Journal of American Studies of Turkey

47 (2017): 49-67

Submitted: 2015.02.17

Accepted: 2015.07.07

ORCID # 0000-0002-0355-790X

The Rhetoric of Presidential Leadership in American Foreign Affairs: Richard Nixon the Cold War Negotiator

Marta Rzepecka

Abstract

This article focuses on President Richard Nixon's handling of US-Soviet relations in the first three years of his presidency. Set within a framework of US foreign policy for the 1970s, the article traces the development of Nixon's approach to the Soviet leaders and their Communist ideology and identifies characteristic rhetorical devices around which the president structured his discourse concerning American-Soviet relations. The article argues that through his rhetorical choices Nixon indicated that he paid attention to conditions which could bring the US and the Soviet Union closer together and dared to pursue policies that could improve bilateral relations.

Keywords

Richard Nixon, Presidential Rhetoric, Political Discourse, US-Soviet Relations, Cold War

Amerikan Dış İlişkilerinde Başkanlık Retoriği: Soğuk Savaş Müzakerecisi Richard Nixon

Özet

Bu makale, Richard Nixon'ın başkanlığının ilk üç yılında, Amerika Birleşik Devletleri ile Sovyet Rusya ilişkilerini ele alışına odaklanmaktadır. Makale 1970'lerin Amerikan dış politikası

çerçevesinde, Nixon'ın Sovyet liderlere ve onların komünist ideolojilerine yaklaşımının izini sürmekte ve başkanın Amerikan-Sovyet ilişkileriyle ilgili söylemlerini yapılandıran retorik araçların kendilerine has özelliklerini tanımlamaktadır. Bu makale, Nixon'ın retorik tercihlerinin onun Amerika Birleşik Devletleri ve Sovyet Rusya'yı bir araya getirebilecek koşullara önem verdiğini ve ikili ilişkileri iyileştirecek politikalar yürütmeye çalıştığını gösterdiğini öne sürmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler

Richard Nixon, Başkanlık Retoriği, Politik Söylem, Amerika Birleşik Devletleri-Sovyet Rusya İlişkileri, Soğuk Savaş

Introduction

The new balance of power in the areas of economic development, military build-up, and political control that emerged at the end of the 1960s shaped President Richard Nixon's approach to Communism and Communist leaders during his first term in office. Instead of engaging in a hostile manner towards Communism and arguing that it threatened peace and freedom worldwide, Nixon was conciliatory in tone in order to bring the two superpowers toward collaboration.

At the heart of Nixon's revised approach was a reassessment of four major concepts underlying American foreign policy—peace, power, prosperity, and principles (Jentleson 147-151). The Nixon administration concluded that peace and balance of power served American interests better than military conflict and an expanded nuclear arms race. Moreover, acknowledging the limitations that can be exercised in imposing internal change in foreign nations, Nixon and his National Security Adviser Henry Kissinger chartered a new course for foreign relations that emphasized politics over idealism. This overhaul of the four foundations of American foreign policy resulted in the adoption of a "realist" approach (McCormick118-124).

This transformation of America's approach toward international affairs ushered in the period of détente. Aimed at relaxing Cold War tensions while at the same time stimulating peaceful coexistence, détente became "both a safety valve for releasing tensions" and "a tactic for controlling the emergence of the Soviet Union as a global power"

(LaFeber 267). Nixon's approach sought to moderate Soviet behavior through the "application of incentives and penalties" (Litwak 196). The strategy aimed to identify shared concerns of the two superpowers and then tie those extensive and overlapping interests together.

In explaining why Nixon sought détente and constructive engagement between Washington and Moscow, Keith Nelson emphasizes the context of the times and the realities America was facing. First, the United States suffered from growing economic problems, including lower productivity, efficiency, and competitiveness (33-34). What is more, the US, faced with the danger posed by a military equivalence, was concerned with how to maintain its strategic advantage over the Soviet Union after withdrawing its forces from Vietnam (45). Finally, the weakening of public support for interventionism prompted the Nixon White House to better its relations with the Soviets in order to bring the Vietnam War to a conclusion and settle strategic problems in West Berlin and the Middle East (17).

