BEING NUMBER ONE NATION: PRIMACY AND DETENTE

by

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Since World War II, the United States has been repeatedly identified as the Number One nation in the world. As the world changes, a variety of interpretations of American primacy are being advanced by both foreign and domestic observers.

Interest in the identity of Number One status in most collectivities of humans is perfectly normal. Most students are interested in knowing who stands at the top of the class. In all societies, various forms of competition produce winners and losers in politics, sports, lotteries, jobs, courts, scholarships, and aesthetics.

The United States, however, is frequently said to be obsessed with aggressiveness in relishing, exploiting, and extending ascendancy over other nations in various ways, thereby corrupting American life and American relationships with other nations and peoples.

Are these allegations true? Two percent true? What is the prevailing characteristic identifying America's approach to relationships with other nations—equality, leadership, authority, dominance, competition, hegemony, imperialism, or other? How do foreigners perceive the international role and performance of the United States? How do Americans perceive US status? Does detente strengthen or weaken American primacy? What other trends are occurring that are likely to affect these dynamics significantly?

This article explores the changing context and dynamics involved in being the world's Number One nation, and emerging implications for America's future.

PRIMACY

We suggest here that there are a number of overlapping approaches to the pluralistic concept of primacy: power, authority, influence, superiority, being Number One, winning, bigness, and leadership. These somewhat arbitrary categorizations also overlap a number of other concepts which express some additional nuance of relationship between unequal entities. Ecclesiastes tells us that chance, also, plays a role in outcomes affecting men and nations.

"The fundamental concept in social science," says Bertrand Russell, "is power, in the same sense in which energy is the fundamental concept in physics."[1] Accordingly, among the concepts relevant to primacy, we may well consider, first, power—essentially, the capacity to cause someone else to do something he would not otherwise do. The most impressive practical guide to the exercise of political power is still *The Prince*, although it has been frequently condemned because of Machiavelli's indifference to moral considerations.

Many writers hold that man's search for power is not only universal, but also primary. Says Russell: "Of the infinite desires of man, the chief are the desires for power and glory." Thomas Hobbes wrote: "The general inclination of all mankind is a perpetual and restless drive after power, which ceaseth only in death."[2] Many of these judgements rest on a belief that man is base, corrupt, sinful—a long-standing belief that lies at the roots of Christianity. This doctrine, in turn, deeply influenced the Founding Fathers who, except for a few like Thomas Jefferson, believed that

man is mostly beast and satyr.[3] James Madison wrote in the *Federalist*: "Men are ambitious, vindictive and rapacious . . . neither moral nor religious motives can be relied on to prevail."[4]

Rejecting the notion that power is *inherently* evil or dangerous, Adolph Berle insists that power is an essential ingredient at every level of human organization.[5] Berle sets forth several principles: power is always preferable to anarchy and chaos. With Russell, Berle holds that a vacuum in power will inevitably and promptly be filled by other power.

Arnold Rogow and Harold Lasswell take up the view of Lord Acton, expressed in his famous passage, "power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely."[6] They dispute this view, finding some of the most powerful rulers in history to be least corrupt:

> Most modern empirical research . . . rejects the premise of an innate power drive in human behavior. The evidence suggests that the crucial factor in any generalization involving the power value is the personality structure of the power-seeker.[7]

Another relevant concept is competition, frequently and erroneously said to be uniquely typical of America (with few exceptions, in fact, most of the world is made up of competitive societies).[8] In exploring contexts of competition, Morton Deutsch identifies three basic orientations in any interrelationship: cooperative (includes positive interest in the other party's welfare, as well as one's own); individualistic (interested only in one's own benefit, not in any other party's); and competitive (interested in benefiting self in terms of obtaining greater benefits than adversary).[9]

Leadership is another aspect of primacy. The traditional view, that leadership is exercised through coercion, is steadily changing;[10] so that leadership is now seen to be, not the property of an individual, but a social function. Cecil Gibb distinguishes not one, but four, primary elements of what he calls a "shared direction": a leader (with certain personality, abilities, and resources); followers (with certain personalities, abilities, and resources); the situation; and the task.[11]

The international system is, of course, becoming more complex, more highly organized. Among other evolving characteristics, practically the entire earth's surface is now divided among specific political entities; and despite a few lingering border disputes, the demarcation lines between political entities have become firm. In 1914, there were 63 independent countries on earth; in 1939, 25 years later, there were 60. Only 35 more years later, however, on September 10, 1974, the ex-colony Portuguese Guinea became the Republic of Guinea-Bissau, the world's 150th independent state.[12]

Of the power factors distinguishing among nations, David Vital says: ". . . material size is the factor least of all given to modification through the deliberate efforts of [its own or other] governments. It sets the limit to what can be attained and fixes the international role and status of the nation more securely than any other."[13]

Relations among nations depend upon their relative power, their interests, and their character. One central principle is advocated by A. J. K. Organski: "The great century of Pax Britannica from 1815 to 1915 amply illustrates that peace comes with

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preponderant power, not with a balance of power."[14]

The dominant pattern in the international system has, up to this time, always been founded on military and economic strength. Unequal power favors some degree of hegemony; although noncoercive influence exerted by the lesser power can at times verge on leadership, it cannot attain "hegemonical supremacy." Like Berle and Haas, Klaus Knorr emphasizes repeatedly, however, that population, area, and wealth do not automatically yield power to a nation; to achieve power, capabilities must be organized or "mobilized" for the purpose of wielding power, and must be paid for in terms of opportunity costs.[15]

In reference to winning, or being Number One, David McLelland writes: "It is unrealistic for any country to expect that it can impose situations which reflect only gain for its own position."[16] Modern psychological analysis suggests that a constructive objective in conflict resolution is to see not only that one's own side does not "lose" but also that the opponent, as well, does not "lose."[17]

This discussion recalls the ubiquitous advertising campaign over several years by the Avis Rent-a-Car Company; the president of Avis has written:

> We are careful to delineate between questions of being No. 1 in size and No. 1 in service or quality. . . . I think it is also safe to say that there is no special virtue in being second or first in anything; the question is what is done with that condition. . . .[18]

These considerations are relevant to stratification in associations or other forms of international interrelationship. Do modern states regard themselves as unrestrained by any considerations other than power in pursuing their self-interests? Raymond Aron writes:

> Relations between states are not . . . comparable to those of beasts in the jungle . . . Diplomatic-strategic conduct tends to justify itself by ideas; it claims to obey *norms*, to submit to *principles*. We call cynics those who regard ideas, norms, and principles as mere disguises of the desire for power, without real effectiveness.[19]

One category of competitive thrusts toward primacy on the international scene has played a particularly significant role throughout history: wars. Can relevant patterns of war-incidence be discerned?

