VINTAGE

DETERRING DEMOCRACY

NOAM CHOMSKY

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About the Book

From World War II until the 1980s, the United States reigned supreme as both the economic and the military leader of the world. The major shifts in global politics that came about with the dismantling of the Eastern Bloc have left the United States unchallenged as the pre-eminent military power, but American economic might has declined drastically in the face of competition, first from Germany and Japan and more recently from the newly prosperous countries elsewhere.

In this book, Noam Chomsky points to the potentially catastrophic consequences of this imbalance. He reveals a world in which the United States exploits its advantage ruthlessly to enforce its national interests – and in the process destroys weaker nations.

Deterring Democracy offers a devastating analysis of American Imperialism, drawing alarming connections between its repression of information inside the US and its aggressive empire-building abroad.

About the Author

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ALSO BY NOAM CHOMSKY

Manufacturing Consent
(with Edward S. Herman)
Understanding Power

Noam Chomsky

Deterring Democracy

VINTAGE BOOKS
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SOURCES

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> …the government of the world must be entrusted to satisfied nations, who wished nothing more for themselves than what they had. If the world-government were in the hands of hungry nations, there would always be danger. But none of us had any reason to seek for anything more. The peace would be kept by peoples who lived in their own way and were not ambitious. Our power placed us above the rest. We were like rich men dwelling at peace within their habitations.
>
> WINSTON CHURCHILL

INTRODUCTION

HISTORY does not come neatly packaged into distinct periods, but by imposing such a structure upon it, we can sometimes gain clarity without doing too much violence to the facts. One such period was initiated with the Second World War, a new phase in world affairs in which "the United States was the hegemonic power in a system of world order" (Harvard government professor and foreign policy adviser, Samuel Huntington). This phase was visibly drawing to a close in the 1970s, as the state capitalist world moved towards a tripolar structure with economic power centered in the United States, Japan, and the German-based European Community. As for the Soviet Union, the military build-up initiated after Soviet weakness was dramatically revealed during the Cuban missile crisis was beginning to level off; Moscow's capacity to influence and coerce, always far inferior to that of the hegemonic power, was continuing to decline from its late-1950s peak. Furthermore, internal pressures were mounting as the economy stagnated, unable to enter a new phase of "post-industrial" modernization, and as broader sectors of the population demonstrated their unwillingness to submit to totalitarian constraints. Plainly, Europe and Japan posed a greater potential threat to US dominance than the fading Soviet Union.

These developments were reasonably clear by the late 1970s, but a different conception was needed as a rationale for the policies then being implemented to maintain US global dominance and to provide a needed shot in the arm to high technology industry: the picture of a fearsome

Soviet Union marching from strength to strength and posing an awesome challenge to Western Civilization. These illusions lacked credibility at the time, and became completely unsustainable through the next decade. Meanwhile the observations of the preceding paragraph have become virtual truisms.[fn1]

This pattern has been standard through the postwar era—and, in fact, it illustrates far more general regularities of statecraft and the ideological structures that accompany it. As if by reflex, state managers plead "security" to justify their programs. The plea rarely survives scrutiny. We regularly find that security threats are contrived—and, once contrived for other purposes, sometimes believed—to induce a reluctant public to accept overseas adventures or costly intervention in the domestic economy. The factors that have typically driven policy in the postwar period are the need to impose or maintain a global system that will serve state power and the closely linked interests of the masters of the private economy, and to ensure its viability by means of public subsidy and a state-guaranteed market. The highly ramified Pentagon system has been the major instrument for achieving these goals at home and abroad, always on the pretext of defense against the Soviet menace. To a significant extent, the threat of the Soviet Union and other enemies has risen or declined as these ends require.[fn2]

Strategic theory and the policy sciences are supple instruments, rarely at a loss to provide the required argument and analysis to buttress the conclusion of the moment.

We can, then, identify a period from World War II, continuing into the 1970s, in which the US dominated much of the world, confronting a rival superpower of considerably more limited reach. We may adopt conventional usage and refer to this as the Cold War era, as long as we are careful not to carry along, without

reflection, the ideological baggage devised to shape understanding in the interests of domestic power.

