

FAILURES IN FOREIGN POLICY

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Though we have been on the winning side of the two major wars of this century, American diplomacy has not been equally clear-cut in its results. Dealing as it does with the imponderables of history, it is in the nature of diplomacy to be blurred both in its successes and failures. Yet the frustration that we have known cannot be dismissed merely on the ground that one must allow for a margin of error and hope for the best.

American policy between the wars was a fiasco of monumental proportions. That the failure was one of omission rather than commission in no way exonerates us from a measure of responsibility for the outbreak of the second World War. We reaped the consequences of our own folly. The present postwar period, however, has been very different in character, and the frustration that we have encountered cannot be so readily charged against us. The difference is that between the misfortunes of a prodigal son and the tribulations of a Job. In contrite mood, the American policy makers and indeed the whole articulate public were determined that the abdication of the twenties and thirties would not be repeated. The contrast in terms of political commitment, military expenditure, economic and technical assistance, and cultural exchange has been phenomenal. Yet, we are confronted, as never before, with an overriding problem of security and its exacting demands on our physical and spiritual resources. Never were we stronger, yet never as today have we known fear—a motivation that in the past we have ascribed in pitying mood to others. That so much effort should have seemingly such meager results has produced a crisis in our self-assurance. Alarmed at our seeming inability to move ahead, we have become introspective and critical of the national resolve.

But what in fact does the record show? What is the correct perspective on the fifteen years since the war's end?

While still at war, we did not fail to plan our postwar policy. We envisaged a grand design. International organization in a variety of forms, technical, social, economic, and political, was to constitute the framework of international relations.

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At our initiative, including the drafting of the constitutions themselves, some dozen organizations were created; a number, such as the World Bank, Food and Agriculture, Civil Aviation, and the United Nations itself, were actually established before the fighting was over. Our greatest ambition, expressed in the purposes and powers of the Security Council, was to achieve a nucleus of authority, admittedly residing in the great powers but exercised within the confines of the Charter, which would obviate the old rivalries and hazards of power politics.

Having labored mightily, even to the extent of providing for postwar recovery through the temporary United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Agency, we were prepared to relax with the resumption of peace; and this in fact is what we did. Abruptly we cut off economic aid to our allies and dismantled our fighting forces. Our diplomacy, subordinated during the war to the dogma of unconditional surrender, we were now prepared, still in abnegation of power politics, to subordinate to international organization. Thus the rejection of responsibility which had occurred in the interwar period reappeared in new and subtle form; our policy, we said, was nothing more nor less than the policy of the United Nations. The decisions were for it, not for us, to make.

This dodge would not, even in less strenuous times, have been tenable. But the failure of international organization to fulfill the role that we covered for it did not void our labor in its behalf. Grand design in politics never materializes. Yet it may leave a deposit. How great a deposit in this instance is indicated by the fact that international relations in mid-twentieth century, even in its purely political aspect, would be even more dismaying than it is were it not for the existence of international organization. American policy deserves to be credited with a major accomplishment.

The first period in our postwar policy quickly ended as it became evident that the Soviet Union was contemptuous of its wartime promises. In March 1947, the Truman Doctrine was proclaimed, announcing that we would henceforth resist the expansion of Soviet Communism. This we did with notable success in Turkey and Greece, where Britain, no longer able to stand the economic and military strain, had abdicated its historic role of resisting Russian pressure. The Marshall Plan and NATO followed in rapid succession. The upshot was that a prostrate Europe, vulnerable from without for the first time in modern history, was nurtured and defended by its powerful offshoot in the New World. American policy was not merely resolute; once again it demonstrated the power of innovation, for the economic and political measures that it contrived were not without novelty. And not only did Europe revive; even more gratifying has been the intensity

of her renewed life and the experimental mood that she has displayed during the past decade. True, the full intent of American policy has not materialized; European unity has not progressed as we hoped it might. Yet our influence has been a tangible factor and its results are cause for real satisfaction. The greatest disaster that could have occurred, a debilitated Western Europe, ripe for the commissar, not only has been forestalled but has been eliminated as a possibility in the foreseeable future.

