman’s statement that “. . . aggression anywhere in the world is a threat to peace everywhere in the world” (quoted by Gardner, 1974, p. 239), which, in effect, became the basic view that “a threat to peace anywhere is a threat to peace everywhere,” the perception developed and took hold that “a threat to the *American* peace anywhere is a threat to the *American* peace everywhere,” and finally to the view that “a threat to the *credibility* of American

¹¹This analogy’s ultimate grounding on the shoals of Vietnam was, of course, especially hard, triggering a debate which to some extent still continues and which despite its current application to Saddam Hussein, may yet result in a significant, permanent modification of this thinking.

commitments anywhere is a threat to the *credibility* of American commitments everywhere.”

Hence, if America did not stand firm everywhere, then American credibility everywhere would be irreparably compromised, a “credibility corollary” to the domino theory (Slater, 1987, pp. 105–6), and the “seamless web” that held together the international system in the non-communist world under American tutelage would unravel and the system would collapse like a house of cards. A less extreme and perhaps intellectually a more defensible view perceived the international system as a gigantic checker game in which all of the pieces were of equal (psychological) value in the contexts of containment and deterrence. While one might be able to afford the loss of an occasional piece, too many losses would eventually mean loss of the entire game, as things could unravel very quickly.

Explicit and implicit references to these factors may be found in the public and private utterances of high-level American policy-makers very early in the postwar period. For example, they are clearly present in Truman’s speech of March 1947, announcing what became known as the Truman Doctrine (quoted by Gardner, 1974, pp. 328–330).

One of the primary objectives of the foreign policy of the United States is the creation of conditions in which we and other nations will be able to work out a way of life free from coercion. This was a fundamental issue in the war with Germany and Japan. Our victory was won over countries which sought to impose their will, and their way of life, upon other nations.

... totalitarian regimes imposed on free peoples, by direct or indirect aggression, undermine the foundations of international peace and hence the security of the United States. It is necessary only to glance at a map to realize that the survival and integrity of the Greek nation are of grave importance in a much wider situation. If Greece should fall under the control of an armed minority, the effect upon its neighbor Turkey, would be immediate and serious. Confusion and disorder might well spread throughout the entire Middle East. Moreover, the disappearance of Greece as an independent state would have a profound effect upon those countries in Europe whose peoples are struggling against great difficulties to maintain their freedoms and their independence while they repair the damages of war.

Third, ideology became an explicit consideration. We can hardly imagine a set of ideas, embodied in Nazi Germany and operationalized by Hitler and his henchmen, more repugnant to American moral sensibilities than fascism. Again, although the fundamental origins of American perceptions can be identified much earlier, their proximate roots can be traced to the Bolshevik Revolution and communism and communists stepped, as noted, into this psychological niche. As a composite of the ideas of Marx, the ideas and behavior of Lenin, and the behavior of Stalin, communism, and those acting in its name, quickly came to be seen as an even more virulent form of the totalitarian cancer which had just been dispatched in the most cataclysmic war in modern history and the source of all persistent evil and trouble in the post-1945 international system (Morgenthau, 1977, pp. 10–13).

Fourth, a noticeable tendency emerged to accept at face value an adversary's open hostility, particularly his words, as true reflections of his present and future intentions. Thus, in remembering *Mein Kampf*, American foreign policy allowed Stalin's "two-camps" line and his pronouncements on the "inevitability" of war, Mao's "paper tiger" rhetoric, and Khrushchev's assertion that "we will bury you" and his endorsement of "wars of national liberation" to become additional premises on which operational policy was often based. On the other hand, until very recently, less hostile, and especially conciliatory, statements à la Gorbachev's *perestroika*, were often dismissed as cant, dissimulation, trickery, tactical maneuvers, or, at best, signs of weakness which might somehow be exploited (Nathan and Oliver, 1989, p. 160).

Here we see a case of the "when in doubt, assume the worst" bias noted by Garthoff (1978, pp. 22–24). This, in turn, contributes to development of the "egocentric" bias, that is, the tendency of people to see themselves as the central point of reference when explaining the specific (hostile) actions of others (Stein, 1988, p. 253). More importantly, the net effect of such biases is to make people far more receptive to confirming information (e.g., hostile statements of intent) than to challenging information (e.g., conciliatory statements). Stated another way and as observed by many analysts (e.g., Jervis, 1976), the volume of challenging information must be considerably greater than the confirming information in a given period before individuals begin to shift their basic perceptions.

Fifth, a form of mirror-imaging developed in the sense that American policy-makers never doubted their own inherently peaceful, nonaggressive intentions, and rarely, if ever, considered that an adversary might doubt them. For instance, reflecting on the late 1940s, Kennan (1967, p. 497) observed that American policy-makers never seriously considered the possible reactions of the Soviet side in anything that they were planning or proposing to do. Also recall Lyndon Johnson's apparently genuine surprise at Hanoi's rejection of his offer of a "TVA" for the Mekong river after a negotiated settlement (on basically American terms, of course) of the war in South Vietnam.

Sixth is the Pearl-Harbor syndrome, namely, be prepared militarily, always be vigilant, and never let your guard down. If you relax, even for a nanosecond, then the bogeymen will strike with devastating effect. Logical extensions of this have been the beliefs that enemies would inevitably strike if you ever relaxed your preparations or vigilance and that *everything* they said or did were done with you in mind, a generalized manifestation of egocentric bias. Echoes of this are clearly identifiable down to the present day. For example, Owens (1989, p. 545) recently argued

... caution is required with regard to the Soviet Union, even in an era of reduced tensions. . . . Moscow still has the potential, should its interests warrant, to increase military output and that is what, with all its problems, the Soviet economy does best. Even if East-West negotiations should lead to a shift away from a U.S. defense based on

forward deployment and high levels of operational readiness, industrial preparedness remains a hedge against a return to business as usual by the Soviets.