One of the themes of the chapters that follow is the significance and implications of these changes in the world order, but with a particular focus: with regard to US policies and those most affected by them.

There is a striking imbalance in the "post-Cold War" international system: the economic order is tripolar, but the military order is not. The United States remains the only power with the will and the capacity to exercise force on a global scale—even more freely than before, with the fading of the Soviet deterrent. But the US no longer enjoys the preponderance of economic power that had enabled it to maintain an aggressive and interventionist military posture since World War II. Military power not backed by a comparable economic base has its limits as a means of coercion and domination. It may well inspire adventurism, a tendency to lead with one's strength, possibly with catastrophic consequences.

These features of the international system have been manifest in the varying reactions of the industrial powers to the collapse of the Soviet empire, and in the early post-Cold War US military operations, the invasion of Panama and the response to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait. In the latter case, just unfolding as these words are written, the tension between economic tripolarity and military unipolarity is particularly evident. Despite the very hazardous possible consequence of military conflict, the virtually instinctive US government reaction was to direct the confrontation to the arena of force, undercutting possible diplomatic opportunities and even expressing deep concern that others might be tempted to seek to "defuse the crisis" by diplomatic means, achieving the goals sought generally by the international community but without a decisive demonstration of the effectiveness of US military power and resolve.[fn3]

In the evolving world order, the comparative advantage of the United States lies in military force, in which it ranks supreme. Diplomacy and international law have always been regarded as an annoying encumbrance, unless they can be used to advantage against an enemy. Every active player in world affairs professes to seek only peace and to prefer negotiations to violence and coercion—even Hitler; but when the veil is lifted, we commonly see that diplomacy is understood as a disguise for the rule of force. With the current configuration of US strengths and weaknesses, the temptation to transfer problems quickly to the arena of forceful confrontation is likely to be strong. Furthermore, though the United States cannot regain the economic supremacy of an earlier period, it is committed to maintaining its status as the sole military superpower, with no probable contestant for that role. One consequence will be exacerbation of domestic economic difficulties; another, a renewed temptation to "go it alone" in relying on the threat of force rather than diplomacy.

The Gulf conflict brought these issues to the fore. Aside from Britain, which has its own interests in Kuwait, the other major industrial powers showed little interest in military confrontation. The reaction in Washington was ambivalent. War is dangerous; defusing the crisis without a demonstration of the efficacy of force is also an unwanted outcome. As for the costs, plainly it would be advantageous for them to be shared, but not at the price of sacrificing the role of lone enforcer. These conflicting concerns led to a sharp elite split over the tactical choice between preparation for war and reliance on sanctions, with the Administration holding to the former course.

In the past, the United States and its clients have often found themselves "politically weak" (that is, lacking popular support in some region targeted for intervention) though militarily and economically strong, a formula commonly used on all sides. Under such conditions, it is

natural to prefer military force, terror, and economic warfare to the peaceful means dictated by international law. With lagging economic strength, the temptation to resort to force is only heightened.

It is fitting that the first two occasions for the use of force in this (partially) new era should have been in Central America and the Gulf. Political analysts and advisers often draw a distinction between "our needs" and "our wants," the former exemplified by the Middle East, with its incomparable energy resources; the latter by Central America, of no major strategic or economic significance, but a domain in which the US rules by tradition. In the case of mere "wants," tactical preferences may vary. Our "needs" in the Middle East, it is regularly argued, legitimate extreme measures to preserve US dominance and to ensure that no independent indigenous force (or foreign power, had this been a serious possibility in the postwar era) might gain substantial influence over the production and distribution of the region's petroleum resources. To the extent feasible, these are to be dominated by the United States, its allies and regional clients, and its oil corporations—a doctrine that might virtually be regarded as "Axiom One of international affairs," I suggested in writing about this matter in the mid 1970s, at the time of the first oil crisis.[fn4]

These features of the international system also have their conventional expression (the United States must bear the burden of enforcing good behavior worldwide, and so on). But such ideological fetters must be removed if there is to be any hope of gaining a realistic understanding of what lies ahead.

