



The Stability of a Bipolar World

Author(s): Kenneth N. Waltz

Source: *Daedalus*, Vol. 93, No. 3, Population, Prediction, Conflict, Existentialism (Summer, 1964), pp. 881-909

Published by: [The MIT Press](#) on behalf of [American Academy of Arts & Sciences](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20026863>

Accessed: 15/10/2011 20:22

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at
<http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



The MIT Press and American Academy of Arts & Sciences are collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Daedalus*.

<http://www.jstor.org>

KENNETH N. WALTZ

The Stability of a Bipolar World

THERE is a conventional wisdom, accumulated over the centuries, upon which statesmen and students often draw as they face problems in international politics. One part of the conventional wisdom is now often forgotten. Many in Europe, and some in America, have come to regard an alliance as unsatisfactory if the members of it are grossly unequal in power. "Real partnership," one hears said in a variety of ways, "is possible only between equals."¹ If this is true, an addendum should read: Only unreal partnerships among states have lasted beyond the moment of pressing danger. Where states in association have been near equals, some have voluntarily abdicated the leadership to others, or the alliance has become paralyzed by stalemate and indecision, or it has simply dissolved. One may observe that those who are less than equal are often dissatisfied without thereby concluding that equality in all things is good. As Machiavelli and Bismarck well knew, an alliance requires an alliance leader; and leadership can be most easily maintained where the leader is superior in power. Some may think of these two exemplars as unworthy; even so, where the unworthy were wise, their wisdom should be revived.

A second theorem of the conventional wisdom is still widely accepted. It reads: A world of many powers is more stable than a bipolar world, with stability measured by the peacefulness of adjustment within the international system and by the durability of the system itself. While the first element of the conventional wisdom might well be revived, the second should be radically revised.

Pessimism about the possibility of achieving stability in a two-power world was reinforced after the war by contemplation of the character of the two major contenders. The Soviet Union, led by a possibly psychotic Stalin, and the United States, flaccid, iso-

lationalist by tradition, and untutored in the ways of international relations, might well have been thought unsuited to the task of finding a route to survival. How could either reconcile itself to coexistence when ideological differences were great and antithetical interests provided constant occasion for conflict? Yet the bipolar world of the postwar period has shown a remarkable stability. Measuring time from the termination of war, 1964 corresponds to 1937. Despite all of the changes in the nineteen years since 1945 that might have shaken the world into another great war, 1964 somehow looks and feels safer than 1937. Is this true only because we now know that 1937 preceded the holocaust by just two years? Or is it the terror of nuclear weapons that has kept the world from major war? Or is the stability of the postwar world intimately related to its bipolar pattern?

Stability Within a Bipolar System

Within a bipolar world, four factors conjoined encourage the limitation of violence in the relations of states. First, with only two world powers there are no peripheries. The United States is the obsessing danger for the Soviet Union, and the Soviet Union for us, since each can damage the other to an extent that no other state can match. Any event in the world that involves the fortunes of the Soviet Union or the United States automatically elicits the interest of the other. Truman, at the time of the Korean invasion, could not very well echo Chamberlain's words in the Czechoslovakian crisis and claim that the Koreans were a people far away in the east of Asia of whom Americans knew nothing. We had to know about them or quickly find out. In the 1930's, France lay between England and Germany. England could believe, and we could too, that their frontier and ours lay on the Rhine. After World War II, no third power could lie between the United States and the Soviet Union, for none existed. The statement that peace is indivisible was controversial, indeed untrue, when it was made by Litvinov in the 1930's. It became a truism in the 1950's. Any possibility of maintaining a general peace required a willingness to fight small wars. With the competition both serious and intense, a loss to one could easily appear as a gain to the other, a conclusion that follows from the very condition of a two-power competition. Political action has corresponded to this assumption. Communist guerrillas operating in Greece prompted the Truman doctrine. The tightening of Soviet

The Stability of a Bipolar World

control over the states of Eastern Europe led to the Marshall Plan and the Atlantic Defense Treaty, and these in turn gave rise to the Cominform and the Warsaw Pact. The plan to form a West German government produced the Berlin blockade. Our response in a two-power world was geared to Soviet action, and theirs to ours, which produced an increasingly solid bipolar balance.

Not only are there no peripheries in a bipolar world but also, as a second consideration, the range of factors included in the competition is extended as the intensity of the competition increases. Increased intensity is expressed in a reluctance to accept small territorial losses, as in Korea, the Formosa Strait, and Indo-China. Extension of range is apparent wherever one looks. Vice President Nixon hailed the Supreme Court's desegregation decision as our greatest victory in the cold war. When it became increasingly clear that the Soviet economy was growing at a rate that far exceeded our own, many began to worry that falling behind in the economic race would lead to our losing the cold war without a shot being fired. Disarmament negotiations have most often been taken as an opportunity for propaganda. As contrasted with the 1930's, there is now constant and effective concern lest military preparation fall below the level necessitated by the military efforts of the major antagonist. Changes between the wars affected different states differently, with adjustment to the varying ambitions and abilities of states dependent on cumbrous mechanisms of compensation and realignment. In a multipower balance, who is a danger to whom is often a most obscure matter: the incentive to regard all disequilibrating changes with concern and respond to them with whatever effort may be required is consequently weakened. In our present world changes may affect each of the two powers differently, and this means all the more that few changes in the national realm or in the world at large are likely to be thought irrelevant. Policy proceeds by imitation, with occasional attempts to outflank.

The third distinguishing factor in the bipolar balance, as we have thus far known it, is the nearly constant presence of pressure and the recurrence of crises. It would be folly to assert that repeated threats and recurring crises necessarily decrease danger and promote stability. It may be equally wrong to assert the opposite, as Khrushchev seems to appreciate. "They frighten us with war," he told the Bulgarians in May of 1962, "and we frighten them back bit by bit. They threaten us with nuclear arms and we tell them: 'Listen, now only fools can do this, because we have them too, and

they are not smaller than yours but, we think, even better than yours. So why do you do foolish things and frighten us?' This is the situation, and this is why we consider the situation to be good."² Crises, born of a condition in which interests and ambitions conflict, are produced by the determination of one state to effect a change that another state chooses to resist. With the Berlin blockade, for example, as with Russia's emplacement of missiles in Cuba, the United States decided that to resist the change the Soviet Union sought to bring about was worth the cost of turning its action into a crisis. If the condition of conflict remains, the absence of crises becomes more disturbing than their recurrence. Rather a large crisis now than a small war later is an axiom that should precede the statement, often made, that to fight small wars in the present may be the means of avoiding large wars later.

Admittedly, crises also occur in a multipower world, but the dangers are diffused, responsibilities unclear, and definition of vital interests easily obscured. The skillful foreign policy, where many states are in balance, is designed to gain an advantage over one state without antagonizing others and frightening them into united action. Often in modern Europe, possible gains have seemed greater than likely losses. Statesmen could thus hope in crises to push an issue to the limit without causing all the potential opponents to unite. When possible enemies are several in number, unity of action among states is difficult to secure. One could therefore think—or hope desperately, as did Bethmann Hollweg and Adolph Hitler—that no united opposition would form.

