AN APPRAISAL OF U. S. FOREIGN POLICY

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ROOTS OF U. S. FOREIGN POLICY

In dealing with foreign affairs those who speak for the United States have characteristically articulated its policies on the basis of a set of propositions rooted in the eighteenth century, a time known to us as the Age of Reason. These basic propositions, colored with eighteenth century rationalism, are conveyed to us in the Declaration of Independence. Our magistrates often cite the Declaration, explicitly or indirectly. They tend to cite it because these propositions appeal to the American conscience. They provide the touchstones of justification in our conduct in world affairs.

The Declaration as a document relevant to foreign policy is significant in four respects. First, the Declaration embodies a demand of the right to stand among the powers of the earth. Therein the Americans insist on entering the nexus of diplomacy. They will no longer, if they can help it, permit their relations with the world at large to be channeled through and managed by the British regime ensconced in London. Second, the Declaration is a bid for support of this cause among various countries of Europe. In particular, it seeks intellectual support. It seeks to stir up the thinkers and writers of the time and to get them to back the American cause. Third, to put the matter in contemporary terms, it is an exercise in psychological warfare directed against the British themselves. It seeks, as best it can, to arouse sympathies for the American cause and thereby weaken the adversary will in Britain. Fourth, as a matter related to the preceding three, the Declaration asserts a set of norms about the world in general and the relationships among peoples in the world. I want to examine these asserted norms for a moment. They are by no means as conclusive as the Declaration asserts and as we take them to be.

A rational world is postulated. Truths are held to be self-evident. Now that is an amazing proposition! No empirical evidence for the idea is adduced. The proponents of the idea just flatly assert it as if nobody would question it. Second, the document conceives of mankind as basically unified. I do not mean that in a political sense. I mean it in the sense of having common assumptions and showing common responses. I refer, of course, to the language concerning "decent respect to the opinions of mankind." Third, equality among

all the various groups of mankind is postulated. *Equality* is a concept that really does not make any sense unless it is linked to something else. Equality as spoken of in the Declaration is a political attribute. All mankind, so the document says, is on a par with respect to certain attributes relevant to capacity for governing. Fourth, stemming from that proposition, inherent injustice of rulership from afar over any people is asserted. This last proposition is articulated in terms of the law of nature and nature's God in the intellectual style of the times. The makers of the Declaration might have stated their objections to rule from London on pragmatic grounds that this system was no longer practical because the British Crown had ceased to understand American problems and the Americans were getting too big to be held in leading strings.

THE IDEA OF COLLECTIVE SECURITY

A set of corollaries seems naturally to flow from the far-reaching propositions I have cited. These corollaries were strong in the minds of many American leaders at the time of the Declaration. They have continued to appeal to American thought from one stage to another. Universal independence is seen as a key to justice, order, and peace in the world. This attitude rejects turmoil as aberrant in affairs among organized peoples. Stability is seen as the natural or normal condition. A harmony of interest among peoples is assumed as natural. There is a strong frame of logic in this set of ideas. That is to say, the ideas may be assailable on empirical grounds, but their structure as ideas is coherent. If every organized people will simply leave every other organized people alone, then no trouble or violence or threats will disturb tranquility among the various peoples. Moreover, if every organized people so respects the sanctity of the principle of universal independence as to be willing to help any differentiated people who may be attacked or threatened by another organized people which may turn malefactor, then all peoples can feel secure. The phrase for this idea is collective security, and the idea is integrally linked to our traditional postulates about independence.

This idea was basic to the League of Nations, for which Woodrow Wilson strove at the time of the first of the two world wars in which this country has participated. They were revived in the United Nations during the second World War. These are not strategic ideas. That is to say, they do not involve looking at the world in a way that differentiates among one's potential friends and one's potential enemies. Under the idea of collective security, any nation is presumed to look upon all the other nations as probable friends

willing to take one's side against anyone who might become so aberrant as to make a threat. The merits of the case are supposed to bring others to your side in the event of danger, and the prospect of facing overwhelming odds is supposed to be enough to deter any potential offender and to persuade all organized peoples to be good.

