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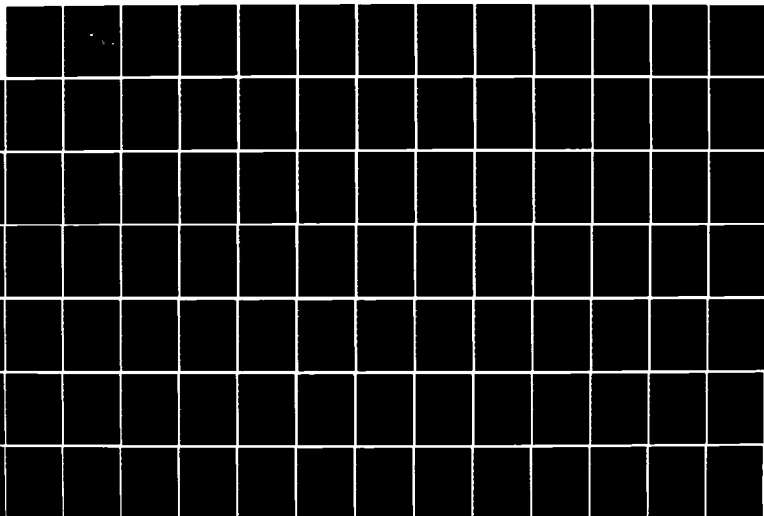
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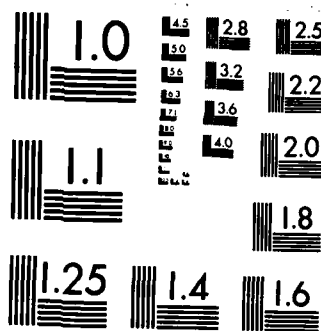
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PREREQUISITE FOR STRATEGIC PLANNING:
A CONCEPT OF THE NATIONAL INTEREST

by

Michael Doyle Simpson

December 1984

Thesis Advisor:

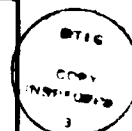
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two primary obstacles that are discussed are the lack of consensus about the philosophic nature of the concept itself, and the eternal debate between realism and idealism in politics. The nature of the American character is examined as the fundamental determinant of the national interest. The concluding chapter considers the requirements of strategic planning in terms of what functions the concept of the national interest must fulfill. In light of these requirements, it is argued that only a value-centered approach to defining the national interest, which recognizes the importance of ideals and the American Dream, can adequately meet those requirements.

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Prerequisite for Strategic Planning:
A Concept of the National Interest

by

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Lieutenant Commander, United States Navy
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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the concept of the national interest from the perspective of strategic planning. The basic premise is that an articulation of the national interest is essential if the nation's strategic planning is to become more effective.

After outlining some methodological problems and issues which are related to this task, the thesis begins by reviewing the problems that have precluded such an articulation. The two primary obstacles that are discussed are the lack of consensus about the philosophic nature of the concept itself, and the eternal debate between realism and idealism in politics. The nature of the American character is examined as the fundamental determinant of the national interest. The concluding chapter considers the requirements of strategic planning in terms of what functions the concept of the national interest must fulfill. In light of these requirements, it is argued that only a value-centered approach to defining the national interest, which recognizes the importance of ideals and the American Dream, can adequately meet those requirements.

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I. INTRODUCTION

"America is, above all, about ideas and dreams - far more than interests" [1].

Strategic planning, in the context of national security affairs, is an arcane profession, advanced slightly beyond art, but lacking the rigorous general theory that would qualify it for the realm of science. The planner must draw upon the knowledge of a wide range of disciplines - history, philosophy, psychology, sociology, and many others - to produce what, at best, is usually a stochastic forecast. His task is to attempt to look into the future and to devise strategies which assure that American interests are safeguarded against any threats which the future may hold.

Recently, Senator John Glenn offered the following criticism of America's strategic planning: "The United States has not yet developed a coherent, long-range national strategy with clear goals and objectives acceptable to the American people and shared by its allies" [2]. There has been little effort to refute this charge, for it is essentially valid. Foremost among the reasons for this failure to develop a national strategy is the lack of a clearly articulated concept of the national interest.

This deficiency is not attributable to any dearth of attention to the problem of the national interest. Since Charles Beard examined The Idea of the National Interest¹

half a century ago, there has been vigorous and continuous debate over this concept. In the words of historian and political scientist Fred A. Sonderman:

"... the concept of the national interest ... has interested and baffled students of international relations for many years. Those of us who try to understand and teach about the realities of foreign policy and international relations have been variously attracted to, and puzzled, or even repelled by, the concept. But like the moth and the flame, few of us have managed to stay entirely away from it." [3]

Rather, the problem, as Professor Sonderman's comment suggests, has been a lack of consensus on the concept of the national interest.

Two distinct areas of disagreement among both scholars and policy-makers have posed obstacles to consensus. The first has concerned the nature of the concept itself; should the national interest be conceptualized in normative terms, as an aggregation of particular interests, or merely as the observance of accepted procedural norms? In this largely philosophic debate, some theorists have even taken the position that this issue is beyond resolution, concluding that the concept cannot be defined with sufficient precision to be of any value to policy-makers.

The second matter of dispute has engaged practical decision-makers as well as scholars and philosophers. This is the long-standing argument of realism versus idealism as the proper basis of national policy. The problem of reconciling pragmatic national self-interests with abstract moral

principles which Americans have generally held to transcend the interests of particular nations is one of the central themes of American foreign policy; it is also a substantial barrier to achieving consensus on the concept of the national interest.

In the absence of this consensus, it has proven impossible to formulate the clear goals and objectives which must provide the foundation for any national strategy. The result, far too often, has been that strategic planning has degenerated into mere reaction to urgent problems, producing policies that respond to the demand of the moment, but reflect little thought of future ramifications.

Although some would argue that U.S. foreign policy has exhibited a high degree of consistency, it has become apparent during the past two turbulent decades that this ad hoc approach to policy-making is inadequate to ensure that the nation's vital interests are protected. This point was well made by retired U.S. Army General A. C. Wedemeyer shortly before his death. In reflecting upon his more than forty years as an observer and participant in the national policy-making machinery, he urged the implementation of measures to improve the country's strategic planning. He stated,

"My present concern arises not only from the conviction that our governmental machinery and methods are little improved over those of the past, but also from the knowledge that today's world is a far more dangerous one than that of yesteryear. We could get by in World War II with what we had and what we did. Our security and prosperity in the future, I am sure, will require more." [4]

In an increasingly crowded world, much of which may fairly be characterized as hostile to democratic values and the American way of life, more effective strategic planning has become a critical requirement.

The first task necessary to make this improved planning a reality is assuredly the most difficult; that is the articulation of a concept of the national interest from which long-range goals may be derived in an environment of uncertainty. This thesis undertakes the formidable task of proposing such a concept, one that will meet the needs of the strategic planner. The fundamental assumption which supports the belief that this endeavor has potential value for the nation's strategic planners is the conviction that the national interest is a social reality. A clear statement of that reality is a necessary prerequisite for developing a national strategy, or even defining the goals which the nation seeks to attain.

One additional rationale led to the selection of the concept of the national interest as a topic for thesis level research. No major treatment of this issue has been undertaken with a view toward the requirements of strategic planning. While many excellent analyses of the national interest are available, the majority are either issue-oriented (and therefore too specific) or are abstract philosophic treatises (and are therefore too general). A mid-range theory of the national interest which can provide planners with a basis for developing both national goals, and the strategies

to achieve those goals, has been lacking. Therefore, the emphasis throughout this thesis will be upon the utility of various alternate conceptualizations of the national interest to the strategic planner.

The nature of this topic dictates that subjective normative values as well as objective realities must be examined in connection with the national interest. This concept, as it has evolved in the United States, cannot be understood outside the context of the American Dream. Any attempt to assess the national interest must, in large part, address the question posed over 200 years ago by Hector St. John Crevecoeur: "What, then, is the American, this new man?" [5]. The plurality and the paradoxes of the answers to Crevecoeur's famous question have intrigued and puzzled observers of American national behavior throughout the nation's history. This effort to articulate a concept of the national interest that will be useful to strategic planners will, by necessity, focus on the requirement that any concept of the national interest be compatible with the American Dream.

Methodological issues and problems relevant to the study of the national interest are briefly addressed in Chapter II. Chapters III and IV review the two major areas of disagreement that have precluded consensus on the concept of the national interest, the nature of the concept in Chapter III, and the issue of idealism versus realism in Chapter IV. In Chapter V, the development and nature of the American national character

conventional wisdom of political science that holds that, although there is no existential public interest with a specified content, there is a political function served by reference to such an interest, presumably a symbolic or exhortative function.

Another common adaptation of the term discussed by Meyer is the pluralist view that the public interest stands for either the political process itself, or the outcome of the process, with no regard for what that outcome might be. Glendon Schubert, who has compiled the most thorough and detailed inventory of the literature concerned with the public interest, designated this view as "realist theory" [24]. He concluded that, in the final analysis, the concept of the public interest makes no operational sense, and might as well be abandoned by political scientists. Frank Sorauf concurred with this view, stating that "the term is too burdened with multiple meanings for valuable use as a tool of political analysis" [25].

At the heart of this criticism of the concept of the national (or public) interest is the disparity among competing conceptualizations that have been advanced by scholars, statesmen, and philosophers, and the fact that no one has succeeded in either disproving any of the contradictory hypotheses, or in reconciling them under one general theory. This debate has concerned, not the substance of the national interest, but how the question of defining it should be

In reality, however, the concept of the national interest is surrounded by confusion and disagreement. William Meyer noted with dismay that the "real meaning of the public interest - involving common purposes, shared goals, etc. - has little credibility today" [21]. He proceeded to describe, however, how the term has been kept in use to serve a number of purposes. Political leaders justify policies in terms of the public interest, citing this concept as the basis for public support. David Truman, despite the disclaimer that "we do not need to account for a totally inclusive interest, because one does not exist," [22] discussed the manner in which appeals to such an inclusive interest are used for propaganda purposes. He commented that such appeals, especially when framed in terms of national security, are emotionally and symbolically useful in mustering support and solidarity. Harold Lasswell's treatment of the public interest viewed it as a way of rationalizing the displacement of private motives onto public objects [23].

All of these views of the national interest focus, not upon any substantive content, but simply upon the assertion that such an interest is the motivation for a particular policy. Not the interest itself, but the making of a claim to the interest, is what has interested modern political scientists such as Truman, Lasswell, and David Easton. The most common explanation of the concept is a functional or instrumental interpretation; that is reflected in the

III. COMPETING CONCEPTS OF THE NATIONAL INTEREST

As the politics among nations have changed over time, so too has the concept of the national interest. In the nineteenth century, when both the external threat to the United States and American involvement in world affairs were limited, the concept was most commonly expressed in the phrase 'national honor' [19]. During the twentieth century, as America's participation in international politics expanded, the term national interests more accurately reflected the broad scope of the nation's concerns. Since the 1950's and the advent of the nuclear bipolar world, this concept has increasingly been defined in terms of national security or defense. Certainly in the 1980's, many policies that have little connection with the survival of the population or the territory of the United States are justified on the basis of national defense.

In theory, the definition of the national interest, in whatever form it may take for a given political era, is what determines the direction of national policy and, indeed, the very future of the nation. This concept establishes the criteria by which policy selections are made and evaluated [20]. The national interest is the expression of the broad goals and the essential identity of the country; as such, it serves as the mechanism by which the nation's pluralistic desires and concerns are integrated into cohesive national policy.

those conclusions are speculative and tentative. The decision to adopt the methods of metahistory dictate that the author's own political and cultural socialization will heavily influence the interpretation of the evidence. In view of the fact that the subject of this thesis is primarily a question of philosophic reasoning rather than verifiable data, this is probably an unavoidable weakness of the analysis which follows.

is possible. These are the pre-conditions for attempting to elicit from history a system of metaphysical precepts concerning the national interest in the face of skepticism from those wiser and more experienced than this author. Additionally, no other methodology seems capable of providing even tentative conclusions regarding a concept as large and complex as the national interest.

Finally, it should be clear that the usual caveats of social science research apply, those which qualify conclusions even in the areas where a large body of theoretical knowledge is generally accepted. First, to quote Friedman again, "the investigator is himself part of the subject matter being investigated, and personal biases may distort the findings, however, much one strives for objectivity" [17]. Second, history does not provide the opportunity for controlled or replicable experiments; each event is played only once. As a result,

"evidence is far more difficult to interpret (than in the physical sciences). It is frequently complex and always indirect and incomplete. Its collection is often arduous, and its interpretation generally requires subtle analysis and involved chains of reasoning, which seldom carry real conviction ... It renders the weeding-out of unsuccessful hypotheses slow and difficult." [18]

The net result of the methodological difficulties described in this chapter is that this study is far from a scientific endeavor. It is highly unlikely that another researcher could exactly duplicate the path followed by the author and arrive at the same conclusions. To a large degree,

methods of logical analysis.⁴ What this study attempts to do is best described by the term 'metahistory' coined by Sir Isaiah Berlin. Metahistory is the attempt to discover in history "patterns, regularities, and similarities on whose recurrence is built a philosophical explanation of human existence" [14]. In this case, the goal is an explanation, not of all human existence, but just the concept of the national interest, and its role and utility for strategic planning.

Alan Bullock points out that many professional historians eye this speculative craft with distrust and dislike [15]. Although its practitioners have included such intellectual giants as Hegel, Marx, Spengler, and Toynbee (and in our own age, Henry Kissinger) critics of metahistory have objected that those who seek from the study of history a substitute for philosophy or religion are asking more from an academic discipline than it can give. While this criticism has some validity, in that metahistorians have produced various and contradictory interpretations, the essence of the appeal of this speculative activity was succinctly stated by the Belgian mediavalist Pirenne: "Without hypothesis or synthesis, history remains a pastime for antiquarians" [16].

The objective of this research, the discovery of a usable synthesis of conflicting interpretations of the concept of the national interest, requires both intellectual audacity (if not conceit) and a leap of faith that such a synthesis

Friedman's analysis of the indispensable requirement for theory includes the following warning:

"If there is one hypothesis that is consistent with the available evidence, there are always an infinite number that are ... The choice among the alternative hypotheses equally consistent with the available evidence must be to some extent arbitrary ..." [13]

The literature which examines the concept of the national interest supports Friedman's observation that more than one hypothesis may be consistent with the evidence. The fact that a wide range of concepts can be shown to have motivated individual policy-makers and foreign policy decisions demonstrates the validity of this assumption.

Additionally, the incorporation of statistical techniques into the research methods of social science has popularized the notion that no hypothesis is ever accepted or rejected without reservation; rather its validity is associated with some degree of confidence or some confidence interval. This attached qualifier on every hypothesis remains forever tentative and flexible, pending the accumulation of additional data. The recognition that all explanations are probabilities, not certainties, magnifies the importance of the conclusions reached by Friedman regarding the implications of the scarcity of positive theoretical knowledge.

B. METAHISTORY AS METHODOLOGY

Consideration of these methodological problems yielded the inescapable conclusion that this thesis was going to be frankly exploratory, and based largely upon traditional

plagues all research in the social sciences (i.e., any field which is dominated by human behavior) which might be termed the indeterminacy of causation.

Friedman was among the first to explore the implications of the now commonly accepted precept that hypotheses can never be definitely proven, that the researcher can only look for hypotheses which cannot be disproven. He noted that a perfectly realistic theory must encompass all the details relevant to the phenomenon under investigation. In the case of the national interest, even the clearly relevant data exceeds the practical grasp of any researcher. Merely assembling the data for investigation clearly fits Santayana's definitional elements of an education and a career.

Accordingly, simplifying assumptions must be made at the outset. The basis of scholarly analysis is the identification of the most useful and illuminating assumptions, those which can provide the most accurate guides to an otherwise incomprehensibly complex reality. As Friedman points out,

"A fundamental hypothesis of science is that appearances are deceptive and that there is a way of looking at or interpreting or organizing the evidence that will reveal superficially disconnected and diverse phenomena to be manifestations of a more fundamental and relatively simple structure ... A theory is the way we perceive 'facts' and we cannot perceive 'facts' without a theory." [12]

The lack of an adequate theory which explains the concept of the national interest implies that the researcher's first obstacle will arise in connection with the perception of 'facts.'

The difficulties encountered in applying these accepted research methods to the concept of the national interest led to reflection upon why this topic should be such a difficult one to explore with a simple research strategy. What emerged from this consideration was the realization that every major treatment of the national interest has been inferential, subjective, and impressionistic, all qualities which are not easily adapted to methods designed to organize quantifiable data. Moreover, the absence of a general theory which satisfactorily explains the nature and the role of the national interest in the context of strategic planning poses several methodological problems beyond this inability to subject data to rigorous measurement.