In a bipolar world, on the other hand, attention is focused on crises by both of the major competitors, and especially by the defensive state. To move piecemeal and reap gains serially is difficult, for within a world in confusion there is one great certainty, namely, the knowledge of who will oppose whom. One's motto may still be, "push to the limit," but *limit* must be emphasized as heavily as *push*. Caution, moderation, and the management of crisis come to be of great and obvious importance.

Many argue, nonetheless, that caution in crises, and resulting bipolar stability, is accounted for by the existence of nuclear weapons, with the number of states involved comparatively inconsequential. That this is a doubtful deduction can be indicated by a consideration of how nuclear weapons may affect reactions to crises. In the postwar world, bipolarity preceded the construction of two opposing atomic weapons systems. The United States, with

The Stability of a Bipolar World

some success, substituted technological superiority for expenditure on a conventional military system as a deterrent to the Soviet Union during the years when we had first an atomic monopoly and then a decisive edge in quantity and quality of weapons. American military policy was not a matter of necessity but of preference based on a calculation of advantage. Some increase in expenditure and a different allocation of monies would have enabled the United States to deter the Soviet Union by posing credibly the threat that any Soviet attempt, say, to overwhelm West Germany would bring the United States into a large-scale conventional war.* For the Soviet Union, war against separate European states would have promised large gains; given the bipolar balance, no such war could be undertaken without the clear prospect of American entry. The Russians' appreciation of the situation is perhaps best illustrated by the structure of their military forces. The Soviet Union has concentrated heavily on medium-range bombers and missiles and, to our surprise, has built relatively few intercontinental weapons. The country of possibly aggressive intent has assumed a posture of passive deterrence vis-à-vis her major adversary, whom she quite sensibly does not want to fight. Against European and other lesser states, the Soviet Union has a considerable offensive capability.** Hence nuclear capabilities merely reinforce a condition that would exist in their absence: without nuclear technology both the United States and the Soviet Union have the ability to develop weapons of considerable destructive power. Even had the atom never been split, each

* The point has been made by Raymond Aron, among others. "Even if it had not had the bomb, would the United States have tolerated the expansion of the Soviet empire as far as the Atlantic? And would Stalin have been ready to face the risk of general war?" Raymond Aron, *The Century of Total War* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1955), p. 151.

** Hanson W. Baldwin, from information supplied by Strategic Air Command headquarters, estimates that Russian intercontinental missiles are one-fourth to one-fifth as numerous as ours, though Russian warheads are larger. The Russians have one-sixth to one-twelfth the number of our long-range heavy bombs, with ours having a greater capability (*New York Times*, November 21, 1963). In medium range ballistic missiles Russia has been superior. A report of the Institute of Strategic Studies estimated that as of October, 1962, Russia had 700 such missiles, the West a total of 250 (*New York Times*, November 9, 1962). British sources tend to place Russian capabilities in the medium range higher than do American estimates. Cf. P. M. S. Blackett, "The Real Road to Disarmament: The Military Background to the Geneva Talks," *New Statesman* (March 2, 1962), pp. 295-300, with Hanson W. Baldwin, *New York Times*, November 26, 1961.

would lose heavily if it were to engage in a major war against the other.

If number of states is less important than the existence of nuclear power, then one must ask whether the world balance would continue to be stable were three or more states able to raise themselves to comparable levels of nuclear potency. For many reasons one doubts that the equilibrium would be so secure. Worries about accidents and triggering are widespread, but a still greater danger might well arise. The existence of a number of nuclear states would increase the temptation for the more virile of them to maneuver, with defensive states paralyzed by the possession of military forces the use of which would mean their own destruction. One would be back in the 1930's, with the addition of a new dimension of strength which would increase the pressures upon status quo powers to make piecemeal concessions.

Because bipolarity preceded a two-power nuclear competition, because in the absence of nuclear weapons destructive power would still be great, because the existence of a number of nuclear states would increase the range of difficult political choices, and finally, as will be discussed below, because nuclear weapons must first be seen as a product of great national capabilities rather than as their cause, one is led to the conclusion that nuclear weapons cannot by themselves be used to explain the stability—or the instability—of international systems.

Taken together, these three factors—the absence of peripheries, the range and intensity of competition, and the persistence of pressure and crisis—are among the most important characteristics of the period since World War II. The first three points combine to produce an intense competition in a wide arena with a great variety of means employed. The constancy of effort of the two major contenders, combined with a fourth factor, their preponderant power, have made for a remarkable ability to comprehend and absorb within the bipolar balance the revolutionary political, military, and economic changes that have occurred. The Soviet Union moved forward and was checked. Empires dissolved, and numerous new states appeared in the world. Strategic nuclear weapons systems came into the possession of four separate countries. Tactical nuclear weapons were developed and to some extent dispersed. The manned bomber gave way to the missile. Vulnerable missiles were hardened, made mobile, and hidden. A revolution in military technology occurred on an average of once every five years and at an accelerating

The Stability of a Bipolar World

pace.³ Two "losses" of China, each a qualified loss but both traumatic, were accommodated without disastrously distorting—or even greatly affecting—the balance between America and Russia.

The effects of American-Soviet preponderance are complex. Its likely continuation and even its present existence are subjects of controversy. The stability of a system has to be defined in terms of its durability, as well as of the peacefulness of adjustment within it. In the pages that follow, some of the effects of preponderance will be indicated while the durability of the system is examined.

The End of the Bipolar Era?

In a bipolar world, by definition each of two states or two blocs overshadows all others. It may seem that to write in 1964 of bipolarity is merely to express nostalgia for an era already ending. Richard Rosecrance, referring to the period since the war, describes the world as "tripolar."⁴ Walter Lippmann, in a number of columns written in late 1963 and early 1964, assesses the recent initiatives of France and Communist China, their ability to move contrary to the desires of the United States and the Soviet Union, as marking the end of the postwar world in which the two superpowers closely controlled the actions of even their major associates.* Hedley Bull, in a paper prepared for the Council on Foreign Relations in the fall of 1963, tentatively reaches the conclusion that between now and 1975 "the system of polarization of power will cease to be recognizable: that other states will count for so much in world politics that the two present great powers will find it difficult, even when cooperating, to dominate them."⁵

If power is identical with the ability to control, then those who are free are also strong; and the freedom of the weak would have to be taken as an indication of the weakness of those who have great material strength. But the weak and disorganized are often less amenable to control than those who are wealthy and well disciplined.** The powerful, out of their strength, influence and limit

* See, for example, Walter Lippmann, "NATO Crisis—and Solution: Don't Blame De Gaulle," *Boston Globe*, December 5, 1963, p. 26: "The paramount theme of this decade, as we know it thus far, is that we are emerging from a two-power world and entering one where there are many powers."

