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USAFA Harmon Memorial Lecture #6

"Mr. Roosevelt's Three Wars: FDR as War Leader"

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It is a privilege to be invited to the Academy, to participate in the distinguished Harmon Lecture series, and to address the members of the Cadet Wing and their guests from Colorado College. This occasion is particularly pleasurable since it brings back memories of my own introduction to the field of military history during my service in World War II- as a historian on the staff of the Fourth Air Force Headquarters. The early interest of your service in military history has now become a tradition fittingly carried on here in the Academy and in this series, which bears your founder's name. I welcome the opportunity to speak to you this morning on the important subject that your Department of History has selected-one that has long interested me, that has affected all our lives, and that has bearing on your future careers.'

Let me begin by going back to March 1, 1945, when a weary President, too tired to carry the ten pounds of steel that braced his paralyzed legs, sat down before the United States Congress to report on the Yalta Conference-the summit meeting in the Crimea with Marshal Stalin and Prime Minister Churchill-from which he had just returned.

"I come from the Crimea Conference," he said, "with a firm belief that we have made a good start on the road to a world of peace..."

"This time we are not making the mistake of waiting until the end of the war to set up the machinery of peace. This time, as we fight together to win the war finally, we work together to keep it from happening again." 2

Forty-two days later- April 12, 1945- Franklin Delano Roosevelt was dead. Not long afterward, Allied forces pounded Germany and Japan into defeat. Thereupon began a great controversy over the way President Roosevelt had directed what I have termed his three wars- the war against Germany, the war against Japan, and war against war itself. No problem of World War II is more fascinating to the historian, none more difficult, than the question of President Roosevelt's leadership. This subject that has run through your discussions for the past week has stirred violent debate ever since the war and, from all indications, will continue to do so. Two extreme views have appeared. One portrays a President who blundered into war, bungled its conduct, and lost the peace. The other presents a picture of a President who was drawn into a war he did not want, rallied the free world, won a great victory, and moved the United States to the center of the world stage. One school of thought emphasizes blunders and mistakes- and on this list Pearl Harbor, the unconditional surrender policy, the Yalta Conference usually stand high. Indeed, in the early postwar days, writers seemed to be vying with each other in a numbers game- to see how many major mistakes they could find. The other school has called this approach "Monday morning quarterbacking" and refutes the charges, discounts the so-called mistakes, and stresses constructive achievements.

The controversy extends not only to the President's policies but also to his plans and methods. Some have argued that FDR had a master plan and a strategy to match. Others counter that he played strictly by ear. Some have contended he was the ready tool of his military staff, others that he manipulated that staff to his will. Interestingly enough, the two most recent accounts of revisionist writing on American strategy have attempted to make out a case for a strong activist role of the President in military strategy and to downgrade the role of the staff. Contrary to Robert Sherwood's findings that on "not more than two occasions in the war did FDR overrule his staff, the latest account,

just off the press, suggests there were more than twenty cases. We may be in for a new numbers game in the continuing controversy.

Where does the truth lie? Why all the controversy? It cannot be explained as simply a case of the "fog of war" or of partisan prejudices. In part the controversy stems from preconceived notions about Mr. Roosevelt- a carryover of stereotyped views about the myth and the man as New Dealer to war leader. In part it arises out of Mr. Roosevelt's highly personalized ways of doing business. He could be direct, he could be indirect, he could even be devious- and we shall have more to say about his methods as we go along. Those who stress Mr. Roosevelt as the "fox" and the "artful dodger" in domestic politics find it hard to believe he could be a genuine do-gooder and idealist in international affairs. The debate has also been fed by the disillusionment and frustrations of the postwar years- the cold war- and the tendency to look backward for scapegoats. Furthermore, there are problems of perspective, evidence, and motivation. World War II history merges into current history, but the most difficult part of current history is to find the current. Many of the trends set in motion during the war are still open-ended and our perspective is blurred. We cannot always be sure what is important, and it is difficult to evaluate with certainty what we identify. We have tons of records. No war was better recorded than World War II. Never have historians made such a concentrated assault on war documents so soon after a conflict. But all too often the historian who has struggled through mountains of paper finds the trail disappearing, at the crucial point of decision-making, somewhere in the direction of the White House. Nor can we always be certain of Mr. Roosevelt's motives. He rarely recorded his reasons. He did not leave us the memoirs we have come to expect from our presidents. Though he was historically-minded, he permitted no historian to peer over his shoulder in the White House. As a result the historian has to pick and choose, interpret and reinterpret; he must distinguish between appearances and realities and try to fit the pieces into a proper pattern. Above all, he must beware of creating new myths in place of those he destroys.

To do justice to all the facets of FDR's war leadership would take far more time than we have at our disposal today. In our discussion here I would like to focus our attention principally on FDR's roles as Commander in Chief and war statesman after Pearl Harbor. We shall be especially interested to see what use he made of military power and how he viewed its relationships to foreign policy-problems of central importance to his war leadership and to your profession.

