Speeches, Foreign Relations in Transition

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REMARKS OF SENATOR MIKE MANSFIELD (D., MONTANA) at INDIANA UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA, INDIANA, PENNSYLVANIA Columbus Day, Monday, October 11, 1971, 8:00 p.m.

FOREIGN RELATIONS IN TRANSITION

When the history of this century is written, it may well be recorded that the whole international order shifted and reorganized itself in a short span of time in the early 1970's. For those of us who are living through today's changes, the accelerating transition is evident. What cannot be foreseen is whether the shift leads, in the end, to a new era of confrontation or toward a new plateau of international stability. How the die is cast depends heavily on the wisdom which we in the United States bring to our understanding of our times. That is why your inquiry here at Indiana University is so timely and appropriate.

Let me consider at the outset several manifestations of the current transition in the world and the responses to
them in the nation's foreign policy. The most immediate, of course, is the President's new economic program. Twenty-five years of over-extension has stretched the U. S. economy to the breaking point. To avoid a financial collapse, the President found it necessary to combine what amounts to de facto devaluation of the dollar plus a blanket increase in import duties with a domestic freeze of wages and prices.

Other countries have long been aware that something had to give in the way the U. S. government was managing the nation's financial affairs. When these moves came, however, they caused great distress, notably in Europe and Japan. What is feared abroad is not so much the moves themselves but what they could portend. At stake is their export markets in the United States and, hence, the possible evaporation of a great deal of international purchasing power.

It is understandable, in the circumstances that the search for new economic alignments has intensified. The United
Kingdom is moving, for example, toward the European Economic Community, now, with the support of France. Germany and, in fact, the whole of Western Europe is tending toward closer commercial relationships with Eastern Europe. For its part, the Soviet Union seems eager to facilitate this shift and, is actively seeking to promote it through political stabilization. Thus, the Soviet government has acknowledged the legitimacy of West Berlin as an appendage of West Germany and is pressing for a wider agreement which would, in effect, legalize the territorial changes which were effected in Eastern Europe after World War II, including the division of Germany.

The United States is acquiescing, in these new trends in Europe, at a pace, however, which seems sometimes as reluctant as it is belated. U.S. policies are changing, too, with regard to the Far East. It seems to me, we are learning, in paying the terrible price of Viet Nam, the folly of extending ideological fears and great power animosities
into the inner conflicts of underdeveloped regions. In the process of learning, the Vietnamese war has been drained of meaning for this nation. It is revealed, now, as a tragic waste, a revelation that is reflected in the President's program of phased troop withdrawals. In that sense, the war is over for this nation; regrettably, what has yet to be ended is the military involvement. There is left in Southeast Asia, the vestiges of mistakes of the past and they continue to exact a toll of senseless death and devastation. One way or another—by the action of the President or the Congress and, hopefully, by both—these vestiges must be removed.

It may be that an end to the involvement will be facilitated by changes in the Sino-U. S. relationship which the President has been cultivating. In any event, China seems to be moving from a phase of isolation into one of more active participation in world affairs. The effect of this transition
and the U. S. response to it may well be causing internal distress in China, not to speak of consternation in the Soviet Union, in Japan and Taiwan.

There is a point of central significance in these and similar phenomena of international change. In a massive readjustment, the lingering legacies of World War II are being liquidated once and for all. What is occurring is a series of shifts in outlook and alignments of policy in many parts of the world. It is a cataclysmic process, analogous to the geological adjustments of the earth's crust when pent-up stresses give way along fault lines to produce a new equilibrium. The international upheaval, like its geological counterpart, causes sharp reverberations which are both widespread and unsettling.

It is somewhat surprising that so many historic dislocations should linger for a quarter century after the hostilities of World War II. In the past, matters of this
kind have often been settled more promptly—as they were at the close of World War I or as they were a century earlier following the Napoleonic Wars. The time lag after World War II is ascribable, in part, to the peculiar circumstances of peace when the guns fell silent in 1945. What had been a united coalition of victorious military allies, quickly split apart into mutually distrustful armed camps organized around antagonistic ideologies. Hovering over this split was the unprecedented threat of nuclear destruction.

