Mainsprings of World Politics

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This booklet has been written in the interest of public information on and discussion of America's post war policies. Any comment or criticism of the general thesis will be welcomed.

The views expressed are the author's and do not necessarily represent those of the Council on World Affairs.

Mainsprings of
WORLD POLITICS
America's Power Position

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Introduction

The history of the modern world has been marked by four great peace settlements: Westphalia, 1648, which brought to a close the Thirty Years War; Utrecht, 1713, which ended the War of the Spanish Succession; Vienna, 1815, which followed the defeat of Napoleon; and Versailles, 1919, which terminated World War I.

BEGINNING OF THE MODERN STATE

Of these four settlements the Peace of Westphalia was historically the most significant in several respects. In the first place, it brought to a close a long succession of bloody religious conflicts and settled the principle that Europe could remain half Catholic and half Protestant. But even more important, it established the idea of the nation as a sovereign independent unit, and defined the modern state system.

Europe at that time marked the limits of Western civilization, except for certain colonial areas. The other regions of the earth were either unexplored or comprised the peoples of Oriental and Mohammedan culture, to whom the concept of the sovereign independent state was completely foreign.

Since that time the world has become universally organized along the lines of the European state system. As Western civilization has spread and embraced the entire surface of the earth,
all peoples have accepted the idea of the territorially defined sovereign independent state. Under this system no nation owes allegiance to a higher sovereign authority nor brooks any interference with its internal or external affairs, unless by its own choice or through forced submission to the superior power of another state or coalition.

"THE BALANCE OF POWER"
It is in these respects that the Peace Settlements of Utrecht, Vienna and Versailles are historically of great interest. Each marked the reconstruction of the state system following a tremendous upheaval which arose from the attempt of a single nation or coalition to destroy that system by conquest. Thus the idea of Louis XIV and of Napoleon that France should dominate the Continent and thereby upset "the balance of power" between the nations of Europe, was as intolerable to British sovereign interests as to the other nations, victims of French conquests. The similar ambitions of Germany under Wilhelm II and Hitler have been productive of identical reactions, though on a tremendous world-wide scale.

Wars have existed from earliest times between groups of mankind. They are not, therefore, peculiar to the nation-state system. In fact the Western world has known but two periods of relative peace. The first of these periods existed during the single sovereignty of the Roman Empire. Only "barbarians" lived outside and they were beyond the pale of Roman civilization and law. The second period prevailed during the medieval papacy, under whose temporal powers some moderating influence over the conflicting ambitions of ruling princes was exercised. In neither instance, however, did the sovereign independent state, as we understand it, exist.

PRINCES, PEOPLES, AND "ECONOMIC NATIONALISM"
With the development of the nation-state system, the nature of wars has varied from century to century. Between the Peace of Westphalia and the French Revolution, conflicts between nations were primarily dynastic struggles. The rivalry of the sovereign princes for possession of larger territories and colonial holdings typified this period. But since Europe was composed of sovereign independent states, the attempt of any one or combination of them to gain sufficient power to threaten the security of the others, served to upset the existing equilibrium. Thus the balance-of-power system became the natural by-product of the nation-state system. The wars of Louis XIV, of Napoleon, of Kaiser Wilhelm II and of Nazi Germany have each in turn challenged that system with identical reactions on the part of nations whose security was thereby threatened.

But if the wars of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were largely dynastic, those of the nineteenth and twentieth have become primarily nationalistic. It was the French Revolution that introduced a new phase in the conflict of states by giving rise in Europe and the rest of the world to a strong spirit of nationalism. During most of the nineteenth century this generally took the form of irredentist or ethnic struggles, motivated by the desire of groups of people with like background and customs, or speaking the same language, to unite under a single sovereignty. The unification of Italy, through the efforts of Mazzini and Garibaldi, and of Germany under Bismarck, were both an expression of this desire and resulted in the creation of two Great Powers.

World War I gave impetus to another force with explosive potentialities, i.e., economic nationalism. This came as a natural result of the ever-tightening squeeze of competition between nations unequal one to another, and territorially limited in many cases both as to the means of livelihood and of power.
LAWS FOR NATIONS

But while wars have become more extended and devastating, there have likewise been considerable developments with respect to the peaceful settlement of disputes and the techniques of international organization. Since the writings of Grotius some three hundred years ago there has evolved a large body of public and international law. The conduct of nations among themselves has become more regularized in certain respects through universally accepted treaty engagements. But unlike domestic law, this vast body of rules of conduct has not received the necessary sanction of police power. Its only sanction has been the voluntary acceptance and good will of the sovereign states themselves.

