

# THE UNFINISHED BUSINESS OF DIPLOMACY

*Norman A. Graebner*  
*Professor of History*  
*University of Illinois*

Diplomacy is always a tedious and trying endeavor. It is not so hopeless, however, that countless diplomatists of modern history, supported by far less power and intelligence than the United States possesses, have not arranged matters of profound significance through the simple application of reasoned judgment to international affairs. Yet without that freedom of choice, unencumbered by ideological preferences, which Washington advocated in his Farewell Address, there can be no genuine diplomacy. Whether the absence of flexibility in United States policy flows from political pressures, illusions of omnipotence, the national weakness for abstractions, the defense of prestige, or the sheer inertia of government matters little. Each of these factors succeeds only in reinforcing the others.

Within the context of an overdemanding national environment, can the United States mark off a series of diplomatic positions that best reflect the nation's long-range interests?

## DIPLOMACY AND EXERCISE OF POWER

The major achievements of American foreign policy since 1945—those which overshadow all others—have been the economic rehabilitation of Western Europe and Japan, and the maintenance of a military structure, largely through NATO, capable of guaranteeing the lines of demarcation in a divided Europe.

These accomplishments, remarkable and unprecedented as they are, have been limited to what the economic and military power of the United States will buy. Unfortunately it is true that for the industrially dominant United States the creation and employment of force has often been its easiest and its major contribution to world affairs. American power in this century has contributed to victory in two world wars and has stabilized a cold war. But power even of such magnitude will not do everything. On record, in fact, its employment in winning rather than preventing wars has brought few genuine gains. That power, unfortunately, contributed to the destruction of the old European balance of power which gave this nation its profound security before 1914. The stability of Europe, and with it America's favored position, required above all a balance between Germany and Russia. It could not survive a total victory of one over the other.

Nationalism and communism—the twin enemies of liberal traditions of the Western World—were unleashed on the world by World War I and received their second massive impetus from the second World War. Both of these movements demand that culture implement politics; both require undivided loyalty of their followers. In Latin America, Africa, and Asia the great challenge to tolerance and diversity comes from both nationalism and communism, perhaps more from the former than the latter. Nationalism lies closer to the basic human emotions and is easier to spread. Wherever communism appears to be dominant, much of its dominance rests upon its past exploitation of nationalism, and if it spreads elsewhere, it will be not because of its inherent merits but because of the strength that it may receive from nationalistic propaganda.

Thus, in the postwar world even its great power has not permitted the United States to resolve any of its controversies with its major antagonists—Russia and China—through the normal devices of diplomacy. NATO has not eliminated Soviet power and influence from Eastern Europe. Nor has American power and the American alliance system in the Pacific disposed of the Peiping regime or brought peace to Asia or Africa. This appears doubly strange inasmuch as American diplomatists enjoy the backing of a universally recognized national capacity to pulverize much of the earth's surface within a matter of hours. Unfortunately, from the viewpoint of the Western World, the USSR and China have also experienced a vast internal growth and the accumulation of such power and energy that the total Western effort has achieved a military and political stalemate rather than victory or even a settlement.

In the Far East especially the search for stability has proven to be agonizingly futile. Despite enormous effort, the United States has not succeeded in eliminating revolution, political turmoil, subversion, guerilla warfare, and all the other enemies of peaceful change and self-determination. The limits of power appear especially evident in South Viet Nam where the United States has demonstrated again its power to destroy on a massive scale. Whether that destruction is achieving political stability, however, is doubtful. As the usually perceptive James Reston wrote from Saigon late in August:

We are chasing guerrillas with bombs and it is apparently having much more effect on the Viet Cong than anybody thought possible, but in the process we are attacking and often destroying the areas we want to pacify. It is now estimated that there are between 500,000 and 600,000 refugees in this country. Most of them are living in shacks and pens that would make the slums of Harlem look like the LBJ Ranch. . . . This country normally produces a rice surplus, but this year the U. S. has already had to commit itself to bring in 100,000

tons of rice to make up for the lost production of peasants driven off the land. . . .

But above all the people of Viet Nam are trapped in a power struggle beyond their understanding or control. Maybe nothing can be done about it, but somewhere in a corner of the mind their tragedy must be remembered. For we could win the war and lose the people, and that would be the final irony of the story.

