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Speech of Senator Mike Mansfield (D., Montana)
For Release on Delivery

BEYOND THE MIDDLE EAST CRISIS

Mr. President:

Thanks to the work of the brilliant and indefatigable Deputy Under Secretary of State (Mr. Murphy) we may yet extricate ourselves from a very delicate position in Lebanon. We may yet escape a costly and ever-deepening involvement in the Middle East. We may yet avoid the chain-reaction leading to the great conflict, a chain-reaction which was risked when troops were put into Lebanon.

If we come out of this situation in this fashion, we may count ourselves very fortunate. But, Mr. President, we cannot always bank on luck. On the contrary, unless we build policies on sterner stuff, we shall gaze over the brink once too often and one of these days we shall lose our footing.

That is why I think it is essential that we explore without delay the lessons that are implicit in the current crisis in the Middle East. I think it is essential that we grasp their significance before this experience, like so many others, slips into the dimming past, its meaning lost to us. I suggest the need for such an exploration regardless of how we come out of the present crisis, whether the nation emerges unscathed or damaged to a greater or lesser degree.

Let me make clear, Mr. President, that I am not suggesting a post-mortem on policy in the Middle East. A post-mortem is hardly possible on a policy which not only has not yet died but has yet to be born. What I am suggesting is that the intensification of the crisis in the Middle East may afford us one more opportunity -- perhaps the last --

to bring a constructive Middle Eastern policy into being. If we do have that opportunity then let us not waste it. Let us see to it that this policy gets underway. Let us see to it that it develops in a rational fashion towards rational national ends.

I can conceive of no better way to begin on this task than to isolate the principal factors which have brought upon us the present unfortunate state of affairs. And, make no mistake about it, Mr. President, we are confronted with a most unfortunate state of affairs in the Middle East. In this connection, let me say that I can understand a point of view which regards our predicament in Lebanon as necessary or unavoidable although I may not agree with that view. I cannot, however, see anything in the predicament to elate anyone in this country. At best, we are in a situation which will have cost the people of the United States countless millions of dollars for our own military operations in the eastern Mediterranean and Lebanon. Add to this cost, countless millions more for emergency military aid to Lebanon and write off the tens of millions in military aid extended to Iraq in the foolish expectation that it would help to keep that country friendly to the West. These hundreds of millions of dollars will have produced, at best, a sullen acquiescence in the Middle East, a bowing to our superior force until such time as a new challenge to us can be contrived.

At best, we will have brought upon ourselves an opprobrium on the part of many people in the Middle East whose memories are scarred with a deep hatred of foreign troops on their soil. Thanks to the superb military conduct of our forces in Lebanon perhaps this adverse consequence may be minimized. It will be minimized, however, only if these forces are not compelled to plunge more deeply into the Middle East, only if their withdrawal is fairly prompt and without serious incident.

That, Mr. President, is the meaning of the present situation in the Middle East, at best. I do not need to detail what this situation might mean at worst. Clearly, it could mean a long involvement of American forces demanding billions of dollars of expenditures over the years. It could also mean war, the great war. These possibilities were inherent in the action which plunged us suddenly into Lebanon and they are still inherent in the situation in which we find ourselves.

We may have been shocked to have awakened one morning to the fact that we were involved in a military sense in the Middle East. We ought not to have been. Events were trending in that direction for a long time and little was done to alter the trend. The Secretary of State for several weeks prior to the action had said that military measures might be forthcoming. For an even longer time, the Senate had been aware of this likelihood. Some of us addressed ourselves to the problem and warned that unless a more positive and constructive stand were taken, the nation ran the grave risk of war in the Middle East.

These warnings went largely unheeded. The Executive Branch drifted along in the same pattern of the past, enclosed in the feeble cocoon of the Eisenhower Doctrine. The cocoon did not protect anyone from anything. It merely shut out the disturbing sight of the accumulating difficulties in the Middle East and gave a false sense of security to the nation. Encased in the cocoon of its own fantasies, the Executive Branch evaded the realities of the Middle East until it could no longer evade them. Then when it finally acted, it was compelled to act in a military fashion. It acted, in short, with too much, too late.

Our use of military force in the Middle East may be a positive act but a positive military act is not to be confused with a positive

foreign policy. On the contrary, it is the antithesis of such a policy.
The use of military force signifies the absence of policy or the breakdown
of policy. In this case, Mr. President, it is the former. We have not had
a Middle Eastern policy or, at best, we have had only the generalities of
such a policy.

It is time, Mr. President, to ask the "why". Why have we lacked a constructive policy in the Middle East? Why have we permitted matters to drift until we were drawn in a military fashion into this region? Was it really the fault of the Russians? Whether or not it was, it will make little difference in the adverse consequences which will flow to us from this act. It will not do much good to blame the Russians. The foreign troops in plain view of the Middle Easterners are American and British, not Russian. It is we who are in the exposed military position, not the Russians.