While the new economic, military, and political situations were conducive to setting American-Soviet relations on a new course, Nixon, many scholars argue, was quite visionary in recognizing the potential of the new reality in order to take advantage of the prospects it had to offer. William H. Chafe points out that as a Republican who had in part built his career on anti-Communism, Nixon was in a position to do what no Democrat could even have considered without facing severe right-wing criticism (404). Concurring, Bruce W. Jentleson emphasizes that Nixon's long track record of anti-Communism gave him political cover so that he could proceed to implement a new approach to dealing with Soviets without having to face accusations of being soft on Communism (152). Also, by recognizing that clinging to a strict anti-Communism locks one in a position of rigid idealism, he was able to shift away from that in order to facilitate genuine and substantive changes in American-Soviet relations for fostering negotiation and compromise. In a December 1971 interview with *Time* magazine, Nixon admitted that he had "probably the most unusual opportunity, the greatest opportunity of any President in history, due to the fact that in just the way the cards happen to fall [he] may be able to do things which can create a new structure of peace in the world." Robert. E. Denton and Dan F. Hahn observe that Nixon's usage of such positive language shaped world public opinion about "what is worth saving, developing, etc." (91). Indeed, Nixon skillfully communicated his belief that he was

operating in unprecedented circumstances. In using action verbs such as "fall," "do," and "create," which, as Denton and Hahn explain, contain messages of movement (91), he conveyed that he was devoted to exploiting the favorable circumstances to America's advantage. This article will argue that through his rhetoric Nixon was able to exercise leadership that enabled him to be a successful Cold War negotiator in bringing the United States and the Soviet Union to a point in which they could dare pursue policies for mutual benefit.

Nixon's Framework for US-Soviet Relations

In reports to Congress published as extensions of his State of the Union addresses in the first three years of his presidency, Nixon spelled out his new attitude toward American-Soviet relations. At the onset of his first term, he saw US-Soviet affairs within a framework of deep-seated ideological differences and national interests. In his "First Annual Report to the Congress on United States Foreign Policy" for 1970, he observed that "many of those [ideological and national] differences remain today." In the 1971 "Second Annual Report to the Congress on United States Foreign Policy," he reiterated that the United States and the Soviet Union "have very real differences that can continue to divide us." A year later, listing the differences in ideology and political and military objectives, he once again emphasized the "deep concerns that divide us." Without minimizing the disparities in ideology and interests that divided the two nations, Nixon sought to show that his view was realistic and based on sound historical foundations. He publicly emphasized a pragmatic approach to take into account the context of genuine political realities and avoid any illusion that the adversary would give up its ideological beliefs for the sake of mutual accommodation. He assured members of Congress, and the public at large, that his approach to negotiating with the Soviets would be based on a comprehensive understanding of the problems of rivalry and the mutual distrust that had characterized American-Soviet relations since the beginning of the postwar era. His was a straightforward recognition that each superpower had its own interests/objectives and preferred means of pursuing them.

While recognizing the differences that divided the two nations, Nixon made a clear distinction between his ideological views and his practical proposals. He approached negotiations with the Soviets not

as a forum for a theoretical debate but rather as a practical discussion of ways in which the two powers could seek genuine accommodation with one another. In his first annual report to Congress on foreign policy, Nixon explained: "Negotiations must be, above all, the result of careful preparations and an authentic give-and-take on the issues." In the second report, in 1971, he added, "The principle of mutual accommodation, if it is to have any meaning, must be that both of us seek compromises, mutual concessions, and new solutions to old problems." Further, "We did not expect agreements to emerge quickly, for the most vital of interests are engaged. A resolution will not be achieved by agreement on generalities." Finally, in the third report, he stated that negotiations "required that we put aside the temptation of immediate, but shallow, 'accomplishments' such as unprepared and unproductive summit meetings. A constructive relationship with the Soviet Union cannot be built merely by mutual assertions of good intentions or assurances of good will." It is clear that he wanted the nation to see that he entered negotiations with the adversary with a plan in place. Stressing the substance of the talks over their form, he valued good preparation over any acclaim for having arranged there to be discussions. In negotiating with the Soviets, he was a pragmatist dedicated to the principles of hard work, reciprocity, and conciliation. He avoided building up excessive euphoria around his administration's dealings with the Soviets in order to moderate the public's expectations; and he tried to show that he was devoted to a determined and persistent pursuit of his objectives. That is why he did not want to be dependent on anyone else's hopes for prompt progress, nor did he wish to foster unnecessary frustration that a given goal was not quickly and easily achieved. While some read Nixon's behavior as arrogant and conceited, others regarded him as displaying statesmanship-like qualities.