Among other conclusions that may be drawn from statistics about wars (such as the well-known statistical analyses by Sorokin, Wright, Richardson, Singer, and Small), one may conclude that France has a claim to being the modern nation with the most extensive war history, while the United States has a claim to being the least war-involved major nation in the world. Despite changes in world power statuses, J. David Singer and Melvin Small observe that in recent decades no major power has escaped involvement in major wars; this may be one price a nation must pay for great power status.[20]

OBJECTIVE MEASURES OF US STATUS

Are there objective measures of international standing? What are the facts about US relative status?

George Liska, a political scientist, wrote in 1967: "The United States is now clearly the most powerful state by any criterion; it is the only truly global power."[21] Organski, another political scientist, referred to earlier, wrote in 1968: "The dominant international order is headed by the most powerful single nation on earth, formerly England, today the United States."[22]

Systematic analysis of data for the purpose of establishing international rankings is relatively new.[23] Wayne Ferris, for example, indicates in Table 1[24] the ten highest power-capability states every ten years since 1855 (note the high standing of Russia prior to 1917).

Robert Cox and Harold Jacobson, in computing their stratifications of power worldwide, used five indicators (Gross National Product (GNP); GNP per capita;

Table 1. Ten Highest-Scoring States on Power Capabilities Rank-Ordered: 1855-1965.

1855	1865	1875	1885	1895	1905
1. United Kingdom	1. United Kingdom	1. Russia/U.S.S.R.	1. United Kingdom	1. Russia/U.S.S.R.	1. Russia/U.S.S.R.
2. France	2. Russia/U.S.S.R.	2. France	2. France	2. France	2. United Kingdom
3. Russia/U.S.S.R.	3. France	3. United Kingdom	3. Russia/U.S.S.R.	3. United Kingdom	3. France
4. Austria-Hungary	4. United States	4. Germany	4. Germany	4. Germany	4. Germany
5. United States	5. Austria-Hungary	5. United States	5. United States	5. United States	5. United States
6. Prussia	6. Italy	6. Austria-Hungary	6. Austria-Hungary	6. Austria-Hungary	6. Austria-Hungary
7. Spain	7. Prussia	7. Italy	7. Italy	7. Italy	7. Italy
8. Turkey	8. China	8. China	8. China	8. Netherlands	8. Netherlands
9. Netherlands	9. Spain	9. Spain	9. Spain	9. China	9. Japan
10. Uruguay	10. Turkey	10. Turkey	10. Netherlands	10. Spain	10. China
1915	**1925**	**1935**	**1945**	**1955**	**1965**
1. United Kingdom	1. United States	1. Russia/U.S.S.R.	1. United States	1. United States	1. United States
2. Russia/U.S.S.R.	2. United Kingdom	2. United Kingdom	2. Russia/U.S.S.R.	2. Russia/U.S.S.R.	2. Russia/U.S.S.R.
3. France	3. France	3. France	3. United Kingdom	3. United Kingdom	3. Communist China
4. United States	4. China	4. United States	4. Canada	4. Communist China	4. United Kingdom
5. Germany	5. Germany	5. Germany	5. China	5. France	5. West Germany
6. Austria-Hungary	6. Russia/U.S.S.R.	6. Italy	6. Australia	6. Canada	6. France
7. Italy	7. Japan	7. China	7. Belgium	7. West Germany	7. Canada
8. China	8. Italy	8. Japan	8. Brazil	8. Australia	8. Italy
9. Japan	9. Australia	9. Poland	9. Netherlands	9. Sweden	9. Sweden
10. Netherlands	10. Spain	10. Netherlands	10. Italy	10. Belgium	10. India

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population; nuclear capability; and prestige) to arrive at power rankings (the highest 39 nations) at three key years: 1950, 1958, and 1967, as shown in Table 2.[25]

The National Science Foundation in 1973 compared[26] the position of the United States with those of the other major nations performing significant research and development and found that in seven of eight scientific areas studied, (physics and geographics; chemistry and metallurgy; molecular biology; systematic biology; mathematics; engineering; psychology; and economics), the United States produces a larger share of the world's scientific and technical literature than any of the other major developed countries.

While the United States occupies an advanced position in most international rankings, it does not occupy the highest place among them all in every attribute. In a few in which it stands first, primacy is not a position to be pointed to with pride—such as in the incidence of crime. We shall cite here only one more worldwide indicator of American influence and primacy: the English language.

FOREIGN PERCEPTIONS OF US STATUS

We now approach the same subject from a different angle. Regardless of consistency or inconsistency with the facts, how do foreigners perceive the United States?[27]

Two early foreign observers, Lord Bryce and de Tocqueville, agreed in perceiving that the idea of equality is the key to understanding life in the United States.[28] Another alleged American characteristic, linked to competitive drives, has been cited by Englishman Geoffrey Gorer:

> The typical American attitudes toward authority have remained substantially the same as those manifested by the framers of the American Constitution: authority is inherently bad and dangerous; the survival and growth of the state make it inevitable that some individuals must be endowed

Table 2. Stratification of Power Worldwide.