A. THE SCARCITY OF POSITIVE THEORETICAL KNOWLEDGE

Economist Milton Friedman has outlined some of the methodological problems which result from the lack of positive theoretical knowledge. First, it means that we lack what Friedman calls "a filing system for organizing empirical material and facilitating our understanding of it" [11]. In the context of the national interest, this problem is manifested in a high degree of uncertainty regarding causes and effects - is a particular foreign policy inspired by a given conception of the national interest, or is that interest only defined after the fact to give the policy greater legitimacy? This one example reflects the more general problem that

preliminary step undertaken to assess the viability of this research strategy, four major theorists (Beard, Osgood, Lippman, and White) were considered as unique cases for structured comparison. In order to utilize these cases as building blocks toward a general theory of the national interest, three general questions were posed for each case.

These were:

- did the writer consider the concept of the national interest to be a substantive entity which contributed (or should contribute) to the formulation of American foreign policy?
- what were the component parts of the national interest, and how were they identified?
- what was the postulated relationship between the national interest and the national character?

While this case study approach provided a useful organizing scheme for research, it did not, in and of itself, yield any basis for a general concept of the national interest which was compatible with all of the cases examined. Each writer developed his own theoretical framework of analysis, and although there was some overlap, each case presented significant unique features. These unique perceptions of individual theorists provided far greater insight into the concept of the national interest than did any amalgamation of common factors. Attempting to simplify each of the theories presented to make them fit into a single conceptual framework would deprive them of the very richness which makes them worthy of study.

and political history. The literature of American studies provides a rich variety of speculative studies by men who were astute observers of their contemporary milieu. From Alexis de Toqueville to T. H. White, the substance of the American character and the motivations for the nation's foreign policy have provoked some of the brightest minds of each generation to attempt to explain America to itself and to the world. Following de Toqueville, analyses by William James, John Dewey, Herbert Croley, Walter Lippman, Charles Beard, Henry Steele Commager, Hans Morgenthau, and Robert Osgood have explored the concept of the national (or public) interest.

In the current generation of writers on this subject, philosophers and historians have been largely superceded by journalists as the most prolific observers of the American experiment. Contemporaries who have attempted to identify the beliefs and interests of the American people include, along with T. H. White, such respected reporters as David Broder, Godfrey Hodgson, David Halberstam, and Theodore Draper. From these individuals whose insights derive from the reporting and analysis of current news, one can discern how the national interest has been conceptualized by both political elites and the public at large.

Analysis of these works appeared to lend itself to a modified version of the focused comparison case study methodology pioneered by historian Alexander George.³ As a

"Let every nation know, whether it wishes us well or ill, that we shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe, to assure the survival and success of liberty." [9] (John F. Kennedy, 1961)

"The United States is not looking for opportunities to demonstrate its manhood." [10] (Henry Kissinger, 1975)

Clearly, each of these statements reflects some conception of the national interest held by the speaker; it is equally clear that there is a substantial difference of opinion represented in this small sub-sample. Content analysis failed to provide any basis to go beyond the obvious generalization that such differences of opinion have existed. One could, if so desired, arrange American history into a series of chronological periods in which one or another concept of the national interest seemed to dominate foreign policy pronouncements. Even this relatively simple task encounters obstacles during certain periods (including the present one) when no clear consensus on the national purpose is apparent. Moreover, this research method does not move the researcher any closer to a theory of the national interest which can facilitate contemporary strategic planning. In short, content analysis was an adequate first stage in the research design, but was insufficient to support any conclusions beyond descriptive historical analysis.

The second phase of research consisted of a systematic and comprehensive survey of works that can be generally categorized under the classification of contemporary social

II. A QUEST FOR A METHODOLOGICAL SYNTHESIS

George Santayana, who devoted a lifetime to probing into the metaphysics of spirit that make America a unique nation, wrote, "To be an American is of itself almost a moral condition, an education, and a career" [6]. At least the last two elements of Santayana's observation could be applied equally well to the study of the national interest, as that concept has developed over the two centuries of American historical experience as an independent nation. The selection of a research method suitable for the exploration of this vast subject proved to be as much of a challenge as did the subsequent analysis.

The author's initial approach attempted to utilize the methodology of substantive content analysis,² using key foreign policy statements of government leaders as the sample for analysis. Such statements which reveal some conception of national purpose are plentiful; consider, for example, the following illustrations:

"In short, the flames kindled on the 4th of July 1776, have spread over too much of the globe to be extinguished by the feeble engines of despotism; on the contrary, they will consume these engines and all who work them." [7]
(Thomas Jefferson, 1821)

"The United States goes not abroad in search of monsters to destroy. She is the well-wisher in the freedom and independence of all. She is the champion only of her own." [8] (John Quincy Adams, 1821)

are examined, as a necessary prelude to any attempt to resolve the questions raised in the two preceding chapters. Finally, Chapter VI outlines the requirements for strategic planning which the concept of the national interest must meet, and suggests a conceptual approach which satisfies those requirements.

framed. To a large extent, the framing of the question pre-determines the content of the answer. The purpose of this chapter is to provide a review of how major contemporary theories of the national interest frame the question.

Before turning to particular conceptions of the national interest, however, the first task of this chapter is to clear away a problem of semantics which plagues many treatments of this subject. This problem concerns the usage of the terms "public interest" and "national interest," which are sometimes used interchangeably and sometimes are not. There does not appear to be any general agreement among political scientists as to whether these two terms are synonymous, or whether each has a specific application. In order to avoid confusion in the discussion which follows, this issue requires resolution at the outset.

In the broadest sense, the two terms convey the same idea. What is in the interest of the nation must, perforce, be in the interest of the public which constitutes the nation's population. Writers who employ the terms synonymously seldom bother to explain this obvious tautology. Either term, or both, may be used to connote the concept of the national identity and ultimate aims which motivate public policy. The nature of the issue toward which the policy is directed is not relevant to the choice of phrases.

However, many political scientists, especially during the last quarter-century, have adopted a convention of usage

which separates the two terms on the basis of issues. By this convention, the public interest is related only to issues of domestic policy, while the national interest is used only in the context of international relations and foreign policy.⁵

As long as all parties to the dialogue are aware of the distinction made by this semantic convention, it can add clarity to the discussion. However, because the convention is not universally accepted, particularly when the writings of political theorists of past centuries are brought into the debate, it can introduce confusion. Confusion results in either one of two possible situations. The first is when the writer does not distinguish between the terms, but the reader is accustomed to thinking in terms of the modern convention. The second arises when the writer does use each phrase in its specialized context, but the reader is unaware of the distinction.

At the level of metaphysics, which is the concern of this chapter concerning philosophic conceptualizations of the national interest, there is nothing to be gained by making a distinction between the public and the national interest. Either term adequately conveys the broad concept which provides the foundation of legitimacy for public policy in a democracy.

However, in order to be as explicit as possible in the absence of generally accepted definitions for either of these

terms, the following rules of usage will be observed throughout this thesis: the public interest will be used in the largest sense, whether the orientation is foreign policy or domestic issues. The phrase 'national interest' will be employed in the restricted context of international politics and foreign policy. The public interest as it relates to matters of purely domestic concern will be termed the domestic interest. Thus, the national interest, which is the primary focus of this thesis as it is the primary concern of strategic planners, represents one element, or a sub-set, of the public interest. In this chapter which examines the conceptual problem of the national interest, it is actually the larger public interest concept which is at the center of the debate.

With these semantic groundrules established, the discussion can now proceed to an examination of competing concepts of the public interest. Four major philosophic approaches to framing the question of how the national interest should be defined will be reviewed; these are the normative, aggregationist, procedural, and rejectionist schools of thought.

A. THE NORMATIVE CONCEPT

This conceptualization of the public interest is the first of two substantive philosophic approaches that will be examined. Prior to reviewing normative theory, a brief introduction of the substantive approach is necessary.

This approach postulates that the public interest exists as a substantive entity which can be known, and once known, can serve as the guide for public policy. Throughout history, from Plato's philosopher king to Karl Marx's class struggle, many political theorists have attempted to discover, or to persuade their fellow men that they have discovered, the principle which reveals the substantive essence of the public interest. This approach led to a search for the "natural laws" which govern the relations of men and society. This philosophic conception dominated the dialogue on the public interest until near the end of the last century.

Two contemporary theories of the public interest subscribe to this substantive approach. Although they share the common premise that the public interest is a discernable quantity, they disagree on the method of determining that quantity. Within each of these two broad schools of thought, there is a wide variety of specific theories which attempt to define, or to provide a mechanism for defining, the public interest. These two fundamental conceptions of the public interest are the normative approach, which is described below, and the aggregationist concept, which is taken up in the following section.

In its basic configuration, a normative conception of the public interest is founded upon some unitary value or internally consistent scheme of values. Only those interests which are justified in accordance with the idealized value

system constitute legitimate public or national interests. This philosophic approach defines the public interest as a moral precept, something which, for its own sake, ought to be the object of all public policy. The public philosophy of the Soviet Union, which defines all public interactions in terms of class struggle, is an excellent contemporary example of a normative concept of the public interest.

The appeal of the normative approach lies in its certainty and its simplicity. Guided by fundamental and inherently valid moral principles or natural laws, those responsible for the formulation of public policy are provided an infallible reference. The corresponding danger of this conception is that down this path lie dictatorship and totalitarianism. As exemplified by the six decades of communist rule in the Soviet Union, those in power who are the guardians of the public interest are, in their own view, justified in ruthlessly suppressing any number of people who disagree with the accepted normative definition of that interest.

The danger of normative theory serving as the basis for dictatorial abuse of power is actually the less important of two reasons that normative conceptions of the public interest have largely been dismissed by Western political thinkers. The second and more important reason derives from the epistemological revolution that began with the Enlightenment; this intellectual renaissance swept away absolutes in favor of philosophic and cultural relativism. Progress in the physical

sciences, reflected in the discoveries and theories of Plank, Heisenberg, and Einstein, completed the transcendence of relativism as the dominant mode of thought in the modern climate of opinion.⁶ In this climate, any absolute frame of reference is viewed with skepticism; the criteria for normative evaluation have been discredited.

A more complex normative conception of the public interest which attempts to avoid the perils of absolutism is expressed by such terms as the "common good" or the "general welfare." This conceptualization identifies the public interest with some existential harmony of interests within the community which possesses sufficient objectivity to yield concrete public policies which ought to be pursued. Rousseau's postulation of a general will that comes into existence when men join together to form a body politic which "refers to their common conservation and general welfare" [26] expresses the fundamental tenet of this conception of the public interest. The key assumption to this approach is that the general will is both greater and wiser than the sum of the individual wills of all the members of the community. The interpretation of the general will represents the public interest, conceived and expressed in normative terms.

Many political theorists have attempted to clarify the concept of the common good in order that it may become a usable guide in the formulation of public policy. Walter Lippman wrote, "the public interest may be presumed to be

what men would choose if they saw clearly, thought rationally, acted disinterestedly and benevolently" [27]. Bertrand de Jouvenel, in his assessment of the common good, could only conclude that it was neither self-evident nor entirely subjective. In his analysis, the common good was finally perceived as somehow "residing in the strength of the social tie" [28].

The difficulty of utilizing the concept of the common good as the operational definition of the public interest is readily apparent when it is confronted by a reality in which conflict among individual interests abounds. Experience has amply demonstrated that men neither see clearly, think rationally, nor act with disinterest and benevolence with any degree of consistence. This approach leads to the same unacceptable consequence as does upholding some unitary idealized value system - a dictatorship, in which some ultimate authority, such as Rousseau's "Legislator," discerns the true common good and hands down laws which the citizenry is forced to obey. This philosophic approach is compatible with government for the people (provided that the despot is a benevolent one) but not government by the people.

An additional problem with the concept of the common good, or natural harmony of interests, concept is the regularity with which it has been abused, both in domestic and international political contexts. Proponents of the natural harmony of interests have been guilty, in Edward H.

Carr's words, of "clothing (their) own interests in the guise of a universal interest for the purpose of imposing it on the rest of the world" [29]. Whenever the common good is cited as the justification for a political action, thoughtful skeptics quickly look to see what special interest is being advanced or whose ox is being gored.

Before leaving the normative concept of the public interest, an evaluation of the utility of this approach is merited. Only to the degree to which a philosophic concept can be externalized and applied by policy-makers and planners does it have value to those responsible for safe-guarding the interests of the nation.

Certainly in abstract terms, the public interest can be expressed as a normative concept; every citizen will agree that national self-preservation is in the public interest. However, as soon as one attempts to delineate the characteristics of the national "self" which we wish to preserve, general agreement becomes unattainable. National self-preservation can include a wide range of goals, from preserving the lives of the population to maintaining the ability to influence world events.

Unfortunately, decisions affecting public policy, either foreign or domestic, require a pragmatic "nuts and bolts" approach far more frequently than they do a simple normative statement about self-preservation. The public interest is expressed through policies which are formulated by choosing

from among a variety of specific details. At this level, even when general agreement exists at the abstract level, consensus on means to reach broadly defined goals cannot be attained. We are apparently left with two choices - either abandoning the normative concept entirely, or accepting the necessity for an authoritative governing body which will define the public interest by virtue of superior wisdom.

Since the second choice is clearly unacceptable in a democracy, should we then dispense with all normative theories of the public interest? Such a decision would negate the possibility of basing any public policy upon the idealistic values which most Americans believe give this nation its quality of "exceptionalism." Some of these values, such as the dignity of the individual, are essential to the belief in democracy as a viable form of government. Complete rejection of the normative concept would result in an ad hoc approach to making public policy which looks only to the present moment for justification, and pretends that the future will not judge our actions by normative standards. To a large degree, this is an accurate description of the manner in which the United States has fashioned its foreign policy during the past two decades, with unfortunate, and sometimes tragic, results.

Here it is appropriate to interject an idea that will be developed more fully in the concluding chapter of the thesis. That is that the task of strategic planners is significantly

different from that of officials in a policy-making role, who must respond to current daily problems. The planner must consider the national interest in a much more abstract context than those who deal in specific problematic situations. Thus, the abstract normative concept of the public interest may have greater utility for the planner than it does for the policy-maker.

Perhaps the normative concept is applicable only to issues that are too vague and too broad to be of use to the policy-maker who is responsible for some specific issue of public policy. On the other hand, this conception of the public interest, if it can win a consensus, is capable of inspiring the highest degree of democratic compliance. The difficulties inherent in attaining agreement upon a normative concept should not cause us to discard this approach entirely. Clearly, any "all purpose" normative conception which can guide policy under all circumstances is not viable. For the policy-maker, the problem is to determine under what conditions such a concept is appropriate; then when these conditions are met, public policy can be formulated and explained to the public on the basis of accepted normative values.

For the strategic planner, the normative conception of the public interest must be understood in a larger context. At the minimum, it serves as an ever-present boundary which defines what strategic options will be acceptable to the American people and which will not. Certain democratic

values may not be ignored by planners, regardless of what pragmatic interests may be gained by doing so. For long-range planning, a normative concept of the national interest is also a necessary ingredient in the formulation of goals; this function of normative theory will also be discussed in greater detail in the concluding chapter.

B. THE AGGREGATIONIST CONCEPT

As a result of the problems encountered in attempting to define the public interest in normative terms, some theorists have rejected this concept, yet still adhere to a substantive approach. They agree with the premise that the public interest is a substantive entity which ought to guide public policy; where they depart from normative thinkers is in the method for determining the content of the public interest. In this second substantive approach, the key to defining the public interest is in the aggregation of individual interests.

The aggregationist concept of the public interest developed out of the attempt by several important political philosophers in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, particularly in England, to identify a substitute for the superhuman or Divine order which had provided the foundation for earlier normative conceptions. The departure from the search for Divine-willed natural laws, and the turn toward purely human explanations of governmental authority, was the essence of English philosophic development during the Age

of Enlightenment, which would subsequently exert great influence upon the genesis of American political theory. Political thinkers such as Thomas Hobbes, Joseph Priestly, and John Locke established the foundation upon which Jeremy Bentham would later build in developing an entirely new concept of the public interest - Utilitarianism.

Benthamism, or Utilitarianism, offers a simple rule for defining the public interest of a society filled with individual conflicts of interest. The primary principle is the "greatest happiness of the greatest number" [30]. In a statement which would greatly influence the thinking of Bentham, Joseph Priestly noted in his Essay on the First Principle of Government, "The good and happiness of the members, that is the majority of the members, of any State, is the great standard by which everything relating to that State must finally be determined" [31].