There is, indeed, a "New World Order" taking shape, marked by the diffusion of power in US domains and the collapse of the Russian empire and the tyranny at its heart. These developments leave the US as the overwhelmingly dominant military force and offer the three economic power

centers the attractive prospect of incorporating the former Soviet system into their Third World domains. These must still be controlled, sometimes by force. This has been the responsibility of the United States, but with its relative economic decline, the task becomes a harder one to shoulder.

One reaction is that the US must persist in its historic task, while turning to others to pay the bills. Testifying before Congress, Deputy Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger explained that the emerging New World Order will be based on "a kind of new invention in the practice of diplomacy": others will pay the costs of US intervention to keep order. A respected commentator on international economic affairs describes the Gulf crisis as a "watershed event in US international relations," which will be seen in history as having "turned the US military into an internationally financed public good," "an internationally financed police force." While "some Americans will question the morality of the US military assuming a more explicitly mercenary role than it has played in the past, … in the 1990s there is no realistic alternative…." The tacit assumption is that the public welfare is to be identified with the welfare of the Western industrial powers, and particularly their domestic elites.[fn5]

The financial editor of a leading conservative daily puts the essential point less delicately: we must exploit out "virtual monopoly in the security market … as a lever to gain funds and economic concessions" from German-led Europe and Japan. The US has "cornered the West's security market" and others lack the "political will … to challenge the U.S." in this "market." We will therefore be "the world's rent-a-cops" and will be "able to charge handsomely" for the service; the term "rent-a-thug" would be less flattering but more appropriate. Some will call us "Hessians," the author continues, but "that's a terribly demeaning phrase for a proud, well-trained, well-financed

and well-respected military"; and whatever anyone may say, "we should be able to pound our fists on a few desks" in Japan and Europe, and "extract a fair price for our considerable services," demanding that our rivals "buy our bonds at cheap rates, or keep the dollar propped up, or better yet, pay cash directly into out Treasury." "We could change this role" of enforcer, he concludes, "but with it would go much of our control over the world economic system."[fn6]

This conception, while rarely put so bluntly, is widely held in one or another form, and captures an essential element of the Administration reaction to the Gulf crisis. It implies that the US should continue to take on the grim task of imposing order and stability (meaning proper respect for the masters) with the acquiescence and support of the other industrial powers along with riches funneled to the US via the dependent oil-producing monarchies.

Parallel domestic developments add another dimension to the picture. Studies by the US Labor Department and others predict serious shortages of skilled labor (everything from scientists and managers to technicians and typists) as the educational system deteriorates, part of the collapse of infrastructure accelerated by Reaganite social and economic policies. The tendency may be mitigated by modification of immigration laws to encourage a brain drain, but that is not likely to prove adequate. The predicted result is that the cost of skilled labor will rise and transnational corporations will transfer research, product development and design, marketing, and other such operations elsewhere. For the growing underclass, opportunities will still be available as Hessians. It takes little imagination to picture the consequences if such expectations—not inevitable, but also not unrealistic—are indeed realized.[fn7]

All of these questions arise, in various ways, in the chapters that follow.

The successes of the popular movements of Eastern and Central Europe are a historic achievement in the unending struggle for freedom and democracy throughout the world. Throughout history, such successes have elicited efforts to institute order and docility and thus to contain and deter the threat to privilege. The modalities range from large-scale violence to more subtle devices of control, particularly in more democratic societies. These include the structuring of values and operative choices,[fn8] and measures to control thought and opinion—what we call 'propaganda' in the case of enemy states.