1950 Rank Order	State	1958 Rank Order	State	1967 Rank Order	State
1	United States	1	United States	1	United States
2	USSR	2	USSR	2	USSR
3	United Kingdom	3	United Kingdom	3	France
4	France	4.5	People's Republic of China	5	People's Republic of China
5	People's Republic of China	4.5	France	5	Japan
7	Canada	6.5	Federal Republic of Germany	5	United Kingdom
7	Federal Republic of Germany	6.5	India	7	Federal Republic of Germany
7	India	8.5	Canada	8	Italy
9	Japan	8.5	Italy	9.5	Canada
12.5	Australia	10	Japan	9.5	India
12.5	Belgium	11.5	Brazil	11	Sweden
12.5	Brazil	11.5	Sweden	15	Australia
12.5	Italy	15	Argentina	15	Austria
12.5	Sweden	15	Australia	15	Netherlands
12.5	Switzerland	15	Belgium	15	Spain
16.5	Indonesia	15	Indonesia	15	Switzerland
16.5	Spain	15	Switzerland	15	Yugoslavia
20	Argentina	19.5	Mexico	15	Brazil
20	Mexico	19.5	Netherlands	21	Argentina
20	Netherlands	19.5	Spain	21	Belgium
20	South Africa	19.5	South Africa	21	Pakistan
20	Yugoslavia	26	Austria	21	Poland
27.5	Czechoslovakia	26	Czechoslovakia	21	South Africa
27.5	Denmark	26	Denmark	26.5	Czechoslovakia
27.5	New Zealand	26	German Democratic Republic	26.5	Denmark
27.5	Norway	26	Israel	26.5	German Democratic Republic
27.5	Pakistan	26	Norway	26.5	Indonesia
27.5	Philippines	26	Poland	26.5	Israel
27.5	Poland	26	Yugoslavia	26.5	Mexico
27.5	Turkey	26	Venezuela	31.5	Cuba
27.5	United Arab Republic	33.5	Cuba	31.5	Norway
27.5	Venezuela	33.5	New Zealand	31.5	Turkey
34	Finland	33.5	Pakistan	31.5	United Arab Republic
34	German Democratic Republic	33.5	Philippines	36	Finland
34	Israel	33.5	Turkey	36	New Zealand
37	Austria	33.5	United Arab Republic	36	Nigeria
37	Cuba	37	Finland	36	Philippines
37	Luxembourg	38	Luxembourg	36	Venezuela
39	Nigeria	39	Nigeria	39	Luxembourg

> with authority; but this authority must be as circumscribed and limited as legal ingenuity can devise; and the holders of these positions should be under constant scrutiny, should be watched as potential enemies.[29]

Another Briton, Reginald Hargreaves, recently analyzed American primacy:

> During President Nixon's first term, the United States crossed a historic watershed in its relations with the rest of the world .... The American tent, which, in the words of Roy Jenkins, had once stood gloriously and uniquely on the top of the highest hill, was now being lowered, and a new era of American foreign policy was clearly about to begin .... The United States remains a superpower, a giant among nations, but the ideals of the Pax Americana are no longer credible in the 1970's .... In short, America has lost its immunity to history. Like other, lesser nations, it too has discovered that there

Table 3. Ratings of Countries in Power and Importance.

	Parliamentarians				Public			
Rate These Countries	UK	France	FRG	Italy	UK	France	FRG	Italy
USA	9.3	8.9	9.8	9.7	8.7	8.7	9.3	8.8
USSR	8.9	7.6	9.3	8.7	8.6	8.5	9.2	8.2
PRC	5.8	5.7	6.5	6.2	6.2	7.0	7.3	6.2
Japan	4.9	5.8	5.7	5.8	5.2	6.6	6.4	7.1
France	5.0	na	5.5	5.2	5.4	na	5.8	5.8
Britain	na	4.9	5.3	6.0	na	5.7	5.5	6.3
West Germany	4.6	5.9	na	5.7	4.9	6.1	na	6.8
Italy	3.0	4.3	3.7	na	3.2	4.6	3.6	na
Own Country-Past	6.6	4.5	4.2	3.2	7.6	4.5	4.3	4.6
Own Country-Present	5.5	5.8	5.0	4.6	5.6	6.7	5.6	5.8
Own Country-Future	5.9	7.0	6.3	6.9	6.2	7.4	6.7	6.9

are in fact limits to its enormous power.[30]

Many appraisals of America, her position, and her performance are available; however, space precludes more extensive samplings. We turn, selectively, to structured surveys of foreign opinion.[31]

Most surveys are expressed in terms of "net favorable," that is, the "percent favorable" minus the "percent unfavorable." The criterion of education is usually used to separate general publics from elites. In some cases, the views of parliamentarians (members of national legislatures) are distinguished from general publics.

The public and parliamentarians of Britain, France, Germany, and Italy were asked to place on a scale of power and importance from 0 to 10, eight countries, including (or adding) their own country in the past, the present, and the future.[32] Results are shown in Table 3. (It is interesting, among other aspects evident in the table, that only the British consider their past superior to their present and future.)

Long term change is illustrated in this 1973 chart:[33]

Proportion of Japanese Considering the United States a "Most Liked" or "Most Disliked" Nation

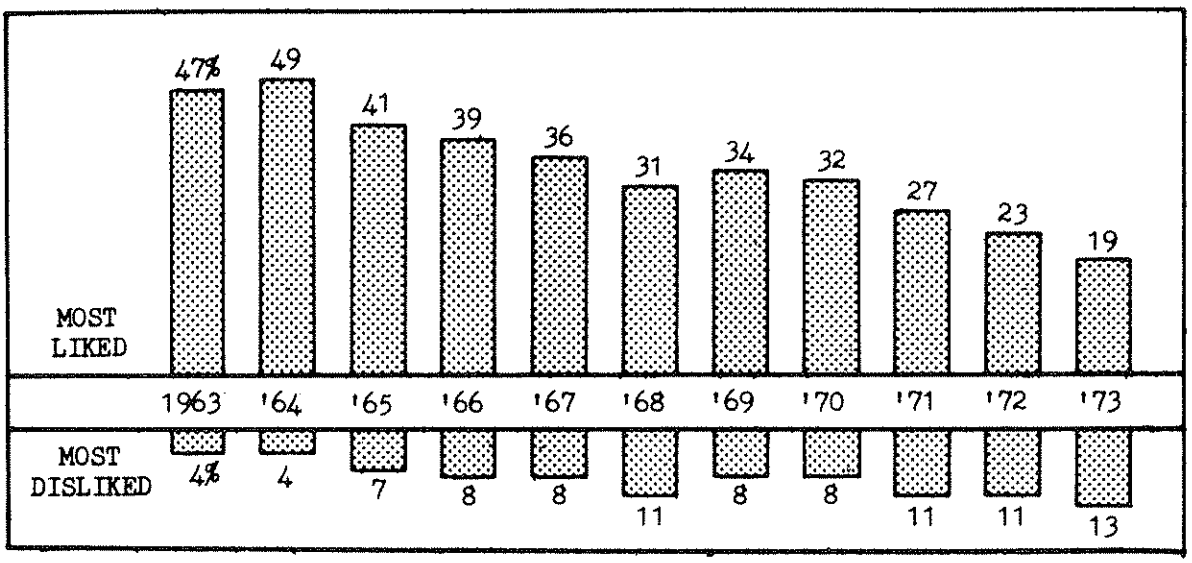

Table 4[34] is also instructive about the course of change in opinion. It is related to an attempt to trace the course of British opinion concerning the question: "Which country, the United States or the USSR, do you believe to be ahead in space developments (science, military)?" The table shows favorable and unfavorable British evaluation of US standing in these fields between 1957 and 1971.