Bentham's idea of aggregating individual interests on the basis of a simple pain-pleasure calculus to define the public interest became doctrine for all subsequent aggregationist concepts of the public interest. John Stuart Mill called Bentham one of the "two great seminal minds of England in (their) age" [32]. In the same essay, he referred to Bentham as "the greatest critical thinker of his age and country" [33]. Thomas Jefferson's assumption of happiness as the object of political organization was almost certainly derived from his familiarity with Bentham's principle of the greatest happiness for the greatest number [34].

Contemporary theories which approach the public interest from the aggregationist concept define it as the maximization of particular interests. Determining the public interest is essentially a problem of measurement; once particular interests are measured, the public interest is that which will satisfy the greatest number. Public policy, according to this conception, should be shaped to this end.

Some aggregationist concepts, reflecting greater sophistication, go beyond the idea of measuring a simple numerical majority of individuals. Recognizing that all individuals do not always exert an equal influence upon public policy, these theories assess the public interest in terms of a preponderance of particular interests. Preponderance can refer to a simple numerical majority, but it can also derive from political opinion, power, or influence. The public interest is that which satisfies the preponderant majority of individuals. This theory of the public interest seems particularly well suited to the Madisonian model of democratic consensus, which is one of the important models of American political theory.

Either the simple aggregationist concept or the more sophisticated preponderance variant yields a substantive public interest which, according to the proponents of this approach, ought to guide public policy. Like the normative approach, this concept establishes a public interest which precedes policy. However, also like the normative concept,

this philosophic approach suffers from serious deficiencies when policy-makers attempt to apply it to policy formulation.

The most evident flaw in the aggregationist concept is the problem of measurement. From a population of 240 million people, with thousands of competing particular interests, simple aggregation becomes infeasible. Perhaps at the level of the New England town meeting, this approach offers a viable method for determining the public interest; when that interest must represent the entire nation, as is the case with foreign policy, this concept lacks practical utility.

Another difficulty arises in accepting the preponderance concept of the public interest. If those particular interests which have achieved a preponderance of political power solely define the public interest, then the ability to distinguish between the genuine public interest and those particular interests is lost. This results in the problem of a tyranny of the majority which de Toqueville described in Democracy in America a century and a half ago. In his analysis of this problem, he argued effectively that a minority coerced remains a minority coerced despite high-sounding statements about men being compelled to be free [35]. Preponderance theory ignores the tenet of American democratic theory that certain basic rights of minorities must be included in the public interest. John C. Calhoun, as the principal spokesman for the minority attempting to preserve the socio-economic system of the ante-bellum South, also condemned the power of a

rejection, are represented. No rationale similar to the survival of the fittest exists which would prove that the more recent developments are in any way superior to earlier conceptions.

The idea of the public interest as an evolutionary process poses an intriguing subject for speculation and a possible hypothesis for further study. The hypothesis is this: that a causal relationship exists between the way in which the public interest has been conceptualized and man's expanding knowledge of human behavior and cultural diversity. The sciences of psychology and anthropology have greatly increased our awareness of the complexity of human needs and the different ways in which various cultures have addressed those needs. Perhaps the increasing indeterminacy of the concept of the public interest is no more than a reflection of that greater awareness of the complexity of the problem.

This chapter has provided an overview of how contemporary theories view the essential nature of the public interest. The inability to select any one of these competing concepts as the correct philosophic framework for defining the content of the national interest is the first of two major problems which created the confusion which surrounds the concept. The following chapter will discuss the second area of dispute which resulted in this unfortunate state of affairs.

normative conception than is the policy-maker. However, he needs to be aware of the other conceptions described in this chapter in order that they may be utilized when appropriate.

Before concluding this survey of contemporary concepts of the public interest, one additional observation is worthy of comment. This concerns an evolutionary pattern which seems to be present in the body of philosophic literature which addresses the public interest. The evolution of this concept appears to follow the Weberian model of history, an evolution from a sacred to a secular orientation, from a framework of absolutes to a framework of relativity.

Early treatments of the public interest all revolved around normative ideals and natural laws. Divine will played the largest role in conceptions of what constituted the public interest. Later, as humanism superseded ecclesiasticism, this approach gave way to the aggregationist concept of Utilitarianism. As absolutes continued to lose credibility under the onslaught of modern science, the procedural concept appeared and became dominant. In what might well be called the Age of Skepticism, theorists began to reject the concept of the public interest completely, and classify it as a myth which is irrelevant to modern society.

Unlike biological evolution, the process of evolution in ideas does not destroy old life forms as new ones become dominant. In the contemporary dialogue on the public interest, all points of view, from normative absolutes to complete

This analysis by Schubert points up the great advantage of viewing the public interest as a multiple concept; it permits the entire spectrum of philosophic constructs to be utilized. Normative values, where appropriate, can provide the basis for policy decisions. If normative values are unclear, or lead to fragmentation, decisions can be made on the basis of the aggregationist concept of the public interest. If no substantive concept is attainable, a reliance upon accepted democratic procedures can still provide some degree of legitimacy to policy decisions.

For the official concerned with the formulation of policy, this multiple concept approach offers the most useful philosophic framework. It does not solve the problem of defining the public interest, because it leaves the decision-maker the task of determining what concept of the public interest is appropriate for the given problematic situation. What it does do is give the policy-maker the flexibility to utilize the concept that is most appropriate to the circumstances and retain a basis for legitimacy.

The problem of the public interest which the strategic planner must resolve is somewhat different. Unlike the policy-maker, the planner has no concrete problematic situation within which the public interest must be perceived. His environment is dominated by uncertainty, with little other than abstract principles to serve as a guide. For that reason, the planner is more apt to be forced to rely on some form of

This more complex conceptualization of the public interest more accurately reflects the real world in which policy is made and strategic planning must be conducted. It is a world of multiple effects; seldom, if ever, does a single-factor analysis capture the essence of any political situation or decision. Additionally, the multiple concept approach appeals to common sense. A philosophic theory which recognizes that a fundamental difference exists between the public interest in defending the nation against attack and the public interest in preserving the snail-darter, but that nonetheless, both of these problems do engage some level of public concern, gains substantial credibility.

An excellent example of the multiple concept approach is provided by Schubert's analysis of the public interest as a function of the societal role being played [45]. In this analysis, which does him greater credit than his previously cited total rejection of the concept, the role being filled determines how the public interest will be operationalized and defined. For example, while a social planner may conceptualize the public interest in terms of some normative 'common good' of the community, officials in mediation roles have reference only to procedures sanctioned by accepted legal or political process. In both cases, the public interest provides the basis for decision, but it is two different concepts of the public interest which are applied.

to reject the concept of the public interest. The existence of some public interest, whether it can be defined with clarity or only vaguely, is the basic rationale for strategic planning. Without this cognitive concept as a foundation, there can be no point in expending efforts on planning the future. If the planner can operationalize the concept, his task will be made easier and more objective; if, because of the difficulty in operationalizing it, he dismisses the concept as meaningless, his efforts lack any basic justification.

E. THE PUBLIC INTEREST AS A MULTIPLE CONCEPT

Thus far, this discussion of contemporary theories of the public interest has focused upon unitary concepts, theories which are wholly committed to substantive, procedural, or rejectionist philosophies. There is additionally a philosophic approach which borrows something from all of these concepts. This synthesis draws upon the apparent truths and utility of all the other approaches.

This attempt to overcome the difficulties associated with concepts of the public interest which can be valid at all levels of analysis concludes that only a multiple concept can resolve all of the dilemmas. This approach recognizes that the public interest has unique meanings on different operational planes, but sees this as no cause to reject the concept in its entirety.

distinction must be made between functional and operational concepts and cognitive concepts, Meyer reveals the fundamental weakness of the functional treatment of the public interest:

"Indeed, the operationalist treatment of the public interest does seem to wipe away the historical struggles with which liberal thought has been confronted: the problem of universal and particular, individual and collective, Rousseau's general will standing in opposition to Bentham's sum of particular wills. The assertion of a public interest no longer stands as a possible threat to liberalism, since empirical science has offered the choice of treating the concept in its merely functional dimensions or else dismissing it with impunity." [44]

The recently increased criticism by theorists such as Marcuse and Meyer highlight the inadequacy of attempting to restrict a cognitive concept, such as the public interest, to purely functional, empirical, or operational modes of political analysis. Perhaps rejection of the public interest as a meaningful entity can be supported on the basis of the evidence that can be rationally measured and quantified. Yet it is non-quantifiable values which comprise the essence of the American Dream. That Dream is government by and for the people, with equal opportunity for all to participate. If that goal is to be realized, some concept of what is in the people's interest must be attempted. No matter how difficult it may be, we dare not throw away the concept of the public interest. If we discard this concept as a myth, then the American Dream itself is equally a myth.

Even more than the thoughtful citizen or the policy-maker, the strategic planner cannot afford to be persuaded

this goal. Political science ought to eschew value judgments and cut away all concepts stricken with the cancer of ambiguity and imprecision generated by value judgments. If politicians, journalists, or citizens wish to concern themselves with the public interest, political scientists will not object. But the discipline itself must remain pure and exclude from its conceptual apparatus such pre-scientific curiosities." [43] (Emphasis in the original.)

Flathman's observation exposes the shallowness of the rejection of the public interest. While this self-styled "tough-minded" approach can present some formidable obstacles to any concept of the public interest, it overlooks a fundamental reality of the American political system. "Politicians, journalists, and citizens" do concern themselves with the public interest; this concern has substantially influenced the evolution of both American society itself, and its institutions, particularly the institutions of government. To the present day, the public interest is cited as the justification for innumerable laws and government activities. If we abandon this concept, as a myth exposed by modern scientific wisdom, what shall be put in its place as the yardstick by which the legitimacy of policy is measured? This is the fatal flaw of the rejectionist critique of the concept of the public interest - it creates a vacuum in the American theory of government and offers nothing with which to fill that vacuum.

In one of the most recent attempts to restore meaning to the concept of the public interest, William Meyer advances another argument for rejecting the abandonment of the public interest. Citing Herbert Marcuse's suggestion that a critical

"There are those who would say, using the words of philosophers to prove it, that it is the characteristic illusion of the tender-minded that they believe in philosophy. Those who can do; those who cannot teach and theorize. And being theorists by profession, they exaggerate the efficacy of ideas, which are mere airy nothings without mass or energy, the mere shadows of the existential world of substance and of force, of habits and desires, of machines and armies." [42]

This philosophic approach described by Lippman is representative of a certain kind of intellect. It belongs to the doers, the men of action who have little patience for abstract ideas. If the public interest cannot be defined in some clear, usable fashion, then this intellect dismisses it.

This rejection of the concept of the public interest has a certain appeal to those who pride themselves on being realists and on being practical. It avoids the central problem which confronts all positive theories of the public interest as a meaningful entity - the necessity to define it in terms broad enough to gain a consensus, yet specific enough to point toward concrete policies. Proponents of this modern approach have concluded that this problem is insolvable, and have relegated the concept of the public interest to the category of interesting but useless abstractions.

One political scientist who is critical of the rejection of the public interest is Richard Flathman. He argues,

"the 'abandon public interest' school of thought is not concerned with politics or justification at all, but with a more tender growth known as political science. Desiring to turn political science into a hard science on their model of the natural sciences, these writers wish to cut away all concepts, questions, and concerns which, in their view, hold political science back from

"But though a common will or public opinion of some sort may still be said to emerge from the infinitely complex jumble of individual and group-wise situations, volitions, influences, actions and reactions of the 'democratic process,' the result lacks not only rational unity but also rational sanction." [40]

A similar conclusion is reached by Schubert; because he has examined the literature of the public interest in such exhaustive detail, his conclusions are worth quoting at length as the best representative of the modern school of thought which rejects the public interest:

"American writers in the field of political science have evolved neither a unified nor a consistent theory to describe how the public interest is defined in governmental decision-making; they have not constructed theoretical models with the degree of precision and specificity necessary if such models are to be used as descriptions of, or as a guide to, the actual behavior of real people. A theory of the public interest in governmental decision-making ought to describe a relationship between concepts of the public interest and official behavior in such terms that it might be possible to attempt to validate empirically hypotheses concerning the relationship. If extant theory does not lend itself to such uses, it is difficult to comprehend the justification for teaching students of political science that subservience to the public interest is a relevant norm of official responsibility.

Moreover, our investigation has failed to reveal a statement of public-interest theory that offers much promise either as a guide to public officials who are supposed to make decisions in the public interest, or to research scholars who might wish to investigate the extent to which governmental decisions are empirically made in the public interest." [41]

Walter Lippman described the essence of this rejection of the concept of the public interest in his essay, "The Public Philosophy." He characterized this approach (with which he vehemently disagreed) as follows:

Two related but distinct arguments are advanced by those who reject the concept of the public interest. The first is the dogmatic assertion that because the concept cannot be operationalized, it has no utility. The second argument is less dogmatic, but it reaches the same conclusion as the first. This approach focuses upon the pluralistic character of American society; the public interest may be a meaningful concept to any specific individual or group, but no basis can be established for consensus among competing individuals or groups. As a result, no accommodation of the diverse meanings of the public interest within one single concept is possible. Since no single concept that can be applied to policy formulation is available, the basic concept itself is therefore without utility.

The belief that the concept of the public interest has no real meaning for the modern world has dominated much of the recent literature of theoretical political science. Joseph Schumpeter argues unequivocally that "there is no such thing as a uniquely determined common good that all people could agree on or be made to agree on by the force of rational argument" [39]. He dissents from the proceduralists who impute a "common good" label to the democratic process or the results of that process, seeing in this concept nothing more than a carry-over of classical democratic theory. He states,

identified, or can inspire a workable consensus, then the policy-maker may fall back upon the second-best conception of the public interest. In a democratic society, that second-best concept is the reliance upon accepted procedures - democratic consensus expressed through majority rule.

However, the focus of this thesis is upon the concept of the public interest in the context of strategic planning. The function of the public interest in this context is to provide a basis for defining the goals upon which strategies for the future must be founded. The procedural concept, while it may be of some value to the policy-maker, has no utility for the strategic planner, because it does not consider or address this function of the public interest.

D. REJECTION OF THE PUBLIC INTEREST AS A MEANINGFUL CONCEPT

The final contemporary approach to the problem of defining the public interest is a relatively recent development. This approach argues that the traditional concept of the public interest is a myth, and further, a myth that no longer has utility. Confronted with the complexity of making national policy for the modern age, theorists who reject the public interest as a useful concept postulate that the term is so vague as to be undefinable. Since it cannot be defined with any degree of precision (i.e., operationalized) it is of no use in either the actual realm of policy-making, or in the world of scholarly analysis of governmental processes.

Although the procedural concept of the public interest successfully avoids the pitfalls of substantive concepts, it provides little practical help to the policy-maker, and even less to the strategic planner. Proponents of this approach can assert for the purpose of academic discussion that the public interest is not related to concrete policies, but finding that relationship is the very essence of the policy-maker's job. A public interest that can only be determined after policy is formulated cannot contribute to solving the problem of making policy reflect the public interest. Even less can it serve as the basis for the formulation of the long-range national goals required by the strategic planner.

Again recognizing that actual public policy decisions require a large number of choices among details, it is impractical to refer each one of these choices to some kind of democratic referendum. Among the range of choices to be made, there are many different decisions which can be taken, all in accordance with proper procedures. Clearly, some decisions will be in the best interests of the nation, while others will not. The procedural approach does not solve the problem of articulating the public interest; it avoids it.

This criticism of the procedural concept is not intended to imply that there is no merit whatsoever in this approach to defining the public interest. The value of this philosophic approach lies in its function as the court of last appeal. When no substantive basis for the public interest can be

the public interest. (Recall Schubert's designation of this approach as "realist theory.") The emphasis upon procedure rather than substance denies the premise of an existential public interest which can serve as a guide to policy; however, this approach retains the belief in the importance of the concept as the source of legitimacy for policy.

Rather than preceding policy, as it does in substantive concepts, the procedural approach places the public interest after policy [37]. The test of policy legitimacy is not some measure of a normative "right" or "wrong," nor is it the satisfaction of the majority of particular interests; the criterion is whether the policy is derived from proper and accepted democratic procedures. If these procedures are observed, then the policy is, ipso facto, in the public interest, and will be perceived as legitimate.

A comprehensive exposition of the procedural concept of the public interest is provided by Howard R. Smith in Democracy and the Public Interest. He concluded in this analysis, "the public interest is most properly identified with, not concrete policies as such, but rather a particular kind of process by means of which it is decided what should be done" [38]. Policy that is genuinely in the public interest is derived, according to Smith, through the operation of democratic consensus and majority rule within the framework of the due process of law.

preponderant majority to trample the rights of a minority. His concept of concurrent majorities was an attempt to escape from this dilemma of the aggregationist concept of the public interest [36].