The concept of thought control in democratic societies—or, for that matter, the structuring of options in a democratic society by hierarchic and coercive private institutions—seems contradictory on its face. A society is democratic to the extent that its citizens play a meaningful role in managing public affairs. If their thought is controlled, or their options are narrowly restricted, then evidently they are not playing a meaningful role: only the controllers, and those they serve, are doing so. The rest is a sham, formal motions without meaning. So, a contradiction. Nevertheless, there has been a major current of intellectual opinion to the contrary, holding that thought control is essential precisely in societies that are more free and democratic, even when institutional means effectively restrict the options available in practice. Such ideas and their implementation are perhaps more advanced in the United States than anywhere else, a reflection of the fact that it is in important respects the most free society in the world.

The interplay of freedom and control is a second theme of the chapters that follow, addressed from several perspectives.

The opening and concluding chapters contain some general observations on the points just outlined. Chapters 2 through 7 survey the range of prospects and problems

facing the US leadership, and active and engaged segments of the public, under the partially new conditions now taking shape. The remaining chapters consider the operative concept of democracy, and the attitude towards popular movements and independence, as revealed in concrete situations and background thinking; examples are drawn primarily from Central America and early postwar Europe, but could easily be extended to other regions, the policies being quite general, with stable institutional roots. An afterword, added in November 1991, reviews the events in the Gulf and their aftermath, placing them within the setting of the stable institutional factors that guide domestic and foreign policy.

I have discussed these topics in a number of books, to which I would like to refer as general background where specific details and documentation are not provided below.[fn9] The material here is based in part on articles in *Zeta* (*Z*) *Magazine* from 1988, generally excerpted from longer unpublished manuscripts; or from talks through the same period, some appearing in a different form in conference proceedings. These have been edited and revised to reduce overlap, with considerable new material added.

December 1990

Notes

The following abbreviations are used for some sources cited in the Notes:

AFP	Agence France Presse
AI	Amnesty International
AP	Associated Press

BG	*Boston Globe*
CSM	*Christian Science Monitor*
FEER	*Far Eastern Economic Review*
JP	*Jerusalem Post*
LAT	*Los Angeles Times*
NPR	National Public Radio
NYRB	*New York Review of Books*
NYT	*New York Times*
PBS	Public Broadcasting Service
PPS	Public Papers of the Presidents
TNR	*The New Republic*
UPI	United Press International
WP	*Washington Post*
WSJ	*Wall Street Journal*

fn1. For discussion at the time, see my *Towards a New Cold War* (Pantheon, 1982), particularly the Introduction and ch. 7. This is generally presupposed in what follows, along with further comment on these matters in my *Turning the Tide* (South End, 1985), *On Power and Ideology* (South End, 1987). The quoted phrase is from a report to the Trilateral Commission in M.J. Crozier, S.P. Huntington, and J. Watanuki, *The Crisis of Democracy* (New York University, 1975).

fn2. See reference of Note 1; also William A. Schwartz and Charles Derber, *et al., The Nuclear Seduction* (University of California, 1990).

fn3. Thomas Friedman, "Behind Bush's Hard Line," *NYT*, August 22, 1990. See Chapter 6 for further discussion, and Chapter 1, section 5, for background.

fn4. "The Interim Agreement," *New Politics*, no. 3, 1976; see *Towards a New Cold War*, chs 11, 8. See the latter, and Chapter 8 below, for several examples from the foreign affairs literature making the distinction between "needs" and "wants" in essentially these terms.

fn5. Mary Curtius, "US asks allies to help pay for its continued leadership," *BG*, September 20; David Hale, chief economist of Kemper Financial Services, Chicago, "How to pay for the global policeman," *Financial Times* (London), November 21, 1990.

fn6. William Neikirk, "We are the world's guardian angels," *Chicago Tribune* business section, September 9, 1990.

fn7. AP, reporting a study of the Cornell University School of Industrial and Labor Relations, September 9, 1990.

fn8. For a lucid and penetrating discussion of these modalities within capitalist democracy, see Joshua Cohen and Joel Rogers, *On Democracy*

(Penguin, 1982).

fn9. Among them, those cited in Note 1. Also, *Political Economy of Human Rights* (with Edward S. Herman, 2 vols) (South End, 1979), *Fateful Triangle* (South End, 1983), *Pirates and Emperors* (Claremont, Black Rose, 1986), *Culture of Terrorism* (South End, 1987), *Manufacturing Consent* (with E.S. Herman) (Pantheon, 1988), *Necessary Illusions* (South End, 1989).