American power has brought stability outside Europe only to the region of the Caribbean where United States influence is completely dominant and where it holds the absolute strategic advantage over any nation of the Eastern Hemisphere which might choose to contest American purpose. This strategic advantage decreed the ultimate success of President John F. Kennedy in his confrontation with Nikita Khrushchev over the Cuban missile bases in October 1962. Yet the continued existence of the Castro government in Cuba illustrates again the limits of United States power to control political events in a region only ninety miles from American shores. The United States intervened in the Caribbean states on twenty occasions between 1898 and 1920. By 1930, however, it was clear that this policy had brought little political stability. Again in 1965 the United States, without fear of retaliation, landed troops in the Dominican Republic to protect its citizens and to prevent a possible Communist coup. There, too, it quickly became evident that the United States could not bring political salvation beyond the capacity and determination of the country's leaders to seek their own political solutions.

Power is of supreme importance in world affairs. It is a prerequisite for world leadership and for the defense of one's interests and security from open attack. That it has played an essential role in bringing security and even prosperity to the United States and Western Europe is beyond question. But that power, in short, has not permitted the United States to control events that lie outside its clearly recognized sphere of influence.

Through the logic of history and geography the United States has written into the record its vital concern for what happens in Europe and in the Western Hemisphere. However, the world simply does not recognize any body of established American interests in Asia. Countless students and leaders within the nations of Europe, Africa, and Asia who would not question the United States commitments to Europe and the Caribbean would deny that this nation possesses any interests in Asia significant enough to merit a general war in their defense. In the turmoil of Asia it is not easy to discover the relationship between the price of destruction and the gain to be derived.

Why the gains from sheer destruction are always illusive is clear enough. The power to destroy is not the power to control. At the level of war the United States could kill hundreds of millions of Asians in one day; at the level of politics it cannot govern the game of musical chairs in Saigon even though the South Vietnamese regime could not exist one month without the full economic, political, moral, and military support of the United States. With all of its power the United States cannot control one square foot of territory beyond its legal jurisdiction unless it chooses to engage in actual conquest. At Seattle in November 1961, President Kennedy reminded the American people that there were few decisions in world politics which this nation could determine:

. . . we must face problems [he said] that do not lend themselves to easy, quick or permanent solutions. And we must face the fact that the United States is never omnipotent nor omniscient, that we cannot always impose our will on the other 94 per cent of mankind, that we cannot right every wrong or reverse each adversity, and that therefore there cannot be an American solution for every world problem.

### THREE STREAMS OF AMERICAN THOUGHT

Fortunately the unfinished business of postwar diplomacy has not challenged the basic interests of the United States. But if the limits of what the existence of vast economic and destructive power will achieve have been reached on most diplomatic fronts, then all unfinished business must remain unfinished or be resolved through the methods of diplomacy and compromise. The problem is not alone that of terminating the cold war; it is more that of reducing those tendencies toward international anarchy in which even the most well-meaning nations, acting in unison, might lose control of events. The chief task confronting the United States—one that has always fallen to the *status quo* powers of the world—is that of encouraging the dissatisfied nations to refrain from aggression by maintaining that fine balance between sufficient power and sufficient flexibility which alone can produce a world of adequate security with a minimum of friction and conflict. It is this elusive balance which the United States and the Western World are seeking that offers the prospect of an improving future.

What disturbs the student of American foreign policy, however, is the clear dichotomy between the ubiquitous recognition of the nation's limited power by Washington officials and the actual demands placed on American policy in much of the world. At the heart of the dilemma is the relationship between government and a popular foreign policy. Too often politicians in search of public approbation draw the American people into questions purely diplomatic

—questions whose settlement can have no relationship to American opinion. Few governments since the eighteenth century have ventured far into foreign involvements without endeavoring to carry the sentiment of their countries with them. What matters, therefore, is not public opinion as a factor in policy creation, but what a people have been led to expect of their foreign policies and whether their expectations will permit a national leadership the liberty of formulating objectives abroad that have some relationship to both the nation's historic interests as well as its limited power. It is in this respect that the internal pressures on American leadership have been disturbing and unique.