Nixon developed his new approach towards the Soviets during the first three years of his administration. In the 1970 report, he noted positive developments in mutual relations, such as the beginning of talks on limiting strategic arms, but he also stressed the negative aspects of the relationship, criticizing the Soviets' actions in Vietnam and the Middle East. "To the detriment of the cause of peace," he wrote, "the Soviet leadership has failed to exert a helpful influence on the North Vietnamese in Paris. . . . In the Middle East talks, too, we have not seen on the Soviet side that practical and constructive flexibility . . . . We see evidence, moreover, that the Soviet Union seeks a position in the

area as a whole which would make great power rivalry more likely." He thus threw the adversary on the defensive, criticizing the Soviets' actions in areas of mutual concern, questioning their intentions, and blaming them for aggravating existing tensions in mutual contacts. In the 1971 report, he made a more mixed observation, on the one hand appreciating the positive elements of Soviet initiatives concerning disarmament, the problem of Berlin, and cooperation with regard to outer space; but, on the other, disapproving of the negative consequences of their actions in the Middle East, Berlin, and Cuba. However, although Nixon continued to express criticism of Soviet behavior, he did not come across as a politician on the offensive for he spoke in a balanced and temperate manner. Though Nixon in the 1971 report referred to the Soviet "intensive and unrestrained anti-American propaganda" and regarded the "intransigence" as "a cardinal feature" of Kremlin leaders, he nonetheless believed there was "a basis for future progress in our relations." In a way, Nixon treated aggressive Soviet policies as a background against which he could reevaluate mutual relations and then set them on a completely new course. This was the clearest sign yet of the president's determination to seek an end to the bilateral hostilities that had separated the two nations and to seek areas of mutual concern in which accommodation could be achieved. Finally, in his 1972 analysis of American-Soviet relations, Nixon concentrated on discussing concrete accomplishments between the United States and the Soviet Union. Although he noted that developments in the Middle East and Vietnam continued to have dangerous implications for mutual relations, he emphasized that "we have also had evidence that there can be mutual accommodation of conflicting interests, and that competition need not be translated into hostility or crisis. We have evidence that on both sides there is an increasing willingness to break with the traditional patterns of Soviet-American relations." Repetition of the word "evidence" demonstrates that Nixon saw palpable changes—which could create conditions for and justify the advancement of negotiations—as a central factor in the improvement of US-Soviet relations. Such statements illustrate that the president did not conduct discussions with the adversary merely to improve the atmosphere of mutual relations but also to change the character of mutual contacts in such a way so as to make a more constructive and stable relationship possible.

Constructing US-Soviet Discourse

Nixon's bold foreign policy approach and the decisions and actions resulting from it, which were partly dictated by national and international developments and partly by his personal skills and abilities, were reinforced by his discourse with the Soviets. In a letter to Secretary of State William Rogers, sent on February 4, 1969, Nixon wrote that he believed that "the tone of our public and private discourse about and with the Soviet Union should be calm, courteous, and non-polemical." In a speech made on February 27, 1969, in West Berlin, Germany, he expressed hope that Berlin could become an object of "negotiation among governments and reconciliation among men" instead of "threats and coercion." Also in a statement concerning the deployment of the anti-ballistic missile system at a March 14, 1969 conference, he stressed that in his relations with the Soviet Union he wanted "no provocation which might deter arms talks." Suggesting a "calm, courteous and non-polemical" rhetorical tone in negotiating "reconciliation" between the US and the Soviet Union and rejecting the old arsenal of threats, coercion, and provocation, he sought to remove barriers to dialogue. While he did not say that a new tone and manner of conducting talks could diffuse the problems and differences that then characterized American-Soviet animosity, his call for a less divisive and more conciliatory new rhetoric expressed the hope that the two adversaries could in time come to make those differences seem less important and have less negative impact on the development of economic, military, and political cooperation.