Seventh, and less obvious than the preceding, a tendency developed after 1945 not only to perceive the world as a seamless web (e.g., "a threat to peace anywhere is a threat to peace everywhere") but also to collapse the time frame for the dire consequences of American inaction or loss of credibility or both. The apocalyptic vision of the domino theory and its credibility corollary in the specific situations to which they were applied typically collapsed everything, perhaps ironically for a country supposedly concerned with the long-term future, to a single timepoint—tomorrow.¹²

FUNDAMENTAL AND INSTRUMENTAL GOALS

The perceptual prism just outlined has formed the foundation of the paradigm which has guided the intellectual formulation, as well as the practical application, of American foreign policy in the post-1945 period. The use of the term "paradigm" in analyses of policy-making processes in general and American foreign policy in particular is, of course, not new (Flynn, 1989; George, 1989; Hyland, 1989; Roskin, 1989; Shafer, 1988b). These analyses, however, typically focus on compartmentalized aspects of American foreign policy (e.g., U.S.–Soviet relations in Europe, the "lessons" of Pearl Harbor or Vietnam, counterinsurgency policy in the Third World), thus using the term in only a basic or generic sense. On the other hand, here we use and develop it in a much broader sense, one more consistent with its use in examinations and analyses of the history and philosophy of science (Kuhn, 1970).

In some of these compartmentalized analyses, however, there is occasionally a manifest awareness of broader implications. For example, Shafer (1988a, p. 60) observed:

Given this reduction of insurgency to a Communist tactic, it is not surprising that policy makers' efforts to understand revolution focused almost exclusively on the writings of the modern master theoreticians of revolution—Mao Tse-tung, General Vo Nguyen Giap, Ernesto (Che) Guevara, Régis Debray.

Americans' reading of the revolutionary masters was self-frightening and narcissistic. Analysts took them at their word. When General Giap said of Vietnam, "If we win here, we win everywhere," policy makers believed him. When Mao declared that his was a scientific, universally applicable revolutionary weapon, Americans took heed.

The next step in our broadening of the use of this concept is the identification of the set of goals or objectives pursued by American foreign policy-makers. These goals, in turn, can be divided into the categories of fundamental and

¹²For a recent discussion of this and related issues, see Slater (1987).

instrumental. Regarding the analytical usefulness of this distinction, Dutter and Kania (1980, p. 932) observed:

. . . *Fundamental* goals relate to matters of paramount national interest—e.g., territorial integrity, political independence, economic and military security. The specific mix of these goals for a given nation-state must be deduced from a variety of sources—documents, writings, capabilities, intentions, past and present behavior. Furthermore, it is particularly important to note that fundamental goals are sometimes not immediately obvious or apparent, especially to the casual observer, and are relatively stable or unchanging over long periods of time.

Instrumental goals relate directly to the pursuit and/or achievement of one or more fundamental goals. These goals are typically easier to identify and are likely to change periodically, particularly in response to alterations in the environment in which the nation-state must operate. Also, on occasion, what appear to be changes in fundamental goals are, in actuality, changes in either instrumental goals or the strategy followed in pursuit of both.

In sum, fundamental goals are long-term and change very little, if at all. Instrumental goals are short-term, the achievement of which is seen to be relevant to the pursuit of one or more fundamental goals, and can change noticeably, even in the short run.¹³ While there obviously can be legitimate disagreements in the American case, we can identify at least four interrelated, but analytically separable fundamental goals.

First has been the prevention of World War III. In and of itself, this goal would, needless to say, generate little debate or dissent. Debate, however, and sometimes vigorous debate, which continues to the present, has occurred at the levels of instrumental goals and especially operational policies. More specifically, the principal instrumental goals have been to contain the U.S.S.R. and for a time, the PRC within their existing spheres of influence and to deter their efforts to expand these spheres or to gain influence outside of them and to do so by a variety of operational means, which have shifted from president to president. A more general variation on these goals, which is also related to the second fundamental goal, has emphasized the American “duty” to oppose “aggression.”

Often the means employed have involved policies which fall into four major categories: deterrence by hypothetical threats of post-hoc punishment (e.g., MAD); deterrence by hypothetical threats of possible denial (e.g., NATO and the defense of Western Europe); containment by a tangible demonstration of denial (e.g., the Korean and Vietnam wars); and deterrence by the promise of tangible rewards (e.g., the economic operationalization of detente).

Second has been the preservation of the geopolitical status quo in the “free” or noncommunist world. An alternative formulation, reflecting the collapse of

¹³For an illustrative discussion of shifts in American (instrumental) goals vis-à-vis the Soviet Union, see Gaddis (1988). Also, while we can often observe debates among high-level American policy-makers in the course of formulating, articulating, implementing, and evaluating policies, we suggest that much more often than not, no matter what their surface complexities, policy outputs, especially major initiatives, can be traced backward to a small set of intellectual premises, goals, etc., derived from the basic components of the policy-making paradigm outlined in our analysis.

colonial empires after 1945, has emphasized opposition to rapid, disorderly, violent change in that world, especially if the Soviets or communists were directly or indirectly involved, or might benefit. Again, debate has occurred at the instrumental and operational levels, but policies have generally fallen into the categories of economic and military aid programs, covert action or intervention, nonmilitary forms of coercion (e.g., economic sanctions), and in two instances, direct, overt involvement in limited wars.

Third has been the consistent effort to foster an international (economic) environment receptive to the United States and its ideas (e.g., free trade). Once again, debate can be observed on the means to be employed and many of the same means noted a moment ago have been used, with the addition of more specific mechanisms such as the UN, Bretton Woods, the IMF, the World Bank, and GATT. Although perhaps less immediately obvious, this goal also reflects the lessons of current experience. For example, Long (1989, p. 558) recently observed:

Profound economic changes and intractable political problems rightly challenge policy assumptions and institutional patterns. The devastation of the Great Depression and World War II delegitimized U.S. high tariff policy and galvanized American support for open international markets. As one consequence of these crises, executive branch institutions acquired unprecedented capacity to effect liberal free trade and investment policy.

Fourth has been the desire to preserve and to promote the “American way of life,” although sometimes this goal has been invoked in a more moderate form with the term “Western,” as George Bush did at the December 1989 summit meeting. Earlier, it had been propounded in a number of ways ranging from verbal pronouncements (e.g., Carter’s statements on human rights) to tangible behavior (e.g., the policies of economic modernization, political development, and counterinsurgency subsumed under the umbrella of the Kennedy “doctrine” of nation building).

