*America and the Rational Road to Peace**

RICHARD D. POLL

On the assumption that neither human nature nor Providential design dooms man to nuclear destruction, inquiry concerning obstacles which bestrew the path to peace is necessary and proper, even urgent. The analysis which follows is hopeful. To the question—"Can reason prevent another general war?"—the answer is "Yes." Indeed, if the argument be limited to the present generation, "can" is to be interpreted in terms not of possibility but probability.

Such optimism amid the headlines on Communism, Castro and the Congo surely requires elucidation and defense.

One dictionary gives two relevant meanings for the word "reason": "Ability to think and draw conclusions" and "right thinking; good sense." There is a third definition which invites passing comment: "sanity." For if the men at the controls of the missile launchers take leave of their sanity, the right thinking and good sense of all the rest of us will avail little. It is assumed that defense arrangements both here and in other nuclear-armed nations are so structured that no *one* man's hitting the panic button can ignite the holocaust.

For those who recall that many past wars have been triggered by impulse or incident—a Hapsburg ambassador thrown out of a Prague window or a Hapsburg heir slain in a Bosnian street—attention is called to the fact that the last sixteen years have seen scores of threats, claims and deeds of violence which would have been cause for war in former generations. Yet the "hot war" withholds. Reason—"the ability to think and draw

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Dr. Poll is professor of history and political science at Brigham Young University.

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conclusions"—is the key to this remarkable change, and the change is pragmatic evidence for the proposition here advanced. If it comes, World War III will come deliberately, and because it will come deliberately, it need not and probably will not come in the predictable future.

The record failing to produce a significant war which lacked rational justification by at least one of the combatants, the argument which follows accepts Clausewitz's classic dictum: "War is a mere continuation of policy by other means." It further classifies the wars of history in terms of two major policy objectives: those to change existing power arrangements and those to preserve them. It asks, "What can be done to prevent such wars in the years ahead?"

Consider first the myriad wars for which the end of policy has been some alteration in the *status quo.* A piece of territory is coveted, and the owners refuse to sell or surrender. A commercial opportunity is monopolized, and the overtures of outsiders are rebuffed. A new creed is born, and peaceful proselyting is deemed too slow. Existing power structures seem too confining for a nation aggressively led or newly come to strength. In short, an important ambition needs serving and war is judged the swiftest, the most efficient, or the only means to that end.

Such wars for land, loot, status or idealogical hegemony are deliberately made. Assassination or other incident may precipitate them, but rational reflection antecedes the event and attends the choice of war. Jenkins' ear would never have gained immortality if British businessmen had not seen trading opportunities in a humbled Spanish empire. Zachary Taylor would not have led his men into ambush on disputed Texas ground if the vision of an American California had not captured the imagination of President Polk and an expansionist electorate.

Our own generation is witnessing the obsolescence of this type of war, at least insofar as relations among the major powers are concerned. War—nuclear war—is no longer a means to an ambitious or imperialist end, because no end short of national survival itself is worth the price of war. Most rational people thought this lesson had been made clear by World War I. That was the conflict which proved that no one really wins a general war. Unfortunately, all that it

taught those sane and sober Germans who followed Hitler was that you win nothing in a war which you lose. World War II was only in part a madman's doing.

Hiroshima finally made the point. As motives go, fear is not praiseworthy, but it does influence policy. Men who "think and draw conclusions" dread the awful force of modern weapons, and their choices are limited by that fear. Men of good sense in Washington and Moscow, London and Peking know that hydrogen warheads and ICBM's have made traditional, Clausewitz-style wars for aggrandizement unthinkable among the major nations of the world. (Chinese conduct since Korea warrants their inclusion in the foregoing list despite their bellicose propaganda line. To the extent that the reported ideological split between the two Red capitals has substance and Mao is counting on World War III, the probability is still strong that by the time he develops the capacity to wage it he will discover that China, too, has a stake in preventing it.)

Parenthetically, what of limited, localized wars?

On insurrections and civil wars, with or without great power encouragement and support, fear of the atomic abyss has not yet imposed a ban. Nor are probing actions, like those recently on the India-China and Israeli-Arab frontiers, interdicted. Laos and the Congo witness that we are far from the abandonment of the politics of violence. However, the failure of the Sino-Russian adventure in Korea and the subsequent abstention by all the major powers from resort to substantial armed force against independent external targets is ground for hope. To the extent that "limited war" entails the risk that its acceptable limits will be transgressed, the nuclear inhibitor, fear, operates.

The role and the risks of limited war are worth much fuller treatment. However, the concern here is not with brushfires but continental conflagrations. If right thinking can avoid the latter, the firemen of the free nations and the policemen of the United Nations may be able to keep the former within tolerable bounds.

