

stemming from an acute case of national hubris. Our Secretary of State says the United States stands taller, sees further than other nations. The President declares that we call the shots. Senator Jesse Helms stands astride the U.S. Senate, a chauvinistic jingo who rejects the concept of a global community based on the rule of law. Washington speaks as the sole superpower and international norms are for lesser nations.

It is true, perhaps, that never in the history of the world has a single nation ever exercised the preeminent influence globally which the U.S. wielded in the 20th Century. The question now becomes, what lies ahead in the 21st Century? Will it be another American Century? Or could this great power slip away, be thrown away, and the 21st Century become the anti-American Century?

The answer is that it depends on whether the U.S. attempts to perpetuate an American global hegemony as the world's only military superpower - or if they seek to exercise constructive leadership as a cooperative member in a peaceful world community governed under the rule of law. Confrontation or cooperation?

Unfortunately, the U.S. Congress and the Executive seem determined to make military power the primary instrument of U.S. foreign policy. The U.S. is the only nation in history which has formally divided the globe into military zones and appointed a General or an Admiral to be Commander-in-Chief within each zone. There are nearly a quarter of a million uniformed troops permanently assigned to these Commanders, heavily armed and fully combat ready to intervene militarily in not one, but two conflicts anywhere on earth and to win both wars nearly simultaneously. President Clinton has proclaimed that he will act multilaterally where possible but is prepared to act unilaterally when necessary.

Forward presence

This aggressive posture is called forward presence, in current jargon. In truth, it is no more than gun boat diplomacy which through the implied threat of military action is intended to influence and control events to U.S. advantage. This confrontational approach to foreign relations is extremely negative because it is based upon coercion rather than efforts to develop constructive approaches of mutual benefit. It also creates pressure to use military force when significant issues lead to public awareness of pending problems with another nation. All too often the United States finds that gun boat diplomacy has put us in a position where the use of force will not resolve a problem but we will look foolish and impotent if we fail to act after threatening to do so. Kosovo is only the latest example of this process.

Yet another dangerous, potentially fatal, form of confrontation is intensifying through U.S. nuclear policies. In 1995 the U.S. led efforts to extend the Non-Proliferation Treaty indefinitely. To inspire the non-nuclear states to agree, we joined the other four nuclear powers to make a formal pledge in a statement titled, "Principles and Objectives For Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament." This contained a joint commitment to: "The determined pursuit by the nuclear weapons states of systematic and progressive efforts to reduce nuclear weapons globally, with the ultimate goal of eliminating those weapons..." That is an unequivocal commitment to get rid of all nuclear weapons.