A third phase of our postwar policy was initiated in 1950 by the Korean War. The balance of power in the Far East had shifted by virtue of the events in China. Moreover, Russia had in 1949 exploded its first atomic bomb. As opportunity in the West ceased to be attractive, Stalin was emboldened to act in Asia. Presently China intervened with her own independent policy. And thus began a series of encounters with Moscow and increasingly with Peiping which have not yet ended, expanding to Southeast Asia, South Asia, the Middle East, Africa and Latin America. All of these areas contain societies whose political, economic, and social institutions are for the most part outmoded or newly contrived, subject to severe pressure, and in a condition of flux. It is this vast theater of the non-Western world in which the main events of the past decade have unfolded. And it is our indifferent success in relation to them which has resulted in a feeling of inadequacy and dismay.

All of history teaches that rivalry among outside powers is likely to erupt within a society unable to generate enough progress to sustain itself. However, never until today has it occurred in the form of competing grants of economic and technical assistance. This liberality is so different from the accustomed devices of imperialism (which, however, have not meanwhile disappeared) that one is curious about its origins.

One finds again that American policy set the pattern. Point Four of President Truman's inaugural address in 1949 announced a world-wide program of technical assistance. If, in turn, we trace the origins of Point Four, we are led back to the establishment in the late thirties of the Latin American Institute, which undertook to make technical assistance available to certain Latin American countries. Probing further, we find an interesting circumstance. In response to the urging of the Latin Americans, we had subscribed to the Doctrine of Non-Intervention, aimed by them against us. Not to have yielded to their insistence would have been tantamount to admitting bad intentions; yet we were not without misgivings because many of the countries in question were not stable communities, possessing a national consensus on which habits of mutual forbearance could be established. So, having in good faith made a self-denying promise we undertook through technical assistance to attack

instability at its roots.

Underlying this new departure was the fact of our surplus economy. Only a nation of wealth could have invented the diplomacy of affluence. However, once established, the pattern has influenced others, not least of all the Soviet Union, though we have been less flattered than disconcerted by her imitation. Even Red China, though still a marginal economy, has for reasons of prestige followed suit.

The record shows, conclusively it seems to me, that American policy has had a tremendous impact on the shape of international relations during the past decade and a half. All the more pertinent, therefore, is the question why events have so often gone against us.

Above all, we are bound to recognize that American policy is not the only variable in today's situation and that our influence is in fact not sufficient to govern events. Far from being captain of our fate, we are subject to the folly, not to speak of the necessity, of other nations. Nor are we immune to the hazards of chance. To pretend to an influence that we do not possess can at home only encourage unreal expectations, which then culminate in recrimination; while abroad it can only invite skepticism among our friends and, among our enemies, ridicule.

Among the variables with which we interact is the Soviet Union. Stalin's suspicion and ill-will were regrettable. But, if we must endure these things from Russia, his woodenness was less difficult to cope with than Khrushchev's flexibility; indeed, was in a sense an advantage. There are a number of reasons why our policy was more successful before 1953 than after. But among them surely, in view of his extraordinary successor, was Stalin's death. The psychopath was, in this instance, less formidable than the acrobat. Change of leadership, however, has not been the only factor in the growth of Russian influence. The explosion of an atomic bomb in 1949 I have already mentioned. Next, reducing to a matter of months its technological lag behind the United States, the Soviet Union exploded a thermonuclear bomb in 1954. Then in 1957, to our surprise and dismay, sputnik was launched. Finally, Russia's economy has shown a dynamic quality with which we had failed to credit it, enabling her in 1957 to start competing with us in the granting of economic and technical assistance. In view of her still unsatisfied needs at home, not to speak of the un-Marxian character of such grants, Russia undoubtedly entered this path with reluctance. Her economy has subsequently demonstrated, however, that it by no means precludes such a course. It is a fascinating question, one to which Moscow would undoubtedly like to know the answer, whether the power interests of the donor or the welfare interests of the recipients will in the end be the more fully served.