Though publicly Nixon offered assurance that he was working towards improved American-Soviet affairs, privately he took action that slowed the process of advancing mutual relations. For example, without checking with the Soviet leadership, Nixon and Kissinger arranged through the White House channel a two-day visit to Romania as part of the president's tour of Eastern Europe. On Nixon's instructions, the announcement of the 1969 visit was made without any advance word to the Soviets. Although the tactic of surprise did not assure the success of the trip, its unexpected announcement helped the president prevent the Soviets from undertaking maneuvers which could undermine his plans. As Kissinger observes, the trip to Romania demonstrated America's enormous support in Eastern Europe and that Nixon was able to deal directly with those countries without Soviet interference. By traveling to Bucharest on August 2 and 3 and forcing the postponement of a long-scheduled Romanian party conference to which General Secre-

tary Leonid Brezhnev and Prime Minister Aleksei Kosygin had been invited, Nixon proved that the Romanians attached greater importance to their relations with the US than to their normal contacts with the Soviets (Kissinger 156-157). Chafe adds that Nixon needed to make his good relationship with the Romanian President, Nicolae Ceausescu, very clear in order to signal the possibility of America reshaping its relationship with China. Ceausescu maintained good relations with the Chinese and Nixon wanted to use him as a channel to forge relations with the Asian superpower. Exploiting Soviet anxieties, he planned to use his alliance with the Chinese as leverage against the Soviets for extracting concessions in policy areas, such as Vietnam and the Middle East, and for reducing Soviet influence over world affairs in general (287-88).

By utilizing the China strategy, Nixon and Kissinger reached the point where they made the development of a closer relationship with the Soviet Union totally dependent upon a parallel movement with China. Since chances for a quick advancement of American-Sino relations were slender, they took their time to respond to Soviet overtures; for example, Nixon and Kissinger delayed their response to the Kremlin's indication of willingness and readiness to commence strategic arms limitations talks (SALT). The president conveyed his unhurried pace at a March 4, 1969 news conference, in which he stated that the interests of the Soviet Union and the United States "would not be served by simply going down the road on strategic arms talks without, at the same time, making progress on resolving these political differences that could explode. Even assuming our strategic arms talks were successful, freezing arms at their present level, we could have a very devastating war." At a news conference two years later, held on October 12, 1971, he restated his concern: "If there is another world war, if there is a war between the superpowers, there will be no winners. There will be only losers." By drawing on fears of war, defeat and failure, Nixon attempted to build public support for his slow approach in dealing with the Soviets. In predicting terrible consequences should his undertakings with the Soviets fail, he sought to increase the rhetorical effectiveness of those fears by purposefully intensifying them. Having reached the pinnacle of his political career, Nixon utilized the exploitation of emotional intimidation as a more effective means of persuasion than the simple dissemination of information. He preferred to instill anxieties and worries in the general population instead of providing a rational examination of the matter in question.

Nixon also insisted on pursuing the policy of leverage when he refused to set a firm timetable for negotiations with the Soviets at a summit. At the March 14, 1969 news conference he was asked about the timing of a possible future summit meeting with Soviet leaders. In response, he stated:

> Talks have not yet reached the point where I have concluded, or where I believe they have concluded, that a discussion at the summit level would be useful. Whenever those talks, preliminary talks, do reach that point, I anticipate that a summit meeting would take place. I do not think one will take place in the near future but I think encouraging progress is being made toward the time when a summit talk may take place.

Determined to escape public and media criticism prompted by the perception that he had evaded answering questions about the American-Soviet summit, Nixon did not bluntly drop the issue. Instead, he constructed artificially complex sentences and statements overloaded with vague words and repetitions to create the impression that he had in fact addressed the issue. Going back to a promise made during his 1969 inaugural address, he tried to advance his political goals related to the summit by using a rhetoric that simplified instead of complicated, that clarified rather than confused.

The phrase "I will make it clear" was another rhetorical device Nixon used to avoid saying something he did not want to say. For instance, at a news conference from February 6, 1969, in response to a question concerning why he changed his mind on the ratification of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, he stated, "I want to make it very clear that in asking the Senate to ratify the Treaty, I did not gloss over the fact that we still very strongly disapproved of what the Soviet Union had done in Czechoslovakia and what it still is doing. But on balance, I considered that this was the time to move forward on the Treaty, and have done so." Realizing that only a year earlier, as a presidential candidate, he had opposed ratification of the treaty because of the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, Nixon did not want to stir discussion about his shift on the issue and explain his decision because he did not want to give away the details of the political arrangement he was working on at that time. But he also wanted to use the moment to give the impression that his decisions and actions served a real American interest. As Eli

S. Chesen explains, a speaker who employs the phrase "I will make it clear" is usually trying to camouflage his calculations and maneuvers, not reveal them. Fearful of reprisal from authority, he uses the phrase to control the situation, rather than be controlled by others (102). By his skillful rhetoric he came across as open and candid, enabling him to be persuasive with the media and the public and therefore weakening their vigilance as they regarded him as being in firm command.

