

# Ideology and Foreign Policy



*The Freedom Leadership Foundation is an independent non-profit organization devoted to education, research and publication in the field of international affairs. FLF's primary objective is to develop the standards of leadership necessary to advance the cause of freedom in the struggle against Communism. Based in Washington since 1969, FLF publishes a wide variety of material in various formats and sponsors conferences, seminars and workshops for the benefit of professionals, students and interested public.*

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# Ideology and Foreign Policy

An Interview With  
Neil Albert Salonen

# Introduction

The role of ideology in foreign policy is a subject of continuing speculation and controversy, though rarely systematic thinking. The approach to foreign affairs which considers "ideology" of central significance has both supporters and detractors. With few exceptions, however, most studies focus on diplomatic, defense or economic aspects of foreign policy, exclusive of ideological issues. The "end of ideology" is proclaimed along with the presumed "end of the Cold War."

For the most part, the people who make American foreign policy have accepted this interpretation. It is as though they are themselves converts to that precept of Marxism that holds that ideas are merely a reflection of objective, material existence. In general, therefore, American foreign policy eschews idealistic ends for the sake of pragmatic means, such as national security and economic well-being, and refuses to acknowledge any other measure of actual or prospective accomplishment.

It is the most profound failure of American foreign policy that the nation with the most ideas to offer the world has conceded the ideological struggle to adversaries who believe fervently in a single idea, an idea whose triumph in the world would mean the

destruction of everything Americans believe in. Faced with a massive ideological challenge from totalitarian Communism the United States has chosen to abandon the field, content to contend for lesser grounds like Gross National Product. Those who really believe that adding a few more percentage points to our yearly industrial output will convince the rest of humanity that we represent the forces of prosperity and progress fool only themselves.

In this interview, Neil Salonen, President of The Freedom Leadership Foundation, discusses the role of ideology in world affairs. Assessing the ideological nature of the challenge of Communism, Mr. Salonen calls for an ideological response, for a foreign policy based on the ideals which America represents. His comments cover a wide range of pertinent topics; such as the relationship between morality and foreign policy, the definition of national interest, and the uses of force. In the course of the interview Mr. Salonen proposes principles upon which to base a new, more creative, and viable foreign policy.

The interview was conducted by Gerard Willis, editor of *The Rising Tide* and director of foreign policy programs for The Freedom Leadership Foundation. Questions were submitted to Mr. Salonen in advance.

# Ideology and Foreign Policy

**Q. The Freedom Leadership Foundation differs from other groups on the stress it lays on ideology. How do you define ideology? What is the relationship between ideology and foreign policy?**

**Mr. Salonen:** Ideology attempts to define consistent values or principles, as opposed to relative ones. These can be systematically applied to reaching judgements about diverse situations. To say ideology is important is really only saying that ideas play an important role in world affairs. I don't believe we have witnessed the "end of ideology." In fact, we can't even begin to understand the foreign policy of a particular government without analyzing its "operating" ideology, whether it is actually spelled out or not.

**Q. Terms like "balance of power" and "national interest" dominate the discussion of foreign policy more often than "ideology". Many people say that these kinds of considerations transcend ideology in practice, if not theory. What is your opinion?**

**Salonen:** That's a position often taken by people who say the government of the Soviet



Union or Communist China ought to be considered as traditional great powers, not dangerous aberrations from the international norm. What they usually mean to say is that the United States is no more "moral" than the Communists because we pursue similar geo-political, economic and diplomatic objectives; for instance, influence and security. In one sense, that may appear to be true. It requires X military force to secure Y objective; proximity confers a certain degree of leverage, etc. But that doesn't say anything about "ends," "means," or "moral perspectives," which are ideological, fundamental questions.

Not only goals, but in many important ways the strategy and tactics a nation employs are the offspring of its ideology.

## Marxism

### **Q. Exactly how does ideology affect ends, means, and moral perspective?**

**Salonen:** Let me address your questions by referring to Soviet, or more generally Communist foreign policies, since the main point I want to make is that the United States needs to better understand the nature and ramifications of the ideological components of Communist strategy.

Most important to understand is that as a wholistic world view—which embraces history, economics, sociology and psychology—Marxism attempts to relate the meaning of transitory events to a wider historical process. These theories, both about the forces at work in the world and the "laws" which govern them, guide foreign policy decisions of Communist governments. Communist doctrine gives Communist governments a ready-made goal, a political-revolutionary analysis and operational guidelines for planning and implementing policies.

Marxism is a conceptual framework. The Communists use it to analyze world affairs. It provides them some insight into trends and new developments, helps them calculate the advantages and disadvantages of policies in



relation to long term goals.

They find Marxism useful because it is expedient, but it doesn't follow that it is true. The thing to remember is that Marx's view of man, man's predicament, and the solution for man's problems is false. It has never worked in practice and never can, not because the theory has been misapplied but because the theory itself is wrong.