There are those who contend that it was the ultimate reality of nuclear power which, alone, inhibited the post-war antagonists from rushing into another direct and more deadly confrontation. However that may be, the avoidance of a major confrontation between the two ideologies seems to have been bought, at least on our part, at the high cost of many peripheral confrontations, of which Viet Nam is the most recent
and, one would hope, the last. It was bought, too, at the price of lingering fears and suspicions about the intentions of both sides. In consequence, there have been massive disruptions of important domestic priorities in order to permit a wasteful indulgence in a fierce and costly arms competition which persists to this day.

We have, indeed, suffered what Shakespeare called "the cankers of a long peace" and can welcome in principle, I believe, the present series of economic and political adjustments. They do hold promise of neutralizing the unhappy legacies of a war fought twenty-five years ago.

Some of the adjustments involve the removal of legal straitjackets which may come to be regarded, someday, as having been extended exercises in ideological rigidity and national pride. The long delay stems, in part, from the fact that the United States chose to engage in the diplomacy of non-recognition of Soviet-dictated territorial changes after
the World War II and consequences of the Chinese Revolution.

For what seemed good and ample reasons at the time, it was felt necessary to cling to the pre-war territorial status quo in Europe, particularly with regard to Germany and the pre-revolutionary political status quo with regard to China. We are coming to realize, however, that such policies extended indefinitely are self-defeating and contrary to our own best interests. That is usually the case with policies based on dead fictions as opposed to living circumstances.

While changes in the legal perspective of our policies are certainly of significance, they are overshadowed for the moment by the more sweeping adjustments which seek to accommodate to contemporary economic realities. In general, these adjustments reflect the fact that the United States, having served in a variety of roles, as the world's chief banker, policeman, storekeeper and consumer, as well as the chief
pioneer in outer space, has now approached the limits of its economic capacity and that some of the burdens have to be redistributed.

It is notable, I believe, that the current adjustments have concentrated on the commercial-financial elements of our international position—to the exclusion, unfortunately, of other over-extended roles abroad, which I shall discuss shortly. However, I would like to take a moment to consider at this point what has occurred under the President's new economic program. Essentially the program involves two basic elements of our commercial-financial relationships with other nations. The first is accessibility to markets, that is, the extent to which each nation opens its borders to the competing products of others. The second is the method of payments, or the settling of accounts between the nations.
In both spheres the economic power of the United States has been preeminent for the past quarter century. U. S. markets have absorbed vast quantities of goods from other nations and sent abroad even greater quantities. This nation has led world policy, notably in the so-called Kennedy round of tariff negotiations, into an era of vastly expanded international trade through the reciprocal removal of trade barriers.

At the same time, the U. S. has been at the core--the central banker, if you will--of the international payments system. The settling of accounts between nations has been based for a quarter of a century on the dollar and on its convertibility into gold. The system worked well as long as other nations were prepared to hold dollars in their reserves or had free access to U. S. gold. Neither of these conditions remains fully operative at this time. So a search for new devices to facilitate financial exchange is underway. In
recent international conferences, there have been proposals for the realignment of values among the various currencies, all acknowledging a lessening of the relative value of the dollar. There have also been proposals for devising an international substitute for the dollar as the central element in the international payments system.

Proposals of this sort reflect, in my judgment, both a healthy decline of others in their economic dependency on the United States as well as an unhealthy loss of confidence in the stability of the United States economic structure. Clearly, the "temporary" surtax on imports causes the deepest concern abroad. It is an understandable concern in major exporting nations as it ought to be on our part. In my judgment, the curtailment of international trade which is implicit in this measure is not the best way, in terms of the interests of the people of this nation, to bring our international payments into better balance. If, for no other reason, the new import levy, by raising the price of foreign
goods, creates a predisposition to higher prices for similar goods within the United States.

Because of immediate difficulties, we should not lose sight of the fact that the era of expanding international trade which we have fostered for two decades may go down as one of the truly positive advances in international relations in the 20th century. It has stimulated a highly useful economic exchange that has strengthened the fabric of world stability. It has served to underwrite, too, a long period of mutual economic well-being and cultural enrichment. Necessary though they may be, the new economic policies are, at best, temporary expedients. Without indulging, I hope, in excessive hindsight, I am bound to say that the adjustments might have been easier for us and all the world, had we faced up to our predicament at an earlier date and proceeded in a more measured way to negotiate the necessary relief.

