

Problems of Multi-Polar Power

One of the most significant political developments in this decade has been the progressive dissolution of the bi-polar nuclear confrontation of the United States and its allies with the Sino-Soviet Communist Bloc and its replacement by a multi-polar power relationship. It is my purpose in the course of these lectures to comment upon the significance of this development and point to some of the consequences of this breakdown in bi-polarity and its replacement by a state of multi-polarity. That the significance is profound is, I think, apparent and we are feeling now and will feel more in the future its effects on many aspects of our political, military and social interests. I want first to talk in general terms about some of the problems of multi-polar power and then illustrate these problems by experience drawn from the situation in South Viet-Nam. I propose to follow this latter discussion with an analysis of some of the lessons we have learned in Viet-Nam which bear on this new situation and then close the lecture series with a few proposals for the improvement of our governmental procedures for dealing with multi-polarity.

From the end of World War II until quite recent times, the United States has been obsessed with the military threat of the Soviet Union and its allies, obsession which grew as both sides proceeded with the development of formidable arsenals of nuclear weapons. The main military concern of this post-war period was to keep ahead of our opponent in numbers and quality of nuclear weapons and of delivery devices; the main political concern was to avoid a head-on collision with this Bloc. This was the era of reliance on Massive Retaliation as our basic strategic concept, that is, on the use or

the threatened use of nuclear weapons to assure the maintenance of the peace in all of its forms. Although our experience in Korea demonstrated the fallacy of this reliance on nuclear weapons as an all-weather, all-purpose deterrent, nonetheless we did not shift to a strategy of Flexible Response until after the advent of the Kennedy Administration in 1961. Since that time, we have moved rapidly in the direction of better preparation for non-nuclear war and we have made progress although somewhat more slowly in preparations to prevent and resist those ambiguous threats which are included under the head of subversive aggression or in Communist parlance "Wars of Liberation". Our present experience in South Viet-Nam is making a strong case for greater attention to these ambiguous threats.

The change in our military strategy since 1961 was the result of a number of factors. The first was the appreciation by President Kennedy that the deliberate initiation of nuclear war by either side in the bi-polar confrontation was highly improbable whereas there was a growing threat of small and intermediate challenges resulting from the indications of a break-up of the bi-polarity of power which we have mentioned above. Whereas formerly we could regard the Sino-Soviet Bloc as an entity and had spoken and planned about it as if it were moved by a single purpose and by a single leadership, in the years following the expulsion of the Soviet technicians from China in 1960, it became increasingly clear that this presumed identity of interest, never complete, was rapidly dissolving. The alienation of the affections uniting Moscow and Peking was only indirectly our doing. The Soviet leaders in acquiring a growing arsenal of nuclear weapons also acquired an appreciation of their terrible destructiveness as tools of war.

Thoroughly aware of the vast arsenal of these weapons in the hands of the United States, they properly concluded that the possession of these weapons was of value almost entirely in terms of deterrence and that the last thing they should seek would be a nuclear show-down with the United States.

At the time of the Cuban missile crisis in 1962, Khrushchev gave signs of being clearly shaken by the narrow escape from the nuclear confrontation which he had always hoped to avoid. At the close of the episode, it was evident that he had not enjoyed this "cliffhanger" and, while talking loudly in public to cover his retreat, nonetheless he became thereafter definitely more tractable in his dealings with us and, in 1963, joined us in the limited nuclear test ban treaty.

Related to this growing respect for nuclear weapons on the part of Soviet leaders was their increased emphasis on the virtues of peaceful coexistence. No one in his right mind could assume that the adoption of this attitude constituted a renunciation of militant ambitions, but it was an encouraging indication that the Kremlin leaders would like to avoid future exercises in brinkmanship, and hoped to gain their ends without exposure to the consequences which they had been obliged to contemplate during the Cuba affair.

These proclivities of the USSR, of course, went diametrically opposed to the desires and hopes of the leaders in Peking. It is not entirely clear when the latter began their serious squabbles with the Soviets, but the growing estrangement became public knowledge from 1957 onward. Since that time, the open exchange of asperities has mounted to the point that one is not sure whether, as viewed by Peking, Washington or Moscow is International Enemy No. 1.

From our point of view, of course, this partial breakup of the Sino-Soviet Bloc has been of vast importance. It is perhaps the most significant political development of the decade. For us, it has not been entirely without disadvantages since now both Moscow and Peking must compete for leadership of the Communist world and the rivalry has tended to make both more belligerent and aggressive than they probably would have otherwise been. We find them in bitter competition not only in North Viet-Nam but also in many of the developing countries of Africa and Latin America. In this competition, they agree publicly on only one thing, namely, the wickedness and perfidy of the American imperialists. However, in those areas where they are facing the United States, neither wishes to take us on directly since, to say the least, the outcome would be most doubtful and, if unfavorable, would seriously weaken the competitive position of the loser vis-à-vis his Communist rival.