** Cf. Georg Simmel, "The Sociology of Conflict, II," *The American Journal of Sociology*, IX (March, 1904), 675: "when one opposes a diffused crowd of enemies, one may oftener gain isolated victories, but it is very hard to arrive at decisive results which definitely fix the relationships of the contestants."

each other; the wealthy are hobbled by what they have to lose. The weak, on the other hand, bedevil the strong; the poor can more easily ignore their own interests. Such patterns endure and pervade the relations of men and of groups. United States Steel enjoys less freedom to vary the price of its products than do smaller producers. The United States government finds it easier to persuade large corporations and the great labor unions to cooperate in an anti-inflationary policy than to secure the compliance of small firms and independent unions. The political party in opposition is freer to speak irresponsibly than is the government. Power corrupts *and* renders its possessors responsible; the possession of wealth liberates *and* enslaves. That similar patterns are displayed in international relations is hardly surprising. It is not unusual to find that minor states have a considerable nuisance value in relation to states greatly their superiors in power. A Chiang Kai-shek, a Syngman Rhee, or a Mossadegh is often more difficult to deal with than rulers of states more nearly one's equal in power.

The influence and control of the two great powers has stopped short of domination in most places throughout the postwar period. The power of the United States and of the Soviet Union has been predominant but not absolute. To describe the world as bipolar does not mean that either power can exert a positive control everywhere in the world, but that each has global interests which it can care for unaided, though help may often be desirable. To say that bipolarity has, until recently, meant more than this is to misinterpret the history of the postwar world. Secretary Dulles, in the middle 1950's, inveighed against neutralism and described it as immoral. His judgment corresponded to a conviction frequently expressed in Communist statements. P. E. Vyshinsky, in a 1948 issue of *Problems of Philosophy*, declared that "the only determining criterion of revolutionary proletarian internationalism is: are you for or against the U.S.S.R., the motherland of the world proletariat? . . . The defense of the U.S.S.R., as of the socialist motherland of the world proletariat, is the holy duty of every honest man everywhere and not only of the citizens of the U.S.S.R."⁸ The rejection of neutralism as an honorable position for other countries to take is another example of intensity of competition leading to an extension of its range. By coming to terms with neutralism, as both the United States and the Soviet Union have done, the superpowers have shown even their inability to extend their wills without limit.

Bearing in mind the above considerations, can we say whether

The Stability of a Bipolar World

the recent independent action of France and Communist China does in fact indicate the waning of bipolarity, or does it mean merely the loosening of bipolar blocs, with a bipolar relation between the United States and the Soviet Union continuing to dominate? By the assessment of those who themselves value increased independence, the latter would seem to be the case. The Earl of Home, when he was Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, thought he saw developing from the increased power of the Soviet Union and the United States a nuclear stalemate that would provide for the middle states a greater opportunity to maneuver.⁷ De Gaulle, in a press conference famous for other reasons, included the statement that uncertainty about their use "does not in the least prevent the American nuclear weapons, which are the most powerful of all, from remaining the essential guarantee of world peace."⁸ Communist China's calculation of international political and military forces may be highly similar. "Whatever happens," Chou En-lai has said recently, "the fraternal Chinese and Soviet peoples will stand together in any storm that breaks out in the world arena."⁹ Ideological disputes between China and Russia are bitter; their policies conflict. But interests are more durable than the alliances in which they sometimes find expression. Even though the bonds of alliance are broken, the interest of the Soviet Union could not easily accommodate the destruction of China if that were to mean that Western power would be poised on the Siberian border.

That strategic stability produces or at least permits tactical instability is now a cliché of military analysis. The axiom, transferred to the political realm, remains true. Lesser states have often found their opportunity to exist in the interstices of the balance of power. The French and Chinese, in acting contrary to the wishes of their principal partners, have certainly caused them some pain. Diplomatic flurries have resulted and some changes have been produced, yet in a more important respect, France and China have demonstrated not their power but their impotence: their inability to affect the dominant relation in the world. The solidity of the bipolar balance permits middle states to act with impunity precisely because they know that their divergent actions will not measurably affect the strength of the Soviet Union or the United States, upon which their own security continues to rest. The decisions of Britain, France, and China to build nuclear establishments are further advertisements of weakness. Because American or Soviet military might provides adequate protection, the middle powers need not

participate in a military division of labor in a way that would contribute maximally to the military strength of their major associates.

The United States is inclined to exaggerate the amount of strength it can gain from maintaining a system of united alliances as opposed to bilateral arrangements. The exaggeration arises apparently from vague notions about the transferability of strength. Actually, as one should expect, the contribution of each ally is notable only where it believes that its interests require it to make an effort. In resisting the invasion of North Korea and, later, Chinese troops, roughly 90 per cent of the non-Korean forces were provided by the United States.¹⁰ In South Vietnam at the present time the United States is the only foreign country engaged. British and French military units in West Germany, under strength and ill equipped, are of little use. Western Europe remains, to use the terminology of the 1930's, a direct consumer of security. The only really significant interest of the United States, as is nicely conveyed by Arnold Wolfers' dubbing us "the hub power,"¹¹ is that each country that may be threatened by Soviet encroachment be politically stable and thus able to resist subversion, be self-dependent and thus less of an expense to us, and be able at the outset of a possible military action to put up some kind of a defense.

On these points, the American interest in Western Europe is precisely the same as its interest in the economically underdeveloped countries. In the case of the European countries, however, losses are harder to sustain and there are advantages clearly to be gained by the United States where our interests and theirs overlap. It would be difficult to argue that the foreign-aid programs undertaken by Britain, France, and West Germany transcend a national purpose or have been enlarged in response to our insisting upon their duty to share the military and economic responsibilities that the United States has assumed. The protection of persons, property, and the pound sterling required Britain to resist Communist guerrillas in Malaya, which was after all still her dependency. In such a case, the bearing of a heavy burden by another country serves its interests and ours simultaneously. If anything, the possibility of a transfer of strength has decreased in the past fifteen years, along with a decline in usable military power in Britain. Britain had in her army 633,242 men in 1948; by 1962 she had 209,500, with further reductions anticipated. The comparable figures for France are 465,000 and 706,000.¹² France, with a system of conscription for a comparatively long term and at relatively low pay, has main-

The Stability of a Bipolar World

tained military forces impressively large when measured as a percentage of her population.* As France takes the first steps along the route followed by England, her military planning runs parallel to the earlier English calculations; she will seek to cope with the pressures of large money requirements by making similar adjustments. According to present French plans, the total of men under arms is to be reduced by 40 per cent.**

To compensate for the loss of *influence* that once came from making a military contribution outside their own borders, the one country has tried and the other is now attempting to build nuclear establishments that supposedly promise them some measure of *independence*. The British effort remains dependent on American assistance, and the French effort to build an effective nuclear weapons system is in its infancy. The independence of recent French policy cannot have been grounded on a nuclear force that barely exists. It is, rather, a product of intelligence and political will exercised by President de Gaulle in a world in which bipolar stalemate provides the weak some opportunity to act. Independence of action by France and by the People's Republic of China is at once a product of loosening alliances—the lesser dependence of principals upon their associates—and a protest against it.

In the wake of the war, the countries of Western Europe derived a considerable influence from their weakness and our inability to let them succumb to internal difficulties or external pressures without thereby disadvantaging ourselves in relation to Russia. We were less free then because they were so dependent upon our support. The Soviet challenge made it important to recreate strength in Western Europe, a purpose that could best be achieved cooperatively. From about 1960 onward, the dependence of each of the nuclear giants upon its associates lessened. The earlier postwar pattern was one of interdependence with consequent influence for junior partners. More recently a lesser interdependence has permitted and produced assertions of independence, which must be understood in part as efforts to recapture influence once enjoyed.