In that kind of a situation no nation would have to worry about alliances or balances of power or anything of that sort. In 1943 Secretary Hull, returning from the Moscow Conference at which our principal allies had agreed to go along in the revival of a world organization, told the Congress of the United States in joint session that there would be no concern over strategic questions in the postwar world. Such matters as alliances, concern for the balance of power, and spheres of influence would all be rendered obsolete and consigned to the unhappy past. President Roosevelt, addressing the same body after his return from Yalta a year and a few months later, made the same statement in words almost identical with Hull's.

These anticipations were bolstered by assumptions concerning what had happened to the Russians and how they would behave thenceforward. Their ideology was supposed to have burned out under the fires of war. They were supposed to have become so fearful of any renewal of hostilities that they would feel constrained to abandon any attitude likely to contribute to animosities among nations. They were supposed to have become used to the methods of cooperation through the experience of combined action against the common enemies. Supposedly, moreover, dealing with the problems posed by the ex-enemy countries would itself provide the cement of cooperation in the postwar situation. As a way of helping the process along, the United States and its closer allies would do everything proper and expedient to reassure the Soviet Union, to allay whatever suspicions might still be latent in it, and to set a good example. By these means, the Soviet Union would be encouraged into adaptability. I suppose we can appropriately sum up all these ideas as the I-understand-Old-Joe fallacy.

In reality, the Russians proved recalcitrant, ambitious, and suspicious, and their forces pressed into Eastern and Central Europe. The other European peoples beyond the Russian sway felt pressed and threatened. The problem of the ex-enemy states, far from providing the occasion and incentive for further cooperation among the principal wartime allies, produced the very issues on which cooperation foundered. A factor of signal importance was the debility of the United Kingdom. It was exhausted by war. The extent of its

depletion was revealed suddenly as a big surprise. In dealing with international affairs, our minds continuously seek analytically to single out the determinative events—to find those factors by which to account for others. In this manner of thinking, I should say that perhaps the single most important development in the period of World War II and its immediate sequel was the draining away of British power. So many of the other awesome circumstances were contingent upon that one development.

U. S. POLICY IN EUROPE

The United States perforce had to change its line of action. This change did not involve, however, renouncing the UN as an embodiment of hope. The hope of developing the UN into an agency for collective security was postponed but not abandoned. The organization itself was to remain in being as a ready framework of collaboration if and when the Soviet Union could be brought to see the error of its recalcitrant ways and persuaded, enticed, or compelled by lack of an alternative to redeem the hope. Meanwhile, in the period from 1947 to 1949, the United States launched a set of undertakings designed to bolster the nations under threat in Europe. These undertakings inherently involved distinctions between peoples or states amicably disposed and those hostilely disposed. They were in that basic sense strategic in a way that collective security undertakings are not. I refer here to the Truman Doctrine, to the Marshall Plan for European Recovery, and to the commitment of the United States instrumentalities and resources to the military security of Europe in the North Atlantic Alliance.

These undertakings have worked as well as anything ever does in the obdurate field of foreign policy. Europe's public life has been restored. The national economies of the area have been put back on their feet and are prospering in the main. General self-confidence has replaced the anxieties that were rife less than two decades ago. The situation is not perfect or even completely satisfactory, but it is immeasurably improved over what it was. I should say these undertakings have worked except in so far as the United States has overreached in trying to press the European nations into acceptance of American preconceptions of how those nations should merge into new frameworks of collaboration. Here some of our overzealous advocacy has run into obdurate factors of identity and history, and the European nations have proved to be less plastic than some of our planners would prefer. Our undertakings in Europe have worked so well that the United States has lost a good deal of the leverage that it had on the European situation only a few years ago. That

fact helps explain why some of the later designs have met obstacles. In a sense, some of our present frustrations are the consequences of some of our earlier successes.