Perhaps the reason is clear. Those editors, writers, or politicians who choose to extract partisan advantage from foreign policy questions invariably seize the most demanding of alternatives and insist that the government pursue them. Such maneuvering can be explained by the existence of three streams in American thought: the illusion of omnipotence, the spirit of nationalism, and the inclination of the nation's minorities to identify any acceptable foreign policy with the welfare of the countries of their origin.

### **Nation's Omnipotence**

The belief in the nation's omnipotence flows logically from a record of astonishing success that began in the eighteenth century. If the young republic of Franklin, Washington, and Jefferson managed to defend its interests in every diplomatic confrontation even with the great powers of Europe, then certainly the leading nation of the twentieth century should continue to do so.

Even more troublesome, and lying at the base of the American isolationist tradition, is the deep-seated conviction that the omnipotence of the United States relies less on the nation's physical power, always a limited entity, than on the peculiar qualities of American civilization which appeared predominant at the turn of the century when the United States enjoyed both international primacy and almost absolute security at a minimum of physical and financial effort. Unmindful of the unique role played by the nation's genuine insulation from world politics, its industrial capacity, the British navy, and the European balance of power in creating its favored position, countless Americans, conscious only of the strange relationship between the nation's security and its minimum defense expenditures, have found the country's strength in low taxes, its free enterprise system, and the moral promise of its democratic structure. This explains why those who demand the triumph of American purpose

abroad invariably demand a simultaneous reduction of the federal tax burden.

### **American Nationalism**

The nation's patriotic sentiments are as vulnerable to exploitation by foreign policy elites as is the notion of United States omnipotence. Yet the appeals to American nationalism have followed no consistent pattern, for their character reflects the peculiar requirements of the times. After the armistice of 1918 American nationalism expressed itself in a total repudiation of all foreign policy influences which might tarnish the brightness of American institutions or involve the country unnecessarily in world affairs. The nationalists of the twenties, taking up the cause of the Irish-Americans, the German-Americans, and other minority groups who were disappointed with Wilson's efforts at Versailles in behalf of self-determination, turned their abuse on Britain and the Allies.

Since World War II the basic appeal to American patriotism has logically taken the form of anti-communism, for to most Americans communism poses the ultimate challenge to American security, ideals, and institutions. The historic concept of mission, assigning to the United States the special obligation to secure the eventual triumph of universal freedom, simply reinforces the nation's anti-Soviet and anti-Chinese posture by insisting that any American policies abroad, worthy of the nation's ideals, must pursue the Wilsonian principle of self-determination to the elimination of all governments under Communist control. Goals based on such abstractions as self-determination of people may be attractive enough in public statements but, unfortunately, they have little meaning in diplomacy for the simple reason that they create purposes which transcend the nation's interests and, in practice, demand that others forfeit their positions, not on the basis of their inferior power, efficiency, or interest, but on the basis of their inferior moral and legal claims. This accounts for the fact that abstract objectives generally remain dead issues at all levels of policy formulation except that of rhetoric.

### **Uncompromising Opposition to Communist Bloc**

The perennial demand that the United States maintain its uncompromising opposition toward the Communist bloc has established a direct relationship between the nation's declared objectives in Europe and the will of powerful urban minorities of Eastern European extraction. The impact of these groups on United States wartime diplomacy is obvious enough from President Roosevelt's recorded conversations with Stalin at both Teheran and Yalta. What gave special force to

the country's uncompromising mood during the immediate postwar years, when the Grand Alliance finally disintegrated, was the decision of the Catholic Church to adopt not only the new American nationalism but also the cause of its constituent minorities from Eastern Europe. "The church," D. F. Fleming has written, "was the fixed rock on which every cold warrior could rely."

John Foster Dulles' program of liberation continued this special appeal to the nation's Slavic minorities. Like similar causes in American history, such as the Young America movement of 1852, liberation was designed less to free Hungarians and Poles than to capture the political allegiance of Eastern European groups within the United States. Indeed, during the 1952 presidential campaign Adlai Stevenson termed liberation "a cynical and transparent attempt, drenched in crocodile tears, to play upon the anxieties of foreign nationality groups in this country." Yet as late as October 1960, Vice President Richard Nixon, in his closing appeal to the voters of America, promised that with his election he would dispatch three former Presidents of the United States—Herbert Hoover, Harry Truman, and Dwight D. Eisenhower—to Eastern Europe to arrange for that region's liberation.