For our part, this Sino-Soviet rivalry in which each contestant seeks new fields abroad for the expansion of his particular brand of Communism has forced the United States to broaden its span of international attention in watching for germinating crises. Instead of having the relatively simple problem of observing the movements of a single adversary, the Sino-Soviet Bloc, with the primary concern the possibility of general nuclear war, now we must divide our attention and direct it with equal priority on the Soviet Bloc and the Chinese Bloc while remaining alert to the situation in the many weak countries about the world which may become the target of the rival expansive ambitions of the two great Communist powers.

Even that is not the total problem today. But Peking and Moscow are not the only trouble-makers capable of interfering with the pursuit of American objectives about the world. Even in the Communist world there are other adversaries. Although it may be difficult to distinguish clearly the goals of Hanoi from those of Peking, the purposes of its leadership are not always identical with the Chinese and hence North Viet-Nam, even after the end of the current conflict, needs to be considered with separate attention. Castro's Cuba must always be on our list of potential trouble-makers and we need to watch for indications of his subversive activities throughout Latin America. Sukarno with his aggressive nationalism has similar claims on our sentinels as does Nasser who has expansive nationalistic designs in the Arab World.

The point I am making is that, whereas in the past we have had one single principal enemy, the Sino-Soviet Bloc, which absorbed all or virtually all of our attention, now we have not only two major enemies, the Soviet Union and Red China, but additionally other trouble-making powers which must be taken into account. The United States can no longer be a one-eyed Cyclops. Its power of attention must partake of the many-eyed vigilance of Argus-- constantly watching in all directions in anticipation of the emergence of forces inimical to our national purposes.

As a practical matter, in a world of some 114 sovereign countries, it is not possible for any government to give equal attention to the problems of so many states. There must be some selectivity injected into the surveillance procedure. In seeking a selective approach, I suggest that for

purposes of this discussion we divide the countries of the world into three categories--the trouble-makers, the victims and the by-standers. I shall discuss in greater detail in a subsequent lecture the importance of selectivity but I would like to lay the groundwork for the discussion here.

The trouble-makers are expansive, interventionist countries such as those which I have just mentioned--USSR, China, DRV, Cuba, Indonesia, UAR. Most of them are presently Communist but this is not an essential characteristic. The victims or potential victims are usually the weak, emerging nations of which there are about 80 in number. The unaffected countries are generally the relatively old and mature nations of the Northern Hemisphere and which contribute little of direct importance to our multi-polar problems.

Now let me say a few words about the victims, the emerging nations. They are potential targets of aggression because of their own internal weaknesses. Being young, they are usually characterized by political volatility, by immature leadership, by endemic poverty, by bad government and, for the foregoing reasons, by popular discontent. We find such countries principally in Africa, in Asia and in Latin America. They represent about 98 million in population. Because of their weakness, they are a natural target for Communist expansion and invite the use of the technique of the so-called "War of Liberation" or the "People's War". Because this phenomenon, the "War of Liberation", bulks so large in the plans for future Communist expansion, it is central to any study of multi-polar power. Hence, I would like to discuss it in some detail.

It was only in comparatively recent times that this term of Communist jargon, the "War of Liberation" or its synonym, the "People's War", entered into our political awareness. Although these terms appear in early

Marxist-Leninist writings, the event which focused our attention on their significance was Hanoi's guerrilla attack in 1960 at President Diem's government in South Viet-Nam. This escalation of the war--as we would now describe it--resulted from the failure of five years of attempted political subversion to overthrow the Diem regime, conducted by the Communist political cadres which had been left behind in South Viet-Nam following the signing of the Geneva Accords and the partition of Viet-Nam in 1954. In spite of these efforts to drag him down, President Diem proved surprisingly tough and his young government stoutly resistant to internal subversion. Instead of collapsing, his administration gave signs of being able to unify the country and showed moderate progress in developing the economy.

In Washington, we did not sense the significance or perceive the practical effects of this declaration of subversive warfare by Hanoi until early 1961, by which time the increase in Viet Cong terrorism and guerrilla activity showed clearly that something new and important had been added to the situation. If we needed a formal clarification of Communist intention, Chairman Khrushchev gave it to us in his address of January, 1961, which explained the Communist attitude toward subversive aggression. "Now a word about national liberation wars. The armed struggle by the Vietnamese people or the war of the Algerian people serve as the latest example of such wars. These are revolutionary wars. Such wars are not only admissible but inevitable. Can such wars flare up in the future? They can. The Communists fully support such just wars and march in the front rank with the peoples waging liberation struggles."