Turn now to the second class of wars, for which the end of policy is the protection of the *status quo.* A revolution in France threatens the monarchial order of Europe by example

and propaganda. A religious heresy in Germany takes such strong root that fire and the sword seem necessary. A vital segment of an imperial life-line is seized and British and French bombs rain on Cairo. Slav nationalism menaces the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Germany sees time running against the Triple Alliance, and Sarajevo becomes a *causus belli.* In short, a vital national interest is threatened, and war is judged the best hope, or the only hope, for its preservation.

This, the war born of desperation, is the greater threat to our generation, because if anything is likely to override the nuclear fear, it is another fear. Home, family, freedom, faith—these critically threatened, and reasonable men may be brought to the desperate decision that ICBM's are not, after all, the ultimate evil. The challenge to reason which confronts the growing number of nations with nuclear capability is to see that none of their number feels driven to this awful choice.

Since the Soviet Union, Britain, France, soon China, and eventually other states will share this capability and responsibility, there would seem to be some obligation to establish the probability that all these will meet the challenge. Space permitting, a case for each could be made. As for Britain and France, irrationality of the order of wholesale insanity would be prerequisite to their launching a nuclear war. The Soviet record of aggression and deceit is depressingly clear, but neither her gospel of world revolution nor her external power interests require an atomic offensive. The same is true of Red China, though the population explosion and the remembrance of an ancient East Asian empire create temptations for aggressive action which will only be resisted as long as it is clear that the price of yielding is too high even for a government which boasts two or three hundred million people to spare.

This analysis will focus on America, because her policy lies within our sphere of influence, her reason is our reason, and she is no less capable of failing the test than the others.

The danger that the United States will be accessory to a general war for the *status quo* lies in several directions, all discernible to good sense and avoidable by right thinking. Here are four which directly involve foreign policy:

1. There is the danger of doing too little.

2. There is the danger of doing too much.

3. There is the danger of doing too little and then too much.

4. There is the danger of confusing success with failure.

The first, the doing of too little, is the most likely error.

The magnitude and the duration of the effort required to prevent a change of international power relationships incompatible with our vital interests may be greater than the American people will be willing to accept. Soviet Russia and Communist China, for reasons more imperial than ideological, will be exploiting areas of weakness for the foreseeable future. Tactics will vary, and a hopeful possibility is that they may not always support each other, but the pressure will continue, and where counter-pressure is insufficient, gains will be made. Overt war, for reasons suggested earlier, will probably not be used, but subsidies, subversion, propaganda and threats are potent weapons. It is conceivable that what Hitler called the "artichoke method" of conquest may in time strip so many leaves from the free world plant that exposed America must fight or be devoured. Since either option then would be disaster, the opinion is of minor consequence that a people who would permit themselves to be backed into such a predicament would probably surrender when the choice had to be made.

However, no greater ability to "think and draw conclusions" than Americans have already shown is necessary to avert this danger. Imagination, money, reasonableness, science, patience—these applied in a spirit of enlightened self-interest can bring such strength to the will to resist among free peoples as may in time transform an expedient "peaceful co-existence" into a durable *modus vivendi.* No more imagination will be required than launched the Berlin airlift or devised the Uniting for Peace Resolutions for the United Nations. No greater share of our national income will be needed than brought Marshall Plan recovery to Western Europe and today supports "ugly Americans" in many blighted regions of the earth. No more reasonableness is demanded than that which buried hatred of Japan and Germany in half a decade and now, with fingers crossed, explores disarmament possibilities

with the Kremlin and even faces the prospect of contact with Peking. No more scientific miracles must occur than made the lesson of Hiroshima possible, and the conquest of polio; as long as the "missile gap" means only that the other side can kill us three times while we are killing them twice, the greatest danger is not the prospect of attack.

No greater patience is required, either, than that which has borne us through sixteen years of unmatched stress with no more serious symptoms of irrationality than rock'n roll and McCarthyism. But patience is a perishable commodity, particularly with Americans. If so mental a phenomenon as reason may be said to have an Achilles heel, the American approach to the avoidance of war may be most vulnerable here.

Tired of the tension and the taxes, we may persuade ourselves that they are no longer necessary. Having survived so long without the dreaded World War III or the forcible Soviet move which would have provoked it, we may forget the relationship between the results of the policy of "containment" and its price. Seeing how amiable the "comrades" can be when the price of truculence is embarrassment in Hungary and failure in India, we may conclude that they can be safely left unwatched and unchecked. Impatient for the fleshpots of normalcy, we may abdicate the leadership which our country has creditably borne since the last great war.