Nixon's obsessive control was also evident in his handling of the debate over the deployment of the antiballistic missile (ABM) system. During the news conference of March 14, 1969, in answer to a question about whether he would consider abandoning the ABM program altogether, he said:

> And on that particular point, I think it would take two, naturally, to make the agreement. Let's look at the Soviet Union's position with its defensive deployment of ABMs. Previously, that deployment was aimed only toward the United States. Today their radars, from our intelligence, are also directed toward Communist China. I would imagine that the Soviet Union would be just as reluctant as we would be to leave their country naked against a potential Chinese Communist threat.

Employing the "minimax tactic"—identified by Denton and Hahn as that of speaking more about the adversary than about himself (81-82)—Nixon did not state outright whether he wanted to abandon the program or not. Instead, he constructed a message which conveyed that he could not get rid of American ABMs because the Soviets would not dispose of theirs; and he noted that the Chinese would gain a strategic advantage if he did. Thus, by focusing the public's attention on the position of the Soviet leadership and the threat of Communist China, Nixon fostered the impression that he was not responsible for keeping the ABM program going—the Soviets and the Chinese were. By placing the burden for the failure to abandon the ABM program upon America's adversaries, he also hoped to shift the responsibility for failure to make substantial progress on arms control on them while, in fact, he himself had delayed negotiations on SALT until after he secured better control over American defenses.

Nixon controlled the time of negotiations with the Soviets also through a delay in the ratification of the Non-Proliferation Treaty,

which had been signed with the Soviet Union in 1968. As Raymond L. Garthoff observes, while Nixon asked for the advice and consent of the Senate to ratify the treaty, he opted to not pressure European allies to sign the agreement as well—a drastic change from his predecessors' approach (74). In a message to the Senate sent on February 5, 1969, Nixon wrote: "I believe that the Treaty can be an important step in our endeavor to curb the spread of nuclear weapons." He used the word "step" because it carried the connotation of movement. Clearly, Nixon wanted to give the impression of advancement in the negotiations with the Soviets without revealing his true intentions. While path metaphors allowed him to present to the public that progress was being made without disclosing the specifics of actions taken to make such progress possible, building metaphors similarly helped him to convey to his listeners the idea of creating some new structure without him sharing any of the details. For instance, the statement "Consonant with my purpose to 'strengthen the structure of peace,' therefore, I urge the Senate's prompt consideration and positive action on this Treaty" suggested that the American-Soviet relationship was like a building which required a strong frame and solid foundation to withstand the difficulties brought about during its construction and which would inevitably arise during its further maintenance. While the building metaphor did not reveal any details of either the construction itself or the construction process, it communicated to the public the sense of growth and development, and that was exactly Nixon's desire. Formally, he wished to assure the public that he was advancing their expectations for improved American-Soviet affairs while in actuality he was stalling the process for the purpose of some larger gain.

Anatoly Dobrynin, the Soviet ambassador to the United States, interprets Nixon's decision to start discussions with the Soviet Union on the strategic arms limitations announced on October 25, 1969, as a confirmation of the view that the president saw SALT as both a means to seek security through arms control and a device to gain political advantages (202). For instance, military negotiations with the Soviets could be a useful tool in the diplomatic discussions in other areas. The structure of the SALT negotiations was unprecedented. On the one hand, they were two-channel talks between the formal delegations of both sides, which met for a preliminary round of sessions in Helsinki, Finland, in 1969 and for a series of negotiations alternately in Helsinki and Vienna, Austria, over a period of two and a half years. On the

other hand, meetings took place between the informal representatives, Kissinger and Dobrynin, who conducted secret parallel negotiations in Washington. From the onset of the talks, Nixon emphasized that they were not merely atmospheric meetings. At a December 8, 1969 news conference, he stressed that "both sides are presenting positions in a very serious way and are not trying to make propaganda out of their positions." Three months later, at a March 21, 1970 news conference, he spoke in a similar tone: "the Soviet Union did not come in with generalized language, which had been previously their tactic in arms negotiations, but they came in with very precise weapon systems by weapon systems analysis." Describing the American and Soviet approach to these negotiations as "very serious," and contrasting the Soviets' "precise" language of analysis with the "generalized" one they had used previously, Nixon emphasized a change in mutual relations and negotiations. The reflection that the Soviet leaders had changed their manner of discussing issues with the Americans suggests that he purposefully brought to the public's attention the positive aspects of the developing American-Soviet relationship. The phrasing he used indicates that he wanted to convey to the public that, in contrast to their predecessors, both he and the Soviet leaders then in power were interested in settling things through careful political consideration, and not spontaneous enthusiasm; that they relied on a thorough discussion pertaining to the subject matter, and not on personal relations; and that they wanted to reach a balance of military, economic and political interests, and not impose ideological dominance.

