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# John F. Kennedy's Third World policy : foreign aid and the role of South Vietnam

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JOHN F. KENNEDY'S THIRD WORLD POLICY:  
FOREIGN AID AND THE ROLE OF SOUTH VIETNAM

A Thesis  
Presented to  
The Faculty of the Department of History  
San Jose State University

In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts

by  
John Steven Bradford  
December 1995

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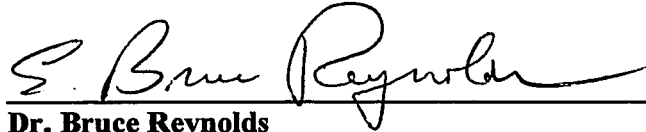
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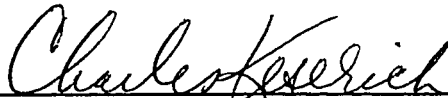
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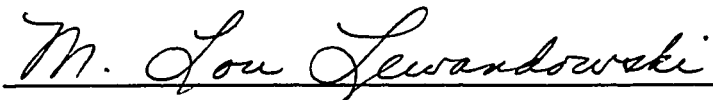
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## ABSTRACT

### JOHN F. KENNEDY'S THIRD WORLD POLICY: FOREIGN AID AND THE ROLE OF SOUTH VIETNAM

by John Steven Bradford

This thesis maintains that President Kennedy's Third World Foreign Policy was a synthesis of ideas that were developed during the 1950s by United States scholarly, philanthropic and military institutions. The research indicates that John F. Kennedy used these ideas to define the Democratic vision in the 1960 presidential campaign and thereafter to implement a program of general economic assistance to developing nations. Despite the President's apparently sincere advocacy of American development aid to the Third World, this thesis finds that U.S. government institutions reverted to their traditional roles by the third year of Kennedy's presidency. This helped to buttress congressional rejection of Third World development aid in 1963. Throughout the course of the foreign aid debate, South Vietnam was cited as the symbol of the U.S. national security problem in the Third World and the claim of success there by direct military means served to undermine support for the President's idealistic program.



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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION: THE UNITED STATES AND THE WORLD STAGE

The threat of spreading international communism provides the backdrop for major divisions of post-Second World War American foreign policy. A short, unique period occurred during the Kennedy administration, between Eisenhower's policies of containment and Johnson's expanded war in Vietnam, when American foreign policy focused on the Third World. Kennedy's Third World foreign policy departure was the expression of an idealistic hope that the world's developing nations would act in their own enlightened self interest. It was professed during the 1960 presidential election, institutionalized by the Kennedy administration, and renounced by overwhelming political opposition in 1963. Upon his assumption of office, President Kennedy's strategic vision was well defined and widely accepted in academia and government. Nevertheless, the president failed to maintain adequate support for that part of his foreign policy which was the New Frontier's response to political fermentation in the Third World.

For fifteen years after the end of the Second World War, the Western nations had been involved in the problems of violent nationalism in the underdeveloped nations, many of which were former European colonies. In the eyes of

American security analysts, Soviets and Red Chinese exploited the unrest. American theorists decreed that a period of "nation building" could absorb the energies of nationalism while political and economic institutions matured enough to resist communist subversion. Since the Truman administration's articulation of a technical assistance program in 1950, the United States had hoped to encourage the evolutionary establishment of a stable world order. From the end of the Second World War through fiscal year 1961, total United States foreign aid spending for this purpose exceeded \$97 billion dollars, less than half of which was for the Marshall Plan in Europe.<sup>1</sup>

When European spending petered out in the early 1950's, the surge of foreign aid to the Third World ensued, with the ratio of economic to military aid being two to one.<sup>2</sup> The economic development of Third World states thought to be targets of the communist bloc was determined to be in the American national interest. In American eyes these endangered nations came to include the entire developing world. Walt W. Rostow, one of the architects of Kennedy's Third World foreign policy, stated,

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<sup>1</sup>1963 Congressional Quarterly Almanac (Washington, D.C.: USGPO, 1963), p. 298.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

There is almost literally no nation in Asia, the Middle East, Africa, and Latin America in which the Communists are not investing significant resources in order to organize individuals and groups for the purpose of overthrowing the existing governments . . . .<sup>3</sup>

President Kennedy's response was a combination of economic aid and a vast expansion of the defense budget that added weight to nuclear weapons capability, to conventional forces and, innovatively, provided the armed services with the new role of counterinsurgency. Counterinsurgency used specially trained forces: counter-guerrilla guerrillas, who would employ a judicious combination of force and civic action to protect fragile institutions in developing nations. The United States found an urgent site to test the efficacy of its new tactics in the guerrilla warfare in South Vietnam.

Historian Douglas S. Blaufarb identifies the three post-Second World War American national security doctrines as containment, counterinsurgency, and detente.<sup>4</sup> Currently, containment and detente are commonly noted while the doctrine of counterinsurgency is not. This may well be due to the lack of consensual definition of the purposes of counterinsurgency and the short period of time in which it was applied. In addition, counterinsurgency permuted into

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<sup>3</sup>W. W. Rostow, The View From the Seventh Floor (New York: Harper and Row, 1964), pp. 21-22.

<sup>4</sup>Douglas S. Blaufarb, The Counterinsurgency Era (New York: The Free Press, 1977), p. 6.

the Vietnam War so that military confrontation dominated the national dialogue about the United States' involvement in developing nations during the Johnson Presidency.

Blaufarb's inclusion of counterinsurgency as a doctrine is somewhat misleading. While counterinsurgency was often used as a shorthand for the entire range of means whereby the United States countered the spread of communist influence in the world's developing nations (and Blaufarb applied it even to the conventional war which developed in Vietnam) it is more clearly understood as the limited application of force among an array of programs touching upon all aspects of a Third World nation's development. For a brief period during the Kennedy administration the United States government sponsored economic and political development within the Third World as a primary American national security response to the communist menace. As a strategy for lasting world peace, President Kennedy hoped that this development would lead to a humane world order, initially subsidized by the United States treasury but leading to financial independence for the recipient nations. This larger program will be called strategic development in this paper.

Kennedy's innovative foreign policy occurred only a few years after the outbreak of national anxiety about the communist threat following the Russian launching of Sputnik

in 1957. Kennedy's vision answered the widespread call for a more active anti-communist American role in the developing world. While Kennedy was militant towards the perceived machinations of the communist empire he was also sympathetic to the aspirations of Third World nationalists. Kennedy's view was clear in remarks he made to the President of Finland: "The strongest force in the world is the desire for national independence . . . . That is why I am eager that the United States back nationalist movements, even though it embroils us with our friends in Europe."<sup>5</sup>

The policies of Eisenhower and his Secretary of State John Foster Dulles had virtually required recipients of American foreign aid to adhere to military alliances,<sup>6</sup> but Kennedy felt that the aspirations of even independent Third World nations should be encouraged and assisted with American foreign aid. In the process, peaceful development would strengthen their ties to the United States and to the West. Nationalism among the world's developing peoples was not in itself a threat to the United States. "We are steadfast in our determination to promote the security of the free world," said the President in 1963, "not only

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<sup>5</sup>Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., A Thousand Days (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1965), p. 558.

<sup>6</sup>William J. Rust, Kennedy in Vietnam (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1985), p. 29.

through our commitment to join in the defense of freedom, but also through our pledge to contribute to the economic and social development of less privileged, independent peoples." <sup>7</sup>

The arguments for strategic development were framed in terms of a political landscape fraught with peril in which time was of the essence due to the decline of the United States' world position.<sup>8</sup> As such, strategic development provided the rationale for a massive and immediate American program of economic and military aid to the Third World on a scale that resembled the Marshall Plan.

Kennedy's plan was a departure from the foreign policies of his postwar predecessors. During the Truman administration the as-yet poorly defined concept of Third World development assistance had taken second place in strategic and budgetary urgency to the emergencies caused by Western European weakness, the Soviet threat to Greece and Turkey, the Chinese civil war, the Korean War and the imminent French defeat by communist guerrillas in Indochina.

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<sup>7</sup>Richard P. Stebbins, ed., Documents on American Foreign Relations 1963 (New York: Harper and Row, published for the Council on Foreign Relations, 1964), p. 13.

<sup>8</sup>Henry A. Kissinger, The Necessity For Choice (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1960), p. 2. Kissinger states, "To grasp the measure of our decline we need only compare the world in which we find ourselves with that which existed at the end of World War Two."

Then, President Eisenhower limited direct American responsibilities in the Third World because Third World development assistance and military aid abroad were lesser priorities in his administration than progress towards a balanced budget. Eisenhower assumed that the contest with the Soviet Union would continue for a long time and any leader " . . . who doesn't clearly understand that national security and national solvency are mutually dependent . . . should not be entrusted with any kind of responsibility in our country."<sup>9</sup>

It remained for President Kennedy to give strategic development prominence among foreign policy goals. Despite his fervent support, strategic development was largely crippled as a doctrine before President Kennedy's assassination.<sup>10</sup> The difficulty lay in its cost and in its focus upon the confusing array of new nations within the developing world. It expected that military force would be a secondary instrument of national policy. In a word, strategic development lacked the comprehensibility of the containment system's military alliances and detente's often

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<sup>9</sup>Mark Perry, Four Stars (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1989), p. 49.

<sup>10</sup>Richard P. Stebbins, The United States in World Affairs 1963 (New York: Harper and Row, 1964), p. 36 Stebbins says, "This readiness to override the deepest convictions of the nation's chief executive was nowhere so pronounced as in the field of foreign aid."



personalized mechanisms of human communication and exchange. Strategic development, instead, targeted the development of a multitude of nations and required a rare and subtle appreciation of economics, psychology, sociology, political science and military tactics.

President Kennedy was not successful in persuading necessary participants within the executive branch of government, within Congress, or among the public at large that his vision of a peaceful solution to the international communist threat provided the imperative for a costly American aid effort in the Third World. He failed in his attempt at national persuasion in 1963 and the United States national security problem relative to the developing world devolved towards piecemeal solutions and indiscriminate force.

On January 30, 1961, President Kennedy delivered his first Annual Message to the Congress on the State of the Union. He began, "I speak today in an hour of national peril and national opportunity . . . ." <sup>11</sup> The peril he perceived was the result of the spreading tentacles of world communism encircling the globe. The opportunity to which he referred was an American program of persuasion that would counter communist designs. This peaceful focus became

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<sup>11</sup>Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: John F. Kennedy (Washington, D.C.: USGPO, 1962), p. 19.

apparent when the president continued:

. . . the first great obstacle is still our relations with the Soviet Union and Communist China...our task is to convince them that aggression and subversion will not be profitable routes...Open and peaceful competition - for prestige, for markets, for scientific achievement, even for men's minds - is something else again.<sup>12</sup>

Although the new Democratic administration vastly expanded the capability of the United States to wage both nuclear and conventional war, the President hoped to avoid general war by the judicious use of limited force. His hope was that the selective application of military force would keep the developing nations independent of communist domination while the enlightened application of American foreign aid transformed their societies.

The Democratic message in the 1960 presidential campaign emphasized the threat by both subtle and overt communist attacks on the world's emerging nations. Democrats successfully criticized the Eisenhower administration for failure to anticipate both military and political challenges abroad. Nevertheless, in 1963 President Kennedy's primarily peaceful program for world development was the focus of a battle between the executive branch and an unconvinced House of Representatives. Facing overwhelming political opposition, the administration lost its struggle to expand the program for the world-wide

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 23.

development of economically viable democratic governments abroad. Barely two years after the administration came to power, the program, usually identified as "foreign aid," was in serious political trouble. In late February 1963 the Christian Science Monitor editorialized,

One of the great tides of postwar history is slowly beginning to reverse itself. The sending of massive United States aid into Southeast Asia on an emergency basis, throwing up dikes against the outward pressure of communism, is soon to taper downward.<sup>13</sup>

The editorial concluded by saying, "This is a good move."

Such a development is worth noting for several reasons. Any "great tide of history" is important in itself, but this abrupt change in American foreign policy is noteworthy because it occurred at about the mid-point of the Cold War and it closely preceded the American decision to enter into the hot conflict in South Vietnam. Strategic development was a program designed to avoid overt warfare. Its failure provides an illustration of the requirement that the presidential vision must be implemented through practical programs which attract political support.

Opposition within Congress doomed the forward momentum of American foreign aid. The crucial point of political friction came in 1963 with the annual struggle for the foreign aid budget for fiscal year 1964. Reflecting

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<sup>13</sup>Christian Science Monitor, February 28, 1963, p. 10.

widespread disillusionment, the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Foreign Operations reduced the foreign aid budget from an original request of \$4.9 billion to an actual appropriation of \$3.2 billion.<sup>14</sup> Opposition was expected from the notoriously anti-foreign aid House appropriations subcommittee chairman, Louisiana's Otto Passman, but the opposition extended to broad sections of the American body politic as well. This development occurred despite Cold War competition among major powers and United States government appeals to the American public describing the absolute necessity of the President's program. Although the administration had been able in the first year of "can-do" enthusiasm to institute sweeping programs for the realization of its vision, such as the Alliance for Progress and the Peace Corps, congressional rejection of expansive foreign aid in 1963 redirected the focus of American foreign policy towards more traditional means.

The foreign aid debate did not occur in a vacuum; it was argued during a continuing series of foreign policy crises. During the first two years of Kennedy's presidency the Cold War flared up through a series of crises which were related or attributed to the spread of world communism and which brought into public view the question of the nation's

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<sup>14</sup>1963 Congressional Quarterly Almanac (Washington D. C.: USGPO, 1963), p. 255.

national security. The crises began in the Americas with a self-inflicted wound to national pride in the Bay of Pigs fiasco in Cuba; proceeded to Europe where communists seemed to exploit Western weakness with the construction of the Berlin Wall; to Africa with the Katangan secession from the Congo; to the Indian sub-continent with the Chinese attack on India; to Southeast Asia with the Laotian and the Vietnamese guerrilla wars; and returned to Cuba with the October 1962 missile crisis. This series of crises seemed to prove the validity of the Democrats' 1960 campaign charge that the United States was in danger of losing its future freedom to a relentless exploitation of human misery by the Communist bloc. Strategic development was the Kennedy administration's primarily peaceful solution to this long-term threat to the nation's security.

One can look to several reasons for Congress's rejection of the President's vision in 1963. One reason was the cost, another was that the nation's security was seen to be obtainable by other, more familiar means. In addition, the perception of danger which gave the program its impetus was lessening. Finally, the elevation of the level of world civilization was seen to be an unlikely investment enterprise by people of worldly experience. All of these factors were evident in the rejection of the President's program. Together, they reveal differing "world views"

within the United States government, the necessity for the Executive branch to obtain the cooperation of Congress for the implementation of its programs, and the difficulty of transforming campaign slogans into action.

The hopefulness with which the administration proposed a massive program to improve living conditions among the world's least developed societies and the widespread public pessimism concerning its practical application display in sharp relief the opposing sides in this struggle to determine the course of American foreign policy. The various factions opposed to the President's approach included proponents of a military response to the spread of communism as well as traditional isolationists and those simply concerned with the budget deficit. Supportive executive branch members, on the other hand, found justification for their programs in the world of academia, in the foreign aid bureacracies and in the unwavering support of a popular president.

The conflict which arose between the President with his handful of supportive advisers on the one hand and congressional critics on the other came to a head in April 1963 with the report of a prestigious panel, the Clay Committee, which the President had expected would support his vision. However the panel, headed by the retired General Lucius D. Clay, was generally skeptical of the

direction of U.S. foreign aid and its critical report gave great relief to the opposition.<sup>15</sup> This coincided with the production of a damning report on foreign aid to Southeast Asia by Democratic Senate leader Mike Mansfield.<sup>16</sup> The two reports signalled the death knell for the level of funding requested for foreign aid in the 1964 fiscal budget.

In the President's hopeful vision, the Sino-Soviet bloc would be surrounded and contained by stable nations drawn into natural alignment with the western powers. This strategy was legitimized by the American perception that the communist powers were striving to surround the capitalist democracies with totalitarian client states. The rejection by Congress of these means was due to three main factors: the obstruction of the Departments of State and Defense, which were uncommitted to the idea that the foreign aid offensive in the developing nations was of primary strategic importance compared with Europe and NATO; the conviction of Congress that the country could not afford the expense of the proposed foreign aid budget in view of the record planned budget deficit; and the diminishing Red Threat which obviated the necessity for American action. Thereafter, American security programs in the "endangered" developing

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<sup>15</sup>New York Times, April 1, 1963, p. 46.

<sup>16</sup>Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report, no. 13, March 29, 1963, p. 438.

nations ground onward without the idealistic reference point of human betterment provided by President Kennedy's vision. The American role in South Vietnam was the prototype of the new direction in American foreign policy relative to the Third World.



## CHAPTER 2

### LOCATING FOREIGN AID AND THE THREAT FROM THE THIRD WORLD IN THE SPECTRUM OF COLD WAR HISTORY

The failure of President Kennedy's strategic vision in 1963 marked the decline of an idea which had been gathering momentum as a fixture of American Cold War intellectual thought during the preceding decade. American foreign aid had been a major budget fixture since shortly after the Second World War, although it was not granted for altruistic purposes. As former State Department official John Paton Davies observed, "Were it not for the communist menace, we would scarcely have embarked on this, unnatural for us, proselytization of foreigners . . . ." <sup>17</sup> The large American central government, established to lead the nation from the straits of depression and world war, had found a new rationale for its continued existence in the post-war world. The United States did not return to its pre-Second World War pattern of a small, isolationist federal government because of the perceived threat to American national security from the Soviet Union. Soviet domination of Eastern Europe, for example, was seen to be merely the prologue to Soviet domination of Western Europe; a new totalitarian wave from which the lessons of the failure to confront Nazi ambitions

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<sup>17</sup>John Paton Davies, Foreign and Other Affairs (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1964), p. 210.

provided the rationale that confrontation was preferable to "appeasement." Facing a lethal threat, the national security state could not afford to withdraw from international involvement. President Kennedy's Secretary of State, Dean Rusk, served in the State Department during the Truman years. He recalls,

At all levels, my own included, the Truman Administration believed that unless we confronted Communist aggression, the world would once again witness the sorry experience of the 1930's, when one unmet act of aggression led to another and eventually to world war.<sup>18</sup>

Thus, the Marshall Plan for the reconstruction of Western Europe and the subsequent expenditures to implement the Truman Doctrine were sold to Congress by the Truman administration in terms which emphasized the necessity for stopping communist expansion. In postwar Europe, American economic and military aid were grouped together in a package which provided for the mutual security of the United States and the recipient nations.