* In 1960, 1.5% of total population for France; 1.01% for the United Kingdom; 1.39% for the United States. M. R. D. Foot, *Men in Uniform* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, for the Institute for Strategic Studies, 1961), pp. 162, 163.

**The reduction is figured from the level of military manpower in 1960. Ministre des Armées, Pierre Messmer, "Notre Politique Militaire," *Revue de Défense Nationale* (May, 1963), p. 754.

The Durability of the Bipolar World

Bipolarity as a descriptive term remains appropriate as long as there is a great gap between the power of the two leading countries and the power of the next most considerable states. When one looks in this light at Communist China, he is likely to be mesmerized by the magic of numbers. Surely 750 million Chinese must enable their Communist government to do some things very damaging to the United States or the Soviet Union, or to both of them. When one considers the West European states, he may be struck by their rapid movement from economic and military dependence upon the United States to positions of some independence. It is natural to ask whether this is part of a trend that will continue, or simply a movement from nearly zero on the scale of independence to a threshold that can hardly be passed. It is easy to think that the trend will continue until, again in the words of Hedley Bull, "over the next decade the Soviet Union and the United States will find themselves still the principal powers in opposed systems of alliances, but, like Britain and Germany 1907–1914, aware that their allies are not irrevocably committed to their cause and able to cooperate themselves against their lesser allies on particular issues."¹³ But this is an analogy that can mislead. The allies of Britain and of Germany were of an order of power, as measured by a combination of territory, population, and economic capability, similar to that of their principals. That many important changes have occurred in the past fifteen years is obvious. That the changes that have occurred and others that are likely will lift any present state to the level of Soviet or American capabilities is all but impossible.

In 1962, the gross national product of the Soviet Union was \$260 billion, of the United States \$555 billion, of West Germany \$84 billion, and of Communist China roughly \$50 billion. If one projects from these figures, the following picture emerges: the Soviet Union, at an assumed growth rate of 5 per cent, will have in the year 2004 a gross national product of \$2,080 billion; the United States, at a growth rate of 3 per cent, will have by 2000 a gross national product of \$2,220 billion; West Germany, if it grows at a sustained rate of 6 per cent yearly, will have by 1998 a gross national product of \$672 billion, and Communist China, projected at 7 per cent, will have a gross national product in 2002 of \$800 billion.* The growth rates assumed are unlikely to be those that

* To complete the picture, Britain in 1962 had a gross national product of

The Stability of a Bipolar World

actually prevail. The rates chosen are those that will narrow the gap between the greatest and the middle powers to the largest extent presently imaginable. Even on these bases, it becomes clear that the Soviet Union and the United States to the end of the millenium will remain the preponderant powers in the world unless two or more of the middle powers combine in a way that gives them the ability to concert their political and military actions on a sustained and reliable basis.

The gap that exists can be described in other ways which are more fragmentary but perhaps give a still sharper picture. The United States has been spending on its military establishment yearly an amount that is two-thirds or more of the entire West German or British or French gross national product. In 1962, the Europe of the Six plus Great Britain spent on defense less than a quarter of the military expenditure of the United States.¹⁴ The United States spends more on military research and development than any of the three largest of the West European countries spends on its entire military establishment.

The country that would develop its own resources, military and other, in order to play an independent role in the world, faces a dreadful problem. It is understandably tempting for such countries to believe that by developing nuclear weapons systems, they can noticeably close the gap between themselves and the superpowers. The assumption that nuclear weapons will serve as the great equalizers appeared early and shows an impressive persistence. "The small country," Jacob Viner wrote in 1946, "will again be more than a cipher or a mere pawn in power-politics, provided it is big enough to produce atomic bombs."¹⁵ Stanley Hoffmann, writing in the present year, reflects a similar thought in the following words: "True, the French nuclear program is expensive; but it is also true that conventional rearmament is not cheaper, and that a division of labor that would leave all nuclear weapons in United States hands and specialize Europe in conventional forces would earmark Europe for permanent dependence (both military and political) in the cold war and permanent decline in the international competition."¹⁶

\$79 billion and France of \$72 billion. Gross national product figures for all of the countries mentioned, except China, are from the *New York Times*, January 26, 1964, E8. The figure of \$50 billion for China in 1962, though it is a figure that is widely given, is necessarily a crude estimate. As a close and convenient approximation, I have taken 3, 5, 6, and 7% as doubling in 24, 14, 12, and 10 years, respectively.

It is difficult to know just what is meant by saying that "conventional rearmament is not cheaper" than a nuclear program, but it is clear that nuclear programs are very expensive indeed.* France and Britain now spend about 7 per cent of their gross national products on defense. If this were increased to the American level of approximately 10 per cent, or even if it were doubled, the defense spending of each country would remain comparatively small. The inability to spend large sums, taken together with the costs of research, development, production, and maintenance, leads one to the conclusion that the French government is betting that Kahn's revolution in military technology every five years will no longer take place. The French might then hope that Polaris submarines, with their missiles, would remain invulnerable. It is doubtful that they are truly invulnerable even now.

The point is a complicated one. By confusing the tracking mechanism of a hunter-killer submarine, an easy accomplishment, one submarine can escape from another. A Soviet submarine, however, may be able to meet and quietly destroy a French submarine as it comes out of port. It is unlikely that the French would in such an event say anything at all; surely they would not wish to draw attention to the loss of what might be one-third of their strategic nuclear system.** To prevent this, France could choose to operate her submarine fleet entirely from the Mediterranean, a sea from which the Soviet Union is militarily excluded. But limiting the direction from which missiles may come will make it easier for the Soviet Union to defend against them. Khrushchev's claim that the Soviet Union's rockets can hit a fly in the sky, which strikes Americans as an irrelevant boast, has an important implication for the country that would build a small nuclear force.¹⁷ Missile defenses, almost useless against large numbers, may be highly successful against the approach of only a few missiles. Furthermore, a single command and control system can easily be obliterated. Middle powers will have to concentrate on a single system or a very small number of systems, and thus deny to themselves the invul-

* Albert Wohlstetter has estimated that the first one hundred Polaris missiles manufactured and operated for five peacetime years will cost three to five times as much as the cost of the first one hundred B-47s ("Nuclear Sharing: NATO and the N+1 Country," *Foreign Affairs*, XXXIX [April, 1961], 364).

** France plans to have three nuclear submarines of sixteen missiles each, the first to be operating in 1969, the others following at two-year intervals (Messmer, "Notre Politique Militaire," p. 747).

The Stability of a Bipolar World

nerability gained by the United States from dispersion of the weapons of any one system and the existence of multiple systems. Were military innovation to cease, a force such as that projected by France could gradually be built up to a level of military significance. If, however, a future French Polaris force should begin to look dangerous to the Soviet Union, the increased French capability would itself become an incentive for Russia to move faster. And if Russia does, so must we too. Far short of America or Russia using nuclear weapons for the surgical excision of any country's embryonic nuclear capability, the opportunity to develop a nuclear force to a level of usefulness exists, if it is present at all, only on sufferance of the two nuclear giants.