OPERATIONAL RULES AND GUIDELINES

The third major component of the American foreign policy-making paradigm is the set of rules of, or guidelines for, operational policy-making in the pursuit of instrumental goals, rules or guidelines which can be applied to a wide variety of existing and emergent situations. Probably the two leading rules or guidelines consciously and unconsciously used by American policy-makers have been policy by analogy and policy by reaction.

Policy by analogy has been typically grounded in the economic deprivation argument, the Munich analogy, and early, perceived successes, that is, the presumption that what has worked, or appears to have worked, in one situation will also work in another, even superficially similar situation. There is, of course,

nothing wrong with the use of analogies per se. Theoretically, difficulties arise, however, in determining which analogy may apply, as well as the details of how it might apply (Neustadt and May, 1986).¹⁴

In American foreign-policy-making, we often observe high-level policy-makers "jumping to analogies" and omitting crucial intermediate analytical steps. For example, as one domino after another fell in Eastern Europe during 1989, a noticeable amount of debate in the White House and State Department apparently revolved around the "Tiananmen analogy." Namely, when are the tanks going to roll in and put an end to it all? The tanks did, of course, eventually roll in Romania, but in this case, on the side of the revolutionaries.

Afghanistan, however, may provide an example more pertinent to our discussion of the fundamental role of analogies in American thinking. Prior to the departure of Soviet troops in February 1989, there was a widespread belief that *analogous to earlier events in South Vietnam*, after their departure, the Soviet-backed government in Kabul would quickly fall, certainly within a few months, if not a few weeks. As of this writing, over two years have passed since the Soviet departure without this outcome having occurred. A "purist" might note that more than 2 years passed from the final American withdrawal from South Vietnam to the fall of Saigon, so the analogy has not yet played itself out. This, of course, could be the case, but there are grounds to suggest that the analogy may not hold. For instance, unlike South Vietnam, significant economic and military aid continues to flow from Moscow to the Kabul regime. Also, the Mujahedeen opposition is divided into several distinct groups which often squabble among themselves. Thus, at least in the short run, Lebanon may be a better analogy for Afghanistan than South Vietnam.

Returning to the late 1940s, the Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan had the economic deprivation argument and the Munich analogy as major intellectual premises. Once they were implemented and perceived to be working, policy by analogy entered via the assumption that what was working in Greece, Turkey,

¹⁴Empirically, many analysts of foreign-policy behavior strongly argue that the use of analogies is actually the foundation of cognitive decision processes. For instance, in their review and summary of previous research, Powell, Dyson, and Purkitt (1987, p. 209) observed that individuals are found to be "selective information processors," have "limited cognitive capabilities," and "often use heuristic or mental aids to handle decision problems." On this last point, the drawing of analogies can be regarded as a leading heuristic or mental aid, a view expressed by Mefford (1987, p. 225), for example, who observed:

In foreign policy . . . analogies are used to understand the present in terms of the past. The practice is ubiquitous and serves the purpose of reducing a new and possibly threatening situation to a variation of something familiar. For better or worse, what is known or believed is often transferred wholesale to new contexts. While the parallels drawn might be apt in some cases in some respects, the overall resemblance may well be superficial, with differences and discrepancies overwhelming similarities. As a consequence, analogies are simultaneously powerful mechanisms for orienting policy and grave sources of misperception and error.

and Western Europe would work anywhere; hence, the conceptualization of Point Four and the birth of the American foreign aid program.

These initial, perceived successes also strengthened the *intensity* of belief in the original premises. Indeed, it is sometimes remarkable how persistent the belief in specific analogies can be, even aside from Munich. For example, during the past forty years, we have periodically heard calls for a Marshall Plan for this or that, including America's inner cities, with Hungary, Poland, and Eastern Europe in general currently filling in the blank. Coming full circle, it may very well be that the last analogy is more appropriate and defensible than many of the others in the intervening forty years.

Moreover, psychologically, the close temporal proximity of conceptualization, operationalization, and perceived success have a mutually reinforcing impact on intensity of belief. These same considerations are mirror-imaged in policy-making by reaction, which can be interpreted as a form of learning from perceived mistakes and then drawing "negative" analogies. Recall, for example, our earlier comments on the American perception that abstention from pre-1939 European affairs had been a disastrous mistake.

In post-1945 American foreign policy, a partial list of major concepts, ideas, or policy initiatives—developed to deal with specific issues or situations, which have largely rested on both positive and negative analogies—includes the Truman Doctrine; the Marshall Plan; Point Four: containment; NATO; European integration; "rollback" of Soviet power and the "liberation" of satellites; massive retaliation; the New Look; the Long Haul; Dulles's "line of containment," that is, NATO, SEATO, ANZUS, CENTO, and various bilateral agreements; brinkmanship; the Eisenhower Doctrine; flexible response; the Kennedy Doctrine of nation building; the Alliance for Progress; the Nixon Doctrine; the Nixon-Kissinger balance-of-power or "system building" approach; detente; the Carter Doctrine; the Reagan Doctrine; and the Caribbean Basin Initiative.

In sum, the practices of policy by analogy or reaction have often led, at best, to the *overattribution* of causality in the original situation(s) in which past policy was made and, thus, an overattribution of relevance to the emergent situation(s) for which policy had to be made. In hindsight, for example, the degree of relevance of American aid under the Truman Doctrine in the ultimate defeat of the Greek communist insurgents is at least debatable [e.g., Shafer (1988b, pp. 166–204); for a contemporary example of a debatable proposition, see Dolan (1990)]. At their worst, policy by analogy or reaction have resulted in the *misattribution* of causality and relevance in the past and emergent situations, helping to set the psychological stage for mistakes such as the Bay of Pigs and Vietnam.

Returning for a moment to original premises, consider again the Marshall Plan. Among the factors or qualifications which contributed to its success, but which were largely ignored when the analogies of Point Four and American

foreign aid programs were made and carried through in many subsequent situations, were the strong receptivity of the West European governments and their populations to an aid program; an intense motivation by those governments and populations to rebuild; highly developed administrative structures of government which could effectively receive and distribute the aid; highly skilled populations of workers who, in turn, could make good use of the aid; and despite the widespread physical destruction of the war, the existence of a foundation of an economic infrastructure on which to rebuild.¹⁵

PARADIGM FORMULATION AND CONFIRMING EVIDENCE

However reasonable, plausible, or defensible the abstract components of a paradigm may appear to be, especially to the individuals who employ it, these components are irrelevant operationally unless they mesh together logically *and*, in turn, “fit” the reality to which the paradigm purports to apply. Enough has been said so far to suggest that the components of the American foreign-policy-making paradigm meshed together reasonably well in the minds of its users, and events in the years immediately after 1945 provided sufficient evidence for the presumption of a good fit to reality to be made. Moreover, as noted, the timing of paradigm formulation and confirming evidence further reinforced the paradigm. A few examples should suffice to make the point.