As we watched further the development of the savage guerrilla fighting in South Viet-Nam, we became aware that we were merely seeing an old game played under a new name. We recognized it as the same tactic employed in the civil war in Greece, in the Huk insurrection in the Philippines, in the guerrilla warfare in Malaya and during parts of the China civil war. It could even be said that Castro had waged a "War of Liberation" in seizing the political power in Cuba. By analyzing the elements which entered into these Communist-inspired conflicts, it was relatively easy to reach a definition of the term, "War of Liberation" or "People's War". Common to all was the use of subversive aggression for the overthrow of a non-Communist state, employing terrorism and guerrilla warfare, usually supported clandestinely from an external Communist source.

As we became more deeply involved in South Viet-Nam, it was apparent that the "War of Liberation" represented a formidable threat and that one outcome of our efforts must be to find a way to cope with it and expose the myth of its invincibility. The Communist leaders had long been vocal in proclaiming its merits as a cheap and easy way for the expansion of militant Communism. It was clearly their hope that the outcome in South Viet-Nam would demonstrate its sure-fire efficacy. General Giap, the Commander-in-Chief of the North Vietnamese forces, stated: "South Viet-Nam is the model of the national liberation movement of our time. If the special warfare that the United States imperialists are testing in South Viet-Nam is overcome, then it can be defeated anywhere in the world." Marshal Lin Biao, the Chinese Minister of Defense, expressed the hope that "Wars of Liberation" waged in numerous parts of the world could result in the depletion of U.S. strength and our ultimate defeat. He also had the feeling that the

"War of Liberation" was relatively safe, adding "There have been Wars of Liberation for twenty years since World War II. Have any single one developed into a world war?" As recently as Mr. Reston's Moscow interview of December 8, 1965, Kossygin put himself on record as having confidence in the future of the "War of Liberation". "We believe that national liberation wars are just wars and that they will continue as long as there is national oppression by imperialist powers. Take Southern Rhodesia. There will be a national liberation war there."

These statements of the Communist elect show clearly that they take very seriously the "War of Liberation" which they view as the preferred tactic for Communist expansion among the emerging nations. It appeals to them as being cheap since guerrilla forces can be trained, equipped and maintained at a relatively low cost in comparison to the great expenditures necessary on the part of the government under attack to defend against them. There is the political advantage that the clandestine external ally who is normally in the background can disavow participation in the guerrilla warfare just as Hanoi has tried to deny complicity with the Viet Cong. It is true that Hanoi's participation in reinforcing, supplying and directing the guerrillas is now so obvious that the brassiest of Communist apologists have been reduced to silence but for a time at least their disavowals confused and misled the unwary international public. The final advantage perceived in the "War of Liberation" was its relative safety, noted by Lin Piao, since its ambiguity is difficult to confront with conventional military force and since, because of its sporadic nature, is not likely to expand into the large scale war which in turn might escalate to the great nuclear holocaust which all parties wish to avoid.

In spite of these clear statements of intent on the part of Communist leaders to exploit the "War of Liberation" to the hilt, I have encountered some skepticism in the U.S. as to the reality of the threat of the expanded use of the "War of Liberation". Are not the Communist statements merely examples of rhetorical exuberance, made for the benefit of the faithful in Communist countries? At most, are they not appeals to the discontented have nots of the world to stir up trouble for the haves with the intention of direct involvement? It seems hardly that casual or innocent to me. At the Tri-Continental Solidarity Conference in Havana last January, representatives of Moscow and Peking joined Castro and other Communist spokesmen in calling for "armed struggle" to defeat "imperialism in all or almost all Latin American countries." Since all or almost all of the Latin American nations are independent states, the "liberation" in the mind of the Havana delegates is plainly the overthrow of non-Communist governments by armed force supported by external Communist allies. Chou En-Lai states a similar attitude toward the nations of Africa which, he declared in 1965, to be "ripe for revolution".

This is not just a theory with the Communists. Consider the case of the Chinese aggression committed against Tibet. Tibet was a peaceful Buddhist theocracy until Chinese troops "liberated" it in October, 1950 and in 1965 Peking proclaimed it an "autonomous republic", an euphemism for "Chinese colony". Our own experience in resisting a "War of Liberation" in South Viet-Nam should relieve us of any doubt that the Communists really intend to use this technique for the expansion of militant Communism--at least, until it clearly fails.

If this new aggressive technique promises so much to the Communist leaders, it becomes our task to expose its weakness and to demonstrate in South Viet-Nam and elsewhere that far from being cheap, disavowable and safe, the "War of Liberation" can be made costly, dangerous and doomed to failure.

