Specters of “Isolationism”?
Debating America’s Place in the Global Arena, c.1965-1974

by

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Graduate Department of History

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ABSTRACT

The United States emerged from the Second World War determined to play a leading role in the maintenance of international order. Increasing levels of tension between the United States and the forces of communism after 1945, however, slowly forced a redefinition of what might be more distinctly termed America’s “global” responsibilities, such that by 1961 John F. Kennedy declared that the United States would “pay any price...in order to assure the survival and success of liberty.” An identifiable Cold War consensus took shape based on the assumption that it was America’s responsibility to lead, protect, and defend, the “free-world.” Since America was effectively waging a battle to ensure the successful spread of its own values, the Cold War consensus also served to severely limit debate—dissent essentially implied disloyalty. By the mid-1960s, however, the Cold War consensus began to crack and a debate over American foreign policy began to emerge.

That debate is the focus of this dissertation, which looks at the opposition to Cold War policies which emerged in the Senate, most notably among the members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee—many of whom had once played a role in developing the very foreign policies they now protested. The war in Vietnam provided the focal point for much of the dissent, but the foreign aid program also became heavily criticized, as did America’s
NATO policy, particularly the size of the American military presence in Europe. More important, however, Senate dissenters came to question the United States’ very position as the principle defender of the free world. They did not dispute the idea that America had a significant role to play in the global arena, but they did not believe that role should consist of being the world’s policeman, the self-appointed arbiter of other’s affairs, and the keeper of the status quo. Because of their views, the so-called dissenters were labelled as “neo-isolationists.” They saw themselves the true “internationalists,” however, believing that the Cold War had led to confusion between internationalism and indiscriminate global involvement.
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It is to Rose, and to my mother, that I dedicate this thesis. Also to the Boys (who shall remain unidentified beyond this simple description).
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Introduction

The question of what constitutes an appropriate role for the United States in the global arena is of central importance to understanding American foreign relations. This dissertation examines a period, c.1965-1974, when the struggle to answer that question was particularly pronounced. More specifically, it focuses on a debate emerging between the Johnson and Nixon administrations and members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. The former subscribed to the Cold War consensus, which operated on the assumption that because of everything the United States stood for, America’s immense power obligated it to assume the role of protector and defender of the “free world.” The latter, while not disputing the idea that the United States had significant responsibilities in the global arena, nonetheless came to reject the idea, originally inspired by the Cold War, that the United States should function as the world’s policeman—the self-appointed arbiter of others’ affairs, and the keeper of the status quo.

America’s sense of its role in the global arena has, of course, evolved over time. Indeed, the struggle to answer the question of what constitutes an appropriate role for the United States within the global arena has in many ways determined the construction of foreign policy throughout the history of the United States. There have been periods of both consensus and disagreement. For example, through much of the nineteenth century Americans sought to actively insert themselves in the international economy while refraining from becoming too closely connected or “entangled” politically with European nations and their interests.1 This

position is often referred to as “isolationism,” though few Americans actually intended to isolate the United States. Rather, it was believed that since America’s interests were so fundamentally different from those of Europe—the United States was, after all, committed to democratic principles not reflected in the structure of European monarchies and politics—it was unnecessary for America to involve itself in European affairs.

As America’s role in the world expanded, however, there were instances of profound disagreement as to what the nature of that role should be. The 1898 debate over the annexation of the Philippines provides a good example of this, with some Americans being deeply opposed to that action because they feared that by participating in the larger colonial order, the United States would more likely be drawn into international conflict. The opposition also believed that donning the mantle of imperialism would represent a betrayal of American principles; that a republic could not also be an empire without losing its republican ideals; and that imperialism was inconsistent with America’s historical identification with the ideal of liberty. Others, however, believed that it was the very ideals America represented that mandated annexation—because it was America’s task, its Manifest Destiny, to help modernize and democratize others.

As with 1898, the question of American membership in the League of Nations in 1919 provides another excellent example of profound debate—one often seen, at least in part, as a battle between “isolationist” and “internationalist” impulses. Woodrow Wilson saw the First
World War as providing an opportunity to fundamentally rewrite both American foreign policy and the larger rulebook for the conduct of international relations itself. Wilson seized this opportunity to promulgate a League of Nations, a mutually cooperative society of countries determined to maintain peace, and one in which the United States would play a leading role. The United States Senate, however, rejected membership in the League. A variety of concerns led to this action: that membership would entangle America in the affairs of Europe; that it might interfere with America’s interests or independence of action at some point; that it could disrupt the constitutional processes governing the construction of foreign policy, particularly the authorization of the use of armed forces abroad. The debate over League membership was so intense, however, that Congress moved to vote on the Treaty of Versailles several times over, and Wilson tried to turn the 1920 Presidential election into a referendum on the issue.4

Despite America’s active involvement in world affairs throughout the 1920s, many see the League’s rejection as evidence of the continuing pull of “isolationist” thinking on the United States. In the 1930s, as the nation struggled to recover from the Great Depression, the pull of “isolationism” appeared to grow stronger—with Congress going so far as to pass neutrality legislation to prevent America from getting involved in another European conflict like the First World War. When war broke out in 1939, however, Franklin Roosevelt began to push the notion of America as the “greatest arsenal of democracy.” Conflict between those who opposed American intervention in the Second World War and those seeking an American role in the war waged for two years, until the bombing of Pearl Harbor. This event, which was to “live in

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infamy” within the American consciousness, is often depicted as delivering the death blow to “isolationism”. As Arthur Vandenberg—the Republican chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee from 1947 through 1949, and the man credited with driving the bipartisan consensus necessary to substantially alter America’s international outlook—later put it: “In my own mind, my convictions regarding international cooperation and collective security for peace took firm force on the afternoon of the Pearl Harbor attack. That day ended isolationism for any realist.”

Over the course of the Second World War, America’s international outlook did undergo a change. Perhaps nothing epitomizes this more than Henry Luce’s conceptualization of “The American Century.” Appearing in Life magazine on 17 February 1941, even before Pearl Harbor, Luce’s editorial addressed the debate over non-intervention and “isolationism”. Arguing that much of the twentieth century had been “a profound and tragic disappointment” because the United States had failed to accept its responsibility “to exert upon the world the full impact of our influence,” Luce believed that America had now become “the sanctuary of the ideals of civilization.” It was America’s responsibility to “undertake the role of the Good Samaritan of the entire world.” The United States was “the dynamic center of ever widening spheres of enterprise . . . the training center of skillful servants of mankind . . . the powerhouse of the ideals of Freedom and Justice—out of these elements surely can be fashioned a vision of the Twentieth Century to which we can and will devote ourselves in joy and gladness and vigor and enthusiasm.”

As the events of the war unfolded, Luce’s call appeared to be answered and America moved towards a revival of a Wilsonian-like role for the U.S. within the international arena. In

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1944 the United States played a part in overseeing the construction of a new international economic order with the establishment of the International Monetary Fund and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (the World Bank). President Roosevelt, an ardent Wilsonian, also envisioned a leading role for the United States in ensuring peace and stability in the post-war world, and the United States was also active in the creation of the United Nations, which unlike the League in 1919, the Congress voted overwhelmingly in favour of America joining.

Over the course of the war, Americans came to believe they were fighting to establish a world based upon the larger principles that guided America itself. Only in doing so could peace truly last. In framing the contrast between the United States and its enemies in terms of a vivid, dichotomous metaphor—one of freedom versus subjugation—Roosevelt, as John Fousek points out, succeeded in linking America’s national strengths to a sense of international obligation. This, in turn, “brought the opportunity for world leadership ‘in the name of peace and humanity’ and in the interests of the United States.” At war’s end, Truman continued this line of thinking. He declared that the success achieved in the war was “more than a victory of arms. It was a victory of one way of life over another.”

The vision of a unified world operating under the umbrella of American leadership defined by the very values that America projected at home cracked upon the hard reality of the emerging Cold War, however. If the United States emerged from the Second World War determined to play a leading role in the postwar international order, the events of the next five years would see an augmentation, and an alteration, of that role. Membership in the United Nations was one thing, but the Truman Doctrine, in committing the United States to defending

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“free peoples everywhere,” was quite another. The Marshall Plan, a loan of billions designed to underwrite the European economy represented a further heightening of responsibility, and the capstone of the “new” policy came with America’s decision to join the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (which was followed shortly thereafter by the creation of a military assistance program). By the terms of Article 5 of the NATO treaty, an attack upon any one member constituted an attack upon all members, necessitating a response (though not necessarily a declaration of war) by all. Such a commitment was of immense symbolic importance. America entered into its first entangling alliance in one-hundred-seventy-one years. Indeed, a New York Times editorial argued that NATO contained “promises not even dreamed of by Woodrow Wilson.”

If the United States emerged from the Second World War firmly committed to “internationalism”—as opposed to so-called “isolationism”—the increasing level of tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union after 1945 slowly forced a redefinition of what might be more distinctly termed America’s “global” responsibilities. In analyzing this development, John Fousek’s To Lead the Free World: American Nationalism and the Cultural Roots of the Cold War (2000) is indispensable. Fousek’s study is centered on “popular perceptions of United States foreign policy” as embodied by “public culture” between 1945 and 1951. By examining the rhetoric and actions of the Truman administration and the mass print media, Fousek argues that an “American nationalist ideology provided the underpinning for the broad consensus that supported Cold War foreign policy.” Three elements comprised this ideology: a sense of national greatness; a sense of global responsibility; and anticommunism, the last component to fall into place. As to America’s greatness, at its core rested a sense that

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9 New York Times, March 22, 1949. When it came to sending American troops to Europe to create a military apparatus for NATO, the Chicago Tribune exclaimed, “Not even F. Roosevelt had so wronged the country. Truman – Get Out!” December 3, 1950.
the U.S. had a “unique and universal message of benefit” to all mankind. Fousek argues that “national greatness brought global responsibility, which [then] required the containment of communism.” After all, communism represented the very antithesis of America’s self-perceived identity. Thus, America waged the Cold War “not primarily in the name of capitalism, or Western civilization (neither of which would have united the American people behind the cause), but in the name of America—in the name, that is, of the nation” itself.¹⁰

Nothing exemplifies this better than the language of the Truman Doctrine. Promulgated on March 17, 1947 as a means of gaining support for legislation to aid Greece and Turkey against subversive communist threats, Truman stated, “nearly every nation must choose between alternative ways of life. The choice is too often not a free one. One way of life is based upon the will of the majority, and is distinguished by free institutions, representative government, free guarantees of individual liberty, freedom of speech and religion, freedom from political oppression”—hallmarks of American identity all. Truman then spoke of the suppression of freedom as the basis of the second way of life, declaring that the United States “must support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or outside pressures.” He concluded by stating, “The free peoples of the world look to us for support. . . . If we falter in our leadership, we may endanger the peace of the world—and we shall surely endanger the welfare of this nation.”¹¹ Here we see the triad of American nationalist globalism that Fousek writes about: America’s national greatness is exemplified by the fact that it epitomizes the free way of life and others look towards it for support; the sense of global responsibility is evident in references to leadership; and a sense of anti-communism crowns the whole thing. Even though Truman did not once explicitly mention the Soviet Union

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¹⁰ Fousek, To Lead the Free World; see the introduction.
or Communism, it was very clear to all that these represented the second way of life based on subjugation.\textsuperscript{12}

WWII era thinking about America’s proper role in the international sphere was slowly being expanded upon to include the idea that America should assume responsibility for all “free” peoples, and also, as implied by the language of the Truman Doctrine, for all un-free peoples seeking to be “free”. The United States, therefore, gradually came to undertake a self-appointed mission to defend the “free world.” This does not mean that the United States assumed responsibility for the entire globe all at once, however—as U.S.-China policy in the closing years of the Chinese civil war reveals—or that it abandoned the multilateralism inherent in the United Nations and accepted unilateral responsibility for ensuring order in the international arena in one fell swoop—although America, by virtue of its sheer power, did increasingly assume preponderant responsibility for others. The United States provided the foundation of both the European Recovery Plan (through the Marshall Plan) and the North Atlantic Alliance, for instance, though each of those contained a degree of multilateralism with their references to “mutual aid.”

In addition, the assumption of the role of “defender of the free world” did not go unchallenged within the United States. Renowned journalist Walter Lippmann typifies this. He feared that America’s newfound sense of responsibility, at least as it was articulated in the Truman Doctrine, represented a blank check for the exertion of American power in the world. The globalist language of the Truman Doctrine implied that the United States would defend down-trodden peoples in far-flung corners of the world, resulting in military commitments that

\textsuperscript{12} Fousek writes that the Truman Doctrine “succeeded in reshaping U.S. foreign policy discourse because it tapped into the mixture of nationalist and universalist values that had already shaped much of that discourse. By incorporating deep-seated strains of American anti-communism into the emerging ideology of nationalist Globalism, with its basic precepts of national greatness and global responsibility, Truman’s speech gave that ideology added potency.” See page 103.
would actually do little to enhance American security and much to draw America into a “heterogeneous array of satellites, clients, dependants, and puppets.” For Lippmann, the Truman Doctrine could easily lead America down the path of indiscriminate globalism.\footnote{Walter Lippman, \textit{The Cold War: A Study In US Foreign Policy} (New York, 1947)}

Indeed, the level of support for foreign policy initiatives throughout the period was questionable enough to lead the State Department to organize the Freedom Train in the fall of 1947. The train started at Philadelphia to commemorate the 160\textsuperscript{th} anniversary of the Constitution and it ended its journey in Washington in time to celebrate Truman’s 1949 inaugural address. It visited some three-hundred cities between September 1947 and January 1949, carrying along with it such documents as the Mayflower Compact, the Bill of Rights, the Declaration of Independence, and the UN Charter. Michael Hogan writes that the purpose of the train was to “present an idealized and sacred version of the America past in order to overwhelm dissent and unify the American people behind the national security policy of the Truman Administration.”\footnote{For a detailed description of the Freedom Train see Michael Hogan, \textit{Cross of Iron: Harry S. Truman and the Origins of the National Security State, 1945-1949} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 426-430.} In other words, the Freedom Train was designed to tap into elements of American Nationalist Globalism, reifying the ideology. The ploy was effective and, as Fousek writes, the “range of acceptable public discourse narrowed considerably between 1945 and 1950.”\footnote{Fousek, \textit{To Lead the Free World}, 13.}

Indeed, by 1950, the increasingly predominant view that containing Communism and protecting the free world was America’s paramount duty had also come to encompass Asia. When North Korean forces crossed the thirty-eighth parallel and invaded South Korea, the United States responded by sending troops—albeit as part of a larger United Nations initiative, but one that the U.S. initiated and oversaw. With the North Korean invasion coming so closely
on the heels of the Soviet detonation of its first atomic bomb, the conclusion of the Chinese civil war in favor of the Communists, and the signing of an alliance between the People’s Republic of China and the Soviet Union, the globalist language of the Truman Doctrine was given new weight.

In the United States itself, Truman proclaimed the existence of a state of emergency in December 1950:

Whereas recent events in Korea and elsewhere constitute a grave threat to the peace of the world . . . Whereas world conquest by communist imperialism is the goal of the forces of aggression that have been loosed upon the world; and Whereas, if the goal of communist imperialism were to be achieved, the people of this country would no longer enjoy the full and rich life they have with God’s help built for themselves and their children . . .

Now, therefore, I, Harry S. Truman, President of the United States of America, do proclaim the existence of a national emergency, which requires that the military, naval, air, and civilian defenses of this country be strengthened as speedily as possible to the end that we may be able to repel any and all threats against our national security and may now fulfill our responsibilities . . . I summon all citizens to make a united effort for the security and well-being of our beloved country and to place its needs foremost in thought and action that the full moral and material strength of the Nation may be readied for the dangers which threaten us . . . I summon all citizens to be loyal to the principles upon which our Nation is founded, to keep faith with our friends and allies.16

The language used is significant. Truman effectively tied America’s Cold War battles to the well-being of the United States at home. More importantly, in calling upon all Americans to “make a united effort” and to be “loyal”, Truman tied dissent to disloyalty. National loyalty, then, became connected to global anticommunism, which, in turn, corresponded to acceptance of America’s role of leader and protector of the free world. To question this role, to voice dissent, was to question America itself. The politics of national loyalty, then, served to constrain debate over foreign policy.

This general view that the peace and security of America depended upon the peace and security of the entire free world defined America’s Cold War mentality; it placed a tangible, strategic face on what Fousek calls American Nationalist Globalism. This ideology, with its corresponding image of America as the leader of the free world, served as the central trope of foreign policy discourse during much of the Cold War. To be sure, there was often disagreement within policy making circles as to the best means by which to contain the perceived threat of conspiratorial communist forces; NSC-68, for example, called for a significant expansion of containment from Kennan’s original thinking, Eisenhower’s “New Look” placed emphasis on nuclear deterrence, while Kennedy hoped to implement a system of “flexible response.” But if strategies varied, America’s goals in containing the expansion of Communist forces deemed puppets of the Moscow-Beijing axis remained remarkably consistent. So, too, did the limitations on dissent. As Fousek writes: “tactical debate on specific foreign policy issues continued, but on fundamental questions of national purpose, of the nation’s role in world affairs…the range of permissible discourse and legitimate debate became increasingly constricted.” An identifiable Cold War consensus took shape, and the areas of the world America felt itself responsible for expanded.

Throughout the 1950s, that consensus resulted in an increasingly globalized network of military bases, of bilateral agreements with other countries, and of formalized alliances (the “pactomania” of John Foster Dulles)—exactly the sort of thing that Walter Lippman had predicted (and warned against) as the fallout of the globalist language of the Truman Doctrine. By 1960, the United States had made commitments or agreements with the following regions: Latin America, through the Rio Pact of 1947; Western Europe, through the North Atlantic Treaty

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18 Fousek, To Lead the Free World, 13.
(and the subsequent North Atlantic Treaty Organization—NATO) in 1949; Australia and New Zealand, through the 1951 ANZUS Pact; South East Asia, through the South East Asian Treaty Organization (SEATO) created in 1954; and the Near and Middle East, as a member of the Military, Economic, and Anti-subversion Committees of the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO). In addition to these broad organizations, the United States entered into security agreements with the following individual countries: the Philippines (1951); the Republic of Korea (1953); the Republic of China (1954); and Iran, Turkey, Pakistan, and Liberia (1959).\textsuperscript{19} Approximately one million military personnel were stationed around the globe.\textsuperscript{20} Congress had also passed two broad resolutions—the Formosa Resolution and the Middle East Resolution—which authorized the President to deploy American military forces to those areas, as he deemed necessary. Alongside these security arrangements, and often as a result of them, America’s foreign aid program, particularly the military assistance component, grew exponentially. And, perhaps most importantly for the developments to be explored in detail in the thesis, the United States found itself committed to South Vietnam.

By the early 1960s, as a result of America’s efforts to wage the Cold War, the view that it was America’s role to defend the so-called free world—literally, and unilaterally if need be—had become so ingrained that John F. Kennedy’s 1961 inaugural address declared: “Let every nation know, whether it wishes us well or ill, that we shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe, in order to assure the survival and success of liberty. This much we pledge – and more.”\textsuperscript{21} Kennedy’s words offer a striking example of the

\textsuperscript{19} For a full list of American commitments to other nations, including the relevant passages from various treaties and bilateral agreements, see World Wide Military Commitments, Hearings before the Preparedness Investigating Subcommittee of the Committee of Armed Services, United States Senate, 89\textsuperscript{th} Congress, 2\textsuperscript{nd} Session, 1966, 11-29. RG287, Publications of the Federal Government.

\textsuperscript{20} Statistic drawn from a table found within United States Forces in Europe, Hearings Before the Subcommittee on Arms Control, International Law and Organizations, Senate Foreign Relations Committee (July 1973), 200.

\textsuperscript{21} Public Papers of the Presidents: John F. Kennedy, 1961-63, Vol. XXXV.
sense of international mission the United States undertook as a result of the Cold War. There seemed to be no limitations on the extent of America’s international responsibilities and what was required of the United States in living up to them. But if the late 1940s, the 1950s, and the early 1960s represent a period of general agreement, or consensus, as to what constituted America’s “proper” role within the global arena, the same cannot be said of the mid-1960s.

During the Johnson years, particularly from 1965 onwards, the Cold War consensus began to collapse. H. W. Brands has written that when the Truman Doctrine was announced in 1947, “the idea that the United States could guarantee a friendly status quo in the far corners of the globe appeared ambitious but not inconceivable. During Johnson’s half-decade as president, this idea shattered on the hard reality of a new international order.” But Brands’ analysis, while astute, is incomplete. Support for the Cold War consensus also shattered upon the attitudes of individuals who increasingly came to think it was not America’s job to preserve a friendly global status quo in the first place.

The American public’s increasing opposition to the Vietnam War is well documented. Perhaps of greater significance, however, is the collapse of the Cold War consensus within ostensible foreign policy-making circles. In particular, opposition to Cold War policies began to emerge in the Senate, most notably among the members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee (SFRC). Here, too, opposition to the Vietnam War served as a focal point, but the foreign aid program also became heavily criticized, as did America’s NATO policy, particularly the size of the American military presence in Europe. More important, however, Senate

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dissenters came to question the core of the Cold War ideology itself; they came to question the United States’ very position as the principal defender of the free world— that is to say, America’s sense of its role in the global arena during the previous two decades. What began, in some instances, as a debate about methods for waging the Cold War evolved, for some, into debate and dissent about America’s goals in the international arena—about America’s very sense of mission, and about the true meaning of American “internationalism.” A foreign policy debate, which extended into the Nixon era as well, was touched off the likes of which America had not seen in decades—a debate made all the more profound because of the extent of the international responsibilities the United States had already adopted as a result of the Cold War.

As noted, it is this debate that serves as the focus of this dissertation—with a specific concentration on SFRC opposition to the Johnson and Nixon administrations’ policies regarding foreign aid, Vietnam, and NATO, as well as their vision of what constituted America’s role in the global arena. There were certainly members of the Committee who continued to support the Cold War consensus, and there were individuals elsewhere in Congress who also developed dissenting viewpoints. The SFRC is noteworthy, however, for having a membership that included (at one point or other) some of the most prominent dissenting voices within Congress—individuals like J. William Fulbright, the Committee’s chairman, Mike Mansfield (also the Senate Majority Leader), Wayne Morse, Frank Church, Eugene McCarthy, Albert Gore Sr., George McGovern and Stuart Symington. Fulbright, Mansfield, Church and Symington served on the SFRC for the whole period under consideration, with Fulbright having assumed the position of Chair in 1959. Morse was a member from the mid-1950s through 1968, when he lost his seat in the Senate. Gore served on the Committee from 1965-1970 until he too
lost his Senate seat. McCarthy was a member from 1965-1970. McGovern was a late comer to the SFRC; he did not begin his service until 1971, though he was regarded as an informal member of the SFRC since he shared similar views and frequently supported Fulbright and Mansfield’s ideas. Indeed, McGovern wanted Mansfield to be his running mate in the 1972 election (though Mansfield had no desire to leave the Senate).

The SFRC dissenters’ collective voice was important in part because of their position as members of that Committee. The SFRC, in existence since 1816, is the most powerful congressional committee when it comes to matters of foreign policy. It holds general jurisdiction over relations with foreign nations, over diplomatic appointments, foreign assistance programs (economic, military, technical and humanitarian), international conferences and congresses, interventions abroad, and treaties and executive agreements. SFRC members were therefore in a position to have great potential influence on matters of foreign affairs.

What makes the SFRC dissent particularly noteworthy, however, is that it was coming from people who had played a role in developing the very foreign policies they came to protest. Though none of these individuals—save Fulbright, who was first appointed to the SFRC in 1949—were on the SFRC as the Cold War took shape, Mansfield, Morse, and Fulbright were already serving in Congress in the 1940s. Others, who were elected later in the 1950s, like Church and McCarthy, expressed support of America’s Cold War mission and its various manifestations up through the mid-1960s, although McGovern did express dissenting viewpoints from early on in his Senate career, which began in 1961. These men were Democrats who turned against the foreign policies of their own party—the party which had constructed much of the framework for America’s Cold War foreign policy in the first place. In
other words, the challenge increasingly came from within the ranks of those who had once been a part of the consensus themselves.

For this reason alone, these individuals and their ideas about America’s place in the world deserve attention. Yet until just recently, Congress has not been the subject of much interest in histories of American foreign relations, particularly during the Cold War period. This largely has to do with the presumption of what Arthur Schlesinger Jr. called the “imperial presidency.” In a period when presidential administrations dictated policy, Congress simply was not of great interest, especially since it seemed to largely support what the Presidents were doing. Of possible exception are the biographies or studies of individual Senators, such as Randall Woods’ work on Fulbright and Don Oberdorfer’s compelling biography of Mansfield.24 While these have offered valuable insight into the viewpoints and actions of these individuals on matters of foreign affairs, biography, by its very nature, focuses on single individuals. This dissertation, on the other hand, endeavors to examine the SFRC dissenters collectively—though individuals like Fulbright and Mansfield do emerge as leading figures within that collective.

Robert Davis Johnson’s Congress and the Cold War (2005) is really the first work of substance to examine Congress’ role in the Cold War, and to demonstrate that Congress was not the passive observer providing a proverbial rubber stamp for presidential policy that it is generally assumed to be. Johnson’s book offers remarkably comprehensive coverage of Congressional developments during the entire Cold War. By virtue of this, however, the work is unable to focus in depth on many particular issues—and the growing debate over America’s place in the global arena in the 1960s is deserving of such deeper attention. Granted, the

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Senate’s views on Vietnam have been examined by others. Most recently, Gary Stone has undertaken a study of the entire Senate and the question of Vietnam,25 though other works have provided more focus. The essays in Randall Wood’s edited collection, *The Politics of Dissent: The American Political Tradition and Vietnam* (2003) concentrate on Ernest Gruening, McGovern, Church, Fulbright, Mansfield and Gore. Similarly, Joseph Fry looks at the SFRC and Senate Armed Services Committee hearings on Vietnam in 1966 and 1967 respectively in *Debating Vietnam: Fulbright, Stennis and their Senate Hearings* (2006).

Much as Fulbright and the others dwelled on Vietnam, however, they also tackled other issues—like foreign aid and NATO—and they ultimately came to examine and critique the larger scope of American foreign policy and the sense of mission the Cold War had previously inspired. These individuals were not merely rethinking certain foreign policies; they were trying to re-conceptualize America’s overall role within the global arena.

Because of this, they were labeled “neo-isolationists”. That this is so is revealing of the extent to which America was believed to be responsible for world order. Fulbright and his colleagues were not at all suggesting that the United States lacked a fundamental role in ensuring the peace and stability of the international arena. Because their vision of what that role comprised rejected the notion that America should serve as policeman and arbiter of world affairs, however, they were seen by many as advocating a call for a return to “isolationism”. For their part, the dissenters actually described themselves as the true “internationalists”, believing that the Cold War had led to a distortion of internationalism—to confusion between “internationalism” and indiscriminate global involvement.

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By expanding the investigation of these men beyond their views on Vietnam, then, and by looking at the use of labels like “isolationist” and “internationalist”, this study endeavors to offer a more complete and complex picture of Senate dissent in the 1960s and early 1970s, and thereby illuminate more fully the extent of the debate taking place in this era.

Chapter One examines the emergence of cracks in the Cold War consensus. It traces how a particular group of influential Senators serving on the SFRC came to question the logic of the Cold War imperatives for American foreign policy, despite having once been proponents of the Cold War consensus. An overview of the directions that emerged after the cracks became more fully evident, and the ways in which questioning of the Cold War consensus affected discourses concerning American foreign policy, is offered.

Chapter Two focuses on the growing debate over the foreign aid program. From the time of the inception of the program, foreign aid had largely been utilized as a tool or weapon for waging the Cold War; emphasis was placed on military assistance to others, often at the expense of genuine development. Concerned that the aid program was responsible for the increasing American commitment to South Vietnam, and that it was failing in its stated goals of promoting development and democracy abroad, especially since emphasis was place on military assistance and many of the recipients were in fact dictatorships, Fulbright and Wayne Morse spearheaded an effort to re-conceptualize the purposes and goals of the aid program, as well as the ways in which it functioned. Fulbright, in particular, sought to transform aid from a “dubious instrument of national policy to a stable program of international development.”

Chapters Three and Four examine the Vietnam conflict. Chapter Three focuses on the growth of Senate opposition to the Americanization of the Vietnam War, paying particular
attention to the evolution of dissent from private to public questioning of Johnson’s Vietnam policies, a process which culminated in the unprecedented decision to hold public, televised SFRC hearings on Vietnam in February 1966 in hopes of triggering a national debate over the objectives and tactics of the American effort in Vietnam.

Taking the emergence of public dissent/debate as its starting point, Chapter Four then examines the alternatives to further escalation advocated by the SFRC dissenters. These included halting the bombing campaigns and seeking a negotiated settlement, preferably by getting the United Nations involved in the process. Rejecting all of Johnson’s justifications for having escalated the war, the dissenters believed the Americanization of the war had been a mistake in the first place. They further believed that American military efforts in Vietnam were not succeeding, nor were they likely to, and they were concerned about the increasing hostility towards the United States in the international community because of American actions in Vietnam. Ultimately, they viewed the war not just as a mistake, but as a tragedy and a betrayal of the very principles America claimed to be upholding.

Chapter Five examines the effort, led by Mike Mansfield, to reduce the size of American military forces stationed in Europe as part of the United States’ NATO commitments—a movement that gained momentum following France’s 1966 decision to withdraw from NATO’s integrated command. It seemed increasingly obvious to the supporters of this measure that the world of the 1960s was a vastly different place than the world in which NATO had been created. While no one advocated dismantling the alliance, or the withdrawal of the United States from NATO, there was a growing belief that America’s NATO policies had stultified. Economic considerations relating to the balance of payments problem and a desire to see increased burden-sharing within NATO were factors pushing for a reduction of the American
military presence in Europe. Ultimately, however, a reduction was deemed necessary so as to reflect changing international realities and possibly further the process of détente already begun by the Europeans, and to which the United States itself was supposedly committed.

None of these debates—over foreign aid, Vietnam, and NATO—ended when the Johnson administration left office and the Republicans came to power under Nixon. In fact, each of the debates escalated. Chapter Six, therefore, seeks to trace these debates as they evolved in the Nixon years, although it does so with a deliberately impressionistic overview. The much briefer narrative and analysis nonetheless help indicate the trajectory of the developments already considered in greater depth in the preceding chapters. What is important to note, however, is that whereas in the Johnson years much of the Senate’s efforts had been aimed at simply making Johnson aware of alternate viewpoints with the hopes of prodding moves in a certain direction, during the Nixon years the members of the SFRC adopted a much more direct approach by trying to pass binding legislation.