Similarly in the realm of international government, a signal growth in administrative technique and arbitration has taken place. The nineteenth and early twentieth centuries witnessed frequent convenings of important world assemblies, devoted not only to peace arrangements following war but likewise to the adjustment of causes of conflict.

NATIONAL INTERESTS VS. INTERNATIONAL LAW

This long-established practice of international conference received recognition of permanent need under the Covenant of the League of Nations after 1919. All elements of national government, legislative, executive, administrative and judicial, were to be discovered in the League in the form of the Assembly, the Council, the Secretariat and the World Court. But adequate authority for these bodies was lacking in case of serious disagreement between the nations party to the Covenant, except for a degree of moral force. Despite the unprecedented expansion of machinery for preserving peace which has taken place during the twentieth century, wars have increased rather than decreased in extent and devastation. For no nation, and particularly no Great Power, has been willing to accede to the jurisdiction of the League, or to any other international body, in matters affecting vital national interests. And modern technology has placed armaments in the hands of nations with a destructive power beyond anything known to human history.

Since states have remained faithful to the doctrine of national sovereignty they have refused to conform their policies in essential matters to the dictates of public international interest. Similarly, in resisting the sanction of international law, the creation of an international police force, and the exercise of super-state authority, they have continued to interpret attempts at regional or world jurisdiction in their own affairs as a direct challenge to their sovereign rights and interests.

Under these conditions the pledge of the nations, signatories to the Kellogg Pact in 1928, to “renounce war as an instrument of national policy” was nothing more than an absurdity. No nation renounced thereby its right to proceed according to its own interpretation of its national interests. Nor did the signatories pledge the use of their armed forces either unilaterally or collectively to punish violators of the Pact.

ARMAMENTS AND RAW MATERIALS

Since states have been unwilling to subject their vital national interests to the restraints of international authority, it has followed naturally that they have sought to clothe their policies with force. Armaments in fact have always been the most familiar prerogative of sovereignty. But in the modern Age of Industrialism, only those nations which possessed the natural resources for the establishment of heavy industries could create the sinews of power necessary to maintain their individual sovereign rights.
against all challenging authority. Thus a premium has been placed upon the possession or availability of the industrial raw materials and agricultural resources of the world, since a nation's ability to defend its rights depends upon its own strength in relation to its neighbors.

Fundamentally, then, the central dilemma of international relations derives from the fact that the absence of super-state authority imposes upon each country ultimate dependence upon its own resources in the defense of its security. While ordinarily the ends of national policy will be achieved by peaceful means, once the gathering forces of recrimination, fear and greed become overwhelming, there remains no arbitrament but that of force.

WAR AND THE GREAT POWERS

But although war as an instrument of policy must naturally enter into the calculations of every nation, it becomes of critical importance for world relations only when the Great Powers are involved. For it is the Great Powers who possess the industries essential to the extensive manufacture of modern arms. The smaller states find themselves in a position of virtually complete dependence, wherein they have become the hapless as well as the helpless victims of the vicious workings of the modern state system. There can be no more eloquent proof of this than the fact that the Great Powers and China alone make possible the continuance of the present war. All the smaller nations have become either direct victims of conquest by the aggressors, or are but limited participants, or benevolent neutrals in the conflict.

Not all the Great Powers have resorted to war as a matter of choice. For it is evident that Soviet Russia, the United States, the British Empire and France desired nothing more than to be left alone. The same of course is true of China. These were nations whose territories were large and rich and who had no designs upon the lands of their neighbors. Germany, Japan and Italy on the other hand, had been far from satisfied with their lot. Being without many of the basic raw material essentials of industrialized power, they sought to reinforce their position through the expansion of their territories and areas of economic control.

To the student of world affairs, therefore, it is evident that one is confronted with two mutually exclusive expressions of the national policies of different states, those which are static and those which are dynamic. This is indeed the very heart of the problem of peace in the contemporary world. For it appears to be posed by the demand of one group of peoples for security based on the maintenance of the status quo, and of another for security attainable only, in their view, by a modification of the status quo.

OUR PLACE IN THE WORLD

At the close of the present war, this dilemma of power politics will have reached an even more acute stage. For in place of seven Great Powers only three, the United States, Soviet Russia and the British Empire will have emerged intact and powerfully armed. The destiny of all other peoples will be determined primarily by the initial decisions and policies of this exclusive and limited triumvirate. Of the three, the position taken by the United States as to the future peace will become a portent for good or evil beyond anything heretofore known in human history.