Here I would stress the consonance between our undertakings in Europe, especially the successful ones, and the traditional assumptions and values to which I referred at the outset. President Truman's speech in 1947 enunciating the Truman Doctrine made clear the integral relation of the value of independence to what we were trying to achieve. We were to help others against threats to their independence, whether external or internal. In no sense was the United States attempting to take over those positions or the direction of affairs in those positions. Our policies rested on the assumption of the existence of peoples and regimes endowed with a sense of identity, faculties of will, sense of purpose, and a grasp of history which enabled them to preserve what they wished to be on the basis of what they had been in the past.

COMMUNIST APPROACH TO EMERGING NATIONS

We should ponder for a moment the effect of these undertakings and their success on the Communist regime in the Soviet Union and on the Communist forces aligned with it. Their reliance was on a view of history by which their interests, their outlooks, and their purposes were bound to prevail. What they preferred and sought was a reflection of the dictates of history's laws. Anything helpful to that outlook was postulated as legitimate. Anything counter to it was *ipso facto* illegitimate and contrary to the thrust of history. Moreover, the Communists assumed themselves the advocates of everybody else's future. The Communist interests were supposed to be ultimately everybody's interests. The regime which had come into power in Russia in 1917 had looked upon itself as the forerunner and the exemplar for all of Europe. All the war-weary peoples were supposed to fall in the Russian footsteps. That dream was unfulfilled. In the immediate sequel to World War II Soviet Russia was in a hugely expanded position, with vastly greater power than ever before, and with great prospects of being able to accomplish what had eluded the Communists a generation before. When the United States interposed to shore up the European countries lying to the west, those in charge of Soviet affairs felt cheated. The Communists faced a danger of the collapse and refutation of their doctrine.

In that situation the Communists turned for alternative opportunities to what, for want of a better term, we call the Third World. The term is oversimple and much too pat in implying only three groups of nations—the Western allies, the Communists, and

then all the others. Actually, those others are a variegated lot. They include an array of juridically independent states which do not seem to have established their characters. They are sovereign in the sense of being juridically autonomous. In varying degrees they fall short of being sovereign in a sense of having regimes fully capable of managing their internal affairs. They are not all new states. Some of them owe their independence to the events of the Napoleonic period. Others came along into independence in the sequel to World War I. A very large number have been precipitated into independence by events during and since World War II. These are all states cast up by the ebb of empire. How far the process will go is anybody's guess. The concept of statehood is being carried to an absurd and dogmatic extreme in our time. Maritius and the Maldives and Gambia are the latest ones in line. Soon it will be Basutoland. Eventually why not Pitcairn Island? It can send every one of its residents abroad as an ambassador somewhere, and presumably it could find adequate subvention.

Most of these states are in Africa and Asia. They are widely variant in characteristics such as size, resources, ethnic classification, and so on. They do present certain common traits with respect to lack of developed public life, identity, sense of history, and rapport between regimes and peoples. Often their spokesmen articulate ambitions hugely in excess of means. Lacking alternatives, their leaders resort to emotion to marshal unity. They are usually necessitous in economic matters. They are ambivalent, if not hostile, toward the more successful and affluent states to which they were once in tutelage. In compensation for domestic inadequacies, many of these new states take inordinate interest in outside affairs. If they cannot amount to much at home, they can at least amount to something on the world stage by strenuous advocacy at the United Nations and in their regional groupings.

The Communists were slow to realize their opportunity with respect to these nations. Actually, the great movement into independence in the sequel to World War II took the Communists by surprise. Their theory had not led them to expect that empire would give up so readily and so voluntarily. Over a span of a few years, however, the Communists have rounded out and articulated their approach to the Third World. It is a formula for enlarging and exploiting opportunities. It takes into account the prodigious character of contemporary weapons and the general reluctance to use them. The formula also reflects the lessons gleaned from developments in the Far East since World War II.