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On the other hand, there are aspects of the doctrine which are descriptively true. There are, as Marx asserts, contradictions within societies which generate harnessable resentment. Marxism paints a picture of these contradictions; it tells people clearly and simply what they can do about them, and it holds up the vision of a world without contradiction. These ideas are the source of Marxism's strength and appeal, and the basis of their programme.

**Q. How does the theory influence practice?**

**Salonen:** Distilled to its essence, Communist strategy and policy rests on two dialectical premises: (1) that the question of power is primary and (2) that the quickest way to achieve it is by intensifying and exploiting political, economic and social contradictions. These derive from the various themes of

Marxism-Leninism: such as dialectical materialism, class struggle, the relationship of "base" and "super-structure", the "laws" of economic movement, and the dictatorship of the proletariat.

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**Q. How does the Marxist ideology make Soviet foreign policy different than if it were the expression of Russian national interest?**

**Salonen:** The most fundamental difference is one of goals. Soviet goals are revolutionary and unlimited. They are intimately linked to the success of their ideology and are not limited to the traditional great power concerns for security and prosperity. What we in the West look upon as instruments to conduct or insure peaceful international relations, the Communists look upon as instruments of struggle. The United States seeks peace and stable progress; the Communists seek revolutionary change and unchallengeable power.

A glance at the history of United States-Soviet strategic relations is sufficient to establish my point. During World War II, Franklin Delano Roosevelt thought he could win Stalin's support for the U.N. and other post-war peace-keeping plans by conceding to the Soviet Union a "security zone" of friendly buffer nations along their Asian and European

borders. FDR thought of the Soviet Union, as did many Americans during the war, as a partner in the struggle for peace, which was a tragic misapprehension. Stalin used what he got in Eastern Europe and Manchuria as a springboard to extend Soviet Communist dominion to outside the bounds of so-called traditional Russian national interest.

The concept of "detente", which resurrects FDR's 'partners in peace' strategy, rests on similarly faulty assumptions. According to the would-be architect of detente, Henry Kissinger,

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if the Soviets are assured of certain interests—such as parity with the West, exclusive "influence" in Eastern Europe, trade credits and Most Favored Nation status—they would cooperate with the United States to preserve peace and stability. Soviet actions in the Middle East, Portugal, Angola and Ethiopia—to cite only a few of the outstanding examples of recent years—completely repudiates that concept. Stalin's heirs are no less intent than Stalin was on "making the world safe for Communism", at least their brand of it.

**Q. Is Marxism a "Master Plan" which the Communists follow?**

**Salonen:** No, I wouldn't say it's a "Master Plan" or a time schedule for world conquest. I see Marxism as the "organizing principle" of Communist international policy.

Lenin greatly admired the views of the German military theorist, Carl Van Clausewitz. Subsequent Communist leaders adopted Lenin's Clausewitzian thesis that war and politics are alternative means to the same

end—namely, victory—and both are played by the same rule, which is maximum concentration of strength at decisive points and total mobilization of political and economic resources.

One key to Communist thinking is the notion of “protracted war”. In a world pregnant with revolution, the Communists believe time and history are on their side. In addition, they believe that the side which perceives the nature and dimensions of the struggle enjoys an advantage even over an initially superior adversary. In the protracted struggle with the West, the Communists believe that as their military and technological expertise, organizational ability and popular support develops; the resources, morale, and strategems of their enemies will be exhausted. The political, economic and military advantage, or to use another famous Soviet term, the “correlation of forces”, will gradually shift in favor of the Communists.

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**Q. Has the “correlation of world forces” shifted in favor of the Communists?**

**Salonen:** Power has become more diffuse rather than more centralized in the last few decades. The post-war bi-polar world has become multipolar. The Communists have many problems and weaknesses in their economic and social institutions which distract and impede them. By comparison, America's economy and society have greater vitality, flexibility and overall strength. Yet the overall position of the Communist movement and the Soviet Union has improved. Why? “*Ideology*” and “*Organization*”: those are the keys to Communist success. While America's sense of purpose, confidence and commitment has

waned, that of the Communists has grown proportionally.

## America in the World

**Q. You are saying, I think, that America, unlike the Communists, has no ideology. Could you explain what you mean and how it is significant?**

**Salonen:** Americans have certain, common, Judeo-Christian and liberal democratic beliefs about the individual and society; however, these shared ideals are often vague and inconsistent. Consequently, America lacks a clear, coherent framework within which to formulate policies or adjust means to ends. As a result, foreign policy is made ad hoc, usually in reaction to events, rather than in anticipation or as the initiator of them. Every new president says he will be the one to fix things; do it right; differently than his predecessor. But each of them encounters the same frustrations, which are the result of muddled, inconsistent, and in short, unideological thinking.

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Since the turn of the century, when the United States entered the world scene as one of the great powers, American foreign policy

has vacillated between so-called realism and idealism. Teddy Roosevelt represented the *Realpolitik* school in turn-of-the-century foreign policy doctrine. Contrast Teddy Roosevelt's "*Realpolitik*" with the idealism and moralism of Woodrow Wilson. The contemporary expression of these two threads in American foreign policy can be found in the contrasts between Kissinger's amoral *Realpolitik* and Jimmy Carter's naive moralism. Neither sentiment—they don't deserve the word strategy, let alone ideology—responds to the crisis of the modern world.