First, as noted, Stalin and communism quickly filled the psychological niche vacated by Hitler and fascism. This was, of course, reinforced by Stalin’s intransigent and opportunistic behavior, which was reminiscent of Hitler at his worst. Second, as also noted, the perceived success in a relatively short period of the Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan led to their globalization in Point Four and other foreign aid programs. Third, the 1948 coup in Czechoslovakia, reminiscent of events there ten years earlier, propelled the Marshall Plan forward and stimulated the formation of the Brussels Pact, which, in turn, led to the formation of NATO during the Berlin Blockade, the first real crisis of the Cold War.

Fourth, the outbreak of the Korean War went a long way toward confirmation of the Munich analogy, the domino theory, the credibility corollary, and the Pearl Harbor syndrome; reinforced the perceived need for NATO; and provided

¹⁵In sum, high-level American policy-makers might have been better served, and would be better served, by the development and maintenance of a higher degree of “sensitivity to the environment,” which would contribute to the development of greater “openness to change” (Hermann, 1978, pp. 57–59) in emergent situations for which policy must be developed and applied. Unfortunately, this is in contrast to the more frequent practice in which policy-makers not only rely heavily on “simplifying mental heuristics,” but also “frequently misuse statistical and formal principles of inference” (Powell et al., 1987, p. 213).

“evidence” for the paradigm-based arguments of NSC-68. In his own words, Truman (1956, p. 333) observed:

Communism was acting in Korea just as Hitler, Mussolini, and the Japanese had acted ten, fifteen, and twenty years earlier. I felt certain that if South Korea was allowed to fall Communist leaders would be emboldened to override nations closer to our own shores. If the communists were permitted to force their way into the Republic of Korea without opposition from the free world, no small nation would have the courage to resist threats and aggression by stronger communist neighbors. If this was allowed to go unchallenged it would mean a third world war, just as similar incidents had brought on the second world war.

In hindsight, NSC-68, completed a few weeks before the North Korean attack, can be seen as an important milestone in paradigm formulation and articulation (Gaddis, 1982; Wells, 1979). For example, on the critical roles of American commitments and credibility in the psychological dimension of deterrence and containment, Gaddis (1982, p. 92) observed:

The implications were startling. World order, and with it American security, had come to depend as much on *perceptions* of the balance of power as on what that balance actually was. And the perceptions involved were not just those of statesmen customarily charged with making policy; they reflected as well mass opinion, foreign as well as domestic, informed as well as uninformed, rational as well as irrational. Before such an audience even the appearance of a shift in power relationships could have unnerving consequences; judgments based on such traditional criteria as geography, economic capacity, or military potential now had to be balanced against considerations of image, prestige, and credibility. The effect was vastly to increase the number and variety of interests deemed relevant to the national security, and to blur distinctions between them.

On the equally important issues of confirmation and the timing of “confirming” evidence, Gaddis (1982, p. 109) observed:

As it happened, NSC-68's advocates did not have to work as hard as anticipated to win support for it thanks to unexpected help from the Russians. Circumstances surrounding the outbreak of the Korean War are still by no means clear, but two points seem beyond dispute: that the North Korean invasion could not have taken place without some kind of Soviet authorization, and that it could hardly have come at a better time to ensure implementation of NSC-68.

This happened in large part because of the remarkable manner in which the Korean War appeared to validate several of NSC-68's most important conclusions. One of these was the argument that all interests had become equally vital; that any further shift in the balance of power, no matter how small, could upset the entire structure of postwar international relations. There was almost immediate agreement in Washington that Korea, hitherto regarded as a peripheral interest, had by the nature of the attack on it become vital if American credibility elsewhere was not to be questioned.

Fifth, the quick, cheap, spectacular successes of covert action in Iran and Guatemala gave this paradigm component a reputation for effectiveness that was little diminished by its mixed record later on. Although discussed in a different context, this point is made by Halperin (1988, pp. 177–178). More specifically, Bill (1988, p. 94) observed:

Washington policymakers for years considered the operation in Iran a great success story in direct covert intervention. As such, . . . Iran . . . acted as a catalyst that bred other CIA interventions—beginning with Guatemala in 1954.

These points highlight another major component of paradigms, namely, a set of model “problems” and their “solutions,” which are used to “educate” or to “socialize” new individuals into the modes of thought and action contained in the paradigm and which provide “models” for future applications via inductive reasoning (e.g., the drawing of analogies). Moreover, the paradigm becomes institutionalized (e.g., in standard operating procedures), which represents another form of multiplicative effect in terms of the long-run impact on operational policy and resistance to change. Finally, the occasional individuals who do not readily conform are typically weeded out early in the education or socialization processes; eventually leave the organization(s) of their own volition or are forced out; never get selected or appointed in the first place; or if they do survive, are simply ignored. Recall, for example, the excesses of McCarthyism in the 1950s, George Ball’s internal (and ignored) arguments against escalation of the Vietnam War in the mid-1960s, and resting on similar attitudes, the surveillance and harassment of domestic dissidents and political opponents in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

They also highlight an unfortunate paradox. With early, overwhelming, confirming evidence in the perceptions of a community of practitioners, a paradigm becomes more intensely held than it might be otherwise and adjustments of its components to a changing reality are correspondingly slower and more difficult psychologically, not to mention operationally. In other words, potential sensitivity to the environment and openness to change are diminished and handicapped. The paradigm’s scope is then relentlessly pushed forward, largely ignoring the possibility of a declining fit between it and the reality to which it is applied, even in the face of challenging information and evidence, often until disaster strikes in the form of a costly anomaly.¹⁶

In other words, the users of a paradigm implicitly presume that in many important respects, the reality to which it applies is uniform and largely static. Thus, as the Cold War spread from its European origins in the late 1940s, to Asia in the early 1950s, the Middle East in the late 1950s, and the Third World in the early 1960s, American policy-makers largely ignored the growing gap, easier to see in hindsight, of course, between their paradigm and the economic, geographic, political, psychological, and sociological realities of the situations to which it was applied, further setting the stage for Vietnam.