The slogans of American intervention were meant to influence the public and the Congress. In 1946, State Department official Loy Henderson recalls Senator Aurther Vandenburg telling President Truman what he had to do in order to get congressional approval for the proposed Greek-

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<sup>18</sup>Dean Rusk, As I Saw It (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1990), p. 129.

Turkish aid package. "Mr. President," he said, "the only way you are ever going to get this is to make a speech and scare the hell out of the country."<sup>19</sup> Fear provided the tone for the public dialogue on the United States' world position. The Truman Doctrine expanded the scope of United States national security interests to the entire world, but at a cost which possibly included the self-inflicted wounds of the McCarthy era's paranoia. In the words of historians Walter Isaacson and Evan Thomas:

(Secretary of State Dean) Acheson did not take the Truman Doctrine literally .... Overstatement was to him merely a tool for manipulating balky, unsophisticated congressmen into paying for legitimate policies. The problem was that those unsophisticated congressmen, not to mention the public, took sweeping language literally.<sup>20</sup>

Across the country, the framework within which Americans defined the postwar world included the assumption that totalitarian forces were acting to encircle and destroy the American and Western democracies. The conspirators in this diabolical plan supposedly coordinated events world-wide. A young army enlisted man, David Hackworth, who was to spend his 25-year career opposing communism abroad, rose to the call when United States troops went on world-wide alert in June 1950 as North Korean forces invaded South

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<sup>19</sup>Walter Isaacson and Evan Thomas, The Wise Men (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1986), p. 395.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., p. 398.

Korea " . . . because the word was that the Communists weren't going to stop at South Korea--they were going to bust out all over the globe."<sup>21</sup> A general officer, James Gavin, concurred that during the Korean War it seemed as if the security of the entire Western Alliance was at stake:

Europe, also, was on people's minds and for the first time we began to feel that unless something were done we might well lose Europe. Militant Communism was on the march and Korea was neither an accident nor an isolated phenomenon.<sup>22</sup>

Nor was the state of alarm confined to the military. The same concern was felt within the Department of State. Secretary of State Acheson is reported to have feared that North Korea's invasion of its southern neighbor was merely a diversion to enable the Soviet Union to more easily launch an invasion of Western Europe.<sup>23</sup>

The unsatisfactory conclusion to the Korean War, and the election of the budget-conscious Dwight D. Eisenhower to the presidency produced a retrenchment from the expense of direct military confrontation and led to the "New Look" whereby the nation's security rested primarily upon the nuclear deterrent and the development of military alliances

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<sup>21</sup>David Hackworth and Julie Sherman, About Face (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1989), pp. 46-47.

<sup>22</sup>James M. Gavin, War and Peace in the Space Age (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1958), p. 132.

<sup>23</sup>Isaacson and Thomas, p. 512.

which would provide the manpower to confront communism on the periphery of the communist empire. Short of nuclear war, the international confrontation with communism was to be largely delegated to military allies in both Western Europe (NATO) and the third world (SEATO and ANZUS). The idea persisted that the world's underdeveloped nations--with populations that expected better conditions due to recent emancipation from colonial bondage--were in special danger from communist intrigue. Critics of the Eisenhower administration charged that the means to counter the communist master plan existed in the wealth and enlightenment of the western world and that the United States should provide both moral and material leadership in the changing world. Instead, the Republican administration chose to practice frugality.

The perception of threat was theoretical insofar as the prospects for communist success rested upon predictions of behavior of disparate peoples around the globe. The theoretical threat engendered theoretical solutions and it is not surprising that academicians skilled in the social sciences played a fundamental role in the formulation of the appropriate response to the world communist threat. Kennedy aide and biographer Arthur Schlesinger noted that during the 1950s, ". . . a new analysis of the aid problem was emerging

from the universities and foundations ."<sup>24</sup> Development economist and later presidential aide Walt W. Rostow agrees, writing, " . . . as the 1950's wore on, development analysis became something of an intellectual fad in American academic life . . . ." <sup>25</sup> The urgent necessity in the view of these academicians was for the rapid development of viable institutions within the new nations: institutions which would help to provide stable government, education, good health, and economic independence. National security strategists thought that the communists would exploit human misery. Therefore, the application of humanitarian aid, while benign, was not promoted as a good in itself but rather as a means to protect the United States and the international balance of power.

Acting more quickly than the United States government could have in the appropriation of funds, private institutions, notably the Ford and Rockefeller Foundations, first led the thrust of anti-communist competition outside of Europe.<sup>26</sup> In 1951, just prior to the Republican capture

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<sup>24</sup>Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., A Thousand Days (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1965), p. 586.

<sup>25</sup>W. W. Rostow, Eisenhower, Kennedy and Foreign Aid (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1985), p. 42.

<sup>26</sup>George Rosen, Western Economists and Eastern Societies, Agents of Change in South Asia, 1950-1970 (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985).

of the White House, Paul Hoffman of the Ford Foundation wrote to the new American Ambassador to India, Chester Bowles, that the United States should have had an effective aid program to China starting in 1945 and had it had such a program,

. . . and carried it on at a cost of not over two hundred million dollars a year, the end result would have been a China completely immunized against the appeal of the Communists. India, in my opinion, is today what China was in 1945.<sup>27</sup>

The threat to United States national security interests, in this heady age of nascent geopolitical thought, could hardly be over-emphasized. John Cowles, a member of the Ford Foundation board of trustees postulated:

If we lose India, as we lost China, we shall certainly lose Southeast Asia with the repercussions running all the way through Africa. It is difficult under such circumstances to see how Japan could be held in line, and it would not be too long before we would find ourselves driven back into [a] 'citadel'.<sup>28</sup>

Since communism's third world appeal lay in its proposal for the betterment of life among impoverished masses, western capitalism had to provide an equally attractive alternative. The economist George Rosen, a research scholar at the M.I.T. Center for International Studies, adviser to the Indian government, and later a Ford Foundation employee, charted the elevation of economists to

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<sup>27</sup>Ibid., p. 11.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid.

leading roles in the emerging response to the spread of communism. He noted that Keynesian theory had empowered economists in the 1930s and 1940s to provide leadership for the New Deal through deficit funding which continued through the prosecution of the Second World War. After the war, economists had even more influence in Rosen's view:

The success of the Marshall Plan, in which economists played a key role, seemed to indicate that using investment-related policy variables with tools of economic planning could achieve speedy results in countries other than the United States and England, to resurrect almost-destroyed economies (which in their destruction superficially resembled underdeveloped ones).<sup>29</sup>

Prominent among those in the forefront of the ranks of social scientists who concentrated upon development economics were those at M.I.T. and Harvard, from the home state of Senator John F. Kennedy. Some of these figures were to play a prominent part in the development of Kennedy's application of strategic development. The main figure at M.I.T.'s Center for International Studies was Walt W. Rostow. In 1952 he was joined by Max Millikan who returned from a stint as the CIA's director of economic research. On the Center's board of directors was Dean Edward S. Mason of Harvard who had been in the State Department. Millikan's appeal to the Ford Foundation for funding stated the Center's research program as " . . . the

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<sup>29</sup>Ibid., p. 26. Rosen's parentheses.



application of basic social science research to problems of U.S. policy in the current world struggle."<sup>30</sup> Harvard entered the development field when Pakistan asked for Ford Foundation help in establishing an economic planning board in 1953. The Ford Foundation contacted Dean Mason of Harvard's Littauer School who journeyed to Pakistan to investigate, then returned home to find a suitable man to head the effort. He selected David E. Bell who had been the assistant director of the Bureau of the Budget until the Republican presidential victory in 1952 and who was studying for his Ph.D. in economics at Harvard. Concurrently at Harvard, Professor John Kenneth Galbraith had begun to teach a course in economic development, soon to be joined in this field by his colleague Carl Kaysen. Subsequently, Rostow, Bell, Galbraith and Kaysen were all to play important roles in the Kennedy White House.

The ideas of "eggheads" alone could not have been expected to permeate the national consciousness. As it happened, the development economists were joined in their appreciation of the national danger by a lobby which had clout on Capitol Hill and prestige among the public. This lobby, which consisted of disgruntled United States Army officers and their political sympathizers, was able to

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<sup>30</sup>Ibid., p. 29.

broadcast the perceived Third World threat to the public in ways which served to broaden the national pre-occupation with world development issues. Among the political sympathizers, not surprisingly, were Democrats who did not avoid the opportunity to broadcast the dissension within President Eisenhower's old service. The conjunction of interests between Army officers, politicians both in and out of office, and scholars worked to magnify the sense of foreboding about the emerging nations. The economists' theories for the peaceful establishment of United States national security coincided with calls for an expanded military effort by both professional observers of the international scene and the Army officers who resented their lack of an expansive role in the Eisenhower defense strategy.

President Eisenhower's strategy was designed to provide the most effective national defense for the lowest cost and placed reliance upon the Air Force and Navy to deliver nuclear weapons in massive retaliation for any direct communist attack on either the United States or its treaty allies. This strategy did not provide an alternate response to the indirect attacks of infiltration and subversion among the developing nations.

It also left the United States Army without a defense role equal to the Air Force and Navy. In 1955, Army Chief

of Staff Matthew Ridgway retired amidst dissent over the Army's diminished role and was succeeded by Maxwell Taylor who sought to provide a new role for the Army which would allow service expansion based upon a perceived danger which would occur below the strategic nuclear level. As Army Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations and Administration, Taylor had advocated an expanded anti-guerrilla Army capability as early as 1951.<sup>31</sup> Throughout the 1950s, he pushed for a redefinition of the Army's role which would provide a mission outside of the prevalent focus upon strategic nuclear weapons. Taylor advocated an expanded Army role which would employ tactical nuclear weapons<sup>32</sup> and rapid-deployment small unit forces. As Taylor saw the future,

In the approaching era of atomic plenty, with resulting mutual deterrence, the Communists will probably be inclined to expand their tactics of subversion and limited aggression.<sup>33</sup>

Critics such as Taylor charged that the communists could achieve power in small increments in the developing world by means which would be carried on below the threshold

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<sup>31</sup>Mark Perry, Four Stars (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1989), p. 90.

<sup>32</sup>A. J. Bacevich, The Pentomic Era: The US Army Between Korea and Vietnam (Washington D.C.: National Defense University Press, 1986), p. 54.

<sup>33</sup>Maxwell Taylor, The Uncertain Trumpet (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1959), p. 32.

above which a U.S. nuclear response would be appropriate. The efficacy of the new military doctrine was outlined in the words of the Army's head of research and development, General James Gavin,

. . . we could have settled Korea and Dien Bien Phu quickly in our favor. Tactical nuclear missiles, sky cavalry, and increased assault airlift can contribute decisively to that kind of an operation.<sup>34</sup>

Despite the alarms being raised by the Army as its leaders searched for an expanded role in the nation's defense, the Eisenhower administration continued throughout 1957 to promote its reliance on nuclear weapons. At a meeting of the National Security Council on July 25, 1957, for example, the Secretary of Defense announced a plan for the national defense in the period 1959-1961 which would cut the Army's strength from 900,000 to 700,000 personnel, while using the savings thereby generated to enhance the nation's ability to fight a general nuclear war.<sup>35</sup> President Eisenhower's concern was unambiguous:

We had carefully prepared every military budget so as to support only the essential, shifting the emphasis from the traditional or conventional defense to the development of powerful deterrent forces.<sup>36</sup>

The president's fear was for the preservation of the

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<sup>34</sup>Gavin, p. 128.

<sup>35</sup>Taylor, p. 50.

<sup>36</sup>Dwight D. Eisenhower, Waging Peace 1956-1961 (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, 1965), p. 218.

American economy which would suffer from profligate defense spending. He maintained,

Our security depended on a set of associated and difficult objectives: to maintain a defense posture of unparalleled magnitude and yet to do so without a breakdown of the American economy.<sup>37</sup>

A then-obscure Harvard history professor, Henry Kissinger, published Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy<sup>38</sup> in 1957, a volume which summarized the views of those who advocated the expanded use of military power to counter what they saw as the weakness of President Eisenhower's defense strategy. Kissinger's view is important because of his continued involvement with the individuals who played important policy-making roles in the upcoming Kennedy administration and the generally high regard for his prescience expressed by national security planners.

Kissinger's book was written as the result of a study group conducted by him for the Council on Foreign Relations, an organization with a history of inside involvement in the formulation of American foreign policy.<sup>39</sup> Kissinger's study group included Roswell Gilpatric, McGeorge Bundy, General

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<sup>37</sup>Ibid., p. 222.

<sup>38</sup>Henry A. Kissinger, Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy (New York: published for the Council on Foreign Relations by Harper and Brothers, 1957).

<sup>39</sup>The Council on Foreign Relations has been called ". . . the incubator of foreign policy ideas and a farm club for policy makers." See Isaacson and Thomas, p. 572.)

James Gavin, and Paul Nitze (head of the State Department's Policy Planning Staff under President Truman). Each of these study group members went on to active foreign policy roles in the next Democratic administration.<sup>40</sup> The other study group member, military analyst for the New York Times Hanson Baldwin, helped to propagate Kissinger's ideas in the national media. The involvement of the study group with the ideas contained in Kissinger's book can be inferred from Kissinger's assertion that "this book has grown out of its deliberations".<sup>41</sup> The gravity of Kissinger's message was expressed in a comment by the study group's chairman Gordon Dean, former head of the Atomic Energy Commission, who wrote that the nation should be " . . . unwilling to accept gradual Russian enslavement of other peoples around the world, which we know will eventually lead to our own enslavement . . . ." <sup>42</sup>

In Kissinger's view, a horrendous descent into chaos and subjugation awaited the complacent if the United States did not act to blunt the growth of Soviet and Chinese power. Eventually, Western Europe would be taken by the Russians,

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<sup>40</sup>Bundy became National Security Advisor, Nitze the Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs, Gilpatric was picked to be Deputy Secretary of Defense, and Gavin was appointed Ambassador to France.

<sup>41</sup>Kissinger, *ibid.*, introduction p. xiii.

<sup>42</sup>*Ibid.*, foreward p. viii.

Africa and the Middle East would dissolve into warring tribes and Russia and China would combine to take Eurasia-- that long stretch of developing nations along the underbelly of the Sino-Soviet empire extending from Turkey and Pakistan through India to Southeast Asia. Then the United States would become an isolated island fortress. "At best," said Kissinger, "we would be forced into a military effort incompatible with what is now considered the American way of life."<sup>43</sup>

If inaction in the face of communist aggression was clearly unacceptable, then the application of American power would have to be limited to levels which would not provoke an all-out response by the Russians. At the same time, it would have to be directed at specific targets which would counter the designs of communist expansion. In Kissinger's view, the most desirable focus for American action was to reinforce those states which ringed the Soviet and Chinese frontiers. Security would be obtained if the judicious use of American power was effective in stopping communist expansion without leading to total nuclear war. Kissinger did not embrace the means of the development economists, however, and relied instead upon the application of limited, mobile military force which would employ the use of tactical

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<sup>43</sup>Ibid., p. 270.

nuclear weapons. The drawbacks of this solution were outlined by Kissinger himself:

We can make a strategy of limited war stick only if we leave no doubt about our readiness and our ability to force a final showdown. Its effectiveness will depend on our willingness to face up the risks of Armageddon.<sup>44</sup>

The policy of "Better Dead Than Red" was difficult to sell as a political slogan since it suffered from the liability that neither of the two options were acceptable and the threat to commit national suicide contained inherent elements of incredibility. The difficulty of getting the American public to rally behind a more active military solution was due to the cunning of communist planners, since " . . . the Soviet leaders graduate their moves so that the equilibrium is overturned by almost imperceptible degrees."<sup>45</sup> In Kissinger's view, those prescient observers such as himself, other alarmed academicians, statesmen and military officers should have the authority to determine the course of American policy due to the public's unwillingness to confront the danger. "It was because the non-Communist powers do believe in their own principles," Kissinger complained, "that their resistance to independence movements

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<sup>44</sup>Ibid., p. 173.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid., p. 321.



has been so indecisive."<sup>46</sup> In his view, the threat was so subtle that the public had difficulty grasping its substance.

If decisive action was required but the complacent public did not feel the urgency of the threat, then this was a victory for Soviet disinformation. As Kissinger saw it, the approach of incipient Soviet domination could be apprehended intellectually only by those with the courage to recognize the hidden communist hand behind the third world's shifting political alignments, in which anti-western sentiments--or even professed neutrality--were clear signs of the success of communist influence. "The Soviet leadership, therefore, presents to the West a challenge which may be moral even more than physical," he professed. "It resolves itself into questions of how much the free world will risk to back up its assessment of a situation without being 'certain' . . . ."<sup>47</sup> Here Kissinger's perception of how America should respond to Third World politics is based on a principle like that in religious faith, whereby faith itself is held to be evidence of those truths which are not tangible. In this context, the role of Soviet subversion could be perceived in the actions

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<sup>46</sup>Ibid., p. 328.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., p. 335.

of those states which were suspicious of--or even indifferent to--the foreign policy interests of the West.