Whether the revolution in world affairs is the cause or the consequence of the Communist revolution is irrelevant. What is important is that there is a revolution going on, which neither school can adequately account for or propose workable means of coping with. America's pursuit of an international order of consensus and cooperation has been grounded on concepts and principles quite distinct from the Marxian dreams of revolutionary utopia. To respond to the crisis of the modern world, America needs an ideology superior to Marxism, which can guide the United States toward the completion of the ideal for which it stands.



## Counterproposal

**Q. What do you mean by “ideology superior to Marxism?” What could be the essential ingredients of an ideological alternative to Communism?**

**Salonen:** By that I mean a unifying vision from which we can derive workable principles and policies. Our own Judeo-Christian and democratic heritage contains the basic ingredients of that kind of vision. We need to identify, articulate and refine its central concepts. This involves examination of the most fundamental questions—about the nature of man, society and government.

The Freedom Leadership Foundation was founded by people who, because of their religious idealism, believe that the solution to the problem of the modern age, most especially the challenge of Communism, must be founded on an understanding of the spiritual nature of man. The American Revolution set the government of this nation on a course to realize those essentially religious



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ideals of freedom and justice. America has been the champion of that philosophical viewpoint which sees a transcendent principle, namely God, as the center of reality, against those like the Marxists, who see reality as immanent in the material universe, and man, therefore, as the center of all things. The American Revolution lost its momentum only because it has lost its engine of religious power. To rekindle the American Revolution and complete its work, we must restore America's spiritual vision.



## War and Peace

**Q. The traditional goals of U.S. foreign policy have been preventing war and preserving peace, not defeating and overcoming Communism. Would a crusade for victory over Communism increase international tensions and the risk of war?**

**Salonen:** The answer to that depends on how you define "peace". Communism, by its nature, presents a constant provocation and irreconcilable obstacle to peace. For years the Soviets have believed—and still do—that there can never be peace until the West is overthrown.

Many people believe peace is the same as the absence of war. Let's look at the case of Vietnam. Certainly you can say today that the people of South Vietnam have peace if you define peace as the absence of war. However, looking at it from another perspective, it will now take decades more for Vietnamese to find peace than it would have had they won the war against, rather than lost the war to the Communists.

The people of Europe had peace under Hitler, if you exclude the systematic persecution of Jews and Christians in your definition of peace, as many of our modern apologists exclude the persecution of dissidents and other "class enemies" under modern Communist regimes, and yet it took more years of fighting and far more innocent lives lost to bring peace to Europe than it would have had Hitler been stopped in 1936 rather than 1945. Opponents of the war in Vietnam said whatever happened in Vietnam doesn't affect America's 'peace'. The opponents of America's entry into World War II used a similar argument before the Japanese attack of the Americans at Pearl Harbor; namely, what happens in Europe doesn't affect America's 'peace'. That's not to say that America should get involved in every conflict in the world. It does mean that we need to evaluate the nature of the threats we face. It used to be a joke of anti-War activists that if Americans didn't fight

the Communists in Vietnam they'd have to fight them next on the Golden Gate Bridge. I have seen or heard nothing to dissuade me from that view. It's no joke. The threat of Communism in places like Vietnam ultimately endangers our own security.

Rather than being unduly provocative, our foreign policy has just the opposite problem today—it's a policy of appeasement. We're being pushed and shoved from every side; America has become so concerned with its own comfort that we're afraid to draw the line. During the Angolan Civil War, for instance, President Ford considered increasing American aid to the anti-Communist forces of UNITA to counter massive Soviet support for the Marxist MPLA. Politicians and newsmen in this country grabbed their microphones to warn of an "impending Vietnam". When the Soviets saw we were unable to act, they backed a Cuban invasion of Angola, which turned the tide against UNITA. Today there are thousands of Cuban regulars and advisors in a dozen African countries doing just as they please.

Someday we'll have to make a stand, not just to satisfy personal or national machismo, as some New Left critics contend motivated the action of Lyndon Johnson and Richard Nixon in Vietnam, but for the sake of the future peace of humanity.

**Q. Is there room for accommodation between the United States and the Communist powers? Are there areas of U.S.-Soviet relations, for instance, where common interests can lead to fruitful negotiations?**

**Salonen:** The Soviets use negotiations—and the same is true of other Communist movements—either as a tactic for some ulterior purpose or to secure an agreement that they believe will improve their position; never out of commitment to "detente", or some abstract notion of world peace. That might not seem so unusual in itself. Most governments put interests of national security above all else. But while non-Communist governments might not

always act in complete sincerity, they justify it in terms of "raison d'etat", not, as do the Communists, by the canons of their ethical system. Communists believe it's inherently right and just, as the only and best way to further the cause of world revolution.