Another revealing instance of substantial change in foreign views toward American primacy is contained in Table 5,[35] showing responses to a question asked in 1958, 1964, and 1971 in Great Britain, West Germany, and France. While the wording varied each time, the sense of the question remained: "Would it be best for the United States to be ahead militarily, or the USSR, or neither?"

Table 6[36] looks ahead. In late 1969, citizens of 12 countries were asked by Gallup International, concerning the United States, USSR, their own, or any other country: "Looking ahead 10 years, which country do you think will have the highest standard of living?"

Table 4. British Evaluation of US Standings in Military, Science, and Space, 1957-71.

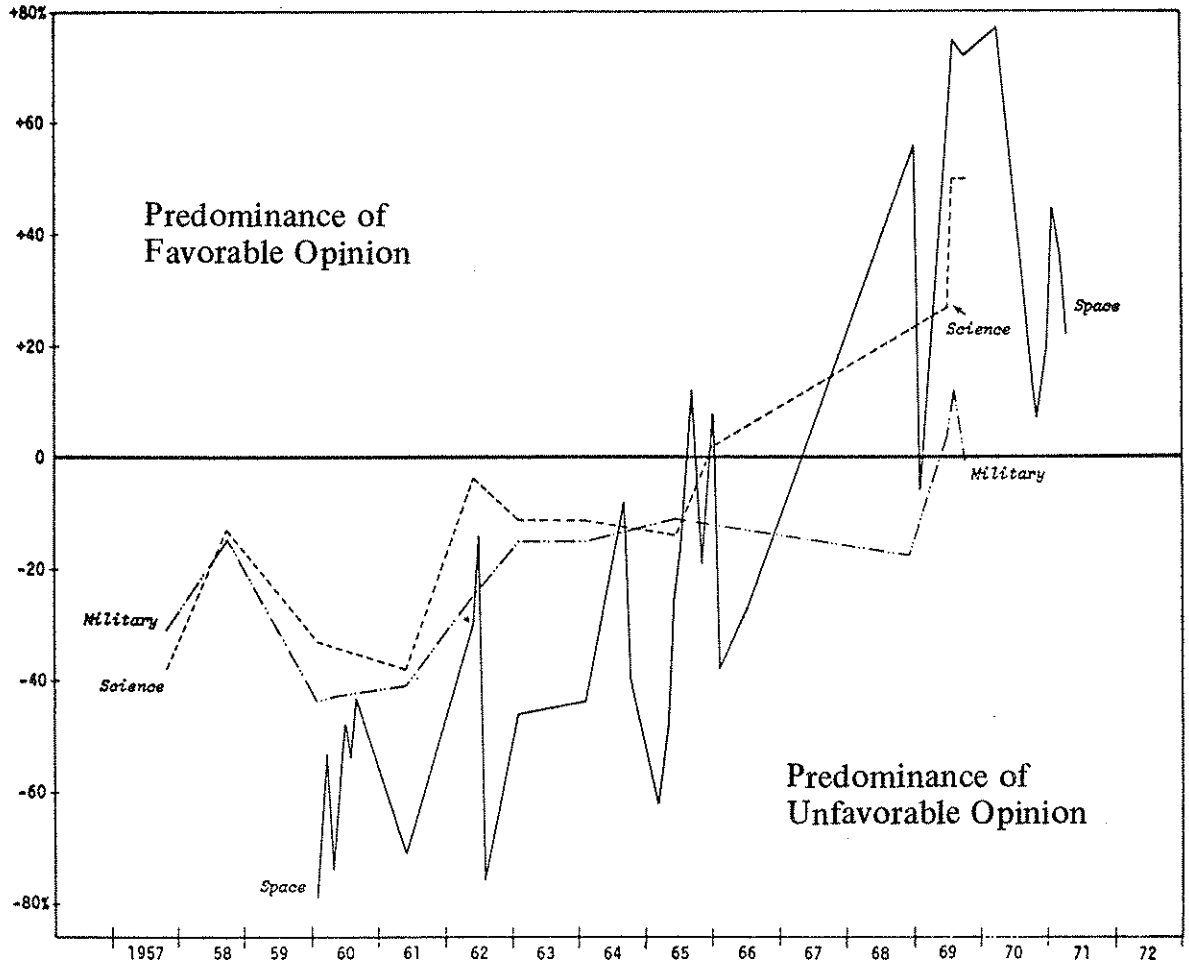

Table 5. Preferences for Military Advantage.

	Great Britain			West Germany			France		
	Oct 1958	Feb 1964	Jul 1971	Oct 1958	Feb 1964	Jul 1971	Oct 1958	Feb 1964	Jul 1971
Prefer US ahead	69%	40%	31%	73%	49%	31%	43%	22%	12%
Prefer USSR ahead	2%	1%	3%	1%	–%	1%	3%	2%	3%
Prefer neither ahead	21%	47%	56%	15%	35%	56%	36%	64%	71%
No opinion	8%	12%	11%	11%	16%	13%	18%	12%	15%
	100%	100%	101%	100%	100%	101%	100%	100%	101%

Table 6. Predictions of Standards of Living.