RESISTANCE TO PARADIGM CHANGE

Whether genetically based, culturally determined, or both, the human mind appears to be a seeker of simple, eternal truths or principles which can be applied

¹⁶An anomaly can be defined as a situation that initially looks as if it ought to fit the paradigm, but despite the persistent and costly efforts of the community of practitioners, it cannot be made to fit.

to the world around it. If these are found or developed and are fortuitously juxtaposed to strong confirming evidence, then they are typically clung to with an intensity that can defy logical argument, even in the face of significant evidence that they are in need of revision. Resistance to change is strong, even among those “objective” seekers of truth, scientists. For example, on challenges to paradigms, competitions between them, and the ultimate resolution of challenges, Kuhn (1970, pp. 150, 151) observed:

. . . the transition between competing paradigms cannot be made a step at a time, forced by logic and neutral experience. Like the gestalt switch, it must occur all at once (though not necessarily in an instant) or not at all.

How, then, are scientists brought to make this transposition? Part of the answer is that they are very often not. . . . The difficulties of conversion have often been noted by scientists themselves. Darwin, in a particularly perceptive passage at the end of his *Origin of Species*, wrote: “Although I am fully convinced of the truth of the views given in this volume. . . , I by no means expect to convince experienced naturalists whose minds are stocked with a multitude of facts all viewed, during a long course of years, from a point of view directly opposite to mine. . . . [B]ut I look with confidence to the future, -to young and rising naturalists, who will be able to view both sides of the question with impartiality.” And Max Planck, surveying his own career in his *Scientific Autobiography*, sadly remarked that “a new scientific truth does not triumph by convincing its opponents and making them see the light, but rather because its opponents eventually die, and a new generation grows up that is familiar with it.”

It should not be surprising that a similar phenomenon occurs among policy-makers as well, especially the reluctance to accept and to act upon discrepant or challenging information (Dunn, 1985; Jervis, 1976, 1989). As noted, even if the challenging evidence is strong, it is often outweighed by the intensity of resistance to change. For example, Shafer (1988a, p. 75) observed:

Counterinsurgency—now subsumed as one element in low-intensity warfare—is again attracting the high-level attention that propelled the counterinsurgency era of the 1960s. . . . Perhaps nothing demonstrates this better nor offers a better opportunity to assess new thinking on counterinsurgency than the January 1986 Conference on Low-Intensity War sponsored by Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger. . . . Examining the proceedings. . . is a sobering experience, for they show no evidence that any of the underlying analytic problems of past doctrine have been recognized, let alone corrected. Indeed, what is most striking about the proceedings is the extraordinary continuity of the ideas expressed.

The same phenomenon is observed in contemporary assessments of broader U.S. strategic interests and needs. For example, while perhaps not a definitive statement of official, contemporary government thinking and, of course, predating the events of 1989, the recent, initial report of The Commission On Integrated Long-Term Strategy (1988), a major statement by a group of individuals who have been directly or indirectly involved in policy-making for many years (e.g., Brzezinski, Huntington, Kissinger), nevertheless reflects still-dominant institutional perspectives.

More specifically, it contains a number of statements, as well as implications, which reflect continuity in thinking. First, although expressed in less

alarmist terms, the basic view of the Soviet threat (p. 5) is little changed from 40 years earlier:

. . . Soviet power has bypassed the lines we drew and has pushed into Southern Asia, the Middle East, Africa, the Caribbean, and Central America. In a world that is less bipolar than it once was, [our past] strategy has not helped much in dealing with hostile countries (Iran, for example) outside the Soviet bloc. In Europe itself there are signs of severe strain. The Alliance has not succeeded in matching Soviet conventional forces on the continent, and for many contingencies our threat to use nuclear weapons against them has become progressively less credible in light of the growth in Soviet nuclear forces.

There are also echoes of the Munich analogy (p. 64), as well as the domino theory, the credibility corollary, and the view of the Third World as largely a battleground in the U.S.–U.S.S.R. competition (p. 13):

. . . we need to fit together strategies for a wide range of conflicts: from the most confined, lowest intensity and highest probability to the most widespread, apocalyptic and least likely For genuine stability, we need to assure our adversaries that military aggression at any level of violence against our important interests will be opposed by military force.

. . . conflicts in the Third World are obviously less threatening than any Soviet-American war would be, yet they have had and will have an adverse cumulative effect on U.S. access to critical regions, on American credibility among allies and friends, and on American self-confidence. If this cumulative effect cannot be checked or reversed in the future, it will gradually undermine America's ability to defend its interests in the most vital regions, such as the Persian Gulf, the Mediterranean and the Western Pacific.

Even problems which are more contemporary in origin, such as terrorism, are perceived very much through the prism of the Soviet threat (p. 14):

The Soviet Union and its allies have often backed terrorism and insurgency around the world. They have skillfully exploited pervasive poverty and nationalist resentments in many regions, and their methods of political control provide a useful model for Third World dictatorships seeking to gain and hold power.

The issues of collective and institutional memory, as well as institutional resistance to change, or a lack of sensitivity to the environment and openness to change, are universal in relevance. In fact, it could hardly be otherwise. Without a paradigm, or some form of abstract belief system, which a community of practitioners can use to impose at least partial "order" on the reality around it, conscious thought itself might very well disappear. On the other hand, a willingness to revise, or to cast aside at the slightest provocation, an established paradigm is an invitation to intellectual, not to mention operational, chaos. It would also be a form of psychological suicide for those who have based their entire careers on the paradigm.

The discussion to this point should not be interpreted as criticism of policy-making paradigms per se, but rather their observed rigidity when change seems in order. When faced with strong evidence that change is in order, however, modifications are typically made in reverse order (Dunn, 1985, p. 228; Jervis, 1976, pp. 291–300), that is, in components less central to the paradigm, and

while they may come quickly in response to “critical” events, these changes often take years, sometimes decades, and occasionally a generation. Regarding the American foreign policy-making paradigm, this means that any modifications would likely come first to the model problems and solutions; then to policy-making rules or guidelines; third to instrumental goals; fourth to fundamental goals; fifth to the lessons of current experience; and finally to the lessons of historical experience.