The formula is called "the doctrine of national liberation wars." It is the other side of what the Moscow regime calls the doctrine of peaceful coexistence. Direct confrontation with the Western world, especially the United States, is to be avoided because it is all too likely to involve the danger of a cataclysmic general war. Within the limits imposed by that condition, the Communist powers will do whatever is feasible to create and to exploit cleavages between the emerging states and the metropolitan countries of the West. These latter countries are, of course, called imperialist in the Communist lexicon, irrespective of whether they still play or have ever played the game of empire. Every purpose and every interest of these powers is labeled imperialistic, and the Communists will do their utmost to get the regimes and the peoples of the emerging states so to regard them. The Communists will count on the ultimate failure of every alternative to their own system in these neophyte states. They assert the sole legitimacy of their own pattern of purposes and thereby construe all competing or differential purposes as illegitimate. Both of the polar capitals of communism, namely Moscow and Peking, endorse this general approach. They disagree widely and deeply on the tactics and on the order of interests and opportunities, but they do not disagree on the basic propositions.

U. S. POLICY IN ASIA

You will note that I have mentioned China for the first time as one of the great Communist powers. The Communist accession in China was one of the great postwar developments in the Far East.

As China emerged from World War II, it looked like a primary candidate for what we now call the Third World. It was indeed not a new country without a history. The Chinese were an ancient people. China, however, had undergone many difficulties in recent centuries and was long in eclipse. In its weakness it was subjected to many inequalities in its relationships to outside powers. Now, after World War II, China was at last to be freed of these trammels. It was going to join the great powers. That purpose was one entertained and fostered by the United States. Whenever anyone confronts me with the statement that the United States failed in the realization of its war aims in World War II, I counter by pointing out that the goal of having China take its place as a great power has been largely achieved.

China had been done in by the war. The country was depleted. Its people and its regime were demoralized. In many ways it was not too bad a regime. At least it had a willful leader of steady purpose. The regime lacked means, however. It certainly lacked com-

mand of the situation confronting it. In China's situation, our attempts to help did not help. In that respect the situation was markedly different from that of the European countries which we assisted.

There were possible alternatives to what we did, but keep in mind that possibility differs from feasibility. Possibly a decision to interpose our forces in China in 1944, concentrating our resources in that area, rather than fighting island by island northward in the offshore campaign, would have prevented the ultimate debacle. Clearly this government never addressed itself properly to that possibility. We do not know whether it would have worked. By 1946-48 the situation in China had deteriorated drastically. The Communists were pushing the process of deterioration for all it was worth in expectation of taking over as the receivers.

Suppose the United States had even then decided to spend resources in men and material to the extent it has done so in appurtenant areas in the sequel to China's debacle. We can only speculate on the answer. The White Paper on China issued by our government in 1949 made clear the basis of our decision not to take such drastic measures. The United States was preoccupied with efforts to salvage the situation in Europe. There were prudent considerations against assuming so great an additional burden. Besides all that, an effective interposition would have required the deployment of great numbers of American forces on the ground in China. Such an action would have entailed the irreducible question of who was in charge. If the United States had assumed control of the factors bearing on China's security, it would have been taking over a colony, whatever we called it. It might have been necessary to stay on for generations. If the United States had interposed large forces in China, while leaving the Chinese regime in charge of China's affairs, the United States would have been putting itself in a subordinate role, that of a tributary. The United States, for reasons considered adequate at the time, signed off in China. It renounced any military commitment on the Asian mainland. The White Paper expressed hope in an ultimate assertion of the "democratic individualism" of the Chinese people. It is ironical to find our government postulating hopes in abstractions, so my Sinologist friends tell me, which are not translatable into the Chinese tongues.

The Communist accession in China tripled the numbers of peoples subject to communism and added by a third to the territory. That was an enormous shift counterbalancing the measures which we were taking for the salvation of Europe.