Unfortunately any successful appeals to American utopianism, nationalism, and hyphenism identify the most extreme demands on the enemy of the moment with patriotism. The more successful the appeal, the more its proponents saddle the nation with a diplomatic burden. When completely successful they force national behavior into a state of limbo wherein it can never settle its external conflicts with negotiation. Nor can it legitimately resolve them through war, for by common consent objectives so established transcend the nation's interests. In actual practice it means that the country is encouraged to cling to a variety of goals that can be achieved only through war while at the same time it abjures the use of force in their pursuit. The result can only be diplomatic deadlock.

Two classic examples of this self-imposed dilemma of pursuing peacefully what can be accomplished only through war can be found in the United States-Japanese quarrel over China and the United States-Soviet conflict over Eastern Europe. More recently the United States has become involved in a similar confrontation with China over the future of Southeast Asia. What has determined the nation's course in each conflict has been a variety of domestic pressures which have created the conviction that the United States possessed the power to direct and control the manifold changes on the world scene without resort to war. A recent journal editorial summarized the resulting dilemma for American leadership in the following terms:

There is . . . a crisis in leadership but it does not come from the failure to guide world events along our favorite paths. Rather does this crisis arise from the fact that our leadership has allowed the impression of U. S. omnipotence to be engraved into a basic dogma of Americanism. It has been said that to be aware of one's ignorance is the first step towards wisdom. Effective leadership begins when it is realized that there are limits to America's capabilities in the real world of the 1960's. Leadership will then be in the position to devise bold and imaginative programs to cope with a world convulsed by kaleidoscopic changes.

## BARRIERS TO NEGOTIATIONS

### Overexaggeration of Danger

What compounds the problem of inflexibility and overdemanding is the American habit of regarding all its enemies as insatiable. Perhaps the Tanaka Memorial, followed in the late thirties by the announcement of its "Co-prosperity Sphere" in the Orient, gave Japan the appearance of a nation bent on the total conquest of East and Southeast Asia. Yet there was little relationship between such alleged universal goals and the actual proposals embodied in Japanese diplomacy during the weeks preceding Pearl Harbor. The acceptance of limitless ambitions in an enemy discourages diplomacy both by reducing all negotiation to the level of appeasement and by encouraging the establishment of a countering purpose to seek that country's destruction as a matter of self-defense.

United States inflexibility toward Russia and China partakes of extreme assumptions regarding the danger which they pose. Perhaps no one has defined the Soviet challenge to American security and values in more universal terms than has Bertram D. Wolfe. One of his warnings regarding the Soviet Union, published in the January 1959 issue of *The New Leader*, ran as follows:

It is a deadly enemy. It is a deadly enemy because never for a moment does it abandon its two basic aims: to remake man, and to conquer the world. It is particularly our enemy—not because we so choose, but because it has chosen. It regards the strength and the way of life of the United States as the chief obstacle to its plan to remake its own people and to remake the world in the image of its blueprint.

Any definition of the Soviet problem in such terms dictates automatically a posture of limitless opposition, for any compromise with an insatiable enemy can lead only to retreat and ultimate collapse. Confronted with the extreme choice of total victory or total ruin, the United States, declares the argument, must pursue victory. "Anything less than victory, in the long run," Barry Goldwater warned the Senate in July 1961, "can only be defeat, degradation, and slavery." Defining the Chinese threat to Asia in the language of



universal ambition, Karl Lott Rankin, chief United States representative to the Republic of China from 1950 until 1958, wrote the State Department in April 1957:

A great people like the Chinese will never accept the permanent mutilation of their country. This only reinforces the conclusion that there can be no genuine lasting peace in Asia while half a billion Chinese remain under communist rule. Peace will remain in jeopardy and freedom a word of mockery until a reunited China joins the free world. Lenin said that the road to Paris lay through Peiping. In any case, China is half of Asia and Asia is half the world. The fate of China may well determine the fate of all.