Does this mean that the thinking of American policy-makers is destined to be years out of phase with the reality with which they must deal? The most defensible answer is a qualified no. Learning can and does occur, even within the same generation, particularly in response to a significant quantity of contrary evidence and especially to critical events. For instance, consider the Cuban Missile Crisis.¹⁷ Cuba quickly became a model problem, perhaps the paramount one, in the years following the crisis. It also, of course, became a model solution as “crisis management” and related terms entered the paradigmatic vocabulary, as well as being perceived by some as a “vindication” of flexible or graduated response.

Regarding policy-making rules or guidelines, Cuba essentially delegitimized nuclear weapons and threats to use them as potential tools to be used in the pursuit of foreign policy objectives, overturning one leading interpretation of NSC-68. Their visibility and perceived relevance were relegated to deterring World War III or a NATO-Warsaw Pact conflict in Europe. On the other hand, the visibility and perceived utility of conventional force was, if anything, enhanced (e.g., the “surgical” air strike), helping to set the psychological stage for the “slow squeeze” strategy of Vietnam. Regarding instrumental goals, as the rhetoric and behavior of the U.S.S.R. began to change and U.S.-U.S.S.R. tensions eased, the primary threat to peace in America perceptions, especially in Asia, came, of course, to be embodied in the Peoples Republic of China, reinforced by Mao’s hostile rhetoric.

Shifting the focus beyond Cuba to fundamental goals, there is another key question: Whether because of or in spite of past or present policies, what if the paradigm’s fundamental goals are clearly being achieved? Alternatively, even if it is concluded that fundamental goals continue to be relevant, then as a moment ago, the question shifts back to appropriate adjustments in instrumental goals and the means used to pursue them.¹⁸

In the context of the fundamental goals identified earlier, from the perspective of 1991, World War III, or even a crisis which might precipitate it, has never seemed more distant, especially given the conscious “crisis avoidance” prac-

¹⁷The most recent, but certainly not the last word on this crisis is provided by Garthoff (1989), who draws on a variety of contemporary sources, most notably Blight and Welch (1989).

¹⁸For example, one recent analysis (Chace, 1988) explicitly begins with the premise that containment has worked.

ticed by both superpowers in the years since Cuba. For example, after examining the list of postwar crises and major incidents, Gaddis (1986, p. 121) concluded:

. . . one need only run down this list to see how many occasions there have been in relations between Washington and Moscow that in almost any other age, and amongst almost any other antagonists, would sooner or later have produced war.

Indeed, even a scenario which might lead to such a crisis and war is difficult to imagine. Berlin, once the fulcrum of East-West relations and typically the leading catalyst of many past scenarios, is now a backwater in terms of the probability of a crisis and escalation to war. Ironically, the opening of the Wall pushed Berlin once again into the spotlight, but this time as perhaps a different symbol, one of a possible transition to a more stable, peaceful order in Europe.

In their dealings with the most likely potential catalysts of the present and near-term future such as the Arab-Israeli conflict, the Persian Gulf, central America, and southern Africa, caution, circumspection, and studied avoidance of the risk of irreversible involvement or escalation have generally characterized superpower relations. The wars in Korea and Vietnam have also been largely relegated to the history books, although the psychological impact of Vietnam on policy lingers, the so-called "Vietnam syndrome," but for at least some (e.g., in the Reagan administration) as an outlier rather than as an anomaly from which real, long-term lessons should be drawn.¹⁹

While yet to be fully explored, it may also be the case that the conventional wisdom about the period of so-called "bipartisan consensus" in American foreign policy and particularly the "shattering" of that consensus by the Vietnam War is more "conventional" than "wisdom." For example, at the level of elite opinion, Holsti and Rosenau (1979, p. 232) reported the results of ". . . a survey of American leaders with a view to understanding how the [Vietnam] conflict has been defined not only by those presently in leadership positions, but also by persons who are likely to occupy such roles in the future." Their sample of 2,282 included Foreign Service Officers, military officers, business executives, labor officials, political leaders, clergy, academics, leaders in the media, and a sample of individuals listed in *Who's Who in America*.

The survey was conducted in 1976, presumably at the height of the Vietnam syndrome, and so we might expect to have seen major changes in elite opinion. What is remarkable, however, is the large measure of agreement which appears to persist on matters related to the fundamental and instrumental goals which we outlined earlier. Table I reproduces their basic findings. With three exceptions, majorities in excess of two-thirds endorsed the goals listed. A large, but not overwhelming majority endorsed item 13. Perhaps reflecting the Vietnam experi-

¹⁹An outlier can be defined as a situation which is clearly recognized as having gone wrong, but is judged by the community of practitioners to be so atypical of the population of situations with which the community must deal that its apparent negative implications for the paradigm can be be safely ignored.

ence, a bare majority endorsed 17 and only a minority endorsed 18. Thus, the long-term impact of Vietnam on elites may actually be felt at the level of operational policy, especially regarding the threat or use of force, but even here it is not clear how this will ultimately work itself out. For example, the December 1989 invasion of Panama was notable for the general *absence* of public criticism from any quarter of the operation and its immediate aftermath.

These findings are paralleled in surveys among the American public at large. For example, in a review and summary of major findings, Cohen (1984, pp. 158–160) observed:

As the mass . . . public reaction to the Iranian hostage crisis of 1980 and the Grenada operation of 1983 (as well as the defense expansion of 1978–1983) indicated, opinion returned to its pre-Vietnam position in favor of a large peacetime military establishment and willingness to use force abroad. Nor has the Vietnam experience created a generational cleavage of major proportions, younger people taking “dovish” and their elders more “hawkish” positions, as some observers had expected it would.

The point is not that the Vietnam syndrome does not exist: it does, and will exercise a restraint on American Presidents for some time. However, the effects of a public opinion shaped by the Vietnam War may be less than were originally expected, or at least more predictable.