While the aggregationist approach to the problem of the public interest is appealing as a theoretical concept, and is compatible with American principles of consensus among competing factions, its utility for the practical business of government is limited. Particularly, in the context of strategic planning, this concept is difficult, if not impossible, to apply. The planner is concerned with future contingencies in which particular interests may not presently exist, or if they exist, have not been articulated; for long-range planning, there is nothing to measure and aggregate. Of the two substantive concepts of the public interest, normative theories, in spite of their difficulties, are more likely to prove useful. The next philosophic approach described is fundamentally different; it avoids the deficiencies of both the normative and the aggregationist concepts by rejecting the possibility of any substantive public interest.

C. THE PROCEDURAL CONCEPT

Seeking to define the public interest in such a way as to avoid the problems which confront either of the substantive approaches, many contemporary theories focus on process and procedures as the only realistic and attainable meaning of

IV. IDEALISTS AND REALISTS: A DIALOGUE OF THE DEAF

The second issue of controversy which has precluded consensus on the national interest has been the subject of a debate that is as ancient as philosophy, perhaps as old as human history itself. The two points of view represented in this debate have been variously labelled idealism and realism, utopianism and realpolitik, visionary politics and power politics, and morality and self-interest. Whatever labels are applied, these two viewpoints comprise fundamentally opposing belief systems about the basic nature of man, and consequently, the nature of the relations between men and between their political organizations, nation-states.

Four hundred years before the birth of Christ, Thucydides described how this eternal conflict was given expression in ancient Greece during the Peloponnesian War. Pericles proclaimed in his famous funeral oration that Athens alone obeyed the dictates of the highest morality because "When we do kindnesses to others, we do not do them out of any calculation of profit or loss: we do them without afterthought, relying on our free liberality" [46]. Despite this declaration of adherence to morality, power politics made its presence felt in the negotiations between Athens and the small Spartan colony of Melos. Facing Melos with a powerful fleet, the Athenian representatives reminded the Council of the Melians about the realities of power in terms that were painfully blunt:

"Athenians: ... if you have met here for any other reason except to look the facts in the face and on the basis of these facts to consider how you can save your city from destruction, there is no point in our going on with this discussion.

[Melian assent.]

Athenians: Then we on our side will use no fine phrases ... a great mass of words that nobody would believe ... Instead we recommend that you should try to get what is possible for you to get, taking into consideration what we both really do think; since you know as well as we do that, when these matters are discussed by practical people, the standard of justice depends on the equality of power to compel and that in fact the strong do what they have the power to do and the weak accept what they have to accept." [47]

The conflict between obedience to moral ideals and the expedience of using naked power in the service of self-interest is as much a part of the American historical experience as it was that of Athens. This tension between realism and idealism was, in fact, present at the very origin of the nation. In what remains the classic study of the beginnings of American foreign policy, Felix Gilbert described two opposing motivations that inspired 17th century settlers to make the voyage from Europe to the New World [48]. Alongside those with an idealistic urge toward a new Utopian social order based upon liberty, equality, and religious freedom, came those motivated by the more pragmatic appeal of the profits to be gained from trade between the New World and the Old. From this beginning to the present day, the conflict between those who believe that America's destiny is to act as the champion of certain moral principles and those, equally

sincere, who believe that the nation's policies must recognize and be derived from the realities of the distribution of power has been a constant thread in the fabric of American foreign policy.

This debate became particularly heated in the aftermath of World War II, and continued to dominate political analysis during the first half of the 1950's. There are a number of reasons why the experience of a great global war gave added currency to the age-old argument between realists and idealists. The maximum national effort engendered by the war was made possible only by the characterization of the Allied cause as a moral crusade against evil. As described by Godfrey Hodgson, "The sleeping energies of the American sense of mission were turned outward to the world" [49]. With victory in 1945 came a renaissance of the kind of moralistic foreign policy that had not characterized American political beliefs since the era of Woodrow Wilson. In the words of contemporary observer T. H. White,

"The imperative legacy of Virtue also descended from the war. As Eisenhower's divisions tore open the Nazi concentration camps, Americans realized for the first time how deep human depravity could go. They accepted in their policies the moral mandate not to let such evil happen again." [50]

The same public awakening was described by Hodgson in his account of American in Our Time; he wrote, "In 1945, a deep sense of the historical mission of the United States came to fruition in the public mind" [51]. Explaining how this

awakening affected America's post-war foreign policies, he continued:

"The same sense of religious duty, of a call to take sides in a Manichean conflict between the forces of light and the forces of darkness, runs through the whole history of American foreign policy since 1947" [52].

These observations by contemporary observers of the post-war resurgence of idealism as the basis of American foreign policy tell only half the story of the effects of the war on the debate between realism and idealism. At the same time, a number of political theorists, such as Hans J. Morganthau and Robert Osgood were re-emphasizing the necessity to make American foreign policy match the realities of international power politics. These realists also derived lessons from World War II to support their position.

They cited America's retreat into isolationism following the First World War as a primary contributing factor to the rise of totalitarianism in Europe, and traced this isolationist sentiment directly to the disillusionment with Woodrow Wilson's attempt to inject American ideals into world politics. In their view, morality as the basis of policy had been tried, and had proven to be a cataclysmic failure. Additionally, they expressed the concern that America's declared aims in the post-war era far exceeded her grasp, and urged that a more realistic appraisal of national interests be the foundation of policy.

The essence of this national debate was summarized by Hodgson:

"After World War II, in almost every department of intellectual life, the doctrine of 'American exceptionalism' revived. At the same time, utilitarian doctrines, stressing that morality in politics was an illusion, undercut the moralistic basis of left-wing politics." [53]

The conflict between idealism and realism was the dominant concern of political theorists until about 1955. (Or to put it in the vernacular of the day, it was the conflict between the doctrine of "American exceptionalism" and the search for value-free politics.) At about that time, the debate "was won by the realists," according to Fred Sonderman, "but the victory was transient" [54].

After almost two decades of quiescence, this issue returned to the forefront of American politics in the aftermath of Vietnam and Watergate. The 1976 Presidential campaign, and the subsequent administration of Jimmy Carter was, above all, about the effort to restore American ideals and a sense of morality to the nation's policies. T. H. White described the vision that motivated this shift away from realism, and its attendant problems:

"Underlying the vision of the world as seen by Carter was the same moral righteousness that had inspired Woodrow Wilson half a century earlier and had been repudiated after the First World War, not only by America's allies but by America's Senate. And underlying all was the fundamental flaw in the traditional 'righteous' foreign policy - the inability to distinguish between American ideals and American interests, which rarely coincide" [55].

Hans Morgenthau, considered by many to be the foremost apostle of the realistic concept of the national interest as the focal point of the nation's foreign policy, anticipated by

a quarter of a century the kind of arguments that would be raised against Carter's conception of the national interest. He wrote, "A foreign policy derived from the national interest is in fact morally superior to a foreign policy inspired by universal moral principles" [56]. While this precept has a certain pragmatic appeal, it evades the central dilemma that has been at the center of the debate between realists and idealists. That dilemma is simply stated: What is the role of American ideals and moral values in defining the national interest?

Those responsible for the formulation and conduct of America's foreign policy, as well as the nation's strategic planners, must answer that question, at least to their own satisfaction, if not that of the public. Morgenthau's realistic theory does not help solve this dilemma; moreover, it introduces an artificial dichotomy between the concept of the national interest and the moral values which are held by the majority of American citizens. In order to be useful, a theory of the national interest must reconcile, not separate, these two quantities.

To be fair to Morgenthau, and his like-minded contemporaries, it must be pointed out that he arrived at his famous prescription for the national interest as the "mainspring of American foreign policy" [57] within a particular historical context. That context was the post-war international environment, which presented American policy-makers with a myriad of

complex challenges. Morgenthau's dictum was less a theory for all time and circumstances than it was a plea to avoid a relapse into a kind of Wilsonian idealism that would ignore the real power relationships that existed at the end of the war. He was writing in response to what he (and others) perceived as an over-reliance in the pre-war era upon moral principles as determinants of policy, and a danger that the same trend would continue in the more dangerous post-war period. It is no accident that the other single most influential modern study of the national interest (Osgood's Ideals and Self-Interest in America's Foreign Relations: The Great Transformation of the Twentieth Century) was a product of the same historical context, and came to essentially the same conclusion - that American foreign policy required a large injection of realism.

Three decades have now passed since these landmark studies first appeared. Throughout this period, both government and academic circles have largely been dominated by disciples of Morgenthau and Osgood (with the exception of the Carter aberration mentioned previously). National interests and the nation's foreign policy have been formulated on the basis of what can be quantified and measured, with only sporadic attention paid to the less tangible quantities of ideals and moral values. As American society has become increasingly secularized, it has become more and more difficult to generate any serious discussion on the role of traditional American values

in defining the national interest. In most academic environments, the credibility of the idealist position and of normative theory in general has so far declined that even to attempt such a discussion is considered a sign of either hopeless naivety or ignorance. However, although the realist viewpoint has dominated in recent decades, the issue has not been satisfactorily resolved, and will continue to be a factor in the debate over the concept of the national interest.

The decision to examine the arguments of idealism and realism as they relate to the concept of the national interest was made with full awareness that most scholars consider this debate a dead issue, and with an equal appreciation of the difficulties of addressing what is essentially a question of philosophic preference. However, two pragmatic considerations account for the decision to proceed, in spite of these difficulties, with an exploration of the relationship between intangible moral values and concrete realistic interests as co-determinants of the national interest.

The first is the conviction that the issue of ideals and self-interests requires re-examination in light of the historical events and American political developments of the quarter-century since the "victory" of the realists. To a great extent, the cultural revolution which this nation sustained during the 1960's was a rejection of purely realistic policies, and a demand for recognition of certain moral principles in the formulation of national policy. The second is the belief

that this philosophic issue is most germane specifically to strategic planners; more than any other governmental activity, the attempt to look into the future and fashion strategies to cope with that future, demands an understanding and appreciation of the values and principles which give this country its unique identity. Until the planner resolves the role of idealism in determining the future direction of the nation, he is too much like the shipwrecked mariner, trying to set a course with half the rudder gone.

The following discussion of the realist and the idealist arguments can, of course, do little more than touch upon the highlights of each position. The intent of this chapter is to illustrate how each of these two philosophic belief systems leads to a different conception of the national interest, and how this dichotomy has contributed to the nation's inability to articulate a clear concept of that interest.

A. THE IDEALIST POSITION

Idealism is both a particular set of epistemological assumptions and an expression of belief in the validity of abstract moral principles as the correct foundation of national policy. Although these two uses of the term are separate and distinct, the second derives from the first to a greater extent than is frequently recognized. In this brief exposition of the idealist concept of the national interest, it will first be necessary to explain the

epistemological meaning of the term, prior to describing how that set of assumptions has been given expression in defining the national interest.

The prime assumption of Idealism is that being is spirit, which yields an other-worldly view of reality. Empiricism is rejected as a viable philosophy of knowledge, with intuition or revelation seen as the only true path to knowledge of reality. For the greater part of Western civilization, this philosophy was the dominant mode of thought about political theory. One of the earliest recorded expressions of this world view was Platonism, which held that the real world existed beyond the reach of men, and that only an imperfect reflection of that reality could be perceived through human experience. Modern Idealism traces its roots to the German philosopher Hegel, who developed a comprehensive, internally consistent system of thought based upon the ideal of the universe as spirit, and nations as the reflection of that spirit.

From Idealism's first assumption derive social, political, and economic theories which are based upon some type of specialized knowledge which is available only to an elite few. The Divine Right of Kings was one of the practical concepts which arose out of the Idealist philosophy. Throughout history, including our own century, Idealism has had a powerful appeal, because it affirms certain humanistic values, concepts of transcendence, and God, which are beyond

existential human verification. However, the same belief in abstract absolutes has served as the foundation for fascist and dictatorial state philosophies, such as German Nazism in the 1930's and 1940's.

The link between this philosophic mode of thought and a particular approach to defining the national interest is in the belief that certain moral principles are a more accurate reflection of reality than are visible, verifiable human perceptions of existential realities. Attempting to provide an operational definition for this approach to international politics, Edward H. Carr defined it as the recognition of, and adherence to "an international stock of common ideas, however limited and weakly held, to which appeal can be made, and a belief that these common ideas stand somehow in the scale of values above national interests" [58]. In the American political context, this belief has been given expression in such concepts as American exceptionalism, manifest destiny, and the missionary impulse.

American idealists have developed variously phrased justifications for this missionary impulse. Some have viewed the American experiment as the unfolding of a plan that included the nation, yet was greater than the nation, that the fundamental principles of the American Republic were principles of universal significance and application. Some have seen American history as the revelation of a Divine plan, while others have viewed it as the logical development of

natural laws. In all of these idealistic conceptions of the meaning of the American experiment, it has been emphasized that the United States either has represented, or should represent, the good life for all men everywhere, that at no time have the American people been thinking or acting for themselves alone.

In an attempt to describe the national style of American foreign relations, Knud Krakau listed a number of basic assumptions that have undergirded America's approach to foreign policy [59]. The first two of these basic assumptions have been central in the beliefs of American idealism. The first is the idea that the American experiment represented a new beginning for mankind, which spawned the concepts of the separateness and exceptionalism of American existence. This feeling of exceptionalism has supported policies of both active internationalism, by which American ideals are forcefully impressed upon less progressive societies, and isolationism, by which America simply serves as a passive example of moral conduct for less morally developed nations.

The second basic assumption underlying American idealism is the liberal outlook which derives from the Lockean political tradition. According to this view, the international system is not chaos, but a rudimentary order subject to the laws of reason. Reasonable men are able to discern this order, and act in such a manner as to foster it. From this assumption derives the concept of a natural harmony of

interests among nations, which leads to the idea that international peace is the normal state of affairs, and aggression and war an aberration. Any nation which initiates aggression is upsetting the natural order of the international system as well as violating the law of reason, and may therefore be destroyed by the defenders of that natural order with complete moral justification.

These theories attempt to explain the motivation for and the basic assumptions of American idealism, with its fundamental premise of a moral international community. The other key component of this approach to the national interest consists of the definition of the specific ideals which Americans have made central tenets of their faith. These beliefs have been powerful enough to inspire Americans to fight for their propagation, and even to place the national existence in jeopardy on their behalf. Charles Frankel has categorized these ideals under four general headings, which taken together, constitute the democratic bias of American foreign policy [60].

The first is the ideal of the consent of the governed. This is the mechanism by which the line between those who command and those who must obey is softened and made "emotionally and morally digestible" [61]. Inherent in this concept is the model of democratic consensus, in which all groups and individuals have the opportunity to voice their preferences and exert some influence upon the formulation of policies which they will be obliged to support.

Closely related to the principle of government by consent is the ideal of the open society. This concept implies that all arrangements and policies of a democratic society are open to question, and that those who criticize what exists and strive for other possibilities are entitled to the same rights and protection that is granted to those who are satisfied with the status quo. Supreme Court Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr. expressed the essence of the open society in one of his justly famous dissenting opinions:

"When men have realized that time has upset many fighting faiths, they may come to believe even more than they believe the very foundations of their own conduct that the ultimate good desired is better reached by free trade in ideas - that the best test of truth is the power of the thought to get itself accepted in the competition of the market, and that truth is the only ground upon which their wishes safely can be carried out." [62]

In this open society, loyalty is given to the existing social order precisely because it is permitted to criticize and work to change it. Finally, it assumes that criticism is the necessary prelude to corrective action which will make the society continue to become better for all.

These first two ideals lead to what is undoubtedly the most important tenet of the democratic faith - the autonomy of the individual. The essence of the American Dream is the belief that any person can hold an expectation of life which is limited only by his own tastes and talents; in other types of societies, such an expectation was accessible only to an elite privileged class. Although the Dream is not without limits, it gives its believers, more generously than any

V. THE NATIONAL CHARACTER

The very foundation of the national interest, the character of the nation, is a continuously changing creation of ideas interacting with experience. This chapter will examine several factors which have made major contributions to the nature of that character. The discussion begins with the philosophic heritage of the European Age of Enlightenment, which was transported to the New World by the early settlers. The conflicting political philosophies and the compromises reached to establish the new American government will then be reviewed. The importance of the frontier experience, particularly as embodied in the American West of the 19th century, in the development of the national character will be explored. America's original contribution to philosophic theory, American Pragmatism, will be discussed. The chapter then concludes with a look at the central philosophic problem of contemporary American political theory, the lack of a recognized public philosophy.