The importance of Kissinger's book in the development of President Kennedy's doctrine of strategic development lies in its call for action against a threat which is both indistinct and theoretical. The credence which this perception of threat held with influential policy makers gave impetus to the abstract solutions of the social scientists and provided the perfect cover for the Army, which demanded an expanded role that provided an alternative to the use of nuclear force.

Kissinger gave ammunition to those who objected to the lack of anti-communist activism by the Eisenhower administration--whether they were out-of-office Democrats or Republicans close to the power centers. Henry Cabot Lodge advised the President either to read or have Kissinger's Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy summarized for him. He knew Eisenhower's White House military assistant General Andrew J. Goodpaster was reading the book, which Lodge characterized to the President as " . . . clear-headed, profound and constructive."<sup>48</sup> In the Democratic ranks, former Secretary of State Dean Acheson was also favorably impressed with Kissinger's volume. Following the

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<sup>48</sup>Henry Cabot Lodge, As It Was (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1976), p. 202.

publication of this work, according to Walter Isaacson and Evan Thomas, "Acheson was so impressed by Kissinger that he tried to recruit him to formally declare himself a Democrat."<sup>49</sup> In 1958 he served as research secretary to a Council on Foreign Relations discussion group on Political and Strategic Problems of Deterrence, which included Roswell Gilpatric and Dean Rusk.<sup>50</sup> By 1961, Kissinger was a consultant to National Security Advisor McGeorge Bundy,<sup>51</sup> Secretary of Defense McNamara and Secretary of State Rusk.<sup>52</sup> In early 1963, the United States ambassador to Rome could send a telegram to Secretary Rusk identifying Kissinger as someone " . . . close to the administration."<sup>53</sup> Kissinger's closeness to the Kennedy administration suggests that his national security ideas were part of the mainstream of strategic thought and not merely the musings of an isolated scholar.

Simultaneous with the defense-structure debate, development economists were proposing another avenue of

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<sup>49</sup>Isaacson and Thomas, p. 582.

<sup>50</sup>Henry A. Kissinger, The Necessity For Choice (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1960), p. 1.

<sup>51</sup>Isaacson and Thomas, p. 612.

<sup>52</sup>Rusk, p. 221.

<sup>53</sup> President John F. Kennedy's Office Files, 1961-1963 (Frederick, MD: University Publications of America, 1989), Part 3, Reel 24, frame 0014.

action which would tackle the danger but which would achieve American security through benevolent means. Millikan and Rostow published a book that promoted ideas that they described as " . . . an indispensable element in a policy designed to minimize the possibilities of limited war in the underdeveloped areas."<sup>54</sup> They saw the greatest danger to the nation's long-term security in the political ferment of the developing nations which could be exploited by communist agents. In their view, the third world was composed of nations in various stages of development along the road to modern industrial democracy and that the success or failure of their development was to be determined by the availability of international financial assistance. They believed that the United States along with its industrialized allies " . . . should give assurance to every underdeveloped Free World country that it can secure as much capital as it can use productively . . . ."<sup>55</sup> Haste was essential since the emerging nations were undergoing social change and their populations viewed their emancipation with high expectations. Millikan and Rostow said the best strategy was for the United States to be on

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<sup>54</sup>Max F. Millikan and W. W. Rostow, A Proposal: Key to an Effective Foreign Policy (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1957), p. 142.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid., p. 56.

the side of the forces for change within these societies, not to buttress and support the existing regimes which represented privileged classes whose power was doomed by the growth of egalitarianism inherent in the processes of modern economic development. Therefore, they proposed programs which would encourage land reform, democratic government and the ascendance of the educated middle class without the trauma of political violence which could be exploited by communist opportunists. In their view:

The process of change is already inevitably and irreversibly under way, the expectations are already aroused, and the economic, political, and social revolution of the underdeveloped areas is already inexorably on the march.<sup>56</sup>

The goal of American policy would be to provide stable, prosperous, independent nations and a corollary would be the development of healthy trade partners for the United States, but the purpose was indisputably United States national security since:

. . . the combined resources of Eurasia could pose a serious threat of military defeat to the United States . . . for with modern communications, it is difficult to envisage the survival of a democratic American society as an island in a totalitarian sea.<sup>57</sup>

No doubt of the enemy's intentions plagued the scholars' conviction as they described a threat which employed

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<sup>56</sup>Ibid., p. 25.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid., pp. 131-132.

sociological means. They decried,

. . . the psychological, economic, and political offensive now being conducted from Moscow and Peking and designed to disengage the United States from power and influence in the Eurasian continent."<sup>58</sup>

Like Kissinger, they identified the biggest obstacle to the implementation of their proposal as the uncertainty of action through the mechanisms of democratic government:

One requirement cannot be shirked if the program is to succeed. The United States must discover a device for guaranteeing a continuity in capital loans and grants which would avoid an annual congressional renewal of the effort.<sup>59</sup>

The yearly congressional review was painful to the advocates of increased spending for foreign aid because the American public failed to see the impending disaster which was integral to the critics' perception of global politics. If the public was to become aroused, some event would have to occur which would threaten the sense of security which had become commonplace for most Americans.

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<sup>58</sup>Ibid., p. 135.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid., pp. 108-109.

### CHAPTER 3

#### THE PUBLIC BECOMES AROUSED: SPUTNIK THROUGH THE 1960 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

As the year 1957 drew to a close, disagreements divided many observers over the proper course of American national security policy. Anxiety existed in the minds of those who anticipated an impending struggle to the death with world communism while most Americans complacently traveled the courses of everyday life, protected from uncertainty by the composure of the former Supreme Allied Commander who occupied the White House. The ability of national security enthusiasts to lobby for the expansion of military means in the Third World and of development economists to attract private funding through a reference to the same danger might have dissipated had the American public not been shaken from its complacency in late 1957. The national composure was abruptly rocked in October when a Soviet missile launched Sputnik, a satellite which circled the globe. The United States had no such missile capability and it seemed incredible that a state which had been devastated by its own demented ruler and then by ravaging German armies not many years before could beat the United States to this technological achievement. This event was even more significant since the United States had a program to put a Satellite into orbit and the Russians had succeeded at a

time when most Americans were unaware that the Russians were even in the race.

The mortal danger posed by this achievement was explained to a suddenly nervous American people by bureaucrats, politicians, and eminent fellow citizens: the Soviets now had the means as well as the motive to penetrate the United State's defenses and destroy the nation. Critics who had long chafed under the defense budget constraints of the Eisenhower administration found in the newly awakened public a receptive audience for demands that the United States pursue an aggressive, militant foreign policy to thwart the world-wide spread of Soviet influence.

The 1986 Pulitzer Prize-winning historian Walter A. McDougall describes the public reaction: "As it happened, the public outcry after Sputnik was ear-splitting. No event since Pearl Harbor set off such repercussions in public life . . . ." <sup>60</sup> The primary fear, of course, was that the Soviets would be tempted by nuclear superiority to launch a pre-emptive strike on the United States, but to observers of the international scene, the significance of Sputnik was also the loss of American influence in the developing world. Even Vice President Richard Nixon cited the growth of

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<sup>60</sup>Walter A. McDougall, . . . the Heavens and the Earth: A Political History of the Space Age (New York: Basic Books, 1985). p. 142.



communist prestige in Asia and Africa as a result of the Soviet missile.<sup>61</sup>

Much to Senate Majority Leader Lyndon B. Johnson's avowed dismay, General Gavin resigned in early January 1958 to publicly protest United States defense policies which enabled the Soviet Union to threaten the periphery of the free world with limited war and subversion.<sup>62</sup> In February 1958, Senator John Sparkman testified:

I was in Malaya when Sputnik went up . . . I made it a point from that time on, in every country I visited, to ask the USIA personnel and also our other representatives what effect it had. The unanimous answer was that we had taken a severe psychological beating . . . .<sup>63</sup>

The dramatic Sputnik launching gave birth to the nation's concern over the "missile gap" (the fear that the Soviets either already possessed or would shortly have a superior quantity of strategic weapons and delivery systems) but it also provided those who had long advocated the more flexible use of American power the ability to motivate public opinion towards a confrontation with the communist powers in those areas of the world which were in the process of emerging

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<sup>61</sup>Ibid., p. 147.

<sup>62</sup>Richard A. Aliano, American Defense Policy from Eisenhower to Kennedy (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1975), p. 134.

<sup>63</sup>United States House of Representatives. 1st Session, 85th Congress. Hearings Before the Committee on Foreign Relations (Washington, D.C.: USGPO, 1958), p. 234.

from colonial rule. Influential voices in the military, in journalism, in academe, and in government articulated the necessity for an American effort using both military and economic means. Those who were pre-occupied with the inadequacies of the nation's defense, like the journalists Joseph and Stewart Alsop, accused the Eisenhower administration of " . . . the most mendacious complacency-mongering . . ." <sup>64</sup> which lulled the people into a sense of false security. "With a cold chill of horror," they noted, "one already senses that another 1939 and another 1940, may perhaps be contained in the future that is now rushing down upon us." <sup>65</sup> These activists perceived disquieting similarities between the western world's disastrous appeasement of Nazi Germany and the willingness of members of the NATO alliance to accept both Soviet hegemony in Eastern Europe and China's aid to militant communists in Korea and Indochina.

President Eisenhower did not believe that American security was any more threatened "by one iota" <sup>66</sup> after Sputnik than it had been before, and he endeavored to " . . . find ways of affording perspective to our people and

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<sup>64</sup>Joseph and Stewart Alsop, The Reporter's Trade (New York: Reynal and Company, 1958), p. 63.

<sup>65</sup>Ibid., p. 92.

<sup>66</sup>New York Times, October 10, 1957, p. 1.

so relieve the current wave of near-hysteria."<sup>67</sup> He feared that the suddenly increased influence of those calling for an expansion of international spending might lead to massive budgets which could cause " . . . a breakdown of the American economy . . . " and, equally important for the maintenance of American institutions, " . . . we could not turn the nation into a garrison state."<sup>68</sup>

Unfortunately for the president, Democrats controlled both houses of congress and, being on the verge of mid-term elections in 1958, they hoped to identify issues which would resonate with the voters and would help them to capture the White House in 1960. The Democrats played the national security card. Senate majority leader Lyndon B. Johnson chaired a Senate armed forces subcommittee which called Army Chief of Staff General Maxwell Taylor to testify in early 1958. Taylor wrote,

Senator Johnson's Preparedness Subcommittee soon called us before the klieg lights of the committee room to express our views of the budget publicly under oath [even though].... the members of the committee knew in advance my convictions on the need for modernizing and otherwise improving limited war forces.<sup>69</sup>

Much to Taylor's satisfaction, his testimony revealed

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<sup>67</sup>Eisenhower, p. 211.

<sup>68</sup>Ibid., p. 222.

<sup>69</sup>Taylor, The Uncertain Trumpet, p. 178.

to a nervous public the disagreement within the defense community over the competing doctrines. The President relied for security upon a fortress-like bastion protecting the American way of life with nuclear weapons while his critics wanted flexible and limited applications of American power to stem the spread of communism in the third world. Taylor noted,

This revelation profoundly disturbed many members of Congress as well as thoughtful citizens generally. This healthy state of alarm had the benefit of creating a climate favorable to a demand for the reappraisal of strategic needs....this charged atmosphere throughout the country promised to make it difficult to stand pat on the strategy and programs of the past.<sup>70</sup>

Congressional Democrats had found an incendiary issue for both the mid-term and 1960 elections in the failure of the Eisenhower administration to address the dangers inherent in Third World instability. Republican claims to predominance in national security issues disintegrated as the disputes within the defense community were thrust more and more into the public domain. Dissidents despaired of persuading the President and looked to the Democratic Congress for remedial action. Searching for an authority which could override the Commander in Chief, General Gavin invoked the intentions of the Founding Fathers as he justified making his dissent known to sympathetic

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<sup>70</sup>Ibid., p. 78.

Congressmen:

It appears to have been the intent of our forefathers to give responsibility to Congress for the nature and character of the Armed Forces. This includes the responsibility to look into the state of the armed forces, and to question its members as to the adequacy of the existing establishment and requirements for the future.<sup>71</sup>

Not content to contrive legal justifications for expanded congressional authority relative to the White House, one distinguished witness suggested a congressional coup.

Foreign policy commentator James P. Warburg addressed the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, of which Senator Kennedy was a member, in apocalyptic terms:

Mr. Chairman, I know, of course, that the Senate does not originate foreign policy - that this is the prerogative and the duty of the executive branch. But when, in a period of kaleidoscopic, revolutionary change, the executive stands complacently frozen in sterile immobility, the people of the United States must look to the Senate, and especially to its Foreign Relations Committee, for remedial action .... [in order to safeguard] the survival of civilized life upon this planet.<sup>72</sup>

Meanwhile, President Eisenhower was not readily abandoning his conception of the national interest which had served to soothe American nerves in the period following the Korean War. Eisenhower was confounded by such criticism and complained to his speech writer Emmet John Hughes, "The idea

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<sup>71</sup>Gavin, p. 170.

<sup>72</sup> United States Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, Review of Foreign Policy (Washington D.C.: USGPO, 1958), p. 768.

of them charging me with not being interested in defense! Damn it, I've spent my whole life being concerned with defense of our country."<sup>73</sup> Nevertheless, the criticism only increased. In 1958 columnists Drew Pearson and Jack Anderson published a volume entitled U.S.A. - Second Class Power? in which they attacked Eisenhower personally, writing "Eisenhower the President is plagued with indecision"<sup>74</sup> due to "a streak of timidity in the Eisenhower make-up."<sup>75</sup> They commended the disgruntled members of the Armed Forces who chafed under the restrictions of the niggardly United States defense budgets and who provided fuel to Eisenhower's critics, applauding those officers who leaked their unhappy opinions to journalists and sympathetic Congressmen.<sup>76</sup> In normal times, this back-door airing by active-duty military officers of strategic disagreement with the Commander In Chief might have elicited condemnation, but the perceived danger was so great that convention was ignored. Pearson and Anderson explained the peril which the United States faced:

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<sup>73</sup>Emmet John Hughes, The Ordeal of Power: A Political Memoir of the Eisenhower Years (New York: Atheneum, 1963), p. 248.

<sup>74</sup>Drew Pearson and Jack Anderson, U.S.A.--Second-Class Power? (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1958), p. 126.

<sup>75</sup>Ibid., p. 128.

<sup>76</sup>Ibid., p. 207.

Today we have to face the fact that if Russia launched a war against the United States first she would win. If she got the drop in the United States by one hour, she would wipe out all the industrial cities of the Middle West, the Capitol of the United States, and the great seaports along the Atlantic seaboard.<sup>77</sup>

The heightened public awareness of American vulnerability on the eve of the 1960 national election provided the opportunity for John F. Kennedy to articulate a new strategic vision which would address the East-West conflict.

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<sup>77</sup>Ibid., p. 301.

## CHAPTER 4

### KENNEDY SYNTHESIZES FOREIGN AID AND FLEXIBLE RESPONSE INTO THE DOCTRINE OF STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT

During the furor over Sputnik, young Senator Kennedy was preparing for the national election of 1960 and his message reflected the arguments of both the Army dissidents and the development economists. The perception of national danger was widespread and Kennedy did not ignore the opportunity to address an issue which transcended local concerns and which established him as familiar with larger strategic issues. Indeed, foreign policy was an issue which Senator Kennedy strove to identify as a personal specialty. The ideas which Kennedy was to adopt came from a variety of sources. In addition to his experience with expert testimony in the Senate, Kennedy was a voracious reader of non-fiction, including history and biography.<sup>78</sup> He seemed to think in the broad terms of historical evolution.

Furthermore, he subjected himself to new viewpoints as a result of the need to provide a compelling vision for his claim to national leadership. The degree to which his campaigns for national office relied upon exposure to other people's ideas has been the subject of recent scholarship. One can make the conjecture that he was aware of the

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<sup>78</sup>Schlesinger, p. 105.



dissident trends in intellectual thought regarding the appropriate American response to the Cold War. Historian Thomas C. Reeves states,

While public figures almost always, of course, employ ghost writers at times to express their ideas, no national figure had ever so consistently and unashamedly used others to manufacture a personal reputation as a great thinker and scholar.<sup>79</sup>

Kennedy's image across the country as an intellectually forceful setter of national priorities differed from his image within the Senate as an inexperienced lightweight who avoided controversy. Nevertheless, after Kennedy received a Pulitzer Prize for Profiles in Courage<sup>80</sup> he was appointed to a seat on the Foreign Relations Committee by Senate Majority Leader Lyndon Johnson. In early 1958, Kennedy's speech writer Ted Sorenson put together an academic advisory group of New England intellectuals which included Henry Kissinger and development economists to brief the Kennedy campaign for the 1958 senatorial election. Campaign aide Abraham Chayes later reflected upon the necessity for Kennedy to establish ties to the intellectual community and the importance of this advisory group.

Kennedy knew, I think, quite coldly that as you looked at the range of Democratic candidates--Stevenson,

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<sup>79</sup>Thomas C. Reeves, A Question of Character (New York: The Free Press, 1991), p. 157.

<sup>80</sup>A work which Reeves says was produced by Kennedy's aide Ted Sorenson. Reeves, pp. 127-128.