In maneuvering toward the summit, Nixon avoided being predictable, assuming that it would weaken his bargaining position in his dealings with the Soviets. His approach was to seize the initiative and keep the adversary speculating about his next move. In private he was much more enthusiastic about the notion of a summit than in public, but he had been sending mixed signals from the beginning of his presidency. Asked about his attitude toward the possibility of future summits with the Soviet leaders at the February 6, 1969 news conference, he replied:

> I think that where summitry is concerned I take a dim view of what some have called 'instant summitry,' particularly where there are very grave differences of opinion between those who are to meet. I believe that a well-prepared summit meeting, where we have on the

> table the various differences that we have on which we can perhaps make progress, would be in our interest and in their interest, and it will be my intention . . . to conduct exploratory talks at various levels to see if such a meeting could take place.

Although Nixon said he would take interest in the issue, his choice of adjectives such as "dim" and "grave," and such recurring nouns as "differences" and "interests," suggested that he was too skeptical to believe that the summit could take place and doubtful that, if scheduled, it might help reconcile conflicting American and Soviet philosophies and policies. Yet, to avoid his comments being interpreted as an absolute rejection of prospects for a summit meeting, he offered a qualified response: he was in favor of "well-prepared" summits, but preparing for these required time to identify areas in which progress could be made.

Nixon kept the Soviets guessing also about his view of American-Soviet nuclear parity. In some statements, he accepted the general concept of parity and wanted to use strategic arms limitation talks to contribute to strategic stability. For example, in a radio speech on February 25, 1971 about the second annual foreign policy report to the Congress, he stated: "Today neither the United States nor the Soviet Union has a clear-cut nuclear advantage." At a news conference a year later, on March 24, 1972, he answered a question about world powers in a similar tone, stating that "it could be said that the United States and the Soviet Union are the two major superpowers from a military standpoint . . . ." In other statements, he refused to recognize that the Soviet Union and the United States were equally strong nuclear powers. For instance, in the February 25, 1971 radio speech he communicated to the public that "America's strength will be, as it must be, second to none . . . ." In the Annual Message to the Congress on the State of the Union on January 20, 1972, he restated his view, noting that "Our ability to build a stable and tranquil world . . . depends on our ability to negotiate from a position of strength." While the first two statements were powerful signals that Nixon recognized American nuclear parity with the Soviets, the next two declarations indicated that while he recognized America's new place in the structure of world politics, he considered American military prowess superior to that of other powers. The last two statements conveyed his implied warning that the United States would fall behind the Soviet Union, and they expressed his belief that despite nuclear parity America needed to maintain its dominance, just

as his administration needed Americans' support for its policies which aimed at ensuring their country's superiority

A sense of anxiety also accompanied the outcome of negotiations concerning the summit's agenda. At a November 12, 1971 news conference, Nixon suggested that "Whether we are able to reach an agreement by the end of the year, I think, is highly improbable at this point. I say highly improbable—not impossible. It depends on what happens." Four months later, at the March 24, 1972 conference, he spoke in a similar tone: "The Moscow trip . . . will be primarily devoted to a number of substantive issues of very great importance. One of them may be SALT, if SALT is not completed before Moscow. It does not appear now likely that they can complete SALT before Moscow . . . ." He followed the line of pessimism even on the day before his trip, May 19, 1972, maintaining that there were

> three areas, in which there is a possibility, not a certainty by any manner of means, but a possibility of agreement, provided at the highest level we can break some bottlenecks which still exist. One, of course, is arms limitation. . . . we hope that we may be able to reach agreement in this area. We are hopeful, but we do not want to leave the implication that it is certain that we can reach agreement. The second area is the area of trade. . . .I would say that the chances for some positive results are good, not certain, but certainly good. . . . A third area that is . . . the area of cooperation in space. . . . We are going to try to see a culmination of that progress in this area.