I

Long before the attack on Pearl Harbor plunged the nation into war, Mr. Roosevelt's apprenticeship for war leadership had begun. Intensely interested in naval affairs from his youth, he had had firsthand experience, as Assistant Secretary of the Navy in World War I, in preparing for war. Extremely conscious of Wilson's experiences during and after World War I with Allies, enemies, and the U.S. Congress, he was determined to avoid Wilson's mistakes. Roosevelt himself had fought for the League of Nations, on which Wilson had staked so much of his war policy. He knew that victory had to be won on Capitol Hill as well as on the battlefield. A year before Pearl Harbor- in his "arsenal of democracy" speech- he had spoken out against the folly of a negotiated peace with the Nazis. During that same year he appointed two Republicans- Frank Knox and Henry L. Stimson- to be Secretaries of the Navy and War Departments, respectively- the first of a series of steps toward bipartisanship. The Commander in Chief would also serve as the politician in chief.

Between 1939 and 1941, under President Roosevelt's leadership, the country gradually awakened to the dangers from without and began to mobilize. His efforts during the prewar period to join military power to national policy were, however, only partially successful. Simply put, that policy was to try to avert war but to be prepared for it should it come. He used power to avert war- what we would today call the deterrent. Calls for planes, "now- and lots of them," keeping the fleet at Pearl Harbor; extending naval patrols, garrisoning Atlantic bases, reinforcing the Philippines did not avert war. Nor did he succeed in harnessing that military power- such as it was- to an effective diplomacy to develop

an alternative to war. But he did succeed in getting rearmament started. He went as far as he dared in letting foreign powers know that America would aid those fighting tyranny. By the time of Pearl Harbor, we were, in effect, a nonbelligerent ally. He reached for his Commander in Chief's baton early and used it actively. He gathered in the reins of military power, harnessed his team, and began to educate his staff even as they were educating him for the tasks ahead. The relatively prolonged "short of war" period gave him an invaluable "dry run" and by late 1941 he was ready.

Enemy action, not the President's wish or design, put an end to the three years of peacetime preparation. The measures he had instituted to stop Japanese aggression may have narrowed the choices for Japan, but Japan made the decision for war. FDR's campaign for preparedness was still far from complete, but so far as advance military planning was concerned, the nation never entered a war so well prepared. The armed forces were being built up, weapons were beginning to flow, the basis of coordinated action with Britain had been set. Pearl Harbor exposed weaknesses in America's preparations, but the steps that had already been taken enabled the United States within less than a year to take the offensive against Germany and Japan. As events were to show, the President had successfully converted the peaceful democracy to war purposes.

With American entry into the war, the Grand Alliance really came into being. In the year following Pearl Harbor, the President devoted himself to consolidating the hard-pressed Alliance. There was both need and opportunity to shape that alliance composed of such diverse sovereign states as Great Britain and the Soviet Union, both fighting desperately, and the still untried United States. And, unlike Wilson, Roosevelt personally participated in the important wartime conferences of the Allies.

This coalition was really a polygamous marriage. It represented different degrees of partnership. With Churchill and the British, Roosevelt had a special relation- and the Anglo-American partnership was an alliance within an alliance. Wearing both a political and a military hat, Roosevelt sometimes found himself more in agreement with Churchill than with his own military staff. Throughout the war, and particularly in the early defensive stage, Churchill exercised a strong influence on him. The doughty British statesman-warrior, whose conversation always charmed Roosevelt even when his ideas did not, was a perfect foil for FDR. As FDR once told Churchill, "It is fun to be in the same decade with you."³

With the Soviet Union- the half ally involved almost to the end only in Europe- relations were never so intimate, and Roosevelt early took over the role of mediator between Churchill and Stalin in this "Strange Alliance." From the beginning, he strove to win the friendship of the Soviet Union. "The only way to have a friend," he once quoted Emerson, "is to be one."⁴ To bring the Soviet Union out of isolation, even as the United States had been drawn away from its isolationism, became one of his major goals.

Roosevelt's relationship with China's Chiang Kai-shek, who was involved only on the Japanese side of the war, was also a special one. In this role FDR did not always find himself in agreement with the British or with his own staff. From the beginning he hoped to raise China to recognition as a great power.

To Roosevelt the alliance presented a grand opportunity to "win friends and influence people," and to get allied nations, united by the common bond of danger, to know one another better and break down legacies of suspicion. To FDR the summit meetings from Washington to Yalta were more than assemblies to iron out war strategy and policy; they were historic chapters in international cooperation. To this end he early essayed the role he played throughout the war- guardian of the good relations of the coalition.

This attitude colored his approach to military strategy. Usually he went along with his staff on military strategy and was content to have the British and the Joint Chiefs of Staff settle it or to allow events to shape it. But wherever differences with major allies threatened to strain the coalition, he stepped in. Thus in the summer of 1942 he intervened to break a deadlock between the American Joint Chiefs- intent on preparing for an early cross Channel operation in force- and the British Prime

Minister and his staff intent on launching a North African operation. The decision for North Africa reversed the approval he had earlier given to the cross-Channel operation. He justified this decision on the ground that he wanted American troops in action in 1942, but he was also very much aware that the British were faltering and that the Russians were having a disastrous summer. The North African operation would provide a timely demonstration of allied solidarity. Not only did he overrule his staff on this occasion- as he was to do on several others- but he refused to permit the staff to give an ultimatum to the British, a threat to go all-out in the Pacific should the cross-Channel operation be canceled. Indeed in this connection in mid-July 1942 he used an imperative tone that was quite unusual to put down the stirrings of protest of his staff. Note, too, that throughout the war he steadfastly backed the "Europe first" decision- the basic coalition decision in strategy confirmed at the Anglo-American Conference in Washington soon after Pearl Harbor- a decision in which major allies found common political as well as military grounds.