So far, the other principal trading nations have eschewed acts of reprisal. That unfortunate possibility, however, does exist. Should there be a trade war, it would unravel the strands of a beneficial interdependence which have been woven so carefully over the past two decades.
In the circumstances, I endorse fully the President's stress on the temporary nature of the surtax and his emphatic opposition to a return to economic isolationism. The possibility of an inadvertent slide into what is eschewed, however, is not to be overlooked. To avoid it, it seems to me that we must take more fundamental steps to redress the economic balance than are contained in the New Economic Policy. We need to go beyond the negative sanctions so far invoked and deal with what, largely, precipitated the necessity for them in the first place.

This brings us to the non commercial aspects of the nation's international economic difficulties. Our present problem of balance of payments is not so much one of buying too much and selling too little of goods and services in international commerce. the fact is that, for years, we have sold far more than we have bought. Rather, the difficulty arises, in major part, from the spending of vast amounts of public funds in order to maintain an outmoded military-diplomatic position in
the world. Dollars spent abroad to underwrite that position flow overseas just as surely as those which go for imports of goods from other nations. Dollars spent at home to backstop that position contribute just as certainly to inflationary pressures as any other non-productive expenditure in the federal budget.

In my judgment, we are paying exorbitantly—in billions of dollars—to sustain foreign policies and practices which are simply out of date and which have little to do with the security and welfare of the people of the nation. Like other legacies of World War II, these policies and practices are in urgent need of revision.

There is no greater urgency than the liquidation of the war in Viet Nam. Ending the war is the most compelling business of this nation. The reason why that is so is obviously not only a matter of cost, before all else, Viet Nam is a human tragedy which tears at the fibers of the nation's cohesion.
Nevertheless, Viet Nam is a root cause of the nation's present economic difficulties. What is involved is an astronomical levy of government expenditure on the nation's economy in order to finance the war, to date, something in the neighborhood of $130 billion. This expenditure has burdened the productive economy at home with a heavy surcharge in taxes and inflation. Hence, it has reduced the competitive position of the nation's commerce in the world.

In two and a half years, it should be noted, the President has brought about a significant reduction of the cost of the involvement in Viet Nam. Prolonged as the reduction has been, it is all to the good. It is to be hoped, however, that what is being attempted is not simply a gradual tapering off of the war to a forgotten, Korean-type residue. In Viet Nam, that would still involve, for many years, in my judgment, continuing expenditures of billions in aid to the Saigon government as well as U.S. forces in coastal enclaves in order to shore up a regime with few roots in its own people.
It would be a continuation of a mistaken war by other means. It would be a way of being involved without seeming to be involved. Even if it were possible to attain, it would be a solution that is ill-suited to the needs of either Viet Nam or the United States.

The Senate has tried and is now trying, again, to establish a date certain for a total withdrawal of U. S. forces as the policy of this nation. Since definite assurances do not yet exist on this point, it can be expected that the matter will be pressed in the Congress; it will be pressed again and again until the involvement on the Southeast Asian mainland ends, lock, stock and barrel.

As in Southeast Asia, this nation's economy is carrying in Europe another archaic burden in the name of national defense. Two decades ago, the North Atlantic Treaty joined, in a common fate with Western Europe, the free survival of this nation. Insofar as I am concerned, the North Atlantic Treaty was valid then and remains pertinent to the nation's defense.
needs today, **it is not the treaty of alliance which is archaic;** rather, **it is the bureaucratic military structure of NATO which has grown up in its name that stands in need of adjustment.**

NATO continues to correspond, today, to circumstances which were defined before many of you were born. At that time the free societies of Western Europe were heavily dependent on the United States and the fear of communist totalitarian takeovers was great. In terms of today's circumstances, NATO is over-staffed, over-manned, over-officered and over-financed by this nation. Of the budget of the Department of Defense, about $14 billion is estimated to be traceable to NATO. Over a half-million American servicemen and dependents are consigned to Europe.