For eleven years the United States rationale for involvement in South Viet Nam has been based on the domino theory that the enemy, never defined in terms more concrete than Communist aggression, is insatiable and if permitted any further successes will drive Western influence and power completely out of Asia and the Pacific. No American leader has stated this idea more often and with greater vehemence than has Henry Cabot Lodge, twice United States ambassador to Saigon. Lodge wrote in the *New York Times Magazine* of January 17, 1965:

Geographically, Vietnam stands at the hub of a vast area of the world—Southeast Asia—an area with a population of 240 million people extending 2,300 miles from north to south, and 3,000 miles from east to west. The Mekong River, one of the ten largest rivers in the world, reaches the sea in South Vietnam. He who holds or has influence in Vietnam can affect the future of the Philippines and Taiwan to the east, Thailand and Burma with their huge rice surpluses to the west, and Malaysia and Indonesia with their rubber, oil and tin to the south. Japan, Australia and New Zealand would in turn be deeply concerned by the Communization of South Vietnam.

Similarly General Earle G. Wheeler, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, declared in August 1965 that defeat in Viet Nam would only lead to the need of defending another line somewhere in Southeast Asia.

Unfortunately, the United States is never permitted to formulate actual policies that reflect the challenge as defined, and this failure, in large measure, destroys the seriousness of the definition itself. No Washington official has yet devised a policy which would liberate Eastern Europe or destroy the Peiping regime, for neither objective could be achieved short of World War III. Yet both of these objectives have been embedded in American rhetoric.

The day-to-day policies of the United States vis-a-vis Russia and China have sought coexistence, not victory, for the simple reason that American interests will permit no less and American power will

permit no more. The war in Viet Nam illustrates also the typical gap between the declared ends of policy—the defense of all Southeast Asia and the entire Pacific—and the established means of policy.

To prevent this general Communist conquest the United States, with its allies, is engaged in the dual action of fighting the Viet Cong in the jungles of South Viet Nam and bombing a variety of military and nonmilitary bases in North Viet Nam. Yet what is the precise relationship between such limited action and the ends of saving all Southeast Asia and more? If the threat to the Asian and Pacific world is total, then that danger cannot emanate from either the Viet Cong or Hanoi, for no one would insist that these jungle areas can generate more than very limited power. The enemy, as defined by the domino theory, must be China or, more reasonably, China and Russia combined, although even then it is not clear how any enemy, merely through capturing Saigon, can command the sea power required to conquer the entire world of the Pacific.

If China and Russia are the enemy in Asia, how can the United States dispose of the problem of conquest with its present course? The perennial effort to resolve the struggle with limited war indicates that the nation's leadership does not, after all, regard the domino theory as valid. If Saigon, moreover, is the key to the defense of the *status quo* in a vast region of the world, then it must also be the key to Communist success everywhere in Asia. If this is true, then what kind of effort must eventually be required to hold that city?

The dilemma created by the overexaggeration of danger and the resultant downgrading of diplomacy is illustrated clearly by the gradual acceleration of the Vietnamese war. United States leadership has made it definite on numerous occasions that it desires no war in South Viet Nam. "Let us be quite clear about this," Adlai Stevenson wrote in the August 24 issue of *Look*. "The United States has no desire to dominate. We have no illusions of omnipotence or omniscience. . . . We do not see ourselves as self-appointed gendarmes of this very troubled world. And we do not want to rely on muscle instead of diplomacy." The President has declared that he has no desire "to expand the war." When in July he announced his decision to increase the American troop commitment to 125,000 he added, "We do not want an expanding struggle with consequences that no one can perceive." During the campaign of 1964 the President declared repeatedly that he opposed going north and thus escalating the war. Yet beginning in February 1965, United States aircraft flew north and began bombing targets that have become decreasingly military in nature and increasingly closer to Hanoi and

the Chinese border. The President has often expressed his desire to avoid a land war in Asia. Nothing, he has said, would be more disastrous than to pit American soldiers against the 700 million people of China. Despite all of these statements, uttered with obvious sincerity, the United States is involved in an expanding ground war in Asia.

