

NO MORE VIETNAM: THE END OF INTERVENTION?

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Some twenty years ago, when we found out that the Chinese could fight, American military and diplomatic officialdom discovered Sun Tzu. This discovery came about through emergency reading of Mao Tse-tung on strategy, which in turn revealed that Mao had drawn many of his ideas (and even plagiarized) from an obscure ancient called Sun Tzu. More recently, when we found out that the North Vietnamese could fight, Sun Tzu again, so I am told, came into vogue with our military and diplomatic thinkers.

Liddell Hart speaks of this fourth century B.C. military theorist as having had a "clear vision" and "more profound insight" than Clausewitz. But our leaders' acquaintance with that vision and insight seems to have availed us little. "Know the enemy and know yourself," said Sun Tzu — not Confucius nor John F. Kennedy — "and in a hundred battles you will never be in peril." Those who took us into the Vietnam war did not know the enemy. And what was more perilous, they did not know themselves, which in our democratic system meant knowing the American people.

Not knowing themselves, our leaders lost what Sun Tzu called "moral influence." "In war," he said, "the first fundamental factor is moral influence." "By moral influence," he continued, "I mean that which causes the people to be in harmony with their leaders, so that they will accompany them in life unto death." Because of our leaders' deficiency in this first fundamental factor, there has been something less than perfect harmony between the American people and their leaders. In short, Vietnam has not been for the American Government one of its finest hours.

It is reasonable to ask, as I have been requested to do here, whether there should be no more Vietnams. And Vietnam having gone so badly, the impulsive next question is whether we should not put an end to all intervention.

It is easy enough to answer the first question. There are no other Vietnams. No other country has the complex of characteristics that has made Vietnam so intractable a problem. So in this sense, history cannot repeat itself. The next issue of whether or not to

intervene, even if the country is Laos or Thailand, will be posed in significantly different terms, uniquely its own.

Turning to the second question, should an end be put to intervention? I assume that what we are talking about here is military intervention by the United States Government. But military intervention is almost always the final phase, the culmination of other forms of intervention. We cannot realistically think about military intervention without taking into account the series of events that lead up to it.

For over a century in East Asia we have had a tangled skein of interventions; individual and collective, private and official, benevolent and acquisitive, pacific and belligerent. May I illustrate this out of my personal experience and observation? I was born into intervention. My parents were Baptist missionaries in China. They and other American missionaries, with righteous and loving intent, intervened in the Confucian system of belief and ethics. Missionary intervention contributed to the breakdown of traditional Chinese society.

I spent my junior year of college at Yenching University, near Peking. This institution was affiliated with Harvard and Princeton and supported by those who believed it was a good thing to inculcate in future leaders of China Western values, attitudes and know-how so that China might be modernized and become a constructive member of the family of nations. Created and administered in altruism, Yenching was an act of American intervention.

Later, as a consul, I intervened to protect and advance American business interests in China. Both the business interests and my interventions were, by at least American and European norms, legitimate.

Then during the war between China and Japan, before Pearl Harbor and in Japanese-occupied areas, I intervened with the Japanese. The intervention was in the form of warnings and protests against harming American lives and property. By extension, this was intervention also on behalf of those Chinese physically associated with American lives and property.

After Pearl Harbor, American partiality to the Chinese swelled to maudlin proportions. We had become allies, not through American choice, but because

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the Japanese had been stupid enough to attack us too. As an ally, we felt free, nay obligated, to make the Chinese shape up militarily against the common foe. After all, it was all for the good of the Chinese themselves.

As a political advisor attached to General Stilwell's staff, I was a subordinate part of this earnest, avuncular intervention. But the Chinese army did not really shape up. The American Government then concluded that to bring the army up to snuff, extensive reforms had to be made in the way the Chinese Government functioned. In the natural progression of ever more involvement, American intervention steadily widened.