ONE

Cold War: Fact and Fancy

THE great event of the current era is commonly taken to be the end of the Cold War, and the great question before us therefore is: What comes next? To answer this question, we have to begin by clarifying what the Cold War has been. There are two ways to approach this prior question. One is simply to accept the conventional interpretation; the second is to look at the historical facts. As is often the case, the two approaches yield rather different answers.

1. The Cold War as Ideological Construct

According to the conventional understanding, the Cold War has been a confrontation between two superpowers. We then find several variants. The orthodox version, which is overwhelmingly dominant, holds that the driving factor in the Cold War has been virulent Soviet aggressiveness, which the United States sought to contain. On one side of the conflict, we have a "nightmare," on the other, the "defender of freedom," to borrow the terms of the ultra-right John Birch Society, right-wing fundamentalist preachers, and liberal American intellectuals, who responded with awe and acclaim when these words were used by Václav Havel in addressing Congress in 1990.[fn1]

A critical variant argues that the perception of a Soviet threat was exaggerated; the dangers were less extreme than we thought. US policies, while noble in intent, were based on misunderstanding and analytic error. A still sharper critique holds that the superpower confrontation

resulted from an interaction in which the United States also played a role (for some analysts, a major role) and that the contrast is not simply one of nightmare versus defense of freedom, but is more complex—in Central America and the Caribbean, for example.

According to all variants, the essential doctrines guiding US policy have been containment and deterrence, or, more ambitiously, "rollback." And the Cold War is now at an end, with the capitulation of one antagonist—the aggressor throughout, according to the orthodox version.

The orthodox version is sketched in stark and vivid terms in what is widely recognized to be the basic US Cold War document, NSC 68 in April 1950, shortly before the Korean War, announcing that "the cold war is in fact a real war in which the survival of the free world is at stake."[fn2] It merits attention, both as an early expression of the conventional understanding in its orthodox variant and for insights into historical realities that lie beyond these ideological constructs.

The basic structures of the argument has the childlike simplicity of a fairy tale. There are two forces in the world, at "opposite poles." In one corner we have absolute evil; in the other, sublimity. There can be no compromise between them. The diabolical force, by its very nature, must seek total domination of the world. Therefore it must be overcome, uprooted, and eliminated so that the virtuous champion of all that is good may survive to perform his exalted works.

The "fundamental design of the Kremlin," NSC 68 author Paul Nitze explains, is "the complete subversion or forcible destruction of the machinery of government and structure of society" in every corner of the world that is not yet "subservient to and controlled from the Kremlin." "The implacable purpose of the slave state [is] to eliminate the challenge of freedom" everywhere. The "compulsion" of the Kremlin "demands total power over all men" in the slave

state itself, and “absolute authority over the rest of the world.” The force of evil is “inescapably militant,” so that no accommodation or peaceful settlement is even thinkable.

In contrast, the “fundamental purpose of the United States” is “to assure the integrity and vitality of our free society, which is founded upon the dignity and worth of the individual,” and to safeguard these values throughout the world. Our free society is marked by “marvelous diversity,” “deep tolerance,” “lawfulness,” a commitment “to create and maintain and environment in which every individual has the opportunity to realize his creative powers.” It “does not fear, it welcomes, diversity” and “derives its strength from its hospitality even to antipathetic ideas.” The “system of values which animates our society” includes “the principles of freedom, tolerance, the importance of the individual and the supremacy of reason over will.” “The essential tolerance of our world outlook, our generous and constructive impulses, and the absence of covetousness in our international relations are asset of potentially enormous influence,” particularly these qualities at first hand, as in Latin America, which has benefited so much from “our long continuing endeavors to create and now develop the Inter-American system.”