Country/City	United States	Own Country	USSR	West Germany	Other	No Opinion
Israel	66%	2%	–%	15%	–%	17%
India	59%	5%	2%	4%	11%	19%
Bogota	58%	5%	7%	7%	17%	6%
Athens	55%	6%	1%	3%	10%	25%
West Germany	49%	13%	1%	–%	17%	22%
Great Britain	47%	17%	2%	12%	10%	13%
Tokyo	43%	22%	–%	6%	9%	21%
Uruguay	41%	3%	4%	7%	12%	33%
Canada	41%	36%	–%	–%	5%	18%
Finland	40%	3%	3%	8%	35%	11%
Sao Paulo	34%	50%	1%	1%	8%	6%
Spain	33%	6%	3%	10%	9%	39%

THE UNITED STATES, AS SELF-PERCEIVED

So far, we have presented objective evaluations of US attributes relative to those of other nations, and evaluations of US attributes as perceived by foreign observers. In this section, we explore evaluations of US attributes as perceived by Americans themselves.

Some aspects of America's experience are not inconsistent with a drive for parity, if not primacy. As Seymour Martin Lipset termed it, America was the first new nation, created deliberately with "instant" status and identity among nations.

Americans made self-conscious attempts to put behind them any categorizations as raw and uncultured, and added a layer of social and aesthetic ambition to the other forms of dynamism that came to be demanded by, and associated with, life in America. And the egalitarian principle became deeply ingrained; one man might have or receive or gain more than another, but that did not make him *better*. Stratification emerged, as it does in all societies; but in America, aspects of class were muted and never achieved towering proportions.

A variety of expressions have attempted to bespeak the American character. The

Founding Fathers set a heady early pace. John Adams, for example, wrote to Jefferson in 1813 that "Our pure, virtuous, public-spirited, federative republic will last forever, govern the globe, and introduce the perfection of man."[37] Declared Woodrow Wilson: "Sometimes people call me an idealist. Well, that is the way I know I am an American. America is the only idealist nation in the world."[38]

Such statements are sometimes taken to support a belief that the United States is obsessed with the position of being Number One nation. While President, Richard Nixon sounded that note repeatedly, as in his early 1974 State of the Union Message: "We must never allow America to become the second strongest nation in the world."[39]

America's alleged obsession with competitiveness has been ascribed to American absorption in football and the football coach's nonacceptance of any result but winning. Coaches like Vince Lombardi are frequently quoted: "Winning isn't everything; it's the *only* thing!"[40]

As Senator Fulbright was recently retired from government, he was quoted thus, relative to primacy:

> ... the present outlook, for the Western world at least, is a gloomy one—largely because of the irrationality of the leadership, especially in the United States .... We're constantly out in front—which we take pride in doing—like being on the moon first.[41]

Some economic indicators[42] give cause for concern about their impact on primacy. On January 16, 1975, the Commerce Department said total output declined in the last quarter of 1974 faster than at any time in 16 years, as shown below:

US GNP in Billions

Year	Current Dollars	Real (1948) Dollars
1972	1158	792.5 (+6.2%)
1973	1295	839.2 (+5.9%)
1974	1397	821.1 (-2.2%)

SURVEYS OF AMERICANS

We now include the results of selected structured surveys of the state of American opinion on critical issues, or trends, in recent years up to 1974. For example, Potomac Associates' surveys show that internationalist Americans declined from 65% in 1964 to 41% in 1974, while isolationists increased from 8% to 21% over the same period.[43]

The same agency reports that Americans perceived the United States to rank first in power and importance in 1974 by a sizable gap over the Soviet Union, but forecast an appreciable drop in absolute US ranking within the next ten years, while still edging out the Soviets by a hair.[44]

One particular subgroup's forecast was disturbing:

> The great bulk of the American population ... saw essential equivalence ahead between the United States and the Soviet Union. People less than 30 years old were a notable exception, expressing the view that 10 years hence the Soviet Union would rank first ... with the United States in second position ....[45]

When asked whether or not the United States must remain Number One at all costs, even to the brink of war, Americans who agreed amounted to 56% in 1964, but 42% in 1974, while those who disagreed amounted to 31% in 1964 and 43% in 1974.[46]

AMERICA'S EXERCISE OF PRIMACY

Lincoln Bloomfield, political scientist at MIT, provides thoughtful insights which are representative of balanced evaluations of American performance:

> Much of US policy was right for the period 1945 to the early 1960's and, despite the revisionists, was so recognized by virtually the entire non-Communist world ... the trouble came in believing, two decades later, that nothing had changed.[47]

In commenting on a conservative American

organization's document published in 1970, Bloomfield takes issue with an assertion that "the United States has a clear call to continuing leadership in world affairs. This is not a role it chose. It was chosen by events. . . ."

> In other words, despite everything that has happened, the United States retains a unique mandate to lead the non-Communist world. I for one do not believe it. I do, however, believe that policies of greater cooperation and economic equity will meet a warm response; and if we want to call that 'leadership' or being 'Number One,' that's perfectly all right with me.[48]

CHANGE IN THE WORLD

Significant changes are taking place in the world, providing a dynamic yet uncertain environment for America's attempt to sustain primacy or whatever other status turns out to be appropriate.

Referring to his own as "probably the last earth-bound generation," John Cogley said, in addressing a 1967 student audience at the University of North Carolina:

> Already between most of you and me (who has children your age), there is a yawning generational gap. But between you and your children, there may be a Grand Canyon. . . . For, of all the generations that have grown up in the United States, yours seems to have been marked to live out your entire lives in a state of collective instability and restlessness. . . .[49]

We are aware that the rates of change of not only scale, but also tempo, are accelerating, compared to all history. Over the past century, we have increased speed of communication by a factor of 10^7; speed of travel by 10^2; speed of computers by 10^6; energy resources by 10^3; ability to control diseases by something like 10^2; and rate of population growth, compared to the rate of a few thousand years ago, by 10^3, more or less.[50] However, cautions John Platt, many of us are slow to realize that, though we have been on a steeply-rising S-curve of change, the S-curve is beginning to level off, and some technological changes are approaching certain natural limits. We may never have faster communications or more powerful weapons than we now have.

Do such changes harbor implications for wars, other competitions, or primacy? "War for resources or food or markets by any nation or group of nations would, in modern times, represent the supreme folly," said Prime Minister Gough Whitlam of Australia, addressing the UN General Assembly in September 1974. "There is no war, nuclear or conventional, by which the so-called winner, assuming there was one, could conceivably win back by war the resources used and destroyed in waging it."[51] Stanley Hoffmann calls the modern trend "the atrophy of war."[52]

Other trends presage profound changes in relations among peoples and nations. Since 1955, for example, for the first time in man's history, the majority of mankind have become literate.[53] The phenomenon of intercommunication is intensifying in effect. On the whole, it appears that no society, American or other, yet grasps the potential scope of power accumulating in the communications media. Who will control the media? Who will control the controllers?