Along with a signing off with respect to mainland China, the United States ended its military involvement in the Korean peninsula. The joint occupation of Korea, with Soviet forces at the upper end and United States forces at the lower end of the peninsula, divided at the 38th parallel by a line making no logical or practical sense in relation to the terrain, was entered into when that dream of postwar cooperation with the Soviet Union was still intact. By 1949, the continued occupation of South Korea by our forces seemed to be a misallocation of resources. The United States withdrew its forces. It succeeded in getting a local regime set up under UN aegis. The United States did not enter into a treaty of assurance to South Korea. It gave no unilateral guarantee. Either of these courses would have inherently required a delimitation of the obligation. Inevitably, some juridic legitimacy would have been conveyed to the division at the 38th parallel. This would have run counter to the proposition, essential to our case and essential to the South Korean regime, that it was the only one properly established in that country.

Conceivably, the United States might have left a relatively small unit to keep the U. S. flag flying as a "keep out" warning to the forces lying to the north where a formidable Communist military establishment had been left in charge by the Soviet Union with a Soviet military mission still on hand in a role of superintendency. To have left such a force with a flag would have entailed one or the other of two kinds of arrangements. On the one hand, the U. S. might have retained charge of South Korean security. In that case we would have in effect had a colony, or a dependency. On the other hand, the United States might have left a force deployed in the area with the South Korean government in charge of security policy. In that case we would have given hostages to a small regime with purposes not necessarily consonant with our own. As the central circumstance, the United States wished to be free of military involvement in continental East Asia.

The attack launched across the 38th parallel with shattering effect determined otherwise. This government saw in a moment the necessity of moving to the defense of the position. Our forces had been there. The regime enjoyed our patronage. To have left it to go under unassisted would have destroyed the credibility of our commitments elsewhere. Eventually the struggle over Korea was fought to a stand-still. After many jerks and bobbles we played it for a tie. The armistice terms only brought an end to the heavy firing on a front that had already been stabilized in military reality. Our forces remained pinned down there in a continental position where this government did not really wish them to be. They are there

in great strength. The old irreducible question applies. We have in most respects, though not in name, an imperial responsibility. Fortunately, the UN good housekeeping seal is on the relationship and helps obscure some of the realities. The armistice terms left the Chinese adversary free to redeploy arms and munitions to Indo-China.

An effect of that war was a sense of frustration and embitterment in American strategic and political thinking. "No more Koreas" was the watchword at the Pentagon. The gist of this was that we should avoid any further commitments to ground warfare on the Asian continent. This thinking created a paradoxical difficulty. The United States concurrently wished to deter any further Communist advances in East Asia, as elsewhere. How could it do this while making well known its distaste for further involvements? As you must appreciate, in the hard business of strategy, a well advertised wish to avoid a military encounter is very often an almost sure way of encouraging it.

In Indo-China the French were fighting a feckless war against indigenous forces. It is often carelessly called in retrospect a colonial war. The phrase is not accurate. French dominion was no longer at issue. The question, rather, was who should establish the conditions to be operative following French withdrawal. The French were trying to establish the conditions. Communist forces were trying to call the turn. With the step-up of Communist operations following the Korean armistice, the French cause was rendered hopeless. We tried to save the situation with the feckless threat of nuclear retaliation. After debating with ourselves about trying to go to the rescue of the French with air bombardment and possibly even ground troops, our government decided negatively.

The terms following the French defeat called for neutralization of Indo-China, the component countries of which were established in at least nominal independence. Strict limits were to be imposed on military assistance to any of these component countries. They were not to become military bases for any outside powers. One of the three countries, Viet Nam, was divided at the 17th parallel, with a Communist regime in the north and a non-Communist regime in the south. After a relatively brief period, a year or two, elections were to be held to settle the question of which regime should prevail over the whole land. The notion of settling such a question of legitimacy and dominion by election in a land which had no electoral tradition and which was divided into two mutually hostile jurisdictions seems, now in retrospect, as it did to men of practical judgment at the time, to have pushed fantastical statesmanship to a new outer limit.