Humphrey and so on--he was lacking this association in the popular mind and in the academic mind with academics and intellectuals. And so I think an important part of the conscious motivation here was to establish this kind of contact and was to find a way of winning people of this kind over.<sup>81</sup>

Not insignificantly, Senator Kennedy's primary legislative accomplishment for 1958 was co-sponsorship of the Kennedy-Cooper Initiative which guaranteed development aid for India. A letter sent by Senator Kennedy to former Secretary of State Dean Acheson in August of 1960 reveals that expertise on foreign affairs was important to Kennedy's plans for capturing the presidency. Kennedy wrote, "Foreign policy for the first time in many years will be the great issue . . . ." <sup>82</sup>

The major Democratic and Republican candidates for the presidential nomination in 1960, Vice President Richard Nixon, Governor Nelson Rockefeller, and Senators John Kennedy, Lyndon Johnson and Stuart Symington, all called for a massive program to close the missile gap, to increase conventional military forces and otherwise to arrest the perceived decline in the United States' world position. Senator Kennedy repeated the alarms of Kissinger, Rostow, Taylor and Gavin in predicting disaster if the spread of

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<sup>81</sup>The John F. Kennedy Presidential Oral History Collection (Frederick, Md.: University Publications of America, 1989), Part 1, Reel 2, frame 0366.

<sup>82</sup>JFK Office Files, Part 1, Reel 1, frame 0005.

communism in the third world was not controlled. He wrote:

The periphery of the Free World will slowly be nibbled away. The balance of power will gradually shift against us. The key areas vital to our security will gradually undergo Soviet infiltration and domination. Each such Soviet move will weaken the West: but none will seem sufficiently significant by itself to justify our initiating a nuclear war which might destroy us.<sup>83</sup>

But Kennedy separated himself from the other front-runners for presidential nomination by an appeal to idealism which proclaimed an empathy with the aspirations of common people throughout the world. In this way, he expressed a vision which transcended America's narrow national security concerns by promising a better life for the world's suffering masses while looking for a solution to America's long-term security in an evolving world. While proposing a strategy which would utilize Taylor's call for a "flexible response" capability in trouble spots, he primarily looked to development aid to achieve strategic success. The sources of Kennedy's inspiration were, doubtless, manifold, but the sincerity of his conviction is suggested by his unremitting emphasis upon humanitarian goals. He stayed the course more consistently than some advisors upon whose advice he had drawn for the development of his vision.

Through 1960, Rostow was on a first-name basis with

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<sup>83</sup>John F. Kennedy, The Strategy of Peace (New York: Harper and Row, 1960), p. 38.

Senator Kennedy<sup>84</sup> and in November, after Kennedy's narrow election victory, he was advising the President-elect on military and foreign policy and took it upon himself to promote the names of Paul Nitze, McGeorge Bundy, and Dean Rusk as suitable men to lead foreign policy study teams.<sup>85</sup> Rostow echoed Maxwell Taylor's call for the use of limited war forces. Despite his advocacy of the policies of international development to win the long-term struggle with communism, he felt that the immediate danger to national security required more direct confrontation. "We should also be prepared to fight the Communists ruthlessly in Cuba, Africa, etc," wrote Rostow, "This they will respect."<sup>86</sup>

Despite the history of American public distaste for "foreign aid," the new administration saw development aid as a promising avenue for strengthening the United States' world position without resorting to military action. Kennedy brought intellectuals who were long associated with the advocacy of development aid into the White House. Among their number, Walt Rostow became an assistant to National Security Advisor (and former Harvard Dean) McGeorge Bundy.

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<sup>84</sup>JFK Office Files, Part 2, Reel 5, frame 314. "Dear Jack," wrote Rostow in August 1960, "I'm as confident that you can take Nixon as I was when you said so at . . . the Harvard Club."

<sup>85</sup>Ibid., frame 319.

<sup>86</sup>Ibid., frame 328.

He was to play a central role in the implementation of the theories of development economics whereby the emerging nations would move towards modernization of their economies and societies and the goal of self-sustaining growth. In early March, 1961, Rostow sent a memo to the President titled, "The Idea of an Economic Development Decade" in which he said, ". . . the notion is not a gimmick."<sup>87</sup> He continued,

In short, in the 1960's we face the peak historical requirement for special external aid . . . if we work hard for a decade we will get well over half the peoples of the underdeveloped areas into self-sustained growth . . . .<sup>88</sup>

Historian Seyom Brown notes:

....the lack of such a concept and objective for determining the flow of foreign assistance to the poorer nations was considered by the new President as probably the most critical deficiency in the arsenal of tools by which we hoped to influence the international environment.<sup>89</sup>

As the new president examined the world in 1961, he saw ongoing communist-supported "wars of national liberation" in Laos, South Vietnam, Venezuela, Columbia and Algeria. These conflicts were just the prelude to a multitude of such conflicts to come. This very danger had been predicted by

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<sup>87</sup>JFK Office Files, part 2, Reel 5, frame 422.

<sup>88</sup>Ibid., frame 423.

<sup>89</sup>Seyom Brown, The Faces of Power (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968), p. 165.

national defense experts, by academicians, and by journalists. Support for the "peoples' struggles" had been a staple of Chinese communist public pronouncements since 1957. Then, at the moment of Kennedy's assumption of office, Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev weighed in with his nation's avowed support for the Chinese encouragement of widespread revolution. On January 6, 1961, Khrushchev announced that the resources of the Soviet Union would henceforth be made available to help such wars of "national liberation" in the third world. The new American president was alarmed by the danger and made Khrushchev's statement required reading for all members of his administration.<sup>90</sup> One of Kennedy's first actions was to instruct the National Security Council to go to work immediately on a counterinsurgency program. Countering guerrilla insurgency involved both military and political/economic factors. The concept had the objective of thwarting an armed insurrection amidst social frustration, so the means to defeat this threat were a combination of strong police and military forces combined with advances in the development of social institutions. Yet Kennedy promoted idealism in the foreign aid program by displaying empathy for civilians against the narrow security concerns of their governments. The

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<sup>90</sup>Hilsman, p. 414.

necessity for enlightened participation by the host countries was recognized by the President in June of 1961 as he addressed the Eighth National Conference on International Economic and Social Development. He said:

I think that we should recognize that the efforts to seize power in these countries . . . can be stemmed only by one thing. And that is governments which are oriented and directed towards assisting the people. <sup>91</sup>

Kennedy's idealism was no where more apparent than in his announcement to Latin American leaders of the context in which United States resources would be committed to the Alliance for Progress. He lectured the Latin Americans that:

. . . political freedom must be accompanied by social change. For unless necessary social reforms, including land and tax reform, are freely made . . . then our alliance, our revolution, our dream and our freedom will fail.<sup>92</sup>

As seen by Kennedy's speech writer and aide for Latin American policy, Richard Goodwin, the United States would counter the communist appeal not only by increasing the military and police capabilities of the threatened governments, but also by effecting revolutionary social change. In fact, says Goodwin,

This was the heart of Kennedy's policy. It was a call to uproot those social structures which, in almost every

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<sup>91</sup>Public Papers, p. 461.

<sup>92</sup>Richard N. Goodwin, Remembering America (New York: Harper & Row), p. 158.

Latin country, had allowed a handful of wealthy oligarchs and generals to prosper while the mass of the population was imprisoned in hopeless poverty. Our help would not go to enrich the few, would be denied to those unwilling to establish a framework of social justice. Coming from an American president, it would appear as a summons to social revolution, and after the first glow of Kennedy's speech had faded, the Alliance for Progress would meet its most determined opposition not from the communists, but from the wealthy, the privileged, and the powerful.<sup>93</sup>

In late April 1961, Kennedy appointed Maxwell Taylor to be his special military representative--ostensibly to report on the failure of the Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba. But Taylor came away with a broader mandate. As Kennedy explained his intention,

It is apparent that we need to take a close look at all our practices and programs in the areas of military and paramilitary, guerrilla and anti-guerrilla activities which fall short of outright war.<sup>94</sup>

Thus, Taylor was charged to convey to the Joint Chiefs of Staff the president's concern for the expansion of "flexible response" forces, including the counter guerrilla innovations of the Special Forces of the United States Army: the Green Berets. In this new concept, heavy weapons and equipment, regimental, division and corps structures and support personnel were not required. Rather, the nation-building ideas of the development economists were to be utilized for the betterment of backward societies. Arthur

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<sup>93</sup>Ibid.

<sup>94</sup>Taylor, Swords and Plowshares, p. 184.



Schlesinger noted that Kennedy " . . . insisted that Special Forces be schooled in sanitation, teaching, bridge-building, medical care and the need for economic progress."<sup>95</sup> Despite the new military capability, the new administration hoped to be able to win the battle without resort to outright war.

The New Frontiersmen sought to prevent violent upheavals as backward countries entered the modern world by encouraging the social benefits of revolution through reform by their governments, thus avoiding the upheaval associated with violent revolution. As John Paton Davies commented, "Reacting to the worldwide ideological offensive of the communists, we have joined battle for men's minds in alien lands."<sup>96</sup> The new style ran counter to previous patterns of policy-making but Kennedy insisted the programs be implemented without delay. The senior Foreign Service Officer, Deputy Undersecretary of State U. Alexis Johnson, said that the president had " . . . a customary impatience, and perhaps a certain ignorance about the ways of government departments and their chains of command."<sup>97</sup> A sense of changed perspective and momentum prevailed while the new

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<sup>95</sup>Schlesinger, p. 342.

<sup>96</sup>Davies, p. 186.

<sup>97</sup>U. Alexis Johnson, The Right Hand of Power (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1984), p. 317.

president took action upon the new third-world foreign policy considerations. A body of programs were formulated in the coordinated application of military assistance, economic aid, scientific know-how, and political advice which were particularly aimed at developing nations threatened with guerrilla insurrection. The programs were all designed to stabilize and strengthen the ties of indigenous peoples to their governments.

The ongoing "wars of national liberation" which confronted Kennedy threatened the independence of 40 nations and one billion people who had been freed from colonial rule since the end of the Second World War. The Cuban example, so close to the United States' shore, was particularly galling. In Undersecretary Johnson's words,

Cuba seemed a classic example of how a tiny core of dedicated Marxists could ride to power on a wave of popular resentment against an unpopular government . . . This was the counterinsurgency problem we faced worldwide.<sup>98</sup>

In May, 1961 President Kennedy delivered a special message to Congress on urgent national needs in which he identified the necessity for countering communist-led guerrilla warfare directed from Moscow or Peking. "They have fired no missiles," he said, "and their troops are seldom seen. They send arms, agitators, aid, technicians and propaganda to

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<sup>98</sup>Ibid., p. 343.

every troubled area."<sup>99</sup> On the one hand, the President promoted the development of the Army's Special Forces which would counter the guerrilla's armed capabilities using the guerrilla's own methods. But armed forces had a wider role to play. In June Walt Rostow gave a speech to the graduating class of foreign military officers at Fort Bragg in which he said:

We can learn to prevent the emergence of the famous sea in which Mao Tse Tung taught his men to swim. This requires, of course, not merely a proper military program of deterrence, but programs of village development, communications, and indoctrination.<sup>100</sup>

One of the formulators of the new doctrine was the head of the State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Roger Hilsman. He described counterinsurgency as the western defense to the Soviet theory of wars of national liberation, noting, "The theory enables Moscow and Peking to manipulate for their own purposes the political, economic and social revolutionary fervor that is now sweeping much of the underdeveloped world."<sup>101</sup> Hilsman, himself a guerrilla leader in the Second World War, advocated the use of small, mobile, self-contained military units which would be able to

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<sup>99</sup>Hilsman, p. 415.

<sup>100</sup>W. W. Rostow, View From the Seventh Floor (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), p. 120.

<sup>101</sup>T. N. Greene, The Guerrilla and How to Fight Him (New York: Praeger, 1962), p. 23.

apply discriminate violence to the subversives within the threatened societies while sparing the civilians. Like the president, he saw the current international emergency as an opportunity to appeal to the self-interest of the threatened governments in calling for humanitarian reforms.<sup>102</sup>

It is difficult to overstate the sense of idealism which permeated the new administration as it foresaw nothing between the existing world of poverty and its hopes for the creation of a humane world order except determination and the application of adequate resources. In its view, it was a time of unparalleled danger and opportunity. In the words of Frank M. Coffin, the director of the Development Loan Fund:

On timely, forthcoming, generous and sustained assistance in these threshold years will depend the atmosphere, the political stability, and the economic well being of the world for long years to come.<sup>103</sup>

Optimism was a crucial component in the expectation that they would succeed. But optimism was commonplace in the new leadership as the White House embraced the idea that "can-do" sincerity would overcome grave obstacles; and the obstacles were grave, indeed. As a brochure from the Agency for International Development noted:

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<sup>102</sup>Blaufarb, p. 61.

<sup>103</sup>Frank M. Coffin, Witness for Aid (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1964), p. 108.

In countries lacking basic law and order, administrative services, and political continuity to launch a serious development effort, U.S. assistance may help to establish these preconditions for growth.<sup>104</sup>

A compelling vision of a just and stable new world order drove the Kennedy administration to spare no effort as it attempted to implement innovative programs. If political stabilization was to become widespread, then the financial resources of the West would be required to prime the pumps of the developing economies. This sense of historic opportunity accounts for the initial optimism; the sense that the nations of the world were poised upon the brink of radical change and could actually make the leap to economic growth and democratic government.

During the Kennedy years nations were asked to reform themselves voluntarily, to become mobilized for modernization and social enlightenment. An appeal to logic and self-interest alone, expressed in ideas which were limited to the intellectual elite of moribund social systems, was not adequate in itself to mobilize the spirit of awakening societies. As Richard Goodwin concludes, the theories of modernization could only reach a limited audience,

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<sup>104</sup>Agency for International Development, Department of State, Principles of Foreign Economic Assistance (Washington D.C.: USGPO, first printed 1963, revised 1965), p. 1.

But nations, whole peoples, are not stirred to difficult, revolutionary deeds by the careful studies of engineers or the cautious projections of economists. Only those who provide a large vision, a noble goal, the prospect of a bright future--not just for the unborn, but for the living who must bear the battle--can raise a standard that others will follow. Promises must be grounded in reality. But hope must reach to the bounds of possibility if there is to be any hope at all. That is the lesson which bureaucracy rejects, and leadership understands.<sup>105</sup>

Promise and hope to the people of the world were the elements provided by the young American President as he began to translate his vision into government programs. It was a moment which transcended the original narrow goal of national self-interest for many Americans. However, the nuances of inspired idealism are not easily transferable to public discourse after being ground through the mill of the popular political process. Most American politicians reduced the nature of the perceived threat to terms comprehensible to the least informed citizens. They used terms which were designed to elicit an indignant response in support of an increased American effort abroad. Vice President Johnson traveled to various nations including South Vietnam in May of 1961 on a mission designed to bolster congressional support for the Kennedy administration's foreign aid program. Upon Johnson's return, referring specifically to South Vietnam, he issued

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<sup>105</sup>Goodwin, p. 155.

an indignant report to the United State Senate. Anticipating the character of political discourse during the sound-byte era he said, "If a bully can come in and run you out of the yard today, tomorrow he will come back and run you off the porch."<sup>106</sup> Senator Thomas J. Dodd's more literary response assured the nation that the Senate did apprehend the danger implied in Johnson's manful call for resistance to aggression: ". . . the drama which may toll the death knell for the United States and for Western civilization is now being played out in southeast Asia."<sup>107</sup>

Politicians and journalists emphasized the danger, and the President saw it, too. Moreover, it was his responsibility to act. Former director of the CIA William Colby has lately noted,

Kennedy was a liberal who was intent on fighting for freedom, too. He goes back to my era when the liberals were internationalists; when the conservatives were isolationists . . . He felt there was a communist tide running in the world that had to be stopped, in Latin America, Southeast Asia, and Europe.<sup>108</sup>

Kennedy was unable to readily locate targets for the finely

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<sup>106</sup>William Conrad Gibbons, The U.S. Government and the Vietnam War: Executive and Legislative Roles and Relationships, Part II: 1961-1964 (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1986), p. 46.

<sup>107</sup>Ibid.

<sup>108</sup>Gerald S. and Deborah H. Strober, Let Us Begin Anew, "An Oral History of the Kennedy Presidency (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, Inc., 1993), p. 68.

sharpened weapons of the Army's expanded "flexible response" capability since the communist menace was perceived to be employing means that were subtle, not overt. But action was a hallmark of the Kennedy style and the lack of obvious targets for United States action did not mean no action would be taken. The extent to which the President saw aid as the alternative to a military response was reflected in his remarks to AID Overseas Mission Directors on June 8, 1962. His address read,

And as we do not want to send American troops to a great many areas where freedom may be under attack, we send you . . . so that . . . they can solve their problems without resorting to totalitarian control and becoming part of the bloc . . . . That is the issue.<sup>109</sup>

President Kennedy soon instituted an advisory body to emphasize the importance of counterinsurgency. In January 1962, the Special Group Counterinsurgency was formed with Maxwell Taylor as chairman. In order to be kept informed about the group's activities, the President appointed his brother, Attorney General Robert Kennedy to the body and received reports from him after each of the weekly meetings.<sup>110</sup> The other members of the group were Deputy Secretary of Defense Roswell Gilpatric, CIA Director Allen Dulles (shortly to be replaced by John McCone), National

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<sup>109</sup>Public Papers, 1962, p. 469.

<sup>110</sup>Taylor, Swords and Plowshares, p. 201.



Security Advisor McGeorge Bundy, U.S. Information Agency Director Edward R. Murrow, Agency for International Development Director Fowler Hamilton, JCS Chairman Admiral Lyman Lemnitzer and Deputy Undersecretary of State U. Alexis Johnson. The group was not an executive body but rather coordinated the work of the various departments and agencies. The President directed the group to:

. . . insure proper recognition throughout the United States Government that subversive insurgency is a major form of politico-military conflict equal in importance to conventional warfare.<sup>111</sup>

This recognition throughout government took various forms. National Security Action Memorandum 131 was issued March 13, 1962. It addressed what must have been the perception of a lack of reflective intellectual appreciation for the United States' world position. It states: "Personnel of all grades will be required to study the history of subversive insurgency movements past and present . . . This kind of background historical study will be offered throughout the school systems of the responsible departments and agencies, beginning at the junior level of instruction and carrying forward to the senior level."<sup>112</sup>

Starting in March, the Foreign Service Institute of the

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<sup>111</sup>Johnson, pp. 329-330.