To look upon nuclear weapons systems as the great equalizers is to see them as causes of the increased power of states. It is more accurate and more useful to look upon them as the products of great scientific and economic capability. The railway age brought a great increase in military mobility, which the elder von Moltke brilliantly exploited in the wars for German unification. So long, however, as war power took the form of great masses of men and material, railways were not able to deliver the whole force of a nation to a front or concentrate it upon a point. Even in transporting a portion of a country's military power, railways were not able to cross the front. Thus in 1914, German armies *marched* through Belgium.¹⁸ In World War II, the wedding of high explosives and air transport still did not make it possible to aggregate a nation's whole power and deliver it suddenly and decisively to designated military targets. World War II was won slowly and largely on the ground. Nuclear technology produced a change decisive in one respect. The power of a nation can now be distilled. Like the French chef who boils down a pig for three days until he has a pint of liquid that represents the very essence of pig, the country that produces nuclear warheads and the requisite delivery systems is distilling the power of a whole nation. But the power has to be there before it can be distilled. The stills of such countries as Britain, France, and Communist China are simply not large enough.

Nuclear weapons systems are not the great equalizers, but they are, rather, in all of their complexity and with all of their tremendous cost, outward signs of the Soviet and American ability to outstrip all others. If other countries should nevertheless be able to build nuclear systems capable of doing great damage on second strike to any attacker, they would then, as the Soviet Union and

United States now do, participate in a nuclear stand-off. Competition would shift to other means, which to some extent has already happened, and traditional criteria of power, including economic and military capability, would once again take on their old significance.

This is not to say that nuclear diffusion makes no difference. It is useful to consider briefly some of the possibilities. (1) A threat by Britain, France, or Communist China to use nuclear force in order to deter a conventional attack launched by a great nuclear power is a threat to do limited damage to the invading state at the risk of one's own annihilation. It is a radically different way of assuming the deterrent-defensive posture of Switzerland and should be interpreted as a move to bow out of the great-power picture. In part the desire for an independent nuclear deterrent derives, as the late Hugh Gaitskell put it, "from doubts about the readiness of the United States Government and the American citizens to risk the destruction of their cities on behalf of Europe."¹⁹ The nuclear superiority enjoyed by America in the early 1950's created in Europe a fear that the United States would too easily succumb to a temptation to retaliate massively. The arrival of strategic stability has produced the opposite worry. In the words of a senior British general: "McNamara is practically telling the Soviets that the worst they need expect from an attack on West Germany is a conventional counterattack."²⁰ Behind the difference on strategy lies a divergence of interest. A policy of strategic nuclear threat makes the United States the primary target. A policy of controlled response would shift some of the danger as well as additional burdens to Europe. The countries of Europe, separate or united, have an incentive to adopt destabilizing military programs. Where Britain has led, France now follows. While it is understandable that lesser powers should, by threatening or using nuclear weapons, want to be able to decide when the United States or the Soviet Union should risk their own destruction, it is also easy to see that both the United States and the Soviet Union would resist such an outcome. The more badly a country may want to be able to trigger someone else's force, the more difficult it becomes to do so, which is another way of saying that the Soviet Union and the United States have something close to invulnerable second-strike systems.

(2) If a middle power were engaged in a conventional military action against a state of comparable or lesser size, the Soviet Union or the United States might threaten a nuclear strike in order to

The Stability of a Bipolar World

bring about a withdrawal. It is sometimes thought that the possession of a small nuclear force by the middle power would make such a threat ineffective. In the Suez adventure, for example, military action by Britain and France called forth Soviet rocket threats against them. Against states having no strategic nuclear forces, such threats would be more readily credited, and thus more likely to exert pressure successfully against the conventional action itself. A small military action, however, is not worth and does not require nuclear interference by a great power, for it can be stopped in other ways. The onus of threatening to use nuclear weapons first, in order to interdict conventional interference, is then placed upon the smaller power. Such a threat would not be credible.

Both the first and second uses presuppose the adequacy of the small country's nuclear threat when directed against the United States or the Soviet Union. A capability that is small compared to America's or Russia's may be adequate to its task; a certain minimum, doubtfully achievable in the foreseeable future, is nevertheless required. When Hedley Bull says that the French ambition is "to become strong enough to choose deliberately to act alone,"²¹ he may have in mind the second use mentioned above, or the one following, which is seldom discussed.

(3) As the United States and the Soviet Union have opened up a gap in military power between themselves and all others, so Britain, France, the People's Republic of China, and states who may follow them can differentiate themselves from non-nuclear nations. Great Britain has placed nuclear weapons in the Middle and Far East. Let us suppose Indonesia were to move militarily against Malaysia. A British threat to use nuclear weapons could conceivably follow, which might cause Indonesia to stop short or might persuade the United States to offer the support of the Seventh Fleet and American Marines in order to avoid the use of nuclear weapons.

The effects of nuclear diffusion are necessarily uncertain, but one point can sensibly be made: Building a small nuclear force is an unpromising way of seeking to maintain the integrity of one's state, even though it may enable that state to act positively against equal or lesser powers.

There can be approximate equality among states even where there is considerable disparity in the material bases of their power. Whether or not effective power is fashioned from the material available depends upon adequacy of national organization, wisdom of policy, and intensity of effort. In the 1920's, France sought to

maintain a greater military strength than Germany in order to compensate for a lesser French productivity and smaller population. Where the material differences are relatively small or where countries of immensely larger capacity are quiescent, it may be possible to "mobilize" a nation in peacetime in order to build on a lesser material base a superior military strength. Germany and Japan in the 1930's began to play the game from which France was withdrawing. The Soviet Union, since the war, has been able to challenge the United States in many parts of the world by spending a disproportionately large share of her smaller income on military means. There is in the West a quiet nightmare that the People's Republic of China may follow such a path, that it may mobilize the nation in order to increase production rapidly while simultaneously acquiring a large and modern military capability. It is doubtful that she can do either, and surely not both, and surely not the second without the first, as the data previously given clearly indicate. As for France and Great Britain, it strains the imagination to the breaking point to believe that in a world in which scientific and technological progress has been rapid, either of them will be able to maintain the pace.* Unable to spend on anywhere near the American or Russian level for work in research, development, and production, middle powers will, once they have gained an initial advantage, constantly find themselves falling behind. France and Britain are in the second-ranking powers' customary position of imitating, with a time lag, the more advanced weapons systems of their wealthier competitors.**

From the above analysis, it is clear that the time when other states can compete at the highest levels of power by a superiority of effort in mobilizing their resources lies far in the future. Unless

* It is not wholly absurd for British and French governments to proclaim, as they frequently do, that an embryonic capability brings an immediate increase of strength; for further expenditures are not likely to bring much of an additional payoff. Cf. President de Gaulle's message to his minister-delegate at Reggane upon the explosion of France's first atomic device: "'Hurrah for France! From this morning she is stronger and prouder!'" Leonard Beaton and John Maddox, *The Spread of Nuclear Weapons* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1962), p. 91.

** The experiences of Chinese Communists prior to 1949 and of the People's Republic of China since that date suggest that attempts to outflank may bring a greater success than efforts to imitate! Or, applying an economist's term to military matters, would-be Nth-countries would do well to ask, where do we have a comparative advantage?

The Stability of a Bipolar World

some states combine or others dissolve in chaos, the world will remain bipolar until the end of the present century.