Communist strategists, from Lenin's time on, have emphasized tactical flexibility; the ability to "tack" with the ebb and flow of the revolutionary tide; a willingness to back away from a direct encounter or take advantage of a fortuitous opportunity. The Soviet Union, and to a greater or lesser degree, every Communist government considers itself the model, base, arsenal or center of world revolution. Lenin said, "as long as capitalism and socialism exist, we cannot live in peace; in the end one or the other will triumph"; the same sentiment has been repeated in one form or another by every Communist leader since.

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What the present Soviet leadership means by detente isn't significantly different than what Lenin advocated when he called for "peaceful co-existence" with the West in 1918. To the United States, peaceful co-existence and detente means that the world balance of power will remain as it is, that neither side will do anything to cause or perpetuate instability and conflict. To the Soviets, it means that the struggle against non-Communist countries will be waged by means other than war between

Russia and the West. Peaceful co-existence takes for granted that the non-Communist world will remain on the defensive while the Communists gradually enlarge their "sphere of influence".

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Nikita Khrushchev said peaceful co-existence in the world depended on whether or not the United States resisted.

Brezhnev says that detente in no way signifies the lessening of the "ideological struggle". And ideological struggle, in the Soviet lexicon, means more than philosophical debate or peaceful competition between distinct social "models". Military might, espionage and subversion: these are part of what the Soviets call an "ideological struggle", which Lenin asserted as a necessary corollary of 'peaceful-coexistence' and detente. It sanctions wars of national liberation, the Brezhnev doctrine, the Finlandization of Europe, Soviet bases and Cuban troops in Africa, the containment of China, the squeezing of the United States out of the Middle East, S.E. Asia, even Latin America.

Yet our policy makers still search for a magic word to smooth it all over. Surprisingly little attention has been paid to several remarks by Brezhnev at a meeting he held with Communist leaders in Prague in 1973 which undercut the whole premise of detente. A copy of the speech was obtained and authenticated by the British intelligence and excerpts first published in the United States by the *Boston Globe*. Brezhnev said that detente was a tactic to allow the Soviets to build up their military and economic power, so that by 1985 a decisive shift in the correlation of world forces would enable the Soviets to exert their will whenever they felt the need. He said they had

achieved through detente what their predecessors had been unable to achieve using the "mailed fist".

**Q. Can the SALT negotiations succeed? Or do you foresee a revival of the arms race?**

**Salonen:** Let me take your questions in reverse order. First, it's really questionable whether the arms race ever ended, from the Soviet point of view anyway. No, I don't think SALT will succeed, if by success you mean reduce the chance of war while simultaneously preserving United States security.

**Q. Let me pursue those statements a little further. What do you mean "from the Soviet point of view the arms race never ended"?**

**Salonen:** Since the mid-60's, while the United States unilaterally refrained from expanding and improving its strategic forces, the Soviet Union engaged in a massive armament program, which shows no sign of abating. The Soviets spend twice as much of their GNP on arms as the United States, relatively more money in all categories, and over double in the critical Research and Development field. The Soviets have bigger missiles, more missiles, better missile defense, a civil defense program reaching into and providing some modicum of security for the Soviet people; a bigger, more modern navy; and more troops, tanks and planes. I agree with the conclusion of many of our country's top defense experts, while they may not quite yet have it, the Soviets seek clear-cut military superiority.

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**Q. What use is military superiority in the age of the atomic bomb? Some specialists say both the Soviet Union and United States could destroy the entire world several times over.**

**Salonen:** The Soviets say they would win a nuclear war, and they are evidently trying to bring their boasts into line with their capabilities. Winning a nuclear war takes a first-strike capability and/or an effective missile/civil defense. Most experts agree that the Soviets don't have either yet, but they're working on it.

Military policy is an area where, once again, we've paid too little attention to doctrine, our own and theirs. American strategic doctrine is poorly defined, resting on wishful as much as conceptual thinking. Soviet doctrine in contrast is more well-defined, and in my opinion, more realistic. The Soviet leadership recognizes the importance of military doctrine far more than America's military and civilian leadership; and the development and application of military doctrine gets more high-level attention in the Soviet Union than in the United States.

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Strategic power can serve one of several purposes. It can be used to deter a potential aggressor or to defeat an aggressor, should deterrence fail. Finally, it can be used to accomplish political objectives short of war. For every purpose other than simple deterrence, strategic superiority, real or perceived, is important. Soviet doctrine accepts this, and that's why the Soviets desire,

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and quite clearly are seeking strategic superiority. Whereas the Soviet Union emphasizes the war-winning and the political utility of strategic power, formal U.S. doctrine recognizes only the deterrence function of strategic power.

The Soviets emphatically reject the American doctrine of deterrence, known as Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD). MAD boils down to the conviction that in the event of a nuclear war, each country's major cities and their industrial and population bases would be destroyed. Critics of MAD call it a doctrine of holding ourselves hostage. While the United States seems content to accept its own devastation in a nuclear war, the Soviet Union has concentrated its efforts on developing successful offense and defense, which is after all, the main responsibility of any government.