Meanwhile the Chinese Communists grew in strength behind the Japanese lines. As they did, the American Government began fitfully to worry that its vision of a strong, unified, democratic and friendly China would be shattered by civil war. To forestall civil war — and to improve China's war effort against Japan — the American ambassador chose to act as a go-between with Chiang and the Communists. This credulous political intervention in the most inflamed and recalcitrant area of China's internal affairs aggravated suspicion and hatred between the two sides, and gratuitously embroiled the United States in the mess.

Immediately following Japan's capitulation, our intervention moved onto a military plane, in favor of Chiang's dispensation and against the Communists'. We air- and sea-lifted nearly half a million Nationalist troops to accept the surrender of the Japanese forces in China and landed 53,000 American Marines to secure a zone from Peking to the sea. The effect of this intervention was to deny to the Communists, who held the surrounding countryside, the cities and lines of communication occupied by the Japanese.

Civil war inevitably followed, notwithstanding General Marshall's pacific intervention. The Truman Administration, in distraction, then tried to disentangle itself from the Chinese catastrophe. For so doing, it was subjected to vilification from outside and inside the government. That part of the bureaucracy dealing with foreign affairs suffered a trauma that conditioned its performance for years afterwards, on into the Vietnam intervention.

We "lost China," although at what point in history we had "won" it has never been made clear. The Communists took it away from us, we felt. Even though we were out of mainland China, the China intervention story was not over. When the North Koreans invaded the Republic of Korea, we interposed the Seventh Fleet in the Formosa Strait, between mainland China (Communist) and Formosa (Nationalist).

This was passive intervention, intervention by denial. Finally, when General MacArthur made his bravura dash through northern Korea toward the Manchurian border, the Chinese Communists thought that he was about to intrude into Manchuria. Consequently, they launched a preemptive military intervention, a surprise offensive into North Korea against the advancing American forces. Thus their apprehension of intervention excited preventive intervention.

The introduction of Western culture into China and Japan ended their millennia of isolation and undermined their traditional societies. China tried to adapt to itself Western values and institutions, only to succumb to Communist values and institutions, and thereafter fought us in Korea. Japan, having been "opened," extracted with phenomenal success what it wanted from Western cultural intervention, modernized itself, and rewarded us with Pearl Harbor.

So intervention is not something to be entered into with a blithe spirit. Nor is it something that we will, or should, altogether foreswear. We cannot seal ourselves off in a Fortress America, or build a Great Wall to keep out the barbarians while we, with the narcissistic appreciation of mandarins, admire our civilization as the only one on earth. We will intervene because it is in our make-up — and at times in our interest — to do so. We will intervene as individuals, in association, and as a government. A distinction exists between private intervention and that by the government. Private intervention, individually or collectively, does not carry the authority of the state, is usually disassociated from national policy, and is ordinarily not involved in power politics. Hence it is, as a rule, regarded by what we chivalrously call the "host country" as relatively innocuous.

I qualify these statements because the "host country" reaction to these private intrusions varies considerably. The Rockefellers developing high-yield rice in the Philippines are universally acclaimed. The Rockefellers operating supermarkets in Buenos Aires are emulated. But let Nelson Rockefeller visit Buenos Aires in an effusion of good will and the supermarkets are wrecked in riots. Meanwhile the Rockefellers in Peru have their interests in the International Petroleum Company (I.P.C.) seized in the expropriation of that company. Because private intervention is, as a rule, regarded as relatively innocuous by those subjected to it, they tend to tolerate it. Particularly is this true of those non-profit activities engaged in people-to-people good works, such as the Friends Service Committee, Planned Parenthood International, HOPE, CARE, and the Ford Foundation.

Even where there is "host country" criticism of people-to-people good works, these activities alone rarely create international crises. The *New York Times* of August 24, 1969, reported the findings of a Chilean psychiatrist to the effect that Chilean students who attended American-sponsored colleges in his country developed cultural psychoses. He claimed that 48% of them experienced personality problems, in contrast to 31% in the national university. Unfortunate as this may be, it is not likely of itself to create another Vietnam or even start the 82nd Airborne jumping.