Some Dissenting Opinions

The fact remains that many students of international relations have continued to judge bipolarity unstable as compared to the probable stability of a multipower world. Why have they been so confident that the existence of a number of powers, moving in response to constantly recurring variations in national power and purpose, would promote the desired stability? According to Professors Morgenthau and Kaplan, the uncertainty that results from flexibility of alignment generates a healthy caution in the foreign policy of every country.²² Concomitantly, Professor Morgenthau believes that in the present bipolar world, "the flexibility of the balance of power and, with it, its restraining influence upon the power aspirations of the main protagonists on the international scene have disappeared."²³ One may agree with his conclusion and yet draw from his analysis another one unstated by him: The inflexibility of a bipolar world, with the appetite for power of each major competitor at once whetted and checked by the other, may promote a greater stability than flexible balances of power among a larger number of states.

What are the grounds for coming to a diametrically different conclusion? The presumed double instability of a bipolar world, that it easily erodes or explodes, is to a great extent based upon its assumed bloc character. A bloc improperly managed may indeed fall apart. The leader of each bloc must be concerned at once with alliance management, for the defection of an allied state might be fatal to its partners, and with the aims and capabilities of the opposing bloc. The system is more complex than is a multipower balance, which in part accounts for its fragility.* The situation

* Morton A. Kaplan, *System and Process in International Politics* (New York: Wiley, 1957), p. 37; and "Bipolarity in a Revolutionary Age," in Kaplan, ed., *The Revolution in World Politics* (New York: Wiley, 1962), p. 254. The difficulties and dangers found in a bipolar world by Kaplan are those detected by Hans J. Morgenthau in a system of opposing alliances. It is of direct importance in assessing the stability of international systems to note that Morgenthau finds "the opposition of two alliances . . . the most frequent configuration within the system of the balance of power" (*Politics Among Nations* [3d ed.; New York: Knopf, 1961, part 4], p. 189). Kaplan, in turn, writes that "the

preceding World War I provides a striking example. The dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire would have left Germany alone in the center of Europe. The approximate equality of alliance partners, or their relation of true interdependence, plus the closeness of competition between the two camps, meant that while any country could commit its associates, no one country on either side could exercise control. By contrast, in 1956 the United States could dissociate itself from the Suez adventure of its two principal allies and even subject them to pressure. Great Britain, like Austria in 1914, tried to commit, or at least immobilize, its alliance partner by presenting him with a *fait accompli*. Enjoying a position of predominance, the United States could, as Germany could not, focus its attention on the major adversary while disciplining its ally. The situations are in other respects different, but the ability of the United States, in contrast to Germany, to pay a price measured in intra-alliance terms is striking.

It is important, then, to distinguish sharply a bipolarity of blocs from a bipolarity of countries. Fénelon thought that of all conditions of balance the opposition of two states was the happiest. Morgenthau dismisses this judgment with the comment that the benefits Fénelon had hoped for had not accrued in our world since the war, which depends, one might think, on what benefits had otherwise been expected.*

The conclusion that a multipower balance is relatively stable is reached by overestimating the system's flexibility, and then dwelling too fondly upon its effects.** A constant shuffling of alliances would be as dangerous as an unwillingness to make new combinations. Neither too slow nor too fast: the point is a fine one, made finer still by observing that the rules should be followed not merely out of an immediate interest of the state but also for the sake of preserving the international system. The old balance-of-power system here looks suspiciously like the new collective-security system of the League of Nations and the United Nations. Either system

most likely transformation of the 'balance of power' system is to a bipolar system" (*System and Process*, p. 36).

* Kaplan, though he treats the case almost as being trivial, adds a statement that is at least suggestive: "The tight bipolar system is stable only when both bloc actors are hierarchically organized" (*System and Process*, p. 43).

** Kaplan, e.g., by the fourth and sixth of his rules of a balance-of-power system, requires a state to oppose any threatening state and to be willing to ally with any other (*System and Process*, p. 23).

The Stability of a Bipolar World

depends for its maintenance and functioning upon a "neutrality of alignment" at the moment of serious threat. To preserve the system, the powerful states must overcome the constraints of previous ties and the pressures of both ideological preferences and conflicting present interests in order to confront the state that threatens the system.²⁴

In the history of the modern state system, flexibility of alignment has been conspicuously absent just when, in the interest of stability, it was most highly desirable.²⁵ A comparison of flexibility within a multipower world with the ability of the two present superpowers to compensate for changes by their internal efforts is requisite, for comparison changes the balance of optimism and pessimism as customarily applied to the two different systems. In the world of the 1930's, with a European grouping of three, the Western democracies, out of lassitude, political inhibition, and ideological distaste, refrained from acting or from combining with others at the advantageous moment. War provided the pressure that forced the world's states into two opposing coalitions. In peacetime the bipolar world displays a clarity of relations that is ordinarily found only in war. Raymond Aron has pointed out that the international "système depend de ce que sont, concrètement, les deux pôles, non pas seulement du fait qu'ils sont deux."²⁶ Modifying Aron's judgment and reversing that of many others, we would say that in a bipolar world, as compared to one of many powers, the international system is more likely to dominate. External pressures, if clear and great enough, force the external combination or the internal effort that interest requires. The political character of the alliance partner is then most easily overlooked and the extent to which foreign policy is determined by ideology is decreased.

The number of great states in the world has always been so limited that two acting in concert or, more common historically, one state driving for hegemony could reasonably conclude that the balance would be altered by their actions. In the relations of states since the Treaty of Westphalia, there have never been more than eight great powers, the number that existed, if one is generous in admitting doubtful members to the club, on the eve of the First World War. Given paucity of members, states cannot rely on an equilibrating tendency of the system. Each state must instead look to its own means, gauge the likelihood of encountering opposition, and estimate the chances of successful cooperation. The advantages

of an international system with more than two members can at best be small. A careful evaluation of the factors elaborated above indicates that the disadvantages far outweigh them.

Conclusions That Bear upon Policy

If the preceding explanations are correct, they are also of practical importance. Fixation upon the advantages of flexibility in a multipower balance has often gone hand in hand with an intense anxiety associated with bipolarity: the fear that a downward slide or a sudden technological breakthrough by one great state or the other would decisively alter the balance between them. Either occurrence could bring catastrophic war, which for the disadvantaged would be a war of desperation, or world domination from one center with or without preceding war. The fear is pervasive, and in American writings most frequently rests on the assumption that, internally dissolute and tired of the struggle, we will award the palm to the Soviet Union. Sometimes this anxiety finds a more sophisticated expression, which turns less upon internal derangements. In this view, the United States, as the defensive power in the world, is inherently disadvantaged, for the aggressive power will necessarily gain if the competition continues long enough. But a conclusion derived from an incomplete proposition is misleading. One must add that the aggressive state may lose even though the state seeking to uphold the status quo never take the offensive. The Soviet Union controls no nation now, except possibly Cuba, that was not part of its immediate postwar gains. It has lost control in Yugoslavia and the control it once seemed to have in China. The United States, since the time it began to behave as a defensive power, has seen some states slip from commitment to neutralism, but only North Vietnam and Cuba have come under Communist control. One would prefer no losses at all, but losses of this magnitude can easily be absorbed. On balance, one might argue that the United States has gained, though such a judgment depends on the base line from which measurement is made as well as upon how gains and losses are defined.