Red China is another important variable in today's

situation. Though we seek to maintain an economic blockade against her and are in actual military contact with Chinese power in Korea and Formosa, our restraint on Peiping is tenuous. And that restraint is likely to diminish further, for China is gathering momentum that we shall have difficulty in counterbalancing. The time cannot be far off when she will have nuclear weapons of her own manufacture. Taking into account the fanaticism of Peiping, what does this portend for Asia and for the world? We could agree no doubt that American policy should be more flexible, but we are handicapped by the fact that the Chinese government needs us as an enemy. It is not a situation that we alone can cope with. The upshot will be determined not merely in Peiping and Washington but in New Delhi, Tokyo, Moscow, London, and in the Bandung countries.

There are vast numbers of variables present in the newly independent countries of Asia and Africa. I have pointed out that our object, through economic and technical aid, is to promote the stability of these nations. Stability, we believe, will enable them to resist the ceaseless propaganda and intrigue of international Communism. Such a result cannot, of course, be guaranteed, nor can the intervention of the military factor be precluded. Yet, beyond mere stability, we have hoped that our endeavor might result in the emergence of democratic societies, governing themselves on the basis of political freedom. We have learned a great deal in the past ten years about the bewildering complexities of human society. We have discovered that the path is not straight that leads from know-how and capital development to stability and freedom. Whether the free interplay of interests and opinion is a way of political life that can be transplanted indiscriminately any place in the world is a doubtful thing. However, we have reacted to frustration not by abandoning our initiative but by endeavoring to refine both the theory and practice of what is a truly original approach to the perplexities of international politics.

In one regard, I believe, we must accept without recourse a limited influence. We very much wanted the non-Western nations to commit themselves as between the West and the Soviet Union, and some have seen fit to do so. For the most part, however, neutralism has prevailed among them, and to this we have been obliged to reconcile ourselves—though in the Middle East not before the Arabs had moved much further toward Moscow than would otherwise have occurred.

Actually, we are witnessing an interesting phenomenon, and are deriving from our policy of aid an unanticipated benefit—though one foreseen no doubt by our more perceptive policy makers. Inasmuch as the superpowers are partially immobilized by the very potency of their weapons, their rivalry has

been diverted into non-military channels. This has resulted in third states being courted in ways and with an intensity to which they are unaccustomed. The situation is highly paradoxical, for the newer and weaker the state, the higher it seems to be thrust into the councils of the mighty. Lumumba's occupancy of Blair House suggests, not indeed that the meek, but the weak, shall inherit the earth. Never before today has the power of states contrasted so precipitously, yet never has the doctrine of equality been so lively. The utterance of a Nkrumah, a Tito, or a Nasser, is awaited not merely with curiosity but with anxious concern. There is in this situation the danger of debacle if the third state, bent solely on its own advantage, is reckless. However, if the uncommitted states practice responsibility to the international community—and the chief leaders among them unquestionably feel that responsibility deeply—then they are ideally situated, on the one hand, to catch up with history by accepting assistance from both sides with the salutary effect of reducing among peoples the existing vast discrepancies in welfare, and, on the other hand, to serve the interests of us all by becoming a third and restraining force.

Polarization is a poor figure for describing the relationship of the superpowers, for it suggests that everything in between is under the spell of one or the other of the poles, whereas the effect actually has been to allow third states a significant freedom of action. It remains to note that the same effect holds for the United Nations. Though the United Nations has none of the material elements of power at its command, Secretary-General Hammarskjöld, relying on the platform afforded by the Charter and on his own incomparable talent for diplomacy, has emerged as an independent factor in international politics, which the great powers themselves must take into account. Such a possibility was unforeseen at San Francisco, where it was assumed that as regards the great powers the United Nations could only stand aside. Khrushchev now sees Hammarskjöld as an obstacle to his purposes, and if he could he would strike him down, and the office of Secretary-General with him.

Secretary Dulles, seeking to capitalize on the relative success of our diplomacy up to 1953, took the offensive. But conditions were changing and the relative success of the preceding years was followed by the relative failure of the Dulles period. We did not alter course fast enough to adjust to the stubborn neutralism of the newly emerged states of the non-West. Seeking to capitalize on our chagrin, Khrushchev took the offensive. In response, it seems to me, our ambition should be fairly modest: that he stub his toe on the same obstacle on which we stubbed ours.