As consistently reflected in behavior, one critical “lesson” of the Seventy-Five Years' War, however, appears to have been learned. Namely, the colossal

Table I. Leadership Attitudes Toward U.S. Foreign Policy Goals^a

Here is a list of possible foreign policy goals that the United States might have. Please indicate how much importance you think should be attached to each goal.	Very or Somewhat Important
1. Maintaining a balance of power among nations	83.5
2. Defending our allies' security	90.4
3. Containing communism	80.1
4. Strengthening countries who are friendly toward us	85.3
5. Protecting weaker nations against foreign aggression	77.8
6. Securing adequate supplies of energy	95.8
7. Protecting the jobs of American workers	81.1
8. Protecting the interests of American business abroad	
9. Fostering international cooperation to solve common problems, such as food, inflation and energy	95.3
10. Combatting world hunger	89.6
11. Helping solve world inflation	90.6
12. Helping to improve the standard of living in less developed countries	87.6
13. Strengthening the United Nations	61.0
14. Keeping peace in the world	94.1
15. Worldwide arms control	91.5
16. Promoting and defending our own security	96.7
17. Helping to bring a democratic form of government to other nations	51.2
18. Promoting the development of capitalism abroad	38.9

^a1976 Survey of Leadership Attitudes Toward Vietnam [responses, in percentages, of 2282 leaders], reported by Holsti and Rosenau (1979, pp. 238–239).

blunders which have occurred, especially in 1914, have heightened awareness of the potential for escalation and its devastating consequences, making World War III even less likely and strengthening the tendency toward crisis avoidance. Coupled with nuclear weapons and Cuba, the crisis which missed the war, the superpowers appear to have learned and to a great extent insitutionalized the lesson that no outstanding issue between them is worth the risk of a war which could annihilate both. The recent situation in Lithuania could be viewed as a case in point. Unlike Serbia in 1914, no one, with the possible exceptions of a few members of the U.S. Congress and isolated groups in the American public at large, was willing to risk war, a crisis, or even a worsening of relations over the issue of Lithuanian independence.

To some extent, these points challenge the proposition that nuclear weapons in themselves have effectively kept the peace. Mueller (1988), for example, provides a more detailed dissection of this bit of conventional wisdom. Also, arguments are now appearing to the effect that given the collective experience of the 20th century, war, threats of war, and even threats to use military force among the economically developed countries have become not only counter-productive or self-defeating, but also obsolete (Luard, 1989; Mueller, 1989).

In sum, although the situation could be a short-term trend, the world as a whole has never seemed more settled, or has at least never seemed to be moving so much in that direction, especially in terms of situations which might draw the developed countries into a crisis or war with one another, since the start of the Seventy-Five Years' War. Regional conflicts, of course, persist and contain risks not only to the parties directly engaged, but also to external actors. However, it is not unreasonable to speculate that as they have done in other realms, and despite the recent detour through Kuwait, these countries will eventually mimic the observed trend in the developed world (Mueller, 1989, pp. 251-7).

While in some ways the contemporary international (economic) environment may not be all that friendly or hospitable to the United States, it is far from hostile. For example, interdependence, especially in banking, finance, telecommunications, and information transfers, with America at its center, grows by the day and shows no signs of abating any time soon. Japan and Germany, successfully converted from military aggressors into economic competitors, have also become major, generally cooperative partners in this matrix. Moreover, the former abstainers in the East are now eager to get into the game and display a willingness to significantly modify their domestic and foreign policies in order to do so.

Finally, regarding the "American way of life," American policymakers might also find some comfort, if not encouragement, in recent trends. For instance, while armies may travel on their stomachs, cultures travel on their tongues. Solzhenitsyn (1973, pp. 14, 15) has observed that literature is "the living memory of a nation," and similarly, it may be that language is the living

soul of a culture, at least potentially capable of transplantation. Many people in the world appear prepared to undergo the operation, however experimental or risky it may be, and few non-English speakers are scrambling to learn Russian, or even Japanese. Indeed, one does not have to spend very much time abroad to realize the pervasiveness with which (American) English is studied and used. Here, another perception of high-level American policy-makers has been the implicit, static assumption that economic, military, and political capabilities are the dominant factors in a nation-state's short- and long-term positions in the international system. In the future, however, cultural factors may very well grow in importance relative to these traditional ones (Russett, 1985).

Other, less obvious challenges to the American policy-making paradigm can also be identified. For example, could Kennan (1947, p. 582) really have known how prophetic his words would be on counterpressure's leading to a "mellowing" of Soviet power? Much more relevant to our purposes, could he or anyone have possibly known or guessed that in a modified form, that the same would apply to American power? Could they have guessed that counterpressures would not always, or even primarily, come from the other superpower? Could they have deduced that this mellowing would be caused by the rapid demise in the Soviet Union in the early 1980s of the generation of Stalinist plodders and the accession of Gorbachev and his generation in the late 1980s—short of violent revolution or defeat in war, possibly the most rapid and thorough generational change in national leadership in modern history? Could anyone have guessed that he and his colleagues would proceed, in turn, to pull the plug on their predecessors' Stalinist brethren in Eastern Europe?

Yet, despite a heated debate near the end of the Reagan administration between "squeezers" of and "dealers" with the U.S.S.R. and its resolution largely in favor of the latter (Horelick, 1990, pp. 54–58), it is not surprising that paradigm-based doubts linger. Initially pledging continuity with Reagan's second term, the Bush administration was somewhat slow in displaying flexibility in response to Soviet initiatives, especially prior to the December 1989 Bush–Gorbachev summit, partially on the grounds that Gorbachev might fall and be replaced by a neo-Stalinist. In other words, some high level policy-makers (e.g., Cheney) appeared to believe that there was (is) a bogeyman in the closet who is waiting to strike Gorbachev down and return U.S.–Soviet relations to the (good?) old days of the Cold War. Although it appears to be fading, the attitude of some has seemed to be nostalgia for this simpler time, that is, better a bogeyman whom you know than an angel (?) whom you do not know.

As indicated, the paradigm component most resistance to change, or even modification, is the perceptual prism, or belief system, which lies at its core. While this belief system has a larger empirical base than an ideology or a religion, it shares with them an internal logic of its own that, at least within a given generation and often beyond, is strongly resistant to empirically based

arguments that significant modifications are in order. This, of course, adds a pessimistic note to our earlier observation that empirically based learning can and does occur, even within the same generation.