It is difficult, on the face of available evidence, to ascribe strong strategic convictions to Mr. Roosevelt. Well into midwar he continued to show what his staff regarded as diversionist tendencies. When the invasion of North Africa proved successful, he could hardly repress a note of personal triumph to Gen. Marshall. "Just between ourselves," he declared, "if I had not considered the European and African fields of action in their broadest geographic sense, you and I know we would not be in North Africa today- in fact, we would not have landed either in Africa or in Europe!"⁵ The Mediterranean fascinated him almost as much as it did Winston Churchill. The American staff spent a good part of its wartime efforts trying to win him- and seeing to it that he stayed won- to a strategy based on a scheduled cross-Channel operation in force. It is not generally realized that Mr. Roosevelt as late as the summer of 1943 toyed with the idea of a campaign through the Iberian peninsula in place of the cross-Channel attack and even at Teheran in November 1943 showed interest in Adriatic ventures

This does not mean that FDR was opposed to the cross-Channel operation. Far from it. It does mean that he permitted his staff wide latitude in the day-to-day conduct of the strategic business of the war. But it also means that he reserved to himself the determination of the choice and timing of important decisions. Once determined- and no one could be more stubborn when his mind was made up- Mr. Roosevelt stood fast at Teheran for a cross-Channel operation and in the summer of 1944 for a southern France operation. By his interest in the Mediterranean and his desire to meet the British at least halfway, the President in effect compelled American strategists- in midwar- to broaden their strategic thinking and to consider various permutations and combinations of Mediterranean, cross-Channel and strategic bombing operations. The rigidity of America strategists has been much exaggerated.

Mr. Roosevelt's flexible approach to strategy gave his staff military advisers considerable problems. In the spring of 1942 he breezily tossed off a promise to Mr. Molotov for an early second front- to his staff's consternation. At times he adopted a cautious "wait and see" attitude, reluctant to commit himself in advance of an international conference. Occasionally he prodded the planners to do more for the Mediterranean. In this connection he once chided General Marshall, declaring that planners were "always conservative and saw all the difficulties."⁶ Small wonder that for a long time- in midwar- the staff could not work out a united front with him for the great conferences with the British. FDR played off one school of thought against the other, for example those advocating ground offensives in the China theater versus those advocating more air operations there. Spectacular actions that promised fast results also appealed to him- send an air force to the Caucasus to help the hard-pressed Russians, he proposed in late 1942, an offer the Russians refused; let Chennault mount a daring air campaign to bolster limping China, he ruled in 1943. At a conference he could take a strategic strand from Churchill, one from General Marshall, and another from Gen. Chennault and come up with a position of his own. He could also reverse himself even during a conference- witness the decision by default in the case of a large-scale operation on the mainland of Asia at Cairo-Teheran.

The chiefs became accustomed to seeing "OK-FDR" on their papers; at least once he also wrote "Spinach."

Yet when all is said and done, there is nothing to indicate that he had a thought-out strategic military plan of his own- separate from that of his staff. This was a working partnership. If he pulled the rug from under his staff on occasion, he could also back them strongly. They freed him from immersing himself in details- details bored him. They enabled him to play his favorite mediatory role at the conferences. The precise number of times he overruled his staff is not really important. For every case offered there are literally hundreds where he did not intervene- as a glance at JCS minutes of the war would show. What is important is the area of differences and these we have suggested lie in the realm of keeping the alliance in harness to get on with the war. Note how little, in contrast to European strategy, he intervened in Pacific strategy-basically in an American theater where Allies played a relatively small role and where he gave the JCS a comparatively free hand within the context of the "Europe first" decision.

As Commander in Chief Mr. Roosevelt was fortunate in his choice of staff and commanders. Unlike Lincoln, he found his general early. General Marshall soon won his confidence and carried much of the burden of debate with Churchill and the British Chiefs of Staff over European strategy, permitting Mr. Roosevelt to play his favorite mediatory role. The reliance he placed on Marshall is reflected in his decision not to release Marshall for the top command in Europe. As Roosevelt put it, "I . . . could not sleep at night with you out of the country."7 In Admirals King and Leahy he found strong naval advisers; Leahy, his personal link with the JCS, also became his "leg-man." Each could get his ear, as could also the Air Forces' Gen. "Hap" Arnold, via Harry Hopkins. The working relationship that grew up among them justified his confidence and produced an orderly administration in the day-to-day conduct of the war that was in marked contrast to Roosevelt's personalized methods in other fields. His system of administration during the war may have appeared haphazard and his relationship with his staff loose, but that system and relationship worked for him.