A. THE EUROPEAN HERITAGE

During the 17th and 18th centuries, a revolution of ideas swept Europe. What Alfred North Whitehead and Carl Becker termed the "climate of opinion" [79] underwent a fundamental and irrevocable change. The authoritative religious explanation of the world and man's place in it which had dominated

"The choice is not between moral principles and the national interest, devoid of moral dignity, but between one set of moral principles, divorced from political reality, and another set of moral principles, derived from political reality." [78].

Thus, there is a consistent recognition that American ideals have a place in the calculation of the national interest, and that to ignore them is a sure road to failure. Yet none of these theorists has advanced a theory which attempts to clarify that role. The debate has continued between realists and idealists, with neither side really hearing the other, and neither working toward a solution to the critical problem - defining the functional role of moral values in the real world of the struggle for power.

Prior to attempting a resolution of this realist-idealist dilemma in the context of strategic planning, and attempting to answer the questions posed in the previous chapter concerning the nature of the concept of the public interest itself, it is necessary to consider what has been called the 'American character.' In the most basic analysis, the public or national interest is that which maintains and enhances that national character. The following chapter will examine the development and characteristics of this national identity.

C. REQUIRED: A SYNTHESIS

Recognition of the limitations of both idealism and realism as the foundation of the national interest has led many theorists to seek a synthesis of the two. Even the foremost proponents of the realist philosophy have felt compelled to qualify their statements with a bow to morality. Thus we find in E. H. Carr:

"We return therefore to the conclusion that any sound political thought must be based on elements of both utopia and reality. Where utopianism has become a hollow and intolerable sham, which serves merely as a disguise for the interests of the privileged, the realist performs an indispensable service in unmasking it. But pure realism can offer nothing but a naked struggle for power which makes any kind of international society impossible.

Here, then is the complexity, the fascination and the tragedy of all political life ... Every political situation contains mutually incompatible elements of utopia and reality, of morality and power." [76]

Robert Osgood concludes his defense of self-interest as the basis of foreign policy with the following:

"If the United States is to have a stable and effective foreign policy, neither egoism nor altruism must interfere with the rational, objective assessment of the real long-run conditions of American self-interest; but this does not mean that Americans should forsake their traditional idealism and relapse into cynicism or moral apathy ...

... it is relevant to understand that the calculation and pursuit of national self-interest without regard for universal ideals is not only immoral but self-defeating. Any assessment of the conditions for achieving a nation's international ends which ignores this fact is unrealistic." [77]

Even the high priest of political realism, Morgenthau, compromises in the end, by stating that

failure of Wilsonian visionary policies, and the high costs of the subsequent retreat into isolationism, comprise an eloquent statement requiring no elaboration as to the efficacy of this approach to foreign policy.

Yet, in the very attempt to overcome the flaws of idealism, a purely realistic approach to politics suffers from a number of critical limitations. Carr found four missing ingredients in consistent realism that are essential elements of effective political thinking. These were "a finite goal, an emotional appeal, a right of moral judgment, and a ground for action" [75]. Realism, despite its appeals to reason, lacks the inspiration necessary to mobilize democratic compliance and enthusiastic public support for its policies. No better illustration of this weakness could be found than the recent lack of success enjoyed by the ultimate believer in realpolitik, Henry Kissinger; while his understanding of America's interests may have been faultless, his inability to give his policies an emotional appeal and a moral content doomed him to failure. Moreover, pure realism shares many characteristics with political cynicism; to many critics of the realist approach, differences are matters of degree, not substance. Cynicism is peculiarly alien to the American political mentality, with its belief in progress, and thus, realism finds a somewhat hostile reception among the American electorate.

Hamilton proceeded to answer each of the moral arguments which favored American involvement in terms of the real risks and benefits entailed. He placed the issue into the context of the concrete power situation in which the United States existed at the time, and found that the national interest of the country demanded American neutrality.

According to political realists (exemplified by Morgenthau) reasoning such as Alexander Hamilton's, which openly recognized the objective laws of politics, guided American policy only as long as the Federalists remained in power. From the administrations of Thomas Jefferson onward, American statesmen have sought to justify their actions in moral terms, yet their actions have been dominated by considerations of power and national interest. For over a century however, by felicitous coincidence, what moral law demanded was always identical with what the national interest seemed to require [74]. Thus, even though political thought and political action tended to occupy different planes, the end result of both pointed to the same policies.

It was when moral principle and apparent national interest clearly diverged, which Morgenthau places at the initiation of the American move outside this hemisphere at the end of the Spanish-American War, that the idealist conception of the national interest began to lead the nation into trouble. Rather than justifying the enduring national interest, moral principles replaced it as the guide to action. The ultimate

The contrast between the idealist conceptualization of the national interest and this more realistic appreciation of what constitutes the genuine interest of the nation was clearly illustrated by one of America's first political realists, Alexander Hamilton. The background was the European coalition against revolutionary France arranged in 1792; the following year, President George Washington had proclaimed American neutrality in this struggle, against the wishes of a large segment of public opinion which demanded that the United States go to the aid of France. Among the arguments against the proclamation of neutrality were three derived from moral principles; these were (1) faithfulness to treaty obligations, (2) gratitude to France for assistance provided to the colonies during the war for independence, and (3) a natural affinity of the republican United States with the republican institutions of France. Hamilton countered these moral arguments with a clear statement of the national interest:

"There would be no proportion between the mischiefs and perils to which the United States would expose themselves by embarking in the war, and the benefit which the nature of their stipulation aims at securing to France, or that which it would be in their power actually to render her by becoming a party ...

Self-preservation is the first duty of a nation; and though in the performance of stipulations relating to war, good faith requires that its ordinary hazards should be fairly met, because they are directly contemplated by such stipulations, yet it does not require that extraordinary and extreme hazards should be run." [73]

- (4) Political realism recognizes the moral significance of political action, and recognizes the tension between moral command and the requirements of successful political action. However, realism maintains that moral principles cannot be applied to actions of nations in an abstract universal formulation, but must be filtered through the concrete circumstances of time and place.
- (5) Moreover, realism refuses to identify the moral aspirations of a particular nation with the moral laws that govern the universe. It is exactly the concept of interest defined in terms of power that allows us to avoid the folly of moral excess, and to treat all nations, pursuing their own interest, with even-handed justice.
- (6) The difference between political realism and all other schools of political thought is both real and profound. The question which the realist always must ask about any political action is "How does this policy affect the power of the nation?" Although the realist is aware of the relevance of other standards, such as moral and legal principles, he must subordinate them to this one overriding consideration.

The realist critique of idealistic belief in universal moral principles was summarized in Carr's description of this approach to international politics: "International order and international solidarity," he wrote, "will always be slogans of those who feel strong enough to impose them on others" [71]. He continued, "What matters is that these supposedly absolute and universal principles were not principles at all, but the unconscious reflections of national policy based on a particular interpretation of national interest at a particular time" [72]. Political realism does not deny the possibility of morality in policy, but denies the validity of morality as the basis for policy. The only correct basis is a calculation of the consequences of policy for the power of the nation, or in other words, for the genuine national interest.

From Machiavelli and Hobbes, political realists take the premise that men, and thus nations, are motivated by self-interest; they view the struggle for national power as the central theorem of international politics, and are skeptical of attempts to mitigate this struggle for power through appeals to moral principles or universal ideals. One of the more concise expositions of political realism was provided by Hans Morganthau, who offered these six principles:⁷

- (1) Politics, like society in general, is governed by objective laws that have their roots in human nature. The operation of these laws is impervious to human preferences or desires, and those who challenge them are doomed to fail. Realism asserts the possibility of developing rational theory which reflects the objective laws of politics; the role of this theory is to distinguish between what is true objectively, supported by evidence and reason, and what is only subjective judgment, informed by prejudice and wishful thinking.
- (2) The concept which provides the most useful signpost in mapping the confused landscape of international politics is the idea of interest defined in terms of power. The evidence of history bears out the assumption that statesmen think in terms of this concept. A realist theory of politics, with this concept as its basis, guards against two common fallacies: concern with the motives of individual statesmen, and concern with ideological preferences.
- (3) Realism does not endow its central concept of interest defined as power with a meaning that is fixed for all time. The kind of interest determining political action depends upon the political and cultural context of a particular period of history. The contemporary conditions under which foreign policy operates can be changed, but only through the skillful manipulation of the forces that have shaped history, not by confronting those forces with abstract ideals which refuse to take the objective laws of politics into account.

the validity of innate principles was one of the most important steps toward the philosophy of Materialism.

A comprehensive theory of determinism as a rational historic process was provided by Hegel, who found its directing force in a metaphysical abstraction (spirit). However, it was only a short step to transform this abstraction into a concrete material force. In the works of Marx and Engels, this material force which explained the march of history was economics.

Economic determinism was not the only interpretation of history advanced to explode the myth of universal abstract principles, however. Buckle propounded a geopolitical interpretation which argued that human affairs were "permeated by one glorious principle of universal and undeviating regularity," the role of geography as "a political categorical imperative" [69]. This theory would find a modern echo in the geopolitical analysis of Sir Halford Mackinder. Oswald Spengler offered quasi-biological laws as the determinants of the rise and decline of civilizations. More eclectic thinkers saw history as the product of the interaction among a variety of material factors. As Secretary of State, Charles Evans Hughes gave practical expression to this realist interpretation of why nations pursue particular policies:

"Foreign policies are not built upon abstractions. They are the result of national interest arising from some immediate exigency or standing out vividly in historical perspective." [70]

causation was the first substitution of reason for Divine supervision and occasional intervention as the motive force of history. Second, contrary to Utopian beliefs, political practice creates theory, rather than the other way around. Lastly, politics are not (as Idealists assert) a function of ethics, but ethics derive from politics. Opposing power, not morality, is what constrains men to act in a certain manner; morality is merely an invention of theorists to give human behavior a more self-gratifying set of motivations. Machiavelli recognized the influence of morality, but believed that there could be no effective morality in the absence of effective authority, which was the product of power.

Subsequent political philosophers contributed further to the realist conception of politics. Bacon praised Machiavelli for "saying openly and without hypocrisy what men are in the habit of doing, not what they ought to do" [67]. Bodin in France, developing a theory of sovereignty, Hobbes in England, exploring the basic nature of man, and Spinoza in the Netherlands, attempting to identify the laws of nature, all built upon the premises of Machiavelli in constructing their theoretical analyses of politics. John Locke demonstrated the empirical foundation of knowledge in An Essay Concerning Human Understanding. He argued that the concept of innate principles (i.e., those which inspire the universal assent of mankind) is contrary to the reality of the actual world, and therefore cannot be true [68]. Locke's rejection of

Although the principles of political realism were familiar in the ancient Hellenic world, as evidenced by the earlier citation from Thucydides, the origins of modern realism are found in the break-up of the medieval system. For centuries, under the supremacy of the Roman Empire and later the Catholic Church, the political good, first of the Empire and then of the church, could be and was equated with the moral good. However, once the supremacy of the church was successfully challenged, the divergence between political theory, based upon moral precepts, and political practice, based upon perceptions of real interests, became ever more acute and challenging.

The first political theorist in this era of disintegration who attempted to reconsider the whole question of theory and practice was Machiavelli. In stating his rationale, he wrote,

"... it appears to be more appropriate to follow up the real truth of a matter than the imagination of it; for many have pictured republics and principalities which in fact have never been seen and known, because how one lives is so far distant from how one ought to live that he who neglects what is done for what ought to be done sooner effects his ruin than his preservation." [66]

Three fundamental tenets implicit in the political doctrine revealed by Machiavelli constitute the foundation of political realism. First, history is a sequence of cause and effect, the course of which can be perceived and understood through intellectual effort, but not (as the Idealists believed) through imagination or revelation. This idea of

and the uncertainty that the capability to complete it does exist, constitute the fundamental weakness of idealism, and provide the point of attack for the opposing realist conceptualization of the national interest.

B. THE REALIST CRITIQUE OF IDEALISM

Like idealism, political realism derives from a particular metaphysical system of thought. This world view is most commonly called Materialism, and it bears the same epistemological relationship to political realism as does the philosophy of Idealism to the moralistic or idealistic approach to politics. A brief description of the philosophic underpinnings of the realist approach to the national interest will be followed by an examination of the assumptions of this approach.

The fundamental tenet of Materialism is that all reality is matter, from which it follows that all knowledge must be empirically based. Any belief derived from the intuitive, spiritual, or transcendental is dismissed; thus abstract moral principles are denied as an accurate reflection of reality. Only that which can be perceived and experienced through the human senses is admitted as true. Unlike Idealism, which postulates specialized knowledge available only to an elite few, Materialism is democratic, in that it is based upon an appeal to the senses that can be experienced by all.

gains and losses in the material sense. The idealist conceptualization of the national interest begins with the assumption that perceived realities of international politics do not provide as true a guide to American policy as does adherence to these fundamental beliefs.

This assumption is why, throughout American diplomatic history "good will and good intentions would prevail over the realities" [63]. The quintessential attitude of the American idealist was captured by de Toqueville, and quoted by Lyndon Johnson as President:

"Forever seeking, forever falling to rise again, often disappointed but not discouraged, he tends unceasingly towards that unmeasured greatness so indistinctly visible at the end of the long track" [64].

A less transcendental but more applied expression of America's idealism was provided by Harry Truman, considered by most historians to be hard-headed realist. In the doctrine of foreign relations which bears his name, he stated, "One of the primary objectives of the foreign policy of the United States is the creation of conditions in which we and other nations will be able to work out a way of life free from coercion" [65]. This theme is at the heart of American idealism - that this nation has the responsibility (and therefore capability is assumed) to shape not only the international environment, but also the domestic conditions within other nations so that all may participate in the American Dream. The difficulties inherent in this self-appointed task,

other political system, the opportunity to define their own goals and, within reason, to seek their own ideals.

The final principle which is central to the idealist approach is the concept of responsible government. Like a responsible individual, such a government knows and observes its limits. It conducts its affairs in accordance with the rule of law and with respect for the basic rights of its citizens, as well as the universal human rights of all citizens of the world. Additionally, it is a responsive government, alert to the legitimate needs and desires of those it governs. Finally, it is government that is accountable for its actions to that same constituency.

This set of fundamental ideals suggested by Frankel is just one of numerous attempts to describe the basic beliefs which the American missionary spirit has attempted to spread throughout the rest of the world. Other categorizations are available, some more general, many more specific. For any given era of American diplomacy, there have been accepted phrases and definitions which have elicited support from the idealistic segment of both the population at large and the policy-making elite.

What is important, however, to understanding the influence of the idealist tradition upon the concept of the national interest, is not the specific expression of particular ideals, but the notion that some ideals, as abstract principles, are more important to the welfare of the nation than are concrete

fifteen centuries of thought gave way to the Newtonian universe of reason and scientific method. To realize the magnitude of this transformation, one has only to compare the Summa Theologica of Thomas Aquinas with Isaac Newton's Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy. The former, postulated upon faith and Divine revelation is barely intelligible to the twentieth century mind, let alone relevant; the latter, as a statement of human learning and reason can still be understood by anyone who cares to read it.

The Newtonian epistemological revolution marked a turning point in the intellectual evolution of mankind. As Karl Popper noted,

"For those who have eaten of the tree of knowledge, paradise is lost ... The more we try to return to the heroic age of tribalism the more surely do we arrive at the Inquisition, at the Secret Police, and at a romanticized gangsterism. There is no return to a harmonious state of nature. If we turn back, then we must go the whole way - we must return to the beasts." [80]

When human reason and intellectual investigation replaced a mysterious and unknowable Divine Being as the basic ordering principle of the universe, new realms were opened for men's understanding. The Newtonian universe is above all a rational universe - all events can be explained in terms of natural causes. "To the same natural effect we must, as far as possible, assign the same causes," [81] wrote Newton, and with this statement, he established an entirely new epistemological framework for political theory. It offered man a new vision of being able, first, to understand, and then to

control his own destiny. Control over human destiny would be the fruit of the knowledge provided by the new ordering principle, scientific rationalism. The rational, knowable, controllable Newtonian universe comprised the philosophic climate of opinion in which the New World was settled, and subsequently, the American Republic founded.

Newton's new conception of man's cosmological environment ushered in the Age of Enlightenment in philosophy and political theory. In essence, this new age was a methodical search for the causes which would explain the effects perceived by men. Men's relationship to one another and the proper role of the state were placed under the microscope of reason and dissected according to the scientific method. The central and radical concept which emerged from this examination, and which subsequently exerted the single greatest ideological influence upon the shaping of American ideals, was the concept of individualism. The focus upon the importance of the individual, and the associated concepts of natural rights which developed from that focus, became the primary theme of political theory. Where formerly the Divine Right of Kings had preoccupied philosophers, their attention was now turned to the individual common man as the elemental building block of sovereignty.