That is an immense diversion of public resources. Yet, the basic question of NATO is not cost. If a commitment of that magnitude were essential for the security of the nation and the stability of peace, of course, it should be made. More
to the point, however, is whether a U. S. deployment of that size and composition has relevance to the situation in Europe a quarter of a century after World War II. In this connection, I returned just a month ago from a series of consultations in seven nations in Western Europe. The overwhelming mood of Europe is that of detente and peace; it is not of confrontation and war. The emphasis is on reconciliation; it is on intra-European trade, technological exchange, travel and other cultural interchange. It is not on military power or fear. Only in NATO are the games of war still played with any sense of expectancy or conviction.

In the circumstances, it is not surprising that the European nations are prepared to have us shoulder the preponderant costs of the organization so long as we are prepared to do so. They have no readiness, not to speak of eagerness, to increase their own role or expenditures for NATO. While they want to maintain the North Atlantic Alliance, it is doubtful
that the Europeans see the need of the present force levels of NATO since they do not meet their commitments to them and have not done so for many years. It has seemed to me for a long time that a substantial reduction in our deployment in Europe is possible and desirable, even as similar steps have already been taken by the United Kingdom, Canada and others.

Let me emphasize my belief that we do need the North Atlantic Treaty and Alliance and we do need to preserve the structure of NATO as an element-in-being of western defense and unity. But I also believe the organization can be trimmed to a streamlined standby force without danger to our security or the stability of peace in Europe and with great benefit to the well-being of this nation.

Specifically, I have recommended that the United States undertake a reduction of its force commitment to NATO by at least 50 per cent, leaving no more than two U. S. divisions on the European continent. Hopefully, the Executive Branch will
take the initiative in this connection because it can do so without further ado. If necessary, however, efforts to that end will continue to be made in the Congress, 'cumbersome' though it may be to try to legislate an action of this kind.

It would seem to me desirable, too, that a multinational NATO naval force should take over the Mediterranean patrol, thus permitting a sharp reduction in the overwhelming presence of the U. S. Sixth Fleet in that sea. In the same vein, substantial cuts in U. S. command participation in NATO and the designation of a European as the next NATO commander-in-chief would serve to reduce the presence of the United States in Western Europe and, of course, the cost which is entailed in that presence.

Changes of this kind are needed with regard to Europe and Asia if we are to adjust our policies effectively to the realities of the 70's. I think you will see that the changes which I have suggested involve an end to flailing at the fears of the past. They have much to do with an end to illusions of omnipotence and adventurism and a greater sharing of the glare
of leadership which has focused upon this nation for too long. They have to do, in short, with what the President, I believe, was talking about when he introduced the 'low profile' concept of the Nixon Doctrine. Unless and until we make these changes, the new economic policy will be, at best, only a stop gap for our difficulties.

We may anticipate the most serious consequences both at home and in our relationships abroad unless we grasp the extent of the transition in world affairs over the past quarter of a century. During these years, we have come only haltingly through successive and delayed stages of adjustment. We are paying now for the time gaps in our official perception and responses to changing international realities. We are paying for it in the economic faltering at home and, more seriously, in the tragedy of Viet Nam.

We stand, now, on the threshold of a new era in which prime motivations are appearing which are other than the fear of aggression and war. There may exist a possibility of breaking
down antagonisms along the gulf separating the Communist states from those of the Western world. Entered with a clear head and sure foot, this era may yield the fruits of peace to nations prepared to take the risks of peace.

The promise is there; it may be that it will fall to a younger generation to work out that promise. I hope that your vision of the world will be far less constrained than ours has been for the past twenty-five years. With luck, you may be able to view national power not just as an instrument of territorial defense or of the defense of ideological systems, but rather as an element of human survival and well-being. National resources can then be committed in far greater degree to the fundamental problems which know no boundaries of race or nationality: population numbers, the preservation of natural resources, pollution abatement and the enlightenment of the human spirit wherever and however it is oppressed.

Your deliberations here can help to bring that day closer. I urge you to continue the quest.