As time went on, FDR's respect for the complexities of military planning grew along with his knowledge. "You can't imagine how tired I sometimes get," he once stated, "when something that looks simple is going to take three months-six months to do. Well, that is part of the job of a Commander in Chief. Sometimes I have to be disappointed, sometimes I have to go along with the estimates of the professionals."5 The JCS system, which came into existence soon after Pearl Harbor and to which, characteristically, Roosevelt never gave a charter, remained his bulwark in the military field. Unlike the ubiquitous Churchill, he did not hang over the shoulders of his staff and commanders; nor did he harry them with messages, overwhelm them in debate, and give them no rest. Weeks would go by when he did not see General Marshall and for a long period after the North Africa decision, to which Stimson had objected strongly, the President did not see his Secretary of War. While much advice from nonmilitary sources reached him informally through various members of his inner circle, as Commander in Chief he preserved formal but friendly relations with commanders in the field through accepted military channels. Only once, at Pearl Harbor in July 1944, did he see Gen. MacArthur during the war, and it is doubtful that even then he intervened in strategic decisions that were pending.

To sum up, in general the Commander in Chief exercised a loose control over military strategy but preserved an independent role in it. He kept his cards close to his chest, persuaded rather than commanded, or let events make the decisions. He conducted grand strategy through the JCS and outside of it. He used any and all instruments at hand; as usual, he was not too much concerned with system and form. He assimilated and synthesized strategic ideas and then used his power of leadership to translate them into reality. His flexibility in military strategy was entirely consistent with his desire to defeat the enemies decisively and to keep the alliance solidified. He was wedded to no strategic doctrine except victory. To the President, military strategy, like politics, was the art of the possible. Through lend-lease he gave the coalition bricks and mortar. He used strategy to cement the alliance.

But he refused to use strategy to achieve strictly political objectives overseas. When the question of a possible Balkan operation came up in August 1943, he declared it was "unwise to plan military strategy based on a gamble as to political results."⁹ To the American President, strategy had to serve larger and nobler purposes.

So far we have been talking about the President as Commander in Chief. The time has come to ask the most important question of all, what was FDR after- what were his objectives in the war and after the war?

To answer this question we must first consider the role of the war President in his other important capacity, as manager of foreign relations. From the beginning, Roosevelt, like Wilson before him, was his own Secretary of State. He did not give the State Department the exceptionally free hand he permitted the Pentagon. He turned down Cordell Hull's proposal, after Pearl Harbor, that the Secretary of State participate in the President's war councils, particularly those involving diplomatic matters. Indeed, the Secretary of State's plea to be taken along to international summit conferences is one of the most poignant notes in all the literature of World War II. Only once, at the Quebec Conference of August 1943, did Secretary Hull attend a wartime summit meeting outside the United States; and even there he was not brought into the discussion by the Anglo-American Chiefs of Staff on the occupation of Germany. As a result, Roosevelt was his own quarterback. When on occasion he threw the ball to the Secretary of State, the latter was apt to be taken by surprise. By early 1942, a working division of labor had developed. FDR would be occupied with the JCS and with Allied political and military leaders in fighting the war; the Department of State would handle the more routine aspects of foreign relations and would work out the plans for the postwar settlement.¹⁰ The enunciation of higher aims in the struggle FDR reserved to himself.

It is not surprising therefore that when President Roosevelt made his announcement of unconditional surrender as his war aim at the Casablanca Conference in January 1943, he had not threshed it out with the JCS or the Secretary of State. We know now that this momentous announcement did not come to him out of the blue- an impression he delighted in giving to the press on such occasions along with a flourish of his familiar long cigarette holder. The origins and the impact of the formula will long be debated. Here I should like to emphasize that the announcement was entirely consistent with his approach to war and peace and with the circumstances of the turn of the year 1942. Unconditional surrender, he stressed at the time, did not mean the destruction of the peoples of Germany, Italy, and Japan, but the destruction of the evil philosophies that had taken hold in those lands. There must be no compromise- no deals- with those who fomented war. In effect this meant that a wedge must be driven between the enemy governments and their people- a moral offensive must be waged along with the fighting in the field. What he was offering was a simple dramatic slogan to rally the Allies for victory and to drive home to friend and foe that this time there would be no negotiated peace and no "escape clauses" offered by another Fourteen Points. This time the foe would have to admit he was thoroughly whipped.

We may conjecture that there were special circumstances at the time that reinforced his reading of World War I experience. In particular, the formula might reassure the Russians, disappointed in the delay of a second front in Europe, of the determination of the Western Powers to wage a fight to the finish with Germany. Also, since Pearl Harbor, he had been concentrating on defensive objectives of U.S. policy-essentially the security of the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. By the time of Casablanca these objectives had been largely secured, and the President may have leaped ahead in his thinking, impatiently, to the peace conferences that would follow a clear-cut victory, at which he could appear, uncommitted, to emulate the purposes, while avoiding the mistakes, of President Wilson.

