

# ... And a Russian's Reflections on Détente

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By Georgy A. Arbatov

If I had to describe in a single word the changes now taking place in U.S. foreign policy, in the role Americans play in the world, I could probably find no better term than accommodation—accommodation to the new realities of the international situation, to the changing foreign and domestic conditions in which U.S. policy is being conceived and shaped. Or, to put it differently, I might say that U.S. policy is being brought in line to a greater degree than formerly with America's resources, capabilities, potential, and national interests.

Détente is opposed by groups in the United States whose economic interests are incompatible with it (first of all, the military-industrial complex), by certain special-interest groups (for instance, representatives of counter-revolutionary émigrés from the socialist countries), and finally by those bureaucrats, journalists, and social scientists who rose to prominence because of the cold war and are only able to think or act within its categories.

One also gets the impression that a number of Americans have still failed to rid themselves completely of another false political assumption, namely, that the United States has special "rights," especially the "right" to interfere in the internal affairs of other countries, to apply direct pressure upon them for that purpose, to dictate to them what is good and what is bad.

Views of this sort at one time led

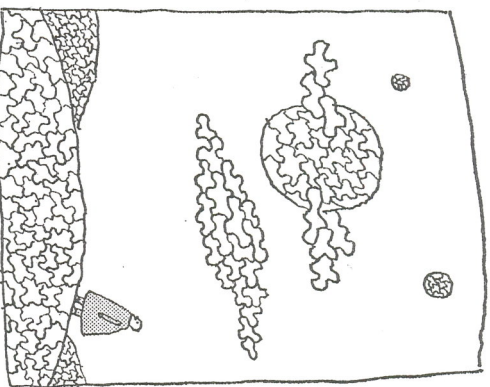
American politicians to proclaim officially that the mission of the United States was that of "global policeman." Today everybody knows of the blind alleys into which this attitude led American foreign policy, first making the cold war inevitable, and then bringing on the bloody military intervention in Vietnam.

Under present-day conditions rejection of such pretensions is an absolute prerequisite of world peace, and is, after all, a central problem and cardinal principle of peaceful coexistence.

It was for just this reason that the American Government's official acknowledgment of the principle of peaceful coexistence as the only alternative to nuclear war was understood as a rejection of all pretense to any U.S. "right" to interfere in the internal affairs of the Soviet Union or to attempt to exert pressure on the Soviet Union in such matters.

Unfortunately, many Americans have not drawn the proper conclusions from this declaration. Contrary attitudes have been voiced, for instance, in the Congress during debates on the question of removing discriminatory regulations that limit trade with the U.S.S.R. (which is precisely the meaning of granting most-favored-nation status to the Soviet Union), not to mention in noisy campaigns in America centering around the question of so-called dissidents.

In these attitudes we see the full force of the system of double standards that for a long time has been typical of the political mentality of many Americans, and from which they



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are extricating themselves slowly and with great difficulty.

Peace, détente, the development of economic and scientific-technical ties—these are benefits in which the U.S.S.R. and the United States have an identical interest, as do other countries. But for some reason, very many Americans still seek to regard these mutual benefits as concessions to the Soviet Union for which the United States has the right to demand special payment—the latter, among other things, including counterconcessions that concern fundamentally domestic affairs of the U.S.S.R.

One can well imagine the indignation with which these same people who present demands to the Soviet Union would set any effort to exert similar pressure on the United States. This

kind of behavior represents adherence to double measures and standards that have obviously survived the older conceptions of American omnipotence, and America's purported special rights and missions in the world, on the basis of which those measures and standards arose in the first place.

I am quite aware of the fact that a good many Americans disapprove of certain laws, procedures, and political and social institutions existing in the U.S.S.R. In precisely the same way, Soviet citizens, myself included, disapprove of much that exists and happens in the United States. But normal peaceful relations between the two countries are possible only on the condition that each refrains from trying by any means to "correct" or reform the other, to impose its standards on the other, except by force of the example each sets in guaranteeing the well-being, freedom, and exemplary life-style of its own citizens.

To reinforce and stabilize those positive developments that have taken place in Soviet-American relations, I think these important truths must be fully understood and converted into a norm for coexistence, a norm for relations between our two countries. As an optimist, I am convinced that this will happen sometime. My only wish is that it could happen sooner.

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