The hopefulness that good sense will prevail against this temptation is based on the record. Three Presidents of varying politics and temperament and a decisive majority of Congressmen of both parties have seen the wisdom in sustaining the free world's ramparts, and the American people have approved. For all our materialism, moral flabbiness, status-seeking and payola, we have yet borne the inconvenience and expense of defensive commitments too far-flung and intricate for most of us really to understand. After sixteen costly and frustrating years, the country still assigns the tax-slashers and the get-out-of-the-world'ers to the eccentric fringe and willingly, even enthusiastically picks up the U. N. check for the Congo operation and enlists in Peace Corps to make the world safe for humanity.

The danger that the United States will precipitate war by doing too much is remote but not to be ignored. Conceivably we could crowd the Soviet Union or China so closely and aggressively that they would judge war preferable to its alternative. To the extent that the "missile gap" is a significant factor, rash action by the United States or our major allies is particularly fraught with danger, for if Khrushchev and Company become convinced that war is inevitable, the pressure will be almost irrestible to wage it while that weapons differential obtains.

Convinced as we are of the purity of our motives, it is difficult to credit the possibility that Moscow and Peking regard us as a threat. Yet no day passes without expressions of the most hostile sentiment toward the Communist states by prominent Americans. Consider the post-World War I record of intervention and non-recognition, not blotted out by the marriage of convenience in World War II. To place our NATO, SEATO and Far Eastern bases in Soviet perspective, recall the indignation with which many Americans greeted the announcement that Red missiles would be tested in *our* Pacific Ocean. Moscow is no farther from Ankara than St. Louis is from Mexico City. Imagine our reaction to the establishment of a Russian military base in the Mexican capital or Havana!

This is not to object to the base in Ankara, or the Seventh Fleet in the Formosa Strait, or our Polaris submarines wherever they are. These are defensive measures and are not likely to be construed otherwise unless our basic policy changes. Assuming Russian rationality, a strong *deterrent* force in the free world reduces the temptation to consider war either for the alteration or the preservation of the Soviet power position.

The danger of doing too much lies in overestimating our strength and underestimating the strength and durability of our potential foes. This was rather more likely to occur before the recent satellite and missile revelations than it is now. But there are still among us those who hold that the Communist bloc is a hollow shell which will collapse under sustained and increasing pressure. For them a policy of defense is defeatist. Liberation is the goal, and political isolation, economic warfare and subversion are the methods.

Such talk of rolling back the Iron Curtain was the chief evidence cited by an Intourist guide in Moscow to prove that peace-loving John Foster Dulles was a "war-monger." Hungary showed how far the Kremlin would go to prevent the loss of a satellite; in this youth's opinion it was a justified defensive action. Surely it is not "right thinking" to expect that the Soviets will submit to the division of their empire or the subversion of their system without a fight.

One can feel profound sympathy for the oppressed in satellite Europe and South Africa and Franco's Spain and still regard their immediate deliverance as an infeasible goal for American foreign policy. To confuse the morally desirable with the politically possible is a natural error for a humane people, but it can bring disaster. Since amelioration of the lot of the people behind the Iron Curtain is more likely to result from economic growth and the relaxation of international tensions than from external deliverance, a policy of reasonableness rather than belligerence may, in fact, be morally as well as politically sound.

The danger of doing too little and then too much stems from that natural, impulsive tendency of democratic peoples, Americans in particular, to go to extremes. Changes occur, problems arise, old techniques and remedies become obsolete. The process is continuous, and if we are fortunate, those whose responsibility is to watch the course of events perceive the new problems and devise approaches to them. But to the people at large, no problem is recognized until it has achieved spectacular, often ominous proportions, and then the reaction may be irrational. George Kennan puts it aptly:

> . . . I sometimes wonder whether in this respect a democracy is not uncomfortably similar to one of those prehistoric monsters with a body as long as this room and a brain the size of a pin; he lies in his comfortable primeval mud and pays little attention to his environment; he is slow to wrath—in fact, you practically have to whack his tail off to make him aware that his interests are being disturbed; but, once he grasps this, he lays about him with such blind determination that he not only destroys his adversary but largely wrecks his native habitat. You wonder whether it would not have been wiser for him to have taken a little more interest in what was going

> on at an earlier date and to have seen whether he could not have prevented some of these situations from arising instead of proceeding from an undiscriminating indifference to a holy wrath equally undiscriminating![1]

The possibility still exists of a sudden popular response to an international surprise, so violent as to destroy the peace. However, enough people besides professors are reading Kennan and his fellow pundits these days to sustain optimism. Aggressors necessarily have the initiative, and in our defensive role we have not always anticipated their moves in time to forestall them or to counter them effectively. But reason dictated the reaction to Greece and Berlin, Korea and Indo-China, Suez and Lebanon; the fiasco of our emotion-distorted China policy is an exception which only confirms the point, and the present approach to Latin America suggests that the key policy makers, at least, have not forgotten the lesson. In our now-customary assignment of international cleaner-upper, we have often used the wrong soap, or filled the tub too deep, or scrubbed too vigorously, or failed to look behind the ears, but so far we have not thrown out the baby with the bath water.