It is time to ask why we are in this position. It is essential that we ask why, since there may still be an opportunity to set and pursue a positive policy for the Middle East if we can answer the question accurately.

Mr. President, I shall not take the time of the Senate to review the detailed events in the Middle East leading to this moment. The Senate is not unfamiliar with them. What is important to the nation is the significance of these events. What do they mean in terms of the adequacy with which the nation's foreign relations are being conducted? I think it will be helpful to the nation if out of our individual efforts to answer this question some common wisdom emerges.

Each Senator is free to analyse the problem as he sees fit. In the interpretation which I am about to give to the Senate, let me stress
that I do not mean to be critical in a personal sense of the President and

the Secretary of State. It is true, they have primary and ultimate responsibility in foreign relations. It is also true, however, that decisions in foreign policy stem from the work of many in the Executive Branch. And it is also true that what is said and done in the Congress is not without its influence in these matters.

If we ask ourselves how we came to be involved in this predicament in the Middle East, I believe that we shall find a key to the answer in what has been an absence of understanding of our national purpose in that region. We have not had clearly in mind our over-riding interests. Some may see those interests in terms of the need to take a firm stand against the Russians or communism. But against whom, Mr. President, are the United States forces now standing in Lebanon? I venture to suggest that there is not a Russian combat soldier within sight of the Lebanese frontier. The fact is that we are not standing against Russians in Lebanon. We are not even confronting them. And I suspect that we are not even confronting many local communists. To seek to relate the action which we have pursued in Lebanon to taking a firm stand against aggressive communism has the ring of Don Quixote jousting with the windmills.

If the stopping of communism can hardly be our over-riding interest since it is not present in this situation, neither ought our supreme interest be the maintenance of a sterile status quo in the Middle East. I cannot see what interest at all this country can have in preserving a stability compounded, as it is in that region, too largely of irresponsible and oppressive governments, military dictators, social rot and economic stagnation.

Nor can the over-riding interest of this nation lie in supporting this group of Arabs over that, or Arab over Israeli or Israeli over Arab. Nor can it lie even in securing access to the petroleum of the Middle East, however important that may be.

Our fundamental interests in the Middle East are, or ought to be, the preservation of peace, the emergence of peaceful and popularly responsible governments, and the social and economic progress of the ordinary peoples of the Middle East, Arab and Israeli alike. It is these interests which serve all the people of the United States. It is these interests which must be advanced before all others. I regret to say that I have seen few signs, except in words, that the supremacy of these interests is fully appreciated by those responsible for the conduct of foreign policy. I do not mean, Mr. President, that these officials do not have an appreciation of them. I mean only that their actions do not adequately reflect them.

Mr. President, if we are to advance these supreme interests of the United States in the Middle East we have got to have not only a full recognition of them on the part of the Executive Branch, we have also got to have an unbiased and accurate understanding of the forces at work in the Middle East which might advance or impede the interests. Only with that kind of understanding is there any hope of making intelligent day-to-day decisions of policy.

I have seen few signs that we have had that kind of understanding. I have seen many indications to the contrary. One day we are given the impression by the Executive Branch that Mr. Nasser is not such a bad chap. The next day he takes on the appearance of a monster. One day we are assured that Arabs, as good Moslems, are communist-resistant. The next we are warned of the imminent dangers of communism in the Arab lands. One day, Iraq is billed as the most stable and progressive country in the Middle East, ruled by friends of the West. The next day the heads of our presumed friends roll in the streets of Baghdad and, symbolically at least, our own roll with them. Yet, there is scarcely a ripple of protest from the Iraqi people.

One day we virtually ignore Lebanon and the next we are so concerned as to land marines on its shores. One day we condemn the British for sending forces to Suez and the next we join them on a highly dangerous jaunt in the Holy Lands.

Mr. President, it is not necessary to labor the point. It is clear that our actions in the Middle East over the past few years suggest a headless policy with many tails. It is not easy for an American to understand this strange behavior. How much more difficult to explain it to the rest of the world which, having a very vital stake in peace, has a most proper concern in what we do or do not do in the Middle East?

I repeat this erratic course which we have followed in the Middle East seems to me to stem in part from a failure to appreciate our over-riding interests in the peace of that region and in peaceful, responsible, free and progressive governments in that part of the world. It seems to stem in part, too, from our failure to understand accurately the forces at work which lead towards and away from the realization of these interests. In short, we have not known where we most want to go in the Middle East, let alone how to get there.