The conflict between the forces of light and darkness is “momentous, involving the fulfillment or destruction not only of this Republic but of civilization itself.” “The assault on free institutions is world-wide,” and “imposes on us, in our own interests, the responsibility of world leadership.” We must seek “to foster a world environment in which the American system can survive and flourish.” Since “a defeat of free institutions anywhere is a defeat everywhere,” no corner of the world, however tiny and insignificant, can escape our ministrations. And surely “the idea that Germany or Japan or other important areas can exist as islands of neutrality in a divided world is unreal, given the

Kremlin design for world domination." Five years after the USSR was virtually annihilated by the Axis powers, they must be reconstituted within a US-dominated alliance committed to the final elimination of the Soviet system that they failed to destroy.

Given that "the integrity and vitality of our system is in greater jeopardy than ever before in our history," even in the darkest days of the War of Independence or when British troops captured Washington in 1814, it is clear that serious measures are in order, in fact, military spending nearly quadrupled shortly after, on the pretext that the invasion of South Korea was the first step in the Kremlin conquest of the world—despite the lack of compelling evidence, then or now, for Russian initiative in this phase of the complex struggle over the fate of Korea.

The memorandum calls for a huge increase in armaments, while recognizing that the slave state was far weaker than the champion of freedom by any measure. Relevant data are presented in such a way as to obscure direct comparisons and selected to exaggerate the enemy's strength, the standard pattern throughout the Cold War era.[fn3] Nevertheless, even the data presented show the US military budget to be double that of the USSR and its economic power four times as great, while in this early stage of rebuilding their far more powerful economies, the European allies alone already matched the Soviet Union along with its satellites.

Despite the disparity between the two opposite poles in economic level and military force, the slave state has enormous advantages. Being so backward, it "can do more with less"; its weakness is its strength, the ultimate weapon. It is both midget and superman, far behind us by every measure but with "a formidable capacity to act with the widest tactical latitude, with stealth and speed," with "extraordinary flexibility," a highly effective military machine and "great coercive power." Another problem is

that the evil enemy finds a “receptive audience … in the free world,” particularly Asia. To defend Europe and protect the freedom that has traditionally reigned in Africa, Asia, and Latin America from the “Kremlin design,” we must therefore vastly increase military spending and adopt a strategy aimed at the break-up and collapse of the Soviet Union.

Our military forces are “dangerously inadequate,” because our responsibility is world control; in contrast, the far weaker Soviet military forces greatly exceed their limited defensive needs. Nothing that had happened in the past year suggested that the USSR might face some security problems, in contrast to us, with our vulnerability to powerful enemies everywhere. We need vast military forces “not only for protection against disaster but also to support our foreign policy,” though for public relations purposes, “emphasis should be given to the essentially defensive character” of the military build-up.

Public relations aside, our actual stance must be aggressive in “the conflict which has been imposed upon us.” “Given the Kremlin design for world domination,” a necessary feature of the slave state, we cannot accept the existence of the enemy but must “foster the seeds of destruction within the Soviet system” and “hasten [its] decay” by all means short of war (which is too dangerous for us). We must avoid negotiations, except as a device to placate public opinion, because any agreements “would reflect present realities and would therefore be unacceptable, if not disastrous, to the United States and the rest of the free world,” though after the success of a “rollback” strategy we may “negotiate a settlement with the Soviet Union (or a successor state or states).”

To achieve these essential goals, we must overcome weaknesses in our society, such as “the excesses of a permanently open mind,” “the excess of tolerance,” and “dissent among us.” We will have to learn to “distinguish

between the necessity for tolerance and the necessity for just suppression," a crucial feature of "the democratic way." It is particularly important to insulate our "labor unions, civic enterprises, schools, churches, and all media for influencing opinion" from the "evil work" of the Kremlin, which seeks to subvert them and "make them sources of confusion in our economy, our culture and our body politic." Increased taxes are also necessary, along with "Reduction of Federal expenditures for purposes other than defense and foreign assistance, if necessary by the deferment of certain desirable programs." These military Keynesian policies, it is suggested, are likely to stimulate the domestic economy as well. Indeed, they may serve to prevent "a decline in economic activity of serious proportions." "A large measure of sacrifice and discipline will be demanded of the American people," and they also must "give up some of the benefits" they enjoy as we assume the mantle of world leadership and overcome the economic recession, already in progress, by "positive governmental programs" to subsidize advanced industry through the military system.