That the United States and the Soviet Union weigh losses and gains according to their effect upon the bipolar balance is crucial, but there are many changes in Africa, or Asia, or Latin America that are not likely to be to the advantage of either the Soviet Union or the United States. This judgment can be spelled out in a number

The Stability of a Bipolar World

of ways. The doctrine of containment, for example, should be amended to read: defend, or insulate so that one loss need not lead to another. The habits of the cold war are so ingrained and the dangers of a bipolar world so invigorating that the defensive country is easily led to overreact. In Southeast Asia, since no gain for Communist China is likely to benefit the Soviet Union, American concern should be confined to maintaining its reputation and avoiding distant repercussions. If one goes further and asks how great a gain will accrue to the People's Republic of China if it extends its territorial control marginally, the answer, in any of the areas open to it, must be "very little." Neutralization moves by President de Gaulle, if they can obscure the responsibility for unwanted events, may in fact be helpful. It is important to realize that the bipolar world is continuing lest we worry unnecessarily and define the irrelevant gesture or even the helpful suggestion of lesser powers as troublesome.

A 5 per cent growth rate sustained for three years would add to the American gross national product an amount greater than the entire gross national product of Britain or France or West Germany. Even so, the accretion of power the Soviet Union would enjoy by adding, say, West Germany's capabilities to her own would be immensely important; and one such gain might easily lead to others. Most gains from outside, however, can add relatively little to the strengths of the Soviet Union or the United States. There are, then, few single losses that would be crucial, which is a statement that points to a tension within our argument. Bipolarity encourages each giant to focus upon crises, while rendering most of them of relative inconsequence. We might instead put it this way: Crisis is of concern only where giving way would lead to an accumulation of losses for one and gains for the other. In an age characterized by rapidity of change, in many respects time is slowed down—as is illustrated by the process of "losing" Indo-China that has gone on for nineteen years without a conclusive result. Since only a succession of gains could be decisive, there is time for the losing state to contrive a countering action should it be necessary to do so.

Intensity and breadth of competition and recurrence of crises limn a picture of constant conflict verging on violence. At the same time, the relative simplicity of relations within a bipolar world,

the great pressures that are generated, and the constant possibility of catastrophe produce a conservatism on the part of the two greatest powers. The Soviet Union and the United States may feel more comfortable dealing *à deux* than in contemplating a future world in which they vie for existence and possible advantage with other superpowers. While there is naturally worry about an increase of tensions to intolerable levels, there is also a fear that the tensions themselves will lead America and Russia to seek agreements designed to bring a relaxation that will be achieved at the expense of lesser powers. The French general, Paul Stehlin, commenting on American opposition to Nth-country nuclear forces, which he interprets as part of an American-Russian effort to maintain a bipolar world, asks wistfully: "Does Europe have less political maturity than the Big Two credit each other with?" With some bitterness he criticizes America for placing "more faith in the ability of the Russians to control their tremendous stockpiles of offensive weapons than they do in my country's capacity to use with wisdom and moderation the modest armaments it is working so hard to develop for purely deterrent purposes."²⁷

Worries and fears on any such grounds are exaggerated. The Soviet Union and the United States influence each other more than any of the states living in their penumbra can possibly hope to do. In the world of the present, as of the recent past, a condition of mutual opposition may require rather than preclude the adjustment of differences. Yet first steps toward agreement have not led to second and third steps. Instead they have been mingled with other acts and events that have kept the level of tension quite high. The test ban was described in the United States as possibly a first great step toward wider agreement that would increase the chances of maintaining peace. In almost the same breath it was said that we cannot lower our guard, for Soviet aims have not changed.²⁸ Larger acts than agreement to halt testing under the sea and above the ground are required to alter a situation that congealed long ago. The Soviet Union and the United States remain for the foreseeable future the two countries that can irreparably damage each other. So long as both possess the capability, each must worry that the other might use it. The worry describes the boundaries that have so far limited both the building up of tensions and the abatement of competition.

The Stability of a Bipolar World

Where weapons of horrible destructive power exist, stability necessarily appears as an important end. It will not, however, be everyone's highest value. One who accepts the analysis of bipolarity and the conclusions we have drawn may nevertheless prefer a world of many powers. The unity and self-dependence of Europe may, for example, rank higher as goals than international stability. Or, one may think of European unity as a means of melding American power with the strength of a united Europe in order to achieve Western hegemony. Unipolarity may be preferable, for those peoples who then become dominant, to a competition between two polar states. It may even promise a greater stability. The question is too complicated to take up at the moment, but some words of caution are in order.

The United States has consistently favored the unification of Europe, for adding the strength of a united Europe to the existing power of America would be sufficient to establish a world hegemony. But there is a confusion in American rhetoric that accurately reflects a confusion in thought. We have wanted a Europe united and strong and thus able to share our burdens with us, but a Europe at the same time docile and pliant so that it would agree on which burdens are to be assumed and how duties should be shared. The enchanting dream of Western hegemony has many implications, some of them possibly unpleasant. A Europe of the Seven, or even the Six, could, given time to put its combined resources to work, become a third power in the world on the largest scale. President de Gaulle has entertained the fear that such a Europe, if it were to be born under Anglo-Saxon auspices, would serve as an instrument of American foreign policy. One may have doubts of what would necessarily follow.²⁹ De Gaulle is a useful instructor. If we find the weak troublesome, will the strong be more easily controlled? A united Europe would represent a great change in the world; because the change would be great, its effects are difficult to foresee. If Europe were to be stable, strong, and cooperative, one might be delighted; but surely it would be dangerous to predict that a new Europe would rapidly find internal stability and develop political maturity. It would be more dangerous still to assume that the old American and the new European state would find their policies always in harmony. It is seemingly a safe assumption that a clear and pressing interest of a new state of Europe would be to stand firm against any Soviet attempts to move forward. But interests must be taken in relation to situations. In a world of three

great powers, identical interests may logically lead and in the past have led to dangerously disparate policies. European history of the twentieth century makes optimism difficult. Nor could one be serene about America's reaction. Typically, Americans have insufficiently valued the prize of power. The yearning for a Europe united and thus strong enough to oppose the Soviet Union unaided is but one example. The pressures of bipolarity have helped to produce responsibility of action. A relaxation of those pressures will change the situation to one in which it will no longer be clear who will oppose whom. Two considerations then should give one pause: the necessarily unpredictable quality of the third power and the greater instability of a multipower world.