Unfortunately, Mr. President, it has become too characteristic of the conduct of the foreign policy of the nation in recent years to follow the new adage: when in doubt do something. Apparently, the tendency to follow this adage, Mr. President, accounted for the Eisenhower Doctrine of 1957. The Senate will recall that many of us had grave misgivings about this piece of legislation at the time it was considered. We did not like its advanced press agency. We did not like its constitutional implications. We went along with it because the President sought it in terms of critical national necessity. We went along with it, notwithstanding the fact that it

seemed to us to divert national efforts to a random pursuit of the communist apparition flitting from one end of the Middle East to the other while it ignored the inner difficulties which threatened the peace of that region. We believed that without a positive policy directed at these difficulties, our basic interest in peace would remain in jeopardy and our basic interest in the peaceful progress of the nations of the Middle East would remain unattainable. Further, we believed that the very danger which the Administration feared most would not be met by this doctrine but might instead be intensified by it: that is, that the nations of the Middle East would veer more sharply towards communism.

I introduced amendments to the Eisenhower Doctrine, Mr. President, in an attempt to bring it closer to grips with the inner difficulties of the Middle East. I sought to add to the effort which the Administration proposed to make against the intangible problem of communism, a simultaneous effort to meet tangible difficulties in the Middle East. My intent, Mr. President, was to turn the doctrine from an essentially negative holding action into a positive policy for peace. Many members of the Senate advocated the same adjustment of effort.

But the Administration chose to oppose the changes in the Eisenhower Doctrine which were suggested in the Senate. It was successful. It succeeded in defeating, largely on party lines, two amendments which I offered. In retrospect, Mr. President, were these such terrible changes which I had suggested? I do not think so. The first merely called upon the President to take an international initiative in trying to curb the arms traffic in the Middle East. The second was an attempt to end scatter-shot and wasteful aid to the Middle East by calling upon the President to take the initiative in developing a regional program of economic development which would be inter-related with the encouragement of peace and stability in that region.

These two amendments, as I said, Mr. President, were defeated. A third, Mr. President, was passed by the Senate over the objections of the Executive Branch. Has that amendment hurt the Administration? I do not think so. What it did, Mr. President, was merely to emphasize the full support of the nation for the United Nations Emergency Force which was and is the one bright spot in the otherwise dismal Middle Eastern scene.

There have been some press reports, Mr. President, which indicate that the Administration will advocate at a summit conference, the substance of all three of these amendments which were offered in the Senate to the Eisenhower Doctrine, along with other ideas since advocated in Congress. If these reports are accurate, the Administration will do now, as a basis of a constructive initiative for peace in the Middle East, what it objected to doing 18 months ago.

I most certainly hope that these reports are accurate. I hope the administration will go to the impending conference fully prepared to take an initiative for peace. I hope that it will be prepared to strike boldly for agreement which will embrace the following principles:

1. The strengthening of the UN force in the Middle East to the point where it can be used on any border threatened with military invasion in that region.
2. The curbing of indirect aggression in the Middle East whether it be by incitation to assassination and mob action, border raids or other forms of attack short of outright military invasion.
3. The mobilizing of international effort to bring about face-to-face meetings between conflicting Arab leaders, and Arabs and Israelis, in a supreme effort to make the beginnings of a beginning in the settlement of the difficulties between them which have kept the Middle East on the brink of war for the past decade.

4. The establishment of control over the arms traffic among the nations which are in serious conflict in the Middle East, namely the Arab States and Israel, in order to reduce the level of military tension among them and to release the scarce resources now devoted to arms to the urgent constructive tasks of the region.

5. The development of joint international programs which promise to benefit all the people of the Middle East by furthering the rapid economic and social progress of the region.

I do not know, Mr. President, whether agreement on these principles can be reached at any conference. Whether or not it can does not alter the fact that it is in our national interest to offer them. It is in our interest, if only to make clear where we stand. It is in our interest, if only to get clear before the world who it is that talks peace and who it is that is prepared to act for peace. In short, Mr. President, I hope that there will be awakened in the Executive Branch sufficient vigor, sufficient drive, sufficient leadership and sufficient perception to get us off dead center. If there is one single factor which more than any other has undermined the prestige of the United States before the world, it is the negative attitude that Branch has manifested towards efforts to get at basic international tensions. It has acted at times almost as though it has a vested interest in the perpetuation of these tensions.

The hour is late, Mr. President, but it may not be too late to undo the damage which has been done in the Middle East. Whether it is too late or not, it is still essential that we do not overlook a lesson that is involved in the Eisenhower Doctrine. At the time this doctrine was before the Congress, the Executive Branch opposed, as I have already noted, attempts

to alter it in a fashion which would have laid the foundation for an affirmative constructive policy in the Middle East. Even if it is prepared to go along with such a policy now, note, Mr. President, the time-lag of 18 months.

