

Ford Foreign Policy Dims Kissinger Role

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A New Imprint

By PHILIP SHABECOFF

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, May 27—On the eve of President Ford's week-long trip to Europe, White House advisers are saying that he is reducing his reliance on Secretary of State Kissinger and assuming increasing command over his own foreign policy.

The President retains full confidence in his Secretary of State and generally shares Mr. Kissinger's views on diplomacy, the officials said. But recent interviews with White House and other Administration officials, some in high policy positions, indicate that Mr. Ford is determined to put his own stamp on foreign policy and has substantially broadened the circle of foreign policy advisers.

Even Administration supporters of Mr. Kissinger conceded that his grip on the nation's foreign affairs was loosening.

Some high White House aides are describing the forthcoming talks in Europe as the real beginning of the Ford era in foreign policy.

The President will meet with

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Europe Uncertain

By FLORA LEWIS

Special to The New York Times

PARIS, May 27—Europeans are awaiting President Ford's first official trip to this side of the Atlantic with bewilderment and uncertainty.

The President's image so far is a blur, an unknown and unfocused quantity, and the very familiar image of his Secretary of State, Kissinger, is turning fuzzy at the edges.

Generally, European governments and especially those that belong to the North Atlantic alliance are pleased that the American leaders are coming to visit and to mark their continued interest in Western Europe. In country after country, officials and editorial writers repeat the thesis that with Indochina out of the way, the United States can get back to foreign policy fundamentals, and specifically to European affairs.

But there is a persistent undertone of puzzlement, almost of queasiness in the assertion. Correspondents of The New York Times throughout Western Europe were asked the

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Europe Uncertain on Visit by Ford, a Leader It Does Not Know

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View from their capitals. The report from London sounded the theme: "People are glad the President is coming, but they aren't sure whether a renewed American concentration on Europe is good or bad. They're uncertain just what American policy is on Europe now," it said.

For the first time in many years, British officials and correspondents question Americans on the attitudes and moods of Congress. They say it is no longer just a matter of what Mr. Kissinger thinks. Now they need to know what Congress thinks in order to figure out American intentions. That British attitude reflects an awareness of the domestic scene in the United States that goes far beyond what is generally to be found on the Continent.

"The question," said a senior Swiss diplomat in Geneva recently, "is whether Kissinger is going to stay, and whether he does or not, is American policy going to stay the same?" "Strange America," wrote Le Monde's editor, André Fontaine, on his return from a trip to the United States—"It is impossible to take its measure."

How Dare You?

To most continentalists, the United States has always been embodied in some kind of a stereotype: a rough, loud-voiced Texan, an exuberant, handsome Bostonian, a hospitable, generous and folksy Middle Westerner, even a bouncy, extraordinarily clever German emigrant.

The embodiment has shifted over the years, but the figure has always been sharply lined. It is confusing and difficult to find after all that America is a complexity, a combination and complication of shifting people and patterns.

Here, Mr. Ford is not so much the honest, well-meaning if bumbling Boy Scout, as he has been so widely pictured in the United States. Here he is a blank.

When he became President, a French woman asked: "But how dare you choose somebody we don't even know anything about, when you know perfectly well how much power and influence he's going to have on all our lives?"

In Italy, Mr. Ford is more or less dismissed as a lame duck. In Britain and France, it is almost taken for granted that somebody else will be moving into the White House after the 1976 election, so there have been few intimate biographies, big picture spreads, or life-in-a-day-of reports that proliferate when a new personality considered durable comes on the world scene.

Europeans never did fathom what Watergate was all about, and they took President Nixon very much as he chose to project himself. A week before his resignation, Le Figaro, a major French newspaper, complained: "But when are the Americans finally going to wake up and realize that Richard Nixon is the best President in their history?"

Again and again, senior European diplomats have confided privately: "Of course, Kissinger gets all the limelight but there's no doubt the ideas came from Nixon. Now, with only Ford behind him, what is he going to lean on?"