A system of small numbers can always be disrupted by the actions of a Hitler and the reactions of a Chamberlain. Since this is true, it may seem that we are in the uncomfortable position of relying on the moderation, courage, and rationality of men holding crucial positions of power. Given the vagaries of men and the unpredictability of the individual's reaction to events, one may at this point feel that one's only recourse is to lapse into prayer. We can, nonetheless, take comfort from the thought that, like other men, those who are elevated to power and direct the activities of great states are not wholly free agents. Beyond the residuum of necessary hope that men will respond sensibly lies the possibility of estimating the pressures that encourage and constrain them to do so. In a world in which two states united in their mutual antagonism far overshadow any other, the incentives to a calculated response stand out most clearly, and the sanctions against irresponsible behavior achieve their greatest force. Not only how the leaders will think but also who they may be will be affected by the presence of pressures and the clarity of challenges. One may lament Churchill's failure to gain control of the British government in the 1930's, for he knew what actions were required to maintain a balance-of-power system. Churchill did come to power, it is interesting to note, as the world began to assume the bipolar form familiar in wartime. If a people representing one pole of the world now indulges itself by selecting inept rulers, it runs clearly discernible risks. Leaders of the United States and the Soviet Union are presumably chosen with an eye to the tasks they will have to perform. Other countries can enjoy, if they wish, the luxury of selecting lead-

The Stability of a Bipolar World

ers who will most please their peoples by the way in which internal affairs are managed. The United States and the Soviet Union cannot.

It is not that one entertains the utopian hope that all future Premiers of the Soviet Union and Presidents of the United States will combine in their persons a complicated set of nearly perfect virtues, but rather that the pressures of a bipolar world will strongly encourage them to act in ways better than their characters might otherwise lead one to expect. It is not that one possesses a serene confidence in the peacefulness, or even the survival of the world, but rather that cautious optimism may be justified as long as the pressures to which each must respond are so clearly present. Either country may go beserk or succumb to inanition and debility. That necessities are clear increases the chances that they will be met, but there can be no guarantees. Dangers from abroad may unify a state and spur its people to heroic action. Or, as with France facing Hitler's Germany, external pressures may divide the leaders, confuse the public, and increase their willingness to give way. It may also happen that the difficulties of adjustment and the necessity for calculated action simply become too great. The clarity with which the necessities of action can now be seen may be blotted out by the blinding flash of nuclear explosions. The fear that this may happen has reinforced the factors and processes described in the preceding pages.

By making the two strongest states still more powerful and the emergence of third powers more difficult, nuclear weapons have helped to consolidate a condition of bipolarity. It is to a great extent due to its bipolar structure that the world since the war has enjoyed a stability seldom known where three or more powers have sought to cooperate with each other or have competed for existence.

REFERENCES

1. Henry Kissinger, "Strains on the Alliance," *Foreign Affairs*, XLI (January, 1963), 284. Cf. Max Kohnstamm, "The European Tide," *Dædalus*, XCIII (Winter, 1964), 100-102; McGeorge Bundy's speech to the Economic Club of Chicago, *New York Times*, December 7, 1961; John F. Kennedy, "Address at Independence Hall," Philadelphia, July 4, 1962, *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States* (Washington, D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1963), pp. 537-539.
2. Quoted in V. D. Sokolovskii, ed., *Soviet Military Strategy*, Herbert S.

KENNETH N. WALTZ

- Dinerstein, Leon Gouré, and Thomas W. Wolfe, translators and English editors (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1963), p. 43.
3. Herman Kahn, *On Thermonuclear War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1960), p. 315.
 4. Richard N. Rosecrance, *Action and Reaction in World Politics* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1963), pp. 210–211.
 5. Hedley Bull, "Atlantic Military Problems: A Preliminary Essay." Prepared for the Council on Foreign Relations meeting of November 20, 1963, p. 21. Quoted with permission of the author.
 6. P. E. Vyshinsky, "Communism and the Motherland," as quoted in *The Kremlin Speaks* (Department of State publication, 4264, October, 1951), pp. 6, 7.
 7. National Union of Conservative and Unionist Associations, *Official Report*, 81st Annual Conference, Llandudno (October 10–13, 1962), p. 93.
 8. Ambassade de France, Speeches and Press Conferences, No. 185 (January 14, 1963), p. 9.
 9. In a statement taped in Peking before his African trip in January of 1964, *New York Times*, February 4, 1964, p. 2. Cf. the message sent by Communist China's leaders to Premier Khrushchev upon the occasion of his seventieth birthday. After referring to differences between them, it is stated that: "In the event of a major world crisis, the two parties, our two peoples will undoubtedly stand together against our common enemy," *New York Times*, April 17, 1964, p. 3.
 10. Leland M. Goodrich, "Korea: Collective Measures Against Aggression," *International Conciliation*, No. 494 (October, 1953), 164.
 11. "Stresses and Strains in 'Going It With Others,'" in Arnold Wolfers, ed., *Alliance Policy in the Cold War* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1959), p. 7.
 12. *The Statesman's Year-Book*, S. H. Steinberg, ed. (London: Macmillan, 1948), p. 50. *Ibid.* (1951), p. 991. *Ibid.* (1963), pp. 103, 104, 1003. The figures for Great Britain exclude the women's services, Territorial Army, and colonial troops. Those for France exclude the gendarmes.
 13. Bull, "Atlantic Military Problems," p. 24.
 14. Alastair Buchan and Philip Windsor, *Arms and Stability in Europe* (New York: Praeger, 1963), p. 205.
 15. Jacob Viner, "The Implications of the Atomic Bomb for International Relations," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, XC (1946), 55.
 16. Stanley Hoffmann, "Cursing de Gaulle Is Not a Policy," *The Reporter*, XXX (January 30, 1964), 40.
 17. Cf. Malcolm W. Hoag, "On Stability in Deterrent Races," in Morton A.

The Stability of a Bipolar World

- Kaplan, ed., *The Revolution in World Politics* (New York: Wiley, 1962), pp. 408, 409.
18. Cf. a forthcoming book by Victor Basiuk, Institute of War and Peace Studies, Columbia University.
 19. *House of Commons, Parliamentary Debates* (March 1, 1960), cols. 1136–1138. Compare Hugh Gaitskell, *The Challenge of Co-Existence* (London: Methuen, 1957), pp. 45–46.
 20. Quoted by Eldon Griffiths, “The Revolt of Europe,” *The Saturday Evening Post*, CCLXIII (March 9, 1963), 19.
 21. Bull, “Atlantic Military Problems,” p. 29.
 22. Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations* (3d ed.; New York: Knopf, 1961), part 4. Morton A. Kaplan, *System and Process in International Politics* (New York: Wiley, 1957), pp. 22–36. I shall refer only to Morgenthau and Kaplan, for their writings are widely known and represent the majority opinion of students in the field.
 23. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations*, p. 350. Cf. Kaplan, *System and Process*, pp. 36–43; and Kaplan, “Bipolarity in a Revolutionary Age,” in Kaplan, ed., *The Revolution in World Politics* (New York: Wiley, 1962), pp. 251–266.
 24. The point is nicely made in an unpublished paper by Wolfram F. Hanrieder, “Actor Objectives and International Systems” (Center of International Studies, Princeton University, February, 1964), pp. 43–44.
 25. For a sharp questioning of “the myth of flexibility,” see George Liska’s review article “Continuity and Change in International Systems,” *World Politics*, XVI (October, 1963), 122–123.
 26. Raymond Aron, *Paix et Guerre entre les Nations* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1962), p. 156.
 27. Gen. Paul Stehlin, “The Evolution of Western Defense,” *Foreign Affairs*, XLII (October, 1963), 81, 77.
 28. See, for example, Secretary Rusk’s statement before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, *New York Times*, August 13, 1963.
 29. Ambassade de France, *Speeches and Press Conferences*, No. 175 (May 15, 1962), p. 6.