

The New York Times

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NEW YORK, SUNDAY, JANUARY 24, 1971

U. S. Foreign Policy: A Firm Nixon Style

*Despite Nation's Mood of Withdrawal,
President Strives for Strength Abroad*

Following is the seventh and last in a series of articles exploring the Nixon Administration's style in foreign policy:

By MAX FRANKEL

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Jan. 23 — from Vietnam, the President seeks to achieve the objectives that prompted massive intervention in the first place. Even in the face of weariness with obligations abroad, he intends to conduct a forward diplomacy and to keep troops and navies across the seas to assure influence in distant places. Even amid economic stress and demands for new priorities, he intends to remain pre-eminent in weaponry and to retain the capacity to contest any expansionist impulses in the Soviet union and Communist China.

The men and minds at work on foreign policy have changed. The techniques and tactics of American diplomacy have changed. The troops are coming out of Indochina almost as fast as they once went in. The cast of leading characters on the world stage has changed and the rhetoric with which Washington addresses them has changed even more. Most strikingly, the people of the United States have changed their view of the world overseas.

Yet, halfway through President Nixon's term the principal goals and ambitions of American foreign policy have hardly changed at all.

Mr. Nixon's Administration looks outward in the defense of American interests though the country is looking inward now for a period of rest and reconstruction.

Even in withdrawing troops

In sum, President Nixon has labored to protect and to perfect the foreign-affairs concepts of the last two decades against the widespread disenchantment with Vietnam and against the allure of insular doctrines.

To cope with those tensions

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—and for other reasons as well—the President has further enhanced the power of his office in the conduct of foreign affairs, though he has had to yield some tactical ground to a more assertive Congress and an impatient public. By concentrating decision making in the White House, he has been able to devise his own mix of strategic and political calculations and to shield the process from challengers in Congress and among the public.

Signs of Declining Influence

As the series of articles about the foreign-policy process in The New York Times reported this week, most strategic and geopolitical concepts in the Nixon years have been developed by the President and his energetic adviser on national security, Henry A. Kissinger.

The series found a further decline in the influence of the State Department, continuing a trend that developed throughout the nuclear age. It also found a decline in the Pentagon's influence over foreign policy—also for a combination of reasons—although military leaders have regained some voice in planning policy and play a major role in its execution.

The articles reported a lack of cohesion in the conduct of foreign economic policy and intelligence operations—flaws that the White House has recognized and moved to remedy.

Yesterday's report focused on the still-ill-defined stirring in Congress to capitalize on public sentiment, to check the trend toward Presidential power and to retain a measure of at least restraining influence over foreign and military policies.

Such studies of concealed bureaucratic bargaining and continuing political maneuver cannot be definitive. Within every trend there can be a countertrend. Even minor episodes produce irreconcilable testimony and endless controversy.

The Accounts Diverge

For example, an account of irritation in the State Department because the President had pre-empted its plan to publish last year a major definition of foreign policies evoked new and conclusive evidence that the department knew all along of Mr. Nixon's intention to produce his own report. The White House staff had several times solicited the department's help and did not sense a possible



United Press International

Anatoly F. Dobrynin, the Soviet Ambassador to the United States, listening to the State of the Union Message at joint session of Congress. President Nixon has imposed on all major policy decisions his personal sense of U. S. rivalry with the Soviet Union.

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Moreover, by concentrating both the definition and the articulation of foreign policy at the White House, the President has been able to adjust his objectives abroad to the often-contrary political pressures at home. He has been eager to reach decisions from a central perspective in order to protect his brand of globalism from what he deems to be the domestic threat of isolationism.

He has proclaimed an ambiguous "doctrine" that essentially preserves commitments overseas while trying to soothe anxiety about them in the United States. It put forward guidelines for future military aid and involvements that neither altered nor criticized past practice in any significant way, but the proposals were shrewdly calculated to reaffirm the self-evident reluctance of the country to repeat the Vietnam experience.

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Some Operations Expanded

In much the same way, Mr. Nixon has actually expanded some American operations in Indochina with the stated purpose of facilitating an earlier disengagement.

He moved to the brink of threatening military intervention in the Middle East in the hope of making it unnecessary.

He has withdrawn some troops from South Korea and other inactive theaters to win time and public consent for maintaining large forces in Europe and elsewhere.

He has twice reduced the military budget to preserve support for still-huge defense outlays and for the renovation or expansion of costly weapons systems.

He has abandoned talk of international crusade and ideals and replaced it with an emphasis on national interest, thus trying to scale down inflated expectations of American leadership abroad and to calm the fears at home of foreign adventure.

In the context of the last decade Mr. Nixon has clearly lowered the American voice and profile in the world. He would inspire anger rather than admiration if he were to repeat the promise of President Kennedy 10 years ago this week that "we shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe, to assure the survival and the success of liberty."

Yet Mr. Nixon has not recoiled from the major policy objectives that Mr. Kennedy and Mr. Johnson held dear.