The unconditional surrender formula is as important for what it did not set forth as for what it implied. Significantly, the President did not set forth here as his war aim the objective of restoring the balance of power in Europe and Asia. This was never his stated objective in the war. Nor was he concerning himself here with the terms of the peace settlement. On the contrary, from the beginning of

the war he spoke- as we have seen in his Arsenal of Democracy speech- of the folly of a negotiated peace with the Nazis. And from the beginning he wanted to postpone territorial and political settlements with the Allies until after the war. Indeed, in May 1942, he had intervened during Anglo-Russian treaty negotiations to oppose a guarantee of territorial concessions to the Soviet Union, even though at the time Churchill was willing to yield to the Soviet desire. Note that about the same time he had been willing to toss the Soviet Union a strategic bone- a promise for an early second front- he had not been willing to compromise the political settlement after the war.

The formula appears consistent, too, with his emerging views on an international security system after the war. Interestingly enough, and it maybe more than coincidence, a recommendation for unconditional surrender that was brought to his attention shortly before the Casablanca Conference had been arrived at by a subcommittee of the State Department in the course of its own study of postwar organization for peace. In 1942 Mr. Roosevelt had been thinking of an armed alliance of big powers- "sheriffs" to keep order during the transition from war to peace- but in 1943 he definitely gave his support to a United Nations organization. Certainly the President later openly called unconditional surrender the first step in the substitution for the old system of balance of power a new community of nations. Whatever reason bore most heavily with him in January 1943, unconditional surrender promised to allow him to come to the peace settlement with his own hands unbound by either enemies or allies, to keep the alliance in war unfettered by political deals, and to set the stage for molding a new environment of international relations after the war.

From Casablanca onward the President strove to achieve unconditional surrender and the establishment of a United Nations. For the American military staff, unconditional surrender was to serve essentially as a military objective, reinforcing its own notions of a concentrated, quick war. Winning the war decisively obtained top priority.

For his part, the President in 1943-44 concerned himself with cementing good relations with the Allies. The Grand Alliance must be brought through the war intact, converted for peace purposes, and housed in the United Nations. With the British, the close partners, this meant seeing to it that somehow their notion of a cross-Channel operation was reconciled with that of the Americans. With the Russians, it signified continued aid and the earliest possible establishment of a second front in Europe. As a result, FDR fought a coalition war without coalition politics in the narrow sense. The compromise nature of Allied strategy, as it emerged from the great midwar conferences, stemmed in considerable measure from his influence, as growing American power in the field strengthened his hand at summit meetings. More and more his attention at the conferences was taken up with the discussion of the United Nations organization. Meanwhile, as from the beginning of the conflict, he did nothing to jeopardize domestic public opinion or bipartisanship.

During midwar, he followed his policy of postponing specific political adjustments with the Allies and also sought to avoid American involvement in postwar Europe's politics. From the beginning he did not feel the American people would support a prolonged occupation in Europe. Nor did he want American troops in Europe permanently. He feared lest the United States be drawn into Europe's complex wrangles and trouble spots- into "Pandora's box," to use Cordell Hull's phrase. This concern came out sharply in his discussion with the JCS, en route to the Cairo Conference in November 1943, on the zones of occupation in postwar Germany. As he told the JCS, "We should not get roped into accepting any European sphere of influence." The British had proposed dividing Germany into three zones, of which the United States should take the southernmost. He objected to taking the southern zone lest the United States thereby become involved in a prolonged task of reconstituting France, Italy, and the Balkans. "France," he declared, was 'a British baby'." It was at this time that he went so far as to suggest that the northwest zone be extended eastward to include Berlin and that the United States take over that zone. "The United States," he stated, "should have Berlin." Significantly, the President added that, "There would definitely be a race for Berlin. We may have to put the United States Divisions into Berlin as soon as possible." With a pencil on a National Geographic Society map he

quickly sketched the zonal boundaries as he envisaged them, putting Berlin and Leipzig in the big American zone- one of the most unusual and hitherto little noticed records of the entire war.¹¹ Later, in February 1944, he resorted to the jocular tone he sometimes used to get his point across to Churchill: "Do please don't ask me to keep any American forces in France. I just cannot do it! I would have to bring them all back home. As I suggested before, I denounce in protest the paternity of Belgium, France, and Italy. You really ought to bring up and discipline your own children. In view of the fact that they may be your bulwark in future days, you should at least pay for the schooling now."

¹² Eventually reassured by readjustments with the British in the zonal boundaries and lines of communication, the President broke the deadlock in September 1944 at the second Quebec Conference and accepted the southern zone.¹³

FDR's methods worked well in midwar; his main objectives seemed well on the road to realization. By Teheran the blueprint of quick, decisive military victory in Europe had finally been agreed upon by the Russians, the British, and the Americans, and the Allies had also agreed on the principle of a United Nations organization.

Teheran was the high point of the President's war leadership. He had met with Stalin face to face for the first time in the war and, as he put it, had "cracked the ice."¹⁴ The personal relationship he had enjoyed with Churchill might henceforth be extended to Stalin and, as we know, he had great faith in his ability to handle face-to-face contacts. So encouraged was he that in early March 1944 he commented:

On international cooperation, we are now working, since the last meeting in Teheran, in really good cooperation with the Russians. And I think the Russians are perfectly friendly; they aren't trying to gobble up all the rest of Europe or the world. They didn't know us, that's the really fundamental difference.