It is these basic considerations of world affairs which are to be the subject of the pages which follow. And the first essential in the understanding of them is a knowledge of the Map.
1. The Map

A globe provides the only accurate representation of the earth's surface. But it has certain disadvantages. We cannot carry it around for reference wherever we go. The human eye, moreover, is incapable of seeing the entire surface all at once. Despite obvious inaccuracies, therefore, the flat surface map is more useful in the study of a world in which the problems of any part must be considered in relation to the whole.

Every flat surface map of the globe will of necessity produce certain misrepresentations. The purposes for which each is designed, therefore, have to be clearly understood and accompanying distortions taken into account. No single map can fulfill every need. This is particularly true in a world of aviation and

**THE MERCATOR MAP**

Broadly speaking, the three most familiar types of world maps are: the Mercator projection, and the so-called "Polar" and "Equal Area" projections. The first of these was originally designed by the Flemish geographer Gerhard Mercator, over three hundred years ago, and adopted by European navigators of sailing ships. It provided a means for plotting the true directions of the compass, whether one sailed around Africa to the shores of Asia or crossed the Atlantic to the Americas.

But the Mercator map has serious disadvantages. For instance the North and South Poles, each of which is only a point on the globe, become lines equal in length to the equator. This has the obvious effect of exaggerating disproportionately the land and sea areas as one approaches the Polar regions from the equator. Greenland and Scandinavia appear to be large land masses overlooking the continents of North America and Europe respectively, while Siberia fairly dwarfs China and India.

Another distortion of the Mercator projection is the representation it gives of the relative positions of the Americas and Eurasia. These two continents appear to lie side by side. In reality they both stem from the North Polar ice cap in such a manner that the west coast of North America and the east coast of Asia lie, not parallel one to another, but in almost perfect alignment. The Great Circle routes, too, which mark the shortest distance between two points of navigation, must be plotted by curved lines on the Mercator map rather than by straight lines. The shortest distance between California and Yokohama, for example, is not along the 35th parallel, as appears to be the case, but rather by an arc passing close to the Aleutians and Kamchatka. And the most
direct route by air from New York to Chungking is over the North Pole, instead of due west.

**Polar Projection**

In considering, therefore, the relative positions of the land areas of the Northern Hemisphere, the North Polar projection of the world map is preferable. Indeed, it has become almost a necessity for illustrating on a flat surface the impact of aviation upon the strategic problems of World War II. In addition, one is able to plot more adequately the “around the world” aspect of global war, a distinct advantage, since the principal battle areas lie in the Northern Hemisphere. One can understand more readily, too, why Alaska, Newfoundland and Iceland and certain isolated points in northern Scandinavia and Soviet Siberia are already important centers of air transport.

But useful as the Polar projection is in plotting the air routes and in illustrating the global aspects of the war between the Northern Hemisphere Powers, its limitations can readily be seen. For as one moves in any direction from the central point on which the map is plotted the distortions grow in size. Thus, in the North Polar projection the land and sea areas of the Southern Hemisphere appear even more incongruous than in the old Mercator map.

**Equal Area Maps**

A third type of map, one which is especially useful in indicating the topography, resources and transportation systems of the land
areas of the earth, is the projection commonly called "Equal Area." There are many different designs for this map, but most of them have the common principle of splitting the oceans in such a manner as to reduce to a minimum the distortions of the land masses of the globe. Thus Soviet Russia, Alaska and Greenland appear in proper proportion to Europe, the United States or Brazil. But the disadvantages of this map lie in the fact that the world is cut into separate segments and ocean areas distorted to much the same degree as the inaccuracies of the land masses are reduced.

DIFFERENT MAPS FOR DIFFERENT PURPOSES

The student of world affairs, therefore, needs to become thoroughly familiar with all three types of maps, understanding in each case the limited degree to which a true picture is presented. Up to the present war, generations of American citizens had never learned to visualize the globe correctly. Whenever they viewed a wall map of the world in their homes, classrooms or public meeting places, it was usually the Mercator projection which they saw. Even more unfortunate, the map with which they became familiar was the one originally designed for Europeans.

It was not until the last decade that American cartographers and educators generally thought of putting into use a world map in which the Eurasian continent is split in such a way as to illustrate the interoceanic position of the Americas with Asia on one side and Europe and Africa on the other. Formerly, America was usually represented as occupying a region apart on the left of the map, with Eurasia and Africa to the right.

One can hardly wonder that the average citizen in this country has failed to understand the world position of the United States, and that we have not as a people even yet become a mature nation so far as concerns our thinking on matters of foreign policy. Global war alone has forced us to recognize certain geographic realities which, if understood before, might have enabled us to avoid many of the tragedies of the present.

Maps have therefore a very great influence upon the opinions and judgments of the average citizen. This is particularly true when viewed in relation to a few obvious, though frequently forgotten, facts of geography.