No Time for Everything

The intensely personal involvement of Mr. Nixon in foreign affairs has often slighted pending domestic business. And because there is simply no time for everything at the top, his approach has also risked the periodic neglect of such large subjects as trade and foreign aid and such large areas of the world as Latin America and Africa.

But it has also strengthened the hand of the like-minded Mr. Kissinger and allowed him to badger the bureaucracy with difficult questions that might have been ignored, to seek independent sources of information to confirm or challenge departmental testimony and to insist on alternative policy recommendations instead of fixed agency recommendations so that the President can be protected from unchallenged advice or consensus.

Such concentration of energy and coordinating power at the White House is the inevitable consequence in the nuclear age of the President's constitutional duty to shape foreign policy and to command the military forces.

Now that a major war could develop in a few minutes' time, no President is willing to dele-

gate decisions that bear on the danger, however remotely. Moreover, even in nations without nuclear weapons, foreign policies have impinged more and more on domestic economics and politics, so that virtually every chief executive in the advanced nations has become eager to conduct his own diplomacy.

A further motive for concentration is that the departments operating on the world scene have become too large and self-serving in their outlooks, so that only a President and his staff can reconcile conflicting aims and interests fairly.

Building Upon a Trend

Mr. Nixon and Mr. Kissinger have built upon this trend, giving priority, for obvious reasons, to the concept of phased withdrawal from Vietnam and to the relationship with the Soviet Union—notably in the evolution of arms policy and in both long-term planning and crisis management for the Middle East. They have also devoted much thought to the long-term prospects of accommodation in Central Europe, to relations with the Western allies and Japan, and to the search for eventual accommodation with Communist China.

In those efforts the President and his advisers have evolved some new techniques. They are most proud of their more relaxed dealings with Western Europe and their thorough exploration of all possible forms of arms control that could be made consistent with their concepts of national security. They also hope to leave Indochina in a way that will assure the

survival of a non-Communist government in South Vietnam.

In most respects, nonetheless, they have built upon policy lines that were evident before they moved into the White House, even including the concept of "Vietnamization" of the war. They have consciously tried to improve on the experience of their predecessors, however, by not allowing compartmentalized bureaucratic interests to overwhelm their larger purposes.

The Administration has not suffered the embarrassments that followed the failure of the 1961 invasion of Cuba under the aegis of the Central Intelligence Agency or of the Pentagon's cancellation of the Skybolt missile in 1962. It has not tolerated the confusions caused by State Department pressure for an allied nuclear navy in the early nineteen-sixties. It has not rushed into adventures such as the invasion of the Dominican Republic in 1965 on the basis of half-baked intelligence.

No Sudden Lurches

In fact, Mr. Nixon and his advisers have taken extreme care not to rile the sensibilities or disrupt the politics of the European allies with sudden lurches in defense or foreign policy. Extreme care has been taken to brief them fully on the arms-control talks with Moscow. Despite the rumbles over West Germany's move toward accommodation with the Com-

munist world, the Administration has been quite explicit about the conditions it would like to see as part of a move that it generally supports.

Though many of the Nixon policies have been devised in a crisis atmosphere — more so

than the President had hoped before taking office—they have not been improvised in response to pressure from lower echelons. The strike into Cambodia was hurriedly planned, but only after due deliberation at the White House. The Sontay raid last November to liberate prisoners in North Vietnam was planned over many months.

Anger and anxiety at the White House cooled quickly when the opportunities for action seemed limited. The President, though he wanted to, did not retaliate for the shooting down of a spy plane by North Korea. Nor did he act on—or even betray—his private fears and sense of challenge when Chile elected a Marxist Government last fall.

As Mr. Nixon has recognized, he has allowed foreign economic policies to develop in chaotic patterns, often in opposition to his larger strategic purposes. A bold and imaginative foreign-aid program is the natural corollary of the Nixon doctrine, but little has been done to design a plan and to overcome the formidable political obstacles it would encounter.

Meeting Military Needs

The difficult task of matching future military might to the nation's sense of danger and obligation around the world has only begun. Having dismantled Robert S. McNamara's civilian team of whiz-kid analysts at the Pentagon, the White House must now evolve its own machinery for weighing the rival claims of the military services. Only the most rudimentary efforts have been made to develop methods by which a President could truly reorder priorities and weigh military "necessities" against the most urgent domestic needs.

By concentrating control of foreign affairs at the White House, Mr. Nixon had also hoped to restore the public's confidence and to overcome what is called a President's credibility gap. He has fulfilled his pledges on troop withdrawal and has tried to be somewhat more open about remote operations in Laos and Cambodia. But the rules of engagement in Indochina have been a constant source of confusion and the larger effort to reconcile globalism with the popular yearning for retrenchment has produced much deliberate ambiguity that has left large segments of the public suspicious.

Congressional efforts to clarify policies and tactics have become more difficult in the Nixon years. The President has not generally taken even Republican members into his confidence, and more and more of the most important concepts and decisions have been made in staff offices, whose occupants are not subject to legislative oversight or questioning.

Since Presidential news conferences are rare these days, Mr. Nixon has had to account for his foreign policies only to the extent that he has deemed useful or necessary.