Some people say we shouldn't take the Soviets or Communists on their word, since it is a ritual, intended for internal consumption only. For some reason we're to believe what a glass-clinking Soviet diplomat whispers in the ear of an American State Department officer rather than what the highest Soviet officials tell their Central Committee, which gets repeated in every party organ and studied in every Soviet neighborhood and factory study cell. In this case—Soviet military theory, doctrines, strategy, war structure and organization, training programs, resource allocations, research development programs, civil defense efforts, other war readiness and defense measures, confirm their propaganda.

**Q. How has the emergence of the Soviet Union as a military power equal, in some respects superior, to the United States affected international politics?**

**Salonen:** Obviously, the Soviets have a hand in developments in areas where American power had previously kept them out—Africa, Latin America, Western Europe, et al. They're approaching the attainment of their stated goal of having a say in the disposition of every international question of importance.

The Soviet military shadow which falls on Western Europe is greater today than at the end of World War II, when nothing stood between the Red Army and the English channel but a few understrength American divisions; and the West Europeans are even now readjusting to accommodate their overwhelmingly superior neighbor. The nature of Soviet power and complexity of the military equation are much different today than in 1945 of course, but the "Finlandization" of Europe is a real phenomena.

The Soviets have developed the ability today to project conventional and naval power far beyond their traditional areas of interest as well. Now they are availing themselves of the opportunities which their new capabilities afford. The obvious examples are Vietnam, Angola and the Middle East. Elsewhere, neutralization and accommodation have become the dominant response to Soviet Power.

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**Q. A strong anti-defense bias exists in some quarters of the American political community. They describe the arms race as an action-reaction syndrome: we build a weapon, so the Soviets feel they should match it, and vice-versa. The head of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency\* likened the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. to "apes on a treadmill". Is there any validity to this argument?**

**Salonen:** The *real* anti-defense lobby is an alliance of pacifists and the anti-American left.

The pacifists believe any war is wrong, even a war of national survival. The only way to avoid war, they say, is by refusing to fight. The anti-American left, on the other hand, goes as far as to justify "Wars of National Liberation" and condemn only "Wars of Imperial Aggression." An example of the latter would be the war in Vietnam. It would apply to another Korean war; a war in the Middle East in support of Israel; or intervention in places like Angola or in Latin America against Communist or Communist supported insurgencies.

The "apes on a treadmill" argument—that if the U.S. unilaterally cuts back on weapons production the Soviets will be inclined to do likewise—is a misrepresentation of Soviet ideology and a misreading of the history of Soviet-American strategic relations, which you may attribute to bias, ignorance, or wishful thinking as you like.

The history of the SALT talks proves that the Soviet Union doesn't desire disarmament and considers arms control agreements useful only within the context of their own concept of strategic defense and strategic force utility. Under these circumstances, it is purblind to talk about granting the Soviets parity with the United States, or recognizing their "legitimate security interests", unless one is prepared to allow the Soviets clear superiority along all lines, since that is the only kind of security they recognize.

\* Paul Warnke

**Q. Aren't there other reasons, economic reasons, for example, why the Soviets might be inclined to conclude a SALT agreement?**

**Salonen:** The Soviet Union has had the opportunity before to opt for investment over defense spending. They've chosen the military every time. Nothing in the course of the SALT negotiations indicates that economic interests prevail over military ones.

In fact, detente operates in a curious and revealing way in regard to this matter. By entering into detente with the West, the Soviets hoped to secure Western economic credits and technology transfers so they could devote to their military resources that which would otherwise have gone to non-military needs.

**Q. Can the United States afford to delay the production and development of new weapons systems such as the B-1, cruise, the MX, and Trident, as some think?**

**Salonen:** I am in no position to weigh the relative merits of these various weapons systems. I think rational cost-benefit decisions can and should be made when appropriate. I question, however, how many opponents of defense spending base their opinions on cost-benefit considerations. For example, the campaign against the B-1 became the campaign against the cruise missile as soon as the B-1 was defeated. *The Washington Post*, which justified part of its editorial attack on the B-1 by citing the availability of cruise as a cheap, effective alternative to the B-1, announced the day after President Carter discontinued the B-1 program that their next target would be—the cruise missile. Many of the advocates of defense cutbacks sing the same refrain as the pacifists and anti-American left. The only thing that will really make them happy is for the United States to have no weapons at all.

# World Communism

**Q. Has the splintering of the Communist movement into divergent, conflicting power-centers weakened the ideological thrust of Marxism?**

**Salonen:** Every Communist government, regardless of feuds, conflicts, divergencies and strife between themselves pay homage to Marxism-Leninism. All aim for the destruction of the Capitalistic world and for the erection of a Communist world.

An analogy may be drawn between international Communism and Communist splinter groups within the United States. Despite their different approaches, interpretations, sources of support and mutual hostilities, domestic Communist organizations have as their goal, however differently they acknowledge it: the destruction of capitalism and constitutional government in the United States.