Others, better informed and more perceptive, used to marvel at Mr. Kissinger's powers of exposition, his grasp of complicated affairs, his audacity. They brushed aside questions of style or even substance as trivia compared with his great accomplishments. Some of them now have been to focus not on the water but on the empty half

of the glass. They snipe tartly at his methods, giving little attention to his ideas.

The Institute of Strategic Studies, a highly respected London-based group of scholars, had this to say in its review of world affairs in 1974: "It is impossible not to be impressed about the pace and range of American foreign policy activity under Kissinger. This is not to say that many of the weaknesses of the Kissinger method were not equally apparent."

"His reluctance to use the established bureaucratic channels of communications often restricted the efficiency of American foreign policy, frustrated officials and annoyed the United States' allies. That American policy depended on one man had a small staff he chose to consult was both a strength and a weakness."

Chorus on Sour Note

"As a result, the inevitable American rumors about his personal position and the support he received from the President affected not only the man but American policy as well. His tendency towards lone action would be difficult to reconcile with the need for international institutions which became increasingly necessary during the year and which were indeed advocated by Dr. Kissinger himself."

"Whether the substance of American foreign policy would honor the promise of its style remained uncertain at the end of the year."

But just as the chorus of Kissinger adulators has turned to sour notes, some of Kissinger's erstwhile European critics have been moving toward arguments supporting his willingness to be flexible, to seek compromise, to persuade Americans as well as

the rest of the world that problems must be negotiated and can't just be wished away.

European officials long felt that Europe was somehow the problem he mastered least well. But now the same people look to the Secretary of State as the man who best knows how much the United States and Europe have in common and how much they need each other.

The French, as usual, have been the most acid assayers of American policy and reacted the most contemptuously to Washington's handling of the Mayaguez affair. It was widely denounced in Paris as quite unbalanced, precisely Mr. Nixon's erstwhile "pitiful, helpless giant" swatting with mad power at mosquitoes merely to restore its own skewed self-esteem.

Germans Offer Understanding

The West Germans, as usual, were the most indulgent and understanding and a certain satisfaction at a display of American might.

French, West German and British commentators alike, however, have drawn attention to what the German magazine Der Spiegel called "the household use" of President Ford's and Mr. Kissinger's current journeys. That is, they voice a suspicion that much of what the leaders have been saying is really for domestic American political purposes and is to be somewhat discounted in terms of East-West and Atlantic relations.

The recent statements on Portugal by both the President and the Secretary startled and alarmed. The policy everywhere in Western Europe has been to tread softly and hope that somehow the Portuguese moderates will regain control

and settle down to cope with their country's economic and social troubles.

No diplomat questioned professed the slightest understanding of what was taken as a clumsy and rather aggressive tone in the American leader's remarks. One said with irritation: "These self-fulfilling prophecies! This really is not the time to question Portugal's adherence to NATO."

Close Relations Sought

Basically, the European concern is for continued close, cooperative and supportive relations with the United States. That came through very clearly at last week's meeting of North Atlantic Treaty Organization defense ministers, which probably achieved more and wrangled less than any NATO session in many years.

There is a renewed sense of change and danger in the world. Despite occasional rhetoric, the Europeans are keenly aware that they cannot handle it alone and, in fact, cannot even get together to handle it as a united, nearly equal partner with the United States.

European authorities don't feel that the United States has weakened, but they worry lest the Americans believe that of themselves and act accordingly to the illusion. For all the criticism—and there is no reason to suppose it will abate—an underlying desire for United States leadership remains.

The day before Mr. Ford was due to arrive in Brussels, a West German spokesman said that Chancellor Helmut Schmidt was happy to go to see him "because he's the head of the most powerful country in the North Atlantic alliance." It wasn't meant as a satirical truism, but as the simple truth.

