

*The Effort for Security*

CONFRONTED WITH THE GREAT MULTIPLICITY OF POSSIBLE wars the endeavor of foreign policy, even during the primitive stage of the development of sovereign states, has always been twofold.

There has been the effort to provide security within the possible area of conflict and the effort to reduce that area. Both attempts indicate that organized society has from its beginning regarded war as inimical to human happiness and progress. The two endeavors have long proceeded side by side, with reciprocal effects one upon the other. But since the effort to achieve security is the more instinctive, it should be considered first.

Organization for group security is a practice as ancient as the earliest forms of social organization. From the outset this organization seems to have been for offensive as well as defensive purposes, although Neanderthal men doubtless reasoned in a dim way that they committed aggression to make their own caves more secure. No folk belief is older than the saying that the best defense is an offense and Christianity has not successfully undermined the strength of that proverb. There is absolutely no historical or scientific basis for the assumption that the group to which one belongs is ipso facto defensive, the foreign group as naturally offensive. However, there has

long been a certain rhythm in the two kinds of warfare. It follows the reciprocal development of offensive and defensive weapons: from the sword and the shield to the air-borne bomb and the subterranean factory.

When the State, as we know it today, began to develop, it gradually organized professional fighters to insure its security, whether by attack or defense. The writings of Julius Caesar, to go no further back, show us that the Roman soldier was trained for both types of warfare. Where there is any difference of emphasis, in the oldest military manuals available, it consistently favors offensive warfare, as that best calculated to subdue the enemy and achieve victory. The very word "victory", incidentally, in our own and other languages has a significantly negative meaning—"defeat of an enemy"—rather than one of positive, universally helpful accomplishment.

Foreign policy, as the official plan for the relations of one sovereignty to others, grew up side by side with the professional army, an institution that from the beginning has been a potent tool of diplomacy, which is the procedure by which the foreign policy plan is made operative.

Indeed it may be asserted that a sovereignty can have no policy, other than submission, towards other sovereignties unless it has military force, directly or indirectly available, at its command. Apparent exceptions, like that of Western Germany or Japan during the years immediately following World War II, invite a close inspection. In this period neither Bonn nor Tokyo possessed full sovereignty. So far as either had the semblance of a foreign policy, it was based on military potential or

on the backing of the armies of occupation, or on both.

Though indispensable to foreign policy, the military force is nevertheless only the agent of that policy. Even if the Chief of State is a general, and a dictator, he must utilize professional diplomats, as Napoleon employed Talleyrand, to direct the external relations of the government. That is partly because no army is organized to run a national economy—"bayonets won't dig coal", as the French found when they occupied the Ruhr in 1923; partly because no government can afford to be continuously at war. There must be periods—long periods—for economic recuperation and during these times of peace all negotiations with other sovereignties are diplomatic, with the military in reserve to give the diplomatic presentation more force.

Between the approach of the civilian diplomat and that of the military commander there has always been one striking difference. The diplomat maintains the polite fiction that he uses only defensive methods to develop national security. Even the diplomats of Soviet Russia assert that their government has no aggressive design, though they have discarded most of the other conventions which used to make the conduct of foreign policy a polished and gentlemanly profession.

Unlike the diplomat, the professional soldier has never pretended to regard foreign policy as being purely or even primarily defensive in nature. And for this difference there is an important reason, which explains the traditional diplomatic leaning towards deception.

2.

WHETHER SUCCESSFUL or unsuccessful, the conduct of foreign policy is costly. The actual upkeep of the foreign office, known as the Department of State with us, is only a trifling part of the expenditure involved.

The military establishment, providing the latent force that makes diplomacy effective, has for centuries consumed a large part of the budget of nearly every sovereign state. In addition, foreign policy throughout the ages has often required huge subsidies to other governments, to buy their good will or to strengthen them as allies. Peacetime espionage and intelligence work are among other items often overlooked in estimating the cost of foreign policy, as the amount of this expenditure is always kept secret and either excluded from or concealed in whatever accounting the government makes public.