And all these fears that have been expressed by a lot of people here- with some reason- that the Russians are going to try to dominate Europe, I personally don't think there's anything in it. They have got a large enough "hunk of bread" right in Russia to keep them busy for a great many years to come without taking on any more headaches.¹⁵

In June 1944 the Western Allies landed in Normandy and the Russians began to drive from the east in a giant nutcracker squeeze that promised to crush Germany quickly; in August the Allied representatives met at Dumbarton Oaks to spell out further their ideas on the international organization to keep the peace. By the time of the second Quebec Conference in September FDR could look forward with confidence to ending the war in Europe, gathering momentum to wind up the struggle with Japan, and getting on with the business of peace. Military strategy and national policy seemed to be well meshed; indeed, military strategy, in effect, was national policy in midwar.

II

In the final months of FDR's war leadership the picture changed and the problems multiplied. It is this period, more than the other war periods, that critics of his leadership have dealt with most harshly. The full impact of the President's methods and policies began to be felt even as the Allied armies overran Europe and fought their way into the heart of Germany. The demands of a policy of total victory and of total peace began to conflict. Never was his leadership more necessary; never was it more fitful.

As the strategy unrolled in the field and the American staff strove to end the war swiftly and decisively, Churchill, wary of the swift Soviet advance in eastern and central Europe, wished Western strength diverted to forestall the Soviet surge and the war steered into more direct political channels. The President, who had so often sided with the Prime Minister in the past, would not go along. Many

reasons may account for the President's refusal to change course- for example, his desire to get on with the war against Japan, a compulsion he could never forget- and his desire to get on with the peace. What part, if any, the state of his health played, we shall never be able to measure precisely. But it is clear by 1945 the Commander in Chief was caught in a political dilemma. He was disturbed by the Soviet Union's efforts to take matters into its own hands and to put its own impress on the political shape of postwar Europe. As he had gauged domestic opinion, however, he had to fight a quick and decisive war. For to Americans war was an aberration- an unwelcome disturber of normality, a disagreeable business to be gotten over with as quickly as possible. "Thrash the bullies and get the boys home" was the American approach. Moreover, the President's policy for peace centered in an international organization to maintain the peace, not in reliance on the balance of power. To achieve this aim he had to take the calculated risk of being able to handle Stalin and keep the friendship of the USSR. In the event, American national policy in the final year placed no obstacles in the way of a decisive ending of the European conflict. The President did not choose to use for immediate political purposes the military power the United States had built up on the Continent. In the absence of political instructions to the contrary, the American military forces kept at the task of ending the war as quickly as possible.

It is one of the ironies of history that President Roosevelt, pragmatist that he was on most issues, should go down as almost inflexible on the Russian issue. To the end, he refused to use lend-lease as a bargaining weapon or the armed forces as "levers for diplomacy"- to use Herbert Feis's apt phrase, vis-a-vis the Soviet Union.¹⁶ Nevertheless, Roosevelt's last exchanges with Stalin in March and April 1945- over the Polish problem and the negotiations for the surrender of German forces in Italy- were most sharp. His last message to Churchill, written an hour before his death, expressed the optimistic hope that the Polish problem, like others with the Soviet Union, would also pass and that the course toward the Russians had so far been correct, but at the same time urged firmness.

Ironically, too, in the final period, when winning the war decisively and establishing the United Nations- his two main goals- were clearly in sight, his dilemmas were piling up. And weaknesses in his leadership began to show up, along with growing divergences within the coalition he had tried to preserve and shape for larger postwar purposes. Immediate and harsh political problems were rising in the liberated countries of Europe for which his two main objectives provided no ready solution; the presence of armies and power- not principle- threatened to set the conditions of the peace.

Against this background, the much-debated conference of Yalta must be regarded not as the cause but as the symptom of the loosening bonds of the coalition. Yalta brought together three great powers with divergent approaches to the fundamental problems of war and peace. The common danger that had held them together was fading, the political declarations and principles to which the Allies had subscribed- notably the unconditional surrender formula- were beginning to show weaknesses as binding links. Military strategy as a bond of unity was proving a thin cement. Great Britain was growing weaker; the United States and the Soviet Union relatively stronger.

Yalta marked the growing intrusion of problems of victory and peace, the disunity of the West, and the emergence of the Soviet Union as a world power. The American military were conscious of the Soviet rise and troubled by it. Even before Yalta they were stiffening their stand in dealings with the Soviet forces in the field and calling for a quid pro quo. But they were also conscious that the war was not yet over in Europe- the Battle of the Bulge was fresh in their minds- and that the final campaigns against Japan were still to be fought. As their Pacific drives had picked up momentum, China had declined in their plans against Japan and they wanted Russia as a substitute. Following military advice, Roosevelt's immediate objective at Yalta was to get the Russians into the war against Japan as soon as possible; his long-range objective remained- to come out with a working relationship to prevent another world catastrophe. This time, however, he had to pay a price- and that price was a breach in his policy of postponement.