Private American economic intrusions on the foreign scene ordinarily excite more resentment than our private cultural exports. We take for granted that Americans have every right to trade, invest and do business abroad. But foreigners are not always pleased by American economic intrusion. This has long been true in the underdeveloped countries. It is now also true in the advanced countries of Western Europe.

But the days of American military intervention on behalf of the United Fruit Company in the Caribbean or Standard Oil in the Far East have pretty well passed. Our government has learned so well to control its passions when foreigners abuse American private enterprise that the Peruvian Navy can with impunity seize Californian tuna boats fishing not inside the twelve-mile limit which we recognize, but inside the 200-mile limit which Peru claims. Thus gunboat diplomacy is practiced, not by the United States, but by Peru — against the nation with the biggest navy in the world.

So self-controlled has Washington become over injury to American business interests abroad that it has even refrained from doing what it is by law enjoined to do. When the "Revolutionary Government" of the Peruvian junta expropriated properties of I.P.C. without fitting compensation, our government was bound by the Hickenlooper Amendment to cut off economic aid and preferential economic benefits, such as offering a much better than world price for Peruvian sugar. The junta, being only human, viewed American favors as a rightful due and in the natural order of things. It therefore became disagreeable about the Hickenlooper Amendment. Anxious lest the situation become radicalized — Peru must not become another Cuba — Washington fussed over the Hickenlooper Amendment. In a tradition remote from the Halls of Montezuma, a corporation lawyer, chosen by the corporation lawyers preeminent in the present Administration, has twice been sent to Lima to entreat General Velasco's "Revolutionary Government" to do the decent thing by I.P.C.

Not being privy to the reasoning behind the handling of the I.P.C. case, I resist the temptation to call it

misguided. What is clear is that in both the tuna boat and I.P.C. incidents Washington's behavior was hardly in the pattern of classic imperialism. In broader perspective, it was symptomatic of a downgrading of old-fashioned direct intervention by the government on behalf of private U.S. business interests overseas.

Nowadays government intervention on behalf of American business abroad is mostly indirect, through tying American exports to foreign aid. Washington extends economic aid to foreign countries usually on the condition that the external purchases they make with that aid be from American manufacturers. In this manner our government proffers one helping hand to the underdeveloped and the other to the well-developed; one laden with food and machinery, the other with what amounts to an export subsidy.

Economic aid is not prompted by the profit motive; this form of official intervention is prompted by a belief. It is a belief that American assistance to underdeveloped countries can raise their standards of living, whereupon they will become stable and not a threat to our security. Material gain will make for contentment and contentment for tranquillity. This belief, of course, is not borne out by our own experience. As the standard of living of American Negroes has risen and as American college students have been given ever more Porsches, M.G.s and Alfa-Romeos, the hostility of both to the establishment has grown. And it is not just because of Vietnam.

Since World War II our government has also intervened abroad by exporting and promoting the American view of life and the American way of doing things. This has been an enterprise complementary to economic aid. It has meant beives of cultural and scientific bureaucrats sent abroad, USIS libraries, radio and television, Fulbright scholars, and just about everything else that private Americans propagated abroad, save religion.

Our official cultural offensive is also based on belief. Assuming an ideological struggle to the death with communism, the belief is that our view of life and our way of doing things have a certain universal validity. Therefore they are thrust forward as an effective counter-ideology to communism, which certainly asserts its universality. If underdeveloped peoples will heed our example, see things the way we do and acquire our know-how, they may not get to be like us right away, but they will be on the right track.

The belief that animates governmental intervention, both economic and cultural, is reinforced by two subjective forces in the bureaucrats engaged in that intervention. *One* is moral gratification in being part of a crusade for what is good. This imparts a sense of righteousness to some of these functionaries. They

tend to be subconsciously self-congratulatory, and hence offensive to the foreigners they deal with. The *second* reinforcement to belief is that for most of these bureaucrats, working in Uncle Sam's vineyard amidst the political heathen has become a comfortable career. They have developed a vested interest in official intervention as a prestigious way of life. Consequently they are unlikely to be among the first to examine objectively what they are up to.