Nor is this necessarily the end. The growing commitment to war, as long as it produces something less than victory, will tend to generate new and powerful emotional, political, and military demands that the United States adopt any course of action that will win the war. Within the United States there is a vast conflict of opinion, but as Loudon Wainwright wrote in the July 23 issue of *Life*, there is a growing clamor for a "strategy of clobber. If things are going so badly, goes this strategy, why in God's name don't we just go in there and blast 'em where it hurts?" The nature of the blast and the delivery point, observes Wainwright, varies from one clobberer to another, but their impatience, he fears, will mount.

This discrepancy between intent and action in South Viet Nam flows naturally from the failure in Washington to establish objectives in that region which reflect the desire to avoid an escalating war. Wars bring an enemy to the conference table only at that point where the goals pursued are limited enough to encourage the limitation of war. The objectives, not the weapons used, determine whether a war will remain limited or not. Some possible objectives, adopted earlier, might have terminated the war long ago; other goals, if pursued, might prove to be elusive no matter what the magnitude of the war and the victory. Wars, for example, seldom produce any lasting triumphs for abstractions. The goals of war, like the goals of peace, must be defined in terms precise and limited enough to permit their resolution through normal diplomatic processes.

Herein lies the rub. In lieu of victory or negotiation those who have favored the limited escalation of the war in Viet Nam have explained this necessity with a wide variety of arguments that underwrite the concept of the domino: the need to fulfill the American commitment to the Vietnamese people, to end the terrorism of the Viet Cong, to prevent another Munich, to terminate Communist-inspired wars of liberation, to punish the aggressors, to strengthen the principle of collective security, to assure the self-determination of peoples. Unfortunately, only in the vaguest sense do any of these purposes suggest any specific interest of the United States. They involve only words and ideas; they cannot be touched or found on a map. They tend to be universal rather than precise. They can be ap-

plied everywhere or nowhere as the situation dictates. They flow from a sense of obligation to others. But diplomacy must deal with specifics. Even military action, when combined with intangible goals, has generally resulted far more in destruction than in measurable accomplishment.

Perhaps no American has stressed more forcefully the destructive effect of overestimating the enemy on the processes of diplomacy than has George F. Kennan. Kennan repeated this theme in February 1965:

History reveals that the penalties for over-cynicism in the estimation of the motives of others can be no smaller, on occasions, than the penalties for naivety. In the case at hand, I suspect they may be even greater. For in the prediction of only the worst motives on the adversary's part there lies, today, no hope at all: only a continued exacerbation of mutual tensions and the indefinite proliferation of nuclear weaponry.

Our sole hope lies in the possibility that the adversary, too, has learned something from the sterility of past conflict; that he, too, sees—if only through the dim lens of ideological prejudice, suspicion and accumulated resentment—the identity of fate that binds us all; that some reliance can be placed, in the adjustment of mutual differences, on his readiness to abstain, voluntarily and in self-interest, from the wildest and most senseless acts of physical destruction.

## **Prestige**

A further barrier to negotiation is prestige. Because this is true, national leadership should weigh carefully the ultimate price of any commitment before it is declared. Every resistance to the modification of any hard line toward China has been defended at least partially in terms of protecting the nation's prestige, especially among its Asian allies. Prestige is important, but not as important as other considerations of a more concrete nature, such as the avoidance of conflict where the nation's interests are not involved. The sustaining of any commitment demands a price, and if prestige is the essential factor in resisting change the price can easily transcend the gain. "What is prestige?" asked Kennedy after the Bay of Pigs fiasco in 1961. "Is it the shadow of power or the substance of power? We are going to work on the substance of power."

Prestige does not hinge on clinging to commitments when altered conditions have demonstrated that the means required to protect them render them quite untenable. Prestige reflects rather a nation's ability to judge its interests and to formulate its policies on that judgment. Britain did not lose prestige in Europe by giving independence to her colonies in America. The United States gave up

no prestige in agreeing to the Oregon compromise of 1846. Nor did France suffer a loss of prestige when she gave independence to Algeria. In an age of nuclear stalemate the United States can build its prestige more effectively and lastingly with policies that lead to peace than with those which run the risk of war.