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Ford Seeks a Foreign Policy More His and Less

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other Atlantic alliance heads of government in Brussels, with Spanish leaders in Madrid, with President Anwar el-Sadat of Egypt in Salzburg, Austria, and with President Giovanni Leone and Pope Paul in Rome.

With the possible exception of the meeting with President Sadat, the trip to Europe is not expected by United States officials to produce any major agreements of new international arrangements.

The meeting with the heads of governments in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization is described by some White House officials as largely consultative and ceremonial. It will give Mr. Ford his first opportunity as President to meet with his colleagues in the Western alliance as a group and to discuss the future of the alliance.

'Excess Baggage' Gone

But, as one aide said, reflecting a view widely held in the White House, Mr. Ford's trip will mark the first time in over a decade that a United States President will journey to Europe without having to carry "the excess baggage" of American involvement in Indochina.

Another White House official close to the President asserted that, up to now, President Ford has spent most of his Presidency "clearing the decks"—in domestic as well as foreign policy. Since replacing Richard M. Nixon last August, this official said, Mr. Ford has spent almost all of his energies coping with the problems he inherited from his predecessor: Watergate, the economy and Southeast Asia.

Now, with these problems attended to for better or for worse, and with Mr. Ford's growing confidence in his abilities as a leader, he is ready to put his own imprint on the nation's foreign policy, his aides said.

One aide, an official high in the White House hierarchy, noted pointedly that, in his meeting with President Sadat, President Ford will attempt what Secretary Kissinger failed to accomplish: to arrange some basis for an interim negotiated settlement between Egypt and Israel.

"It will not be the President stepping in and saying to Henry, in effect, 'O.K., you've had your shot and now I'm taking over,' this official said. "But it is a refutation of the idea that Ford is Kissinger's puppet when it comes to foreign policy."

Move to Loosen Grip

Reports in recent weeks about efforts by White House staff members to force Mr. Kissinger out of his White House stronghold as director of the National Security Council appear to have been greatly overblown. But few of Mr. Ford's aides deny that there has been an effort to loosen Mr. Kissinger's grip on foreign policy at the White House.

Judging by most accounts, Mr. Ford has been decreasing his reliance on Mr. Kissinger by steadily widening the circle from which he draws advice before reaching decisions on foreign policy.

The recent decision to launch a Marine assault to retake the American merchantman *Mayagüez* and her crew was an example.

"Look at the picture of the N.S.C. meeting," said one ranking aide when asked who had participated in advising the President what to do about the *Mayagüez*. The White House photographs of the National Security Council meeting at which the decision to attack was made show that a number of Presidential advisers who are not officially involved in foreign policy were there.

They included Donald Rums-

feld, the White House staff director, and John O. Marsh Jr. and Robert T. Hartmann, Presidential counselors. Mr. Rumsfeld is a former NATO ambassador. Mr. Marsh is responsible for White House relations with Congress and Mr. Hartmann is the President's chief political adviser in the White House.

These and other members of the White House staff are increasingly being brought into foreign policy. All three of them, for example, helped with the President's speech on foreign policy to a joint session of Congress in April. So did Ron Nessen, the President's press secretary.

"The problem with the N.S.C. from the President's point of view," a White House official said, "is that it is narrowly focused on foreign affairs and security. But the President cannot have input on foreign policy only from people with tunnel vision. Foreign policy does not exist in a vacuum."

Many-Faceted Advice

The President wants and is getting advice on public opinion, Congressional reaction, political implications and other possible repercussions of foreign policy decisions, the aide said. Moreover, he added, the President is getting this information from a steadily widening circle of advisers both within and without the White House.

The Secretary of Defense, James R. Schlesinger, contributes vigorously to foreign policy debates, when national security is involved and it is no secret in Washington that he and Mr. Kissinger do not always see eye to eye. The former Secretary of Defense, Melvin R. Laird, is a friend of the President and is frequently asked for advice.

Kissinger's

White House sources cite several recent instances when the President rejected advice from Mr. Kissinger and the National Security Council, acting instead on other recommendations. One such issue described by a high White House official was the question of United States aid to Indochina after the fall of Vietnam.