Our economic and cultural intervention, therefore, has enlarged enormously our commitments abroad. Our traditional inclinations to intervene for love of God, mankind or profit have been distended to include frustrating the Kremlin — and Peking, Pyongyang, Hanoi and Havana. Confounding Communist imperialism is the dominant and apocalyptic drive in the new belief. It governs and provides justification for our varied aid interventions, including military assistance programs.

The official compulsion to stop communism is the most likely cause of our next military intervention. In preparation for this — or better, to see if something might be done to avoid the necessity of military intervention — we might try Sun Tzu's approach.

"Know the enemy," he said. First, who is the enemy, our external adversary? Since World War II all of our foreign and military policies have been based on the assumption that the Soviet Union is the enemy. Quickly the concept of enemy expanded to include North Korea and the Eastern European countries under Kremlin control, plus China and North Vietnam, where indigenous Communists independently fought their way to power. This assortment of regimes was described as the Soviet Empire or the Communist Bloc, a monolith that practiced aggressive Communist imperialism.

Yugoslavia notwithstanding, nationalism was held to have been extinguished within the monolith, save Soviet nationalism. Ideology and a Kremlin control apparatus, the official dogma went, bound the satellite regimes to do Moscow's will. Of the two, Communist ideology was believed to be the stronger. So Mao and Ho were not patriots but willing tools of the Kremlin. Therefore, when Ho made trouble in Vietnam, our government believed that it was on Kremlin orders and that Ho, disregarding of Vietnamese nationalism, was bent on expanding the Soviet Empire into Southeast Asia for the benefit of Russians and Chinese. On this mind-expanding assumption, John Foster Dulles erected the gossamer barrier of SEATO, and before long American policy took a trip, slipping steadily into the hallucinogenic experience of Vietnam.

"Know the enemy." Tardily, we have come to realize that the enemy is not a monolith and that nationalism is a more powerful force in Communist countries than ideology. Common belief does not affirmatively bind the Communist countries together. There is a shrinking Soviet Empire held together by intimidation, as in the case of Czechoslovakia, and the fears of colonial satraps like Ulbricht. The Soviet Union, itself afflicted by an arterial hardening of its ideology, is in hostile confrontation with the other giant Communist power, China. And China, suffering from a nervous breakdown of its central administration, is spared disintegration into regionalism by its apprehension of external enemies — the United States and the USSR.

In the bizarre triangle of Washington-Moscow-Peking, each is the enemy of the other. This means, in the nature of power relationships, that each is also the potential ally of each of the others against the third member of the trio.

Because it is avowedly committed to destroying our kind of civilization and because it is the only nation that can in the foreseeable future do us mortal harm, the Soviet Union is the principal enemy. Eventually the baleful character of the regime may moderate. Until some such basic change occurs, the best that can be expected from the Kremlin is a grudging peaceful coexistence. China is another matter. It is no less hostile to us. But it does not now have the long-range offensive capacity of the Soviet Union and is not likely to be a serious threat, so we are told, for some years to come. On the defensive, provided that it holds together politically, it is nearly unconquerable by reason of its size, its mass, and its diffused, relatively undeveloped economy. At this juncture, China is undergoing a wracking identity crisis and, perhaps because of this, is as inhospitable to foreigners and as contemptuous of their currying favor as were the last of the Ch'ing Emperors.

North Korea, North Vietnam and Cuba are the pesky Communist states. Although all of them are abusively anti-American, none of them, of themselves, can do real harm to the United States itself. They are the outstanding practitioners of the so-called wars of national liberation. Having failed the first time, Pyongyang is itching to have another try at "liberating" South Korea. Hanoi, of course, is busily engaged in attempting to do the same for South Vietnam. And Havana, with romantic revolutionary ineptitude, has tried and failed to revolutionize Venezuela and Bolivia.