More specific to the American case, for example, while the bogeymen may change, fundamental perceptions of them do not. Compare, for instance, arguments by some that terrorists want nothing less than the destruction, or at least the humbling, of Western civilization to previous articulations, namely, that Nazi Germany, militarist Japan, Stalin, Mao, and communists wanted to conquer and to divide up the world. These beliefs, of course, have important policy implications. Ignoring for the moment definitional problems and relevant empirical considerations, "terrorists" must always be opposed (they are the new aggressors on the march); never talk to, or negotiate with, them (appeasement of aggressors is always bad); force is the only language that they understand (remember Hitler and Stalin); and they must be totally defeated and destroyed (unconditional defeat or surrender, implying, of course, a final end to the struggle a la World War II).²⁰ A more focused example, which strongly reinforces the extant perceptual prism, is provided, of course, by the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and the new "enemy," *instability* (in the Middle East and elsewhere), which this invasion conjurs up.

CONCLUSION

Whatever ambiguities, uncertainties, misperceptions, omissions, implausibilities, simplifications, or errors contained in the preceding discussion, three things are clear. First, while a detailed examination is beyond the scope of the present paper, the international environment which is now emerging and with which American foreign policy-makers will have to deal in the 21st century is very likely to be significantly, perhaps radically different from the one which has prevailed in the 20th century, especially during the course of what we have called the Seventy-Five Years' War.

Second, a policy-making paradigm based on cumulative American experience during the Seventy-Five Years' War is likely to be inappropriate to that environment. Thus, the extant paradigm must be reviewed and possibly revised in all of its parts, another subject beyond the scope of this paper. Furthermore, while it is obviously important to develop specific responses to the Gorbachev "challenge" (Institute for East-West Security Studies, 1987), the examination and reassessment which is suggested here is potentially a much more fundamental one. We have, however, totally ignored perhaps the most difficult question of all: How can appropriate changes be effected?

Third, there are some things that, hopefully, can be avoided in this process.

²⁰While contrary voices are sometimes heard (e.g., Simon, 1987), they do not appear, as yet, to have had a major impact and fundamental perceptions persist.

Dwelling upon America's relative economic, military, and political declines, for example, and rhetoric that its (economic) problems are the fault of others will not help. Of course, the blaming of foreigners for domestic, as well as foreign, problems is neither new nor unique to the United States. It is part of a broader school of theoretical thinking which links the two by arguing that foreign policy is another tool with which a nation-state's leaders seek to maintain enough domestic political support to keep themselves in power (Reich, 1988; Salmore and Salmore, 1978; Vaubel, 1986).

At best, this will divert attention, time, and energy away from more important questions. At worst, it could seriously distort perceptions of the present and future changes in the international environment and what, if anything, the United States can, or should, do about them. It may also reflect the re-emergence of another, older attitude, namely, that America and Americans are not up to the game. Examining the early 1950s, for example, Nathan and Oliver (1989, p. 103) observed:

The [McCarthyite] assault on Democratic and State Department integrity and patriotism was a clever strategy. It explained how it was that Americans were now fighting a curious war in Asia without confronting the complexities and ambiguities of world politics and American policies: There were traitors in high places. Moreover, it appealed to America's alienated, and it preyed on the endemic fear deeply rooted in American society that America might not be equal to the task of global involvement. Senator McCarthy's answer was reassuring: America's difficulties were not the product of inexperience and naivete, but rather treason.

Certainly problems (e.g., loss of political influence, severe trade imbalances) related to America's relative declines should be recognized, as many have already (e.g., Kennedy, 1987). However, rather than focus on the implications of these declines for the components of the American foreign policy-making paradigm and how those might or might not be revised in order to cope more effectively with change, the tendency has sometimes been to search for ways to avoid dealing with such difficult questions, either by behaving as if they were irrelevant (e.g., the dispute over the Soviet gas pipeline in Reagan's first term), or acknowledging them intellectually, but continuing to behave as if many of the old rules of superpower relations were still unequivocally valid (e.g., Reykjavik, the INF Treaty, and Kissinger's recent suggestion, perhaps misinterpreted, for a "Yalta II"). It is also likely that America's allies, in their own efforts to grapple with the coming changes, will be even less willing to follow automatically the American lead than they have been in the past, especially, of course, the Europeans and the Japanese (Howard, 1988).

Nevertheless, there are grounds for optimism. Returning to the cultural dimension, for example, Americans as a people are not ones to bear collective grudges against others for very long, or given to chronic, virulent infections of antagonistic history. Thus, reciprocity, an important approach to foreign policy-making in any circumstances (Phillips, 1978), which may take on added importance in the future, may be easier for Americans to adopt and to develop than

might it otherwise appear. Consider, for example, Reagan's shift in the late 1980s in response to Gorbachev's overtures (e.g., his rhetorical "promotion" of the Soviet Union from the irredeemable and irreformable "evil empire" to the "naughty empire," which, like a errant child, does bad things, but with time and patience eventually can be instructed and expected to behave differently).

The American cultural tendencies of adaptability, flexibility, moderation, and pragmatism, which can facilitate reciprocity and which Bush and many of his key advisers display, may indeed help. With an eventual shift in the thinking of high-level American policy-makers and their advisers, as well as others who influence operational policy, whether forced by changing circumstances or the result of intellectual reflection or both, there is a good chance that appropriate changes in the American policy-making paradigm can be effected, including the surrender of any last holdouts (e.g., The Commission On Integrated Long-Term Strategy), especially among those who are charged with the administration of actual policy.

Finally, complementing this guarded optimism and returning to one of our earlier points, in his discussion of the resolution of "crises" in scientific thought and practice, particularly the eventual shift of paradigms, Kuhn (1970, p. 159) observed:

At the start a new candidate for paradigm may have few supporters, and on occasions the supporters' motives may be suspect. Nevertheless, if they are competent, they will improve it, explore its possibilities, and show what it would be like to belong to the community guided by it. And as that goes on, if the paradigm is one destined to win its fight, the number and strength of the persuasive arguments in its favor will increase. More scientists will then be converted, and the exploration of the new paradigm will go on. Gradually the number of experiments, instruments, articles, and books based upon the paradigm will multiply. Still more men, convinced of the new view's fruitfulness, will adopt the new mode of practicing normal science, until at last only a few elderly hold-outs remain.

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