<sup>112</sup>Mike Gravel, The Pentagon Papers : The Defense Department History of United States Decision Making on Vietnam (Boston, Beacon Press, 1971), vol. 2, p. 668.

Department of State taught a course which educated middle-level and senior Foreign Service Officers in various counterinsurgency problems and techniques. The six-week course was taught by specialists from the Center of International Studies at MIT and it eventually graduated from forty to seventy Foreign Service Officers from eight to ten times per year.<sup>113</sup>

In addition, U.A. Johnson created the National Interdepartmental Seminar, a five-week course in counterinsurgency for senior personnel from all parts of the executive branch of government. This coordination of the American effort was necessary, explained Johnson, because "Neither the military nor the rest of government was used to defining its mission abroad as bringing economic and political change to developing countries."<sup>114</sup> One year later, more than fifty thousand (mostly military) American government employees had had some counterinsurgency training and the impetus of the doctrine swept many other Americans from private lives into the attempt to effect the reformation of struggling third world societies.<sup>115</sup> Thousands of Americans joined the Peace Corps and, as George Ball

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<sup>113</sup>Blaufarb, p. 73.

<sup>114</sup>Johnson, p. 332.

<sup>115</sup>Ibid.

noted, "some university faculties were almost denuded as professors left their tranquil campuses to instruct the natives of the dank far reaches of the world."<sup>116</sup>

The momentum of funding for international involvement was viewed as an opportunity for action by geopolitical activists of all stripes: diplomats, intelligence agents, military officers, charitable and religious organizers, and scholars. At first, Congressional funding for foreign aid was forthcoming to an extent which allowed for the implementation of an unmanageable proliferation of programs. Frank Coffin complained in 1964 that so many programs had been put into effect that right from the beginning of the Kennedy administration the purposes of foreign aid were obscured. The Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 (as amended) simply contained too many provisions, he said. "What began as a program coming to a point has become a shapeless bulbous protrusion."<sup>117</sup> It is significant that such a man as Coffin, who was deeply committed to the furtherance of development aid, could criticize the implementation of Kennedy's aid programs to this extent. If Coffin was dismayed, one can appreciate the quality of rhetorical ammunition available to aid's opponents. Other critics in

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<sup>116</sup>Ball, p. 183.

<sup>117</sup>Coffin, p. 97.

public life could agree with Coffin when he wrote in 1964:

To sum up, our law today is an anarchy of purposes. It includes not only a multiplicity of objectives, without judgements as to their relative importance, but many concepts which falsely masquerade under the label of objectives. Some are proper purposes for the United States government but are not feasible purposes for the instrument of aid . . . Some are frankly improper and undignified under any category. Some are inconsistent with the major historic objectives.<sup>118</sup>

Certainly, President Kennedy had succeeded in broadening federal government involvement in the various aspects of strategic development. The question which remained was whether or not the programs of strategic aid would exist long enough to become effective and whether programs for peaceful development would override the United States' traditional military approach to security. The development goals of foreign aid would take years to bear fruit and the immediate security goals of counterinsurgency required a delicate balancing of means which would be difficult to achieve. Roger Hilsman said counterinsurgency would require " . . . an emphasis on political, economic and social action into which very carefully calibrated military measures were interwoven."<sup>119</sup> Time would tell if the government could fashion such a discreet and finely tuned instrument of national power.

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<sup>118</sup>Ibid., p. 101.

<sup>119</sup>Hilsman, p. 426.

## CHAPTER 5

### STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT LOSES ITS MOMENTUM AND ITS CLARITY OF PURPOSE

The failure of the Kennedy administration to keep the momentum for foreign aid alive in 1963 reflected the failure of strategic aid to maintain its rationale for existence. Not only was the Defense Department successfully portraying itself as addressing the problem of communist subversion which endangered developing governments, but the world communist monolith was in the process of disintegration. Thus the urgency of strategic development was in decline when the President requested the heaviest burden for its continuation from the American taxpayer. Moreover, the institution which possessed the responsibility for the implementation of foreign aid was lukewarm in its support: the State Department declined to take the lead.

The President had hoped to place full responsibility for foreign affairs and foreign aid with the Secretary of State but found both the Secretary and the State Department to be reluctant instruments for the implementation of his Third World policies. After the election, Kennedy had established a task force on "State Department Operations Overseas and in Washington" which concluded " . . . the Foreign Service has failed to keep pace with the novel and

expanding demands of a changing world."<sup>120</sup> To provide leadership, Kennedy had selected Dean Rusk as Secretary of State and the President might well have thought Rusk would share his Third World vision.

Certainly Rusk had wide experience in the developing world. He served as an aide to General Joseph Stilwell in the China-Burma-India Theater during the last two years of the Second World War. After the war, he headed the State Department's United Nations desk, then served as Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs. For the eight years of the Eisenhower administration, Rusk was President of the Rockefeller Foundation and was instrumental in the dispensation of Rockefeller monies for the development of Third World economies.<sup>121</sup> Rusk, however, did not share the conviction that United States national security was primarily threatened by events in the developing nations. He claimed, "Europe remained the central theater of U.S.-Soviet confrontation during the Kennedy years . . . ." <sup>122</sup>

Rusk was joined in this assessment by Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee J. William Fulbright, who said Europe is the "real problem" of United States foreign

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<sup>120</sup>Schlesinger, p. 408.

<sup>121</sup>Dean Rusk, As I Saw It (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1990).

<sup>122</sup>Ibid., p. 273.

policy<sup>123</sup> and Secretary of Defense McNamara who concurred, asserting, " . . . the Communist threat in Europe is the largest single threat we face in the world."<sup>124</sup> Rusk had other, more tangible national security concerns than the speculative and nebulous conditions within underdeveloped societies. For instance, he notes, "Always, arms control stood among the top three items on our foreign policy agenda,"<sup>125</sup> and he was proud that the Limited Test Ban Treaty of July 1963 " . . . was the first arms control treaty actually negotiated after eighteen years of talks between Moscow and Washington."<sup>126</sup>

Not only was Rusk unsympathetic to the doctrine of strategic development, he was busy with his involvement in the almost continuous series of foreign policy crises which beset the first two years of Kennedy's presidency and the responsibility for running a Department with a staff of 25,000. Lacking conviction, and otherwise preoccupied, he declined to champion Kennedy's Third World development crusade. His failure to participate must have been a puzzlement to the energetic young president. If Rusk was

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<sup>123</sup>Christian Science Monitor, January 16, 1963, p. 1.

<sup>124</sup>Ibid., February 20, 1963, p. 2.

<sup>125</sup>Rusk, p. 251.

<sup>126</sup>Ibid., p. 258.

unwilling to take the lead in the strategic development offensive, he was also unwilling to clarify either his opposition or his own vision. This was characteristic of him. Rusk was often referred to as "the silent secretary" or "an enigma." His son Richard says, "These labels delighted him, as did his well-earned reputation for inscrutability."<sup>127</sup> Rusk's reticence was so deep that even at the end of his life, in deeply personal conversation, his son could regret, "My father's relentless inscrutability . . . ." <sup>128</sup>

Kennedy was impatient with the seeming inability of the State Department to embrace his enthusiasm for action. Arthur Schlesinger describes Kennedy's frustration with Rusk's State Department:

The briefing books the State Department sent to the White House in the early Kennedy days . . . were vacuous documents, devoid of the hard facts on which the new President lived . . . At times it almost seemed to us as if the Department were resolved to prevent the President from discovering anything of importance.<sup>129</sup>

It may have been that Rusk wanted the White House to develop a more studied and deliberate approach to foreign policy. Rusk notes, "Often I argued a more cautious line than Kennedy's White House advisors, and frequently I suggested

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<sup>127</sup>Ibid., p. 198.

<sup>128</sup>Ibid., p. 17.

<sup>129</sup>Schlesinger, p. 557.



that we not take on every problem in the world as if it were our problem . . . ."130

Even though he argued for foreign aid before Congress, Rusk remained unconvinced of the primacy of the Third World threat. In his Review of United States Foreign Policy Address in February 1963 he mentioned world-wide obligations but emphasized NATO requirements and the Atlantic Community. Only one sentence in the entire address urged the commitment of resources to the Third World:

Third, it seems to me essential that we mobilize our common resources to assist the underdeveloped countries in improving their living standards, thus making possible political stability."<sup>131</sup>

This statement of the Secretary of State can only be seen as a lukewarm endorsement of the President's vision in the midst of President Kennedy's battle with Congress for continued development aid.

However much White House partisans wished to perceive a lack of imagination or a lack of courage among those who disparaged the new orthodoxy, a real difference of opinion existed among the foreign policy experts on the one hand, and the President and some of his closest advisors on the other. Regarding the new stable of foreign policy makers,

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<sup>130</sup>Rusk, p. 294.

<sup>131</sup>Richard P. Stebbins, ed., Documents in American Foreign Relations 1963 (New York: Harper & row, 1964), p. 22.

career diplomat George Ball noted, "I had unwittingly joined a new youth movement."<sup>132</sup> He distanced himself from Walt Rostow, saying, "I thought him unduly fascinated by the then faddish theories about counter-insurgency and that intriguing new invention of the professors, 'nation building'."<sup>133</sup> Ball further criticized State Department foreign aid advocate Chester Bowles as " . . . enamored of sweeping statements and broad concepts that often seemed little more than catch phrases."<sup>134</sup> Bowles, for his part, complained to the President in December 1962 via an "eyes only" memorandum:

As a result of heavy European orientation, lack of personal interest, and a dearth of relevant experience among the upper echelons, the response of your chief advisors to the problems of Asia and Africa has been one of peevish reluctance . . . . [they are] irritated that demands for action from these particular nations should be made upon us at all.<sup>135</sup>

The State Department did not assert its authority to coordinate the application of development aid, to assert moral suasion towards intractable foreign leaders, or to direct the military components of counterinsurgency. In turn, direction of United States' action in the most

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<sup>132</sup>Ball, p. 164.

<sup>133</sup>Ibid., p. 365.

<sup>134</sup>Ibid., p. 170.

<sup>135</sup>JFK Office Files, Part 1, Reel 2, frame 0022.

threatened developing society, South Vietnam, devolved to the Department of Defense.

Bureaucratic rivalry apparently did not strain relations at the highest echelon between the Departments of State and Defense. Rusk reports, "Bob McNamara and I hit it off right from the start. We insisted upon cooperation and worked hard to obtain it."<sup>136</sup> Despite the amicable personal relationship, disagreement did exist over the two departments' views towards the correct application of American resources in endangered developing nations. The American involvement in South Vietnam is a case in point.

In 1960, problems of coordination arose for the American effort within this developing country which would serve as the model and testing ground for the appropriate American response to communist subversion. Due to the existence of a difficult guerrilla war, seventy-five percent of the economic portion of the total aid package went towards security requirements<sup>137</sup> and the Defense Department wanted its voice heard in its application. In this way, Defense claimed responsibility for programs which did not customarily fall under military control. In mid-1960, the Joint Chiefs of Staff developed the CIP, or Counter-

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<sup>136</sup>Rusk, p. 521.

<sup>137</sup>Gravel, *ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 268.

insurgency Plan. As described in The Pentagon Papers:

This was the newly-articulated and imperfectly understood doctrine of counterinsurgency which stressed the interaction and interdependence of political, military, social, and psychological factors.<sup>138</sup>

Defense's disagreement with the State Department was one of emphasis. Noting the political weakness of Saigon's leader Ngo Dinh Diem, American diplomats postulated that the security problems stemmed from political weakness.

Therefore they proposed the solution of political reform and liberalization. The American military mission, on the other hand, claimed that military inadequacy caused the political weakness; they proposed strengthening police and military forces and not pressuring Diem for reform lest his confidence in the United States decline.<sup>139</sup>

In early 1961, Kennedy's incoming Ambassador to South Vietnam, Frederick Nolting, attended sessions of the Interdepartmental Task Force on Vietnam which were chaired by Assistant Secretary of Defense Roswell Gilpatric. Nolting mentioned to Rusk that Vietnam was a political problem and asked why the Defense Department was in charge.<sup>140</sup> He reported no answer from the enigmatic

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<sup>138</sup>Ibid., p. 148.

<sup>139</sup>Ibid., p. 268.

<sup>140</sup>Frederick Nolting, From Trust to Tragedy (New York: Praeger, 1988), p. 12.

Secretary, but Rusk told him upon leaving for Saigon, "You don't have to worry about the length of your stay. The way things are going out there, we'll be lucky if we still have a mission in Saigon six months from now."<sup>141</sup>

Rusk may have doubted the likelihood of effective reform by the South Vietnamese leader and, therefore, he may have been satisfied to let the newly charged organs of government grind onward in a complex policy which courted a failure for which he could avoid responsibility. He had been a State Department official during the right-wing red-baiting of the later Truman years and may have wanted to avoid the recriminations which would follow the failure of United States policy in South Vietnam. On November 11, 1961, Rusk and McNamara sent a joint memorandum to the President which warned of such recriminations. After citing the destruction of SEATO and the loss of American credibility should South Vietnam fall, they said:

Further, the loss of South Viet-Nam would stimulate bitter domestic controversies in the United States and would be seized upon by extreme elements to divide the country and harass the Administration.<sup>142</sup>

Rusk's reluctance was matched by McNamara's eagerness. General Taylor noted, "In Washington there was a serious unevenness of performance among the executive departments

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<sup>141</sup>Ibid., p. 17.

<sup>142</sup>Gravel, *ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 111.

arising primarily from the great concentration of power within the Pentagon."<sup>143</sup> By this, he meant that the Pentagon had the logistical ability to implement programs and to move men and materials, the budget to fund programs and a chain of command which would respond to policy directives. In addition it had a dynamic Secretary of Defense, Robert McNamara, " . . . one of the ablest and most energetic administrators ever to come to Washington, who was off the starting blocks like a shot . . . ." <sup>144</sup> The Department of Defense could not take over the long-range development programs administered by the Agency for International Development, but it could and did subordinate them to military priority.

According to General Taylor, "The President repeatedly emphasized his desire to utilize the situation in Vietnam to study and test the techniques and equipment related to counterinsurgency . . . ." <sup>145</sup> In October 1961, Taylor and Rostow went to South Vietnam at the President's request to assess the effectiveness of American programs and the requirements for the future. According to Hilsman, their assessment was primarily addressed to military

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<sup>143</sup>Taylor, Swords and Plowshares, p. 249.

<sup>144</sup>Ibid.

<sup>145</sup>Ibid., p. 202.

considerations because Secretary Rusk did not require that a specialist go along to assess the political situation.<sup>146</sup> Rusk was out of step with the President because Kennedy's instructions to Taylor said, "While the military part of the program is of great importance in South Vietnam, its political, social and economic elements are equally significant."<sup>147</sup> Nevertheless, Taylor and Rostow largely ignored the issue of political reform and recommended the deployment of ten thousand American soldiers.<sup>148</sup> Upon review of the report, Secretary McNamara and the Joint Chiefs concurred that large American combat forces would ultimately be needed.<sup>149</sup> Thus, at this early point in the implementation of counterinsurgency, those responsible made an assumption of the need for greater direct American military involvement than the doctrine itself suggested.

The emphasis upon a military solution was further enhanced in December 1961 when Rostow moved from the White House staff to become the Chairman of the State Department's Policy Planning Council. Rostow became a partisan of the military emphasis, noting: "There are those who may find it

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<sup>146</sup>Hilsman, p. 421.

<sup>147</sup>Taylor, Swords and Plowshares, p. 226.

<sup>148</sup>Hilsman, p. 423.

<sup>149</sup>Taylor, Swords and Plowshares, p. 246.

odd for an economist to be also concerned--as I have been-- with the problems of countering Communist methods of guerrilla warfare and subversion."<sup>150</sup> It is ironic that Rostow was one of the founders of the strategic development doctrine. His subsequent emphasis upon military measures reflects the growing lack of support within government for the stated principles of counterinsurgency which derived from his strategic development theories. As Douglas Blaufarb has noted, the South Vietnamese were able to receive whatever they needed without conforming to American demands for social reform:

All of these demands had purposes related to counterinsurgency. In none of these areas was any significant progress made, and yet the U.S. continued to press forward with programs whose success depended upon their implementation.<sup>151</sup>

With the application of counterinsurgency in military hands, the necessity for political reform was discounted. In September 1962, Maxwell Taylor, who had just been appointed Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, toured Asia and came to the conclusion that military programs were succeeding despite the failure of political and social programs.<sup>152</sup> The Military Assistance Command Vietnam (MACV)

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<sup>150</sup>Rostow, View From the Seventh Floor, p. 85.

<sup>151</sup>Blaufarb, p. 126.