While the issues of foreign aid, Vietnam War, and the size and scope of the American military presence in Europe provided specific focal points for debates, they each implicitly raised questions about America’s “proper” role in the international sphere. The final chapter, Chapter Seven, therefore seeks to illuminate the extent to which American foreign policy as a whole was being re-examined, while also analyzing the applicability of the “neo-isolationist” label that was applied to those who held a different vision of what constituted a proper role for the United States than Cold War thinking seemed to dictate.
Chapter One
Cracks in the Cold War Consensus

In a speech before Americans for Democratic Action, given 30 January 1965, John Kenneth Galbraith argued that three “generations” of thought regarding American foreign policy had developed since the 1940s, each with its own view of America’s relationship to the rest of the world. Arising from the Second World War, the “first generation” was predicated upon the hope of continued cooperation among the Allies, with faith placed in international institutions like the United Nations. The “second generation” emerged as the Cold War began to take shape; born more or less alongside the Truman Doctrine and coming to full strength by the time of the Korean War, it was based on the belief of inherent and relentless conflict with communism, the spread of which must be prevented. Galbraith’s “third generation” of thought, which began to emerge in the mid-1960s, was predicated upon the idea that the character of the Cold War had changed. It followed, therefore, that the ideas and perceptions that had been driving foreign policy since the late 1940s also needed to be altered.¹

While it is difficult to meaningfully separate thinking along clear-cut generational lines like this—there were, after all, instances when even at the height of its sway, the so-called second generation of thought was questioned—Galbraith’s formulation offers a useful heuristic device for tracing the rise of the Cold War consensus, as well the eventual weakening of its hold. While his first and second “generations” were both wedded to the idea that the United States should play a leading role in ensuring international peace and stability, the second diverged from the first in its conceptualization of how best to preserve that peace, and who was best suited to the task. America emerged from the Second World War with the hope of working

with the Allies and the newly created United Nations. Increasing levels of tension between the United States and its former ally, the Soviet Union, however, led to a growing consensus within policy-making circles that it was America’s special responsibility to fend off the forces of aggression and subversion across the globe.

It took time, admittedly, for the idea of the literal defense of the free world to develop, but the Truman Doctrine provided the seedbed from which a foreign policy increasingly global in scope could develop. Indeed, in looking back from the perspective of the early 1970s, Senator J. William Fulbright (D-AR), the Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, pointed directly to the Truman Doctrine as the mechanism by which America had slowly come to be so deeply involved in far flung corners of the world like Vietnam: “The Truman Doctrine, which made limited sense for a limited time in a particular place, has led us in its universalized form to disaster in South East Asia.”

Historian Robert Tucker, a contemporary of Fulbright’s, explained the impact of the Truman Doctrine in more general terms: “By interpreting security as a function not only of the balance of power between states but of the international order maintained by states, the Truman Doctrine equated American security with interests that clearly went beyond all conventional security requirements.” The United States thus assumed greater and greater responsibilities within the international arena, such that by 1961 John F. Kennedy had pledged that America would “pay any price” in the defense of freedom.

This line of thinking, which serves as the basis for Galbraith’s second generation, is representative of the Cold War consensus. Historian John Fousek has coined the phrase “American Nationalist Globalism” to describe the basis for that consensus. As the “nationalist” label implies, ideas about America as leader and defender of the free world came to be deeply

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rooted in, and sustained by, the belief that America waged the Cold War not in the name of power, but in the name of the United States itself. Accordingly, the Cold War consensus consisted of more than a general agreement that the United States was responsible for defending the free world. It also contained the implicit belief that to question American policy was to question America itself. Dissent was, therefore, deemed unpatriotic or un-America and, as a consequence, stifled. A climate was thus created in which the appearance of unity became so important that open debate was deemed potentially dangerous.

If Galbraith’s “second generation” of thinking about foreign policy is representative of the Cold War consensus, his “third generation” is representative of developing cracks within that consensus. It came to mount a sustained effort at rethinking some of the fundamental assumptions held by the so-called second generation—which Kennedy’s remarks so nicely symbolize and Lyndon Johnson’s foreign policy later epitomized. Significantly, this “third” generation of thought also came to believe that if to question a particular foreign policy was to question America itself, then it was permissible and necessary to do so because the United States was straying from the very ideals it professed to uphold.

The thinking that developed in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee (SFRC) beginning in the mid-1960s is representative of this—of Galbraith’s third generation. Individuals like Fulbright, Mike Mansfield (D-MT), Wayne Morse (D-OR), Frank Church (D-ID), Albert Gore Sr. (D-TN) George McGovern (D-SD), Eugene McCarthy (D-MN), and Stuart Symington (D-MO)—among others—came to question certain core assumptions of the Cold War consensus, among them the lack of debate in the formulation of policy in the first place, while offering vocal criticism of a variety of foreign policies undertaken in the name of waging

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4 John Fousek, To Lead the Free World, American Nationalism and the Cultural Roots of the Cold War (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000). See the introduction.
the Cold War. This by no means suggests that Cold War logic was abandoned by all in one fell swoop; indeed, Galbraith’s “third generation” arose along side and co-existed with the “second generation.” Nonetheless, a distinctive group within Congress, exemplified by the SFRC, did come to question the logic of Cold War thinking. Interestingly, these individuals had once expressed viewpoints that Galbraith would characterize as belonging to the second generation of thought that he had identified. The challenge to the Cold War consensus thus came from people who had played a role in developing the ideas and policies they came to oppose, even if that role was only one of expressing support.

Criticisms of certain foreign policies, like the foreign aid program, began to appear in the late 1950s, though the effort to re-examine core assumptions about the Cold War, such as the belief in a monolithic communist conspiracy aimed at taking over the world, did not develop until the mid-1960s. Fulbright led the charge here. Buoyed by improved Soviet-American relations in the wake of the Cuban Missile crisis, he sought to dispel certain “myths” about the Cold War that appeared to be lingering. Despite this, however, Fulbright remained supportive of Johnson’s general foreign policy—as did his colleagues. When, however, Johnson sent a large force of Marines to the Dominican Republic in 1965, around the same time the American military presence in Vietnam began to escalate, the SFRC began to question American foreign policy in a much more serious fashion. At that point, Frank Church began suggesting that the SFRC should undertake hearings to address the larger thrust of American foreign policy, but aside from Fulbright’s September 1965 speech in the Senate denouncing the Dominican intervention, growing concerns over the direction of foreign policy tended to be offered in private. The continued escalation in Vietnam, however, provided a large enough issue for the launching of the public hearings—in part because Johnson had undertaken this action with a
very minimum of discussion or debate. From 1966 onward, and through the Nixon years, SFRC criticism of foreign policy became increasingly pronounced, particularly as the SFRC launched extensive investigations of its own into a variety of aspects of American foreign policy.

This chapter, therefore, traces how the distinctive group of SFRC members came to question the Cold War consensus. After first examining evidence of Cold War thinking in these individuals, early indications of questioning or disagreement with policy are discussed. The widening cracks in the Cold War consensus are then examined, and an overview of the directions that emerged after those cracks became more fully evident is provided, with attention paid to the manner in which the growing questioning of America’s foreign policy came to affect public discourses concerning American foreign policy.

I.

Before exploring early indications of disquiet it is useful to illustrate the initial support of the Cold War consensus—to further illustrate the extent of the break to come. Fulbright, for example, stands a good example of someone whose thinking over time could be characterized as falling into each of the generations of thought Galbraith identified. He believed so strongly in the potential of the United Nations to bring hope for cooperation and peace into being that he sponsored a resolution in 1943 advocating American involvement in a new international organization. This resolution helped, in the opinion of Walter Lippmann, lead “the charge of opinion against isolation.”

In the words of one of his biographers, Fulbright “sensed the United States was at last ready for Wilsonian internationalism.” Fulbright also believed so strongly in

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the need for cooperation and understanding that, in 1946, he brought into being an international exchange program designed to increase mutual understanding between the peoples of the United States and other countries.

While Fulbright never gave up hope for the success of the Fulbright Program, he nonetheless came to adopt a Cold War line. As he argued in 1953, for example: “In addition to large armed forces, Russia has developed every effective method of subversion on a world-wide scale . . . one reason the ‘cold war’ technique of the Kremlin is so dangerous is that it is so base, so uncivilized, so contrary to all that we regard as honest and decent. . . . Guns, tanks, and airplanes, unfortunately, will not destroy the insidious and false ideas spread by the Russians . . . it appears that we ought to engage the enemy directly in the ‘cold war’ now being fought in the Middle East, Southeast Asia, Africa, and Europe.” By the mid-60s, however, Fulbright became famous for espousing ideas contrary to the Cold War consensus, and he was not alone in making this transition.

Wayne Morse, viewed as the most maverick of all the later dissenters, supported the Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan. As with Fulbright, Morse initially had high hopes for the United Nations; he lost sight of those hopes (for a while, at least) in the aftermath of the Czech coup of 1948 and came to believe that it was America’s job to contain communism. Morse advocated for increases in military spending so that that “[the U.S.] will be able to enforce the peace at a moment’s notice if Russia should decide to extend her policies of aggression.” Morse was still toeing this line of thought in 1962. For example, he approved of plans to develop counterinsurgency programs to improve America’s ability to engage in guerilla warfare arguing: “We must place ourselves in a strengthened position, so that the communist

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7 Fulbright, “The US, USSR and the Cold War” 6 March 1953, J. William Fulbright Papers, University of Arkansas at Fayetteville, Series 72 (Speeches Elsewhere), Box 9, Folder 5. (Hereafter, the JWF Papers.)
world will know that we can meet them on every front—Cuba, Berlin, Southeast Asia, Africa. We must let them know that wherever they wish to attack freedom, we will stand firm and protect freedom.”⁹ Here Morse almost sounds as if he is paraphrasing Kennedy’s inaugural pledge, yet he becomes one of the first truly vocal critics of America’s war in Vietnam, and one of the leading critics of the foreign aid program as it existed in the 1960s.

Eugene McCarthy and Stuart Symington also offer examples of dissenters who once supported the Cold War consensus. McCarthy, who, for his part, would later pursue the Democratic nomination for the Presidency to protest Johnson’s actions with respect to Vietnam, himself argued in 1951 that the United States must “undertake to preserve western civilization” and use “all of its resources—military, economic, intellectual, and spiritual—in order to stand against communism.”¹⁰ Stuart Symington, the man the Washington Post would dub a “high-level defector” in the late 1960s, recalled, from his perspective in the early 1970s, how “no one believed more in the Marshall Plan and in the Truman Doctrine than I did.”¹¹ Senator John Sherman Cooper (R-KY) perhaps best summed up the support for the Cold War consensus articulated in these examples: “I was in the Senate briefly in 1944 and 1948, and again in 1953 and 1954, and there were a set of circumstances which I think Congress and large numbers of the American people supported. We had to counter the takeover of Eastern Europe by the Soviet Union. People were concerned about the fall of China . . . and the Korean War. . .Arrangements which we made at the time . . . were reflecting the fear of communist expansion.”¹²

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Senate Majority Leader Mike Mansfield offers an example of an individual whose support of the Cold War consensus led him to vigorously support a specific policy that he would later come to deeply oppose—the defense of South Vietnam. Mansfield said of the Geneva Accords of 1954, which attempted to settle the Indochina conflict, that “a serious defeat has been inflicted on American diplomacy. And in the process, vast new areas have been opened for potential conquest by communist totalitarianism.” As a result of his beliefs, Mansfield would play such a leading role in America’s early Vietnam policy that an article in Harpers Magazine declared, “Few Americans realize that Senator Mike Mansfield of Montana is widely regarded abroad as the chief architect of United States foreign policy for South East Asia.” Don Oberdorfer’s masterful biography of Mansfield also suggests that Mansfield played a pivotal role in early American involvement in Vietnam: “The irony is that Mansfield eventually became one of the most articulate and determined opponents of U.S. military intervention that, but for his strong support of Diem, might never have taken place.”

Given the past support of foreign policy constructed in the name of the Cold War by these individuals, then, the rethinking of America’s global role that they came to undertake is all the more poignant, and all the more indicative of the crumbling nature of the Cold War consensus in the 1960s.

At its height, though, believers in the consensus did not just support the idea that it was the United States’ duty to stand as the bulwark of freedom in the face of communist aggression. They also believed that, given the crisis-driven nature of the Cold War, it was necessary for the

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13 Congressional Record, 8 July 1954, 9997. See the Don Oberdorfer Mansfield Biography Research Papers, Mss. 590, K. Ross Toole Archives, The Mike and Maureen Mansfield Library, University of Montana (Missoula), Box 6, Folder 1.


15 Randall Woods writes, “What gave Fulbright’s critique of American foreign policy special sharpness and poignancy was that he had been one of the principal architects of the very Cold War liberalism he was now decrying.” See Woods, Fulbright, Vietnam, and the Search for A Cold War Foreign Policy, 148.
Executive branch of government to take the lead in foreign affairs. Robert Brown has written that cohesion in America’s foreign policy existed throughout the 1950s and until the conflict in Vietnam became protracted because Congress granted the President not just support, but also autonomy in conducting foreign affairs. Indeed, the traditional interpretation of Congress’ role in the foreign policy making process during much of the Cold War is that it had no real role to speak of. Walter Zelman has written: “the most striking aspect of the context of foreign policy making during the years 1946 to 1965 was . . . the trend toward growing executive dominance, and the accompanying erosion of Congressional influence in foreign policy making.” In comparison to the role Congress played in foreign affairs during the interwar years, Zelman seems to have a point. His assessment of the decline of Congressional influence is based upon observations that Congressional treaty ratifying powers decreased as the number of executive agreements increased, the scope to declare war eroded, and the nature of consultation by (and with) the executive was erratic as best.

Robert David Johnson (in a study described as the “first” to offer a “historical interpretation of the Congressional response to the entire Cold War”) points out, however, that war-making and treaty-making functions are not the only means by which Congress can influence foreign relations. While these two functions did indeed atrophy, “understanding the Congressional response to the Cold War requires . . . examin[ing] three other facets of legislative power: the use of spending measures; the internal workings of a Congress increasing dominated by subcommittees; and the ability of individual legislators to affect foreign affairs by

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16 On the idea of Congress allowing the executive branch to take the lead, even in matters were Congress should have some authority, Fulbright said the following during the War Powers debate in the early 1970s: “the major cause of the unhinging of the checks and balances of our political system has been the impact of almost three decades of uninterrupted crises in foreign policy.” See, United States Congress, Senate Foreign Relations Committee, War Powers: A Report together with Additional Views by Senator Fulbright, (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1972), 10.


18 Zelman, Senate Dissent and the Vietnam War, 3.
changing the way that policymakers and the public thought about international questions.”

These last two measures in particular—the workings of subcommittees (especially the Senate Foreign Relations Committee) and the ability of individuals to affect foreign affairs—are of particular import for understanding the breakdown of the Cold War consensus.

While Johnson’s research does much to demonstrate the ways in which Congress was able to participate in the foreign policy, even before the dissent of the 1960s, and while he speaks of a small group within Congress that from the late 1940s was already expressing concern over growing executive dominance, many did in fact believe the President should take the lead and have near autonomy in foreign affairs. During the 1951 debate over the dispatch of American military units to Europe to become part of NATO’s military infrastructure, Secretary of State Dean Acheson argued: “We are in a position in the world today where the argument as to who has the power to do this, that, or the other thing is not exactly what is called for from America at this very critical hour . . . Not only has the president the authority to use the armed forces in carrying out the broad foreign policy of the United States, but it is equally clear that this authority cannot be interfered with by Congress in the exercise of powers which it has under the constitution”

The principles behind Acheson’s argument were accepted by many who would continue to advocate for a strong presidency in matters of foreign affairs. As the belief that it was for

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20 The peak of this concern comes with the Bricker Amendment of 1953. Sponsored by Senator John Bricker of Ohio, the amendment tried to protect the sanctity of the Constitution’s division of powers between the executive and the legislature on matters of foreign affairs. Specifically, it demanded that executive agreements be ratified by Congress before they could hold force. The Amendment was narrowly defeated, and Johnson argues that Congress’ treaty-making and war-making did indeed suffer a blow as a result of this. Congressional power also appeared to shrink as a result of the Army-McCarthy hearings, which upheld the principle of executive privilege to withhold information, as well as by some of Congress’ own actions, such as the passage of the Formosa Resolution in 1955, which granted the President the right to employ America’s military “as he deems necessary” to prevent an attack on Taiwan. See Johnson, *Congress and the Cold War*, 59, 65.

America to defend the free world was originally supported by those who would come to break with that view, so too was the belief that the President had the right-of-way in foreign affairs. Again Fulbright provides a good example of this. He helped lead the attack against the Bricker Amendment in 1953, which, among other things, would have made all executive agreements void unless ratified by Congress.\(^2^2\) In 1961, he wrote an article for *Cornell Law Quarterly*, which argued:

> In a world beset by unparalleled forces or revolution and upheaval . . . the question we face is whether our constitutional machinery . . . is adequate for the formulation and conduct of a foreign policy of a 20th century nation, preeminent in military and political power and burdened with all the enormous responsibilities which accompany such power. . . . The source of an effective foreign policy under our system is presidential power. This proposition, valid in our own time, is certain to become more, rather than less, compelling in the decades ahead. . . . It *is* within our power [Congress’] to grant or deny him authority. It is my contention that for the existing requirements of American foreign policy we have hobbed the President with too niggardly a grant of power.\(^2^3\)

But while Fulbright predicted the need for a strong president for “decades to come,” in 1961, within five years, he began to believe that Congress had “steadily been resigning from its responsibilities in making of policy.” As a result of this feeling, Fulbright advocated resolutions—ranging from clarifying what it takes for the United States to make a national commitment to another party to the question of war powers—to rein in the Executive’s powers in foreign policy. As he put it in the early 1970s: “Out of a well-intentioned but miscarried notion of what patriotism and responsibility require in a time of world crisis, Congress has

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\(^2^2\) Fulbright argued that the amendment “throttles the President of the United States in his conduct of foreign relations.” Cited in Johnson, *Congress and the Cold War*, 61.

permitted the President to take over vital foreign policy powers [the power to declare war and approval of foreign commitments] which the constitution vested in Congress.\(^{24}\)

Fulbright was not the only individual to re-orient his views on the question of executive authority over foreign affairs. Mansfield, for his part, long believed that the primary responsibility for foreign policy rested in the executive branch. He was “an outspoken supporter of the constitutional primacy of the president in executing foreign affairs” until Nixon began widening the war in Vietnam by ordering the bombing of Laos and Cambodia.\(^{25}\)

The picture emerging of the first decade and a half of the Cold War, then, is a picture in which the individuals who would become dissenters were largely on side in their opinions as to what America’s role in the world ought to be, and what branch of government was to take a lead in constructing America’s relations in the global arena. This is not to say, however, that chinks in the Cold War consensus did not exist prior to the time when the major breakdown of that consensus began in the mid-1960s.

II.

While it would take the escalation of involvement in Vietnam to precipitate a full-scale break for many, for some of the key dissenters of the era nagging doubts had cropped up from time to time earlier. Wayne Morse, for example, was one of only three members of the Senate to vote against the Formosa Resolution of 1955. He believed that Chiang Kai-Shek’s government on Taiwan was “completely dictatorial” and that the United Nations, not the United States, should be responsible for arbitrating the differences between Taiwan and mainland

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China. Morse also voted against the Middle East Resolution (Eisenhower Doctrine) of 1957 (this time as one of nineteen in opposition): “I am not in favor of spilling American blood for oil. What we need in the Middle East is United Nations intervention, not American intervention.” Morse’s belief that the UN should be responsible for resolving international disputes—a faith in the effectiveness of the UN he had temporarily lost after the Czech coup in 1948—would only continue to grow. He becomes the leading advocate for placing the Vietnam conflict before the UN.

Morse was not alone in his distrust of the direction American policy sometimes took. In the wake of the Suez crisis and what he saw as the failure of the Eisenhower administration to see third world nationalism for what it was instead of seeing it as part of a world-wide communist conspiracy, Fulbright began to see America’s foreign policy as “inadequate, outmoded, and misdirected.” He believed policy to be based “in part on a false conception of our real long-term national interests and in part on our erroneous appraisal of the state of the world in which we live. . . . In the fear of the deviltry of communism, we have cast ourselves indiscriminately in the role of defender of the status quo throughout the world.” Speaking in May 1958 of a “dangerous apathy” which had developed within foreign policy thinking, Fulbright was beginning to worry that all that was being offered was “aid programs as usual, Cold War as usual, defense strategy as usual, foreign policies in Asia, Europe, the Middle East and elsewhere as usual.” For all the potential of dissent contained in the airing of such views, however, Fulbright’s was only just beginning his search for what one of his biographers has called a “more constructive American role in world affairs, one that would place greater

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26 See Drukman, Wayne Morse, 403, 404.
27 Congressional Record, 6 August 1958, 16317-20, Cited in Zelman, Senate Dissent and the Vietnam War, 205.
28 JWF Papers, Series 71, Box 13, Folder 20.
emphasis on political and diplomatic means and less on military force to uphold world order.”

Concrete opposition, publicly expressed, would not emerge until the mid-1960s. Fulbright’s 1958 speech on “a dangerous apathy” in foreign affairs does, however, prefigure to some extent his 1964 “Old Myths and New Realities” speech, which would further the path towards a much larger break with the Cold War ideology.

As Fulbright’s 1958 remarks suggest, the foreign aid program was one of the particular aspects of America’s Cold War policies to draw criticism in the late 1950s. Though the program largely enjoyed considerable support, it was also routinely debated. Mansfield, for instance, introduced a resolution in 1956 calling for “an investigation of the entire foreign aid program.” There was concern that governments receiving American aid used it to fill their own coffers, and not for any genuinely worthwhile ends. In addition, there were concerns over the prominence of military aid. Indeed, several members of the SFRC, including Fulbright, Mansfield, and Morse, expressed concern that the Mutual Security Act of 1959 placed far too much emphasis on military aid at the expense of economic assistance. A review of the entire aid program was thus urged. Morse, accompanied by Frank Church and Albert Gore (Sr.) led the charge in arguing that military aid was not in America’s interests because it served only to prop up dictatorial regimes. Mansfield repeated his earlier call for an investigation into the aid program with hopes of seeing it revised such that economic assistance would be administered by the State Department and military assistance by the Defense Department, with greater emphasis placed on economic assistance. He also preferred a shift from out-right grants to low-interest

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30 To be discussed shortly; see pages 38.

31 Mansfield Papers, Series XIII, Subseries II, Box 28, Folder 3.

32 *Legislative History of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, 86th Congress, 7 January 1959 – 1 September 1960*. Found in the JWF Papers, Series 48, Subseries 1, Box 1, Folder 1; Johnson, *Congress and the Cold War*, 78.
loans, and he hoped some of the inefficiency and wasteful spending in the program could be reduced by merging the existing aid agencies—the International Control Agency (ICA) and the Development Loan Fund (DLF) into one administrative body.33

The foreign aid program was, in fact, overhauled in 1961. The existing Mutual Security Act—the former legislative basis for the aid program—was replaced with a new law: the Foreign Assistance Act, which abolished the ICA and DLF and constructed a single agency—the Agency for International Development (AID)—in their wake. The new legislation also included provisions for the future separation of military and economic aid budgets and the administering of multi-year, long-term, low-interest development loans to underdeveloped nations.34 Mansfield believed that the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 pointed “the way to significant improvement in the effectiveness of the aid program,” but he “remain[ed] critical because…legislation can never provide more than a small part of the discriminating answer to the difficulties of foreign aid. What matters far more in finding that kind of answer is how the program is fitted into our foreign policies and how effective those policies are in the first place.” If he had voted against the bill, Mansfield said, he would be able to say that he helped save billions of dollars, but he would also have to say it was a vote for bringing about “drastic upheaval” in Southeast Asia, “catastrophic economic dislocations and famine, disease and pestilence in many free nations,” and the closing of American military bases in many parts of the world, which would “undermine the whole system of alliances by which, for the better part of a decade or more, we have sought to defend the security of the nation and to keep open the

33 Mansfield described his plans for Foreign Aid is a series of letters to his constituents. Mansfield to Herb Denler, Billings, MT., 30 June 1959, Mansfield Papers, Series XIII, Subseries II, Box 30, Folder 2: “A New Approach to Foreign Aid”
prospects for freedom and peace in large areas of the world.” Thus, even though there was dissention over foreign aid, there was still a fundamental belief at this time that foreign aid was a necessary component of America’s Cold War struggle. Nonetheless, the questioning in the late 1950s and early 1960s would become the foundation of a much larger debate over foreign aid that would unfold throughout the 1960s and early 1970s.

Vietnam was another subject prompting early concern. While the dramatic escalation of American involvement in Vietnam did not begin until 1965, a quiet doubt began to exist in the minds of a few before then. Unlike the early debate on foreign aid, however, concern over America’s actions in Southeast Asia was not nearly as widespread, and it tended not to be expressed publicly. Mansfield offers a good example here. While vocally expressing dissatisfaction with foreign aid, he largely kept his apprehension over America’s growing commitment to Vietnam quiet. On the occasion of Diem’s assassination, he made a speech in the Senate in which he stated that while the coup was tragic, America should reassess its policy and reduce its involvement in Vietnam. When this did not happen, however, Mansfield chose to express his concerns in the form of private memos, as opposed to speeches. In December 1963, for example, he wrote Johnson to say that the U.S. should find a way to neutralize Southeast Asia. Throughout 1964 he sent a series of memos arguing that Johnson’s rhetoric should be toned down so as not to force the U.S. into a position it did not need to occupy (January); that additional coups in South Vietnam were likely and therefore deeper military involvement was

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35 Mike Mansfield’s Statement on Foreign Aid, 18 August 1961, Mansfield Papers, Series XXI, Box 41.

36 Foreign aid would come to be increasingly assaulted. Continued opposition to military aid and assistance to dictatorships would expand into a critique of the program as a whole, resulting in what the U.S. News & World Report termed “the foreign-aid revolt of 1963.” The Congressional Quarterly Almanac stated that foreign aid legislation “received the worst pummeling in the hands of Congress in 1963 since the program began in 1945.” The continued attacks on the foreign aid program serve as the focus of Chapter 2. The U.S. News & World Report is cited in Johnson, Congress and the Cold War, 95; “Foreign Aid Program Suffers Setback,” Congressional Quarterly Almanac, Vol. XIX, 255.

37 Oberdorfer, Senator Mansfield, 200.
unwise (February); that negotiations should be set up through a third party, such as the United
Nations (May); that, even in the wake of two American reconnaissance planes being shot down,
deepening involvement was not in America’s interests (June).38 Regarding this June memo,
Mansfield disapproved of Johnson having ordered the bombing of anti-aircraft sites in North
Vietnam in retaliation, but, unlike Wayne Morse, he did not say so publicly. Morse, however,
stood up in Congress and equated Johnson’s actions with “outlawry” and arguing “outlaws have
a way of coming to a bad end, both for themselves and their country.”39 Mansfield would also,
despite his misgivings, vote in favor of the Tonkin Gulf Resolution of 1964. Morse would be
one of only two senators who did not.

Despite the relative lack of dissent over Vietnam prior to the 1965 escalations,
Mansfield’s quiet doubt and Morse’s public denunciations, when considered alongside the
growing dissention over the foreign aid program, illustrate the presence of cracks within the
foundation of the Cold War consensus. These cracks would continue to widen as the 1960s
progressed, ultimately resulting in the Foreign Relations Committee’s decision to probe the
underpinnings of America’s foreign policy as whole.

III.

Widening cracks in the Cold War consensus began to appear because of a growing
belief that American foreign policy was out of touch with the realities of the international
system—that it was too rooted within the Cold War mentality to accurately take into account
that the world of the 1960s was a different place than the world of the 1940s and 1950s. No one
typifies this perspective better than Fulbright.

38 See Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS) 1961-63, Vol. 4, 691-692; FRUS 1964-48, Vol. 1, 2-3; and
Mike Mansfield Papers, Series 22, Box 102, Folder 12.
39 Congressional Record, 3 June 1964, 12399.
Fulbright gave a speech in the Senate in March 1964 entitled “Old Myths and New Realities.” He suggested the United States give up the idea of monolithic communism, accept Castro as a permanent fixture in Cuba, and consider dealing with Mainland China. In building up to these statements, he said: “Our vocabulary is full of ‘self-evident truths’ . . . it has become one of the ‘self-evident truths’ of the postwar era that, just as the President resides in Washington and the Pope in Rome, the Devil resides immutable in Moscow. We have come to regard the Kremlin as the permanent seat of his power.” This viewpoint, however, did not take into account “profound changes in the character of East-West relations.” As Fulbright put it:

> We are confronted with a complex and fluid world situation, and we are not adapting ourselves to it. We are clinging to old myths in the face of new realities, and we are seeking to escape the contradictions by narrowing the permissible bounds of public discussion, by relegating an increasing number of ideas to a growing category of “unthinkable thoughts.” I believe . . . that it is within our ability, and unquestionably in our interests, to cut loose from established myths and to start thinking some “unthinkable thoughts”—about the cold war and East-West relations, about the underdeveloped countries and particularly those of Latin America, about the changing nature of the Chinese communist threat in Asia, and about the festering war in Vietnam.\(^{40}\)

Gregory Olsen writes that, with this speech, Fulbright became “the first prominent politician since the beginnings of the Cold War to challenge seriously the rationale behind United States foreign policy.”\(^{41}\)

Wayne Morse might actually be more deserving of being considered the first to sustain a fundamental challenge to Cold War thinking; he had been criticizing the foreign aid program and expressing doubts over the increasing escalation in Vietnam for several years. In fact, the *Washington Post*, while noting the importance of Fulbright’s speech, did not fail to point out that “much of what the Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee had to say has long been

\(^{40}\) *Congressional Record*, 25 March 1964, 6227-31

the private view of many of his Senate colleagues.”\textsuperscript{42} Morse’s iconoclastic nature, however, made it easy for some to dismiss him. Stanley Karnow has described Morse as “the typhoid Mary of Capitol Hill . . . a sanctimonious bore, a garrulous orator whose gravel voice would drone on over trivia. His colleagues would tolerate him for five or ten minutes, since they respected the ritual courtesies of the senate, but he rarely changed votes. He lacked influence.”\textsuperscript{43}

It is worth noting, however, that not all felt this way. Morse’s most recent biographer, Mason Drukman, offers the views of Senator William Proxmire (D-WI) to counter Karnow, whom Drukman cites. In an interview with Drukman, Proxmire, a Johnson supporter, stated: “Wayne Morse was recognized during the years we served together until he left the Senate as having the ablest mind in the Senate. In my mind, he never lost his credibility . . . frequently a large majority disagreed with him, but most Senators deeply respected the sincerity of his convictions.”\textsuperscript{44} Regardless of how Morse is viewed, his early criticisms did not seem to have the same impact as Fulbright’s “Old Myths, New Realities” speech; likely because Fulbright chaired the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and because the speech’s content took to task much of the thinking behind American foreign policy in general.