According to this official, who is not a member of the National Security Council, the council urged the President to adopt a policy of leaving the door open to United States aid to Vietnam and Cambodia through third parties such as the United Nations or private organizations, while ruling out any direct American aid to Indochina.

This policy was opposed by other White House advisers, including Mr. Marsh, who told the President that Congress would "go through the roof" at any suggestion of American money being spent in Indochina, according to the White House official.

The President decided to oppose all aid.

Another case mentioned was last winter's conference on food in Rome, during which Secretary Kissinger pressed the President repeatedly to announce a specific American commitment for food aid. The President, according to accounts from the White House, rejected the advice.

Kissinger Still First

The White House officials who talked of the widening pool of foreign policy advice were quick to concede that Mr. Kissinger remained paramount among President advisers in this area.

"Without question, Kissinger still is the dominant factor in foreign policy," said one aide, noting that the President meets with his Secretary of State for at least an hour every day.

These officials also concede that no other adviser to the President can match the knowledge of and experience in foreign affairs provided by Mr. Kissinger. They acknowledge

that the President continues to have full confidence in Mr. Kissinger despite the recent defeats and setbacks for United States policies around the world.

These setbacks provoked heavy criticism of United States foreign policy and of Mr. Kissinger as a principal architect of that policy for over six years. Some White House officials indicated that they therefore regarded Mr. Kissinger as something of a political liability.

An official who is considered one of Mr. Kissinger's strongest allies inside the White House said that the Secretary of State and the President had "developed a very close working relationship—they have a very similar outlook on the world."

Corrects Mr. Ford

That Mr. Kissinger is secure in the President's confidence is demonstrated by his willingness to correct Mr. Ford's public statements. For example, at a news briefing last Saturday, he softened a blunt statement by President Ford about Portugal's future in NATO.

In an interview on Friday, Mr. Ford expressed concern about the Communist influence in Portugal and, therefore, about Portugal's role in the alliance. The President said he intended to discuss this "very serious matter" in Brussels.

The following day Mr. Kis-

singer said that the question of Portugal's membership in NATO would be discussed in bilateral meetings but would not be brought up in plenary sessions.

Mr. Kissinger said that there was no difference between what the President had said and what he has been saying about Portugal. But the Secretary obviously was trying to draw some of the sting from the President's frank remarks about a delicate issue that was to have been brought up quietly in Brussels.

Contrast With Nixon

Most officials interviewed contrasted Mr. Ford's style in making foreign policy with that of his predecessor, pointing out that President Nixon made his decisions after reading documents and meeting with Mr. Kissinger. Meetings of the National Security Council are said to be much more frequent and freewheeling than they were under Mr. Nixon, who called them rarely and then usually to rubberstamp a decision already reached. President Ford is also seeing foreign leaders more frequently and on a more informal basis than his predecessor, White House officials who worked for both Presidents said.

But they added that unlike President Nixon, Mr. Ford is

unlikely to introduce many innovations into foreign policy. "He is a pragmatist who approaches foreign policy on a problem-by-problem basis," a close aide said. "He doesn't have any structured world view. There probably won't be any 'Ford doctrine.'"

Nevertheless, the President is portrayed by his staff as growingly confident of his own abilities in foreign affairs, a confidence buttressed by 25 years of dealing in foreign policy matters as a member of Congress. They add that Mr. Ford, like Presidents, thinks about his position in history and is determined to make his mark in foreign policy as well as in other aspects of his Administration.

Because he is not doctrinaire, President Ford's imprint is likely to reflect style and personality, one of his advisers commented. Several aides said that the President set great store by personal diplomacy and believed he could do much in direct contacts with foreign leaders.

White House and State Department officials who briefed reporters on the trip to Europe said that the opportunity to meet leaders particularly President Sadat but also the heads of government of the Atlantic alliance, was a major reason for the journey.