### **Momentum in Government**

The last of the important factors that tend to produce inflexibility in foreign policy is momentum in government. Under modern conditions any policy, once established, becomes excessively demanding in terms of money and manpower. Hundreds if not thousands of individuals may eventually come to identify their personal position in government with the perpetuation of an established policy. National leaders, moreover, generally cherish the attribute of consistency. Even when policies falter, governments often attach the greatest importance to convincing themselves and their people that the policies should remain unchanged. "Too commonly," Gunnar Myrdal, the noted European economist, declared at Washington University, St. Louis, in April 1965, "no other lessons are drawn other than the pretended one: that experience shows that these policies are right and have been right from the beginning. This is a main reason why failures of policy become catastrophic." Amid the turmoil in Saigon during the autumn of 1963 President Kennedy admitted that the Vietnamese policies of the United States had not succeeded; nevertheless, he said, they would not be changed. President Johnson, when under pressure to alter those same policies in 1965, insisted repeatedly that he was merely carrying out the decisions of previous administrations.

Perhaps the problem of momentum in government never appeared more obvious or potentially disastrous than at the Bay of Pigs. Kennedy, under compulsion from the CIA and the Pentagon to permit the Cuban landing eventually agreed against his better judgment because the program, once established, was carrying everything before it. While Washington still debated the issue, Secretary of State Dean Rusk suggested that the invasion begin at Guantanamo so that a base of retreat would be available in case of failure. Explaining the Pentagon's rejection of the plan to one presidential aide, Rusk noted: "It is interesting to observe the Pentagon people. They are perfectly willing to put the President's head on the block, but they recoil from the idea of doing anything which might risk Guantanamo."

Momentum more than any other factor inhibits the infusion of new ideas and new knowledge into the policy-making process.

Certainly there is no agency in the world which has as much reporting and analysis available to it as the United States Department of State. Yet the sheer complexity and inertia of the apparatus make it difficult to bring its accumulated knowledge to bear on problems abroad, especially when such action would require some massive alterations in established policies. What baffled Kennedy, writes Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., was his inability to obtain any useful ideas or proposals from the State Department.

The problem of intelligence and its full use by government, unfortunately, far transcends the matter of bigness and confusion. "A government that has entered a conflict and wants to pursue it," Myrdal has charged, "will resort to propaganda and feel free to twist the truth in the direction of making its policy seem the only rational one." The more serious the conflict, the more established policies assume an authoritarian character. The greater the stress the more a government will insist that the range of alternatives open to it is narrower than that available to the adversary. To silence its detractors, who insist that choices exist, a government will often lay claim to secret information which, it says, must be preserved in the national interest. The experience of recent history reveals, however, that no government possesses more fundamental and useful knowledge about another country than is generally available in the press or in literature.

#### DIPLOMACY IN ASIA

United States relations with China are not simple. In Asia the *status quo* to which the United States is committed by its policies of containment includes no provision for an expanding Chinese sphere of influence. Indeed, the vast internal revolution which has given China both its energy and its ambition occurred only after the United States extended its Monroe Doctrine to include Southeast Asia. The challenge to American statesmanship is clear, and it differs little from that posed by Japan during the decade of the thirties. How and to what extent can this nation permit changes in the diplomatic, economic, and political structure of Asia? Can the United States guide its course in the Orient along channels that will permit changes in the status of power without insisting that some vital American interest is involved in every alteration? Long ago the United States accepted the existence and even the essential humanity of the British Empire. More reluctantly it has accepted, but not recognized diplomatically, the Soviet sphere in Eastern Europe. The great challenge remaining for this nation is that of permitting, yet limiting to legitimate measures, the creation of a Chinese sphere of influence in Asia.

What renders this problem so complex is less the existence of vital American interests in Asia than the enormous momentum in the established United States attitudes toward China as a repressive, irresponsible Asiatic power. For fifteen years United States behavior toward that nation has been based on the easy assumption that China is determined to control all Asia. That China is ambitious is obvious enough. That China is already the dominant force in Asian life is equally clear. But influence and control can take a variety of forms, many highly acceptable. The USSR established its sphere in Eastern Europe through force; the United States, on the other hand, established its dominance in the Caribbean through trade, investment, and sheer political superiority. China might be encouraged to follow the example of the United States, expanding her influence through trade, investment, and even the exertion of her political primacy, for nothing less will permit that nation to establish a position in Asian affairs commensurate with her energy, size, and intrinsic importance.