In the previous chapter, it was shown how Machiavelli initiated the attempt to reconcile political theory with practice. The discussion of the problem of the public

interest in the Age of Enlightenment can conveniently begin with the ideas of the English philosopher Thomas Hobbes, who sought to find a compromise between Machiavelli's doctrine of politics and a law of nature that would provide a supreme ethical standard. His political theory represents the first modern attempt to give an answer to the question of the right order of society. It was he who first framed the issue of the public interest as the question of the relationship of individual desires to the interests of the society as a whole.

Recognizing truth in Machiavelli's conceptualization of politics, Hobbes wrote, "Before the names of Just and Unjust can have place, there must be some coercive power" [82]. In his analysis, all men are motivated by individual self-interest. The state is the embodiment of the social contract into which men enter for the purpose of protecting each individual's self-interest from encroachment by other men. The state, through the exercise of sovereignty, provides the social order which allows men to pursue their individual interests without fear. Only within a framework of social order can freedom be achieved; without it, life would be "the war of every man against every man" [83]. Hobbes concluded that a state must be endowed with absolute sovereignty in order to preserve the necessary degree of social order.

Hobbes believed that individual interests were in irreconcilable conflict with the public interest. This aspect

of his political theory created a dilemma - men could not be free in the absence of social order, but this order necessitated the surrender of freedom to an absolute sovereign. Resolving this dilemma became the dominant preoccupation of theorists who followed Hobbes. The tension between freedom and order also would be one of the primary dilemmas of democracy, not only for the framers of the American constitution, but for every generation of American statesmen who followed them.

The most influential of the theorists who followed Hobbes was John Locke. He resolved the Hobbesian dilemma by postulating that men living together in community have certain common, as well as conflicting interests. Additionally, he introduced the assumption that the average man is rational and just. With the addition of these two elements, Locke could devise a new theory of government which accommodated both freedom and order. His theory provided the first (modern) formulation of the harmony of interests concept of the public interest, and introduced the idea of government based upon the consent of the governed [84].

Locke identified the natural rights of the individual as the rights to life, liberty, and property. Like Hobbes, he assumed that men enter into a social contract (the state) in order to protect and preserve these natural rights; therefore, the proper function of the state is to fulfill this protective obligation. Locke's assumption of rationality led to the

concept that men grant sovereignty to the state in order to preserve their natural rights, through the mechanism of consent. Since sovereignty is based upon this freely given consent, Locke maintained that it could be withdrawn at any time the sovereign failed to meet the legitimate expectations of its citizens. (It must be noted that Locke's primary purpose in writing his Second Treatise of Civil Government, in which he expounded the theory of consent, was to provide a theoretical justification for the Glorious Revolution of 1688 [85].) The theory of consent, and the justification for the withdrawal of consent, would provide the primary philosophic rationale for the American Revolution almost a century after Locke published the Second Treatise, and it would remain one of the fundamental ideals of the American Dream.

Where Hobbes had stressed the necessity for the state to exercise absolute sovereignty in order to preserve social order, Locke's conception of rational and just men led to the idea of limited government. Any authority beyond that which is necessary to protect the natural rights of the citizenry becomes an infringement upon the right to pursue individual self-interest. The balance between Hobbes's emphasis on order and Locke's concern with the maximization of individual freedom would provide a departure point and a central theme for the debate over the structure of the American government.

The next major development in democratic political theory was provided by Frenchman Jean Jacques Rousseau in The Social Contract. Where Locke had postulated the existence of some common interests existing concurrently with conflicting individual interests, Rousseau argued that the two sets of interests were in fact identical. Through the operation of (his concept of) the General Will, conflict between individual interests and the public interest is always resolved in favor of the common good. Because the individual gains so many benefits in the transition from a state of nature to the state of civilization, it is actually in the best interest of the individual to further the good of the society which makes civilization possible. Rousseau wrote,

"The passage from the state of nature to the civil state produces a very remarkable change in man, by substituting justice for instinct in his conduct, and giving his actions the morality they had formerly lacked." [86]

Even though the individual may occasionally be tempted to assert himself at the expense of the community, such action is in fact contrary to his real interest.

Rousseau's concepts of the General Will and the common good had a significant influence upon early American political thought. His political theories were never accepted in their entirety, because he was a bit too radical in his condemnation of his age, but the American concept of the public interest would ultimately adopt many of the characteristics of Rousseau's model. His charge that "Man is born free; and

everywhere he is in chains," [87] would be echoed in ever broader definitions of freedom as the American experiment unfolded, and the Dream became the goal for ever greater numbers of people.

The philosophic evolution from Hobbes to Locke to Rousseau provided the predominant ideas of political theory during the period preceding the birth of the American Republic. This, of course, is a very abbreviated distillation of the ideas of the Enlightenment; Harrington, Hume, Berkeley, Priestly, Montesquieu - these and other political philosophers also contributed ideas to the debate which would take place over the form of government to be established in America. But the key themes - the supremacy of the individual, his natural rights, and the role of the state in ensuring those rights - are to be found in the works of these three revolutionary thinkers [88].

B. FOUNDATIONS OF AMERICAN DEMOCRATIC THEORY - THE FEDERALIST DEBATE

When it became apparent that the newly independent thirteen states required some form of central government stronger than that provided under the Articles of Confederation, a debate was initiated that has continued to the present day. The question at issue was how to preserve individual liberty, for which the Revolution had been fought, while at the same time endowing a central government with sufficient authority to "promote the general welfare and secure the

blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity" [89]. This problem has been the essence of Constitutional disputes throughout the nation's history, with different answers being found by different generations of statesmen.

This thesis does not provide the scope for a detailed treatment of the history of the United States Constitution, and the compromises which were reached to produce the government which was established thereby. However, the early debate over that constitution encompasses the first explicit attempt to define the national character; a brief review of the major elements of the Federalist debates serves as a useful introduction to that character.

In the most elemental analysis, the debate was between men who adhered to the Hobbesian view of human nature, and those who championed John Locke's belief in the rationality and justice of the common man. In the former view, individual self-interests are in irreconcilable conflict with the public interest, leading inevitably to anarchy. A strong central government vested with broad authority is required to preserve order and protect the public interest. If, on the other hand, Locke's assumptions are valid, the central government must be limited in order to prevent the unjustified infringement of individual liberty.

Adherents to both of the above philosophic convictions desired to establish a government structure which reflected their own beliefs. The Democratic-Republicans, led by Thomas

Jefferson and James Madison, argued that individual liberty was best preserved in the widest possible diffusion of authority, and that a strong central government would soon pervert its broad powers into tyranny. Alexander Hamilton and his Federalist party distrusted democracy's ability to protect the public interest, and argued that a strong central government was vital to ensuring the security and the growth of the new nation [90]. This conflict between opposing philosophies was played out in numerous specific Constitutional issues, and continued to be the main source of factionalism long after the Constitution was ratified.

That the adherents of two such diametrically opposed doctrines could propose to come together to create a government that would be acceptable to both factions is a testimonial, in itself, to their faith in the ability of rational men to achieve compromise. The framers of the Constitution resolved the Hobbes-Locke dilemma of order versus freedom by creating a new and special form of government - the democratic republic. Locke's democratic ideals were represented in the right of the people to elect those who would govern. Yet the public interest would be protected from mob democracy by the exercise of sovereignty by those elected representatives. In the design of the new central government, adequate power was granted to protect the public interest, but that power was carefully divided and balanced so that liberty could never be destroyed by tyranny.

The federalist structure designed by the founding fathers was based upon a precisely calculated system of checks and balances, on the vertical as well as the horizontal plane. The vertical balance of power was ensured by reserving for the states all powers not specifically enumerated for the central government in the Constitution. On the horizontal plane, authority was balanced among the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government. This compromise did not eliminate the basic philosophic differences between Jefferson's Republicans and Hamilton's Federalists, nor did it resolve the problem of factions. What it did do was solve the immediate problem of devising a structure for the new central government which could gain the ratification of the states. This preference for solving immediate practical problems in favor of attempting to resolve more difficult and more abstract long-terms issues would continue to be reflected in the American national character, and would prove to be both a strength and a weakness in America's ability to pursue the national interest in relations with other nations.

One of the major concerns of both parties as they attempted to work out the structure of American government was the prevention of the arbitrary exercise of political power by any one faction. The destructiveness of uncontrolled factionalism was seen as one of the greatest threats to the security of the new nation. James Madison, in Federalist 10,

addressed this problem, and, in so doing, described a model of democratic government that has been a major characteristic of both the political system and the national character of the United States.

"Among the numerous advantages promised by a well constructed Union, none deserves to be more accurately developed than its tendency to break and control the violence of faction," [91] Madison wrote. He stated that there are two methods for curing the mischief of factionalism - removing the cause and controlling the effects. Removing the cause can be accomplished in two ways. The first is to destroy the liberty which is essential to the existence of factions; this remedy, Madison dismissed as worse than the disease. The second is to give every citizen, "the same opinions, the same passions, and the same interests" [92]. Since this course is possible only in a Utopia, the solution must lie in controlling the effects.

Madison addressed the problem of controlling the effects of factionalism in two cases. In the first, a minority faction, he saw no great danger, since majority rule would prevent a minority faction from endangering the public interest. The critical problem, in his view, arose when the majority is included in a faction; through majority rule, such a faction could sacrifice the public interest to its own particular interest. In framing this issue, Madison stated what he considered to be the central problem of democratic government:

"To secure the public good, and private rights, against the danger of such a faction, and at the same time to preserve the spirit and the form of popular government, is then the great object to which our inquiries are directed. Let me add, that it is the great desideratum, by which alone this form of government can be rescued from the opprobrium under which it has so long labored, and be recommended to the esteem and adoption of mankind." [93]

Madison's answer to this "great object" was based upon the existence of the many factions which would develop in a large republic. As the nation grew in size, so too would the number of individual factions competing for political influence. No one faction could ever become totally dominant and thus attain the ability to trample the rights of the minority, or subvert the public interest to its own ends. The necessity to attain a consensus of differing factions in order to constitute a majority was, in Madison's view, the greatest protection against the danger of majority faction. Since that consensus would change from issue to issue, the public interest would consistently be preserved.

Despite the logic of Madison's argument, the problems of factionalism continued to plague the new republic. George Washington, in his Farewell Address, felt compelled to warn his countrymen against "the baneful effects of the spirit of party generally." To Washington, partisanship was "a fire not to be quenched. It demands a uniform vigilance to prevent its bursting into a flame, lest, instead of warming, it should consume." [94]

Majority rule on the basis of democratic consensus has been the essence of the American style of government. James Madison's concept of consensus-building among a host of diverse factions still represents an accurate model of the political process by which the public interest is determined and the majority of public policy is made. No policy can be sustained in the absence of the legitimacy that is engendered by the presence of consensus. Any concept of the public or national interest must recognize the role and the importance of democratic consensus, from the era of Federalist 10 to this comment from an aide to President Carter:

"Because of what has happened to the political parties over the years, and to the special interest groups, and the resulting fragmentation, it is now more true than ever that the President can get things done only when he can develop the public consensus for action, and when he cannot, he will fail." [95]

C. THE FRONTIER EXPERIENCE

This chapter concerning the national character began with the statement that it has been the product of ideas interacting with experience. In the previous two sections, the role of philosophic and political ideas has been emphasized. In this section, the importance of experience will be addressed. The experience which has been the single most dominant influence in shaping the national character is embodied in the concept of the American frontier.

For roughly three centuries, from the founding of Jamestown in 1607 until approximately 1890, the chief concern

of American life was the settling of the frontier. This process proceeded with unbroken continuity while Americans fought for independence, while they devised the structure of government for the new republic, and even while they engaged one another in bloody civil war [96]. There was always new territory to settle; before one acquisition was fully settled, more land was obtained. This inexorable expansion came to be seen as the manifest destiny of the nation; one of the most articulate advocates of this doctrine, John L. O'Sullivan, editor of the Democratic Review, wrote of "the inevitable fulfillment of the general law which is rolling our population westward." He continued "(it) is too evident to leave us in doubt of the manifest design of Providence in regard to the occupation of this continent." [97]

What the frontier represented was a vast body of wealth without proprietors. (The native Indians were never considered to have established rights of ownership over the territories which they inhabited.) It was an environment of abundance without end, abundance that was freely available for the taking, with none of the restraints and restrictions of the Old World. Historian Thomas Carlyle once said to an American,

"Ye may boast o' yer democracy, or any ither 'cracy, or any kind o' poleetical roobish; but the reason why yer laboring folk are so happy is thot ye have a vost deal o' land for a verra few people." [98]

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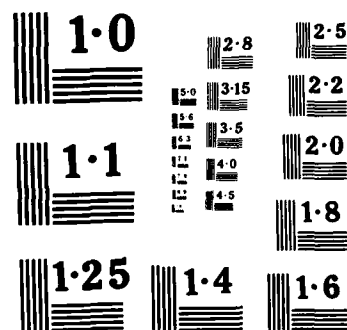
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All that was required to partake of this vast wealth was initiative and hard work. The spirit of American enterprise was born of and nurtured by the frontier.

The effects of the frontier experience were felt everywhere, and impressed themselves indelibly upon the American character. Characteristic of the young Republic of the nineteenth century, that was busy looking outward rather than inward, it was visitors from abroad who were most sensitive to the importance of the Western frontier in shaping the character of the nation. Lord Bryce, who toured the West in 1881 and again in 1883, wrote,

"The West is the most American part of America; that is to say, the part where those features which distinguish America from Europe came out in the strongest relief. What Europe is to Asia, what England is to the rest of Europe, what America is to England, that the Western States and Territories are to the Atlantic States." [99]

An earlier English traveller, Sir Charles Wentworth Dilke, was one of the first observers of the frontier experience to relate the character of the land itself to the character of its inhabitants. He noted, "The singular wideness of Western thought, always verging on extravagance, is tracable to the width of Western land." He concluded, "When you have once set eyes upon the never-ending sweep of the Great Plains, you no longer wonder that America rejects Malthusianism." [100]

The traits that struck these visitors as characteristic of the inhabitants of the American frontier included disregard for convention, unbridled optimism, boisterous

politics, mobility of population, self-taught ingenuity - these became the stereotype of the nation. The values which brought success on the frontier became the values cherished by the country. Above all, the frontier experience complemented and strengthened the concept of individualism inherited from the philosophers of the Enlightenment. The ideal of Jeffersonian democracy could not have been envisioned without the existential reality of the frontier to give it substance.

The individualism fostered by the frontier experience emphasized certain character traits. Foremost among these was the belief in the efficacy and value of individual hard work, and the confidence that such labor would be rewarded. Concern with practical necessities rather than abstract concepts, and an admiration of success for its own sake became ingrained in the American work ethic. The man of the American frontier was forced to be self-reliant, so this attribute became a national goal. The frontier fostered a simple concept of justice, with reward and punishment being meted out on the basis of individual merit.⁸

During America's three centuries of living the frontier experience, the meaning and the significance of this ever westward expansion was largely left to such foreign observers as the two cited. Americans were too busy with the practical tasks of settling the frontier to devote time and effort to national introspection. Those who were not moving themselves

to settle new lands, such as newspaper editor Horace Greeley, were occupied in urging others to "Go West!" and in lobbying Congress to provide free land to all who took that advice [101].

It was a (then) little known college professor who began the American formulation of a hypothesis concerning the impact of the westward movement, and its significance in forming America's national character. This task of explanation after-the-fact was begun in 1893, when Frederick Jackson Turner read his paper titled "The Significance of the Frontier in American History" to the annual meeting of the American Historical Association [102]. Opening with a statement from the Superintendent of the Census that the year 1890 marked the official end of the frontier line as an element in the census reports, Turner's paper continued:

"This brief official statement marks the closing of a great historic movement. Up to our own day American history has been in a large degree the history of the colonization of the Great West. The existence of an area of free land, its continuous recession, and the advance of American settlement westward, explain American development.

Behind institutions, behind constitutional forms and modifications, lie the vital forces that call these organs into life and shape them to meet changing conditions. The peculiarity of American institutions is, the fact that they have been compelled to adapt themselves to the changes of an expanding people ...

From the conditions of frontier life came intellectual traits of profound importance ... The result is that to the frontier the American intellect owes its striking characteristics. That coarseness and strength combined with acuteness and inquisitiveness; that practical, inventive turn of mind, quick to find expedients; that

masterful grasp of material things, lacking in the artistic but powerful to effect great ends; that restless, nervous energy; that dominant individualism, working for good and for evil, and withal that buoyancy and exuberance which comes with freedom - these are traits of the frontier..." [103]

Turner's thesis about the American frontier touched off a new era in American historiography. His perceptions of the critical influence of the Frontier experience created both controversy and a wave of interest in the study of the West. His conclusions have been examined and refined by historians for nearly a century, but none have disputed his basic thesis that the frontier was the critical experience which shaped our national character.