Fulbright’s Senate speech became the basis of a book of the same title, published later that year. Here Fulbright suggested that the Cold War had done some good things for America. It had stimulated economic expansion, increased the pace of intellectual and scientific discovery, and “broken the shell of American isolation.” However, “continuing world conflict had cast a shadow on the tone of American life by introducing a strand of apprehension and tension into a national style which has traditionally been one of optimism.” Moreover, America had become stuck in “rigid and outdated stereotypes which stultify many of our foreign policy

debates . . . the master myth of the Cold War is that the Communist block is a monolith composed of . . . organized conspiracies, divided among themselves perhaps in certain matters of tactics, but all equally resolute and implacable in their determination to destroy the free world.”

The *Washington Post* compared the March speech to the thawing of ice: “Like a spring thaw in a long-frozen river bed, the rigid lines of American foreign policy have begun to crack. A great debate on foreign policy has been joined.” But, while the central pillar of the Cold War consensus—belief in monolithic communism—came under attack in 1964, Fulbright had not yet translated his attack on Cold War mentality into a major break with the foreign polices pursued by the Johnson administration. For example, while he said that the U.S. might be able to work with China in the future, he did not advocate recognition of the People’s Republic at that time. Also, when discussing the situation in Vietnam, he said, “It seems to me we have no choice but to support the South Vietnamese government and army by the most effective means possible. It should be clear to all concerned that the United States will continue to defend its vital interests with respect to Vietnam.” The real break with Johnson would begin as a result of America’s 1965 intervention in the Dominican Republic—an act undertaken by President Johnson in the name of thwarting a communist revolution.

On 25 April 1965, army units in the Dominican Republic sympathetic to the former president John Bosch attempted to overthrow the military junta of Colonel Pedro Benoit. Four days later, Johnson dispatched four hundred Marines to Santo Domingo to protect American lives and property. He did so because he had received word from Tapley Bennett Jr., the

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45 Fulbright, *Old Myths and New Realities and Other Commentaries by J.W. Fulbright, Chairman, Senate Foreign Relations Committee* (New York: Random House, 1964) v, 8, 111.
47 Fulbright, *Old Myths and New Realities*, 38, 43-44.
American Ambassador to the Dominican Republic, that Americans would “die in the streets” unless the marines were deployed. Secretary of State Dean Rusk, in briefing the SFRC on 30 April, concluded his statement by saying: “We began to evacuate our citizens; we were told by our Ambassador that Americans were being subjected to violence and threats of violence.”

Rusk’s briefing also contained the following information, however: “The communists came out immediately and joined the effort [to overthrow the government.] We have identified eight well-known communist leaders who were active at the present time in leading armed groups. We know of about forty to fifty Dominicans in the Dominican Republic who have been trained by Castro.”  By 5 May, there were twenty thousand U.S. troops in Santo Domingo. In justifying the swift move from several hundred Marines to a major military intervention, Johnson moved beyond the justification of protecting American lives to declare that he had acted to contain a communist threat.

Various members of the SFRC refused to remain silent about the Dominican intervention. Wayne Morse questioned the unilateral nature of the intervention: “We signed the Act of Punta del Este and the Washington Agreement binding ourselves with other Latin American countries to stop the spread of communism in the Western Hemisphere. I am willing to join in that joint effort, but if we are going to substitute ourselves for the charter, why you are headed for, I think, repudiation in the western hemisphere.”

Stuart Symington questioned the intervention, not so much because he felt America did not need to contain communism but because he was concerned about the over-extension of American power: “No matter what our


49 Ibid., 493. The Charter of Punta Del Esta, 17 August 1961, established the Alliance for Progress, wherein the American Republics proclaimed their decision to unite in a common effort to bring our people accelerated economic progress and broader social justice within the framework of personal dignity and political liberty.” See http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/intdip/interam/intam16.htm
riches are, our treasure and our people are limited. Ever since World War II, whenever we go in, we stay in: Korea, the Formosa Strait defense, and above all in West Berlin. How long can we be almost unilateral, or at least the vast majority of the power, the force, to contain communism and at the same time . . . be able to carry on from the standpoint of the economy?°⁵⁰

Others found the intervention itself hard to swallow – particularly the threat to American lives that precipitated the beginnings of the intervention. In introducing the 1965 declassified sessions of the Foreign Relations Committee, which were made public in 1990, Claiborne Pell (D-RI)—a member of the SFRC in 1965 and chairman of that committee in 1990—recounted the following:

Senators found it hard to believe President Johnson’s declarations of mass executions and beheadings, and concluded that the President has acted upon less than accurate assessments of the situation. . . . After encountering such skepticism at an executive session in May, Under Secretary of State Thomas Mann suggested that the committee would have no doubts about the correctness of American policy if they could see the Administration’s documentation. The committee took him at his word and offered to send its Latin American specialist, Pat Holt, to the Department of State to examine the cables transmitted between Washington and the American Embassy in Santo Domingo. Holt concluded “That, sure enough, the way the situation had been presented by the Johnson administration did not really jive with the reports the Administration was getting from State and the CIA.”⁵¹

The problem was intensified by the fact that Fulbright had been privy to a meeting in which it was revealed that the CIA had registered concern over communist subversion well before worrying about the dangers to U.S. citizens. So troubled was Fulbright by the American intervention, and the reasons for it as they evolved over time, that the SFRC held executive (closed and classified) hearings on the Dominican situation in July. During the course of the hearings, Fulbright focused on drawing forth the true motivation behind the intervention. He

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⁵⁰ Executive Sessions of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Vol. XVII, 719.
⁵¹ Ibid., v-vi. The Holt quotation contained in Pell’s assessment can be found in Pat M. Holt, Oral History Interviews, 9 September to 12 December, RG 46, Records of the US Senate, Archives I.
questioned Under Secretary Mann about the veracity of Ambassador Bennett’s claim regarding
the danger to American lives, asking: “Is it true that Bennett, in recommending the Marines be
landed, said if Washington likes it can be done for the purposes of protecting the evacuation of
foreigners?” Mann admitted that the Benoit junta “did approach us on its own initiative, first
verbally and then in writing, officially requesting that we land, and basing its request principally
on the Communist influence in the rebel movement.” Mann then stated:

We did instruct our Ambassador to go back to Benoit after it became apparent to
us that we had to evacuate Americans, and in order to improve our jurisdictional
base, we asked him [Benoit] to specifically say that he could not protect the lives
of American citizens. This he also did. But this was subsequent to the other, and
we did not want at that moment . . . we did not want our first landing to be on the
grounds of anti-communism but rather on the ground of saving American lives
because that is what our thinking was at the time.52

The following day Ambassador Bennett’s testimony contradicted this assessment. When asked
if he used “the pretext of saving American lives or the communist threat for the basis of his
recommendation for intervention,” Bennett answered:

I think it took several stages, if I may say so. The first was protecting the
evacuation, saving lives. The landings later, the build-up, was definitely more
allied with the Communist danger because, as of the night of the 28th, one still had
the right to hope that the anti-rebel forces would unite themselves sufficiently to
stop the anarchy from spreading. It was already clear twenty-four hours later they
were not capable of doing that or were unwilling . . . and, therefore, it did become
necessary to bring in more troops. That time the communist problem was
uppermost.53

When asked directly if, as per Mann’s testimony, he had asked Benoit to say he could not
protect American lives, Bennett claimed he could not recall.54

Throughout the course of the hearings, members of the committee, Fulbright in
particular, came increasingly to doubt the correctness of intervention. When Admiral William

52 Executive Sessions of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Vol. XVII, 827
53 Ibid., 876
54 Ibid., 870
Raborn, Director of the CIA, tried to claim that the military intervened only on the order of the President, Fulbright retorted: “The president cannot make this decision in a vacuum. It will depend primarily on what he is recommended to do.” Fulbright admitted that once Johnson received cables regarding the danger to American lives he had no choice but to intervene. However, “whether or not the wires were correct depends on the judgment of the Ambassador and his colleagues . . . now, the fact that they used American lives as a kind of cover . . . as a jurisdictional base, was the testimony of Mr. Mann. The basic reason was the fear of communist takeover . . . the real guts of this is that we did not want a communist takeover, as in Cuba.” Fulbright admitted he did not want to see this either but he nonetheless disapproved of the intervention. “What is important for the future, if we can learn out of this,” he concluded, “is to be . . . very discriminate in the application of our force. If we are going to take the position of intervention on any chance in which even a small communist influence is present, I am afraid the final analysis will be to increase communist influence in Latin America.”

Fulbright’s apprehension for the increase of communist influence in Latin America may appear, at first blush, to suggest affinity for the type of thinking he decried in his “Old Myths and New Realities” speech the year before. However, after the hearings concluded, Fulbright continued to stew over the situation. So distasteful did it become that he denounced the Johnson administration’s Dominican policy in front of the entire Senate on 15 September 1965. Fulbright stated his belief that American policy was characterized “by over-reaction” and “by lack of candor.” “The danger to American lives” he informed the Senate, “was more a pretext than a reason for the massive intervention . . . in fact, no American lives were lost in Santo Domingo until the Marines began exchanging fire with the rebels after April 28.” Had Johnson landed a small force “for the express purposed of removing U.S. citizens and other foreigners

55 Ibid., 924-25
from the island” he continued, and had such a force “then promptly withdrawn when it had completed its mission, I do not think any fair-minded observer at home or abroad would have considered the United States to have exceeded its rights and responsibilities.” The Dominican intervention did not follow this path, however. Instead, “in their apprehension lest the Dominican Republic become another Cuba,” he orated, “some of our officials seem to have forgotten that virtually all reform movements attract some communist support; that there is an important difference between communist support and communist control of a political movement . . . and most important of all, that economic development and social justice themselves are the primary and most reliable security against subversion.” Continued Fulbright:

If there is no democratic left as a third option then there is no doubt of the choice that honest and patriotic Latin Americans will make: they will choose communism, not because they want it but because United States policy will have foreclosed all other avenues of social revolution and, indeed, all other possibilities except the perpetuation of rule by military juntas and economic oligarchs.

Lest anyone doubt where he was headed, Fulbright concluded by stating: “Intervention on the basis of communist participation as distinguished from communist control of the Dominican revolution was a mistake in my opinion, a mistake which reflects a grievous misreading of the temper of contemporary Latin American politics.”

Fulbright’s 15 September speech on the situation in the Dominican Republic received mixed reviews. The Johnson administration was, predictably, unenthusiastic about the speech. McGeorge Bundy once stated: “From Johnson’s point of view anything less than 100% support

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56 J. William Fulbright, “The Situation in the Dominican Republic,” RG 46, Record of the United States Senate, Foreign Relations Committee - Records of the Chairman, William Fulbright, Speeches and Statements 1958-65, Box 1. Archives I, Washington DC. See also, Congressional Record, 15 Sept 1965, 23855-63. Fulbright further expanded upon his ideas regarding the closing of avenues of legitimate social revolution in Latin America in his book The Arrogance of Power. He argued that, if it was America’s view that all revolutions in Latin America are communist run, “then we have made ourselves the prisoners of the Latin American oligarchs who are engaged in vain attempt to preserve the status quo—reactionaries who habitually use the term ‘communist’ very loosely…in a calculated effort to scare the United States into supporting their selfish and discredited aims.” See The Arrogance of Power (New York: Random House, 1966), 92.
was rank dissention,” especially once a decision had already been made.57 Prior to the Dominican speech, Johnson and Fulbright had a relatively close personal relationship, in addition to their political relationship. Afterwards, Johnson went cold where Fulbright was concerned, both personally and politically. Of the changed relationship, which would only become more frigid as Fulbright moved on to question other aspects of American foreign policy, and as his doubts seemed to influence other members of the SFRC, Senator Thomas Eagleton (D-MO) had this to say: “Senator Fulbright became absolutely persona non grata with Johnson.”58

The extent to which Johnson appeared to break with Fulbright as a result of the speech, however, was unanticipated. Donald Ritchie, an Associate Historian at the Senate Historical Office through the 1980s and 1990s, and the editor of the Executive Sessions of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Historical Series, conducted a series of interviews with staff members of the SFRC. “From what I understand” said Ritchie during his conversations with Carl Marcy, the Chief of Staff for the SFRC, Fulbright “had hoped that the speech would not break their relations but would cause the administration to revalue their [sic] policy and change some gears. He hadn’t anticipated it, from what I gather, being such a dramatic break.” In response to Ritchie asking if Johnson just could not tolerate “disagreement and dissent,” Marcy replied: “I suspect that was part of it. Johnson was never a person who much liked dissent, even when he was the majority leader.”

Marcy also recalled discussing the potential fallout of the speech with Fulbright before he delivered it.

When the speech was finished, but still in draft form, Senator Fulbright came to my office one day. Present were his assistant, Lee Williams, as well as Pat Holt

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58 Cited in Olsen, Mansfield and Vietnam, 151.
and Seth Tillman [SFRC staffers], who had done much of the work on the speech. We had all read the speech and Fulbright asked what we thought of it and whether he should deliver it. Both Pat and Seth said yes. Lee Williams and I said he shouldn’t. I said that if he delivered the speech it would bring a severe break between him and President Johnson and I thought it more important for him to keep a close relationship with Lyndon... I felt Fulbright still had access to and influence with the president, something one does not throw away lightly. But Fulbright cut me quite short. He said, ‘All I want to know, Carl, is whether you think this is a fair statement of what we found out during the hearings.’ And he added that he, the senator, would make the political judgment as to whether it was wise to make the speech.59

When Fulbright went and ahead and delivered the speech, Tillman believed he had decided the risk was worth it. “I think it was in large part because of his feeling that he wasn’t getting anywhere with [the Johnson administration] through private channels of communication; that the personal relationship with Johnson which had been very serviceable during the senate years, had ceased to be so.”60

Fulbright himself provided an explanation for his decision. One month after he delivered the Dominican speech, Fulbright addressed the Senate again on the matter of the Dominican Republic. He felt he had to speak his mind because “a highly controversial policy was being carried out without controversy—without debate, without review, without the necessary calling to account that is an essential part of the democratic process.” To those in the Senate who had criticized him for making the speech, who questioned “whether it was proper for the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee to make a speech critical of an administration of his own party,” Fulbright stated his belief that he “could do more to encourage carefully considered policies in the future by initiating a public discussion than by acquiescing in silence on a policy” he believed “to be mistaken.” To those who had called the speech reckless, he stated: “I am

59  Carl Marcy, Chief of Staff, Foreign Relations Committee 1955-1973, Oral History Interviews, September 14 to November 16, 1983, Senate Historical Office, Washington DC, 163-64. (Part of RG 46, Archives I)
quite prepared to examine evidence suggesting that my statement of September 15 contained
effects of fact or judgment; I am not prepared to accept the charge that a statement following
upon hours of listening to testimony in the Foreign Relations Committee and many more hours
of examining relevant documents was irresponsible.” 61

If there were those who were critical of the speech, others applauded it. The New York
Times believed it to be an important contribution: “Senator Fulbright often speaks the
conscience of the United States in foreign affairs. This makes him a disturbing person, but he
plays a valuable and salutary, if often thankless, role.” 62 Senator Church concurred, but he also
felt the speech had wider implications. As he said on 23 September, a week after Fulbright’s
speech:

I think the general propositions that the Chairman laid down in his very
remarkable and candid appraisal of the Dominican Republic have applicability
outside of Latin America. . . . I think it has great applicability in the whole of the
under-developed world in Asia and Africa, where we will experience many kinds
of uprisings in the course of the next generation. . . . I hope that we will begin to
exercise prudent restraint when it comes to unilateral American involvement in
these affairs. 63

Fulbright himself had the wider implications in mind. He later noted how the situation in
the Caribbean helped to focus his attention on the policy of intervention elsewhere, “especially
in South East Asia. . . . Here was another example of what appeared to be a very precipitate and
injudicious use of force far beyond what could be justified by circumstance.” 64 There are also
indications that, even before he made the 15 September speech, Fulbright began drawing
parallels between Vietnam and the Dominican Republic.

61 Congressional Record, 22 Oct 1965, 27456
62 New York Times, 18 September, 1965
63 Executive Sessions of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, 1965, 1164.
64 See J.W. Fulbright, The Price of Empire (New York: Pantheon Books, 1989), 111-12. Here Fulbright was
writing in retrospect. One of his biographers, William Berman, argues, however that when Fulbright gave the
Dominican speech, “he had Vietnam very much on his mind.” The increased bombing campaign suggested to
Fulbright that Johnson really did not have negotiations or compromise on his mind. See William Berman, William
In introducing the 1965 volume of *Executive Sessions of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee*, Claiborne Pell recalled, “So prominent was the escalating United States involvement in Vietnam that the Dominican intervention seemed a minor diversion; yet during that summer [1965], as the Foreign Relations Committee held alternate hearings on Vietnam and the Dominican Republic, its members—and especially its chairman—could not help but draw comparisons between the two.” The idea of wider implications would come to have a fairly large impact; ultimately, it set the SFRC on the path towards holding public hearings on a variety of aspects of American foreign policy, thus contributing to a growing divide between members of Congress and the Executive.

IV.

During the 23 July 1965 executive hearings on the Dominican crisis, Church had raised the point that the SFRC got most of its information from “the one source that is defending official policy. We hold executive sessions, and these are not afterward open to the press. The impact of our inquiry is extremely limited . . . so limited that our influence is dwindling away.” In response to Church’s subtle suggestion that the SFRC hold public hearings, Fulbright replied that the Dominican Republic was “not really so important as Vietnam. There is nothing like the danger inherent in Vietnam. If we want to try to get into something real deep, that is important enough to warrant it, it would be Vietnam.” When other members of the committee suggested Vietnam was “too hot” a subject, Fulbright asked the Committee what they thought ought to be done about Vietnam. Church responded:

I think as a committee, there are a lot of things that we probably ought to be doing, but have not done . . . I think for one, we have never held any public hearings on the policy questions involved in Vietnam, in which we call a lot of

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65 *Executive Sessions of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, 1965*, v.
very knowledgeable and gifted people to give us some balanced judgment as to the correctness of the course we are pursuing. There have been many opportunities through the years as this thing has worsened, and as the tragedy has been compounded by just putting more of the same in, the same policy . . . We have never undertaken to use this committee as a public forum in which to focus and register the protests and the dissent as well as the support for official policy.66

Fulbright replied that such hearings should have been held as early as 1958 but confessed that he “just was not conscious that this [Vietnam] was a real problem. We were preoccupied with Berlin and other things. This was a very side issue to me.” Church admitted that there might be nothing that the Committee could now do by way of public hearings on Vietnam that “would not complicate everything for everyone,” but he believed the Committee could and should “begin to address [itself] in a public way in a much broader and deeper examination of our general thrust in foreign policy and the thinking behind it that has gotten us into this tragic quagmire in Vietnam.”67

Church’s vision for public Committee hearings was quite ambitious:

I am talking about the whole present philosophical argument as it affects American foreign policy generally . . . and the counsel on the one hand that believes that the assertion of American military power on a global scale is the effective way to resist communism, and those who take issue with this and argue for a different scale of priorities in the commitment of American military power. This is a very important, critical, basic question that underlies the thinking, colors the thinking, and leads us into these situations in the world.

While Vietnam might be “a special situation that we have got to cope with,” America’s policy there was symptomatic of something much larger: “The very process of thinking . . . and the orthodox views in this country which places the stamp of approval upon this sort of commitment in American power ought to be questioned. There will be other Vietnams,” Church argued. “If anybody thinks that this war is the end of guerrilla wars, or is going to give any final effect upon

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66 Ibid., 949.
67 Ibid., 951.
guerrilla wars, or is going to contain or sanitize the world from Communist ideology, this in my opinion is profoundly wrong.” It thus fell to the SFRC to “play a part in the opening of a dialogue for the future.”68

Six months later, in January of 1966, the opportunity to pursue the type of dialogue Church had in mind presented itself. The amount of foreign assistance (both economic and military) that had been allocated to Vietnam in the Foreign Assistance Act for the fiscal year 1966 was deemed insufficient by the administration. As a result, Johnson requested supplemental funds. Unwilling to simply approve the granting of these funds without question, the SFRC called Secretary of State Rusk before the committee. Members of the Committee barely even discussed the request itself; instead they bombarded Rusk with questions about Vietnam in general. So rigorous was the questioning put to Rusk that the New York Times wrote: “Rarely has a Secretary of State been put through such a cross-examination by virtually all 19 members of the Senate Committee.”69 Thus began what would come to be known as the Vietnam Hearings.

After Rusk’s appearance, the Committee voted to hold public hearings on the Vietnam situation. The Vietnam Hearings, which began on 4 February, were not just open to the public; they were also televised by the major American news networks. “The purpose of these hearings” declared Fulbright, “is to inform the American people, the members of the committee and the Senate as fully as possible about the implications of the war in Vietnam. Whether our country is to continue to enlarge, to continue on the present basis, or to settle the war is a very

68 Ibid., 951-52.
serious question affecting the lives and fortunes of every citizen of this Nation.” Secretary of State Rusk, General Maxwell Taylor, and Agency for International Development (AID) Administrator David Bell testified in support of the Johnson administration’s Vietnam policy. Lined up to present opposing opinions on the war were Lieutenant General (retired) James Gavin—former Chief of Planning for the Army as well as former Ambassador to France (1961-63)—and none other than George Kennan, the father of the doctrine of containment.

Kennan’s testimony in opposition to the war was particularly powerful, given who he was. While acknowledging that it would not be in America’s interests “to encourage communist aggression,” Kennan admitted to being responsible for “the currency this word ‘containment’ has acquired” and to being “guilty of authorship, or at least of the use, of this word with regard to our policy toward the Soviet Union.” However, “I did not mean to convey in the article I wrote [in 1947],” declared Kennan, “the belief that we could necessarily stop this [communist aggression] at every point on the world’s surface. There were things I failed to say . . . one of them was that certain areas of the world are more important that others.” With respect to the situation in Vietnam, “were we not already involved as we are today” Kennan testified that he “would know of no reason why we should wish to be so involved, and I can think of several reasons why we should not wish to . . . [it] should be our Government’s aim to liquidate this involvement just as soon as this can be done without inordinate damage to our own prestige or to the stability of conditions in that area.” Church believed Kennan’s testimony to be very

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71 The Vietnam Hearings, 350-51, 331-32.
important for giving critics “a respectable character” and for helping to “revive the spirit of
debate and discussion which had lain dormant . . . since the coming of the Cold War.” 72

Kennan’s testimony, then, and the hearings in general, lived up to Church’s earlier
vision of what such hearings could accomplish. As important as they were, however, the
Vietnam hearings were merely the first of such Senate investigations into America’s foreign
policy. The SFRC, often through public hearings, launched investigations into all manner of
topics related to foreign policy. Some of these hearings were held on specific policy directions,
such as United States Policy with Respect to Mainland China (May 1966) or United States
Policy Towards Europe (June-July 1966) and United States Troops in Europe (April-May
1967). Vietnam, of course, and America’s Southeast Asian policy in general, continued to
provide the focus for a good many hearings from 1966 onwards, with investigations ranging
from News Policies in Vietnam (1966), to the Gulf of Tonkin Incidents (1968), to the question of
the Impact of the War in South East Asia on the United States Economy (1970), to Moral and
Military Aspects of the War (1970), to Bombing as a Policy Tool (1972) and Causes, Origins,

The Committee did not limit itself to matters of specific policy, and various aspects of
the conflict in Southeast Asia, however. Hearings were held on subjects related to foreign
policy in general: Conflicts between United States Capabilities and Foreign Commitments
(1967), Changing American Attitudes Towards Foreign Policy (1967), United States
Commitments to Foreign Powers (1967), The Communist World in 1967 (1967), United States
Recognition of Foreign Powers (1969), Psychological Aspects of Foreign Policy (1969), United

72 Church Interview with William Berman, William Fulbright and the Vietnam War: The Dissent of a Political
Realist (Kent: Kent State University Press, 1988), 57.
States Security Agreements and Commitments Abroad (1969-70), and the question of War Powers (1971-72).

In all of its hearings, the SFRC invited policy makers (past and present) from within the executive branch, as well as individuals from outside the foreign policy making process, people whose knowledge base and viewpoint were deemed essential to presenting differing sides. Depending on the subject under investigation, those called to speak before the Committee included: academics in fields ranging from political science and law to history and anthropology; religious figures from major faiths; business and labor leaders; municipal politicians; and others. The goal of this process was best expressed by the way in which Fulbright began many of the hearings. He frequently opened with a statement as to his hopes that, for members of the legislative branch as well as the American public, the hearings would prove “educational”—that they would “increase knowledge” so as to help inform the growing debate on foreign policy.73 Of Fulbright’s leadership, under which the Committee organized its various and varied hearings, and of the growing break from the Cold War consensus those hearings grew to represent, Walter Zelman has written: “Fulbright was unique, for one thing, as a postwar Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee in his readiness to attack Administration foreign policy . . . His scholarly approach to the process of dissent often lent his Committee hearings a seminar-like aspect, a fact which probably heightened the level of debate, as well as the impact of the hearings.”74

74 Zelman, Senate Dissent and the Vietnam War, 344. Zelman’s conclusions in his dissertation are based on interviews with twenty-five Senators and their assistants, twelve Representatives, sixty House and Senate staff, and ten Washington DC news correspondents.
While the hearings, in presenting multiple viewpoints, were perhaps the most successful way in which the SFRC heightened the level of debate over foreign policy, they were not the only means employed to do so. Many individual Senators also began to publish their viewpoints in books. Fulbright took the lead here. Beginning with *Old Myths and New Realities* in 1964, he published several monographs containing his thoughts on various aspects of American foreign policy throughout the 1960s and early 1970s.75 The most influential of these monographs was *The Arrogance of Power* (1966). Its central thesis was that America’s Cold War foreign policy rested on “the arrogance of power, the presumption of the very strong who confuse power with wisdom and set out upon a self-appointed mission to police the world, to defeat all tyrannies, to make their fellow men rich and happy and free.”76 *The Arrogance of Power* achieved a place on the *New York Times* bestseller list, selling over one hundred thousand copies in the first six months of its release alone, and over four hundred thousand in total. The book was also translated into Spanish, Italian, German, Japanese and Swedish. While his books were the most widely read, Fulbright was not, of course, alone in publishing condemnations of American foreign policy. Ernest Gruening (D-AK), Eugene McCarthy (D-MN), Edward Kennedy (D-MA) and George McGovern (D-SD) were among those who also published their views of foreign policy in monograph form.77

The cumulative effect of the hearings, the published books, and, of course, the airing of viewpoints on the Senate floor and in the press was to make dissenting views very visible. In

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turn, this created debate, which opened the door for greater consideration of the principles upon which foreign policy, had been operating. Such consideration was deemed necessary by the “dissenters” because the Cold War mentality, particularly its manifestation in Vietnam, was perceived as having an increasingly negative effect on American society, though opinions as to the exact manner of this effect varied.

There were concerns that the struggle was simply beginning to cost too much in literal terms, thus financially exhausting the United States. This, in turn, meant there was less money available to be used in fixing the problems of the United States itself. Thus, there was some concern as to how “secure” the United States really was as a result of waging the Cold War.

Senator Mansfield best summed this up. Speaking in 1970 he said:

> Today we face perhaps the gravest choice of all. To be sure, militarily we are a strong nation . . . since World War II, we have spent $1.125 billion on national defense . . . but the security of the nation cannot be measured solely by the amount of money spent on military hardware. . . . The decision to allocate so much of our resources to military might . . . has cost us dearly in terms of satisfying what to me are the essential ingredients of a healthy and secure society—good education and health, decent living conditions for all, a safe and clean environment, and the absence of poverty. . . . Over the years as we continued to build militarily, we allowed the cities to rot, we allowed slums to grow and the ghettos to simmer and erupt. Only recently have we begun to realize that the whole fabric of our society has begun to unravel at the seams.78

> If the literal cost of the Cold War weighed on the minds of some, for others there was a growing sense that Cold War logic—again, particularly as expressed through waging war in Vietnam—was imperiling potentially positive developments within the international community.

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78 Changing National Priorities, Hearings before the Subcommittee on Economy in Government of the Joint Economic Committee, Congress of the United States, 91st Congress, 2nd Session, RG 287 – Publication of the Federal Government, Box Y4-1158. The concerns Mansfield raised here had in fact been raised much earlier. By 1964, Fulbright argues that the real meaning of the Cold War for the United States was that “it had consumed money and time and talent that could otherwise be used to build schools and homes and hospitals, to remove the blight of ugliness that is spreading over the cities and highways of America, and to overcome the poverty and helplessness that afflicts the lives of one-fifth of the people in an otherwise affluent society.” See “The Cold War In American Life,” University of North Carolina Symposium on National Security and the Aims of a Free Society, 5 April, 1964, JWF Papers, Series 72, Box 23:11.
as a whole; that it was distracting America’s attention from other issues. For instance, Fulbright believed that the process of reconciliation between the two Europes (West and East), surely a goal of America’s foreign relations, was proceeding “without effective American participation.” In addition to such concerns, there was a growing belief that the United States was losing standing in the international community as a result of actions undertaken in the name of the Cold War. “What seems to be happening, as Archibald MacLeish [a Pulitzer prize winning American poet and former Librarian of Congress] put it,” pointed out Fulbright, “is that ‘the feel of America in the world’s mind’ has begun to change and faith in the ‘idea of America’ has been shaken in the world.” This concern over America’s perception by others was, in fact, widely shared. In one of his monographs, Eugene McCarthy wrote: “Never before has America been as isolated as it is today—not because we are withdrawing from the world, but because much of the world is withdrawing from us.” Morse believed he had an explanation for this: “We are having the charge made against us in many quarters of the world that we have developed a new form of imperialism.” This new imperialism does not take the “form of the old colonialism, the imperialism of old territorial colonialism, but the form of imperialism that consists of a strong military presence and expansion of that presence around the world.”