In a real sense the United States does not possess the choice to accept or reject an enlarged role for China in Asian affairs. The real issue is limited to the price that this nation must pay to prevent it. The everlasting confrontation of China with policies of rejection and opposition, if pursued into the future, will extract its price and that price will be stupendous. The United States, fortunately, is not the only nation that limits the power and expansiveness of China. Japan, India, and the Soviet Union, as Asian powers, share that interest. It is doubtful, therefore, that the continued expansion of Chinese influence in Asia would endanger the security or well-being of the American people.

Lastly, the need to de-emphasize the conflicts in Asia or Africa that fall under the Soviet category of wars of revolution is dictated by the fact that any United States involvement in such a conflict creates a confrontation with Russia as well as China and compels the Kremlin to adopt, often against its own interest, an anti-American and pro-Chinese position. To this extent conflicts such as those in Viet Nam scarcely serve the American interest, for they endanger the profound gains of recent years in the creation of improved United States-Soviet relations. If the earlier challenge to statesmanship lay in Europe, that of the present and future seems to lie in Asia. Kennan has suggested that the United States has placed itself in its unpromising position in this increasingly critical area by attributing too much importance to the turbulent Asian nations. He said at Princeton early in 1965:

I can think of nothing the West needs more, at this stage, than a readiness to relax; not to worry so much about these remote countries scattered across the southern crescent, to let them go their own way, not to regard their fate as its exclusive responsibility, to wait for them to come look to the West rather than fussing continually over them. The more we exert ourselves to protect them from communism, the less the exertion they are going to undertake themselves.

The West is not, after all, their keeper. They have in general much more to demand than they have to give. And others, even the Communists, are not likely to derive much more profit than the United States or former mother-countries have derived in the past from the effort to keep them.

### CONCLUSIONS

The primary obligation of the United States to serve its own deepest interests and those of humanity by avoiding any war not directly or inescapably in defense of its own interests terminates at no specific point in history. The past successes of American policy in bringing relative stability to the European world especially can be viewed as great achievements only as long as they perpetuate the general conditions of peace. Twenty years is but a short span of time in history, and historians of the future will credit this nation with greatness only to the extent that it employs its wisdom in preserving the achievements of the centuries. The judgment of future generations rides on all important decisions of government, even on the decision to avoid decisions. It behooves those charged with the responsibilities of governing to think less of the present or the popularity of any policy and to contemplate rather the relative ease or difficulty which others will face in living with the results of present policies a generation or a century hence. Few important actions of government abroad can be completely undone; some can never be undone. The resort to force may serve the American interest in stability; it may produce chaos. History is strewn with the wreckage of causes that seemed to triumph.

Undoubtedly the path to a future that fulfills the promise of the past will be neither broad nor straight. Only for the omnipotent can it be otherwise. Those who would traverse a winding course successfully must have the capacity to maneuver. Options may never be easy; what is important is that options based on reality and truth be preserved. This, in turn, requires above all that the nation understand that its area of vital concern, no more than its power, encompasses the entire globe. For a dozen years Adlai Stevenson proclaimed the need for greater balance between ends and means in the country's foreign relations. His criterion for a proper approach to external affairs has been repeated so often by the nation's diplo-



matists that it has become an important element in official rhetoric. Yet until policy is anchored to a more pervading sense of limits such utterances must remain a body of appealing phraseology and little else. Whether embodied in policy or not, Stevenson's precepts, as spoken in New York during August 1964 establish a profoundly valid, if still elusive, standard for national action:

We have no alternative [he said] but to keep the balance between an appeasement which would betray us by weakness and a brinkmanship which would destroy us by miscalculation. On this tightrope above the abyss, we cannot indulge in adolescent showmanship or Chinese acrobatics. We have, sanely, calmly, to preserve our strength and our caution, our full defensive might and our ever-readiness to negotiate, our dedication to the cause of allied freedom and our search for reasonable accommodation. This path is not exciting. It sets no trumpets braying or drums beating. It revolts the ideologists. But this adventure has in it the most precious of all possibilities—that our children and our grandchildren may survive to build a saner, better, more law-abiding world.