In early March 1972 Nixon was told that the SALT talks conducted through the official channel in Vienna were on the brink of completion and Kissinger's secret trip to Moscow in April 1972 only strengthened Nixon's faith in a successful outcome of the summit. Why, then, did the president continue to confuse the public and plant doubts in their minds about the results of the meeting? Why did he pretend to raise questions about American and Soviet negotiators' decisions and actions on which they had already made up their minds? One explanation is that Nixon kept open, at least in his public position, the option that the talks on strategic arms might not be concluded before the Moscow summit to ensure that the timing of an arms-control accord was optimal—to his political advantage. He wanted to complete the summit agreements himself so as to earn full credit for the strategic achievements, no matter how much

help he received along the way, because this move had the advantage of casting him in the position of the chief negotiator and the key decision-maker. On the one hand, it conveyed his power of persuasion and perseverance in the pursuit of the goals which helped to create a new congenial quality in American-Soviet relations; but, on the other, it exposed as well his understanding of and ability to negotiate with Communists, which was unavoidable in the context of a new balance of power. It demonstrated his hardline attitude towards dealing with them but also his commitment not to permit personal beliefs and antipathies stand in the way of America's national interests.

Indicative of Nixon's conviction that the summit would come off well were his expressions of hope and optimism about the summit meeting. In the May 19, 1972 remarks, the president communicated to the public his anticipation and enthusiasm for a rewarding visit with phrases such as "considerable" and "significant" and with a statement that "from the correspondence that I have had, the contacts I have had directly with and from Mr. Brezhnev in the last few days, his attitude is positive. Mine is positive." Although the expressions and the statement did not reveal the details of the negotiations, they disclosed his strong motivation and good will to reach consensus with the Soviets on the conflicting political issues and sign the planned agreements. They also revealed a change in the nature of Nixon's political communication with the Soviet leaders, conveying that he was going to Moscow to negotiate with his political partners rather than confront and defeat his rivals. The rhetoric of emphasizing similarities with and personal direct contacts between him and Brezhnev indicated that he was moving away from the old model of Cold War relations and trying to create the promise of a new future in international affairs.

Conclusion

Summing up this analysis of Nixon's rhetorical confrontations with Communism during the first three years of his first term in office, it can be stated that the president devoted much of his time and effort to building a new approach to Communism and American-Soviet relations. He openly expressed his willingness and readiness to go beyond ideological differences and work with the Soviets, not against them. He undertook the initiative with a deep awareness of the differences that separated the two powers and the resistance on both sides to giving up their principles and beliefs for the sake of mutual accommodation. He did not go into a

theoretical debate about ideological and political tolerance but instead opened practical discussions with the Soviet leadership about the ways in which the leaders of the two nations could relate to each other in mutually beneficial ways. Aware that a new partnership with the adversary could not solve all the existing differences, he hoped it would lead to finding more effective ways of working beyond them.

Nixon structured his discourse concerning American-Soviet relations around a few characteristic rhetorical techniques. He used the phrase "I will make it clear" to camouflage his calculations, the "minimax tactic" to turn the public's attention away from the issues he did not want to discuss, and various path and building metaphors to convey a sense of progress and growth in American-Soviet relations, while at the same time keeping the details of the undertaking hidden. He produced artificially complex sentences and statements overloaded with generic words and repetitions to create the impression that he had in fact addressed the subject at hand, but in his handling of American-Soviet relations he avoided being predictable. He sent mixed signals and kept the Soviets and the public guessing about the decisions and actions of his administration because he wanted to control the development of mutual affairs.

Nixon's early presidential discourse demonstrated that his decision as a presidential candidate in the 1968 election to adopt a new approach towards the Soviets was not a temporary political or rhetorical modification designed to help him reach the pinnacle of his career. Instead, this shift represented a more profound transition aimed at setting the United States on a new course in its foreign relations. While the shift did not mean that he had changed his views about Communism or Communist policies, it did indicate that he was willing to speak and act differently regarding the Soviets and their ideology. Further discussion of Nixon's summit and post-summit rhetoric is needed to ascertain whether he managed to stay on this new political and rhetorical course, and whether he was able to build a discourse effective enough to help him win his second term of office, stable enough to turn mutual relations into a permanently peaceful relationship, and strong enough to survive the difficult political developments in the administration in the years to come.

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