If anything, these disputes have sharpened the ideological thrust of Marxism as each power-center seeks to outbid the other for the allegiance of the Communist movement.

**Q. Should the existence of different kinds of Communism, for example, Euro-Communism, influence how we conduct our foreign policy?**

**Salonen:** Communism is a very predictable phenomenon; although our press seems determined to make it always appear new and interesting. Communist governments everywhere exhibit the same characteristics: authority centralized in a military-bureaucratic elite; hatred of the enemy (whether that be class enemy or racial) as the dominant social value; and some form of leader worship.

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happened in Russia and what is happening in Cambodia now, will happen in Europe, if the Communists ever come to power.

The shattering of monolithic Communism into polycentric power centers changes the tactical situation, not the strategic. It may have made Communism even more dangerous now that Marxism is perceived as an expression of nationalism and not merely as an extension of Soviet power. There are more Marxist-Leninist governments in the world now than there were twenty years ago; whether they are so-called "nationalist Communists" or part of the Soviet bloc makes little difference.

**Q. How do you evaluate the impact of the Sino-Soviet dispute in international politics? What kind of policy should the United States have toward China?**

**Salonen:** The Chinese Communists justify cozying up to the United States with the aphorism, "The enemy of my enemy is my friend". (Of course, you can justify just about anything by the "science" of dialectics.) When it doesn't violate our own principles I see nothing wrong with applying "the enemy of my enemy" concept in reverse.

Expediency and temporary coincidences of interest, namely, the hope that Sino-American cooperation can slow down Soviet Russia's hegemonic drive, have pushed us together and will pertain as long as we share the same antipathy toward the Russians, or until the Chinese find it more expedient to sell us out. That's hardly the basis for a long-term relationship. And it belies the so-called China

experts who tell us that Peking's patience with us is running out and that we'd better cut our ties to Taiwan in a hurry if we want to keep the good will of the Chinese people.

First, we wouldn't win anyone's goodwill, least of all people whom Americans haven't been able to talk to in decades. No where in the world has the steel net of totalitarianism been more tightly woven than in Communist China.

It's even a law among thieves, one must not deliver one's friends, partners, allies to one's enemies. What would others think of our word if they knew we would break it as soon as they were no longer of any use to us? In Vietnam at least one can say we tried, even if we didn't try hard enough. But if America abandons Taiwan we will never live down the shame.

## Morality in Foreign Policy

**Q. The young people who opposed the fight against Communism in Vietnam usually appealed to principle and morality. How do you evaluate the morality of the Vietnam War in retrospect?**

**Salonen:** Most of the anti-war protesters, pacifists and anti-American left lost their moral outrage at atrocity and genocide in Southeast Asia when the last American troops withdrew. According to the latest report, Vietnamese troops, planes and tanks are well on their way to wiping out 100,000 of the Meo-tribe and other hill peoples in Laos, who still resist Communist domination. All the men over age 12 are being killed, and the women and children sent to labor camps.

Conventional wisdom says the lessons of Vietnam are evident: Never again should the U.S. intervene militarily in a far off country threatened with a Communist take over. I suggest a contrary "lesson". By all standards, the Vietnam War was a moral war. We fought the war, after all, not to safeguard some vital American economic or strategic interest, but out of the genuine and correct conviction that the people of Southeast Asia would be better

off under a non-Communist, rather than a Communist regime, the petty authoritarianism and corruption of the Thieu and Lon Nol regimes notwithstanding. Anyone still convinced of the immorality of America's role in the war should read John Barron's story, "The Murder of a Gentle Land", about the slaughter of a million Cambodians; or the accounts of Nguyen Cong Hoan, a former Saigon national assemblyman who was elevated to the North Vietnamese Assembly after the Communist takeover because of his pro-peace, anti-Thieu activities during the war. From his privileged vantage point in the North, as well as the South, Mr. Hoan concluded the Communists had established a reign of terror. Reliable, unbiased sources estimate the number of political prisoners in South Vietnam exceeds 300,000. The total number of prisoners of *all* types in South Vietnam during the war never exceeded 35,000 at any one time, according to exhaustive investigations by the American embassy in Saigon.

I recently saw an excerpt from a new book called *America in Vietnam* which reviewed American conduct of the war in terms of international law. The author had access to classified records of the war such as after-action reports, staff studies,

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investigations and the like. I'm not an expert in international law, but I found his arguments well-balanced and persuasive. He concluded that the American record in Vietnam was not as bad as Communist propaganda and the anti-war media-distorted picture made it out to be. The evidence refutes the accusation of criminality and immoral conduct. And as I've already said, our objectives in Vietnam were no less moral than they were in the Korean War and WW II.