<sup>152</sup>Taylor, Swords and Plowshares, p. 258.



encouraged South Vietnamese forces to use long range artillery, air strikes, defoliants, napalm, and large scale "sweeps" of infantry and armor through the countryside. Blaufarb notes the degree to which the military acted upon its traditional institutional forms of action despite the damage to the new doctrine in which it professed to believe:

Inevitably, the bombing and the increased use of artillery involved destruction of property and death and injury of the very civilian population whose loyalty was being sought as the key to victory.<sup>153</sup>

Despite the political turmoil in South Vietnam, the military continued to express the conviction that "counterinsurgency" was winning the guerrilla conflict. Hilsman noted that:

McNamara and Taylor, especially, had made so many public statements that we were winning that they interpreted any suggestion that we were not as a criticism of their judgement and of the whole Pentagon effort.<sup>154</sup>

President Kennedy was unconvinced himself. He indicated his skepticism to journalist Walter Cronkite on September 2, 1963, when he said on national television, "I don't think that unless a greater effort is made to win popular support that the war can be won out there."<sup>155</sup> The President sent another fact-finding team to Vietnam a week later. Marine Lieutenant General Victor B. Krulak, who had

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<sup>153</sup>Blaufarb, p. 119.

<sup>154</sup>Hilsman, p. 496.

<sup>155</sup>Ibid., p. 497.

taken over the White House counterinsurgency effort when Taylor moved to the Pentagon, and Joseph A. Mendenhall, the head of the State Department's Bureau of Far Eastern Affairs planning office, travelled together. When they returned they presented two diametrically opposed views to the President. Krulak said the war was being won while Mendenhall reported political turmoil and the imminent collapse of the South Vietnamese government. Kennedy was puzzled. "You two did go to the same country, didn't you?", he asked.<sup>156</sup> The division of purposes within the agencies of government which implemented the foreign aid programs provided a fitting discordance for the congressional budget rejection in 1963.

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<sup>156</sup>Ibid., p. 502.

## CHAPTER 6

### CONGRESS REJECTS STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT

The President's foreign aid program was rejected by Congress during the fight for the fiscal year 1964 bill, a fight which was largely decided before the fiscal year began on July 1, 1963. In the preceding two years, Kennedy's foreign aid bills had been signed into law in early September 1961 and in early August 1962. In 1963, the bill was not signed until December 16, after the President's assassination. This first session of the 88th Congress was marked by strong debate over the issue of American spending and the budget deficit. The foreign aid controversy helped to make it the fifth longest session in United States congressional history.<sup>157</sup>

President Kennedy had had modest success when Congress appropriated \$133 million more for foreign aid in 1961 than it had under President Eisenhower in 1960. The most notable change in the two bills, however, was the emphasis in Kennedy's bill on development loans and grants. The bill signed into law on September 4, 1961 (for fiscal year 1962) contained development capital appropriations of \$1.4 billion

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<sup>157</sup>"Foreign Aid Program Suffers Setbacks," Congressional Quarterly Almanac 1963, p. 255.

versus Eisenhower's \$550 million.<sup>158</sup> This change reflected the new President's conviction that the ideas of the development economists were paramount to the nation's long-term security. The appropriations also reflected a change of emphasis by reducing military assistance and defense support by some \$400 million, reflecting the President's belief that development funds were an alternate method of attaining national security. Nevertheless, President Kennedy in no way got all he wanted. The 1961 request for \$4.78 billion was met by a congressional appropriation of only \$3.9 billion. The following year was worse. Although the appropriation actually increased by \$14 million in 1962, the request had risen by \$186 million to \$4.96 billion, so the percentage of congressional trimming went up sharply.<sup>159</sup> The difference between the President's request and the allocation exceeded \$1 billion in 1962, but 1963 would be worse yet, with the greatest percentage cut in foreign aid in United States history.

Every year the Kennedy administration focused upon the House of Representatives during the fight for foreign aid funding both because the House was less inclined than the

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<sup>158</sup>"Congress Revises Foreign Aid Program," Congressional Quarterly Almanac 1961, p. 294.

<sup>159</sup>"New Foreign Aid Restrictions Voted," Congressional Quarterly Almanac 1962, p.301.

Senate to support the President's foreign aid budget requests through both the authorizing and appropriations processes and because the House carried more weight in the budget process. Throughout Eisenhower's second term and the Kennedy years, the foreign aid program faced its greatest opposition from the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Foreign Operations chaired by Louisiana's Otto Passman. Passman has been described by presidential aide and historian Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. as " . . . a fanatical foe of foreign aid."<sup>160</sup>

In his watershed work, The Power of the Purse, Appropriations Politics in Congress, Richard Fenno identifies the House appropriations committees as the key determinants of the size of the yearly federal budgets. He quotes a committee member on the power held by appropriations subcommittee chairmen as follows:

They are the lords with their fiefs and their duchys - each with power over his own area of appropriations. There's a power elite on this committee. And these subcommittee chairmen are as powerful as other legislative chairmen.<sup>161</sup>

Fenno discovered a culture of conservative reluctance to appropriate the taxpayer's money by the House committees.

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<sup>160</sup>Schlesinger, p. 595.

<sup>161</sup>Richard F. Fenno, Jr., The Power of the Purse: Appropriations Politics in Congress (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1966), p. 168.

Accordingly, says Fenno, "The House Committee, its members believe, is the only reliable and responsible legislative guardian of the Treasury."<sup>162</sup> Certainly, Congressman Passman's subcommittee was a tough obstacle for the foreign aid bill at even the most politically propitious of times. As the initial congressional toleration for the Kennedy administration's newly espoused concepts of strategic development gave way to subsequent skepticism, the task of persuading Congress to fund foreign aid became ever more difficult. By the end of Kennedy's administration, the rancor involved in arguing for foreign aid appropriations before Passman's committee was summed up by the writer Douglass Cater as follows:

Passman shows himself obsessed with minutiae but little concerned with trying to grasp the fundamental facts and fallacies of economic development. He monopolizes the questioning, and always appears convinced that he is talking to a pack of congenital liars.<sup>163</sup>

On August 1, 1962, the foreign aid bill for fiscal year 1963 was signed into law. The administration advocates of development aid were shortly planning for the coming year. On August 14, Ambassador Chester Bowles sent a memo to Secretary Rusk announcing, " . . . we are badly in need of some showcase examples of what outstanding performance by a

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<sup>162</sup>Ibid., p. 101.

<sup>163</sup>Douglass Cater, Power in Washington (New York: Random House, 1964), p. 151.

recipient nation backed by generous U.S. assistance can accomplish."<sup>164</sup> Less than two months later, Bowles sent a memo to the President reflecting upon the difficulties faced in 1962. On October 11 Bowles noted, "This year the Congressional fireworks in regard to foreign economic assistance hit a new peak."<sup>165</sup> Bowles' identification of the economic element of foreign assistance identified the vulnerability of a doctrine which emphasized the indirect and gradual approach which strategic development took to the threat facing United States national security. The President himself was to address this weakness in his Budget Message to Congress in January 1963. He conceded, "Because these programs are often addressed to complex problems in distant lands, their contribution to our security objectives is not always directly apparent . . ." <sup>166</sup> Indeed, as Schlesinger pointed out, " . . . the annual agony of getting the aid bill through Congress was somewhat eased when it could be presented as a hard, anti-communist, military program."<sup>167</sup>

Since the military component of the aid program had

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<sup>164</sup>JFK Office Files, Part 1, Reel 1, frame 988.

<sup>165</sup>Ibid., frame 1023.

<sup>166</sup>Stebbins, p. 13.

<sup>167</sup>Schlesinger, p. 585.

been largely subordinated to the Department of Defense's own flexible-response, rapid-deployment, counterinsurgency forces, the President faced a difficult task in persuading Congress of the urgent security purposes of his foreign aid program. On November 11, 1962, Fowler Hamilton, who was director of the Agency for International Development, met with the President to tender his resignation. At that meeting, he proposed that the President appoint "a high level review committee"<sup>168</sup> with prestigious people like former Secretary of Defense Robert Lovett and retired Army General Lucius D. Clay which would be charged to examine the agency. Hamilton's suggestion was meant to give AID " . . . approbation which would serve as a basis for a public relations campaign" and which would come out "very strongly for increased U.S. procurement."<sup>169</sup>

This idea, to have a respected outside committee produce a report supportive of foreign aid, was not a new one for President Kennedy. Back in April of 1961 Special Assistant Ralph Dungan contacted Henry Alexander of the Morgan Guaranty Trust Company with just that idea. Referring to President Kennedy, Dungan told Morgan:

He believes that a group of private citizens conversant with the problems of economic development and

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<sup>168</sup>JFK Office Files, Part 2, Reel 2, frame 479.

<sup>169</sup>Ibid.



knowledgeable about the relationship that exists between our foreign assistance efforts and stable world conditions could assist appreciably in creating a climate of public opinion which would permit favorable congressional action on his program.<sup>170</sup>

This was precisely the stratagem followed by Kennedy in late 1962. He shortly implemented Hamilton's proposal, choosing Lucius Clay to head the committee. With an undoubted eye to making the committee's relationship to the national strategic interest most obvious, the President bestowed a pretentious title which would make its findings difficult to ignore. The Committee for the Defense of the Free World, hereafter called the Clay Committee, would examine the aid program while assessing its present and future contributions to national security. On November 19, Bell wrote a memo to Sorensen stating that the committee " . . . would among other things organize stronger public support for the aid program."<sup>171</sup> Kennedy's choice of Clay was probably determined by Clay's impeccable conservative credentials and the weight, therefore, that his expected support of foreign aid would carry in circles opposed to the aid program. Clay later noted, " . . . I suspect that he felt that I was an Eisenhower Republican, that this would

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<sup>170</sup>Ibid., frame 345.

<sup>171</sup>Ibid., Part 3, Reel 2, frame 0079.

help perhaps with the Republican Party . . . ."172 Kennedy had previously asked Clay to participate in foreign policy crises from Cuba to Berlin and Clay had always responded.

Kennedy and Clay selected the ten committee members, to be both bi-partisan and experienced in some fashion with foreign aid. Among them were Republican former Secretary of the Treasury Robert B. Anderson, former Secretary of Defense Robert A. Lovett, retired World Bank President Eugene R. Black, former Republican legal advisor to the State Department Herman Phleger, and Dean Edward S. Mason. Clay encouraged Kennedy to expect a favorable report, saying:

I told the President, that I know the people we are putting on this Committee are all in favor of foreign aid - that they realize that it is an essential part of our foreign policy, and is in our best national interests.<sup>173</sup>

Clay's encouragement of the President's optimism was disingenuous, because Clay himself was unreservedly in favor of foreign aid only insofar as the Marshall Plan was concerned. As he said in a later interview, his view in 1962 was that " . . . the Marshall Plan saved Western Europe . . . Then we extended the idea far to broadly, I think, to

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<sup>172</sup>JFK Oral History Collection, Part 1, Reel 2, frame 644.

<sup>173</sup>Ibid., frame 642.

countries that were not equipped to use the aid."<sup>174</sup> Kennedy was taking a chance with the Republicans on the committee, but he faced unknown difficulties with Democrats as well.

Clay later remarked:

Interestingly enough, the people President Kennedy thought he could count on for the most support were the people we had the greatest difficulty with, although I don't think the President ever knew that. I think he thought that Gene Black [former president of the World Bank] was his great ally. But Gene Black was completely opposed to aid to underdeveloped countries. And yet I think he let the President believe right up to the very end that he was on the President's side in all this.<sup>175</sup>

At the same time as he initiated the Clay Committee, Kennedy also attempted to influence Congress on the upcoming foreign aid bill by asking Senate leader Mike Mansfield to take a small bi-partisan group of Senators to Europe and Asia in December 1962 to assess the effects of American aid.<sup>176</sup> In a sense, the Senate group was to examine a stacked deck, since Europe was the site of the Marshall Plan successes and Asia was the locale for the Western response to armed communist militancy. Kennedy was attempting to structure his defense of foreign aid spending purely within the confines of the national security debate. With these

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<sup>174</sup>Jean Edward Smith, Lucius D. Clay: An American Life (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1990), p. 671.

<sup>175</sup>Ibid., p. 672.

<sup>176</sup>Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report, # 13, March 29, 1963, p. 438.

arrangements in hand, the President anticipated the fight for foreign aid in the new year.

The question of whether the country could afford the program was an issue which he hoped to avoid. President Kennedy chose to disregard the issue of the effect of foreign aid spending upon the budget deficit and upon the deficit in the balance of payments, both of which grew larger during his tenure of office. In July of 1962, the President had asserted, "the fact of the matter is the United States can balance its balance of payments any day it wants if it wishes to withdraw its support of our defense expenditures overseas and our foreign aid."<sup>177</sup> Obviously, he thought the expense was worthwhile, but the need was less obvious to others.

Avowed Keynesians, the Kennedy team produced a deficit in fiscal 1962 of \$6.31 billion out of a total budget of \$87.7 billion. The total budget represented significant growth, since Eisenhower's budget had been only \$81.5 billion in fiscal 1961.<sup>178</sup> Fiscal 1963 showed a deficit of \$7.8 billion out of a budget of \$93.7 billion.<sup>179</sup> The projected budget for fiscal year 1964 would approach \$100

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<sup>177</sup>Public Papers, p. 570.

<sup>178</sup>Britannica Book of the Year 1963 (London: Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc., 1963), p. 227.

<sup>179</sup>Ibid.

billion dollars. The looming foreign aid battle for fiscal year 1964 was played out against the backdrop of an increasing budget and deficit spiral. The debate over national security thus became intertwined with the issue of national economic health, an issue which also had national security implications. The enemies of foreign aid could, therefore, counter with the argument that their opposition to increased foreign aid spending was helping to preclude the weakening of the United States by conserving its wealth. The issue gained momentum due to the President's actions to further reduce government revenues. Compounding the discrepancy between revenues and expenditures, the President proposed a large tax reduction in early January. He proposed reducing taxes by \$13.5 billion over a three year period in order to spur economic growth.<sup>180</sup>

The issue of whether or not the country could afford massive spending had been muted in the recent past due to Eisenhower's constant emphasis on the goal of a balanced budget. Riding the fears engendered by the Cold War, Democrats had assailed such frugality during a time of paramount national danger, but now the climate of opinion was changing. On January 21, the Christian Science Monitor editorialized:

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<sup>180</sup>Christian Science Monitor, January 15, 1963, p. 1.

President Kennedy's \$98,800,000 budget has received a chilly reception in Congress. Criticism from Republicans could be expected, but it has been witheringly sharp. And sentiment among many Democrats has ranged from lack of enthusiasm to direct opposition . . . Rep. Clarence Cannon, Chairman of the House Appropriations Committee and a member of the President's party, deplors "spending money we do not have for things we could get along without." The disposition to demand reduction in government spending is evidently widespread.<sup>181</sup>

Despite this development, President Kennedy announced in January 1963 that the budget amount for foreign aid which would be formally requested in April would be \$4.9 billion, nearly \$1 billion more than had been appropriated in the preceding year.<sup>182</sup>

The Clay Committee held the first of its two sessions January 24-28, 1963. The second session was held February 25-27. Most witnesses before the committee were from the executive branch: the State and Defense Departments and the Agency for International Development. On the last day, Secretaries Dillon, Rusk and McNamara testified, with McNamara bringing along General Taylor.<sup>183</sup> The report was to be presented in March.

The report of the Mansfield group on foreign aid was issued on February 24. It was strikingly critical of the

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<sup>181</sup>Ibid., January 21, 1963, p. 16.

<sup>182</sup>Congressional Quarterly Almanac 1963, p. 255.

<sup>183</sup>JFK Office Files, Part 1, Reel 2, frame 309.

pattern of American spending and of the rationale behind the doctrine of strategic development. Senators Mansfield, J. Caleb Boggs, Claiborne Pell, and former Senator Benjamin A. Smith called for "a thorough reassessment of our overall security requirements on the Southeast Asian mainland . . . "184 and cutbacks in the aid programs there. They asked rhetorically if the \$5 billion in United States economic aid given since 1950 had been worthwhile. They recommended no new aid be given and a reduction in aid to all countries which currently received it. In addition, they strongly recommended against expansion of United States' responsibility for the guerrilla war in South Vietnam.<sup>185</sup>

The difficulties facing the President's foreign aid program were becoming impossible to overlook. On March 1, journalist Richard Strout noted,

The great Washington riddle is why a Democratic President doesn't do better with a Democratic Congress . . . . That (President Kennedy) is fighting for his program anybody can see . . . . Half the cabinet will plead for upcoming foreign aid.<sup>186</sup>

President Kennedy was asked about the Mansfield report at a press conference on March 6, and he resorted to the tested

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<sup>184</sup>Congressional Quarterly Weekly, # 13, p. 438.

<sup>185</sup>Ibid.

<sup>186</sup>Christian Science Monitor, March 1, 1963, p. 13.

reliance upon American national security and the threat of communist expansion. Echoing Kissinger and Rostow, he warned:

I don't see how we are going to be able, unless we are going to pull out of Southeast Asia and turn it over to the Communists, how we are going to be able to reduce very much our economic programs and military programs in South Vietnam, in Cambodia, in Thailand . . . I think we ought to judge the economic burden it places upon us as opposed to having the Communists control all of Southeast Asia with the inevitable effect this would have on the security of India and, therefore, really begin to run perhaps all the way toward the Middle East.<sup>187</sup>

President Kennedy's true compassion for the inhabitants of the Third World is impossible to know. The emphasis he placed upon the subversive military threat to United States security was probably the only compelling argument he could use against the critics of foreign aid. The President was also capable of a sanctimonious appeal to goodness, as when he said to the leaders of the American voluntary relief agencies in April of 1962 that the purpose of foreign assistance programs was " . . . to relieve misery, hunger, and affliction wherever they may be found . . . Yours is a mission of mercy . . . ." <sup>188</sup> Such statements as this, so contrary to the proven efficacy of the militant demagoguery of American politicians who targeted the Communist military

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<sup>187</sup>Congressional Quarterly, p. 310.

<sup>188</sup>Public Papers, p. 134.



threat, suggest the likelihood that President Kennedy really desired the improvement of living conditions in the Third World for compassionate reasons. He continued to sound this theme long after it became a political liability.