Since all this expenditure must be paid for by the people, in one form or another, the taxpayers as a whole are at least dimly aware that the cost of their government's foreign policy bears down on them. In consequence every government must justify its activities in this field to the subjects who foot the bill. As a practical matter, no ruler of a state can afford to admit that his policy is aggressive and calculated to bring war, even when a candid survey of the facts permits no other conclusion.

This necessity of deceiving the people, especially in

matters of foreign policy, is indeed an accepted principle of statesmanship. Machiavelli, writing *The Prince* in 1513, devoted all of his eighteenth chapter to it, under the title: "In What Way Princes Must Keep Faith." The conclusion of this great political scientist was that a Chief of State must always "seem to be all mercy, faith, integrity, humanity and religion." However:

" . . . those that have been best able to imitate the fox have succeeded best. But it is necessary to be able to disguise this character well, and to be a great feigner and dissembler; and men are so simple, and so ready to obey present necessities, that one who deceives will always find those who allow themselves to be deceived." ¹

When the strategy of foreign policy is successful, with or without a victorious war, the fact of deception, if realized at all, is generally overlooked by the "simple" subjects. But when foreign policy is obviously unsuccessful the tempo of deception must be increased and the blame for failure must, if possible, be focussed outside the entourage of "The Prince".

The classical way to accomplish this end is to inflame popular prejudice against a rival government or system. Machiavelli cites several instances of how this was successfully accomplished, notably by King Ferdinand of Spain, who got out of domestic difficulties by successively attacking Morocco, Italy and France, "so that he has continually contrived great things which have kept his subjects' minds uncertain and astonished, and occupied in watching their result." ²

¹ Niccolò Machiavelli: *The Prince* (New York: Modern Library; 1940), pp. 64-65.

² *Ibid.*, p. 82.

3.

THE TRADITIONAL METHODS used to achieve national security are aggrandizement and alliances. Aggrandizement has generally taken the form of outright conquest, either of contiguous or distant territory. Alliances, directed against another state or group of states, are always called "defensive" because that characterization is soothing to the taxpayers. Actually, they are more often defensive than offensive in purpose, but can generally be utilized either way. In publishing the terms of an alliance the contracting parties customarily omit any clauses providing for offensive action.

The great majority of states that exist today have at one time or another conspicuously directed their foreign policy to the conquest of additional territory, containing both economic and human resources. The form of that conquest has varied, in accordance with the geographical problems of the aggressor state.

Thus Great Britain and Japan, being insular countries, were alike compelled to direct their conquests overseas. Russia and the United States were able to expand more naturally by annexation of land and peoples directly bordering their original areas.

Aggression was not less real in the two last cases, but could be more readily exculpated than in the case of conquests requiring the use of navies. Annexations from Mexico by the United States, from Turkey by Russia, seemed less "imperial" than the taking of Ceylon by

Britain, or Formosa by Japan. Self-defense could not be convincingly employed as a reason in the latter instances. Nevertheless, national historians generally manage to give the fact of conquest a pleasant gloss. In the case of Ceylon, Professor C. Grant Robertson, of Oxford University, observes casually that it "fell into our hands".³ It is not impossible that some future Russian historian will use the same euphemistic wording in regard to the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company.

Alliances, as a device of foreign policy, are also as old as recorded history, though more unfamiliar than wars of aggrandizement to most Americans because, until recently, it was a cardinal point of our policy to regard the former as dangerously "entangling".

The story of the Peloponnesian War, so graphically told by Thucydides, is on the diplomatic side very largely an account of the shifting alliances formed by Athens and Sparta. From the account of this impartial historian, though plenty of other evidence on the subject is available, we may also realize how difficult it is for a weak state to maintain neutrality in an area where the alliance system operates.