Henry Steel Commager, a prominent American historian at the time, expounded upon this idea when testifying before the SFRC during the 1967 hearings on changing American attitudes towards foreign policy. “There is a deep feeling that we have lost our moral leadership in much of the western world; that we are not so much naked to our enemies, but naked before

79 Fulbright, Arrogance of Power, 216.
80 Ibid., 247.
81 McCarthy, First Things First, 40.
our friends” said Commager. America’s raw power might be impressive, but others, even American allies who often had to rely upon that power, seemed less than enthused with the exercise of that power, at least in Vietnam. Testified Commager:

   The word ‘power’ is an awkward and even a dangerous one, for it is used in two ways and it is almost fatally easy to confuse the two uses. It is clear that the United States has immense power anywhere on the globe it chooses to use it. But it is by no means clear that the United States is, therefore, a world Power—that is spelled you will note, with a capital P—nor does it follow that we should wish to be a world power. If you have the strength and do not overmuch care about consequences it is easy enough to exercise power, but to be a Power is a very different thing, and it is a very difficult thing.83

In essence, Commager’s testimony suggested to the SFRC that the Cold War was distorting America’s own sense of self. This argument was particularly compelling to many; Fulbright adopted it in The Arrogance of Power, for instance.

   Taken to a logical conclusion, then, the ultimate cost of the Cold War could be found in what waging the war was doing to the nature of Americanism, the very thing the Cold War was being fought in the name of in the first place. This idea, that America had lost sight of its purpose, served to further create dissent and debate. Ultimately, the dissenters were questioning the very nature of what America’s global role ought to be.

   Part of what sparked the reassessment of America’s global role was a concern that America’s actions were beginning to represent the antithesis of what America was supposed to stand for.84 Even Hans Morgenthau, the grandfather of the realist school himself, began to demonstrate concern for the effect of the Cold War on the American character. As early as 1965, he was writing that in addition to the military and political risks the Cold War created for

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83 Ibid., 48, 3.
84 For example, many believed the means by which American waged the war in Vietnam were questionable. “One simply cannot engage in barbarous action” said Fulbright, “without becoming a barbarian.” Fulbright, The Arrogance of Power.
America, there was an even greater risk: “It is the risk to ourselves, to our identity, to our
mission in the world, to our very existence as a great nation.”\footnote{Hans Morgenthau, \textit{Vietnam and the United States} (Washington DC: Public Affairs Press, 1965), 19.}

These types of concerns over power and identity and the overall scope of American
foreign policy served to further the breakdown of the Cold War consensus and widen the debate
over America’s foreign policy. But, while debate was exactly what members of the SFRC
wanted to see, to the Johnson administration and its successor, the dissent deemed inherent in
the SFRC’s actions proved dangerous at best.

V.

Defense Secretary Robert McNamara might have testified that he believed “strongly in
the right to dissent,” that dissent “is one of the primary objectives our nation has had for two-
hundred years,” and that there was no “basis for charging the administration with an attempt to
stifle it,”\footnote{United States Troops In Europe, Hearings before the Combined Subcommittee of Foreign Relations and
Armed Services Committees, United States Senate, 90\textsuperscript{th} C, 1\textsuperscript{st} Session, 26 April and 3 May, 1967 (Washington DC:
Government Printing Office, 1967), 12.} but the actions and words of the Johnson administration (and later, the Nixon
administration) proved otherwise. For example, Johnson had the FBI monitor SFRC hearings to
compare statements made (by Fulbright and Morse in particular) with the Communist party line
as a means of discrediting them. Fulbright was tailed by the FBI to try and determine if he had
links to communist organizations. Johnson also had a letter writing campaign created to show
members of the SFRC that the country was, in fact, supportive of presidential policies and he
had the State Department go over the public record of people like Fulbright at the time the
Chinese Communists assumed power—again, so as to try discrediting them.\footnote{Gibbons, \textit{The United States Government and the Vietnam War}, Part IV, 228; Woods, \textit{Fulbright and the Search for a Cold War Foreign Policy}, 119, 123} Senator
McCarthy also believed that CIA funds were helping subsidize domestic organizations in the United States, such as labor unions and certain publishers and broadcasters, “to moderate criticism of administrative policies.”

Johnson’s verbal treatment of “dissenters” also speaks volumes about his views of the appropriateness of dissent and of dissenters in general. The *New York Times* quoted his views on Vietnam protestors as follows: “surprise that any one citizen would feel towards his country in a way that is not consistent with the national interest.” In a meeting with Congressional leaders shortly after the Vietnam hearings, Johnson fumed: “I can’t understand why Americans who dissent can’t do their dissenting in private.” At a Democratic fundraiser later that year, Johnson decried his critics. “I am glad to be here among so many friends—and some members of the Foreign Relations Committee,” he stated. “You can say one thing about those hearings, but I don’t think this is the place to say it!” In general, Johnson referred to dissenters as “nervous nellies” who “turn on their own leaders, on their country, and on our own fighting men.” Senator Eugene McCarthy perhaps best summed up how dissenters were viewed. “Either you support the administration, we have been told, or you are ‘not on our side,’ you’re a ‘quitter,’ a “Nervous Nellie,” an ‘apostle of retreat,’ an ‘appeaser,’ a “neo-isolationist.”

The Nixon administration carried on in similar vein. Nixon’s aides were ordered to find ways to connect dissenting Senators to the communist movement. H.R. Halderman, Nixon’s Chief of Staff, searched for “inflammatory types” to attack dissenters “for knife in the back

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90 Gibbons, *The United States Government and the Vietnam War*, Part IV, 235, 309-310. Gibbons points out that Johnson’s speech actually generated some criticism for its tone. White House Counsel Harry McPherson sent Johnson a memo saying the speech was “harsh, uncompromising, over militant. It sounded like you were trying to beat Fulbright’s ears down before an audience of Democrats who, I am told, has earlier applauded him strongly.” Lest one think this as an indication or approval for dissent, however, McPherson also stated how he abhorred “the kind of vapid, sophomoric bitching Fulbright is producing now-a-days.”
91 *Public Papers of the Presidents: Lyndon Johnson* 1966, Vol. 1, 519
disloyalty and lack of patriotism.” 93 Vice President Spiro Agnew referred to dissenters as “sunshine patriots.” Said Agnew: “In 1964, when the winds and tides were favorable, the military outlook [in Vietnam] promising, the American ship of state sailed on with the enthusiastic backing of Senator Fulbright and his contented crew. But when the seas became choppy . . . one could soon glance down from the bridge and see Senator Fulbright on the deck demanding that the ship be abandoned and staking out claim to the nearest lifeboat.”94 Fulbright’s name was the most often referenced when dissent was being discussed. Indeed, Richard Moose, a SFRC staffer, spoke of the “Fulbright Majority . . . a bipartisan coalition [of the SFRC] that trusted the chairman on all procedural and most substantive matters and that could be counted on to follow his lead.”95 So frequently and vitriolicly did Agnew attack Fulbright in particular, and dissenters in general, that William Berman refers to “Agnewism” as an “even more sinister and pernicious phenomenon than McCarthyism.”96 Nixon himself referred to dissenters, antiwar critics in particular, as “endangering America’s future as a free society.” Of the war in Vietnam, he said that North Vietnam “could not defeat or humiliate the United States. Only Americans can do that”—a not so subtle commentary on his opinion of dissenters as essentially traitorous.97

For their part, “dissenters” did not believe they were critics merely for criticism’s sake. They also did not particularly like the label of “dissenter.” Upon leaving office in 1974, Fulbright remarked, “If I am remembered at all, I suppose it will be as a dissenter. That is not

95 Of the various members of the SFRC from the mid-1960s on, only Senators Frank Lausche (D-OH), Thomas Dodd (D-CT), Bourke Hickenlooper (R-IA) were not part of the majority. In 1966, the White House also listed Stuart Symington (D-MO) as outside of the Fulbright Majority, but Symington would very much come to question Cold War thinking. Woods, *Fulbright, Vietnam and the Struggle for a Cold War Foreign Policy*, 55, 114; Johnson, *Congress and the Cold War*, 145.
what I had in mind, but when things go contrary to your highest hopes and strongest
convictions, there is nothing you can do except dissent or drop out.”\textsuperscript{98} In saying this, Fulbright
was plugging into a larger philosophy of dissent—a belief that dissent was in fact necessary, not
just because his own conscience demanded it, but because it was needed in order to keep
America true to itself. As Fulbright put it: “we are proving the strength of the American dream
by resisting the dream of imperial destiny. We are demonstrating the validity of our traditional
values by the difficulty we have in betraying them.”\textsuperscript{99} In other words, to dissent was not to be
disloyal, or unpatriotic, as Johnson and Nixon believed; rather, it was the highest form of
loyalty and patriotism. Fulbright even used the phrase “higher patriotism” in describing
dissenters: “To criticize one’s country is to do it a service . . . the highest devotion we can give
is not to our country as is, but to a concept of what we would like it to be.” George McGovern
put it this way:

True loyalty is . . . the realization that this country was born in revolution,
nurtured in protest, and strengthened by dissent. It is the awareness that the
great experiment still continues and that it must be advanced through the free
play of the inquiring mind . . . it is, above all, the knowledge that any effort to
compress America into a single formula or set of ideas, to compose
conformity or enforce support, is itself, the most dangerous form of
disloyalty, and a betrayal of the principles on which this nation rests.\textsuperscript{100}

Dissenters, then, were also patriots, just “not,” as Fulbright argued, “in the jingoist sense in
which the term patriotism is commonly misused.”\textsuperscript{101}

\textsuperscript{98} \textit{Congressional Record,} 9 December, 1974, 41076.
\textsuperscript{99} Fulbright, \textit{The Crippled Giant,} 278.
\textsuperscript{100} McGovern, \textit{A Time of War, A Time of Peace,} 193.
\textsuperscript{101} Fulbright, “What Students Can do for Peace,” 8 May, 1970, RG 46 - US Senate, Committee on Foreign
Relations, Records of the Chairman, J.W. Fulbright, Speeches and Statements 1966-1975, Box 2. David
Schoenbrun, a former CBS broadcaster who had covered the war in Vietnam nicely summed up this idea when he
testified before the SFRC in 1970: “Most of us have been raised and brought up in the doctrine of Stephen Decatur,
‘My country, right or wrong.’ I used to believe that until I came across, in historical research, a statement by a
Senator, a very great man, a credo of patriotism by which I have lived ever since…and that was Carl Schurz, who,
in 1899, led the anti-imperialist convention in Chicago in protest of the annexation of the Philippine
Islands…Someone in the audience shouted him down and said, ‘Senator, you are not a good American. Remember
Implicit in the philosophy of dissent is the notion of the importance of debate. It was Fulbright’s concern over a lack of debate—of the “narrowing of the permissible bounds of public discussion”\textsuperscript{102}—that prompted him to give the “Old Myths and New Realities” speech in the first place. Similarly, his concern over the lack of discussion regarding the decision to intervene in the Dominican Republic encouraged the decision to lay out the causes of the intervention as he saw them (based on the extensive classified hearings held on the matter) and then denounce the intervention in front of the entire Senate. Fulbright saw “a highly controversial policy was being carried out without controversy—with out debate”\textsuperscript{103} and he felt that was unacceptable. Likewise, Senator Church’s belief in the need for debate prompted his suggestion for the SFRC “to play a part in opening a dialogue for the future” by using itself as “a public forum in which to focus and register the protests and the dissent as well as the support for official policy.”\textsuperscript{104} Church’s suggestion ultimately led to the Vietnam Hearings of 1966, which in turn led to hearings on all manner of questions relating to American foreign relations. The investigations into broad aspects of American foreign policy, as outlined earlier in this discussion, served to further the collapse of the Cold War consensus view that it was America’s duty to protect and defend the “free world” in any way that it could and, that, because of the weightiness of this responsibility, it was best for Congress to assume a limited role in the construction of foreign affairs so as to allow the Executive maximum autonomy. Increasingly, individuals who had once believed in these ideas came to challenge both of them by offering up

\footnotesize{Stephen Decatur’ and Carl Schurz’s reply…was the following: ‘My country right or wrong. But when right to be kept right and when wrong to be put right.’' See \textit{Impact of the War in Southeast Asia on the US Economy}, Hearings before the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, 91st Congress, 2nd Session, 1970, 289. Found in RG 287, Publications of the Federal Government, Box Y4-1465).}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{102} Fulbright, \textit{Old Myths and New Realities}, 7.}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{103} Congressional Record, 22 Oct 1965, 27456}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{104} Executive Sessions of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, 1965, 949-952.}
resolutions attempting to limit, reverse, or reform various foreign policies originally undertaken in the name of the Cold War. Arguably, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee succeeded in accomplishing what Church thought it should try doing—that is to say, it succeeded in initiating a debate over the basic ideological underpinnings of America’s foreign policy writ large.

While examining the broad aspects of American foreign relations, however, three specific areas of Cold War foreign policy served to provide an anchor for the larger debate over America’s place in the global arena: the foreign aid program, Vietnam policy, and NATO commitments. These policy areas will be examined in the next three chapters before turning to the question of the larger picture of America’s international posture.
Chapter Two
The Foreign Aid Program:
“One of the Most Vexing Problems of American Foreign Relations”

In a speech before Congress in March 1965, Senator Fulbright declared the question of foreign aid to be “one of the most vexing problems of American foreign policy.” A year later, in his bestselling book, *The Arrogance of Power*, he wrote, “I have great misgivings about the foreign aid program…my misgivings have to do with the basic character of the program and the need, as I see it, for a *new* concept of foreign aid.”¹ The character and administration of the foreign aid program had, of course, come under attack before. As the previous chapter demonstrated, there was sufficient concern over the direction of the aid program by the late 1950s that it was retooled in the *Foreign Assistance Act of 1961*. Concerns about the nature of foreign aid continued to grow, however, such that by 1965, some members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee felt the Committee should be called the “Committee on Foreign Aid,” since it seemed to spend more time on that issue than anything else.² “The Foreign Aid debate,” wrote Fulbright, “has become an annual occasion for the airing of grievances—many, to be sure, related in one way or another to foreign aid; most at least related to the country’s foreign policy.”³ Indeed, as the 1960s progressed, the foreign aid program came to be one of three arms of America’s Cold War policy (alongside the war in Vietnam and the nature of the

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² Legislative History of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee 88th-90th Congresses. RG 287, Publications of the Federal Government (hereafter, RG297), Box Y4-1491.
commitment to NATO) which the SFRC homed in on as means of initiating a larger debate over the proper role for the United States within the global arena.

This chapter examines the growing debate over foreign aid, focusing on the differing visions of foreign assistance emerging in the 1960s, and the interplay between the legislature and the executive as Congress attempted to reform, restructure, and reshape America’s aid program. Members of the SFRC became increasingly concerned with the ways in which the Johnson administration, following in the footsteps of its predecessor, conceptualized the purpose and goals of foreign aid. Foreign aid programs were designed with the goal of development—or modernization—of the recipients in mind, but while humanitarian and otherwise benevolent considerations factored into the giving of aid, foreign aid was fundamentally a tool or weapon of the Cold War in the eyes of the Kennedy and Johnson administrations. After all, the theory of modernization Walt Rostow presented in his Stages of Economic Growth was dubbed A Non-Communist Manifesto. As Michael Latham so ably put it in Modernization as Ideology, “by outlining the way Americans might fight and win a dangerous struggle in which image and identity became inseparable from definitions of security and strategy, modernization became an important component of American Cold War planning.”

While some members of the SFRC once also conceived of aid as a weapon in the Cold War, the Committee increasingly engaged in debate with the Johnson administration over the nature of the aid program. By 1965, with Senators Fulbright and Wayne Morse (D-Or) leading the charge, a general agreement developed within the SFRC as to the need to re-conceptualize America’s aid program. While the aid program underwent some reform, lack of agreement within Congress as a whole inhibited the SFRC’s attempts to restructure the aid program in

ways it deemed satisfying. Of greater importance in stalling the complete overhaul envisioned and pushed by the SFRC, however, is the fact that the Johnson administration, though receptive to certain attempts to alter the aid program, did not deviate from a vision of aid free from Cold War logic.

I.

The foreign assistance program of the 1960s had its roots in the immediate post-Second World War period, specifically in the Marshall Plan, Truman’s Point IV Program, and the Military Assistance (or Mutual Security) Program. The Marshall plan was intended to foster the economic recovery of Europe in the wake of the war. While devastated by the war, however, European countries were developed nations, with infrastructures that needing rebuilding, as opposed to requiring construction from the ground up. In addition, the Marshall Plan was intended to be limited; it was designed to aid Europe in jump-starting its economic recovery. Truman’s Point IV program aimed to shift the concept of American aid from something that was occasional and necessitated by some form of emergency towards an ongoing program of grant assistance aimed at the less developed nations of Asia, Latin America and Africa.5

Point IV, so named because it was the fourth of the foreign policy goals outlined in Truman’s 1949 inaugural, envisioned a long-term, global program designed to grant assistance to less developed countries by “making the benefits of [America’s] scientific advances and industrial progress available for the improvement and growth of underdeveloped areas.” “More

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5 John Hannah, the Administrator of the USAID (The U.S. Agency for International Development) in the late 1960s—the body that ultimately replaced Truman’s Point IV program and placed it on a much larger scale—defined “less developed countries” as “those that lack modern technical skills and are unable to borrow sufficient funds at commercial rates to carry out a large-scale development effort by themselves. They need assistance at concessional rates, such as soft-term development loans, or technical assistance.” See Foreign Assistance and Related Agencies Appropriations for Fiscal Year 1970, Hearings before the Committee on Appropriations, United States Senate, 90th Congress, 2nd Session, 1969, 13. RG 287, Box Y4-543.
than half the people of the world are living in conditions approaching misery,” Truman declared:

Their food is inadequate. They are victims of disease. Their economic life is primitive and stagnant. . . . The United States is pre-eminent among nations in the development of industrial and scientific techniques. The material resources which we can afford to use for the assistance of other peoples are limited. But our imponderable resources in technical knowledge are constantly growing and are inexhaustible. Our aim should be to help the free peoples of the world, through their own efforts, to produce more food, more clothing, more materials for housing, and more mechanical power to lighten their burdens.⁶

By framing American aid in terms of helping the “free peoples” of the world, Truman linked his aid plan to the Cold War. He nonetheless put the emphasis on improving the standard of living of these peoples as opposed to merely extending them military assistance to ward off communist take-overs. In addition, Truman did not envision that America alone would work towards the goal of development. Truman emphasized Point IV as a program with a significant self-help component, and he “invited other countries to pool their technological resources.” Foreign aid “should be a cooperative enterprise in which all nations work together through the United Nations and its specialized agencies wherever practicable,” said Truman.⁷ Truman’s vision of aid, then, was multilateral, and it was focused on self-help and the development process—albeit conceptualized from a Cold War standpoint.

A program of military assistance was also developed in the late 1940s; however, military assistance and economic assistance operated with entirely different purposes in mind. Military assistance would be used to augment the military capabilities of countries on the forward defense perimeter in Europe. This was the doing of Congress. Truman had tried to incorporate military assistance into the European Recovery Act (which grew out of the Marshall Plan) but

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⁶ The text of Truman’s inaugural can be found at http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/presiden/inaug/truman.htm.
⁷ Ibid.
the State Department advised Truman to take it out on the grounds that, if included, Congress would reject the entire aid bill to Europe. Truman acquiesced and drafted a separate bill—the *Military Assistance Act*—but he withheld sending it to Capitol Hill for another year because he knew it lacked sufficient support. Even the successful passage of the Truman Doctrine, which contained a dose of military aid, failed to provide firm confidence in the success of subsequent measures. When military assistance was finally considered, it was separate even from the North Atlantic Treaty for fear that to include it would impede the ratification process, even though Article Three of the treaty required member nations to “maintain and develop their individual and collective capacity to resist armed attack.”

While the North Atlantic Treaty contained the potential, the Military Assistant Program (MAP) was not officially created until the *Mutual Defense Assistance Act* of 1949 was passed. The Department of State painted the necessity of such a program in no uncertain terms but it also required that MAP not be a

one way flow of aid from this country . . . [it] encourages the recipient countries to exercise the minimum of dependence on the United States. The concepts of self-help and mutual aid apply to all of the recipients . . . reciprocal assistance to the United States . . . might take various forms including facilitating the procurement of strategic materials and the provision of local currency to cover certain local costs incurred by the United States.

This attitude resulted from the harsh treatment the original bill had received in Congress. It was deemed too expansive in scope and there was a great deal of concern that it gave the president far too much authority to assist just about any nation on whatever terms he considered appropriate. A new bill was drafted, which enabled Truman to provide military aid only to

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9 Department of State *Bulletin*, No.521, August 8, 1949, found in *The Papers of Robert Taft Papers*, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Box 617.
specific areas, and then only in specific amounts. In fact, the new restrictions alarmed the
British, who chastised Washington for “withholding the funds to rearm Europe.”

Military assistance, then, began with a rocky start, whereas the Point IV program, with
its emphasis on development, was more easily accepted. As the 1950s dawned, however, the
Korean War high jacked thinking about development, and America’s attention, in the words of
the Department of State itself, “quickly shifted to the security and stability of the countries
rimming the communist world. Assistance in these countries, which quickly became the
primary recipients of financial capital, placed greater emphasis on increasing their immediate
ability to participate in their own defense and less on their development.” The Mutual Defense
Act of 1949 became the Mutual Security Act of 1951, following which the military assistance
program grew immensely. The Mutual Security Act of 1953 directly linked development aid to
security assistance. Afterwards, “a large part of the foreign aid labeled economic had a strong
military complexion.”

The numbers tell the story. Between 1948 and 1951, economic aid accounted for 91.6
percent of America’s total aid distribution, whereas military aid accounted for a mere 8.4
percent. Between 1952 and 1959, however, military aid accounted for over half of all America

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12 This is not to say that development assistance met with resounding approval once the program got under way.
“Different cultural backgrounds, widely divergent attitudes and diverse social, political, and economic systems
proved difficult to overcome. Visible progress was slow in coming . . . the selection of projects was not always
based on major national priorities and long-range needs. Nor could these technical assistance measures overcome
shortages of capital. It was gradually realized that longer-range and more comprehensive evaluations of overall
resource requirements—human and material—was essential to successful development.” Department of State
Report on “Significant Changes in US Foreign Economic Assistance Programs and Policies,” found in the Foreign
Assistance Act, 1969, Hearings before the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate. 91st Congress, 1st
Session. 1969, Printed for the Use of the Committee, 44. RG 287, Box Y4-1478.
13 This quotation can be found in the DOS report, “Significant Changes in US Foreign Economic Assistance
Programs and Policies,” found in the Foreign Assistance Act, 1969, SFRC Hearings, 44.
14 Legislative Reference Service of the Library of Congress, Some Important Issues in Foreign Aid, A Report
Prepared by the Legislative Reference Service of the Library of Congress at the Request of Senator Bourke
Hickenlooper, 4 August 1966, 6. RG 287, Box Y4-1479. See also Nick Eberstadt, Foreign Aid and American
aid doled out—56 percent—whereas economic aid now only accounted for 44 percent.\footnote{These statistics were compiled by the Legislative Reference Service of the Library of Congress using data provided by the Departments of State and Defense. See Some Important Issues in Foreign Aid, 6.} In addition, whereas in 1950 fourteen countries received military assistance, all in the form of grants, by 1960, a total of sixty-nine countries were receiving American military assistance, often in the form of direct sales of military equipment.\footnote{Statistics found in Foreign Assistance and Related Agencies Appropriations for 1966, Hearings before the Committee on Appropriations, United States Senate 89th Congress, 1st Session, 1965, 164. RG 287, Box Y4-543. See also Eberstadt, Foreign Aid and American Purpose, 31-32. Eberstadt sees the move towards more and more military aid as a “most fateful departure from previously enunciated principles for foreign aid.”}

By the end of the 1950s, the imbalance in favor of military aid begun to weigh on the minds of several Congressmen. Indeed, several members of the SFRC at the time, as indicated in the previous chapter, expressed concern over the preponderant emphasis on military aid. These Senators—Fulbright, Mansfield, Church, Morse and Gore—hoped to refocus American assistance away from short-term security objectives and back towards long-term goals of development.

In addition to concerns about the dominance of military aid, some members of Congress believed the aid program produced a lot of waste and inefficiency. Mansfield, in particular, spoke of “doing away with much of the overlapping, duplication, and waste” in the aid program. He also argued for doing “away with grants as much as possible” and “substitute[ing] in their place loans on long-term, low-interest rate basis.”\footnote{See Mike Mansfield Papers, Series XIII, Sub-series 2, Second-Term, 1959-964, Box 30, Folder 2, A New Approach to Foreign Aid, Montanans For.} A desire to revamp the program as it then existed was growing in Congress.

This desire was also shared by the Eisenhower and Kennedy administrations, although for different reasons, particularly as aid bureaucracies themselves “came to understand the ways in which the investment, trade, fiscal, and monetary problems—as well as social and political
problems—of a country all influence one another.”18 In the late 1950s, technical and development assistance was expanded upon and improved under the International Cooperation Administration (ICA) and the Development Loan Fund (DLF), both established in 1958. American aid moved away from investing in specific aid “projects” and towards the “country programming approach—the analysis of critical gaps and the planning of assistance in relation to each country’s circumstances and overall development potential.”19 By 1961, the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 replaced the Mutual Security Act as the basis of the aid program, at least in title. The Act merged the ICA and DLF into a single agency, the Agency for International Development (AID). It also allowed, as the previous chapter has noted, for the future separation of military and economic aid budgets, and it opened the door to multi-year, long-term, low-interest development loans to underdeveloped nations.20

The Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 became the basis for the foreign aid program throughout the 1960s, but while a new legislative framework for the aid program as a whole existed, the philosophy of aid as a Cold War tool had not been altered. A 1966 study by the Legislative Reference Service of the Library of Congress described America’s foreign aid program in these years as based on broad principles: “(1) that foreign aid is extended primarily to counter communism,” and “(2) that the United States is committed to long-range programs for economic development in the less-developed countries.”21 In addition, the countries receiving American assistance of some sort fell into two broad groups: the “strategic” countries—“those to which we are extending aid because of United States military bases on

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19 Ibid. See also Burton Kauffman, Trade and Aid: Eisenhower’s Foreign Economic Policy, 1953-1961 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982).
21 Legislative Reference Service, Some Important Issues in Foreign Aid, iii.
their soil and because heavy military burdens are considered necessary to resist military pressure from communist countries”—and the “non-strategic” countries.  

Seven countries routinely topped the list of strategic nations—Korea, The Republic of China, Vietnam, Laos, Pakistan, Turkey, and Spain. The study noted, however, that aid to these nations “has caused little in the way of genuine economic development,” although “economic and military considerations are closely intertwined.” America’s “economic” assistance could be broken down into three broad categories: 1) “supporting assistance,” which came with a fifty million dollar contingency fund, and was used “primarily in countries where security considerations predominate”; 2) aid for “economic development in the form of development loans and grants for technical assistance”; and 3) “contributions to international organizations, such as the United Nations Special Fund.”

While these broad categories are suggestive, they could not disguise the fact that programs falling under the foreign aid authorization for a given fiscal year were remarkably diverse. By 1965, when the SFRC began to study and consider aid in greater detail, Fulbright stated:

One of the things that confuses our consideration of foreign aid is that the program is a hodge-podge of diverse activities . . . to support foreign armies; to maintain American military bases in foreign lands; to build roads, dams, steel mills; to pay foreigners’ import bills; to grow more food; to rent communication stations; to train foreign tax collectors; to provide emergency relief from disasters; and to support multifarious United Nations activities which themselves range from feeding children, to killing malarial mosquitoes, to irrigating Pakistan.

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22 Legislative Reference Service of the Library of Congress, Some Important Issues in Foreign Aid 10
23 Ibid., 9-10.
24 Ibid., 9.
This “hodge-podge,” as Fulbright called it, was reflected in the shape of each year’s foreign assistance act. The yearly bills included: 1) appropriations for the administration of all AID programs, as well as for other programs such as the Peace Corps, Food for Peace, and the Alliance for Progress; 2) appropriations for technical cooperation and development grants and loans, American schools and hospitals abroad, surveys of investment opportunities abroad, and for monies contributed to international organizations; 3) appropriations for the Export-Import Bank; 4) appropriations for the Military Assistance Program, which included grant military assistance, foreign military credit sales, and a contingency fund for security assistance as broken down by recipient nations; 5) appropriations for the supporting assistance (economic) contingency fund, which had a general fund as well as a fund specific to Southeast Asia; and 5) appropriations for the Department of Army’s Civil Functions in the Ryukyu Islands.

The aid program of the 1960s was certainly far more expansive and encompassing than anything that had been envisioned in the late 1940s. Francis Valeo, member of the Library of Congress’ Legislative Reference Service in the 1940s, then staff member to the SFRC in the 1950s, then personal assistant to Mike Mansfield, Democratic Party Secretary, and Secretary of the Senate respectively from 1959 to 1977, said the following about the evolution of American aid:

I was still in the Library when Truman suggested the original Point IV program . . . which was really a nominal, limited kind of concept originally. But it immediately grew from that into the idea of a much broader program . . . . Once you’ve bureaucratized the aid structure, you made it compelling to find things to do abroad . . . once you have a structure set up for one country abroad, it becomes imperative to have it set up for as many other countries as you can. I think that has been the pattern of the spread of the aid program. 26

Valeo also made an observation about the evolution of aid in political terms that rests at the heart of the differing visions of aid that came to be held by the Johnson administration and certain members of Congress. “The aid program,” said Valeo, “evolved in patterns which made it essentially an instrument of international politics.”

The idea of aid as an instrument of international politics seemed only natural to a nation committed to waging and winning the Cold War. When the Legislative Reference Service examined 1950s presidential messages and testimony by leading members of the Eisenhower administration in connection with foreign aid programs, it found five major arguments which had been advanced with “rather consistent frequency.” These included the following: 1) aid would help in building a strong free alliance network essential to American security; 2) aid would help America’s allies build adequate defenses without imperiling their economies; 3) the extension of aid to others provided a more economical defense of America in terms of money and manpower; 4) aid helps to deter Soviet aggression and, if deterrence were to fail, aid would help in meeting Soviet aggression more effectively; and 5) American assistance to others would help raise their standard of living, thus making communist claims less attractive.