All in all, Yalta marked an important transition. The balance of power in and out of the coalition had shifted without the full realization by the West- or by its leaders- of what the shift meant. The struggle between the West and the Soviet Union was beginning.

The growing disparity in power among the Allies as the war entered its final stages was not inconsistent with FDR's military policy so long as the enemies were beaten decisively. But it did raise serious problems for his political policy. From the beginning his political strategy rested on the survival of the United Kingdom, China's recognition as a great power, and the cooperation of the Soviet Union. In the closing months of the war the basic props of his larger political strategy began to reveal weaknesses. Britain was strained; Russia's cooperation was beginning to be questioned; China had been largely bypassed in the war and Roosevelt had become disillusioned with trying to make China a great power in the near future. At Malta on February 2, 1945, he told Churchill that he now believed "three generations of education and training would be required before China could become a serious factor. " 17 Neither FDR's military nor his political strategy was able to arrest the decline of the alliance as victory approached. Gaps began to open between his military strategy and his larger political goals. His political policy was not tuned to deal with what scholars have called the "middle range" of political problems that emerged between war and peace. Nor was he prepared to fill with American power the vacuums in Europe and the Orient that Allied strategic policy, intent on decisive military victory, had helped create.

III

In retrospect, it is apparent that President Roosevelt was not infallible. Before the war was over, his policies of concentrating on military victory and of laying the groundwork for a new postwar structure of international relations began to conflict and he had to yield on his policy of postponement. As we have seen, it is incorrect to say he had no political objectives. His political objectives remained general- a mixture of idealism and practicality, of optimism and reality. Flaws began to show up in his policies toward the USSR as well as toward China. He underestimated Soviet political ambitions. Certain policies introduced by the President in the early phases of the war were probably held too long and too rigidly- notably the generous lend-lease policy and the unconditional surrender concept. The limitations of unconditional surrender as a political formula began to show up in the last year of the war when the time had come- perhaps was long overdue- to replace a common war aim with a common peace aim.

No appraisal of FDR's failures and successes as a war leader would be complete without considering his attitude toward war and peace and America's place in world affairs. He saw war and peace in different compartments and as distinct phenomena. He did not appreciate that warfare in the twentieth century was undergoing a revolution and that distinctions between war and peace were becoming blurred. Although FDR could wear his military hat jauntily, he disliked war intensely. Like Wilson, drawn into a conflict he did not seek, he expanded his war aims to accord with the great costs he knew it would involve. Not wanting American involvement in the feuds of Europe or the wrangles of Asia, he converted the war into a crusade for remaking the entire environment, if not the structure, of international relations. With the entry of the United States, he lifted the struggle, begun with the upsetting of the balance of power in Europe and Asia, into a world conflict against aggression and evil. Those who fomented war were evil; those who joined to end it would be purged. This view of the nature of war colored his thinking on the way war was fought and on the peace to come. The driving purpose behind FDR's war policy was to create an instrumentality for peace as part of the conclusion of the war. He laid the foundations of a structure for international security intended to provide against the problems and dangers of the future; unfortunately the more urgent issues of the critical present still remained. He was willing to give the Soviet Union a chance to work out its problems and join with other nations in a new international security system. It is doubtful, however, that he really understood Marxist-Soviet politico-military strategy any more than did most of his generation.

He fought a war on two levels- one military, the other political. He fought the war as a pragmatist and as a crusader. It is incorrect to say he was oblivious to the political- that is a myth. It is also incorrect to believe that he had a well-worked-out, coherent military strategy of his own. He can be accused of not meshing the two closely.

He left his country military victory, power, and a vision. His use of power to achieve national policy was most successful during the war his greatest success was harnessing power to military victory. His use of power to avert war before Pearl Harbor was not successful. To harness military power to a new international political order still remained his dream at death. His very success in war has led to the sharpest criticism of his war leadership- overconcentration on military objectives.

Once committed to the struggle, FDR set no brake on the waging of war and on the achievement of victory-total and complete. He set no limit on its strategic escalation. Whether he could have done so, once we were fully committed in Europe and against Japan, will remain a question for theorists of war. It appears more and more that the decision to develop the atomic bomb was the decision to use the bomb. Roosevelt began by waging a limited war in the Pacific. That struggle refused to stay limited. It almost caught up with the European war as American services vied with each other and the Allies began to compete for a place in the victory procession. It is ironical that the atomic bomb, whose development he fostered as a deterrent weapon against Germany, was used in the war against Japan and remains a fundamental element in the uneasy equilibrium of the postwar world. It is ironical that the power he generated and planned to dissipate has done as much to contain Communism as anything he had hoped for in the way of anew order.