At the same time that Turner was explaining the importance of the frontier experience, another group of scholars began a re-examination of philosophy from the American perspective. These scholars, through philosophic analysis, were attempting to fit traditional ideas to the American experience. In this effort, they would develop a uniquely American philosophy that both reflected the national character, and provided it with an explicit intellectual foundation.

D. THE CONTRIBUTION OF AMERICAN PRAGMATISM

Ideas and experience are most clearly synthesized in the philosophy of American Pragmatism. Built upon the theoretical analyses of Charles Sanders Pierce and Chauncy Wright, this philosophy was clarified and given explicit behavioral applications in the works of William James. John

Dewey reformulated the major ideas of Pragmatism, transforming the individualistic orientation of James into an orientation of concrete social and political action [104]. Pragmatism combined both theoretical and practical responses to the conditions of American society at the end of the last century and beginning of this one, and to advances in the physical sciences, especially modern physics.

Two clear and distinct problems of intellectual life provided the impetus which led to the development of Pragmatism.⁹ The first was an increasing suspicion that the completely rational, knowable universe of Isaac Newton did not actually reflect the real universe. The Newtonian rational paradigm had produced a vast body of philosophic systems of absolute natural laws which regulated the universe. Under the illumination of Albert Einstein's Laws of Relativity and Werner Heisenberg's Principle of Indeterminacy, conviction in the validity of absolutes was severely shaken. Relativism and indeterminacy in philosophy, as well as the physical sciences, began to produce a subtle modification in the climate of opinion, the basic epistemological framework of all philosophic analysis.

Moreover, the natural law interpretations of man in society seemed inadequate to explain the social conditions that actually existed. The late 19th century was an age of burgeoning industrialization, urbanization, rapid technological advances, and increasing societal and individual

interdependence. Rather than an increasing number of people achieving happiness, as had been promised by Bentham and John Stewart Mill, an increasing number were finding only poverty and misery. Clearly, something with greater promise than the Social Darwinism of Herbert Spencer was needed, if this trend were to be reversed.

The second impetus for Pragmatism was the schism in European philosophy which had followed the Hegelian system of thought. Proceeding from Hegel's principle of the dialectic, and his conceptualization of Spirit as the motive force of history, philosophers had divided over the question "What is essential in the universe - spirit or matter?" The mind-body dualism, in which absolute idealism and absolute materialism were viewed as mutually exclusive choices, became the dominant issue of philosophic examination. Hegelian idealism was being taught at most American universities, [105] but it was being increasingly challenged by such materialistic doctrines as Marxism. The either-or choice demanded by the European dualism seemed inadequate to the American intellectuals who would invent Pragmatism, as a result of their attempts to fashion a system of thought that could accommodate both idealism and materialism.

American Pragmatism answered both of the needs described above. It resolved the schism between idealists and materialists, as well as providing a synthesis of the Newtonian paradigm and the relativism that was emerging from

modern physics. Pragmatists postulated that in a universe of such unfathomable vastness as ours, it is conceivable, and therefore logical, that spirit and matter coexist in some fashion beyond the understanding of human intelligence. We do not know and cannot ever know with certainty what is Truth. All that we can know is that which is revealed by the human senses and by the study of human history. What these sources tell us is that both ideal and material factors have influenced human behavior and shaped history; therefore, both of these factors are reflections of reality.

William James called the basis of this new philosophy "radical empiricism" [106]. Describing this epistemology, James argued that any observable effect, whatever its cause, must be admitted as evidence; in his words,

"To be radical an empiricism must neither admit into its construction any element that is not directly experienced, nor exclude from them any element that is directly experienced. For such a philosophy, the relations that connect experiences must themselves be experienced relations, and any kind of relation experienced must be accounted as 'real' as anything else in the system." [107]

James's radical empiricism revealed that pluralism was the state of the actual world, and thus, pluralism in ideas was the philosophy which most accurately reflected that world. Rather than denying either material or idealistic reality, James conceptualized a universe that is conjunctive and multi-dimensional. The existential reality of indeterminacy demands that philosophy must be able to accommodate spirit and matter, absolutes and relativism, simultaneously. While

absolute truth is beyond man's ability to prove, it is also beyond his ability to prove that absolutes do not exist, and it can be demonstrated that belief in idealistic absolutes is an important factor of human behavior.

The test of validity of an idea, according to Pragmatism, is workability. Substituting flexibility for the rigidity of traditional philosophic systems of thought, Pragmatism defines truth as the beliefs which prove useful by providing the believer with accurate expectations about the world. Truth can never be final, because experience can always change one's perceptions about the world, but for the present, a true idea is any idea which helps the individual achieve a satisfactory understanding of his life and his environment. The fixed propositions of classical rationalism, expressed in terms of natural laws, will eventually fail this test of workability, and are therefore disuseful. Indeed, it was the recognition of the failure of natural law interpretations to explain the conditions of American society which initiated the developments which led to Pragmatism.

James stressed the importance of the human will in determining what is true (in accordance with the above test). By an act of will, an individual can give reality to an abstract idea, including an absolute ideal, such as the omnipotence of God, which may not be real for some other individual. This aspect of Pragmatism made an important contribution to the national character; ideals in public policy, by an act of

national will, achieve reality. Idealism is not necessarily negated by the facts of realpolitik. Although James never addressed the will to believe in the context of public policy, it was his philosophic analysis which provided the rational explanation and resolution of the apparent dualism of the American character - the coexistence of idealism and realism, without producing irreconcilable conflict. More than three centuries after Hobbes stated the dilemma of individual versus public interests, the philosophy of American Pragmatism offered the first intellectually consistent means of resolution.

Relative to the concept of the public interest, James's important contribution was the demonstration that, by a philosophic system of Pragmatism, the validity and the meaning of the concept is not negated by indeterminacy. Values in which people have the will to believe are real determinants of the public interest, and cannot be discarded on the basis of indeterminism. His emphasis on practical utility as the test of validity provided a philosophic foundation for the existential political system which had developed in response to the requirements of the frontier experience.

The implications of Pragmatism for political action were made explicit in the works of John Dewey, particularly The Public and Its Problems. Dewey was concerned with all aspects of human knowledge and behavior; this discussion will focus on his importance as a political theorist, and his

contribution to the concept of the public interest as an element of the national character.

In The Public and Its Problems, Dewey concentrated on what he called "the eclipse of the public" [108]. This is the inability of the public, or the community as a whole, to protect itself against the depredations of private interests. He asserted that the American political system had accommodated itself, only in piecemeal fashion and with great lag, to the industrial transformation of the country. The public had been replaced by various factions, among which no consensus could be formed which represented the true public interest.

Dewey saw the solution to this problem in the development of an articulate public which had an awareness of genuine common interests. His great attention to the importance of education stemmed from his belief in the need to develop such a public. His Pragmatist orientation led him to stress the application of the methods of the social sciences to the problems of politics and social action. The public interest was identified with the solution of concrete problems and the satisfaction of concrete human needs.

The importance of American Pragmatism, both for the concept of the public interest and in the shaping of the national character, lay not so much in any immediate substantive changes to the political system, but rather as "the intellectual rationalization for the reshaping of American

institutions that has taken place slowly over the twentieth century" [109]. Pragmatism gave intellectual expression to what Turner had described as "the traits of the frontier." The test of workability, and the emphasis upon empirical knowledge have been adapted to public policy-making and political institutions. The ability to experiment, to try radical political and economic innovations, which has allowed a political system devised in the eighteenth century to meet the requirements of the twentieth, is American Pragmatism in operation. That throughout this process of staggering innovations, certain "self-evident truths" have retained their power to motivate the nation's citizens in an impressive testimonial to what James called "the will to believe."

E. THE MODERN DILEMMA - THE SEARCH FOR A PUBLIC PHILOSOPHY

This century, and particularly the last two decades, has witnessed an increasingly deepening national identity crisis in America. What is America really about? What do we stand for in the world? As recently as 1960, these questions elicited clear and self-confident answers which reflected the strong national belief in the inherent validity of commonly shared values. Today the answers are neither clear, nor are they capable of inspiring a broad consensus. When the words of a popular song can define freedom as "just another word for nothing left to lose," [110] there has clearly been some fundamental change in the way we see ourselves.¹⁰

Walter Lippman described this national identity crisis as "an historic catastrophe," consisting of "the steep and sudden decline of the power and influence and self-confidence of the Western democracies" [111]. Echoing John Dewey's thesis of the eclipse of the public, Lippman stated that the public philosophy had been eclipsed by "the plurality of incompatible faiths" [112]. He traced this eclipse to the fact that Americans had become alienated from the inner principles of their national institutions. Widespread belief in these principles comprised the public philosophy which had supported the phenomenal rise of American democracy. According to Lippman, loss of belief occurred when these fundamental tenets of the American creed were removed from the public domain, and became instead a matter of private subjective relevance for each individual. The result has been the inability of democratic government to define clearly, or to make policy which supports, the genuine public interest.

Lippman wrote this eloquent indictment of the pernicious effects of public opinion, when the public is without the rudae. f a public philosophy:

"The happy truth is that the prevailing public opinion has been destructively wrong at the critical junctures. The people have imposed a veto upon the judgments of informed and responsible officials. They have compelled the governments, which usually knew what would have been wiser, or was necessary, or was more expedient, to be too late with too little, or too long with too much, too pacifist in peace and too bellicose in war, too neutralist or appeasing in negotiation or too intransigent. Mass opinion has acquired mounting power in this century. It has shown itself to be a dangerous master of decisions when the stakes are life and death." [113]

world. These causes included such ideals as democracy, individual liberty, pluralism, and a sense of morality in both individual and national behavior. In our own century, the Dream has been broadened step by step, to envision an ever-expanding definition of freedom for greater and greater numbers of people. From the concept that men have the inalienable right to enjoy political freedom in order to seek happiness, the Dream has grown to include the concept that men (and women) have the inalienable right to pursue self-actualization as the road to happiness.

As the promise of the Dream expanded, so too did its diversity and flexibility. In the twentieth century,

"It has been a composite of similar, different, and even contradictory expressions of aspirations and ambitions that have been reflected in the dichotomous approach to war and peace, to isolationism and interventionism, to tolerance or truth, to principle or expediency, and to the acceptance or rejection of responsibility for one's actions." [132]

This pluralistic nature of the American Dream has not diluted its power; its complexity offers the opportunity to accept or reject those elements of the Dream most compatible with individual and national aspirations.

Nor has its power as a motivation been diluted because it has never tallied exactly with reality, even for Americans themselves. What gave the American Dream its power was the confident belief that it represented an attainable goal. If its ideals and values were illusion, the illusion was real enough to inspire dedication and conviction, real enough that men were willing to fight and die for its preservation.

Before attempting to frame a concept of the national interest, then, it is essential to consider how the American Dream has shaped the national purpose. In the words of one historian, "The cliches and platitudes expounded in versions of the American Dream are no less real because they lack exactitude in definition or application" [129]. To some extent, the very diversity of the Dream, and the imprecision of its precepts has been one of its enduring strengths.

The American Dream grew out of the perception of universal values shared by the early colonists, was proclaimed by the Founding Fathers, and has been subsequently elaborated by successive generations of Americans in response to historical experience. The early colonial version of the Dream focused on the rejection of such anachronisms as elitism in government, class distinction by birth, the suppression of humanistic ideals, and the denial of individual mobility [130]. In the Declaration of Independence, Thomas Jefferson added a new element to the Dream, the cause of political freedom for the human race. This 18th century generation of revolutionaries saw their actions as a watershed in human history, and themselves as agents of what John Adams called "a grand scheme and design in Providence for the illumination and emancipation of the slavish part of mankind all over the earth" [131].

By the end of the 19th century, the American Dream encompassed a number of great causes, which Americans believed they represented, and were eager to spread throughout the

B. THE NATIONAL INTEREST IN THE CONTEXT OF THE AMERICAN DREAM

If we accept the above analysis as a framework, that the concept of the national interest must serve strategic planners by providing the foundation for goals development, establishing legitimacy, and eliciting consensus, it is clear that no concept can succeed in meeting these requirements unless it is compatible with the American Dream. Assuredly, the most difficult aspect of the Dream to incorporate into the national interest is that part composed of ideals and moral values, but the attempt must be made. The Presidential Commission on National Goals, which published its report, "Prospects for America," in 1961, concluded that, in a world of considerable change, "What do remain fixed are American ideals and values" [128].

Paradoxically, while these values and ideals do exhibit significant stability, they also must be able to accommodate change over the long-term. This paradox, the necessity to articulate values that have enduring stability, yet contribute to the gradual evolution of the society in the desired direction, has been one of the major problems which has confronted normative conceptions of the public interest. Despite this difficulty, it is these values and ideals which constitute the only viable basis for long-term goals, legitimize government activities, and inspire some degree of public consensus. Thus, the national interest must affirm the relevance of national strategy to these values; to do this, the national interest must be framed in the context of the American Dream.

central position around which consensus for specific policies can be built. Even more so than in the era when George Washington decried the deleterious effects of faction, consensus is essential to effective political action. The national interest is the broad statement of the primary aims and hopes of the public; some degree of consensus about these aims and hopes is a critical pre-requisite for effective strategic planning. Because of the lack of a clear articulation of the national interest, this consensus has been absent in recent decades.

Both legitimacy and consensus contribute to the strengthening of normative, or democratic, compliance. This highest level of compliance is an essential element of the national will, which serves to enhance both the effectiveness of policy and the magnitude of national power. Conversely, the absence of this compliance acts to weaken the national will and reduce national power. It is in this context of legitimacy, consensus and democratic compliance that the strategic planner must consider the nature of the national character as the critical determinant of the national interest. Because that character encompasses certain ideals and moral values, as well as a uniquely American concern with practicality, the concept of the national interest adopted by strategic planners must reflect both aspects of this dualistic character.

recognized objectives, it is impossible to measure progress toward desired ends.

It is as the foundation for the development of national goals that the concept of the national interest is most critical to strategic planning. Goals cannot be formulated in a vacuum; some statement of the nation's ultimate purpose and aims is required as a base. The national interest serves as the overarching criterion which links diverse and sometimes conflicting goals into a cohesive pattern.

In addition to this primary function of the national interest as the foundation upon which goals are based, the concept must fulfill two other functions for strategic planning. First, it is the mechanism by which national activities in foreign affairs are given legitimacy. Just as goals legitimate authority, a clear articulation of the national interest and how a particular strategy supports that interest gives the strategy legitimacy. Without some concept of the national interest, there is no rationale to show why the nation should pursue one course of action rather than another. The national interest provides this rationale which explains to the public why the United States selects a particular foreign policy strategy.

The final function which the concept of the national interest must serve in the context of strategic planning concerns consensus. The national interest provides the basic

throughout the study [126]. One of the most eloquent statements concerning what happens when goals are neglected was written by Walter Lippman in 1960:

"The critical weakness of our society is that for the time being our people do not have great purposes which they are united in wanting to achieve. The public mood of the country is defensive, to hold on and to conserve, not to push forward and create. We talk about ourselves these days as if we were a completed society, one which has achieved its purposes, and has no further great business to transact ..." [127]

Goals fulfill a number of inter-related functions in the political process, as well as for strategic planning. First, they provide direction which makes possible the mobilization of the public energy and efforts toward a common end. Without such a mobilization, the national will to achieve great ends is lacking. The second function of goals is a coordinating role. Only with a clear sense of direction and objectives can there be effective coordination of activities. As national tasks become more complex, and broader in scope, the importance of this coordinating function increases. Third, the articulation of goals, especially when those goals encompass a noble purpose, calls forth a sense of public commitment, which derives from the knowledge that the goals are shared by other members of the polity. Fourth, the acceptance of goals legitimates public authority. Sacrifices required to achieve the goals are accepted by the public as legitimate demands by the government. Finally, goals serve as the ultimate source of evaluation of the national effort; without

the situation, the level of essentiality of the interests concerned, and the content and effectiveness of past policy which relates to the situation are all matters that can be determined and can serve as guides to the national interest.

The strategic planner, on the other hand, has no such guides to reduce uncertainty. Rather than dealing with present problematic situations, his environment is the future, dominated by uncertainty. The more distant the planning horizon, the greater is the uncertainty which masks that horizon. Of the many variables which the planner must weigh, only two can be considered to have any degree of long-term stability. These are the national character, which was described in the previous chapter, and the long-range national goals which derive from this character and perceived national needs. Because there are so few stable indicators available to the strategic planner, these two assume a far greater importance for planning than they do for short-term policy decision-making.