Some of these 1950s arguments for aid continued to be offered in the 1960s. This is not really surprising when it came to military assistance specifically. But aid in general continued

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27 Ibid., 127.
28 Legislative Reference Service, Some Important Issues in Foreign Aid, 12.
29 Members of the Johnson administration testified about military assistance (which was a part of each year’s over all foreign aid bill) in the following terms: John T. McNaughton, the Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs stated, on 9 September 1965, “It is our conviction that military assistance to friendly nations should be viewed as an extension of the United States’ own defense structure, and that adequate support of the program is essential to our own national security. There is in short, an indissoluble relationship between our national security and the collective security pacts with which we are associated.” See Foreign Assistance and Related Agency Appropriations for 1966, 141-42, RG 287 Box Y4-543; Robert McNamara, Secretary of Defense, testified on 20 April 1966 that, “the governing principle of our military assistance program has been and is that the vital interest of this country in the defense of the free world are dependent upon the strength of the entire free world...The United States is the focus in the free world struggle for national independence and economic progress but the United States cannot be everywhere at once...The balance of forces and the options necessary in today’s challenging world can only be achieved with staunch friends, well armed and ready to do their part of the job.” He
to be conceptualized as a Cold War tool. Johnson may have spoken of foreign aid funds as necessary to carry forward a program which offers “hope to those who would otherwise despair” and “progress for those who would help themselves” but he also said American aid offered “strength to those who would be free.” Secretary of State Rusk told members of Congress that they should “consider these requests for economic and military assistance in the framework of the world in which this nation wishes to live.”30 The metaphor of the free and un-free worlds articulated in the Truman Doctrine, a foundation stone in building the Cold War consensus, continued to resonate: In presenting his foreign aid requests to Congress in 1968, Johnson stated: “The people we seek to help are committed to change. This is an immutable fact of our time. The only question remains whether change will be peaceful or violent, whether it will liberate or enslave. . . . Foreign aid is the American answer to this question. It is a commitment to conscience as well as country. It is a matter of tradition, as well as national security.”31 Even David Bell, the administrator of AID from 1962 to 1966, linked aid to American security: “Our programs of economic assistance are designed to serve a basic goal of United States foreign policy: to enlarge the security and prosperity of the United States in a world of free nations. . . . For the central fact of our century is that American security and growth are directly related to freedom and security in other nations.”32

Such Cold War conceptions of aid were once accepted by some of those who would later come to question them. For instance, in early 1964, Fulbright responded to constituents’ continued, “Most of our friends along the forward defense arc are relatively poor. The gross national product of the forward defense countries combined is but one-eighth that of the United States. They cannot be expected to be able to equip their own units properly….United States military assistance is the only solution.” See Ibid, 160-162.

30 Johnson, quoted by Secretary of State Rusk, 8 September 1965, Foreign Assistance and Related Agency Appropriations for 1966, 8. RG 287, Box Y4-543; Rusk’s statement (14 July 1967) can be found in, Foreign Assistance Act of 1966, Hearings before the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, 90th Congress, 1st Session, 1967, 133. RG 287, Box Y4-1478.


32 David Bell, 6 April 1966, Foreign Assistance Act of 1966, 1-2. RG 287, Box Y4-1478.
criticism of foreign aid by saying, “We do it because it is in the national interest and because it is an integral part of our program to protect and promote freedom around the world. It is not a sentimental program of charity but it is a security program designed to help other countries resist communism.”

But, while criticism of aid would eventually come to encompass the question of aid as a Cold War tool, it was the escalation of the Vietnam conflict that provided a strong vehicle for members of the SFRC to really express their developing concerns over aid. South Vietnam came to eat up most of the money in the aid budget, thus necessitating some sort of revision of the rest of the program. Perhaps more importantly, American escalation in Vietnam begged questions relating to the very nature of American aid programs.

II.

In 1961 Vietnam had received $117 million worth of aid, whereas other nations around the world combined received a total of $653 million. By 1965, the gap had narrowed dramatically, such that Vietnam received $201 million in supporting assistance while other recipients combined received $238 million. By 1966, supporting assistance to Vietnam totaled more than that given to all other recipients combined, with Vietnam receiving an estimated $475 million whereas all other recipients received $226 million. The disproportionate share of aid going to Vietnam led many to feel that foreign aid in general had to be cut back. America’s budget, it was argued, could not withstand the pressures being placed on it. In 1966, when Johnson requested a supplementary aid appropriation of $415 million, of which $275 million would be used for supporting military and civil programs in South Vietnam, Senator Morse

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33 Fulbright to Carroll Shukers II, Mount Ida, Arkansas, 18 May 1964, Fulbright Papers, Series 48, Subseries 1, Foreign Relations Committee General, Box 6, Folder 2.
34 Foreign Assistance and Related Agencies Appropriations for 1967, Hearings before the Committee on Appropriations, United States Senate 89th Congress, 2nd Session, 1966, 65. RG 287, Box Y4-543.
declared: “If you are going to have this supplement then we ought to save a corresponding amount elsewhere in the foreign aid program. The world has got to understand that we are not a bottomless pit.”

The SFRC as a whole agreed; it committed itself to reducing the foreign aid program for the following fiscal year because of the increasing costs in Vietnam. “Foreign aid should not remain sacrosanct when it comes to apportioning the war’s financial costs among federal activities,” said the Committee report. “Belt tightening because of the war must not be restricted to domestic programs but should include our foreign aid programs as well.”

David Bell, the head of AID, tried to argue that “the needs of foreign assistance have been carefully measured against expanded needs in Vietnam.” He testified that AID’s field missions were instructed to take into account the needs in Vietnam before submitting their fiscal 1967 proposals and that, “during this comparative review process, reductions of more than $650 million were made from the field proposals.” This was not enough, however, as even Senator Church, long a strong supporter of economic and development aid (as opposed to military aid) argued for a reduction in aid appropriations in light of the escalating costs of Vietnam:

I have favored aid . . . not because I thought it was a formidable or effective weapon against the spread of communism because I do not believe it would be, but because I thought that as a rich nation the United States should try to help bridge the gap and improve living standards in so many impoverished areas of the world. But I recognize if that is its purpose, then it only makes sense we do it if we continue to relate it to our own capacity . . . I know there are those who say that our capacity is limitless, and that what we are doing is really not as sizable as perhaps it should be. Perhaps this is so. But I am not convinced our resources are limitless. I am not convinced that we can conduct a $25 billion dollar war in Vietnam and then go ahead with foreign aid as usual as though the war did not exist . . . I am not convinced that our resources are limitless when I see how far we are from accomplishing the

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36 Legislative History of the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, 88th, 89th, and 90th Congresses, (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1974), 76. RG 287, Box Y4-1491.
goals of the Great Society in our own country and then hear comment about transporting and erecting it abroad.38

Similar attitudes continued to be expressed in subsequent years as well. When reporting on the Foreign Assistance Act of 1967, in which the amount of aid requested by Johnson had been reduced by over three-quarters of a billion dollars (making the appropriations for fiscal year 1968 the lowest they had been in the twenty year history of the aid program to that point)39, the SFRC emphasized that “the shadow of Vietnam was far longer and darker” than it had been the year before. In addition, the report stated that foreign aid “had not kept pace with the changing world,” with aid often serving as a “substitute for sound policies.”40

Both Church’s comments and the SFRC report offer insight into the differing views of aid held by members of the SFRC and by the Johnson administration. Church spoke of aid as something that should operate outside the Cold War context, while the Committee report suggested that aid as previously constructed was outdated. As will be seen shortly, ideas such as these resonated through much of the disputes over aid in the late 1960s and served to bring about questions regarding the very nature of the aid program itself—questions which the conflict in Vietnam also helped to prompt.

If aid was designed to fend off communist expansion, then Vietnam represented the ultimate failure of aid, since American troops ended up fighting the war on behalf of the South Vietnamese. In 1966, Fulbright commented on the fact that the United States was doing all the fighting in Vietnam, an outcome he found puzzling in light of “Administration witnesses

38 Foreign Assistance Act of 1967, Hearings before the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, 90th Congress, 1st Session, 1967, 201-02. RG 287, Box Y4-1478.
40 Legislative History of the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, 88th, 89th, and 90th Congresses, 140-41.
tell[ing] the [SFRC] every year that military assistance to countries rimming China and the Soviet Union is vital to America’s forward defense strategy, sustaining some three and a half million men under arms at a far lower cost than would be required to sustain compatible American forces.” Eugene McCarthy also commented that the United States had committed over one-half million men to Southeast Asia, “exactly the kind of situation from which the military assistance program, according to [Defense Secretary] McNamara, is supposed to save us,”

If America’s involvement in a ground war in Southeast Asia was necessary to allow aid to South Vietnam to work its magic, then the aid presence there was itself responsible for the increasing American commitment to that nation. Fulbright believed aid to Vietnam created a “state of mind” that led to deepening involvement in the country. During hearings on the Foreign Assistance Act of 1966, Fulbright expressed concern that American aid “has the unfortunate side effect of identifying us as a government with certain regimes, and in the extreme case of contributing to our involvement, I think, in such a war as tragic as that in Vietnam.” A year later, using both Vietnam and the Dominican Republic as examples, he again voiced concern “with what appears to be the tendency to intervene on the slightest provocation on the basis of an aid program.” This led the SFRC in 1967 to amend the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 to say: “the furnishing of assistance under this Act, although contributing to the security of the United States, shall not be construed as creating any new commitment, or affecting any existing commitments, to use the armed forces of the United States for the defense

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41 Fulbright, Arrogance of Power, 230.
43 Fulbright, 6 April 66, Foreign Assistance Act of 1966, SFRC Hearings, 12.
of any foreign country.” That an American aid presence in a country could lead to undertaking a major commitment to that country, particularly of the military kind, was deeply troubling to the SFRC.

The Committee even began to question whether or not aid could be considered a success even if it did prevent communist regimes from coming to power in certain areas. If the purpose of aid was to provide a peaceful means for others to evolve into modern, democratic states, then aid was in trouble. Church liked to point out that, “most of the countries to which we give aid . . . are totalitarian countries, and most of the free world that we refer to in this sense is not free at all.” Fulbright later took Church’s point even further: “Today, the problem is not the fall of friendly dominoes to communism but their fall to military rule. Totalitarianism on the right should be as offensive to Washington as totalitarianism on the left. But the major recipients of our military aid—Korea, Thailand, the Philippines, Greece, and Taiwan—are hardly paragons of democratic government.”

The idea that the aid program was failing in its stated goals—either by dragging the United States more deeply into the affairs of others than was necessary or desirable, or by supporting totalitarian regimes in the name of anti-communism—fit nicely with other Congressional concerns regarding aid. These included the long-standing concern about the make-up of American aid—particularly the question of military versus economic or humanitarian assistance and questions about the overall goal of American foreign aid—was it tied, for instance, to obtaining the political support of recipients?

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45 See Ibid., 1-2.
46 Church, 14 July 1967, Foreign Assistance Act of 1967, SFRC Hearings, 204.
47 Fulbright, 2 May 1973, Foreign Military Sales and Assistance Act, Hearings before the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, 93rd Congress, 1st Session, 1973, 3. RG 287, Box Y4-1494.
III.

Aid, as previously noted, had dual goals—those defined by Cold War thinking and those related to development. Granted, the goals nicely overlapped in the minds of those who envisioned aid as a Cold War tool; however, these dual goals came to duel with each other, making an assessment of aid that much more complicated. The question of development aid, of strictly economic or humanitarian assistance removed from military considerations, naturally tied in with longer-standing concerns of the make-up of America’s aid program—the large military assistance component specifically.

Despite the concerns over the dominance of military aid in the late 1950s and the provision of the *Foreign Assistance Act of 1961* that provided for the potential separation of differing forms of aid, military and economic assistance continued to remain a part of the same bill. The balance between military and economic assistance did briefly tip back in favor of economic aid: from 1952 to 1959, military assistance accounted for 56 percent of America’s aid distribution, while economic aid accounted for 44 percent; between 1960 and 1964, military aid shrunk to 40.3 percent of the aid distribution. Economic aid was also cut back, but not as dramatically as military aid: between 1960 and 1964 economic assistance accounted for 59.7 percent of the overall aid budget.48 The shrinkage in aid budgets was due to Congress repeatedly cutting back the requests made by the Kennedy administration.49

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48 See Legislative Reference Service, *Some Important Issues in Foreign Aid*, 6. Regarding the reductions made in aid across the board: while military aid totaled almost $21 billion between 1952 and 1959, from 1960 to 1964 it totaled only $7.8 billion. Economic aid also dropped, from $16.4 billion between 1952 and 1959, to $11.6 billion between 1960 and 1964. The decrease in economic aid, however, was not nearly as significant as that made in military aid.

49 For example, in 1962, the Congress approved an aid bill authorizing $1,032,400,000 less than President Kennedy requested. The final appropriation amount was $585.7 million less than the amount appropriated for the *Foreign Assistance Act of 1961*. Most of the cuts were initially made by the House Appropriations, Foreign Operations Subcommittee. See “New Foreign Aid Restrictions Voted,” *Congressional Quarterly Almanac*, Volume XVIII—1962, 87th Congress, 2nd Session, (Washington: Congressional Quarterly Service, 1963), 301-314. In 1963 foreign aid legislation “received the worst pummeling in the hands of Congress in 1963 since the program began in
Despite the steady decrease in the amounts Congress as a whole would approve for military assistance in this period, many individuals were still unhappy with military aid in general. Morse, an outspoken critic of military assistance since the late 1950s, continued to argue that “military aid in many parts of the world ha[d] offset and crippled our economic aid.” Fulbright agreed, believing military aid to be “a kind of stimulus [that] takes the place of actual economic development in a country.” He felt that American assistance to others “ought to be . . . really concentrated upon developing their economy and not their military power.”

“After all,” said Morse, “our foreign aid program ought to be directed toward doing something about raising the economic standard of the masses of the people . . . rather than having the United States impose its so-called security programs on them.”

By the fall of 1967, Senator Margaret Chase Smith (R-ME) noted “the opposition to military assistance is growing in the Senate. It is opposed by the majority leader of the Senate [Mike Mansfield] who controls the legislative agenda. It is opposed by the senior Republican member of the Senate [George Aiken (VT)]. It is opposed by ranking members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.”


50 Morse, 12 April 1966, Foreign Assistance 1966, SFRC Hearings, 239; Fulbright, 18 March, 1965, *Executive Sessions of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee together with Joint Sessions with the Senate Armed Services Committee (Historical Series)*, Vol. XVII. 89th Congress, First Sessions, 1965 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1990), 333-334. Members of Congress were not alone in their assessment of aid here. Frances Neeley, the Secretary of the Friends Committee on National Legislation—one of the major public advocacy committees that deemed itself friendly to foreign aid—testified on 15 November 1967 that: “Members of our committee understand, indeed, we share much of the widespread frustration over the slow rate of development, and we are not insensitive to the more specific criticisms of aid activities. In fact, we believe these activities have been hampered by their close relationship to military aid, by the tendency to use economic aid as a tool in the fight against communism…” See *Foreign Assistance and Related Agency Appropriations for Fiscal Year 1968*, Hearings before the Committee on Appropriations, United States Senate 90th Congress, 1st Session, 1967, 318. RG 287, Box Y4-543.

51 Morse, 21 February 1967, *Conflicts between United States Capabilities and Foreign Commitments*, Hearings before the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, 90th Congress, 1st Session, 1967, 21. RG 287, Box Y4-1479.

52 Margaret Chase Smith, 16 November 1967, *Foreign Assistance and Related Agencies Appropriations for Fiscal Year 1968*, Hearings before the Committee on Appropriations, United States Senate 90th Congress, 1st Session, 1967, 344. RG 287, Box Y4-543.
because American assistance supported military dictatorships around the world. There is truth to
this, as Church’s and Fulbright’s comments above suggest, but it is not the only reason members
of the SFRC continued to concern themselves with military assistance. Morse believed that “aid
extended for military reasons, security reasons, or for the reasons of political intrigue” did not
serve America’s interests. He was concerned, on the one hand, that in some parts of the world,
military aid determined American policy. “I don’t want military aid to be wagging American
foreign policy,” he said. “I think it is in India and Pakistan and Greece and Turkey and maybe
some other parts of the world too.” On the other hand, he believed that American military aid
was the source of many armed conflicts around the globe. “I think our military aid has been
causative of international tensions in many instances and is today, in my opinion, one of the
serious threats to the peace of the world,” said Morse.

He was not alone in this belief. McCarthy declared: “the long-range effect of the arms
sales program on our relations with our allies, with the Soviet Union, and with the cause of
peace in the world is, in my judgment, one of the most significant and least discussed issues in
our foreign policy.” He argued that military aid sparked arms races around the world and that
American military equipment and supplies given to a nation to strengthen it against communist
subversion tended, more often than not, to be used by the recipient nation for its own designs.

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53 Morse, 12 August 1965, Executive Sessions of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee together with Joint
Sessions with the Senate Armed Services Committee, 1965, 1094-95.
54 Morse, 12 April 1966, Foreign Assistance 1966, SFRC Hearings, 239.
55 See, Eugene McCarthy, The Limits of Power: America’s Role in the World, 73. As evidence of American
military aid and sales sparking arms races, McCarthy pointed to the outcomes of the sale of fifty Skyhawks to
Argentina as an as well as to the sale of a squadron of F-4 Phantom fighters to Iran. Senator Pell tended to agree
about the propensity for aid to cause arms races, particularly in Latin America. “I have a basic philosophical
objection to giving military aid to any of these Latin American countries…What is the rationale? In the end, it
seems to me that one man gets it and then the man next door wants it…One mans gets a destroyer and the next man
wants a cruiser.” See Foreign Assistance Act, 1965, Hearings before the Committee on Foreign Relations, United
States Senate, 89th Congress, 1st Session, 1965, 209. RG 287, Box Y4-1478.
56 Ibid., 40-42. McCarthy used the example of the Indo-Pakistani conflict to prove this point, an example that was
buttressed by John Kenneth Galbraith, the Ambassador to India from 1961 to 1963. Galbraith testified before the
SFRC in 1966 on the impact of American military aid in South Asia. “I share the doubts of members of this
This was one of the larger problems of conceiving of aid as political tool, but it was not the only one. At various times, members of the SFRC made statements that contradicted the views of aid’s purpose as put forth by the presidential administrations. Church best summed up the views of what aid could not do, and therefore what it should not be used for:

The hard-core critics of this program have often indicted it with the statement that you cannot buy friends, and we who have supported it or who have supported parts of its have always retorted that that is not the purpose of the program. Of course, you cannot buy friends. But I think we ought to at least give some attention to what else you cannot get from this kind of program because I think our experience over the years has now demonstrated a lot of things you cannot get. For one thing, you cannot get from a recipient country fidelity to an alliance or a foreign policy that is consistent with our own or with what we think ought to be the policy. . . . Another thing you cannot get when it comes to a time of crisis or a time of reckoning out of a foreign aid program is solidarity with the United States.57

Members of the SFRC increasingly came to wonder what type of tool aid should be, and whether or not it should even be a tool. As early as 1964 Fulbright suggested that:

Much of the controversy that has attended the annual debate in Congress on foreign aid is rooted, I suspect, in our reluctance to regard foreign aid as a normal instrument of American foreign policy like diplomacy or military power. Foreign aid as been described as everything from a sacred mission to a criminal lunacy, but the nation has yet to form a consensus on the significance of foreign aid as it has worked out in practice, that is to say, as a perfectly rational tool of policy, no better or worse than any other in moral terms.58

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57 Church, 14 July 1967, Foreign Assistance Act of 1967, SFRC Hearings, 200-01. RG 287, Box Y4-1478.
58 Fulbright, “Foreign Assistance Act of 1964,” no specific date. RG 46:, Records of the US Senate—Records of the Committee on Foreign Relations, Records of the Chairman, William Fulbright, Speeches and Statements 1958-1965, Box 1. Fulbright continued: “The aspirations of the poor nations are the occasion but not really the reason for the American foreign aid program. The reason for our aid—I think we must admit—lies in our own aspirations rather than those of the recipients, or, more precisely, in the profound effects which their aspirations have on our own prospects for peace and security. Looked at that way, foreign aid is not a ‘special’ undertaking...but an
This quotation suggests that, as of 1964 at least, Fulbright was comfortable with viewing foreign aid as an instrument or tool of the nation’s foreign policy. This view changed over the next couple of years, however. By March 1965, while Fulbright was not yet ready to “advocate the abandonment of aid as an instrument of foreign policy,” he did believe that, “as a result of many changes in the world, experience gained in other international lending agencies, and especially because of the image which the omnibus bill has acquired in the Senate, the time for a change in approach has arrived.” As yet unwilling to abandon the idea of aid as a foreign policy tool, Fulbright was nonetheless coming to conceive of aid as different kind of tool. Whereas the Johnson administration used aid as a combative Cold War tool, Fulbright was coming to believe in “the potential value of foreign aid as a functional instrument for modifying the Cold War and helping build a peaceful cooperative international community.” Thus if aid were still to be an instrument of policy, it should become a different type of instrument:

> For twenty years we have thought of foreign aid as a weapon in the Cold War—a humane and intelligent one, to be sure, but nonetheless a weapon in a global struggle against communism. Hitherto, this has been a sound and realistic basis for our foreign aid, but as ideology recedes as a governing motive of great power relations, at least as between the Soviet Union and the United States, and as the two great nuclear powers move towards better relations—assuming that they continue to do so—it may be that we shall find it possible to convert assistance to the undeveloped countries from an instrument of rivalry to an instrument of reconciliation.

By 1966, as the SFRC pushed to reshape aid, Fulbright had come to consider the possibility that aid should not be a part of America’s Cold War foreign policy arsenal:

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I propose a conversion from an instrument of national foreign policy to an international program for the limited transfer of wealth from rich countries to poor countries in accordance with the same principle of community responsibility which in our own country underlies progressive taxation and social welfare programs. . . . An internationalized system would provide a framework within which the great powers could convert their aid programs from Cold War instruments of competition to cooperative ventures that would benefit their own relations as well as the economic needs of developing countries.  

Fulbright’s remarks here where reflected by the SFRC as whole in its report on the 1967 *Foreign Assistance Act*. Recall that in putting forward a massively reduced aid bill, the Committee had stated that foreign aid “had not kept pace with the changing world,” with aid often serving as a “substitute for sound policies.”

Given the growing belief that the rational for aid, as well some of the actual aid programs themselves had become outmoded, and given the other concerns about aid that took shape throughout the 1960s, the SFRC began, in 1965, working on ways to reform the aid program writ large.

IV.

The SFRC grew tired off waiting for the Johnson administration itself to reform aid. As Morse put it:

I only want to say that I think where we have fallen short before on this committee is that around this table there has been pretty much of a consensus

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62 *Legislative History of the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, 88th, 89th, and 90th Congresses*, 140-41. By 1968 other members of the SFRC had begun crafting speeches on aid in ways that brought across the idea of altering aid so it no longer served as a tool for foreign policy. For example, Church, who had long argued that aid could not achieve goals like creating friends or allies, began arguing that “we have been too preoccupied for too long with ideology and have uncritically accepted the idea that foreign aid is a way to fight communism.” The United States “can no longer accept supporting aid on narrow ideological grounds.” See Carl Marcy to Pat Holt and Don Henderson, 6 June 1968, RG 46: Records of the US Senate – Foreign Relations Committee, Carl Marcy Files, Box 10, April-June 1968. Marcy was writing to these two on behalf of Church. Due to time constraints, he was looking for someone to write him a speech. The quotations are Church’s views, provided in his own words and offered to aid in the speech writing process.
opinion that something ought to be done substantively with foreign aid, but for the most part we have just warned the administration to do something about it the next year. . . . We ought to actually this year [1965] pass the reforms we think ought to adopted and then you won’t have all these amendments on the floor of the Senate.63

This is not to say that aid had not been slowly restructured in ways that suggested improvement. Fulbright noted in 1964 that aid had become less of a potential burden for America itself, with “three-fifths of all economic assistance now in the form of dollar repayable loans; eighty percent of all foreign aid funds being spent in the United States, with the result that the adverse effect of foreign aid on the nation’s balance of payment in negligible; [and] criteria of development lending and self-help have been improved.”64 This type of progress, however, did little to address the substantive concerns about the character and direction of aid, prompting Fulbright to say: “I believe it is my duty to improve the foreign aid program which I believe requires vision to meet the changing needs of American foreign policy in a changing world.”65

What was needed was the “rejection of the concept that an ‘aid presence’ is ipso facto in United States interests” on the one hand, and the elimination of the assumption, on the other hand, that “the presence of some American aid officials is a blessing which no developing country, except for benighted communist ones, should be denied”66

The problem, however, was that while there was a deep-felt dissatisfaction with the character of the foreign assistance program, and while the SFRC had come to a consensus by

63 Morse, 18 March 1965, Executive Sessions of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee together with Joint Sessions with the Senate Armed Services Committee, 1965, 325-26.
66 Carl Marcy to Fulbright, 11 October 1965, RG 46: Records of the United States Senate – Foreign Relations Committee, Carl Marcy Files, Box 7; Fulbright, “A New Concept of Foreign Aid,” Congressional Record, 26 July 1966, Text of remarks found in Fulbright Papers, Series 71, Box 23, Folder 13.
1965 that “Congress had a clear responsibility to give guidance in the area of foreign policy, including the foreign aid program,” there was no agreement as to how exactly to reform the aid program beyond AID’s own efforts to run its programs more efficiently. Nonetheless, the SFRC was determined to give it a try. In 1965 the Committee launched a country-by-country investigation into aid programs. While the Committee wanted to be better informed about aid projects in general, it was also undertaking this study because of hopes to fundamentally reform the aid program as a whole.

During the 1965 deliberations on aid, Wayne Morse spearheaded this reform attempt by proposing a series of changes to the *Foreign Assistance Act of 1961*. He wanted it amended such that no more than fifty countries could receive American aid simultaneously and that Congress had to approve and authorize each country individually. More importantly, however, Morse proposed an amendment that would terminate the aid program entirely as of 30 June 1966. In

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67 *Legislative History of the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, 88th, 89th, and 90th Congresses*, 66. With regards to a lack of consensus as to shape of aid, the Legislative Reference Service of the Library of Congress noted the following: “there is a wider divergence of views regarding the policies that should be pursued. Some, who are most strongly opposed to foreign aid in principle, believe the United States should concentrate on its own military and economic strength…This rather extreme view results from a conviction that the concept of an economic and military ‘Fortress America’ is feasible…Foreign aid, according to this view, is conceived of as charity and should not be extended beyond the scope of relief.

Less extreme, but more numerous, are those who oppose foreign aid, but who view it as a necessary, but temporary, phenomenon. Since they believe the concept of Fortress America is untenable, they hope to strengthen foreign countries to a point at which they will be able to defend themselves. They hope that, after a reasonable time, countries now receiving economic aid will become able to stand on their own feet and no longer need direct assistance from the United States…

At the opposite extreme are those who support developmental foreign aid but believe it will be needed for an almost indefinite future. They believe it is no longer possible for weaker countries to maintain their independence without assistance from their stronger free world partners. They emphasize the determination of the Communist countries to dominate the world and would expand the dictum ‘United we stand; divided we fall’ to the entire free world community.” See *Some Important Issues in Foreign Aid, 1966*, 2.

68 It sought answers to the following questions: Why does the United States extend economic aid to each recipient? What are the specific goals of economic aid in each country? Does each country have a general economic plan of its own into which American aid is fitted? What aid projects have already been completed and what aid projects are under way? How much aid does each country receive from sources other than the United States? How many AID personnel are stationed in each country, including their dependents, and what is the cost of supporting these people? In addition to these general questions, the Committee also wanted to obtain specific knowledge of the state of each recipient country’s tax system, credit and interest rates, and land distribution. Information on educational levels and rates of population increase was also desired, as was knowledge of any indigenous skilled labor and managerial resources. See Carl Marcy Files, Box 7—1965, Folder 2. RG 46, Records of the United States Senate—Committee on Foreign Relations.
the meantime, a new aid program would be constructed, to be implemented in place of the old one. “Reorientation is necessary for two basic reasons,” Morse argued. “First, to get away from the idea that the United States has a duty to give something to everyone; second, to put the burden on other countries to take the initiative in requesting assistance.” Morse (like Fulbright) believed foreign aid to be a “conglomeration of mixed-up half measures.” He was also convinced that “Congress had lost control of these programs because of their number and dispersal.” Morse likewise believed that no one in the executive branch was really in control of aid either: “At least five national agencies (AID, State, Defense, Peace Corps, and Agriculture) plus three international banking institutions scrap, negotiate, convene committees and conclude agreements among themselves.” Added to this seeming lack of control of aid was Morse’s observation that the world had undergone significant change since 1961, when the AID bill was enacted: “new states have multiplied; older European states have prospered . . . the Sino-Soviet split has deepened; our AID program in Vietnam has helped to get us into a war without allies; and the United Nations is on the rocks.” Given all these factors, the aid program needed revamping.

Accompanying the amendment to terminate the existing program were amendments requiring the President to submit to Congress proposals for new aid programs and calling for the creation of a Foreign Aid Planning Committee to aid in creating these proposals—its membership was to include presidential appointees, as well as four members of the SFRC and four members of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs. Lastly, new aid proposals being submitted by the President should conform to several basic principles: 1) assistance intended primarily for humanitarian purposes was to be administered without regard to political  

69 Rational for AID Amendments, Carl Marcy Files, Box 7—1965, Folder 2.  
70 Ibid.
considerations and the social and economic organization of recipient states; 2) assistance for
development purposes was to be extended only to countries respecting the rule of law, unless it
was for technical assistance, which would only be extended if a minimum of seventy-five
percent thereof was to be used for specific projects, as opposed to general development goals; 3)
assistance for political or contingency purposes should serve special United States interests,
such as the rent of base facilities, the creation of a special relationship with the recipient
country, and the reinforcement of an existing alliance; 4) military assistance funds were to be
approved by the Department of Defense and be extended only to countries selected by the
Secretary of Defense and approved by the Secretary of State; and 5) no military or economic
assistance could be extended to any country without specific approval by Congress.71

Suggestions to revamp the aid program had been made on and off for several years, but
this was the first time that the issue of restructuring aid was focused enough to have explicit
expression in a bill that passed a chamber of Congress. The Senate voted in support of Morse’s
amendments. The House, however, balked at the idea of scrapping the existing aid program and
starting over from scratch. Thus, the attempt at “a clean sweep” failed and the issue of
revamping aid entirely was essentially postponed—much to the Johnson administration’s
relief.72

Nonetheless, smaller-scale attempts at revising the existing aid program continued to be
pushed. Fulbright took the lead with these by proposing multi-year authorizations for

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71 See RG 46, Carl Marcy Files, Box 7-1965, Folder 2. See also Wayne Morse, 29 March 1965, Foreign
Assistance Act, 1965, Hearings before the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, 89th Congress, 1st
Session, 1965, 566-7, RG 287, Box Y4-1478.