In 420 B.C. the Athenians sent a diplomatic mission to the little island of Melos, which up to that time had managed to preserve an uneasy neutrality between the two Great Powers of their time and place. The Melians, feeling the military pressure applied by Athens, said to these envoys: "We see you are come to be judges in your own cause". To which the Athenians replied, in

³ Charles Grant Robertson: *England Under the Hanoverians* (London: Methuen & Co.; 1919), p. 380.

language very similar to that of modern statesmanship:

“You will not think it dishonorable to submit to the greatest city in Hellas, when it makes you the moderate offer of becoming its tributary ally, without ceasing to enjoy the country that belongs to you; nor when you have the choice between war and security, will you be so blinded as to choose the worse.”⁴

Like other small states, in much later world wars, Melos nevertheless chose to defend its neutrality, and as a result was overwhelmed by Athens. In modern times Switzerland, and to a lesser extent Spain and Sweden, have more successfully upheld the doctrine of neutrality as opposed to alliances. The Swiss refusal to join the United Nations is due to the alliance characteristics of this international organization.

Although foreign policy has always laid great stress on building alliances their historic result has been not to prevent war, but rather to enlarge its eventual scope as the inevitable counteralliances are developed. Recognition of this lesson of history, at a time when the United States also favored neutrality as the basis of foreign policy, led George Washington to warn, in the Farewell Address, that:

“The great rule of conduct for us, in regard to foreign nations, is in extending our commercial relations to have with them as little *political* connection as possible.”

⁴ Thucydides: *Complete Writings* (New York: Modern Library, 1934), pp. 335-6.

4.

THE FORMULA $x = \frac{n(n-1)}{2}$ is useful not merely to tell us how many wars are possible at a given moment, but also to indicate methods by which the number of potential wars may be reduced. As "n"—representing the number of independent sovereignties—becomes smaller, so also does "x"—the number of theoretically possible conflicts between these sovereignties.

If "n" is reduced to one—meaning only one political sovereignty on earth, then $x = 0$. This expresses the obvious fact that under an effective world government there could be no international war, though of course there might be civil war between states united in a global federal union. The formula is directly applicable only to wars between actual sovereignties. It summarizes the theoretical case for world government, but of course offers no assurance that this panacea would actually maintain peace.

However, it should be noted that, since our own Civil War, repetition of this American tragedy has been rendered unlikely by reducing the sovereign power of the states, and vesting powers taken from them in the Federal Government. So far as the power to make war is concerned, it is agreed that only one sovereignty in the United States—that concentrated in Washington—now possesses it. Therefore, within our union, $x = \frac{0}{2}$ or zero

and no war between Maine and California, or even between such adjacent commonwealths as Pennsylvania and Maryland, need be anticipated.

Much of the same motive of unification lies behind the perennial effort of foreign policy to achieve national security by aggrandizement and alliances. If one sovereign power conquers and takes control over another, the value of "n" in the formula is thereby reduced by one and the number of potential wars is correspondingly diminished. By the same token, the doctrine of self-determination tends to *increase* the number of potential sovereignties and thereby increases the number of possible wars, in geometrical progression.

To put it concretely, Egypt and Palestine could not war with each other when both were under British domination. As wholly independent sovereignties, Egypt and Israel can make war, not merely with each other but at least theoretically with every other nation. The same is true of India and Pakistan. Conversely, Bulgaria and Rumania, or Poland and Lithuania, were much more likely to fight each other as independent sovereignties than they are now as Soviet satellites, all controlled from Moscow.

Thus we reach the conclusion, whether or not morally objectionable, that the policy of conquest has undoubtedly served to save the world from a number of wars.

Similarly, the alliance system has served to lessen the likelihood of wars between the allies. This arrangement qualifies the sovereignty of each state in the alliance, at least to the extent of an agreement not to make war upon other members of the alliance. The value of "n" in the formula is thus in fact, if not theoretically, reduced.

But this contraction of sovereignty is always temporary and often ineffective, as shown by the historic tendency of allies to fall out as soon as the external threat that prompted the alliance is removed.

Nevertheless, both aggrandizement and alliances are foreign policy techniques which, on balance, are seen to have reduced the number of war-making sovereignties and thereby also have reduced the number, though not the scope, of potential wars.