Secretary of State Dulles was determined to avoid a new Communist encroachment. He felt certain that the omission of any kind of a pledge or warning as in the case of Korea had invited the attack and brought on the war there. His method was to secure the area against further Communist encroachments by prefiguring United States involvement in that event. Such was the purpose of the South East Asia security treaty and the organization which it projected. Such, explicitly, was the intent of the protocols adopted and announced concurrently with the Manila Treaty. One of them avowed that the non-Communist parts of former Indo-China were of concern to the security interests of the treaty participants, which included Thailand, Pakistan, the Philippines, Australia, New Zealand, France, and the United Kingdom as well as the United States. Our strength was the real factor. The other of the Manila protocols was the declaration in the long American tradition of foreswearing domination of other peoples—a pledge to support their independence and practical autonomy.

You know the rest of the story. These declarations were accompanied by expressions of our distaste for the very sort of involvement that would be entailed if we should ever be called upon to redeem our undertaking. Even great powers cannot ordain the conditions in which their wills may be tested. Events beyond a nation's jurisdiction repeatedly bring up the issue of put up or shut up. That is the way it has been in Viet Nam. It is a miserable situation in which to be involved. The President knows that. Our commanders know that. I have never yet met anyone in the line of policy who did not know it. I know it. You know it. I cannot imagine what gets into the minds of professors and others who tell us as much in a tone of making a significant revelation. As you must appreciate, there may well be henceforth no situation favorable to our interests and purposes in the contest which pervades world affairs. According to the adversaries' relevant doctrine, the challenges will henceforth be in areas where we shall have great diffculty bearing the brunt in making our preferences effective.

In the Vietnamese situation, obviously our government faces a problem of how to conduct the battle effectively, or as effectively as it falls to us to conduct it, without taking charge of the situation. Whatever the facade may be, the deployment required is bound to be of such magnitude as to involve that old irreducible question to which I have referred already. Last winter, as you will recall, our forces got a sudden bitter lesson concerning the follies of making great deployments of expensive and intricate instruments of war without taking charge of perimeter security. Perimeters in warfare

can be mighty thick. We see evidences in the press of increasing United States control of transport and of such aspects as censorship. Obviously, a great power cannot fight a war of such magnitude in such an area without taking charge in essential ways.

The Vietnamese war entails other great difficulties. One set of these difficulties pertains to the circumstances of quasi war—war fought on the margins of our consciousness and imposing great hardships on a few while the rest of us go our way unaffected and often unaware. This aspect bears on some in all branches of our armed services. We hear now that the military effort has rounded the corner. Alas, so many roundings of the corner have been reported by our spokesmen that we have now made the circle at least two and maybe three times. This time, however, I have a feeling that there may be some truth in the report. Up to now, I have made it a practice to switch off my TV or skip over the newspaper item whenever our defense magistrates have given us their sunny and obviously unsubstantiated reassurances. I do not think they can go on being wrong forever, and I do think they are now beginning to come somewhat near to being right. On the other hand, there is no sign yet of a willingness on the part of the Communist forces to become amenable parties in negotiations.

I have no doubt, moreover, that even with the best of fortune there are many ordeals and ambiguities ahead. Our government's hope clearly is to confront the Communist forces in North Viet Nam and those in Peking and Moscow who support them with such paramount power that they will perforce sign a reliable agreement under which they will give up on their doctrine of national liberation wars in that theater where it is at its most critical test. There is always the latent danger—I cannot imagine why our adversaries have not tried this line—that the Communists will agree to the proper terms, make all the promises called for, bring about a retraction of U. S. forces, and, in face of whatever guarantee we have given, attempt to take the situation over piecemeal by stealth anyway. In that situation, once out, it would be extremely difficult for this nation to muster its will to resume the struggle. This portentous danger is inherent in our proposition of unconditional negotiations. I shall attempt no predictions.

CONCLUSION

The world of policy is adventitious and full of imponderables. It is not possible to see very far ahead, nor is it always true that the alternative to a bad situation is necessarily a good one. The world in which everything would have come out just dandy if only this

little error had been avoided or only this course or that eschewed is an academician's world. It is not the world in which men with responsibilities engage with real decisions. Policy and security are obdurate and baffling business. The only men who are masters of the answers are the ones who write books.

PART II

New Directions: Trade, Aid, Farm Policy