72 See “Major Revision of Aid Program Rejected,” Congressional Quarterly Almanac, Volume XXI—1965, 89th
Congress, 1st Session, (Washington: CQS, 1966), 422-447. In testimony before the SFRC, Rusk had emphasized
the Johnson administration’s opposition to the Foreign Aid Planning Committee and the whole idea of rebuilding
aid from scratch. Such an action would cause: “a break in continuity of the program; uncertainty about United
States purposes and goals; [and] ambiguity regarding the responsibility of the executive and legislative branches.”
See Executive Sessions of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee together with Joint Sessions with the Senate
Armed Services Committee, 1965, 1090.
development assistance, the separation of economic and military assistance into two different bills, and the multilateralization of aid by channeling more of it through international organizations like the World Bank.\textsuperscript{73}

The intent behind the multi-year authorization for development assistance (as well as for separating military aid out from economic aid) was two-fold: Fulbright hoped to reduce the amount of time Congress spent deliberating on the aid bill each year as well as to get past the increasingly tough time the annual foreign aid authorization bills had met in clearing Congress. Fulbright did not oppose straight up development assistance, that is, and he did not want to see it stopped should Congress one day vote down a foreign aid bill. The multi-year authorization plan would authorize foreign aid spending limits for a program for several years. Having once authorized a program, the actual funds for it would still be voted on a yearly basis. Multi-year authorizations were actually provided for in the \textit{Foreign Assistance Act of 1961} but “this provision was scarcely on the statute books before Congress began to disavow it.”\textsuperscript{74} Morse, in particular, believed that such authorizations would be tantamount to Congress abdicating its responsibility over continued review of the aid program.\textsuperscript{75}

Similarly, Morse also distrusted the separation of military and economic aid, even though he loathed military assistance itself. Fulbright, for his part, believed that it was “confusing to the Congress, to the American people, and to our friends overseas to continue to

\textsuperscript{73} Fulbright, \textit{Congressional Record}, 4 March 1965. Text of remarks found in RG 46: Records of the US Senate – Records of the Foreign Relations Committee, Records of the Chairman, William Fulbright, Speeches and Statements 1958-1965, Box 1; \textit{Executive Sessions of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee together with Joint Sessions with the Senate Armed Services Committee}, 1965, 309; “Major Revisions of Aid Program Rejected,” \textit{Congressional Quarterly Almanac}, Volume XXI—1965, 89\textsuperscript{th} Congress, 1\textsuperscript{st} Session, 422.


\textsuperscript{75} See \textit{Washington Post}, 18 November 1964, A21 for a description of multi-year authorizations; See also “Major Revisions of Aid Program Rejected,” \textit{Congressional Quarterly Almanac}, Volume XXI—1965, 89\textsuperscript{th} Congress, 1\textsuperscript{st} Session, 422.
mix military and economic assistance together.”\textsuperscript{76} Morse, though, saw something bigger at risk in separating the two. “I am not going to support a separation of economic and military aid,” he said; “they are inseparable in any developed country because working together they determine the foreign policy in large measure of our country in that country.” To Morse, separation was not a simple procedural matter:

it is one of the most vital substantive issues in regard to carrying out the Committee’s responsibilities in directing American foreign policy . . . the Foreign Relations Committee will have effectively abdicated its jurisdiction over military aid, which means we have no voice left in military alliances that are formed by the Pentagon building through aid, political and economic commitments that the Pentagon will make in connection with military aid.\textsuperscript{77}

Ultimately, he was concerned that separating military and economic aid was a step in funding all foreign military aid out of the Department of Defense and once this happened, the Congress would have “lost sight completely of how much it is costing the United States to finance these foreign armies.” Indeed, the Defense Department’s independent decision to move military assistance to Vietnam to its own budget by 1967 was “one more step down the road to the militarization of American foreign policy.”\textsuperscript{78}

Ultimately, Congress as a whole could not make up its mind on either the issue of multi-year authorization or the issue of separating military and economic assistance. The deliberations of the 1966 foreign assistance bill are revealing here. Hoping to ease the passage of the aid bill, Johnson had taken a cue from Fulbright by asking for multi-year authorizations and presenting his requests for economic and military assistance in two separate bills upfront. Congress ended up granting him a modified multi-year authorization, albeit one that kept most programs at one


\textsuperscript{77} Morse, 18 March 1965, \textit{Executive Sessions of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee together with Joint Sessions with the Senate Armed Services Committee, 1965}, 310, 317.

\textsuperscript{78} See \textit{Legislative History of the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, 88\textsuperscript{th}, 89\textsuperscript{th}, and 90\textsuperscript{th} Congresses}, 73.
year, but it also recombined military and economic aid into one bill. Regarding the multi-year authorizations, the House reversed the position it had been holding since 1963 and authorized them—five years for the Alliance for Progress and two years for all other programs. The Senate, though it had been somewhat open to multi-year authorizations in the past, also reversed its position, however, and refused to grant more than a one-year authorization for any program but the Alliance for Progress (for which it was willing to grant a two-year authorization). Part of this refusal resulted from Fulbright himself changing his mind on multi-year authorizations because “recent events”—namely the escalation in Vietnam—“had persuaded [him] of the continuing necessity—time consuming as it is—for the annual review of Congress of our foreign aid activities.”79 The compromise reached in conference called for a three-year authorization for the Development Loan Fund and the Alliance for Progress but a one-year authorization for everything else. In terms of separating military and economic assistance from one another, both the House and Senate insisted they remain part of the same bill. The Senate, which had been leaning towards separating the two, was swayed by Morse’s line of thinking. It opted to stay with a single aid bill because of the conflict in Vietnam and what it perceived as over-commitment through aid agreements, something it wished to prevent in the future.80 Congressional compromises kept aid afloat, then, but the opposing views of the House and Senate on some issues, as well as the opposing viewpoints of Fulbright and Morse within the SFRC, speak to just how vexing the question of foreign aid was becoming.

80 See “Aid Program Extended With Minor Changes,” Congressional Quarterly Almanac, Vol. XXII – 1966 – 89th Congress, 2nd Session, (Washington: CQS, 1967), 397-422. A Washington Post article on aid commented: “the war dance around the prone corpse [of the aid bill] is a manifestation of more than merely the growing unpopularity of a program that has no voting constituents. It is evidence of the alienations between the President and his critics in the Senate. As he invoked patriotism in the defense of his Vietnam policy and scorn for those who challenge his policy to the cheers of the crowd, the gulf widens.” See “Senate Frustration and Foreign Aid,” Washington Post, 29 July 1966.
Fulbright had, of course, hoped that multi-year authorizations and the separation of economic and military assistance would make the consideration of foreign aid less vexing. While that hope proved false, he clung all the more tenaciously to his third platform for reforming aid—this being the idea of dispersing development assistance through multilateral channels. Of the 1965 foreign aid legislation, Fulbright stated: “the most important innovation in this bill, which is more nearly the anticipation of innovation than a substantive change in itself, is the authority given to the President to make available up to twenty percent of development lending funds under Title I of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development.” Despite Truman’s call for Point IV to involve others in assisting the underdeveloped, the vast majority of American aid had been bilateral in nature—meaning American aid created a direct relationship between the United States and the recipient countries. Fulbright did not question the competence of AID or other such organizations in any way, “but no matter how good they are they have one insuperable disability of which employees of the World Bank, for example, are free: they are Americans, representing a rich and powerful nation with interests that go far beyond the economic development of the recipient countries.”

This statement reflected the concern that an American aid presence had a potential to become politicized, to create the impression of a commitment to a nation or regime, even where none was originally implied. As Fulbright put it, bilateral aid was one of the causes of “the developing role of the United States as ideological policeman for the world.” It reflected the urge to conceptualize aid as a Cold War tool. Therefore, multilateralization was necessary if aid were truly to become something more. To Fulbright, internationalizing development aid would

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82 Fulbright, The Arrogance of Power, 237.
transform it “from private charity to community responsibility, from a dubious instrument of national policy to a stable program for international development.”

In addition to believing bilateral aid to be potentially dangerous to the United States, Fulbright also believed it was potentially damaging to the recipient country. Bilateral aid allowed for America’s international political concerns to overshadow development itself. Issues of pride, self-respect and dependency were at stake for developing nations: “the crucial difference between bilateral and international aid is the basis of incompatibility of bilateralism with individual and national dignity . . . whatever the material benefits of our aid—and they have been considerable in some countries—I am increasingly inclined to the view that they have been purchased at an excessive political and psychological cost to both lenders and borrowers.” Bilateral aid carried with it the connotation of charity, for example, “which in the long-run has a debilitating effect on both recipient and donor, fostering attitudes of cranky dependency or anger on the part of the recipient country and of self-righteous frustration on the part of the donor.” As well, newly independent and developing nations “are in the process of developing nationalism, and the more primitive they are, the more compromising it is for them to have these intimate relations because they are just too recently out of colonial domination and [bilateral American aid] is too reminiscent of the re-establishment of Western influence.”

Fulbright believed there was a causal link between bilateral aid and anti-American demonstrations in countries receiving American aid. “Defiance of American wishes and attacks on our embassies and reading rooms,” he argued, “become almost a matter of self-respect for proud nationalist leaders, as a way of proving to the world and perhaps to themselves as well

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83 Ibid., 223.
that they cannot be ‘bought’ for American dollars.” Multilateral aid, then, would be better for everyone concerned and, most importantly, by removing political considerations from both sides, it would better enable development.

The Johnson administration made an effort to support multilateralization, at least to an extent. In transmitting his foreign aid requests to Congress in 1965 and thereafter, Johnson emphasized the importance of multilateral aid organizations. AID administrators also offered support of the idea. David Bell noted that while in 1960 multilateral institutions provided less than $800 million in assistance they were providing more than $1,900 million by the end of 1965. “We have strongly supported regional multilateral institutions,” said Bell in 1965. Both the Johnson administration and AID recognized, nonetheless, that they might not be moving far enough or fast enough in the direction of multilateralization. William Gaud, who took over the administration of AID from Bell, admitted as much when he testified in 1966 that while AID had joined in international consortia, the agency still exercised direct control over the use of its funds. “It is not the kind of multilateralism that some would have us go for,” said Gaud. As Secretary of State Rusk argued:

to support international aid agencies and multilateral coordination, it is not necessary to derogate our bilateral aid programs; quite the contrary. In our judgment the United States clearly requires strong bilateral aid programs in Asia, Africa and Latin America. The international aid agencies, while growing steadily, cannot hope to replace more than a fraction of the bilateral aid of the United States and other advanced countries in the immediate future.

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86 David Bell, 6 April 1966, Foreign Assistance Act, 1966, SFRC Hearings, 6.
 Nonetheless, by 1968, Rusk believed that the Johnson administration’s continued efforts
towards multilateralization deserved recognition. “A large part of our aid is being channeled
through international organizations,” he testified. “I know that has been a matter that has been
of great interest to this committee.”89 The feeling, then, on behalf of the Johnson
administration, was that a genuine attempt was being made to at least meet the SFRC part way
in its concerns over foreign aid.

Indeed, as early as 1965, the Johnson administration believed that progress in meeting a
whole range of Congressional concerns was well underway. While very much hoping that
Morse’s amendment to rebuild the entire aid program would fail, and while very pleased that
the House did indeed reject the amendment, the administration nonetheless agreed to conduct a
special study of the aid program, “giving particular attention to the issues raised by [the SFRC]:
the number of countries receiving assistance, the requirements for assistance and the prospects
for achieving our objectives and terminating assistance, the contribution of other developed
countries, and the appropriate relationship between bilateral and multilateral assistance.”90 By
1967, Johnson suggested that perhaps a new foreign aid act should be constructed to replace the
Foreign Assistance Act of 1961. This new Act would “codify the experience gathered in the
past and state clearly the objectives, standards, and program techniques of the foreign aid
program” by stressing the principles of self-help, the goal of multilateralization, the shift to
regionalism in developing aid programs, and an emphasis on agricultural, educational, and
health programs in developing countries.91 Johnson’s promise of a completely new aid program

90  Rusk, 12 August 1965, Executive Sessions of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee together with Joint
Sessions with the Senate Armed Services Committee, 1965, 1090.
91  Johnson’s aid message is described in Legislative History of the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States
Senate, 88th, 89th, and 90th Congresses, 140, RG 287, Box Y4-1491.
would not materialize under his administration, however, but by 1968 Rusk was arguing that “over the past few years we have learned—from our successes and from our failures—to do the job better.”

This meant little to the SFRC, which succeeded in attaching an amendment to the *Foreign Assistance Act of 1968* requiring the President to make a “comprehensive review and reorganization of all foreign assistance programs, military assistance and sales programs, and programs involving contributions and payment by the United States to international lending institutions” and report back to Congress no later than 31 March 1970. By that time, of course, the Presidency had changed hands and parties, with Nixon assuming office. The debate over foreign aid thus continued during Nixon’s administration, as Chapter Six will demonstrate.

Two different conceptions of aid lay at the core of the dispute as it had emerged during the Johnson administration, and as it would continue during the Nixon years. While the Johnson administration had made some effort to respond to certain proposals relating to the shape of the aid program, it could not give up the idea of aid as tool in helping to achieve American Cold War objectives, even if that came at the expense of true development in some situations. Johnson could not let go of military aid as a central component of the foreign assistance program. This was unacceptable to the SFRC, which was trying to reshape the aid program and move it away from being a simple tool of the Cold War.

In disputing the long-standing conception of aid as a tool in America’s Cold War arsenal, the SFRC implicitly questioned assumptions that had been driving and shaping U.S.

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92 Rusk, 26 September 1968, *Foreign Assistance and Related Agency Appropriations for Fiscal Year 1969*, Senate Appropriations Committee Hearings, 266. RG 287, Box Y4-543.

93 See *Foreign Assistance and Related Agencies Appropriations for Fiscal Year 1970*, Hearings before the Committee on Appropriations, United States Senate, 91st Congress, 1st Session, 1969, 84. RG 287, Box Y4-543.
foreign policy since the onset of the Cold War. The foreign aid program was not the sole arena for doing this, however. America’s involvement in the conflict in Vietnam—as something separate from the issue of the problems of conceiving of aid in Cold War terms—provided another vehicle for a growing debate between the SFRC and the Johnson administration. As the next two chapters demonstrate, the growing debate over Vietnam offers another powerful example of the ways in which Cold War assumptions were coming to be questioned and rethought.
Chapter Three
Vietnam, Part I:
“A Conflict in which All the Choices Open to Us Are Bad Choices”

While the Senate Foreign Relations Committee viewed the foreign aid program as having redeeming qualities, if only it could be sufficiently altered, the same could not necessarily be said about the conflict in Vietnam. Mansfield wrote Johnson in December 1965 to say that that “all the choices” open to the United States in Vietnam were “bad choices.”\(^1\) Vietnam seemed to epitomize all that was wrong with a foreign policy driven by cold War logic. The conflict served as a lightning rod for many of the Senate critics of American foreign policy in the 1960s and early 1970s. As the previous chapter’s discussion of foreign aid has demonstrated, and as will be seen to some extent in the forthcoming discussion of America’s NATO commitments, the issue of Vietnam tended to hover in the background of other foreign policy considerations. In its own right, however, deliberation on Vietnam dominated a multifaceted debate over America’s place in the global arena.

This chapter (and the next) explores the growing debate over America’s involvement in Vietnam in the Johnson years. The current chapter focuses, in particular, on the evolution of dissent from private to public questioning of Johnson’s Vietnam policies. After providing an overview of the Americanization of the Vietnam War, the justifications for the increasing commitment are explored—with emphasis on the Johnson administration’s placement of the conflict in Southeast Asia within the context of the Cold War. The growth of Senate opposition to Johnson’s Vietnam policy is then considered, culminating with the SFRC decision to hold televised public hearings on the war in Vietnam in February 1966 with the hopes of triggering a

\(^1\) Mansfield to LBJ, 18 December 1965, Found in the Don Oberdorfer Mansfield Biography Research Papers Collection, Box 15, Folder 6, K. Ross Toole Archives, Mike and Maureen Mansfield Library, University of Montana at Missoula.
national debate over the objectives and tactics of American effort in Vietnam. Chapter Four will then examine the alternatives to further escalation advocated by the SFRC, the main concerns with Johnson’s Vietnam strategy, and the impact of Senate dissent on the direction of America’s Vietnam policy.

I.

America’s interest in Vietnam began during the Second World War with Franklin Roosevelt’s initial opposition to the return of French colonial rule in Indochina. Substantive involvement in Vietnam began with Harry Truman’s financial support of France’s efforts to suppress Ho Chi Minh’s revolution for Vietnamese independence. While there was some skepticism over French policy, particularly as the situation in Vietnam degenerated into warfare, the Truman administration judged that France’s importance as a bulwark against Communism, both in Europe and in Asia, outweighed any concerns that might exist, especially since the State Department believed that France itself would be vulnerable to communist influence without the use of its colonies to revive its economy, and that Ho was one of Moscow’s puppets, thus creating a threat in Asia. With the victory of the Chinese Communist Party in 1949, fears about the spread of communism amplified and continued French appeals for financial and military aid found fertile ground, particularly as U.S. officials came to believe that Vietnam was the key to the defense of Southeast Asia. With the outbreak of the Korean War, the United States increased its financial aid to France, while simultaneously ordering the delivery of arms, munitions, and military vehicles. In addition, a program to aid the governments France had set
up in Indochina was also initiated. By 1952, the United States was funding one-third of the cost of France’s war.²

Calling the situation in Vietnam “strange and inexplicable,”³ and believing the French conduct of the war in Indochina in need of redirection, the Eisenhower administration nonetheless accepted the same principles of Indochina policy as had Truman’s administration.⁴ The French defeat at Dien Bien Phu in 1954 confirmed Eisenhower’s skepticism over France’s ability to successfully wage war against the Vietminh. More importantly, however, France’s defeat raised the prospect of American intervention, most likely by way of a massive air strike. Eisenhower was skeptical of an air intervention, but he nonetheless sought Congressional support for a possible military intervention of an unspecified kind in Vietnam.

At least fifteen Senators expressed strong doubts over an American intervention. These included Fulbright, Mansfield and Morse. Fulbright was worried that an intervention would lead to a “shooting war” between the United States and the Vietminh. Mansfield argued that America’s role in the conflict should remain supply-based; that is, manpower for fighting a war should not come from the United States. Morse thought there was no way the public would support an intervention. In addition, he vociferously argued against “sending American GIs into the mud and muck of Indochina on a bloodletting spree to perpetuate colonialism and white man’s exploitation in Asia.”⁵ Congressional leaders also made it clear that if any action in Indochina was to take place, it should not be up to the United States alone; a “united action”

⁴ Herring, America’s Longest War, 25-29.
wherein American allies also participated was the only way to go, if in fact a military intervention was required.6

In the face of such opposition, Eisenhower pulled back from military intervention but as Walter Zelman has written, “the most striking fact . . . was not that the United States did not intervene, but that it came so very close to doing so.”7 Indeed, Washington Post journalist Chalmers Roberts published an article entitled “The Day We Didn’t Go to War,” in which he said Eisenhower would have intervened had it not been for Congressional opposition.8 The Eisenhower administration seriously considered intervention because it firmly believed in the domino theory—that if Indochina went communist, the rest of Southeast Asia (and beyond) would fall to communism as well.9 Dulles, who believed “the possible consequences of the loss” in Vietnam were “incalculable to the free world,” went on a diplomatic tour to raise the support of the British for a united action, which would also include France.10 The British, however, were not interested, and France did not want to see the war internationalized for fear that it would threaten French influence in the region as a whole. With hopes of an allied coalition dashed, Eisenhower informed Congressional leaders that no intervention would take place because it would be “a tragic error to go it alone.” France’s ultimate defeat was thus assured, and the fortress at Dien Bien Phu surrendered.11

With France’s surrender, attention shifted to the Geneva conference’s consideration of the Vietnam question. The Geneva Accords, which the United States did not end up signing, called for the temporary partitioning of Vietnam along the seventeenth parallel and the eventual

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6 Herring, America's Longest War, 33.
7 Zelman, Senate Dissent and the Vietnam War, 28
10 Ibid, 212-248
11 Herring, 34-37.
unification of the nation to be accomplished by internationally supervised elections to be held in
the summer of 1956. The Eisenhower administration had mixed thoughts regarding the
Accords, and, even though they had opposed American intervention, some Congressional
leaders viewed the Accords with distaste as well. William Knowland, the Republican Senate
leader, denounced the Geneva accords as the “greatest victory the Communists have won in
twenty years.” Democrat Mike Mansfield concurred, stating: “a serious defeat has been
inflicted on American diplomacy” and “vast new areas have been opened for potential conquest
by communist totalitarianism.”12 The United States was, however, happy that French colonial
rule had ended. In the absence of colonialism, the Eisenhower administration was confident it
could build up a non-communist alternative to Ho Chi Minh. As Dulles put it, America should
“seize the opportunity to prevent the loss in North Vietnam from leading to the extension of
communism throughout Southeast Asia and the Southwest Pacific.”13

In the wake of Geneva, the United States undertook an extensive exercise in nation-
building in South Vietnam, after first constructing a collective security agreement for Southeast
Asia—the Southeast Asian Treaty Organization. Through the remainder of the 1950s and into
the Kennedy administration, technical assistance flowed into South Vietnam, as did economic
and military assistance to the Ngo Dinh Diem regime,14 which was credited with

the remarkable rise of Free Vietnam from the shambles created by eight years
of murderous civil war and international war, the division of the country at
Geneva and the continuing menace of predatory communism. . . In [Diem] the
country has found a worthy leader whose integrity and devotion to his
country’s welfare have been generally recognized by his people. Asia has given

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12 Knowland cited in Herring, *America’s Longest War*, 41; Mansfield cited in *Congressional Record*, 8 July
1954, 9997. See the Don Oberdorfer Mansfield Biography Research Papers, Mss. 590, K. Ross Toole Archives,
The Mike and Maureen Mansfield Library, University of Montana (Missoula), Box 6, Folder 1
13 Cited in Herring, *America’s Longest War*, 42.
14 For good coverage of America’s nation-building efforts in South Vietnam, including the 1959 dispute over the
uses of aid, see James M. Carter, *Inventing Vietnam: The United States and Statemaking in Southeast Asia* (PhD
Dissertation, University of Houston, 2004).
us in President Diem another great figure, and the entire free world has become the richer for his example of determination and moral fortitude.\textsuperscript{15}

Aid to the Diem regime was therefore viewed as a good thing. It was also seen as a necessity.

As Eisenhower himself put it:

Because of the proximity of large communist military formations in the north, Free Vietnam must maintain substantial numbers of men under arms. While the government has shown real progress in cleaning out communist guerillas, those remaining continue to be a disruptive influence in the nation’s life. Unassisted, Vietnam cannot at this time produce and support the military formations essential to it, or equally important, the morale—the hope, the confidence, the pride—necessary to meet the dual threat of aggression from without and subversion from within its borders. . . . We reach the inescapable conclusion that our own national interests demand some help from us in sustaining in Vietnam the morale, the economic progress, and the military strength necessary to its continued existence in freedom.\textsuperscript{16}

From the standpoint of Congress, Vietnam barely registered on the radar of the SFRC from 1955 until 1959, at which point a dispute over the proper use of aid to Vietnam broke out.

While interviewing Francis Valeo (a staff member of the SFRC and later Secretary of the Senate), Donald Ritchie commented that he “never saw Vietnam mentioned” while he was editing the \textit{Executive Sessions of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee} volumes for the latter half of the 1950s. Valeo responded: “the reason why it doesn’t come up in their records is because they never had hearings, never did anything about it. Mansfield was the only one that paid attention to it, really . . . [He] always did a report to the Committee, and it was circulated, but who read it, I don’t even know. I don’t think they regarded it as part of the official committee records, it had nothing to do with the committee per se.”\textsuperscript{17}


\textsuperscript{17} Francis R. Valeo, Secretary of the Senate. Oral History Interviews, 3 July 1985 to 11 March 1986, (Senate Historical Office, Washington DC), RG 46: Records of The United States Senate. Mansfield paid attention to
From 1960 onwards, though, Vietnam became a topic of conversation, particularly as American efforts to construct a communist-free South Vietnam met resistance by the National Liberation Front—an organization designed to “liberate” South Vietnam—and its fighting arm in South Vietnam, the Vietcong. Several of President Kennedy’s advisors traveled to South Vietnam throughout 1961, including Vice President Johnson. While in South Vietnam, Johnson echoed earlier views of Diem by publicly referred to him as the “Winston Churchill of Southeast Asia.” Upon his return in mid-May Johnson reported that “the basic decision in Southeast Asia is here. We must decide whether to help these countries to the best of our ability or throw in the towel in the area and pull back our defenses to San Francisco and a ‘fortress America’ concept.” If the United States chose the latter option, said Johnson, “we would say to the world in this case that we don’t live up to treaties and don’t stand by our friends.”18 From May onwards, the Kennedy administration considered creating a bilateral defense treaty with the Republic of Vietnam, as well as introducing 3600 American ground troops to aid in training the South Vietnamese army in both conventional warfare and counter-insurgency tactics. Both suggestions came from American officials first—from a Vietnam Task Force Kennedy had set up to appraise the Vietcong drive in South Vietnam—not initially as requests from Diem’s government (although come September, Diem himself was asking for a bilateral treaty). By the end of 1961, Kennedy had significantly increased the amount of American military aid to Vietnam as well as the size of the Military Assistance Advisory Group operating in Vietnam. He had also approved the deployment of four hundred Special Forces troops to Vietnam “for the

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initiation of a covert warfare campaign against North Vietnam.” Kennedy did not, however, decide to send American ground troops, nor did he move on the bilateral defense treaty.\(^{19}\)

Congressional reaction to Kennedy’s increase in aid to South Vietnam was largely favorable, although Fulbright did send Kennedy a private memorandum in the summer suggesting he “reconsider the nature of American policies in Southeast Asia—specifically United States’ programs in Korea, Taiwan, South Vietnam, Laos and Thailand.”\(^{20}\) Fulbright was concerned about the possibility of over-extending American resources. Just because the United States was strong, Fulbright argued, that did not mean it could commit its strength to the “active defense of its policies anywhere outside the Communist empire. . . . Nothing would please the communists more than to draw the United States into costly commitments of its resources in peripheral struggles in which the principal communist powers were not themselves directly involved.”\(^{21}\) Mansfield agreed. In arguing against the future introduction of American troops to Vietnam, he stated the use of the military in Asia would “weaken military capability in Berlin and Germany.” Mansfield was also particularly worried about how China would respond: “If American combat troops land in Vietnam, it is conceivable that the Chinese communists would do the same. With shorter lines of communication and transportation, with much more manpower available, Vietnam, on that basis, could become a quicksand for us.” Mansfield was not, however, against increasing aid to Vietnam if it meant keeping American troops out of the country. “I would wholeheartedly favor a substantial increase of American military and economic aid to Vietnam,” he said in a memorandum to Kennedy, but “leave the responsibility for carrying the physical burden of meeting communist infiltration and subversion

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\(^{21}\) *Ibid.*, 47.
and attack on the shoulders of the South Vietnamese, whose country it is and whose future is their chief responsibility.”

As America’s commitment to South Vietnam continued to increase throughout 1962—there were 11,500 US military personnel stationed there by the end of the year—quiet expressions of concern could be heard from a few members of the Senate, but even they were largely accepting of U.S. policy in Vietnam. Carl Marcy, the Chief of Staff for the SFRC, believes this was because “the committee did not pay much attention. The war was being waged by the executive branch. Committee members didn’t feel they were in a good position to criticize.” Nonetheless, unease was setting in for Fulbright, Mansfield, Morse, Gore, and McGovern in particular (though these last two were not yet members of the SFRC).

The rosy picture of Diem that had been painted back in 1956 had begun to fade. Diem seemed unable to produce results in the struggle against communist insurgents on the one hand, and in the building of a viable, democratic state on the other hand. Fulbright’s opinion of Diem declined to the point where in February 1962 he asked Averill Harriman, the Ambassador at large, if there were no alternatives to Diem. Mansfield was also beginning to doubt Diem, despite his long-standing support of the man, and he was also beginning to wonder just what

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22 Memorandum to Kennedy, November 1961. Mansfield Papers, Series XXI: Speeches and Reports, Box 41.
24 Cited in *Ibid.*, 128. Of the various members of the SFRC who would later come to be highly critical of Vietnam, Francis Valeo recalls the following about their interest in Vietnam in the early 1960s: “Fulbright was interested primarily in Europe. Church wasn’t really interested yet in the situation…Morse was interested because of the aid program. He had then become really a bitter enemy of the aid program and the way it operated. Gore…had his own way of getting interested for a brief period of time, and posing and displaying great erudition in regard to a problem, and then kind of dropping it and leaving it…Cooper had the sensitivity…I think he could see where we were going wrong. Jacob Javits sensed it with a kind of brashness and hardness out of New York City. If you want to do business effectively with Asian countries, then you’d also better have some people that you’re dealing with who have some connection with their own people. He saw it in terms that turned other senators off, but he was beginning to see it…George Aiken had a good deal of sensitivity. He was on some trips with Mansfield. I don’t know how deep his understanding of the problem was, but he was certainly inclined to trust Mansfield’s views on anything dealing with Asia. See *Francis R. Valeo, Secretary of the Senate*, Oral History Interviews, 3 July 1985 to 11 March 1986, (Senate Historical Office, Washington DC), 204-06. RG 46: Records of The United States Senate
was being accomplished with all of America’s aid. While America’s commitment of resources to Southeast Asia would be “a small price to pay if it were to yield a durable peace and safeguard an opportunity for the growth of stable free nations in that region,” he believed, “the experience of the past decade is not such as to give rise to sanguine expectations in this respect. . . . After years of military assistance of a costly kind, it is discovered that aid went into building the wrong kind of forces and that it is now necessary to rebuild almost from scratch with the aid of thousands of additional American training and support forces.” Mansfield was also starting to believe that America’s interests in Southeast Asia were not “basic and enduring” but “transitory and peripheral.” He privately wrote to Kennedy that America’s role must “remain secondary. It is their country, their future which is at stake, not ours. To ignore this reality will not only be immensely costly in terms of American lives and resources but it may also draw us inexorably into some variation of the unenviable position in Vietnam which was formerly occupied by the French.”