World trade has greatly expanded, multiplying interactions among nations:

World Trade Growth, 1870's to 1970's[54]

Decade	Annual Average	World Exports (In Billions of Dollars)
1870's	1876-1880	6
1890's	1896-1900	9
1950's	1958-1960	116
1960's	1968-1970	275

Some observers hold that multinational corporations, some with gross annual sales larger than most nations' GNP's, are actually restructuring national and international economies.[55]

Again referring to the proliferation of

nations from 60 to 150 within 35 years, George Ball emphasizes the unsettling aftermath:

> There is nothing in history to equal in scale or significance the perilous passage of more than a billion people from colonial status to . . . independence, compressed within the period of two decades . . . . All [these nations] have been born weak and poor, many born prematurely. Each seeks self-respect, world recognition, and a better standard of living for its people. . . .[56]

Some major functional problems are surfacing, but perhaps too slowly. A 1974 survey of hundreds of specialists around the world found almost unanimous agreement that a serious world food crisis has begun. Some say it will decline in four to six years; others see it as the beginning of "decades of unrelenting misery" for much of the world, initially felt most severely in India. An important conclusion is that no country in the world will escape repercussions.[57]

The world system itself is in some indefinable state of transition. International order deals with sovereign states, while world order deals with human society as a whole. What we are currently involved in doing is organizing international order; but in the last analysis, observes Hedley Bull, world order is more important.[58]

Karl Deutsch says:

> . . . the prospect before us is a world of nation-states for the next 20, 30, 50, or, perhaps 80 years—that is, for the next two or three generations. The future presents us with a paradox. Only the nation-states can administer the broadening scope of politics and public service . . . . *But these same nation-states cannot defend the lives of their peoples.*[59]

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE UNITED STATES

A number of trends underway indicate substantial changes in the ways in which the world will be organized, and in the ways in which peoples perceive hierarchies and dynamics of power. George Ball titled his 1968 book *The Discipline of Power* because, he said, "it seems to me that we have tended in recent years to use our power not *arrogantly*[60]—I think that is the wrong adverb—but *exuberantly*. . . ."[61] D. W. Brogan, a friendly English critic, takes a long perspective:

> . . . The American people . . . have much to give, materially and spiritually: a well-founded optimism about their own possibilities; a well-founded belief that some of the problems of unity in the absolute essentials, combined with diversity in all departments of life where diversity is possible, have been solved in the American historical experience.[62]

As far as allegations of imperialistic drives toward domination are concerned, Ball insists: "We are a country with no imperialistic drive or proconsular tradition."[63] He insists that unilateral domination is no longer possible, even for the United States.

DETENTE

There being, in my opinion, not enough on the present scene to deny bipolarity in military and nuclear power, this essay accepts ambiguity as clouding American's status of being Number One nation—that is, that while the United States is clearly the Number One nation in the world in important material and psychological attributes (particularly economic), its fairly clear limitation to approximate equality with the Soviet Union in nuclear and military strength renders it imperative to appraise the overall world "ranking" of the United States as, at most, a qualified or ambiguous Number One, and at worst, co-holder with the Soviet Union of Number One status.

How does or might detente affect this status? The elements of such interactions are so impalpable and imponderable that we can only speculate within this area of conjecture. Three facets are particularly critical.

- Detente, it is abundantly clear, means

many different things to many different people. We shall offer this definition: detente is a formal two-sided policy between the two superpowers (other nations affect the relationship and are affected by it, but they are not parties to it). It is not expected to preclude competitive or arbitrary actions (or even, possibly, confrontation) on specific issues; however, it is expected to act, in general, as a restraint across the entire spectrum of bilateral interactions.

• If dominance of one superpower over the other is sweeping and clear-cut, detente would appear to be *unnecessary* to Number One. This is not to predict that a dominant Number One would never include detente among its declared policies toward Number Two; it might announce such a policy gratuitously. A dominant Number One, should it choose to cultivate cooperative, relaxed relations with Number Two, can readily establish such a tone in a hundred unilateral ways if it chooses, without having to sign, agree to, or adhere to any formalized, structural system of inhibitions such as may be represented by the type of detente defined above. If there is no great inequality between Number One and Number Two (that is, no great preponderance), then a natural state of tension can be expected between them, one which might well be relieved by detente—depending upon the form taken by detente in the circumstances, and depending upon the expectations of each side as to what it expects detente to accomplish in that side's interests.

• If the nation which is Number One is a status quo power, interested primarily in furthering world order, detente with Number Two would appear to be one means to further that end. A dominant status quo power would probably find detente a device consistent with the nation's general cultivation of cooperation; if the Number One nation is an expansionist power, detente would appear to have less appeal. A dominant expansionist power would seem to have little use for detente, except as a temporary expedient.

Mr. Gough Whitlam, Prime Minister of Australia, before the UN General Assembly in September 1974, appealed to the United States and the Soviet Union to:

> . . . maintain the utmost mutual restraint in their relations between themselves and with all other countries. They can, of course, easily destroy each other. They can also destroy all of us. We are entitled to ask them to move forward to a stage of complete detente where their tremendous power can be used jointly for the betterment of the whole civilization.[64]

The Chancellor of West Germany, Helmut Schmidt, commented recently on acceptable modern styles of carrying out the responsibilities of primacy:

> It is inevitable that we cooperate in good spirit and faith with the United States. This will never mean that we could obey orders. *The difficulty for the Americans is that, on the one hand, they have to act as the most important leaders of opinion, and on the other, they have to avoid appearing as leaders. There are many people in the world who do not like to be led, at least who do not like this to be shown.* I think this is at the core of many resentments involving Frenchmen and Americans over the past two decades.[65] (italics added.)