**Q. Could the United States have made a difference in Vietnam had we stayed?**

**Salonen:** Not given our goals and the way we went about accomplishing them. America went into Vietnam without a thought-out concept, and from the start, America's commitment was ambivalent. The American military effort in Vietnam can be criticized on grounds other than morality. The catalogue of America's mistakes in Vietnam is long: poor and misapplied doctrines, shortsighted and self-defeating tactics, plus contradictory and inadequately articulated objectives. Most of all, however, the war called into question not America's ability, but its will. It has been said that the North Vietnamese fought the war for fifteen years; America fought the war for one year "fifteen times". For Americans, the Vietnam War was an episode, an annoying interruption of their regular routine. For the Vietnamese, it was their lives and their futures.

But I do believe, had there been a consensus and commitment, had the war been part of a co-ordinated strategy, then we would not have lost the will to fight; the way we would have fought the war would have been different, and we could have won.

People often cite the great loss of lives and the incredible suffering the war inflicted to support their view that America should have gotten out even sooner than we did. In my opinion, America could have saved those lives and alleviated the misery of the war had we acted more strongly than we did, from the very beginning, even if by doing so we raised the stakes and risks involved. Vietnam was a

“proxy” war not a “people’s” war; a war against Soviet supplied North Vietnamese, not independent, indigenous guerrilla fighters.

**Q. What were the lasting effects of the war on the American psyche and in our foreign policy?**

**Salonen:** America’s defeat in the war is a kind of judgment on American society and the American way of life. The Hebrews of ancient Israel believed that whenever they lost in battle it was God’s judgment for their sins. The analogy helps especially to understand this particular war, which exposed the “sins” of American society; all America’s various and accumulated shortcomings. Instead of seeking to correct those defects of character and culture which contributed to defeat, however, Americans blocked the war and its implications from their consciousness.

America didn’t want to face up to the war. Why else do you think anti-war politicians raised the slogan “No Recrimination” after the fall of Saigon in 1975? It is much easier to say we should not have gotten involved and should never again, than to accept responsibility and find a way to amend what happened. I think the worst thing about the war is that we still haven’t understood what it really meant. We’ll continue to meet failure and frustration until we do.

**Q. The CIA is often castigated in the press for meddling in another country’s affairs, such as in its support for anti-Allende opposition in Chile before the coup-d’etat. Do you believe that kind of intervention is justifiable?**

**Salonen:** Right and wrong can’t be judged solely according to the nature of the act; or even the intentions of the actor; the direction and result of the action matter far more. Then it becomes possible to distinguish between the kinds of revolution, the kinds of wars, the kinds of interventions, that are justifiable. Some actions lead to greater oppression and human misery; others to liberation, tolerance, peace and progress.



Had the U.S. intervened on the side of the White Russians during the Russian civil war in 1917 to 1920, then the millions of innocents murdered by Stalin would not have died. Had the U.S. won the war in Southeast Asia, which it could have, then the millions, estimates ranging from one to three million, who have perished in the two years since the Communists took power, would still be alive.

To prevent the spread of Communism, or liberate people now under it must be right, because it brings about a result which benefits people who are suffering. If our methods cause more harm than good, then our methods must be changed until we achieve a better result. Objective, method and result are linked along the continuum of ethical truth.

**Q. Do we risk undermining America's own ideological propositions by working with repressive governments, those that violate human rights and infringe on the freedom of their citizens?**

**Salonen:** The question really is: how can we live within the system while trying to change it? Or more specifically: how can the United States reform a government while at the same time keep close relations with the government whose ways we want to reform?

The answer requires drawing fine distinctions. Ultimately, it's impossible without a proper understanding of ideology.

A case in point is the human rights campaign. No one can genuinely be for human rights without being against Communism, since violation of human rights is an integral part of Communist ideology and system. To divorce support for human rights from opposition to Communism is a contradiction in terms. Nevertheless, in the name of human rights for blacks in Southern Africa, an American Ambassador to the United Nations openly embraced the Marxist dictator of Mozambique, called the Soviet-Marxist system in Mozambique a model worthy of emulation by other African nations, and advocated American economic aid be made available to save its collapsing economy. Samora Machel,

Mozambique's president, opposes apartheid. Yet is he for human rights? Mozambique has been called the "palm-fringed Gulag"; it holds more political prisoners than Rhodesia, South Africa and Namibia combined.

But the choice for America in southern Africa is not between the greater or lesser of the two evils. There are alternatives within Rhodesia to the Marxist Popular Front guerrillas—namely, the moderate nationalists like Muzowera and Sithole. There are alternatives even to Machel's Mozambique—the anti-Communist, democratic guerrillas of FUMO, the United Democratic Front of Mozambique, which like its counterpart UNITA in Angola, already controls substantial territory.

When dealing with others the Soviets follow a two-tier policy. That's how they can talk, in the same breathe, about detente and ideological struggle; of the inviolability of Soviet internal affairs and support for national liberation struggles. Why shouldn't America's foreign policy take a similar approach by supporting and encouraging those forces, in southern Africa and elsewhere, working for the same goals as we are.