To me, this time-lag suggests the absence of a clear understanding of our supreme interests in the Middle East and a leadership firm enough to assert those interests beyond all others. To me, Mr. President, this time-lag indicates an Executive bureaucracy grown so top-heavy, timid and torpid that it produces neither the accurate information which is needed to understand how to act nor the receptivity to the ideas which stimulate the will to act. If that is the case we are in far graver danger -- given the kind of world in which we live -- than any of us have heretofore suspected.

A way must be found and found soon, Mr. President, to cut the lag between the time significant changes occur in the international scene and the time our policies are adjusted to meet these changes. Unless it is found, we shall be, in foreign policy, forever in pursuit of the last step of the last car of a train that is always pulling away from us.

The problem of the time-lag in foreign policy undoubtedly has something to do with the way in which the Executive Branch is organized to deal with international relations. I believe, however, it is larger than that. It is also a problem of sufficient detachment and skill to recognize international realities as honestly and accurately as it is humanly possible to recognize them. It is also a problem of a willingness to come to grips with those realities. It is, finally, a problem of the courage to act on the dictates of those realities in a fashion which will be understood and appreciated, not only by our own people but by decent people throughout the world.

Mr. President, I have gone on at some length discussing the significance of the sorry experience which we are now undergoing in the Middle East.

There is little which I can add to the Senate's knowledge of the facts of this particular problem. If I am correct, however, in my analysis of the principal causes of our difficulties in that region, then, the lessons we may draw from this experience are probably applicable not only in the Middle East but on a far broader scale. For, if there is a misreading of our overriding interests in the Middle East, there are probably similar misreadings elsewhere. If there is insufficient detachment and skill to recognize realities in the Middle East, there is probably insufficient detachment and skill as regards other areas. If there is a serious time-lag in policy in the Middle East, we may presume that there are similar time-lags in policy in other parts of the world.

In these circumstances, Mr. President, will we wait in Europe as we have waited in the Middle East until we risk the loss of the chance to build a constructive peace? Will we wait with regard to the Western Hemisphere, until those who have stood with us leave our side? Will we wait with regard to Asia?

The days go by swiftly, Mr. President, and the situation does not stand still in these other parts of the world. We have already lost too many precious hours. What once was a unique opportunity to build a durable peace throughout the world has now become at best only a passing chance. Soon the odds will turn against even that chance.

The Senate knows, as I know, that no nation alone can create peace. But does that knowledge excuse inertia in our government? Does it forgive the continuance of the negative attitude which has already cost us so much in terms of the world's respect and trust? Does it permit us to take any course other than to leave no stone unturned in the search for peace? No

nation's stake in peace is grater than our own. No nation's quest of peace, in act as well as word, ought to be more determined than ours.

That is why I urge, Mr. President, that we prepare ourselves to meet with any nation or nations, at any reasonable time, in any reasonable circumstances, if there is any promise of moving towards a more durable peace.

We will not be prepared for meetings with anyone, at the summit, half-way up or on the bottom, however, unless we have constructive policies which are in harmony with today's realities rather than yesterday's hopes.

We will not be prepared unless we have constructive policies, policies which strike a responsive chord in the hearts of our own people and in the hearts of others because they are directed not at winning hollow propaganda victories but because they are clearly and unerringly directed towards peace, not a peace of domination, not a peace of subservience, but a peace which decent men and women in Russia, no less than in the United States can accept, a peace with which decent men and women throughout the world can live.

Mr. President, it appears that we shall be meeting, in the very near future, in a summit conference which will deal with the Middle East. It appears, too, that there is some hope that the Executive Branch will bring to that conference at least the beginnings of a constructive policy. I think we can look to this conference without trepidation, even with some hope of positive achievement, if we leave the press-agentry at home and go into it with some honest statesmanship. I think that hope exists regardless of whether the Russians mean to have agreement or not.

Regardless of the fate of this impending meeting, it is time to look beyond it. It is time to look to other major conferences on the Middle East and other world problems. These conferences must come if there

is, in fact, to be a durable peace. It is essential that we prepare now for them, amongst ourselves and with friendly nations.

I go further, Mr. President, and say this. If we do prepare ourselves, if we do adjust our policies to realities, then I believe this country will be in a position to take an initiative for peace which will be understood and appreciated by the world. I believe this country can, and I hope that this country will, call for the international conferences which must be held on Asian problems and on European problems, on the dangers of accidental war, on the whole range of world-wide problems which hold mankind, numbed on the brink of war. I hope that we shall consider calling these conferences, particularly if the meeting on the Middle East reveals a serious determination on the part of all present to leave the weapons of the propaganda war outside the door and get on with the serious business of building the peace which the world wants, which the world needs, which the world must have.

* * *

A few months ago, Mr. President, I expressed some thoughts on these questions. I believe they still have some relevance to the matters I have been discussing with the Senate today. I ask unanimous consent, therefore, to include at this point in the record the text of four speeches delivered earlier in the year.