Mansfield concern about the potential loss of American lives was picked up on by Morse, who as of February 1962 was predicting that the American people would divide over the war in Vietnam if “ships start coming back to the west coast with flag-draped coffins of American boys.” Morse did not believe there was any evidence that could convince him “that it would be militarily wise for the United States to let an American army get bogged down anywhere in Asia.” That it might come to this was a possibility, however, if America continued on its current path. This was something Gore was also worried about. He was, in his

27 Ibid.
own words, “uneasy about public commitments which seem to be with us with respect to the presence of and the purposes for US military personnel in Vietnam.”

While still very much voiced by a minority, Congressional doubts over the course of U.S. policy in Vietnam continued to surface in 1963. Fulbright’s distrust of and distaste for the Diem regime had spread. Most of Congress supported the pressure being placed on Diem by the Kennedy administration to reform itself, however, and only a few members believed that the situation in Vietnam had declined so much that American efforts there were virtually useless. Senator McGovern was one such individual. He gave a speech to the Senate in September 1963 in which he argued that the Diem regime had become “so tyrannical, self-centered and narrow, that it is not capable of maintaining popular support. We cannot even persuade a government financed and armed by American taxpayers from tyrannizing its own citizens.” Because of the Diem regime, McGovern argued, “The United States’ position in Vietnam has deteriorated so drastically that it is in our national interest to withdraw from that country our forces and our aid.” Morse agreed. In his opinion, Diem’s regime was “the most tyrannical, dictatorial, and atrocious regime on the face of the earth outside the communist world. . . . On the basis of present policies that prevail there, South Vietnam is not worth the life of a single American

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31 The Buddhist crisis in South Vietnam, in particular, which was reflective of the problems endemic to the Diem regime, sparked a souring of opinion. For a description of the crisis, see Herring, America’s Longest War, 114-119.
32 On the issue of continued support for Diem, Francis Valeo recalled the following: “I thought: if Diem can make it on his own, fine; if he can’t, really the best thing to do is cut our losses and get out. But this was very early in the game and people had not yet seen what could happen if you didn’t take that approach. There was a lot of ever-estimation of our capabilities you know, Kennedy’s inaugural speech set the tone: we were going to make any sacrifice for freedom. Well, freedom is a vague word in some parts of the world. Sometimes it has more to do with a rice bowl and an honest leader than it has to do with rights of free speech or anything else. But we didn’t fully understand it. Really, our ignorance for the situation in Asia at that time was immense. So the situation moved in the direction of deeper involvement.” Francis R. Valeo, Secretary of the Senate, Oral History Interviews, 3 July 1985 to 11 March 1986, (Senate Historical Office, Washington DC), 361. RG 46: Records of The United States Senate
When word of Diem’s assassination on 1 November reached Congress, Mansfield called Diem’s death a tragedy because his regime had started out with such promise. Nonetheless, Mansfield believed Diem’s death should serve as “a clarion call for the reassessment of United States’ policies with respect to South Vietnam and Southeast Asia. There is no interest in Vietnam which would justify, in present circumstance, the conversion of the war in that country primarily into an American war to be fought primarily with American lives.”

Mansfield’s position here would seem to have been supported by Kennedy, who just a couple of months earlier in a televised interview had stated: “in the final analysis it is their war. They are the ones who have to win it or lose it. We can help them, we can give them equipment, we can send our men out there as advisors, but they have to win it—the people of Vietnam against the communists.” Despite this comment, though, the American commitment to Vietnam had increased significantly in size and scope during the Kennedy years. Indeed, Kennedy concluded the above statement by saying “But I don’t agree with those who say we should withdraw. That would be a great mistake.” Moreover, the Kennedy administration had tacitly supported the coup against Diem. Shortly after Diem’s assassination, Kennedy himself was assassinated and the policy reassessment that Mansfield hoped Diem’s death would create failed to take place.

Lyndon Johnson inherited, in the words of George Herring, “a problem more eminently dangerous than the one” Eisenhower had bequeathed to Kennedy. In dealing with this

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problem, Johnson relied on all of Kennedy’s advisors—the same men who had been urging increased American commitment to Kennedy. As Francis Valeo put it: “the careerists in the executive branch . . . were for carrying over the previous policy. They continued to recommend exactly the same policies, which was understandable. . . . If you believed in what you were doing a year ago, you don’t change it because of a change in presidency.”38 Indeed, Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara recommended to Johnson in December 1963 that, even though the government of South Vietnam was unstable, the United States should “use varying levels of pressure all designed to make clear to the North Vietnamese that the United States will not accept communist victory in South Vietnam and that we will escalate the conflict to whatever level is required in order to insure their defeat.”39

Mansfield issued a different set of recommendations, all based on a study trip to Southeast Asia that he had undertaken in the fall of 1962. This was actually Mansfield’s fourth visit to Vietnam; he had previously traveled there in 1953, 1954 and 1955. Mansfield’s report of his visit stated:

> It would be a disservice not to voice a deep concern over the trend of events in Vietnam over the seven years that have elapsed since my last visit. What is most disturbing is that Vietnam now appears to be, as it was then, only at the beginning of a beginning in coping with its grave inner problems. All the current difficulties existed in 1955...but it is seven years later and $2 billion in United States aid later. Yet, substantially the same difficulties remain, if indeed, they have not been compounded.40

Because of what he saw during that visit, Mansfield recommended to Johnson that he shift America’s strategy away from the military footing it had begun to adopt and towards focusing

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38 Francis R. Valeo, Secretary of the Senate, Oral History Interviews, 3 July 1985 to 11 March 1986, (Senate Historical Office, Washington DC), 252. RG 46: Records of The United States Senate.


40 “Vietnam and Southeast Asia,” Report of Senators Mike Mansfield, Caleb Boggs, Claiborne Pell, and Benjamin Smith, March 1963. RG 287, Box Y4-1512.
on the political and social reconstruction in South Vietnam. Mansfield further suggested that America should initiate a “diplomatic offensive” to help solve the whole of Vietnam’s issues.\textsuperscript{41} Faced with two different recommendations, Johnson chose to ignore Mansfield and follow McNamara, who continued to call upon Johnson to take “necessary measures within our capability to prevent a communist victory.”\textsuperscript{42} Johnson appeared to rely so much on McNamara’s recommendations that by the spring of 1964, Senators Morse and Gruening began to call Vietnam “McNamara’s War.”\textsuperscript{43} The number of Defense Department military personnel in Vietnam continued to inch upwards, and in March 1964 Johnson approved National Security Action Memorandum 288, which declared America’s objective in Southeast Asia to be “an independent, non-communist South Vietnam. . . . The South Vietnam conflict is regarded as a test case of United States capacity to help a nation meet a communist ‘war of liberation.’” In response, the Joint Chiefs of Staff began working on a plan for future air and ground strikes within South Vietnam.\textsuperscript{44} Despite being rebuffed, Mansfield continued to offer public support of Johnson’s handling of affairs. In early July 1964, he spoke before the Senate of his belief that Johnson was trying to “pursue a course which will safeguard our national interests, bring about peace, and preserve the opportunities for freedom in Southeast Asia, at the lowest possible cost in American lives.”\textsuperscript{45}

Johnson’s big test came in early August 1964, when two American destroyers, which according to McNamara, were “engaged in routine patrols in international waters of the Gulf of

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\item \textsuperscript{43} Gibbons, \textit{The United States Government and the Vietnam War, Part II, 1961-1964}, 249.
\item \textsuperscript{44} Gibbons, \textit{The United States Government and the Vietnam War, Part III, Jan 1965 – July 1965}, 7.
\item \textsuperscript{45} \textit{Congressional Record}, 1 July 1964, 15143.
\end{footnotes}
Tonkin off the North Vietnam coast were reported attacked, in two separate instances, by North Vietnamese torpedoes. Following the attack on 4 August, Johnson ordered air strikes against North Vietnamese gunboats and supporting facilities. The following day he sent a message to Congress seeking a joint resolution “to promote the maintenance of international peace and security in Southeast Asia.” The idea to seek a Congressional resolution in support of the Johnson administrations handling of the Vietnam situation had actually surfaced a couple of months earlier. In June Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs William Bundy had prepared a discussion paper on “alternative public positions” for the United States on Southeast Asia. In that paper he argued that a Congressional resolution of support “would provide additional freedom to the Administration in choosing courses of action.” Any such resolution, Bundy continued, should be framed in a such as way as “to support any action required but must, at the same time, place maximum stress on our peaceful objectives and our willingness to accept eventual negotiated solutions so that we might hope to have the full support of the school of thought headed by Senator Mansfield . . . and leave ourselves with diehard opposition only from Senator Morse and his very few cohorts.”

Bundy’s proposed resolution became a reality with Senate Joint Resolution 189 – To Promote the Maintenance of International Peace and Security in Southeast Asia, otherwise known as the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution. The resolution stated that “the Congress approves and supports the determination of the President, as Commander in Chief, to take all necessary measure to repel any armed attack against the forces of the United States and to prevent further aggression” and that “The

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United States regards as vital to its national interest and to world peace the maintenance of international peace and security in Southeast Asia.”

The resolution’s design worked exactly as Bundy had anticipated. In private discussions over the Tonkin incident, Mansfield stated his belief that the attacks should be viewed as “isolated acts of terror from unknown sources” and that while the United States should retaliate, it should do so only in international waters. Furthermore, America should also take the matter to the United Nations. “We may be on the verge of getting ourselves into the trap of becoming inextricably and deeply involved with a minor, third rate enemy nation on its own territory and by its provocation,” argued Mansfield. Nonetheless, Mansfield said he would publicly support the resolution being put forth. Morse, however, said he would not support the resolution. He believed it to be a “predated declaration of war” and felt the incidents “were as much the doing of the United States as the doing of North Vietnam. For ten years, the United States, in South Vietnam, has been the provocateur.” Morse was the only member of the SFRC to raise objections to the resolution when the Committee held joint hearings with the Senate Armed Services Committee on it on 6 August. The hearings lasted a mere hour and forty minutes, with Rusk and McNamara testifying that the attacks in the Gulf of Tonkin were “not isolated events…The present attacks are part and parcel of a continuing communist drive to conquer South Vietnam, control or conquer Laos, and thus weaken and eventually dominate and conquer the other free nations of Southeast Asia.”

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48 Southeast Asia Resolution, Hearings before the Committee on Foreign Relations and the Committee on Armed Services, 1-2.
49 “Statement on the Tonkin Gulf Crisis,” Mansfield Papers, Series XXII: Speeches and Reports, Box 103.
51 Rusk, 6 August 1964, Southeast Asia Resolution, Hearings before the Committee on Foreign Relations and the Committee on Armed Services, 4-5.
Fulbright worked to guide the resolution through the Senate as a whole. Alongside Mansfield, who opened the discussion by speaking of Johnson’s “cool head and steady hand,” Fulbright praised Johnson for being measured in his response to the attacks. Statements on the Senate floor fell into three broad categories: those expressing unequivocal support for the resolution and for military responses on the part of the United States; those expressing support for the resolution but concern about general U.S. policy in Southeast Asia, or at least about the implications for future policy contained in the resolution, and those attacking the resolution. Fulbright and Mansfield are examples of those falling into the second category. So too is Church: “I have entertained and continue to entertain serious misgivings about the correctness of American policy in Southeast Asia . . . however, my dissent, to the extent that I hold it . . . is not appropriate for this occasion.” Church believed it to be a time when one rallies around the flag. Only two Senators fell into the last category: Morse and Ernest Gruening (D-Ak). Morse asked, “Have we reached the point in American foreign policy where we are going to permit the President to send American boys to their death in defense of military dictatorships, monarchies, and fascist regimes around the world?” To Morse, and to Gruening, the resolution was also unconstitutional; it granted the President the power to conduct a war without Congress actually having to declare a war.\footnote{\textit{Congressional Record}, 6 August 1964, 18399-18471; \textit{Legislative History of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee United States Senate, 88th, 89th, and 90th Congresses}, 35, RG 287, Box Y4-1491; Gibbons, \textit{The United States Government and the Vietnam War, Part II, 1961-1964}, 316-329.} The Senate vote on the resolution was 88 to 2 in favor of passage. Only Morse and Gruening voted against it. The resolution passed the House unanimously in forty minutes. Looking back, Carl Marcy, the SFRC Chief of Staff recalled seeing the headlines
“Vicious attack on the high seas,” and thinking “You almost had to be Wayne Morse or a fool—and I never thought Wayne Morse was a fool—to have voted against the Tonkin Resolution.”

Despite their personal doubts about the general course of U.S. policy in Vietnam, Fulbright and Mansfield, much like Church, supported the resolution because they believed a show of unity was needed, and not just in terms of how North Vietnam interpreted the response. 1964 was also an election year and the Republican candidate, Barry Goldwater, was much more of a war hawk than Johnson, who had made peace the theme of his campaign. As Fulbright described the presidential campaign:

The foreign policy issue in this campaign is as profound as any that has ever arisen. . . . The Goldwater Republicans propose a radical new policy of relentless ideological conflict aimed at the elimination of communism and the imposition of American concepts of freedom on the entire world. The Democrats under President Johnson propose a conservative policy of opposing and preventing communist expansion while working for limited agreements that will reduce the danger in the nuclear world.

Fulbright assumed an active role in pushing the resolution through Congress because, as he later stated, “I was confident that President Johnson would use our endorsement with wisdom and restraint. I was also influenced by partisanship . . . I had no wish to make any difficulties for the President in his campaign against a Republican candidate [Goldwater] whose election I thought would be a disaster for this country.” Mansfield also recalled supporting the resolution as a show of unity. He further stated that he voted for it because he believed it was designed to

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54 Johnson stated on 26 October 1964 that “there is only one real issue in this campaign, and it is a very important issue...that issue is peace or war.” See Gibbons, The United States Government and the Vietnam War, Part II, 1961-1964, 357.
55 Cited in Ibid., 368
protect U.S. forces already in Vietnam, and not to expand the war. Those who supported the resolution despite previous (and privately) expressed doubt did not interpret the resolution as providing carte blanche for the Johnson administration to Americanize the conflict in Vietnam.

This is what slowly happened in the aftermath of the Tonkin attacks, however. William Bundy drafted a paper called “Next Course of Actions in Southeast Asia” on 11 August; it outlined three phases. In Phase I, which would last until the end of August, the United States would maintain “military silence”—that is, it would not use its own forces, air or ground, against North Vietnam. In Phase II, which would last from September through December, limited pressure would be placed on North Vietnam through the bombing of selected targets there, limited bombing of the Ho Chi Minh trail in Laos, and the mining of Haiphong Harbor. Phase III, which would begin January 1965, would see U.S. forces attacking infiltration routes and facilities in South Vietnam, and gradually moving northwards to attack military targets around Hanoi and Haiphong.

Walter Conrad Gibbons’ extensive study of the U.S. government and the Vietnam war argues that as Johnson was putting into action plans to widen American military involvement in late 1964, two points were especially worth noting: “First, it was generally agreed that US objectives would be limited, and that force should be used as a political/diplomatic instrument, with a negotiated settlement rather than a ‘military victory’ as the goal. Second, it was generally thought that force would prevail, and that at some point the North Vietnamese would respond affirmatively to graduate pressure from the United States.” These ideas never really lost currency for Johnson and whenever the situation in South Vietnam worsened, he assumed that increased pressure was all that was needed. For instance, in February 1965, when McGeorge

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57 Congressional Record, 9 June 1970, 8635-36.
Bundy, Johnson’s National Security Advisor, visited Vietnam and saw the situation there deteriorating, he wrote Johnson to say that new U.S. action was required:

There is one grave weakness in our posture in Vietnam which is within our power to fix and that is a widespread belief that we do not have the will and force, the patience and determination to take the necessary action and stay the course. . . . At its very best the struggle in Vietnam will be long. It seems important that this fundamental fact be made clear . . . those who live this war know that no early solution is possible . . . there is no short-cut to success in South Vietnam.59

In the wake of the North Vietnamese attack at Pleiku on 7 February, in which eight U.S. soldiers were killed and one hundred twenty-six were wounded, the American military began actively waging war against North Vietnam itself. At the beginning of 1965, there were approximately 23,000 US military personnel in Vietnam. By the end of February, the United States began continuous limited air strikes against North Vietnam—the start of Operation Rolling Thunder. The first (Marine) battalions arrived in March, and by July, there were over 100,000 American military personnel slated to be stationed in Vietnam.60

Congress was not consulted in the making of any of these decisions, nor was there any public reaction from Congress as a whole. Mansfield expressed concern over these actions, but he did so in a series of private memoranda to Johnson. After the attack at Pleiku, Mansfield sent a memorandum stating that “The North Vietnamese attack has opened many eyes. We are not now in a penny ante game. It appears that the local populace in South Vietnam is not behind us, else the Vietcong could not have carried out their surprise attack.” The United States must, therefore, be careful in its retaliation because North Vietnam would likely increase its efforts, thus placing the American forces already in Vietnam in greater danger. America, said

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Mansfield, must not get drawn into a long-term military engagement: “I am persuaded that the
trend towards enlargement of the conflict and continuous deepening of our military commitment
on the Asian mainland, despite your [Johnson’s] desire to the contrary, is not going to provide
an answer.”61

Mansfield sent a second memorandum following Johnson’s March decision to send two
Marines battalions to Danang. This memo of 18 March recapped his previous argument that if
the air attacks against North Vietnam continued, North Vietnam would respond thereby making
it necessary to safeguard American forces already present, either by the addition of combat
forces on the ground or by drawing current American forces into defendable positions.
Mansfield favored the latter and suggested that the number of U.S. installations be “strictly
limited to a minimum consistent with the requirements of United States policy, insofar as it may
involve continued air and naval operations against the communists.” He also stated that the
installations should be on the coast, or otherwise readily accessible by sea, in case evacuation
was needed, and that American forces currently scattered about be drawn into these defensible
enclaves so as make it easier to bring strength to bear if needed while simultaneously limiting
American casualties.62 When Johnson failed to respond to this second memorandum, Mansfield
sent a third on 24 March reiterating his previous suggestions, stating that he believed that the
U.S. was in too deep even before Johnson took office, and suggesting that Johnson should
arrange a cease-fire, reconvene the Geneva conference and start working towards a negotiated
settlement immediately.63

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Oberdorfer, Senator Mansfield, 268-69.
Johnson did not appear to heed any of Mansfield’s memoranda. On 2 April he announced his intention to send even more troops, although on 7 April he expressed his willingness to negotiate in a speech at Johns Hopkins. However, he also stated that the use of force by the United States has been increased to meet the use of force by the North Vietnamese: “We do this to convince the leaders of North Vietnam—and all who seek to share their conquest—of a simple fact: We will not be defeated. We will not grow tired. We will not withdraw, either openly or under the cloak of a meaningless agreement.” Furthermore, Johnson spoke of a one billion dollar aid program to Vietnam for which he would seek Congressional approval.

William Bundy thought that a major review of the situation might be undertaken by Congress at that point, and that Johnson should seek a new resolution of support. However, the Dominican Crisis erupted and Congressional attention shifted towards Latin America.64 The $700 million in appropriations to meet the April troop increase in Southeast Asia was overwhelmingly approved by Congress—only Morse, Gruening and Gaylord Nelson (D-WI) voted against the bill in the Senate. Mansfield told Johnson the vote should not be seen as proof of support for a widened war; instead, the yes vote represented “the desire to uphold the President and those who are risking their lives in seeking to carry out the policies of this government.” Indeed the Senate had attached a reservation to the bill stating this. Morse’s response to this, in voting against the appropriation was “Whom do they think they are kidding, The White House must be laughing at their ‘reservation.’”65

In mid July 1965, the Johnson Administration was considering a large-scale build-up of American combat forces in South Vietnam. General William Westmoreland, the Head of the

64 See Chapter One for a discussion of the Dominican Crisis (starting page 40).
Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV) had requested a major increase in America’s military presence. U.S. military leaders had a two-phase plan for the deployment of large-scale combat forces. In Phase I, “the strategic defensive,” 175,000 American forces, along with the armies of South Vietnam, would work to reverse the victories of North Vietnam. This task would be completed by the end of 1965. Phase II, “the strategic offensive,” would involve up to 300,000 US combat troops who would take the war to North Vietnam itself. It was predicted that Phase II would end by the middle of 1966 but if this did not happen, an additional influx of troops would see the job finished within a year and a half at most. Upon returning from an assessment visit to South Vietnam on 20 July, McNamara suggested Johnson approved Westmoreland’s troop request because the situation had deteriorated since McNamara’s last visit fourteen months earlier. That same day, Ho Chi Minh had announced that the war would last as long as it took for North Vietnam to win—another twenty years if need be. When on 27 July, Johnson met with the Congressional leadership to inform them of his decision to deploy large numbers of troops to Vietnam, Mansfield stated his disagreement: “We owe this government nothing—no pledge of any kind,” he said. “We can’t expect our people to support a war for three to five years.” Despite his personal beliefs and concerns, however, Mansfield said that as the Majority Leader he would publicly support his President.

Mansfield’s decision to be supportive in public while dissenting in private was mirrored by many others in the Senate. In the wake of McNamara’s endorsement of General Westmoreland’s call for a large-scale deployment of American troops, A New York Times article surveyed the four main Congressional positions on Vietnam: it found a “majority of

Congress” saw America’s commitment “in limited and conditional terms . . . but these Representatives and Senators are not saying so in floor speeches. Nor are they expressing their views for publication in conversation with reporters.” The article noted that only a very few Senators—Morse and Gruening, in particular—had “vigorously opposed” Johnson’s decision. E.W. Kenworthy, the author of the article, believed that the vast majority of Senators with concerns had remained publicly silent for four reasons:

First, they are extremely reluctant to create the impression of disunity when American soldiers are fighting and dying. Second, they realize in fairness that President Johnson, like President Kennedy, was bequeathed this burden by the Eisenhower administration, that Mr. Johnson’s problem has been made almost insoluble by the ineffectiveness of the Saigon government on one hand and the escalation by the Vietcong and North Vietnam on the other. . . . Third, if challenged, these Senators have no alternative to offer. They wish the United States had never gone into Vietnam; they would like to get out, even at the cost of a political compromise amounting to defeat, but they will not advocate military withdrawal under fire. . . . Fourth, some of the Senators hesitate . . . because they fear the cry of “appeasement of communism” will be raised against them.69

Without having to face public opposition, Johnson went ahead with the large-scale deployment of American combat troops.

By the end of 1965, with over 100,000 American servicemen in South Vietnam, the Vietnam War had become Americanized. Towards the end of 1965, Mansfield once again journeyed to South Vietnam. Upon reviewing the situation there, he reported back to Johnson:

If the objectives of our policy remain the same, the war in Vietnam is just beginning for the United States. The ultimate needs cannot be estimated, either as to United States’ manpower, costs, or time. . . . The truth is we are up against

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69 New York Times, 25 July 1965. McGeorge Bundy concurred with the assessment that vocal opposition was limited. He would also likely have echoed the second reason Kenworthy offered as to why Congressmen with doubts remained publicly supportive. In a 30 June 1965 memo to Johnson on the question of public and congressional support for Johnson’s Vietnam policy, Bundy stated: “In general, the public appears unenthusiastic but reconciled to our role in this conflict…The most vocal current comment on the Vietnam situation is coming from the Congress. Senators Morse and Gruening remain convinced that we must pull out. There is another group, somewhat larger, which could be termed ‘reluctant realists’ whose viscera says get out but whose heads tell them the present policy in unavoidable. Senators Mansfield, Church and Fulbright seem to fall in this category.” Cited in Gibbons, The United States Government and the Vietnam War, Part III, Jan 1965 – July 1965, 350-51.
an open-ended military situation. . . . If [negotiations] cannot be brought off at this stage, the decision facing us resolves itself into this: Shall we plunge in further militarily, into depths which are unfathomable . . . or can we hold a more limited position in South Vietnam by more limited military means until the communists come around to negotiations. This is a conflict in which all the choices open to us are bad choices. We stand to lose in Vietnam by restraint; but we stand to lose far more at home and throughout the world by the more extensive military pursuit of an elusive object in Vietnam.70

Valeo, who had a close relationship with Mansfield, recalled that when he gave the report to the President, “the President gave it to Rusk and McNamara. I understand both of them poo-pooed it, and said ‘that’s the way he thinks and that’s the way it is always going to be all the time with him. He could almost write the report before he comes back.’”71

The Johnson administration had forged ahead, and was willing to continue to forge ahead, despite the risks that Mansfield saw in doing so for a variety of reasons. Johnson articulated some of these reasons privately to his friend (and future historian) Doris Kearns. He believed that if he were to let South Vietnam fall to communism, he would be so discredited at home politically, given the power of the cold war consensus, and that his vision of the Great Society would lose support. In addition to his own personal credibility, Johnson was worried about American credibility abroad. Said Johnson:

If I left that war and let the Communists take over South Vietnam, then I would be seen as a coward and my nation would be seen as an appeaser and we would both find it impossible to accomplish anything for anyone anywhere in the entire globe. Everything I knew about history told me that if I got out of Vietnam and let Ho Chi Minh run through the streets of Saigon, then I’d be doing exactly what Chamberlain did in World War II. I’d be giving a big fat reward to aggression . . . and I knew that if we let communist aggression succeed in taking over South Vietnam, there would follow in this country an

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70 Mansfield to LBJ, 18 December 1965, Found in the Don Oberdorfer Mansfield Biography Research Papers Collections, Box 15, Folder 6, K. Ross Toole Archives, Mike and Maureen Mansfield Library, University of Montana at Missoula. Emphasis added.
endless national debate—a mean and destructive debate—that would shatter my presidency, kill my administration and damage our democracy.\(^72\)

Johnson also articulated his rational to the American public. During his 7 April address at Johns Hopkins, he told the audience that America was in South Vietnam because:

We have a promise to keep. Since 1954 every American President has offered support to the people of South Vietnam. We have helped to build, and we have helped to defend. . . . We have made a national pledge to help South Viet-Nam defend its independence. And I intend to keep that promise. To dishonor that pledge, to abandon this small and brave nation to its enemies and to the terror that must follow, would be an unforgivable wrong.

The United States was also in Vietnam to strengthen world order. Around the globe from Berlin to Thailand are people whose well-being rests in part on the belief that they can count on us if they are attacked. To leave Viet-Nam to its fate would shake the confidence of all these people in the value of an American commitment and in the value of America’s word. The result would be increased unrest and instability, and even wider war.

Lastly, the United States was in Vietnam because there were great stakes in the balance. Let no one think for a moment that retreat from Viet-Nam would bring an end to conflict. The battle would be renewed in one country and then another. The central lesson of our time is that the appetite of aggression is never satisfied. . . . We must say in Southeast Asia—as we did in Europe—in the words of the Bible: “Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further.”\(^73\)

America’s commitment to Vietnam, then, was about many things, but all of them derived from the Cold War consensus.


\(^73\) Speech at John Hopkins University, April 7, 1965, *Public Papers of the Presidents, Lyndon B. Johnson, 1965.* (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1966), 394-398. Johnson echoed these ideas in his nationally televised State of The Union Address in January 1966. “We will stay because a just nation cannot leave to the cruelties of its enemies a people who have staked their lives and independence on America’s solemn pledge—a pledge which has grown through the commitment of three American Presidents. We will stay because in Asia and around the world are countries whose independence rests in large measure, on confidence in America’s word and in America’s protection. To yield to force in Vietnam would weaken than confidence, would undermine the independence of many lands, and would wet the appetite for aggression.” See *Public Papers of the Presidents, Lyndon B. Johnson, 1966,* 3-12.
Johnson believed America needed to oppose communism in South Vietnam. This he made perfectly clear upon his return visit from Southeast Asia in the spring of 1961. Shortly after taking office in the wake of Kennedy’s assassination, Johnson reaffirmed that it was America’s policy to resist the spread of communism in Southeast Asia in National Security Action Memorandum 273: “It remains the central objective of the United States in Vietnam to assist the people and government of that country to win their contest against the externally directed and supported communist conspiracy.”74 Belief in an international communist conspiracy was, of course, a core part of the Cold War consensus.

The idea that the struggle in Vietnam was not a civil war but a part of the communist conspiracy to dominate the world held wide currency. Whether that conspiracy was directed from Moscow, as originally believed, or now from Peiping (Beijing) did not matter. Indeed, America’s success in withholding communism in South Vietnam was important to the growing competition between the Soviet Union and the China for control of the worldwide communist revolution. As Secretary of State Dean Rusk put it:

> if Peiping demonstrates that they [sic] can make substantial headway in the free world, that their brand of militant world revolution is paying off in Asia, then there is a greater chance that Moscow would try to find some way to solve their bilateral differences and adopt a view that a more militant attitude toward world revolution would speed up the world revolution to which Moscow itself is committed. So these stakes are not, it seems to be, just geographical in Southeast Asia. They have a great deal to do with the total worldwide issues between the free world and the communist world.75

Even Undersecretary of State George Ball, the only Johnson advisor to really doubt the wisdom of Americanizing the war, argued before the SFRC that the situation in Vietnam “has to be

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viewed against the problems within the communist world, and it has to be viewed in its context as part of a Cold War struggle which has been proceeding for a very long time."\(^7^6\)

The belief that it was America’s mission to defend the free world against communism, then, provided the seedbed in which all other rationales for American involvement in Vietnam were rooted, although it was rooted in a series of beliefs that pre-dated the Cold War. David Levy argues that the American public accepted an increasingly international role for the United States during and after the Second World War because “an extremely powerful justification for American involvement in the affairs of the world” was fashioned. This justification was based on two fundamental premises: that the United States had “reasonable and peaceful interests that had to be guarded” and that the United States had a moral duty to fulfill “when such basic principles as justice, freedom, and democracy were under attack by unscrupulous men and nations . . . Americans were called by their most cherished ideals not merely to defend those sacred principles, but also to stand . . . for decency, for charity and the protection of the weak.” While these ideas were formed prior to the onset of the Cold War, it is exactly these ideals that came to form the foundation upon which the general Cold War consensus, with its accompanying belief that it was for the United States to lead the free world, was constructed. More specifically, argues Levy, it is exactly these ideals that were repeatedly used by Johnson to justify to the American people the steady move into Vietnam.\(^7^7\)

In the Cold War context, the unscrupulous men and nations were the communists. Senator Jacob Javits (R-NY), a man who supported the war in Vietnam initially but eventually came to oppose it, offers a good example of how a belief in a moral duty fused with Cold War logic. “Like most Americans, I was an ardent supporter of the Vietnam War in the beginning.