On March 12, the Christian Science Monitor ran a page one article which said, "Year by year, Congress becomes a little more reluctant . . . " to vote for foreign economic and military aid. "The very task itself is monumental - nothing short of making over the economics and mental outlook of the world's awakening masses."<sup>189</sup> This article asked the very questions long raised by Passman's committee, to wit: what national U.S. purpose was served in raising the living standards of the world's masses and, furthermore, was such a goal even attainable. The Mansfield Committee weighed in with a hard-nosed rejection of United States foreign aid that did not serve strictly national purposes, and the report of the Clay Committee which shortly followed provided an expanded expression of the same sentiment.

The Clay Committee presented its report to the President on March 22. Earlier that day, knowing what the report contained, AID administrator David Bell prepared a memo for the President on his imminent meeting with Clay, saying it, . . . is primarily designed to establish good Presidential relations with General Clay concerning the

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<sup>189</sup>Christian Science Monitor, March 12, 1963, p. 1.

report, which will encourage the General to interpret the report and its dollar implications for the program favorably in public comment on the report thereafter . . . . I suggest the President bear in mind . . . that we will need his assistance in properly interpreting the report in support of foreign aid before Congress.<sup>190</sup>

If the President expected the Clay Committee report to be supportive of his strategic development goals, he must have been thoroughly disappointed with its conclusions. The public presentation of the Clay Committee report was anticipated to be the most important element in the President's catalogue of means with which to encourage congressional support for the foreign aid program. The March 22 Christian Science Monitor alerted its readers to the importance of the report on page one:

The big subject boiling up here and all ready to erupt is nothing more or less than the American place in world affairs . . . In its immediate form it is a question of foreign aid, with the tough report of the 10-man commission under Gen. Lucius D. Clay about to be issued, and Rep. Otto E. Passman (D) of Louisiana, chairman of the House foreign Aid Appropriations Committee, demanding in advance that President Kennedy's \$4,900,000,000 foreign aid budget be cut down to \$2,500,000,000 . . . The cutting edge of an attack upon American foreign policy will probably develop in congress over foreign aid. Almost every economic and political sign indicates the greatest congressional onslaught since the program began.<sup>191</sup>

The Clay Committee report was very critical of the foreign aid program. The report was endorsed by all its

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<sup>190</sup>JFK Office Files, Part 1, Reel 2, frame 320.

<sup>191</sup>Christian Science Monitor, March 22, 1963, p. 1.

members, Republicans and Democrats, businessmen and academics alike, with the one exception of labor leader George Meany. It blasted the waste of United States resources on programs which did little or nothing to benefit American citizens, decrying,

. . . its burden on the already heavily pressed taxpayer . . . there has been a feeling that we are trying to do too much for too many too soon, that we are over-extended in resources and under-compensated in results, and that no end of foreign aid is either in sight or in mind.<sup>192</sup>

Rejecting the administration's most compelling argument for the efficacy of development aid, the report sought to separate the success of Marshall Plan aid to Europe from subsequent aid to the developing world.

The miracle of post-war recovery in Western Europe was made possible by the application of temporary aid to countries whose well-established economic, political and social systems and trained manpower could use it wisely. In the less developed nations, most of these conditions do not exist.<sup>193</sup>

Although the report did endorse the concept of development assistance and the United States interest therein--due to the American tradition of charity, its interest in expanding markets, and the increased resistance of stable and prosperous peoples to communist subversion--it disavowed the President's purpose and endorsed the call

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<sup>192</sup>JFK Office Files, Part 1, Reel 2, frames 277-300.

<sup>193</sup>Ibid.

for cuts in the aid budget, saying, " . . . we are convinced that reductions are in order in present military and economic assistance programs."<sup>194</sup> The only specific figure cited in the report was that a reduction of \$500 million could have been saved from the current AID budget had the report's guidelines been implemented a year earlier. This recommendation unleashed an unintended furor. As an article in the New York Times pointed out the day after the report was issued,

Because the current foreign aid appropriation was already \$1,000,000,000 less than the President requested for the New Year in his January budget estimate, the report prompted congressional demands that the asking figure be cut at least \$1,500,000,000.<sup>195</sup>

Despite the report's unwelcome criticisms of foreign aid, the President had to make the best of the situation by endorsing its findings. He could hardly reject publicly the conclusions of such a distinguished group of men that he had appointed and in whose prescience he had placed such confidence. On March 24 he wrote Clay, thanking him for his committee's efforts and pledging to follow its recommendations. The President's letter recapitulated the major points in the Clay Committee's report. Kennedy wrote:

You may be sure that the Committee's recommendations including greater selectivity, stricter self-help

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<sup>194</sup>Ibid.

<sup>195</sup>New York Times, March 23, 1963, p. 30.

standards, greater participation by the developed countries in aid efforts and continued improvements in administration, will be carefully applied in our continuing review of this program.<sup>196</sup>

Despite this assurance, the President and his men began a counter-attack, emphasizing the impending danger which the President had used to mobilize the nation during the 1960 election. In effect, the administration claimed a greater apprehension of an immediate communist threat which could be stemmed by the benevolent application of American resources. Walt Rostow, by then the State Department's top planning official, insisted on March 30,

I can think of no moment in the postwar years when it would be less appropriate for us radically to reduce our aid programs or to despair of achieving important results for the national interest through these programs.<sup>197</sup>

On April 2, the President addressed Congress on the foreign aid program for 1964. Foreign aid, he averred, was " . . . not merely the right thing to do, but clearly in our national interest . . . ." <sup>198</sup> Not only had Kennedy come out swinging, but he acted to consolidate his position for a better defense. He endorsed the findings of the Clay Committee and, in a surprising departure from custom, announced that he was reducing his January budget request by

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<sup>196</sup>Public Papers, p. 288.

<sup>197</sup>Christian Science Monitor, March 30, 1963, p. 3.

<sup>198</sup>Stebbins, p. 35.

\$400 million dollars, from \$4.9 billion to \$4.5 billion.<sup>199</sup> The President was attempting to defuse the inevitable call for foreign aid reductions in the wake of the Clay report by taking the lead, but he was only further attacked by Congressman Passman, who responded by sending a letter to every member of the House of Representatives complaining that there was still \$7 billion in unspent aid money still in the foreign aid pipeline.<sup>200</sup> Far from being dissuaded by the President's aid reduction gambit, Passman pressed his advantage. Passman savored his victory over the strategic development advocates and said he finally felt vindicated by the results of the Mansfield and the Clay reports.<sup>201</sup>

The administration could only resort to the invocation of danger and appeal to fear as it attempted to counter the erosion of support for foreign aid. Secretary Rusk, despite his apparent ambivalence towards the Third World, went into the fray on April 6 and 8 before the House Foreign Affairs Committee. He announced during testimony that American opponents of aid were abetting the Communist design of world domination.<sup>202</sup> Passman responded, "Congress will never give

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<sup>199</sup>Christian Science Monitor, April 3, 1963, p. 1.

<sup>200</sup>Ibid.

<sup>201</sup>Ibid., April 4, 1963, p. 19.

<sup>202</sup>Ibid., April 8, 1964, p. 1.

him a dollar in foreign aid if he makes statements like that."<sup>203</sup> When Rusk appeared before Passman's appropriations subcommittee the following month, he played the same card:

This question is not a question of friendship. This is a struggle to the death (with) the meanest conspiracy aimed at the safety and well-being of the United States we have ever run across in the history of the government.<sup>204</sup>

One might expect that such words from the Secretary of State would occasion some apprehension among the media and the public, but they did not. Hyperbole had been the hallmark of political discourse since the Truman administration first appreciated the effectiveness of "scaring hell" out of the electorate in order to promote funding for foreign aid. The widespread public anxiety occasioned by the Russian launch of the Sputnik satellite, which President Kennedy used to great effect in first attaining the Presidency and then implementing his program of international activism, had evaporated by 1963. On April 21, Felix Belair, Jr. wrote in the New York Times that the opposition to the President's program included, fatally, the leadership of the President's own party among his recent Senate colleagues:

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<sup>203</sup>Ibid.

<sup>204</sup>Foreign Operations Appropriations for 1964. Hearings before a Subcommittee of the Committee on Appropriations. House of Representatives (Washington D.C.: USGPO, 1963.) Part 2, page 31.

It is probably the Senate's worst kept secret that its Democratic leadership triumvirate of Senators Mansfield, Humphrey and Fulbright have long wanted a more concentrated foreign aid program with more limited objectives and a somewhat smaller scale.<sup>205</sup>

On July 8, David Bell sent a memo to the President on the dismal prospects for foreign aid which acknowledged, "As you know, there is considerable sentiment in both authorizing committees for a deep cut."<sup>206</sup> The appeal to fear had lost at least some of its political effectiveness relative to the danger of communist subversion in the Third World. The course of the year saw Congress cut the President's original \$4.9 billion dollar budget request to an appropriation of \$3.2 billion. It rejected President Kennedy's idealism as threatenig a misappropriation of the nation's wealth. His optimistic and benign program was condemned as naive. The occasion for the next great surge of American international spending would be the affront to American national pride by a militant challenge to the emerging nation of Vietnam. The threat had been defined during Kennedy's articulation of the necessity for foreign aid. Ironically, the United States shortly embarked upon a crusade against demons which had been devalued during Kennedy's foreign aid battle with Congress in 1963.

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<sup>205</sup>New York Times, April 21, 1963, p. E4.

<sup>206</sup>JFK Office Files, Part 3, Reel 1, frame 810.



## CHAPTER 7

### THE LESSONS AND THE AFTERMATH OF THE FOREIGN AID DEFEAT

The failure of Kennedy's foreign aid program revealed deep skepticism of its hopeful premises by all segments of the American public. The idea of strategic development had lost intellectual persuasiveness by the time President Kennedy lost his battle for increased congressional funding of foreign aid in 1963. Significantly enough, critics of the concept of strategic development included some of those intellectuals who had championed United States activism in the Third World. Henry Kissinger published The Necessity for Choice in 1960, in which he attacked the foundation of the strategic development idea: "There is no sense pretending," he wrote, "that the problem of political development is very amenable to outside influence."<sup>207</sup> Kissinger's mention of the unlikelihood of benevolent political influence by the United States government was a contradiction of the development economists' prediction that United States economic aid would promote democracy as a by-product of economic development, an idea which was behind President Kennedy's conviction that foreign aid was "the right thing to do."

Rostow and Millikan had written in 1957 that the

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<sup>207</sup>Kissinger, The Necessity for Choice, p. 318.

American people would respond to " . . . the historic American sense of mission--a mission to see the principles of national independence and human liberty extended on the world scene."<sup>208</sup> This they failed to do due to the cost and skepticism about the plan's effectiveness. Theorists in and out of government had predicted that democracy would follow a rising standard of living. Kissinger, among others, concluded that the two phenomena were not related. "Indeed," he wrote, "there is no country in which democratic institutions developed after industrialization and as a result of economic development."<sup>209</sup>

At the new President's request, Kissinger's Harvard colleague John Kenneth Galbraith gave the President a private report on foreign aid in early February, 1961. In it he said, "The prime difficulty of present aid policy is that it is based on a highly convenient but wholly erroneous view of the requirements for economic development."<sup>210</sup> Then he proceeded to invert the development economists' postulation that economic development would lead to better societies. Rather, he said, literacy and education, social

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<sup>208</sup>Millikan and Rostow, p. 8.

<sup>209</sup>Ibid., p. 290. Kissinger observed that the American and British democracies developed in agrarian societies while totalitarianism followed German and Japanese industrialization.

<sup>210</sup>JFK Office Files, Part 1, Reel 2, frame 1111.

justice, a reliable government administration and clear purposes for the use of aid money would be required before economic development itself could take place. He further condemned the performance of foreign aid ever since Truman's Point Four program:

After between ten and twelve years of effort and expenditure, we have a right to enquire whether the countries we have been aiding are on the way to self-sustaining advance . . . In most of these countries poverty, ignorance, and the potentiality for disorder are just as great as they were ten years ago.<sup>211</sup>

Foundations and universities promoted the effectiveness of development aid perhaps, in part, because it justified their active participation in the effort to thwart the apparent danger of international communism. Their conception was based upon the complicated juxtaposition of social science and political action and it was used as a lever to pry funds from a reluctant Congress. Passman complained during the fiscal year 1961 appropriations hearings that "It is our ICA men who are being . . . brainwashed by every type of teacher and professor on an incredible variety of subjects."<sup>212</sup>

Dean Edward S. Mason had been a pivotal figure in the field of development economics at Harvard and his inclusion

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<sup>211</sup>Ibid., frame 1114.

<sup>212</sup>JFK Office Files, Part 3, Reel 23, frame 181. The International Cooperation Administration was the predecessor to AID.

on the Clay Committee probably gratified the President's expectation for a favorable report.<sup>213</sup> Yet Mason harbored doubts which help to explain his agreement with the critical nature of the Clay Committee's conclusions. His criticism of the premises of development economics was explicitly stated in May 1963 during a series of lectures before the Council on Foreign Relations. Expanding the substance of the lectures into a book the following year, Mason criticized the shallow character of development theory, saying, ". . . the study of connections between development assistance and economic development and its political and social consequences is a very thinly cultivated field."<sup>214</sup> Mason looked back to the intellectual justification for the expenditure of billions of public dollars and found they had not passed the test of time.

In the "brave new world" of President Truman's Point Four, all things seemed possible. Technical assistance was going to lift the underdeveloped world by its bootstraps without the need for large flows of capital. When these hopes were disappointed, there appeared on the scene the econometricians brandishing their savings ratios and capital-output co-efficients. They proceeded to demonstrate that all that was needed to increase per capita income by X per cent per annum

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<sup>213</sup>Schlesinger, *ibid.*, p. 598. Schlesinger says David Bell was opposed to the idea of the Clay Committee and asked that Mason be added to provide balance.

<sup>214</sup>Edward S. Mason, Foreign Aid and Foreign Policy (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), p. 5. This book was published for the Council on Foreign Relations. The text was expanded from lectures delivered to the Council in May 1963.

was a savings ratio of Y, plus enough foreign exchange to permit domestic savings to be effectively invested. These experts too are now somewhat less vocal, and it is coming to be recognized that there are more things in economic development than are dreamed of in this philosophy.<sup>215</sup>

And what of the dominant figure in the field of development theory, the man whose convictions about the necessity for Third World development had propelled him onto the White House staff and then into the primary policy planning position in the State Department? Walt Rostow appears to have shed his conviction about the efficacy of the gradual approach to the stabilization of the world order shortly after his appointment to government. He donned the mantle of a warrior whose ardor for combat favored a direct path to the prize of American hegemony. In a memo to the President on June 17, 1961, Rostow evoked the image of the Second World War as he described "The Shape of the Battle."

In these five months I have been reminded of 1942. Then too, many things were sliding against us: the Philippines, Singapore, the Russian Front, the Western Desert, the Battle of the Atlantic . . . . But to turn the tide we must win over two defensive battles: Berlin and Viet-Nam.<sup>216</sup>

On November 11, 1961, in another memo to the President, Rostow proposed sending 5,000 United States combat troops to South Vietnam in order to gain the immediate support of

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<sup>215</sup>Ibid., p. 22.

<sup>216</sup>JFK Office Files, Part 2, Reel 5, frame 521.

South Vietnam's President for the liberalization of his regime. "Our case for asking a great deal from Diem would be strengthened," wrote Rostow, "if this threshold in U.S. action were passed."<sup>217</sup> Showing his newly acquired preference for militant action, Rostow specifically condemned the failure of the State Department to advocate the use of military force to prop up existing Third World governments. Referring to a State Department paper which defined policy options for the President, Rostow wrote, ". . . there is a general attitude in the State Department paper which I regard as dangerous. It would inhibit U.S. action on our side of the truce lines of the cold war . . ."<sup>218</sup> A few days later, Rostow showed he harbored no resentment of Kissinger's criticism of development economics by recommending him to the President for a position on the Secretary of Defense's staff.<sup>219</sup>

Since the early 1950's, Rostow had utilized the communist menace to enlist foundation funding for his scholarly studies. His apprehension of the threat did not diminish as he used his official position as a pulpit to sound the alarm. However, his pattern of continuing to call

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<sup>217</sup>Ibid., frame 605.

<sup>218</sup>Ibid., frame 606.

<sup>219</sup>Ibid., frame 707.

attention to the United States' vulnerability was not foreordained. His fellow academic John Kenneth Galbraith took a much more relaxed view toward South Vietnam in particular. In a cable to President Kennedy in early 1962, he asked:

Incidentally, who is the man in your administration who decides what countries are strategic? I would like to have his name and address and ask him what is so important about this real estate in the space age.<sup>220</sup>

One of the things so important about it to assorted scholars, soldiers and bureaucrats was its utility in justifying the expenditure of public funds.

The Democratic Party had used the discontent over the national security implications of the Sputnik launching to gain political power and to implement the innovative Third World program. President Kennedy's continuous support for the idea throughout his presidency suggests that he was not a cynical man with little faith in the capacity of human societies for moving along the path of self-improvement, even if he found raising the communist threat useful in acquiring political power. The continuity of his expressed belief in the promise of strategic development suggests that he adhered to the old virtue of sincerity of stated conviction.

His vision was on a high plane. Arthur Schlesinger,

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<sup>220</sup>Rust, *ibid.*, p. 70.