Notwithstanding all of their Marxist-Leninist cant, the dominant feature of these trouble-makers is nationalism. North Vietnam is illustrative of how determined a force nationalism can be in a Communist

country. First the French, and then we, fought Ho Chi Minh and company to deny them the control of Vietnam. In so doing we pushed the Vietnamese Communists toward dependence on Moscow and Peking and away from their natural preference for particularism and resistance to foreign influence, especially Chinese. Thus we have been and are working to subdue, and to force under Soviet and Chinese subjugation, potentially the most effective counter to Moscow's and Peking's expansion into Southeast Asia. Yet in spite of all of this, nationalism is strong in North Vietnam.

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"Know yourself," said Sun Tzu. Perhaps the first thing to recognize is the obvious: American involvement in Vietnam has caused revulsion in a great many Americans, turning them against not only intervention but also against war in general. Because the means that we have been and are using in Vietnam are grossly out of proportion to the ends that we profess to seek, the concept of a "just war" and the moral acceptability of force as an instrument of foreign policy has been discredited. This is one of the deplorable results of our Southeast Asian excesses.

The morally outraged who have swung to the extreme of condemning all intervention are by no means all of the American people. There are also those who believe to the contrary that we have been squeamish in our use of force in Indochina. And there are those who, though disliking the Vietnam imbroglio, would support military intervention under other circumstances.

So the American ethos is fragmented: from that of the rock festival — where some people came to believe that because lambs can lie down with lambs, they can, before the coming of the Kingdom of God, also with impunity lie down with lions — to that in which we are deemed to be the lion who is king of the jungle. Thus the imperfect harmony between the people and their leaders, against which Sun Tzu warned, goes deeper into disharmony among the people themselves.

All of this confusion is bound to produce a new foreign policy. It will not be a wholly new foreign policy, but one which is a modification of that which produced the Vietnam war. It is likely to be one in which we are more cautious about foreign involvement.

A key problem in modifying American foreign policy, it seems to me, is to distinguish clearly between private and government activities. It has not been clear what we mean in our discussions when we say "we should or should not do" this or that — whether

we are talking about the U.S. Government, a group of like-minded citizens, or the citizenry as a whole. The Government and citizens each has a proper role. As a general rule, neither should trespass upon the other.

As for government, it should cut back its foreign activities in the direction of what they were before World War II and the cold war, when a sense of crisis caused the official establishment to take over from the private domain a wide range of functions and, in a frenzy of anxiety, to emulate the ideologically motivated and state-centered adversary — the Soviet Union. The American Government was never meant to behave like this. The American Government was meant to have a severely restricted function in foreign affairs — defense of the Republic, reserved relations with other governments limited assistance to foreign trade and a reasonable protection of American citizens abroad. Its true function is essentially custodial.

Obviously, our government will not return to a role of such self-denial. But it can moderate itself somewhat, toward where it belongs in the American ethos we talk so much about. Furthermore, I think officials should refrain from using their position to discharge their various personal conceptions of international morality. John Foster Dulles soured our relations with India and other neutrals because they *were* that during the cold war, and neutrality, said Dulles, was immoral. In contrast, to intervene in Indochina was moral, a righteous act. And that has been the official position ever since.

Swarms of minor functionaries are cudgeling their consciences, searching for ways in which economic or cultural or political intervention can serve the cause of justice in faraway places. Against the history of American intervention abroad, all of this high-principled activity is exceedingly chancey stuff. And the last thing it needs is to be surcharged with passion.

The place within the American system for religious, moral and cultural intervention is in the private domain. Like-minded citizens can organize as their consciences, convictions or tastes dictate, without the distortion of purpose that official association involves. They can then function, with passion and compassion, as pressure groups on a properly torpid government. If there are enough of them with common belief, they can move the government to action. Let the successes of the American Medical Association and the National Rifle Association give them heart and serve as their model.

If they feel that the immediate and urgent problems about them are not as challenging as those in foreign parts, and that they must involve themselves in the alien milieu, let them go abroad as private Americans have done for a century and a half.