Over a hundred years ago, the great British scientist Thomas Huxley observed after a visit to the United States:

> . . . there is something sublime in the future of America. But do not suppose that I am pandering to what is commonly understood by national pride. I cannot say that I am in the slightest degree impressed by your bigness, or your material resources, as such. Size is not grandeur, and territory does not make a nation. The great issue, about which hangs a true sublimity, and the terror of overhanging fate, is what are you going to do with all these things?[66]

It appears reasonable to offer a few tentative conclusions along the following lines, based on the limited data so far examined:

• Obviously, all available evidence supports the premise that the United States is enormously powerful relative to all other nations in the entire world.

• In certain attributes, principally in economic power and associated indicators of development (such as in capacity to produce food), the United States is more advanced than any other nation and is indeed Number One.

• In military nuclear power, the United States does not overshadow the rest of the world as it once did; in essence, there is no nuclear Number One, and the United States now *shares* nuclear primacy with the Soviet Union.

• Leadership continues to be functional at all levels of political and social organization. Predators continue to arise, but no genuine power to keep order has yet been conceded by nations to any international organization. If order is to be maintained, at least one of the superpowers must be inclined toward order-keeping in the exercise of its power and influence. There is no gainsaying that America continues to be the superpower most likely to use its power toward order. The limits of acceptable style in performing international leadership, however, are becoming more narrow and sensitive. Concessions to power and primacy are no longer automatic and not often tacit. Power, primacy, and leadership are increasingly seen to be multidirectional dynamics and decreasingly authoritarian.

• The capability to shape outcomes of international interactions becomes less and less feasible for any single nation, even a superpower. In the sense of being single cause, prime mover, and unilateral decisionmaker, the role of being Number One nation is losing credibility and deference.

• While a minority of Americans appear to retain more or less obsessive concern with winning (at anything) and with being Number One, the majority of Americans appear to experience declining interest in being Number One nation, at least in quantitative terms.

• Two caveats suggest that the potential benefits of detente are conditional: detente will project potential benefits to both sides only so long as neither the United States nor the USSR is clearly dominant over the other; detente will probably continue to offer potential benefits even regardless of the Soviet Union's predilection, as an expansionist state, to attempt to extract undue advantage from interactions with the United States, *provided* this predilection is not exercised beyond the tolerance of the United States.

If detente leads to cessation of the arms race, diminution of weapon stockpiles, and declining incidence of recourse to violence, detente will have served well. It is not likely, in my opinion, to ever do more than open the way to such developments; for detente is itself, by definition, a *limited* step in reducing tensions.

More advanced steps and stages of cooperation than detente will have to become popular simultaneously in the United States and USSR before the importance will decline of seeing to it that the international ranking of the United States is maintained as at least co-occupant of Number One status. Meanwhile, the effect of detente on primacy is not predictable.

Many comparisons among such complex entities as nations are at best narrow, special, limited. Though they may be important, many comparisons cannot be made meaningful. For example, which nation has produced the most great persons? In what fields? Is there some way to decide that one culture, or political structure, or pattern or relations among generations in one country is superior to those in another? Or that one nation should adapt its version of such features to those of another nation? Is the United States a better society, a better nation, than any other nation, most other nations, all other nations? Does anyone want to argue such issues? May we finesse such arguments here, by simply observing that all nations have positive and negative traits, which appear to be agreeable to the development of their own people?

Yet something else needs to be said here. In measuring combinations of various attributes, we see that America has achieved eminence to a degree not surpassed by any other nation. Whether one considers the amount of trust and respect accorded the United States in 1975 to be high or low, it appears not to be exceeded by the degree of trust and respect accorded to any other major country today.

A substantial content of achievement (or talent or effort) had to be present to make such status possible. If a large content of desire-to-win has been present, so be it. (Would "higher" or "better" status have been achieved if the prevailing spirit had been desire-to-lose?)

Without wasting strength on self-congratulation or waiting for the congratulations of others, America knows that such strength as she has achieved has also sustained others, and has been at least partially expended in good causes. For most of the expenditures, no apologies seem called for. As Daniel Moynihan wrote recently in *Commentary*: "It is past time we ceased to apologize for an imperfect democracy. Find its equal."

America may not be Number One all by herself any more, but she has not been relegated to being Number Two, either. May we hope that in world perspective the importance of being Number One will decline, sooner rather than later? If, in the meantime, regrettably, a fighting crisis arises in which freedom, for example, again depends on a contest involving America's physical strength plus will, may we hope that America's desire to win and its practice of winning will not have waned beyond the possibility of prompt recovery?