Jr. was privy to the President's concern in July 1961 when Khrushchev's challenge over Berlin, the humiliation of the Bay of Pigs fiasco and the indecisive proceedings of the Laotian negotiations pointed to the imminence of a direct contest with the communist powers. Schlesinger recalled:

The President said he was not interested in an exchange of standard of living boasts with the Russians or in an anthology of cold war banalities. What he wanted was a fresh analysis of the conceptions of history and the future implicit in the democratic position.<sup>221</sup>

The impulse to sweep the cobwebs of Cold War pre-conception from the government's national security machinery reflected Kennedy's optimistic confidence in his ability to find a solution to the existence of violence as a corollary to emerging Third World nationalism. It was Kennedy's nature to express empathy with the suffering of other persons, an inclination which also helps to explain the sympathetic response he provoked among both Americans and people around the world. As Schlesinger noted

Kennedy rarely lost sight of other people's motives and problems. For all the presumed coolness on the surface, he had an instinctive tendency to put himself into the skins of others.<sup>222</sup>

The broad, if superficial, scope of his education, his

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<sup>221</sup>Schlesinger, p. 613. Kennedy was unique among post-war presidents in having intellectuals at beck and call to provide "fresh analyses of the conceptions of history." See Thomas C. Reeves, A Question of Character.

<sup>222</sup>Schlesinger, p. 118.



eclectic reading, and his government experience during the postwar crises in the developing world gave the President a unique focus for the ends to be attained in the vigorous application of the machinery of the American government to the dislocations of colonial collapse. The moment had arrived: Kennedy had the will and the means to effect the subsequent course of world development. "Still the policy remained peculiarly an exercise in presidential diplomacy," wrote Schlesinger, noting the lack of an American political constituency for this venture. "Kennedy became, in effect, Secretary of State for the Third World."<sup>223</sup>

The President took his leap without pulling the rest of the government along with him. The difficulty the President faced was built into the machinery of the separation of powers; to wit, he not only had to find a new conception of history, he had to fund his new conception of history. Kennedy's experiences as the profligate son of a wealthy family, enamored in later life, one might add, of the Keynesian lack of restraint in government spending, did not prepare him for his losing battle with the Congressional appropriations committees. Still, he appeared to be convinced of the propitious moment in history for foreign aid. As he reviewed the dismal prospects for the foreign

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<sup>223</sup>Schlesinger, p. 509.

aid bill in April, 1963, Kennedy asked,

. . . and what changes do we face at this juncture in world history? . . . I believe it is a crucial juncture. Our world is near the climax of an historic convulsion. A tidal wave of national independence has nearly finished its sweep through lands which contain one out of every three people in the world.<sup>224</sup>

Although the strategic development concept was being throttled by a Congress both uneasy over spending and unconvinced of the soundness of the doctrine, that portion of the doctrine which had military implications and which had been absorbed by the Department of Defense continued to be funded. Counterinsurgency had lost its role as the limited component in a campaign for economic and social progress and became merely a minor component in the application of American military power. After searching for an expanded Army role in the 1950's which swung from the pentomic tactical nuclear model to the small-unit special forces idea, the Army was able to revert to its conventional form. Ironically, the conventional expansion came about disguised as an innovative counter-insurgent doctrine. Referring to Vietnam, the test case for the United States to influence the course of Third World rural insurgencies, national security aid Robert Komer later said " . . . counterinsurgency programs remained a small tail to a

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<sup>224</sup>Congressional Quarterly Almanac 1963, p. 983.

largely conventional military dog . . . ."<sup>225</sup>

The initial justification for the application of counterinsurgency to all aspects of the official American presence in developing nations was the conception that only judicious and discriminate power, combined with pacific activities, could solidify the support of rural populations in what was primarily a political, not a military, context. Contrary to this conception, the Department of Defense used the credibility which the term "counterinsurgency" had acquired but applied it to tactics using conventional heavy weapons, the use of which defeated the intention to tread delicately in foreign political affairs. As Douglas Blaufarb notes:

The counterinsurgency forces of the United States were thus ordained, when committed to combat, to be dependent upon roads, to use weapons which would of necessity harm civilians caught in their fire while causing little harm to the nimble guerrillas, and to impact massively upon the host society in a way which could not but arouse nationalistic feelings.<sup>226</sup>

The shift from a political to a martial emphasis was scarcely remarked upon in Washington. Why would politicians question success? On May 15, 1963 General Taylor appeared with Secretary McNamara before Passman's committee to proclaim the Army's success. Referring solely to the

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<sup>225</sup>W. Scott Thompson and Donaldson D. Frizzell, eds., The Lessons of Vietnam (New York: Crane, Russak and Company, 1977), p. 213.

<sup>226</sup>Blaufarb, pp. 81-82.

military assistance part of the foreign aid program, Taylor told the committee:

In the bitter struggle in the Republic of Vietnam 1962 was a critical year. For the first time in 15 years the people of Vietnam, with our military assistance, started winning instead of losing their fight to protect their freedom.<sup>227</sup>

Passman took this opportunity to cite the concurrence of the Clay Committee with his long-held view of foreign aid. He told Taylor and McNamara,

. . . let me say that the Clay Committee has pointed out some of the things this committee has been pointing out for years. A member of the Clay Committee, a high ranking member, said to me recently that without the actions which had been taken by this committee there would today be no foreign aid program, that had it not been restrained it would have fallen of its own weight.<sup>228</sup>

Roger Hilsman was one of the few who regretted the passing of strategic development. In December 1962 he made a study of the need to apply the social and economic programs which would make political capital of the military presence and concluded that there " . . . appears to be no reason as yet to question the soundness of the concept, but there is a very real question as to how well and wholeheartedly it is being put into effect."<sup>229</sup>

Few, if any, political consequences attended the shift of emphasis to a hardball military response to what was,

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<sup>227</sup>Foreign Operations Appropriations, Part 2, p. 75.

<sup>228</sup>Ibid.

<sup>229</sup>Hilsman, p. 451.

after all, a perceived threat to the United States' national security. The social and economic programs which had been deemed essential to the success of strategic development could be ignored because United States security was being safeguarded without them. In late 1962, Army Chief of Staff General Earle G. Wheeler disavowed counterinsurgency altogether, saying, "It is fashionable in some quarters to say that the problems in Southeast Asia are primarily political and economic, rather than military. I do not agree."<sup>230</sup>

President Kennedy, however, was not convinced of the efficacy of the Pentagon's approach. In January 1963 he sent Hilsman and White House aide Michael Forrestal to Vietnam to report on the situation.<sup>231</sup> Hilsman and Forrestal's report provoked a " . . . reaction of extreme nervousness" in the President.<sup>232</sup> In an interview with the Congressional Research Service fifteen years later, Forrestal said:

The thing that bothered him most about the report was that we were fighting a war . . . with massive military means in a situation which was essentially a civil war . . . We were killing lots of other people at the same

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<sup>230</sup>Rust, *ibid.*, p. 86.

<sup>231</sup>Forrestal was McGeorge Bundy's assistant who had taken Rostow's place when Rostow went to chair the State Department's Policy Planning Council.

<sup>232</sup>Gibbons, p. 138.

time we were trying to kill Viet Cong.<sup>233</sup>

Forrestal says Kennedy tried to limit the arbitrary use of artillery, air power, and sweeps by large units, although " . . . that was very difficult to do because our army supported all those activities."<sup>234</sup>

Meanwhile, Maxwell Taylor, who had given up responsibility for counterinsurgency upon becoming Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in September, 1962, supported the injudicious use of large unit actions by his hand-picked commander of the United States' military mission to South Vietnam, General Paul Harkins. Harkins favored a "national explosion plan" whereby every South Vietnamese military unit in the country would simultaneously strike out on the offensive at the propitious moment.<sup>235</sup> In Taylor's 1972 recapitulation of the events of this time, he never expresses enthusiasm for counterinsurgency, or states its difference from conventional warfare, or attempts to define it at all. After lauding the effectiveness of conventional military forces, he makes one brief reference, saying only, "The counterinsurgency program was bogged down."<sup>236</sup>

When the efficacy of world development aid was widely

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<sup>233</sup>Ibid.

<sup>234</sup>Ibid.

<sup>235</sup>Hilsman, p. 464.

<sup>236</sup>Taylor, Swords and Plowshares, p. 326.

disavowed, the Department of Defense provided an alternate program which was immediate rather than long-term. How this would have been accepted in the long run by President Kennedy had he lived is pure conjecture. One can only note the emphasis Kennedy repeatedly placed upon the slow processes of history and his recognition that civilians were often the victims of conventional military force applied to political war.

When the doctrine of strategic development failed in its utility as a tool for leveraging funds from Congress, the organs of government abandoned even the pretense of conviction and reverted to their traditional interests. Contrary to recent experience, newfound satisfaction with America's national security helped to divert the focus of the American government and public from the developing world.

The appearance of success by conventional military means coincided with disarray among America's enemies. At the same time that the perceived threat to the national security was declining, the so-called "communist monolith" revealed both weaknesses and deep fissures in its unity. On April 5, 1963, the New York Times reported that Secretary of Defense McNamara had unequivocally dismissed the alarms generated by the "missile-gap," saying that the Soviet Union would not equal United States economic or military strength,

" . . . within our lifetime."<sup>237</sup> An Associated Press dispatch in January 1963 reported, "World Communism, staggered by the events of 1962, has begun the New Year on the defensive, facing damaging losses from widespread shock and disillusionment."<sup>238</sup> The article pointed to the Sino-Soviet split, the Cuban missile crisis, and the ban on communist party activity by the revolutionary government of Algiers. Furthermore, China had alienated many in the Third World by its invasion of India in late 1962. The Christian Science Monitor editorialized in late January 1963:

That Peking did not consult Moscow on the Indian invasion was hardly a surprise to the experts. Ever since the Fall of 1961, as far as can be learned, the Chinese have not consulted the Kremlin on foreign policy.<sup>239</sup>

Due to the disarray of America's enemies, a measure of satisfaction in United States global security was expressed across the domestic political spectrum. Even arch-conservative Senator Barry Goldwater acknowledged the Sino-Soviet split. At a Lincoln Day speech in February 1963 he said, "I'm beginning to think more and more that the China-Russian break might be serious, and," he added hopefully, "the time might come when these great countries would fight

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<sup>237</sup>New York Times, April 5, 1963, p. 1.

<sup>238</sup>Christian Science Monitor, January 5, 1963, p. 4.

<sup>239</sup>Ibid., January 24, 1963, p. 18.



each other."<sup>240</sup> In March, 1963, Khrushchev visited the United States and expressed regret over the Chinese invasion of India. In retaliation, he withdrew Soviet economic assistance to China, leading the Christian Science Monitor to editorialize, ". . . the schism between Marxists has gone much deeper than many in America or Western Europe had supposed."<sup>241</sup> In mid-March, Ambassador to the United Nations Adlai Stevenson stated that Soviet influence in the nations of Africa and Asia "diminished perceptibly last year,"<sup>242</sup> and in late April, the Monitor reported on its first page, "The foreign policy theory most cherished currently by Washington's officialdom is that the Communists have lost their post-World War II momentum."<sup>243</sup> All of this compounded the difficulty of administration advocates who had to persuade Congress to fund the American response to the communist threat with a highly theoretical set of postulations about the long-term behavior of distant human beings and institutions. Ironically, the decline of national security concerns in mid-1963 was the prelude to the United States' massive military intrusion into the Vietnamese civil war. It is partially comprehensible as the

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<sup>240</sup>Ibid., February 15, 1963, p. 3.

<sup>241</sup>Ibid., March 1, 1963, p. 20.

<sup>242</sup>Ibid., March 15, 1963, p. 7

<sup>243</sup>Ibid., April 26, 1963, p. 1.

failure of a peaceful doctrine to provide direction to a national security apparatus which, driven by personal and institutional self-interest, continued its forward momentum in traditional roles undeterred by the loss of a leader who valued compassion and historical reflection.

Since the end of the Second World War, United States spending abroad to protect the national security has been in the hundreds of billions of dollars, in the tens of thousands of American lives, and in the millions of foreign ones. The big categories of this spending are the Marshall Plan, the Korean War, Third World development spending, and the American war in Vietnam. Among these, Third World development spending is an anomaly in that Third World deprivation was the result of no dramatic events, but seemed to be in the natural order of things. Unlike Korea and Vietnam, no enemy presented a military challenge to developing nations which demanded an American response. No, Third World development aid required that the American people, summoning the popular compassion which led them to back the Marshall Plan, support a plan which answered an indirect threat and which relied upon discreet methods of self-defense anchored in the belief that human beings and institutions are perfectible. Small wonder that popular support was lacking. The doctrine owed its initial influence to the narrow purposes of existing intellectual and national security institutions and to the coincidence

that it provided the winning candidate in the 1960 presidential campaign with an aura of idealism and insight into world problems.

Skepticism about the predicted behavior of the recipients of United States aid was widespread. The leadership of recipient nations was supposed to promote social and economic liberalization with American foreign aid funds in order to alleviate the grievances of social injustice which the communists could exploit. This scenario seemed unlikely even to the State Department official who served as liaison to the White House for counterinsurgency. U. Alexis Johnson wrote publicly in the July 1962 Foreign Service Journal that the idea was illogical:

To bring about some degree of social, economic and political justice . . . will inevitably require positive action by the local government . . . Yet the means we advocate may strike at the very foundations . . . of the government's control.<sup>244</sup>

Indeed, in most developing nations, power was held by an autocrat who maintained his position by a system of distribution of rewards to those who were loyal and the distribution of punishments--the means of which were often part of the United States aid package--to those who were not. The introduction of democratic political representation and economic fairness could upset the autocrats' position of power. John Paton Davies was more

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<sup>244</sup>Johnson, p. 336.

blunt than Johnson. "What was odd," he wrote, "was the widespread American assumption that those enjoying privilege and authority would be good sports and yield both at our behest."<sup>245</sup>

The doctrine of strategic development was a matter of wishful thinking, of hoping for one mutually beneficial solution to the two problems of American national security and Third World misery. Given the martial character that began to dominate the Third World campaign, it is likely that frustrated Americans were eager to finally join battle with communism after having absorbed the decade-long propaganda campaigns of their government and universities and found the existing autocratic states to be useful allies. That world communism was losing its momentum may only have inspired the public to back the application of a knock-out punch which would ensure American security. If those who were most informed among the American people adopted this course, small wonder that the public followed suit in favor of the quick fix. Historian Gabriel Kolko says Walt Rostow became a champion of working with military rather than civil governments by early 1963 because:

The military establishments were far better transmitters of Western values and the most promising modernizers of the traditional orders. And because the United States controlled aid to them as well as direct training, Rostow urged much greater exploitation of these levers

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<sup>245</sup>Davies, p. 31.

to advance U.S. interests.<sup>246</sup>

Unfortunately, the recipient states of American economic and military largesse were often governed by the same persons whose autocratic behavior spurred the social unrest which the communists intended to exploit. If one followed Kissinger's lead, any overthrow of an existing government by a lower social group was prima facie evidence of communist intrigue. Hence, the development of the unlikely American program to induce the existing leadership to institute revolutionary goals. John Lewis Gaddis writes,

This in a nutshell was the threat: that having committed itself to maintaining the existing distribution of power in the world, the United States could not allow challenges to that distribution even to appear to succeed against its will, because perceptions of power could be as important as the real thing. Like Rostow, an administration committed to diversity, aware of the divisions among its adversaries, had nonetheless worked itself into a universal obligation to maintain a status quo . . . . All of which suggest that while expanding perceptions of threat can broaden interests and enlarge means, the reverse is not necessarily the case. The narrowed perception of threat that followed Khrushchev's moves toward detente and confirmation of the Sino-Soviet split produced no corresponding reduction of interests; instead they remained much as they had been during the Eisenhower administration. This in turn suggests that interests may be as much functions of means as of threats . . . .<sup>247</sup>

That the means were available was demonstrated by the expenditures reached in the American War in Vietnam which

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<sup>246</sup>Gabriel Kolko, Anatomy of a War: Vietnam, the United States, and the Modern Historical Experience (New York: Random House, 1985), p. 117.

<sup>247</sup>John Lewis Gaddis, Strategies of Containment (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), p. 213.

followed. The means for the next great surge of American national security spending in the Third World were almost solely at the disposal of the Department of Defense since the failure of strategic development and its own reluctance took the State Department out of its operational role. Plus, the mantle of counterinsurgency provided cover for conventional tactics when the Department of Defense was questioned about its ability to tread delicately in the troubled waters of foreign social unrest. The decade-long campaign for the doctrine of strategic development served to suppress the question of the advisability of United States involvement in the politics of the developing world.

Richard Goodwin, who wrote convincing speeches for John F. Kennedy deriding President Eisenhower's lack of vigorous involvement in the Third World, has since written: "Only much later, after years of turbulence and rivers of blood, did I come to understand how much I had underestimated Eisenhower."<sup>248</sup> Kennedy's humane prescription for United States policy was rejected by a Congress and a public which recognized its inherent logical flaws. "Worst of all," said John Paton Davies, "it was ineffectual, a defiance of diplomacy as the art of the possible."<sup>249</sup> The final words belong to Goodwin:

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<sup>248</sup>Goodwin, p. 73.

<sup>249</sup>Davies, p. 34.

Admittedly we were new to government, unfamiliar with the institutions of military and foreign policy, reluctant to challenge the assertions of men who had helped conduct the Cold War since its inception. But beneath the uninformed acquiescence, there was also arrogance--the unacknowledged, unspoken belief that we could understand, even predict, the elusive, often surprising, always conjectural course of historical change. Indeed, this false certainty underlay the belief--on both sides of the Iron Curtain--that the United States and the Soviet Union were engaged in a titanic, global struggle between communism and democratic capitalism for the allegiance of the world's people. That assumption dominated, and helped explain the first of the Kennedy years; only later would it yield to a more sophisticated awareness that the multitudinous globe could not be crammed into simple categories--friends and enemies, communists or anticommunists--that the world would go its own, unforeseeable way, not on one road or two, but along a myriad of divergent paths.<sup>250</sup>

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<sup>250</sup>Goodwin, p. 173.

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