In developing a defense against the "War of Liberation", it is first necessary to learn to recognize the conditions which are favorable to its development. As I have remarked before, it is essentially a threat to weak governments and thrives on poverty, social injustice and all similar conditions which encourage popular discontent. Since these are conditions endemic in many if not most of the emerging countries, we are evidently talking about a very large number of possible target countries where a "War of Liberation" may be undertaken under conditions favorable to its success.

Among these threatened governments, the most exposed are those located in comparative proximity to expansive Communist powers. Since the latter are for the moment the USSR, Red China, the DRV and Cuba, we are able to establish a certain priority based on geography among the vulnerable emerging countries, concentrating our attention on those soft areas which can be reached readily by the forces of these expansive governments. Conversely, since threatened countries look to the United States as a primary source for assistance, physical remoteness from the United States is from the Communist point of view a favorable circumstance in picking a target country.

We have other indicators which may warn where future trouble lies. Since we know pretty well the sequence of events followed in the development of subversive aggression, we can watch for conditions and actions which may set that sequence in motion. The first step of the covert aggressor is usually the creation of a clandestine political structure in the country to be subverted, covertly introduced either into the urban or into the rural society, but usually into the latter. Following the creation of an underground political structure, the leaders of the subversion must make provision for raising or introducing guerrilla forces to act as the military arm of the conspiracy. As we know from case studies, the Communist leaders develop these forces progressively and, if favored by success, little by little they increase the harassment of the government forces. To be finally successful, they must obtain willingly or by force a degree of cooperation from the country people if they are to succeed in undermining the government and ultimately in dragging it down. This cooperation will be forthcoming to the degree that as the people lose confidence in the ability of the government to protect them. To attain these objectives in past historical cases, it has usually been found necessary for the subversive forces to receive support from a base outside the country under attack. The most favorable situation is one where an external sanctuary exists, such as the Creek insurgents had in Yugoslavia or the Viet Cong in Laos and North Viet-Nam.

If the Communist leaders have taken the "War of Liberation" seriously as a tactic for future expansion, so also has the United States Government. President Kennedy enunciated our attitude toward the threat in the following words: "The great battleground for the defense and expansion of freedom today is the second half of the globe: Asia, Latin America, Africa and the Middle

East -- the lands of the people who harbor the greatest hopes. The enemies of freedom think they can destroy the hopes of the newer nations and they aim to do it before the end of this decade. This is a struggle of will and determination as much as one of force and violence. It is a battle for the conquest of the minds and souls, as much as for the conquest of lives and territory. In such a struggle, we cannot fail to take sides."

In South Viet-Nam we have indeed taken sides and shall be obliged to continue to take sides until we have exposed the myth of the invincibility of the "War of Liberation" and have assured the independence of South Viet-Nam. But even if we are successful, we will not have removed for all time the potential threat to peace represented by the vulnerability of the instable, backward governments of the world. But our success should have the salutary effect of dampening the ardor of the Communist expansionists who view the new technique as a way of "crawling under" the conventional defenses of the Free World and nullifying the formidable conventional and nuclear armaments which we have assembled at great costs for the protection of our interests. To fail would inevitably set in train a disastrous series of events, starting perhaps among the neighboring countries of SEA, but surely extending over much of the underdeveloped world. Even the presently detached European nations would feel the shock. I often recount an incident which took place in Berlin at the time of President Truman's courageous decision to put U. S. troops into S. Korea to meet the Communist attack. I asked a senior SPD official what he thought of the President's action, expecting him as a man

with a socialist, pacifist background to be critical of the decision. To my surprise he said: "Since the war we Believers have been impressed with the generosity and good will of you Americans. Look what the Marshall Plan has done to this city. But we were never sure that you would always stand by us until we saw that in a distant place like Korea you were ready to contribute not just 'pfannkuchen' but the lives of your young men". If that was the positive effect in Europe of courageous action in the Far East, it is not hard to imagine the enormous, negative effect of the acceptance of defeat in SVN where our assets, opportunities and obligations are all vastly greater than in those grim months of 1950 when our forces were nearly driven into the sea.

In this highly competitive, multipolar world we will inevitably face a far greater variety of problems than ever before. We will have a greater variety of options and hence must make a greater number of critical decisions in the conduct of our foreign affairs. I have used the War of Liberation merely as an important example of the kind of challenge which we may face. Tonight, I am going to discuss the present situation in SVN, not only because of the acuteness of our current interest in that situation, but because it exemplifies the complexities which our overseas activities may assume. Thus it suggests the requirements in leadership, organization, training and resources to fit us for our multiple tasks in this emerging multi-polar world.