NOTES

1. Bertrand Russell, *Power: A New Social Analysis* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1962), p. 9.
2. Quoted in Russell, p. 8.
3. Arnold Rogow and Harold Lasswell, *Power, Corruption, and Rectitude* (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1963), p. 11.
4. Harold Lasswell and Abraham Kaplan, *Power and Society: A Framework for Political Inquiry* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1950), p. 155.
5. Adolph Berle, *Power*, pp. 21-28.
6. Arnold Rogow and Harold Lasswell, p. 34.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 35.
8. Floyd L. Ruch, *Psychology and Life* (Chicago: Scott Foresman, 1948), p. 610.
9. Morton Deutsch, *The Resolution of Conflict: Constructive and Destructive Processes* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1973), p. 182.
10. Arnold Tannenbaum, "Leadership," *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, Vol. 9, p. 102.
11. Cecil A. Gibb, "Leadership," *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, Vol. 9, p. 91.
12. US Department of State, *Status of the World's Nations*, 1974, p. 3.
13. David Vital, *Inequality of States: A Study of the Small Power in International Relations* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1967), pp. 3-4.
14. A. J. K. Organski, "Power Transition," *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, Vol. 9, p. 417.
15. Klaus Knorr, *Power and Wealth: The Political Economy of International Power* (New York: Basic, 1973), pp. 25, 27, 193. See also Berle, and E. B. Haas, *The Uniting of Europe: Political, Social, and Economic Forces, 1950-1957* (Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 1968).
16. David McLelland, *Theory and Practice of International Politics* (Princeton: Van Nostrand, 1961), p. 3.
17. Charles M. Fergusson, Colonel, "What Does It Mean To Win?" Student Thesis, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania: US Army War College, 1963, p. 3.
18. Dr. Winston V. Morrow, letter to author, October 25, 1974.
19. Raymond Aron, *Peace and War: A Theory of International Relations* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1966), p. 581.
20. J. David Singer and Melvin Small, "Formal Alliances, 1815-1939: A Quantitative Description," *Journal of Peace Research*, 1966, pp. 1-32.
21. George Liska, *Imperial America: The International Politics of Primacy*, "Foreword" (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1967).
22. Organski, p. 417.
23. The United Nations and other international organizations, such as the Office of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), produce valuable data. One of the best known private efforts is the Dimensions of Nations Project (DON), started at Northwestern University in 1962, subsequently conducted at Indiana, Yale, and Hawaii. DON has gathered a "monumental amount of data" on the attributes of 82 nations, using 230 variables, and including conflict data. See R. J. Rummel, *The Dimensions of Nations* (Beverly Hills, Calif.: Sage, 1972). For criticism, see Gordon Hilton, *American Political Science Review*, September 1974, pp. 1408-09. Another well-regarded project grew out of the Yale University Data Analysis Program and other resources such as the Inter-University Consortium for Political Research at Ann Arbor. Bruce Russett and others published the 1st edition of the *World Handbook of Political and Social Indicators*, Yale University Press, 1964. Charles Taylor and Michael Hudson published the 2d edition, same press, 1972, including 136 units, using about 150 variables, and fixing on the nation-state as the unit of analysis. Attribute data is included through 1965, and events data through 1967. As will be seen, a number of others, such as Ferris and Barbera, have also produced variously useful rankings.
24. Wayne H. Ferris, *The Power Capabilities of Nation States* (Lexington: Heath, 1973), p. 57.
25. Robert W. Cox; Harold Jacobson, *et al.*, *The Anatomy of Influence: Decision Making in the International Organization* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1973), p. 49.
26. *Science Indicators 1972*, National Science Foundation, pp. 32-33.
27. The earliest foreign analyst of note was J. Hector St. John De Crevecoeur who published *Letters from An American Farmer* in 1782; still, perhaps, the most insightful was the Frenchman Alexis de Tocqueville who published the two volumes of *Democracy in America* in 1835 and 1840; another of the most comprehensive and astute was the Englishman James Lord Bryce, who published *The American Commonwealth* in two volumes in 1889. Andre Siegfried

published *America Comes of Age* in 1927. There are of course many other analytical works extant, across the spectrum of opinion. One useful bibliography appears in Michael McGiffert, *The Character of Americans* (Homewood, Ill.: Dorsey, 1964).

28. James Bryce, *The American Commonwealth* (New York: Putnam, 1959).

29. Geoffrey Gorer, *The American People: A Study in National Character* (New York: Norton, 1964), p. 32.

30. Reginald Hargreaves, *Superpower: A Portrait of America in the 1970's* (New York: St. Martin's, 1973), pp. 337-338.

31. We rely here primarily upon the technically sophisticated surveys and analyses conducted by the United States Information Agency (USIA). In actual contact with foreigners, of course, USIA uses foreign sampling agencies; the individual being questioned by a fellow countryman has no idea that the questions are being asked on behalf of the United States (or any other foreign country). We have also referred to the equally competent similar surveys sponsored by the International Institute for Social Science Research in Washington (directed by Dr. Lloyd A. Free).

32. Lloyd A. Free, "International Attitudes of Western Europeans: A Study of Parliamentary and Public Opinion in Great Britain, France, Italy, and West Germany in the Spring of 1968" (Princeton: Institute for International Social Research, 1969), p. A-23.

33. USIA, Report N12-73, June 6, 1973, p. 2.

34. Alvin Richman, "Trends and Structure of Foreign Attitudes Toward the United States and the USSR," paper for American Political Science meeting, September 1973, Appendix B, Graph 6.

35. USIA, R-29-71, November 29, 1971, p. 5.

36. USIA, R-5-70, March 23, 1970, p. 5.

37. Quoted in Lincoln Bloomfield, *In Search of American Foreign Policy: The Humane Use of Power* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1974), p. 52.

38. Quoted in D. W. Brogan, *The American Character* (New York: Knopf, 1944), p. 63.

39. Quoted in Nick Thimmesch, "Professor in the Pentagon," *Washington Post Potomac*, October 6, 1974, p. 25.

40. Tom Dowling, *Coach* (New York: Norton, 1970), pp. 10-11.

41. Russell W. Howe and Sarah Trott, "J. William Fulbright: Reflections on a Troubled World," *Saturday Review*, January 1975, p. 12.

42. "Steep Recession," *The New York Times*, January 17, 1975, p. 1.

43. Donald Lesh, *A Nation Observed: Perspectives on America's World Role* (Washington: Potomac Associates (Basic Books), 1974), p. 147.

44. *Ibid.*, p. 139.

45. *Ibid.*, p. 140.

46. *Ibid.*, p. 141.

47. Bloomfield, p. 61.

48. *Ibid.*

49. John Cogley, "The Uses of Leadership," in *The Requirements for Leadership in the 1980's*, ed. by Roy W. Holsten (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina, 1967), pp. 22, 25.

50. John Platt, *Perception and Change* (Ann Arbor: Univ. of Michigan Press, 1970), p. 160.

51. Paul Hofmann, "Australian at UN Terms War for Resources Supreme Folly," *The New York Times*, October 1, 1974, p. 1.

52. Cited by Karl Deutsch, *Nationalism and Its Alternatives* (New York: Knopf, 1969), p. 173.

53. *Ibid.*, pp. 178-179.

54. Cox and Jacobson, p. 324.

55. Soma Golden, "Coping with Multinational Corporations," *The New York Times*, December 24, 1974, p. 29.

56. George Ball, *The Discipline of Power: Essentials of A Modern World* (Boston: Little-Brown, 1968), pp. 12-13.

57. Boyce Rensberger, "Food: A Crisis for All," *The New York Times*, September 19, 1974, p. 1.

58. Hedley Bull, "World Order and the Super Powers," in *Super Powers and World Order*, ed. by Carsten Holbraad (Canberra: Australian National Univ. Press, 1971), p. 140.

59. K. Deutsch, pp. 172-173.

60. A pointed reference to the title of Senator Fulbright's book, *The Arrogance of Power* (New York: Vintage Books, 1966).

61. Ball, p. 357.

62. Brogan, p. 169.

63. Ball, p. 89.

64. Hofmann, p. 1.

65. "Schmidt," *Time*, October 7, 1974, p. 58.

66. Quoted in Hargreaves, p. 6.