Notice that the noble purpose of the free society and the evil design of the slave state are innate properties, which derive from their very nature. Hence the actual historical and documentary record is not relevant to assessing the validity of these doctrines. Accordingly, it is unfair to criticize the memorandum on the grounds that no evidence is presented to support its conclusions, and to question such locutions as "it is apparent from the preceding sections," or "it has been shown above," on the same grounds. As a matter of logic, no empirical evidence is required; pure thought suffices to establish the required truths.

In public discourse the same conceptions reigned, and still do. A characteristic expression of the conventional

understanding is given by William Hyland, editor of *Foreign Affairs*, in the lead article of the Spring 1990 issue:

> For the past fifty years American foreign policy has been formed in response to the threat posed by this country's opponents and enemies. In virtually every year since Pearl Harbor, the United States has been engaged either in war or in confrontation. Now, for the first time in half a century, the United States has the opportunity to reconstruct its foreign policy free of most of the constraints and pressures of the Cold War. … Since 1941 the United States has been fully entangled. Now as we move into a new era, a yearning for American nonentanglement may be returning in various guises. … Can America at long last come home? … The United States does in fact enjoy the luxury of some genuine choices for the first time since 1945. America and its allies have won the Cold War …

Thus, we had no "genuine choices" when we invaded South Vietnam, overthrew the democratic capitalist government of Guatemala in 1954 and have maintained the rule of murderous gangsters ever since, ran by far the most extensive international terror operations in history against Cuba from the early 1960s and Nicaragua through the 1980s, sought to assassinate Lumumba and installed and maintained the brutal and corrupt Mobutu dictatorship, backed Trujillo, Somoza, Marcos, Duvalier, the generals of the southern cone, Suharto, the racist rulers of southern Africa, and a whole host of other major criminals; and on, and on. We could do nothing else, given the threat to our existence. But now the enemy has retreated, so we can perhaps satisfy our "yearning for nonentanglement" in the affairs of others; though, as others add, our "yearning for democracy"[fn4] may yet impel us to persist in our noble endeavors in defense of freedom.

With choices available for the first time, we can turn to constructive programs for the Third World (as liberal humanists urge) or leave the undeserving poor to wallow in their misery (the conservative position). Expressing the more caring liberal view, Thomas Schoenbaum, executive director of the Dean Rusk Center of International and Comparative Law at the University of Georgia, calls for "more finely tuned and differentiated policies" in the "complex and heterogeneous areas" of the Third World. Constrained by the overwhelming imperative of resisting Soviet aggression throughout the world, we have been unable to develop such policies. But now, perhaps, we have reached "the end of the Cold War—and the good guys won." We may therefore hope that the Soviets will "mute their longstanding campaign to support communist revolutions and totalitarian regimes in the Third World," so that "the U.S. may be able to abandon its traditional posture—that priority should be given to stopping communist expansion—and adopt more positive policies."[fn5]

In other respects too the public record conforms to the conventions of NSC 68. In particular, it is widely recognized that the very existence of the Soviet Union constitutes aggression. Diplomatic historian John Lewis Gaddis, one of the most respected figures of liberal scholarship on the Cold War, explains that the allied intervention immediately after the Bolshevik revolution was defensive in nature, and for Woodrow Wilson, was inspired "above all else" by his fervent desire "to secure self-determination in Russia"—by forceful installation of the rulers we select. The invasion was defensive because it was "in response to a profound and potentially far-reaching intervention by the new Soviet government in the internal affairs, not just of the West, but of virtually every country in the world," namely, "the Revolution's challenge—which could hardly have been more categorical—to the very survival of the capitalist order." "The security of the United