Point four—the danger of confusing success with failure—is typically American. We may be tempted to give up the responsibility of leadership and so immeasurably increase the risk of war because we expect too much. Sixteen years of military preparations and treaty-making find the Russians still there. Half a generation of taxes to support the United Nations and foreign aid have not purchased the love and cooperation of all the non-Communist peoples. Material exertions, yes, and idealism unparalleled in history have brought us no brighter prospect of relaxation than we faced in 1945. Surely we have failed.

The American reluctance to accept less than perfect answers has been attributed to many causes. Charles Marshall mentions our extraordinarily successful past and our faith in engineering, in laws, and in advertising. Whatever its cause,

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[1]George Kennan, *American Diplomacy,* 1900-1950 (Chicago: U. of Chicago Press, 1952), pp. 65-66.

we react to imperfect solutions with dismay and sometimes a sense of betrayal. Marshall illustrates this delightfully:

> I recall a story told in Mexico. A man heavy in need and great in faith wrote a letter asking for 100 pesos. He addressed it to God and mailed it. The postmaster had no idea how to handle the letter. He opened it, seeking a clue. He was touched by the man's story of need. He passed the hat among the postal employees. Thus 75 pesos were raised. These were placed in an envelope to await the return of the importuning man. A few days later he was back, inquiring for mail. He was given the envelope, opened it, counted the money and glowered. Then he went to the counter and scribbled out another letter. It read: "Dear God: I am still 25 pesos short. Please make up the difference. But don't send it through the local post office. I think it is full of thieves."[2]

The current tendency toward hysteria about the Communist menace illustrates the problem. A standard technique of the professional fear-mongers is to give statistical evidence that America's policy toward the World Communist threat has been a flat failure. In 1945 there were only 4,500,000 hard-core Communists in the world it is argued, and they controlled 180,000,000 people. Today there are 35,000,000 Communists and they control over 900,000,000 people. Land and souls have been brought under the Red yoke at the rate of 1,000 square miles and 130,000 people per day, day in and day out, year in and year out. Surely this is disaster!

Disaster it would be, if the Communists' gains had continued so uniformly and so long. But since the capture of China, the Red gains have in fact been limited. Indeed, since the Indo-Chinese settlement of 1954, not one square mile of territory has gone behind the Iron and Bamboo Curtains, unless one counts a few acres of Himalayan scenery whose occupation may prove a major diplomatic error for Mao Tse-tung. If real estate is what counts, the Indian state of Kerala and the tiny principality of San Marino are quantitative evidence which could be used to support the argument that the tide of the ideological struggle is turning.

Cuba, obviously, argues against so naive a conclusion and

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[2]Charles Marshall, "The Nature of Foreign Policy," *Department of State Bulletin,* March 17, 1952, 418.

emphasizes that the techniques of "containment" do not suffice against poverty and oppression. But reactions in the U. N. and the Organization of American States, as well as in Washington, attest that the remedy for Castro is sustained, constructive action, not despair.

The equating of success with the abolition of trouble is understandable but unreasonable. It can imperil us in two ways. Despairing of results from our present essentially pragmatic approach to international affairs, we may retreat into our shell until the day when the power we fear stands athwart the world and bids us bow. Or, frustrated but less pessimistic, we may take arms against the sea of troubles.

With no more good sense than is required for imperfect husband and imperfect wife to live together in reasonable accord, Americans can accommodate themselves to a world in which millennial peace must await the millennium. With perspective and patience, we can allocate our great but not unlimited power among the tasks before us, resisting the temptation to shirk responsibility or the equally hazardous temptation to undertake too much. We can find encouragement in partial successes and face setbacks without loss of faith in our democratic way of life.

The record of the American people in producing and accepting rational approaches to the complex and formidable international problems of the atomic age is a creditable one. To erect effective barriers against a vigorous and unscrupulous imperialism while barred by moral and material considerations from using unlimited war as an instrument of defensive or revisionist policy is no mean accomplishment. The future need tap only those resources of right thinking which the American people have already shown that they possess for this argument to prevail. To the extent that the issue of war or peace lies within *our* determination—and to a very large extent it does lie with us—reason *can* prevent another general war.