The centrality of goals has been recognized in numerous studies of the strategic planning process. John Collins listed "goal oriented guidance" as one of the essential pre-conditions for effective defense planning, and one of the most critical weaknesses of actual U. S. defense planning" [125]. A strategic planning experiment conducted by the United States Navy in 1979 emphasized the importance of objectives, in terms of statements of ends and means,

values of the American Dream with the more obviously tangible and easily measured factors of international politics, is capable of yielding a concept which has utility for strategic planning.

This concluding chapter will first examine what functions the concept of the national interest must serve in the context of strategic planning, and then suggest an approach to defining that interest which can meet those requirements. This suggested approach is in no sense intended to provide a final substantive resolution to the problem of the national interest; rather, it constitutes a conceptual approach which promises a more cohesive articulation of the national interest than the ad hoc responses to challenges and opportunities which have predominated during the past several decades.

A. THE REQUIREMENTS OF STRATEGIC PLANNING

In assessing what strategic planners require from the concept of the national interest, it is helpful to consider how long-range planning differs from policy-making. The principal difference is the degree of uncertainty which characterizes the respective environments. For the most part, policy-making is concerned with specific problematic situations; although some uncertainties are always present, many factors can be identified which contribute to the definition of the national interest for a given problematic situation. Such elements as the degree of consensus about

VI. A VALUE-CENTERED APPROACH TO THE NATIONAL INTEREST

In a recent study which attempts to forecast the kinds of challenges which will confront the United States in the coming decade, William J. Taylor noted that "increasingly, the national security establishment is trying to come to grips with the necessity to gain insights into the future as a partial basis for making decisions" [124]. The realization of this necessity has resulted in greater attention being given to strategic planning by both military and civilian decision-makers. Unfortunately, this increased attention has failed to produce a substantive framework of analysis within which long-range planning can be carried out effectively.

Current approaches to strategic planning fall into one of two patterns. Either they begin and end with a resource limitation orientation,¹¹ treating planning as nothing more than a decision-making process for the distribution of scarce resources, or they skip directly to what should be considered last in the planning process, procedures and techniques. In order to overcome the shortcomings of these two common approaches, it is necessary to break with the prevailing intellectual tradition in national security studies which discounts the importance, or even the reality, of values. Only a value-centered approach to the problem of defining the national interest, which integrates the ideals and moral

America can offer no comparable cohesive public philosophy which supports our democratic ideals, our invitation to join the free world appears to be not much better than an invitation to anarchy.

What to believe, and even more important, how we know what to believe, have become the predominant questions of psychology, philosophy, and the social sciences in the twentieth century. If as Lippman asserted, the restoration of an effective democratic government requires the revival of an accepted public philosophy, how is that philosophy to be shaped? How is the public interest to be discerned, and who will discern it? If the Jeffersonian concepts of rational and just citizens and the Madisonian model of democratic consensus have become irrelevant for the age of the mass society, what should be put in their places? These questions constitute the central problem facing America's strategic planners, who are charged with preserving and enhancing the national character.

America a nation as Jimmy Carter tried to do" [121]. Despite Carter's efforts to reinfuse the nation with his vision of moral leadership, polls conducted by Candidate Ronald Reagan's organization in 1980 found that

"From 1973 to 1980 fewer than 20 per cent of the country felt that the nation was on the 'right track.' Seventy-five out of every hundred Americans thought that the country was misdirected and in disarray." [122]

This lack of public confidence was in stark contrast to the survey work done by Cantril in the 1950's - "The American pattern, Cantril discovered ... was the most distinctive of all. Americans were the most confident people in the world." [123]

As each generation has come of age in this century, from Croley to Lippman to contemporaries, such as White and Broder, they have found an increasingly serious crisis of confidence in the American public. The lack of a public philosophy on which to base beliefs about the national interest assumes added importance when that lack is juxtaposed with the dominant fact of international relations - the Soviet-American rivalry. Willing or not, America is engaged in a contest with the Soviet Union and the socialist philosophy which that country represents. That contest is for the allegiance and the faith of millions of people. Our adversary in this contest is not hampered by a similar lack of an articulated public philosophy; Marxism-Leninism claims not only to explain everything, but to explain it on a scientific basis. When

A political aide to Edward Kennedy told Broder, "I don't think our generation has produced a vision of the future. I don't think there's a consensus on it. I don't think it's been articulated." [117]

The scion of a great political family, William Scranton III, described the breakdown of the public philosophy in these words:

"... in the turmoil of the sixties, when my political awareness began to form, there was a time when the political iceberg of America began to break up. It was more than just Vietnam. It was an emergence of a different way of looking at the world - naive in some respects, helpful in some, and in some ... even corrupt. But it was an emergence of a new worldview." [118]

British journalist Godfrey Hodgson, in the tradition of earlier British observers of the American scene, was perhaps closer to the truth when he noted, "At the heart of the political rebellion there was a deep feeling that something was wrong not just with political leaders or with their policies, but with American society itself" [119]. T. H. White, in analyzing the 1976 Presidential campaign found that this search for the meaning of America was the dominant theme of the campaign; he wrote, "The country was concerned with basic questions, with what holds the nation together, not with issues" [120].

During his troubled Presidency, Jimmy Carter continued to seek a remedy for the malaise that troubled his country. "Perhaps no President since Lincoln," commented White, "has probed so deeply into the metaphysics of spirit that makes

Jeffersonian democracy seemed to have little relevance for the developing mass society.

The shock of the First World War, for which democracy had been ill-prepared, accentuated the decline of America's public philosophy. The rise of totalitarianism in Europe, hard on the heels of the "war to make the world safe for democracy" further weakened public confidence in the efficacy of democratic institutions. A second global war, more terrible than the first and only one generation removed from the war to end all wars, all but destroyed what remained of America's public philosophy. When that war ended, not with greater security for the nation, but with the birth of the nuclear age, in which it soon became clear that the country faced the greatest insecurity it had ever known, what Lippman called an historic catastrophe was complete. In an international system based upon a balance of terror, the most basic interest - self-preservation - is in constant jeopardy. The rational epistemology of the Newtonian universe seems less relevant to these conditions than the irrational, unknowable metaphysic of the medieval age.

Events in the domestic sector, as well as the realities of international politics, contributed to the assault upon the traditional public philosophy. David Broder described the next generation of political leaders in these grim words:

"Having come of age in the traumatic decade bracketed by the murder of one President and the forced resignation of another, they have lost whatever romantic idealism they may have held about politics and government." [116]

Lippman's analysis of the malaise which infects America in the twentieth century appears to attack the fundamental tenets of American Pragmatism. The coexistence of indeterminacy and self-evident truths founded upon moral values was too complex to inspire a public philosophy that could be widely shared. In reality, it has not been the acceptance of Pragmatism which led to the national identity crisis, but rather the public failure to understand fully what Pragmatism implied. The complexity of a pluralist epistemology precluded widespread understanding or acceptance. What people extracted from Pragmatism was that the rational paradigm of Newton had been discredited; they failed to grasp that pluralism offered an approach which squared rationalism with relativity. The result has been an increasing resignation to the acceptance of irrational man, marching along what Gunter Remmling called the "road to suspicion" [114].

No single historic event can be identified as the sole or even the primary cause of the shattering of the public philosophy. The progressive movement which began in the last century was an early manifestation of awareness of a gap between what people believed and what existed as social reality. Writers such as Herbert Croley began in the first decade of this century to describe a vague public malaise, a general dissatisfaction with the utility of the national public philosophy [115]. For too many people, the American Dream seemed to contain elements of nightmare; the ideals of

The critical importance of the American Dream to the nation's sense of purpose was captured by novelist William Faulkner. Attempting to explain the national aimlessness that seemed to inflict America, he wrote,

"What happened to the American Dream? We dozed, and it abandoned us. And in that vacuum now there sound no longer the strong loud voices ... speaking in mutual unification of one hope and will." [133]

Whether the Dream abandoned us, as Faulkner seems to suggest, or we abandoned the Dream, it is within our power to reaffirm America's commitment to the ideals of the Dream as the basis of the national interest.

Such a reaffirmation is not easy in the modern American climate of opinion, dominated by relativism. Any form of moral absolutism seems out of place in our age, as does belief in any value which cannot be validated empirically. What is required is a conscious and deliberate decision to turn away from what a not quite respectable modern philosopher has termed "the cult of moral grayness" [134]. It requires the intellectual courage to believe in fundamental values and ideals which are beyond empirical verification in an empirical age. The philosophic justification for making this secular leap of faith is to be found in the premises of American Pragmatism.

C. A PRAGMATIST'S CONCEPT OF THE NATIONAL INTEREST

The fundamental metaphysical presupposition of Pragmatism is that the universe and everything in it is characterized by

pluralism. A pluralist epistemology begins with the admission of the limitation of man's ability to achieve knowledge of ultimate truth. It recognizes that empirical verification is useful for material problems, and that intuitive methods may be necessary for other types of questions. Pluralism allows for a combination of the two methods of knowledge in situations where that may be necessary and proper. The concept of the national interest appears to fit this category of problems which demand both empiricism and intuition.

William James demonstrated that the will to believe gives reality to abstract ideals and beliefs which are beyond empirical verification. What has been missing from recent attempts in political science to devise an operational concept of the national interest has been the will to believe that the fundamental beliefs of the American Dream comprise real motivations for national behavior, with the power to shape public support for national policy. A concept of the national interest that will have utility in the context of goals, legitimacy, and consensus must, as a first step, reintegrate the normative components of American democratic theory with the empirical approach to political issues which has dominated both the theory and practice of national security affairs during the past several decades.

This conclusion may appear to present an impasse, since the question - "What is the national interest?" - has not been answered. No list of public values has been generated;

no specific formula has been offered to strategic planners which can be used to determine the national interest. Such a task is beyond the ability of general or mid-range theory to perform, because it requires that the question "national interest relative to what, or concerned with what?" be addressed. What this conceptual approach does provide is the explicit acknowledgement that the national interest cannot be defined by purely empirical methods; it is a cognitive concept which requires faith as well as the ability to perceive reality accurately. The first-level component of a Pragmatic concept of the national interest is the awareness that moral values and ideals are important to the American public, and any statement of the national interest which fails to take account of these values and ideals will fail.

There has been a great deal of criticism in recent times of attempts to define the national interest from a value-centered approach. For example, Dean Acheson, one of the most brilliant Secretaries of State, wrote, "... moral teachings and moral doctrines can be of little guidance, if any, in assessing the substance of international problems" [135]. It is true that morality divorced from political reality may lead to ineffective or even counter-productive policies. However, a reality which does not admit of morality is incompatible with the most basic tenets of American democracy. Concepts of the national interest which discount moral values as irrelevant fail because they do not comprehend the necessity for moral leadership in a democracy.

As an illustration, Elliot Richardson stands out as one of the few political actors in the last decade to have understood fully the power of moral leadership, and the American response to it. His insistence on resigning his office (as Attorney General) rather than commit an immoral act made him the only major Nixon Administration figure to emerge from the Watergate scandal with his reputation intact. His attitude was epitomized by this statement to his staff, during a discussion of a particular thorny political problem: "I think the first thing we are going to do is start with the proposition that we will do what is right" [136]. This belief that it is possible to perceive the morally right solution, and the commitment to act in accordance with that perception, is the essence of moral leadership, and it is that kind of leadership which is demanded by the American people.

Much of the opposition to including any normative component in a theory of the national interest centers on the legitimate fear that such a course will lead to moral excess. There are ample historical examples to justify this fear, including, in our own history, Wilsonian idealism, when the very concept of a national interest was subordinated to the advancement of moral values. Additionally, there is the fear that by affirming certain ideals and values as central to the national interest, one risks excluding other values, which may be equally precious to segments of the population. Several periods of active persecution of the American

Communist Party, as well as other minorities, give validity to this argument. Finally, overshadowing these concerns, stands the philosophic primacy of relativism in our age. The epistemological presuppositions which are necessary to support any kind of normative belief have been effectively demolished by the triumph of pure empiricism.

The escape from these dilemmas lies in the very pluralism of America which makes it difficult to articulate the national interest. As historian Ralph Henry Gabriel noted in his study of American intellectual development,

"The American democratic faith is a system of checks and balances in the realm of ideas. It asserts the possibility of a balance between liberty and authority, between the self-expression of the free individual and the necessary coercion of the organized group. The democratic faith is, then, in essence, a philosophy of the mean." [137]

It has been through the commitment to balance that the Jefferson-Hamilton argument over the power of the government versus the liberty of the individual has been allowed to continue as an on-going process, rather than to conclude with victory for one viewpoint or the other. This same commitment to maintaining an acceptable mean in the realm of ideas provides the necessary assurance that moral excess or extreme absolutism will be avoided in the long-term. Certainly, an affirmation of American moral values and ideals as components of the national interest cannot ensure that policy-makers and planners will never make mistakes in the short-term. No concept of the national interest is that infallible.

However, in the long view, it is the only course which will ensure that the concept of the national interest chosen as the basis of planning and the definition of national goals will provide a true reflection of the American character and the aspirations of the American Dream.

D. CONCLUSION

Theodore H. White was correct in his assessment that "America has always been a questioning nation, always in search of itself and of what it means and what it promises to do" [138]. Today there is a greater need than ever before to put this search in focus, to make the national effort to articulate a clear vision of the national interest. America has only in the last decade confronted the reality that our resources are not unlimited, that we must choose carefully from among a variety of foreign policy aims and options. Without a clear idea of the national interest, that selection will continue to be an ad hoc process, and the nation will continue to zig and zag rather than march steadily forward toward the fulfillment of the American ideals of freedom and democracy.

It is an unfortunate but inescapable characteristic of a society dedicated to cultural, philosophic, and political pluralism that there is no single or simple expression of the national interest. Strategic planners, in considering alternative national strategies for the future, begin, not with

an answer, but with a set of questions. They must ask themselves, for example,

- (1) What kind of concept of the national interest is most appropriate for the requirements of strategic planning - shaping goals, establishing legitimacy, and building consensus?
- (2) How can the apparent utilities of both the idealistic and realistic interpretations of politics be reconciled, or must one choose one or the other?
- (3) If abstract ideals and moral values serve an important function in the definition of the national interest, how should that function be integrated with the more tangible factors that are subject to empirical verification?
- (4) What concept of the national interest provides an accurate reflection of the pluralistic national character and incorporates the idealistic aspirations of the American Dream?

Theory cannot provide answers to questions such as these which can satisfy everyone who has reference to the concept of the national interest, for ultimately, they are beyond the power of rational empiricism to answer. The answers cannot be reduced into mathematical equations; no computer model or graphic representation can begin to capture the complexity of the national interest. Finding the answers, and casting them in terms of the national interest, requires first that a leap of faith be taken, an exertion of the will to believe in the timeless validity of the ideals of the American Dream. Those who seek to understand the national interest, and plan the strategies which will protect it in the future, must take that leap, and assert, along with Walter Lippman, that

"The American idea is not an eccentricity in the history of mankind. It is a hope and a pledge of fulfillment." [139]

In the final analysis, the national interest is that which moves the nation toward fulfillment of the idea.

END NOTES

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2. For a concise summary of this research method, see Jarol B. Manheim and Richard C. Rich, Empirical Political Analysis: Research Methods in Political Science, Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1981, 158-161.
3. For the best summary of this research method, see Alexander L. George, "Case Studies and Theory Development: Method of Structured, Focused Comparison," in Paul Gordon Lauren (editor). Diplomacy: New Approaches in History, Theory, and Policy, New York, 1979, 43-68.
4. For a description of the application of logical analysis to social science research problems, see Wilson Gee, Social Science Research Methods, New York, 1959, 292.
5. For additional comments on this semantic convention, see Wayne A. R. Leys and Charner Marquis Perry, "Philosophy and the Public Interest," unpublished document prepared for symposium of The American Philosophical Association held May 1, 1959, Appendix D, 68-69.
6. This dominance is reflected in such standard works as Morton White, The Age of Analysis, New York, 1955, and Albert W. Levi, Philosophy in The Modern World, Bloomington, Indiana, 1951.
7. The following synopsis is derived from Morgenthau's best-known work, Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace, New York, 1948/1967 (4th ed.), 4-14.
8. Many early American literary classics reflect or praise these characteristics. Among the best-known are Ralph Waldo Emerson's "Self-Reliance," The Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson, New York, (date missing) and Benjamin Franklin, The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin, Collier, New York, 1956.
9. For a discussion of the intellectual roots of Pragmatism, see Albert W. Levi, op. cit. [Note 6].

10. In addition to popular music such as this song, the malaise of twentieth century America has also been reflected in some of the most thoughtful and provocative literary works. Examples include John Dos Pasos, American Trilogy, Ernest Hemingway, A Farewell to Arms, Norman Mailer, The Naked and The Dead, and Joseph Heller, Catch 22.
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