**Q. Could you give me some example of how this would work in practice? Where do you draw the line between support for an ally and interference in their politics in support of democratic rights and freedoms?**

**Salonen:** Two examples come to mind: Free China and South Korea. Both are authoritarian; dissent is stifled. But both are relatively free socially and prosperous economically. Both of them, moreover, are threatened by totalitarian Communist countries, where there is no freedom of any kind and no prospect of improvement. The choice should be viewed in relative, not absolute terms, in the short-run. At the same time, we should never abandon or compromise our goals, for the long run.

Let's look more closely at the case of Korea. An almost paranoid fear of a Communist attack exists in South Korea—not without,

however, some basis in reality. The North Korean Communists regularly provoke incidents on the DMZ and threaten to attack the South. In this circumstance, the government of South Korea feels that any criticism will increase tensions in Korean society and undermine South Korean unity in the face of the threat from the North.

Some political and religious leaders in South Korea have spoken out against the government's suppression of political dissent in order to mobilize world public opinion for their cause. They are well intentioned, often heroic dissidents. But their criticisms have contributed to the climate of tension in South Korea, provoked government crackdowns, and further isolated Korea internationally.

A similar phenomenon took place in Vietnam during the war. Several groups of Buddhists, students, and democratic politicians came out against the repressive, authoritarian policies of South Vietnam's President Thieu. They won sympathizers in the United States and elsewhere in the world.

After the Communists took over, every democratic institution was crushed, every freedom taken away. Many of the anti-Thieu leaders escaped after the fall of Saigon, some of them by raft and fishing boat many months after. The most prominent among them, like Nguyen Cong Hoan and Mrs. Le Thi Ank, came to America. Almost every one of them admit

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now that they were wrong to try to bring the Thieu government down. They say they should have worked within the system to change it, but now they no longer even have that option.

In Korea today there are two camps: those who speak out against the government of Park Chung Hee, and those who are suffering in silence, working within the system to reform it, because they realize the irreparable harm they might cause if they chose to work to bring it down. They don't get as much merit in the press, but they do far more good.

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***Support for democracy and human rights makes no sense and cannot possibly bring about lasting change apart from absolute opposition to communism in South Korea, Free China and elsewhere.***

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The United States should encourage democratic reform, but not by abandoning people of South Korea to aggression from the North, and greater oppression, as we did in Vietnam, but by guaranteeing our support for them against the Communists and helping them to build democratic, representative institutions. Support for democracy and human rights makes no sense and cannot possibly bring about lasting change apart from absolute



opposition to communism in South Korea, Free China and elsewhere.

## Toward a New American Foreign Policy

**Q. Is it right or even feasible to impose our own views and system on others?**

**Salonen:** I don't think that's the proper way to frame the question. After WW II, the United States occupied Germany and Japan, revamped their governments, and influenced even basic aspects of their cultures. Both countries are far better off today because of what we did.

The Soviet Union exports, even imposes,

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its ideology and system on others. Not scruples, but fear of America and America's allies, keeps the Soviets from moving even more aggressively. No one should think the choice is between a Pax Americana and freedom from foreign interference. If America turns away from the rest of the world, then it will go by default to exponents of a system based on principles antithetical to our own. Two considerations must be borne in mind: (1) we are at war, an ideological war, with Soviet and Communist powers; (2) our victory, unlike theirs, can't be imposed. It can be won only when individuals and nations accept a common standard of value, developed through cooperative give and take, which recognizes the spiritual nature of man.

**Q. Is it possible to get Americans and others to accept a common ideology and goal?**

**Salonen:** What's needed is leadership. Only a few people shape the foreign policy of a country even as large as ours. The decisions they make, based on their attitudes, theories and perceptions of international relations, affect the course of events far into the future. They inform popular awareness and sway popular opinion as well.

If America's leaders have a clear grasp of what's required to make a successful foreign policy, they can communicate to the American people what they believe our goals should be and what we need to do to achieve them. I believe the American people will rise up in support of a foreign policy based on the ideas we've talked about here today.

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*Then America can make clear to the world what we stand for and that we are ready to work with and support those who stand for similar ideals; that we will help them in any way; that we will make the resources of this nation available for this cause.*

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Then America can make clear to the world what we stand for and that we are ready to work with and support those who stand for similar ideals; that we will help them in any way; that we will make the resources of this nation available for this cause. It's naive and an abdication of responsibility to think that other nations will be swayed by our example alone. America must organize and lead; stir competition; project our strengths; push our vision.

A favorite quote of mine comes from the Book of Proverbs (ch. 29, v. 18), "Where there is no vision, the people perish." We must restore America's vision, or perish.



Neil Albert Salonen is the President of the Freedom Leadership Foundation and has been since it was founded in 1969. He has spoken in a variety of forums in the United States and worldwide on the pressing international issues such as those touched on in this interview. Mr. Salonen has studied theology, philosophy and politics at Cornell, George Washington, Columbia and Fordham Universities. In addition, Mr. Salonen is President of the Unification Church of America and the International Cultural Foundation. He lives in Tarrytown, N.Y.



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