The war-time President linked national with international security and staked all on the United Nations, as Wilson had on the League of Nations. Roosevelt had set as his political goal a new concert of power, not old fashioned balance of power. He refused to the end to use military power and negotiate from strength to force the Soviet Union into a new international harness. Such an approach represented to him the very antithesis of the world he sought and furthermore might make the USSR retreat to isolationism. He was playing for bigger stakes and for the longer haul. He did not want to foreclose the future by mortgaging the present. To the end he was trying to avoid Wilson's mistakes. He still wanted to appear uncommitted at the peace conference. But the world of 1945 was not the world of 1919. A new colossus was already on the move in Europe. The strange ally was no longer shackled by the common bonds of danger any more than it was checked by FDR's vision of the future. At the close of his term as Commander in Chief, FDR's strength rested on two pillars- moral force and military power. He refused to make a virtue of power. He thereby laid himself open to the charge of relying too heavily on the power of virtue.

What, then, may we conclude about Franklin Roosevelt the war leader? His strength as a war president arose from many factors- the full powers residing in the Presidency, his long experience in that office, his dominant, persuasive personality, the mighty war machine he generated, and, above all, his position as "arbiter in international affairs," as active but disinterested leader at the summit. He kept a firm, if outwardly loose, hold on the reins of national policy. Preoccupied with the mistakes of Wilson, when he put on his military hat he kept one eye on the domestic political front, the other on the postwar world. He was an extremely active and forceful Commander in Chief- one of the most active in American history. If at times the Commander in Chief yielded to the politician and at others to the statesman, he fought a nonpartisan war aimed at a nonpartisan peace. As a Commander in Chief and politician in chief he was highly successful.

He was a great war president but his greatness lay neither in the field of grand strategy nor of statesmanship. His greatness lay, rather, in rallying and mobilizing his country and the free world for war and in articulating the hopes of the common man for peace. He welded a great war alliance and managed to hold it together long enough to convert it to peaceful purposes. Without his wartime drive, it is doubtful that the United Nations organization would have come into existence. His war leadership demonstrated that the structure of the American Government, and of the office of the President, in the

hands of an active and forceful Commander in Chief, was capable of meeting the greatest test in war the nation had yet faced. Though his power as war president came to rival Hitler's, he remained a champion of democratic ideals. The United States, he warned, would have to accept responsibility along with power on the world stage, but power would have to be joined with morality.

With all its cruel dilemmas, war abroad gave him the greatest challenge of his Presidency- an opportunity to project the vision of America on the world stage. He deliberately gambled all on a new international order that would guarantee peace and achieve the noblest aspirations of mankind. The war he waged was part of the never-ending struggle of mankind to banish war. He fell, as did Lincoln and Wilson before him, in the crusade he was waging. He was thus Commander in Chief in a very special sense. Whatever his mistakes in World War II, it is in the context of the struggle for his ideals that he largely staked his place in history.

Franklin Roosevelt had really fought three wars- the war against Germany, the war against Japan, and the war to end war. He had won the first two decisively. Had he really lost the third? Or had the war partners made a "good start on the road to a world of peace," as he reported to Congress after Yalta? Had he pointed succeeding generations in the correct direction? Were the years of tension and crisis that followed World War II only a low point in a world that moves "by peaks and valleys, but on the whole the curve is upward"-as he viewed human progress?¹⁵ Was the "fox" and the "artful dodger" really an innocent abroad? Or, in the long run, will the pragmatist and the idealist prove more realistic than his critics? The experience of your generation may help to supply the answers that await the judgment of history.

1. In preparing this lecture, the author has in part drawn on his essay "Franklin Delano Roosevelt as War leader," published in *Theal War and Cold War* (Ohio State University Press, 1962).

2. Samuel I. Rosenman (ed.), *The Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt, 1944-45 Volume*, (Harper & Bros., New York, 1950), pp.571, 578.

3. Edward R. Stettinius, *Roosevelt and the Russians: The Yalta Conference* (Doubleday & Co., New York, 1949), p.70.

4. Rosenman, op. cit., 1944-45 Volume, p.524.

5. Maurice Matloff, *Strategic Planning for Coalition Warfare, 1943-44* (Washington, 1959), p.68. 6. *Ibid.*, p.211.

7. Robert E. Sherwood, *Roosevelt and Hopkins* (Harper & Bros., New York, 1948), p.803.

8. Rosenman, op. cit., 1944-45 Volume, p.362.

9. Matloff, op. cit., p.215.

10. For an enlightening survey of the wartime role of the Department of State in postwar planning, with particular emphasis on the questions of the zonal boundaries in Germany and access to Berlin, see William M. Franklin, "Zonal Boundaries and Access to Berlin," *World Politics*, Vol. XVI (October 1963).

11. This discussion of the President's views en route to the Cairo Conference is based on Matloff, op. cit., pp.341-42.

12. Matloff, op. cit., p.491.

13. For the resolution of the deadlock at the Second Quebec Conference and the subsequent discussion of the zonal boundaries and Berlin, see Franklin, op. cit.

14. Rosenman, op. ciL, 1944-45 Volume, p.233.

15. *Ibid.*, p.99.

16. The phrase appears in Herbert Feis, *Churchill, Roosevelt, Stalin* (Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1957), p.343.

17. Department of State, Foreign Relations of the United States: The Conferences at Malta and Yalta, 1945 (Washington, 1955), p.544.

18. Rosenman, op. cit., 1944-45 Volume, p.442. Mr. Roosevelt's Three Wars: FDR as War Leader

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