

# Follow moral imperative in U.S. foreign policy

By Willy Gissen

COMMENT 8/15/97

The end of the cold war has started an ongoing debate about the direction of American foreign policy. The result of that debate has major implications for the future of our country as well as the world.

The victory over communism was a product of the moral imperative that has guided the United States from its founding. It is in continuing to follow this moral imperative that our salvation lies.



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In formulating a framework for foreign policy, it is necessary for us to create a model so that other nations will be able to predict when the United States will act. This predictability is almost as important as the model itself in order to forestall the actions of potential enemies and thus prevent wars. Containment was an easily understood policy during the Cold War. We need a similarly simple formula now.

The first rule we should adopt is that genocide will not be tolerated anywhere for any reason. Inexcusably, we do not arrest Serbian war criminals responsible for unspeakable atrocities. Their freedom of movement defies our troops and embarrasses all Americans.

We should have intervened to prevent Pol Pot killing millions in Cambodia and attempted to stop mass murders in Rwanda. If we as a country must look ourselves in the collective mirror every morning, we cannot continue to allow injustices on such a mass scale to occur.

The power of the United States has given our citizens luxuries and a degree of safety unknown anywhere else in the world. But with power comes the responsibility to use it wisely for the benefit of others who are often unable

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## MY VIEW

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to help themselves.

Zero tolerance for genocide assumes a second rule encompassing a more general commitment to human rights. President Jimmy Carter made human rights a guiding principle of American foreign policy, and his resolve made friends for America all over the world. The moral imperative under which the United States operates is the reason the American people have not forgotten the massacre at Tiananmen Square in Beijing. It continues to affect our relationship with China.

A third area where we must be careful involves choosing allies. An evaluation of a potential ally's government must play a role as well as geopolitical factors. Our support of the shah of Iran and his ruthless secret police was due to Iran's strategic location. Yet in the long run, that alliance may have wounded our image there irrevocably.

Of course, foreign and domestic policies are unavoidably interrelated. We cannot demand action by other nations that we are unwilling to take ourselves. For example, we cannot lecture other nations on environmental issues when we are unwilling to curb the luxury of unlimited burning of fossil fuels. The technological revolution has made the world a smaller place, and our domestic policy is scrutinized by other nations as well as our foreign policy.

As is often noted, America's greatness lies in her goodness. It is the soul of America that makes it a true superpower. Abraham Lincoln called us the last great hope of mankind. We have a duty to preserve it.

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*The writer is a White Plains resident.*