The cause was idealistic—preventing a small nation from being overrun by an aggressive neighbor,” he wrote in his autobiography. Recalling a speech he gave in January 1966, Javits stated:

The struggle in Vietnam is worthy of the United States. I believe it is worthy of the cause of freedom . . . the incontrovertible fact is that the confrontation between freedom and totalitarianism in Asia is now in Vietnam. We did not choose this battleground; history chose it for us. It is clear to me . . . that the Vietcong is directed, supplied and controlled by a communist state—North Vietnam—that seeks to expand communist controlled areas, to destroy the chance for freedom, and to humiliate the United States, freedom’s most effective defender in Asia.78

He was not alone among members of Congress who accepted the Cold War ideology, and all the various manifestations of it that produced the justifications Johnson offered the nation in his speeches. He was also not alone in moving from supporting America’s Vietnam policy to dissenting. Senate opposition to the war would steadily mount as it progressed.79

79      The strength of the anti-war movement among the American public also increased. The anti-war movement actually began as a peace movement—as a struggle against nuclear confrontation—in the 1950s but it morphed from “peace advocacy” to “war protest” as a result of Vietnam. Opposition to the war took many forms, ranging from teach-ins and sit-ins, petitions to the White House, marches and protests, burning draft cards, song-writing, etc. Charles Debendetti, Ed., An American Ordeal: The Antiwar Movement of the Vietnam Era (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1990) still provides the most authoritative account of the anti-war movement. See also Melvin Small Antiwarriors: The Vietnam War and the Battle for America’s Hearts and Minds (Wilmington: SR Books, 2002).

Public Opinion Polls also showed a steady decline in support for the war. In August 1965, the Gallup Poll began asking Americans “In view of the developments since we entered the fighting in Vietnam, do you think the United States made a mistake in sending troops to fight in Vietnam?” In August 1965, just after the initial landing of large numbers of ground troops, 61% of respondents believed Johnson had done the right thing, while 24% believed a mistake had been made. 15% had no opinion. In September 1966, 35% of respondents believed America had made a mistake (with 48% saying “no mistake” and 17% expressing no opinion). By the end of 1967, the number of respondents believing America had erred nearly equaled the number believing it had not. 45% of respondents believed that the sending of troops has been a mistake, with 46% believing no mistake had been committed. See Gibbons, The US Government and the Vietnam War, Part IV: July 1965-January 1968, 25.

Public opinion polls also revealed fluctuating approval rating for Johnson’s handing of the war, with a general down-ward trend of support. Johnson’s approval rating in July 1965 was 63% but by February 1966, it was down to 49%. His approval briefly climbed again but by the Fall of 1966 it had fallen to 42%. Throughout 1967, Johnson approval rating hovered between 33% and 43%. These figures include both those who wanted an American withdrawal and negotiations to begin immediately and those who believed the United States should bomb North Vietnam even more aggressively so as to bring the North Vietnamese to the negotiation table in a less than favorable position. The latter category increased at a greater rate than the former. See Gibbons, The US Government and the Vietnam War, Part IV: July 1965-January 1968; Zelman, Senate Dissent and the Vietnam War, 256. See also Fry, Debating Vietnam, 79.
importantly, for many dissenters, their opposition would move from expressing their thoughts privately to vocalizing them publicly.

II.

Walter Zelman’s analysis of the growth of Senate dissent during the Johnson administration traces four groups of public dissenters—i.e. those who voiced their opposition to Johnson’s Vietnam policy in front of Congress, in speeches delivered outside of Congress, or in interviews with members of the press. The first group, a tiny minority, consisted of Morse and Gruening, the first individuals to consistently attack Vietnam policy and to make no effort in minimizing their differences of opinion with the Johnson administration. The second wave of dissent saw early critics with private doubts prior to the escalation of the conflict, such as McGovern, Church, Gore, and Fulbright move their dissent into the public sphere. The third wave also included early critics with private doubts but consisted of those, like Mansfield, who were more reluctant to break completely with Johnson publicly, but who nonetheless began offering negative but temperate assessment of the situation in Vietnam in public. The last group began to emerge in 1967 and grew thereafter. It consisted of Senators who no longer believed that America was succeeding in Vietnam and who were increasingly anxious to find an exit strategy. “The flow of dissent seems to have moved from Senators with some maverick tendencies . . . to Senators with more moderate and more constructive political styles,” writes Zelman. In addition, the flow moved from “liberal to moderate to conservative senators.” Of the first critics—whether they expressed their concern in public or in private—Zelman notes that they were distinct from the rest of the Senate in that they had foreign policy expertise of
some kind; most of them were also members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee during 1965-1966.80

Wayne Morse and Ernest Gruening delivered their first public condemnations of Vietnam policy in front of the Senate in March 1964. “We should never have gone in. We should never have stayed in. We should get out,” said Morse on 4 March. “We cannot win a land war in Asia with American conventional ground forces.” Gruening echoed Morse on 10 March, saying “The war in South Vietnam is not and never has been a United States war. It is and must remain a fight to be fought and won by the people of South Vietnam themselves. Let us get out of Vietnam on as good terms as possible—but let us get out.”81 McGovern recalled that “the Morse-Gruening indictments were considered overly harsh and strident by many members of the Senate, although a number of the Senators privately agreed with what they said.”82 Morse’s remarks on Vietnam fill two hundred pages of the Congressional Record from March to 18 June 1964. Both Morse and Gruening would move on to vote against the Tonkin Gulf Resolution and, in 1965, both began participating in teach-ins and anti-war marches that were organized around the United States. They were the only members of the Senate to do so. “America needs to hear the tramp, tramp, tramp of marching feet, in community after community across the length and breadth of this land, in protests against the administration’s unconstitutional and illegal war,” declared Morse.83

80 Zelman, Senate Dissent and the Vietnam War, 123-130, 345-46. The later critics began to include Republicans, specifically Jacob Javits, Mark Hatfield, Charles Percy, Clifford Case, Thurston Morton, and Edward Brook. Trips to Vietnam figured into their dissent because they produced knowledge that the situation was not going as advertised. See page 265.
81 Congressional Record, 4 March 1964, 4357-59; Congressional Record, 10 March 1964, 4831.
82 McGovern, A Time of War, A Time of Peace, 125.
While Morse and Gruening remained the two most strident public critics of Johnson’s Vietnam policy, they were joined in 1965 by a few other members of the SFRC who began to publicly criticize Johnson’s Vietnam policy—Senators Church, Gore, and Fulbright in particular, plus McGovern (who was not on the SFRC). Very early in the year, McGovern began stating his case that Johnson’s policy was failing. “We are not winning in South Vietnam,” he argued before the Senate: “We are backing a government that is incapable of winning a military struggle or of governing its people.”\textsuperscript{84} By March, with Operation Rolling Thunder underway, McGovern was voicing his concerns on national television. “Even if we could obliterate North Vietnam,” he said during a CBS prime-time special, “Vietnam—The Hawks and the Doves”, “the war would still continue in the South, the guerillas would continue to fight, the political situation would continue to deteriorate. . . . I think there will be loss of life out of all proportion to the stakes involved [with] no guarantee that . . . the situation out there will be any better.”\textsuperscript{85}

While Church had not yet made the leap to speaking his doubts on national television, he nonetheless began expressing them in a series of speeches before Congress, each of which was quoted in national newspapers. Like McGovern, Church’s public criticism was also prompted by the initiation of a sustained bombing campaign against North Vietnam. He believed the bombing to be “self-defeating” because “the specter of Western imperialism is dreaded more

\textsuperscript{84} Congressional Record, 15 January 1965, 784.  
than communism” in newly emerging nations. Church also argued that the United States needed to rethink the premise that “everything which happens abroad is our business” because such thinking had created an “intensely ideological view of the Cold War.” Church’s concern led him to push the SFRC to hold public hearings on the question of Vietnam, an idea he first articulated in late 1964 when he grew concerned that Johnson was planning to escalate American involvement even further. By mid-1965, escalation had become reality.

Joining McGovern and Church in openly criticizing America’s Vietnam policy throughout 1965 were Gore and Fulbright. As with their colleagues, both men also came to disbelieve that, in the words of Gore, “there is a military victory to be won in Vietnam.” By July, with Johnson’s decision to massively increase the number of US combat troops in Vietnam, Gore became increasingly vocal. Standing before the Senate, he argued that the “policy pursued in Vietnam since 1954 had been a succession of mistakes, each of which compounded the adverse consequences of its predecessors.” Increasing militarization of U.S. policy was “not the answer to a problem that is to a large degree political, ideological, cultural, economic, religious, and racial in nature.” Vietnam, stated Gore emphatically, is “a war that we have scant hope of winning except at a cost which far outweighs the fruits of victory.” Fulbright agreed with this last premise, stating: “It is clear to all reasonable Americans that a complete military victory in Vietnam, though theoretically attainable, can in fact be attained only at a cost far exceeded by the requirements of our interest and our honor.” However, Fulbright was ambivalent about just what to do. As he put it:

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86  Cited in David Schmitz, “Congress Must Draw the Line: Senator Frank Church and Opposition to the Vietnam War and the Imperial Presidency,” in Ibid., 128.
88  Congressional Record, 28 July 1965, 18571
I am opposed to an unconditional American withdrawal from South Vietnam because such action would betray our obligation to people we have promised to defend. . . . I am no less opposed to further escalation of the war, because the bombing thus far of North Vietnam has failed to weaken the military capacity of the Vietcong in any visible way; because escalation would invite intervention—or infiltration—on a large scale of great numbers of North Vietnamese troops; because this in turn would probably draw the United States into a bloody and protracted jungle war in which the strategic advantages would be with the other side. 

As a result of this ambivalence, Fulbright’s criticisms remained more muted than did Gore’s, or McGovern and Church’s throughout 1965. By the end of the year, however, he had made an open break with the Johnson administration as a result of Johnson’s decision to intervene in the Dominican Republic.

While Mansfield would never denounce Johnson’s Vietnam policy in public with the same vehemence as Fulbright, or as Morse, Gruening, McGovern, Church and Gore had already done by the end of 1965, he did come to express support for the idea that something other than a military solution/policy was needed. Initially, both Fulbright and Mansfield believed they had a responsibility to their party that required them to express public support of Johnson. Both, as Chapter One indicated, also believed in the executive’s primacy when it came to matters of foreign relations. In addition, both had a certain level of personal friendship with Johnson that restrained them from publicly speaking out against his policies. Lastly, both believed Johnson faced a complicated situation in Vietnam. Mansfield’s stock reply to letters he received from his constituents throughout 1965 regarding the Johnson administrations stance on Vietnam was: “It is a difficult war, it is a long way from the United States, and it will cost much in the way in blood and treasure. Please rest assured no one is more concerned about this conflict than is the President of the United States, and I am in constant and close touch with him on developments

89 Speech before Congress, 15 June 1965, as found in RG 46: Records of the United States Senate—Committee on Foreign Relations—Records of the Chairman, William Fulbright, Speeches and Statements, 1965-1965, Box 1.
90 See pages 31-32
as they occur there.”91 These reasons for maintaining a certain level of public silence when it came to Vietnam eventually lost meaning, however, especially for Fulbright.

In the wake of the Dominican intervention, undertaken as it was without any discussions with Congress and from which Fulbright drew links to Vietnam, Fulbright came to feel that expressing his concerns in private was futile. He opted to publicly break with Johnson over the U.S. intervention in the Dominican Republic because he could no longer condone “highly controversial” decisions being made without first debating the issues and options. Fulbright’s belief in the President’s need to control foreign policy was rapidly waning. Mansfield, for his part, retained his desire to work from within the administration’s fold far longer than did Fulbright. Even when Nixon came to power, he told Congress:

> It is my practice to give as much support as I can on matters of foreign policy to an incumbent president . . . a President’s responsibilities are very heavy in these matters and he carries them on behalf of the entire nation. I have tried, therefore, to present my personal views to the President in private and in public to give him the benefit of any doubts which I may have on a particular course of policy. That has been my practice ever since I became the Majority Leader of the Senate.

This did not mean, however, that Mansfield did not speak his views in public. He concluded his remarks by stating that “even as the President has his responsibilities, I have mine as a Senator from Montana and of the United States. When it is incumbent on me, in my judgment, to express my views on an issue in public, I must do so.”92

Despite the fact that the majority of dissenting views, save for Morse and Gruening, tended to be expressed in private throughout 1964, Johnson was concerned enough about Congressional viewpoints on Vietnam that he had the State Department conduct a survey of

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92 Congressional Record, 9 December 1969, 16028-30; See also Comments on S.J. Res. 166 Relating to a Foreign Policy Appraisal—Vietnam and Beyond, Mansfield Papers, Series XXI: Speeches and Reports, Box 45. See also Oberdorfer, Senator Mansfield and Woods, Fulbright, for a discussion of Mansfield’s and Fulbright’s respective views on public versus private dissent.
Congressional opinion in January 1965. The survey concluded that “the great majority of
Congressmen are neither satisfied nor dissatisfied; their thoughts are fragmented and they are
genuinely perplexed.” Few members of the House seemed willing to take any sort of precise
stand, but “on the Senate side, there are more who will take individual stands and among those,
more who are moving gradually, although cautiously, in the direction of negotiation—
neutralization—UN responsibility—political settlement.” The report further concluded that
Congressional opinions were mirrored in the public, and that there were less people solidly
behind Johnson’s actions and “more whose opinions are frustrated and fragmented.” The report
was careful to note, however, that while many were frustrated, they were “not against us and
will not be so for the time being; in a crunch, they would back us up rather strongly.” Vice
President Hubert Humphrey was not so sure of this. He wrote to Johnson in February of 1965 to
say that while he would support Johnson, he believed that Vietnam would “profoundly affect the
success” of his administration. If the U.S. found itself deeply embroiled, predicted Humphrey,
“political opposition will steadily mount.”

While the State Department concluded that Johnson did not have to worry about a large
degree of public opposition, either from the American people or the Congress, the survey, along
side Humphrey’s prediction, made it clear that one should not exaggerate the consensus in
support of Johnson’s escalation of the war throughout 1965. Indeed, several members of the
Senate were calling for a debate on Vietnam in early 1965, so as to fully consider all the options
available to the United States at that point. A discussion of sorts took place on and off between

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93 The alternative suggested by the Senate and listed here will be discussed in due course. See Ch.4, 149-160.

Humphrey further stated that “American wars have to be politically understandable to the American public. There
has to be a cogent, convincing case if we are to enjoy sustained public support. In World Wars I and II we had this.
In Korea we were moving under United Nations auspices to defend South Korea against a dramatic, across the
border, conventional aggression...Today we lack the very advantages we had in Korea.”
17 February (after Pleiku) and 6 March (when the Marines landed at Danang.) Church began it by saying that the U.S. had “over-involved [itself] in ex-colonial regions as a result of [its] intensely ideological view of the Cold War. . . .We fancy ourselves as guardians of the free world, though most of it is not free and never has been.” Johnson’s Senate supporters overpowered the discussion of Vietnam, however. Gale McGee (D-WY) argued that “history has thrust upon the people of America the frightening but nonetheless indispensable task of redrawing the lines of stability about the power spheres of the globe.” Everett Dirksen (R-IL) backed him up by arguing: “If we do not man the ramparts of freedom on our outer defense line from Korea to South Vietnam, we shall inevitably be facing the enemy on the inner line from Alaska to Hawaii.” Thomas Dodd (D-CT) spoke up to say that calls for negotiations in Vietnam suggested a return to “isolationism”, which was the equivalent of appeasement.96

Johnson worked very hard to make sure that a Vietnam debate did not take place in Congress during 1965. Around the time that Church suggested that the U.S. was over-involving itself, the Johnson administration began an active campaign to obtain Congressional support for expanding America’s role in Vietnam. Johnson worked closely with Republicans to drum up statements of support by organizing speechmaking campaigns in both the Senate and the House so as to show that even the opposition party supported him. Johnson and key members of his administration also worked on a more personal level. Fredrik Logevall argues that Johnson succeeded in preventing debate, and “escalated the Vietnam War with stealth,” by utilizing “his own unmatched skills at using flattery, needling, and threats to bend others to his will.” Also key were the efforts of Johnson’s “three principal foreign policy lieutenants, Bundy, [Dean Rusk], and Secretary of Defense McNamara, who themselves possessed formidable talents of persuasion.” In particular, Rusk took Fulbright aside, since he “had performed so

96 Congressional Record, 17 February through 6 March 1965.
brilliantly in acting as the administration’s point man” during the Gulf of Tonkin crisis, and got him to agree that this was not the time to initiate a public debate over Vietnam. The end result was that escalation went forward through 1965 with very little public dissent -- save that offered by Morse, Gruening, McGovern, Church and Gore.

This did not, however, signify widespread consent. McNamara noted that while Congressional support for the troop increase announced in July was broad, it was also “thin.” When in December 1965 Johnson was considering a further troop increase, he broached the idea of seeking a second resolution from Congress, one that would reaffirm its support of U.S. policy in Southeast Asia. By early 1966, though, the “thinness” McNamara had previously noted had become enough of a concern that Johnson abandoned the idea of a second resolution. He did not doubt that the majority of Congress would vote to pass a resolution of further support, but Johnson was concerned that enough vocal opposition towards such a resolution would be expressed and a major debate on the war might ensue – a major debate that the press would bring to the American public. The vocal critics were still a minority but because they included a number of the Senate’s widely recognized experts on foreign policy—members of the Foreign Relations Committee—their numbers were sufficient to “play a major role in the national debate on Vietnam policy.” Johnson’s fears were justified, and the public debate he hoped to minimize, or avoid altogether, ensued as a result of the SFRC decision to hold televised public hearings on Vietnam in February 1966.

97 Fredrik Logevall, Choosing War: The Lost Chance for Peace and the Escalation of War in Vietnam (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 303-307. See also Joseph Fry, Debating Vietnam: Fulbright, Stennis, and their Senate Hearings (Lanham, Rowman and Littlefield, Inc., 2006), 25. Fry adds that while meeting with various Senators, Johnson’s foreign policy lieutenants “consistently misled Fulbright and the SFRC by promising prior consultation that never materialized on key decisions such as sustained bombing or the commitment of ground troops.”

In March 1965, Fulbright had told the press that he did not think that “the present conditions are so critical in Vietnam—that a public debate by my committee or the Congress would serve any good purpose.” Slightly less than a year later, however, Fulbright had changed his mind. By that point, he had given up hope of privately influencing Johnson, having already chosen to make a public break with him in denouncing the Dominican intervention. Also, by that point, there were over one-hundred-eighty thousand U.S. troops serving in Vietnam, and American involvement showed no signs of slowing down. Senator John Stennis (D-MS) of the Senate Armed Services Committee was forecasting that for the United States to “win” the war, up to six hundred thousand combat troops might be needed. Mansfield’s 1965 prediction of an open-ended conflict appeared to be coming true. Fulbright, and the majority of the SFRC, did not wish to see an even greater expansion of the war in Vietnam. They did not believe America should seek a military victory; instead, the way out was through achieving a negotiated settlement. Thus, public hearings were useful as a means to trigger a debate over the objectives and tactics of American effort in Vietnam.

The idea to hold public hearings had first surfaced in the fall of 1964 with Senator Church, who, worried that the Johnson administration was planning to continue to escalate America’s involvement in Vietnam, “sought to make U.S policy the focus of a national debate.” By May 1965, SFRC Chief of Staff Carl Marcy also began suggesting to Fulbright that the Committee hold public hearings. In cataloguing the mail the Committee was receiving regarding Vietnam, Marcy had noted that eighty percent of the letters expressed the view that

100 Fry, *Debating Vietnam*, 2.
the United States should find a way to peacefully disengage from Vietnam by seeking a negotiated settlement. The majority of those writing thus expressed some form of concern over developments in Southeast Asia. Given this, and given that Marcy believed the legal justifications the State Department put forth for the bombing of North Vietnam were “the sloppiest piece of work” he had ever seen—“it sounded to me like it was put together by a high-school student” he wrote Wayne Morse—Marcy thought the SFRC should address the situation in Vietnam, and it should do so publicly, in light of the fact that the Committee had received over five hundred letters on the subject of Vietnam from the American people.  

Fulbright failed to act on Marcy’s suggestion at this time, still believing what he had told the press a couple months earlier.

During the summer months of 1965, however, as the SFRC held executive hearings on the situation in the Dominican Republic, and as Johnson prepared for a large-scale deployment of American combat forces in Southeast Asia, the idea for public hearings began to gain ground, with Senator Church returning to his notion from the previous year. Church, as indicated in Chapter One, had come to question the fact that the information the SFRC received came from “the same source that is defending official policy,” and he was worried that the Committee’s influence was “dwindling away,” since it had not been consulted regarding the decision to send the Marines to the Dominican Republic earlier in the spring, just as it had not been a part of the decision-making process with respect to escalation in Vietnam. The solution, Church believed, was for the Committee to hold public hearings and to invite a cross-spectrum of individuals who could offer “some balanced judgment as to the correctness of the course” the United States was pursuing in Vietnam. Church believed that the SFRC could and should “play a part in the

102 Carl Marcy Files, RG 46: Records of the United States Senate—Committee on Foreign Relations, Box 7 (1965), Folder 2.
opening of a dialogue for the future.”103 By the fall of 1965, Fulbright was more in agreement, particularly as SFRC staffers began arguing that holding public hearing on Vietnam was “not only appropriate” but could in fact “be regarded as a Committee responsibility.”104

Senator Gruening had been arguing along these lines for some time. That belief continued to grow alongside Gruening’s opposition to America’s Vietnam policy. During consideration of the Tonkin Gulf Resolution, Gruening spoke of the “right and duty” Congressmen had to express their views on matters of foreign relations, especially “if those views embody doubt or dissent.”105 The Cold War might have served to increase presidential authority in manners of foreign policy, believed Gruening, but that did not mean that Congress had no role to play. In fact, it had a constitutionally mandated role to advise the President. Fulbright and others who had once conceded that the unparalleled dangers of the Cold War required giving primacy of power to the President were coming to agree that perhaps Congress had ceded too much of its foreign policy related powers—especially the power to declare war. Indeed, once the hearings were approved, the New York Times reported the “genesis” of the public hearings could be found in “a growing feeling among many Senators . . . that while President Johnson wants their ‘consent’ on any decisions he may decide to make, he does not want their ‘advice.’”106

This is certainly the impression given by the Johnson administration, though it disputed the idea that Congress had not been given opportunities to participate in the policy-making process. When Rusk appeared before the SFRC on 28 January 1966 to discuss Johnson’s

103 Executive Sessions of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, 1965, 949-952. See Chapter One for a more detail discussion of the Dominican Intervention, the genesis of the idea for public hearings, and Fulbright’s 15 September remarks before the Senate.
105 Congressional Record, 6 August 1964, 18413-14.
supplemental request for appropriations for Vietnam, members of the Committee bombarded the Secretary of State with questions about Vietnam: What was the exact nature of America’s commitment to South Vietnam? What objectives were being sought via the bombing campaign and the deployment of large-scale U.S. forces? Was the Tonkin Resolution being used as a de facto declaration of war? Was the conflict in Vietnam diverting U.S. attention from the more crucial issue of lessening the threat of world war? Were Johnson’s policies indicative of general U.S. policies towards revolution in developing countries? What exactly was U.S. policy towards such revolutions? Had Johnson decided to reverse the long-standing military axiom that the U.S. should avoid getting involved in a land war in Asia? How long could the U.S. continue serving as the sole defender of freedom in the world? Rusk simply repeated the same justifications for escalation that had been used throughout the whole process. Moreover, he argued that Congress had been given many chances to advise the President and make known any concerns it had. Congress had, after all, ratified the South East Asian Treaty back in 1954. It had overwhelmingly passed the Golf of Tonkin resolution in 1964, granting the administration broad authority regarding Vietnam.107 Rusk’s refusal to really answer any of the Committee’s questions fueled the concern that the Johnson administration did not really care to listen to its concerns, or to consider the suggestions being put forth by members of the Committee, most specifically, the push towards seeking a negotiated settlement.

The last straw seemed to come when, three days after Rusk’s brisk cross-examination, Johnson announced he was ending the bombing pause he had called at the end of 1965. Prior to

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107 Supplemental Foreign Assistance Fiscal year 1966 – Vietnam, Hearings before the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, 89th Congress, 2nd Session, 1966. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1966) [Hereafter The Vietnam Hearings], 1-69. Rusk’s testimony and cross-examination on 28 January has been published as part of the Vietnam hearings, as it should be since it energetically launched the hearings; but, while Rusk was questioned in open session, as opposed to executive session, his appearance was not televised. The televised portion of the Vietnam hearings did not begin until 4 February.
making this announcement, Johnson had convened a meeting with the Congressional leadership to “discuss” the resumption of the bombing campaign, but as historian Joseph Fry has written, “There, in an all-too familiar scene, the charade of ostensible consultation unfolded. Mansfield and Fulbright argued against renewed bombing; well-chosen hawks . . . agreed with Johnson, and the war continued unabated.”108 A fed-up Fulbright agreed on 3 February to have the SFRC vote on a motion calling for broad-ranging public hearings which would examine U.S. policy in Vietnam. The motion had been put forth by Wayne Morse who, during the cross-examination of Rusk on 28 January had stated that because he disagreed “with every major premise” contained in Rusk’s testimony, he refused to pose any questions until “prolonged hearings in depth on the Vietnam crisis” were held.109 The motion passed and the hearings, which journalist David Halberstam subsequently described as a “constitutional confrontation of the first order,” commenced the very next day. Because Fulbright believed the purpose of the planned hearings would be to inform not just the Senate, but the larger American public about the implications of the war in Vietnam, Marcy was tasked with ensuring the widest possible media coverage, which meant the presence of network television cameras.110

Fulbright described the hearings as an “attempt to bring reason and restraint to the emotionally charged atmosphere in which the Vietnamese War is now being discussed.” “I am not ready to say at the moment that I am positive our policies in Vietnam have been wrong,” he declared, “but I am anxious to gather enlightenment about just what we are about and what our ultimate objective is.” Fulbright further envisioned the hearings as a vehicle “to inform the American people...as fully as possible about the implications of the war in Vietnam,” the future course of which “affect[s] the lives and fortunes of every citizen of this nation.” Others, such as

109 The Vietnam Hearings, 10; Executive Sessions of the Foreign Relations Committee, 1966, Fry, Debating Vietnam, 32.
Gore, framed their understanding of the hearings’ purpose in less diplomatic terms; for him, the hearings represented the “chance to go over the head of the President of the United States to the American people, and reach him by way of the people.” If individuals Senators’ views on Vietnam had made little impact on stopping the Johnson administration from Americanizing the war in the first place, perhaps a national debate would slow the war’s escalation and push Johnson in the direction of seeking a negotiated settlement for Vietnam.

The line-up of experts to testify at the hearings was as follows: David Bell, the Administrator of AID, appeared on 4 February; General (retired) James Gavin, head of the Army’s Division of Planning during the 1954 consideration of Dien Bien Phu, and former Ambassador to France, appeared 8 February; George Kennan, author of the containment doctrine, appeared 19 February; General Maxwell Taylor, former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, former Ambassador to South Vietnam, and Johnson’s current special consultant on Vietnam, appeared 17 February; and Secretary of State Dean Rusk, appeared on 18 February. Bell had already been scheduled to come and discuss America’s aid program to Vietnam and to complete the administration’s presentation on the supplemental foreign aid request. Gavin and Kennan were specifically invited to testify because they disagreed with Johnson’s escalation of the war. Taylor and Rusk appeared in support of Johnson’s Vietnam policy. By providing witness with differing views of the conflict, the Committee hoped to broaden the thinking about America’s policy. “We are engaged in historic debate in this country,” said Morse during the hearings themselves. “There are honest differences of opinion.”

Gavin, “one of the first Vietnam dissenters with unassailable military credentials,” testified that the United States did not have “vital security interests” that required the

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111 Zelman, Senate Dissent and the Vietnam War, 224; The Vietnam Hearings, 44, 410, 431.
112 The Vietnam Hearings, 454.
deployment of troops. This was the case in 1954, and it remained the case in 1966. He also spoke out in disagreement with the domino theory, which he characterized as “very short-sighted” and “intellectually sterile…a point of view that causes one to fundamentally take counsel from fears.” “We are too powerful a nation,” he stated, “to be in involved in such false philosophy of survival.” What was more, world opinion was turning against the United States. “I travel abroad a great deal,” said Gavin. “I get awfully tired of having people hand me leaflets showing bombing casualties and women and children hurt by American bombs and so on.”

Ultimately, Gavin concluded, the United States had become trapped in an open-ended commitment wherein America had lost control of events; all of Johnson’s actions were in response to North Vietnamese-Vietcong initiatives. Because of this, it would be unwise to escalate even further. “We must do the best we can with the forces we have in Vietnam now,” Gavin argued, “keeping in mind the true meaning of global security in world affairs today. Economics, science and technology, and world opinion will, in the long-run, serve our strategic interests well.” What the U.S. needed to do was pause to reassess the situation in Vietnam, halt its bombing campaign, and pursue a negotiated settlement.113

Kennan, who appeared after Gavin, offered a similar view of the situation in Vietnam. He too questioned the arguments behind U.S. involvement, discounting the domino theory and the idea that U.S. credibility was at stake. Were the U.S. not already involved in Vietnam, he would “know of no reason why we should wish to be so involved. Even a situation in which South Vietnam was controlled exclusively by the Vietcong would not,” in his opinion, “present dangers enough to justify our direct military intervention.” Therefore, America’s military involvement was “unfortunate,” and the Johnson administration should aim “to liquidate this involvement just as soon as can be done.” This was all the more important because America’s

113 Fry, Debating Vietnam, 35; The Vietnam Hearings, 231, 261, 266, 286, 289-90, 309.
motives “are widely misinterpreted. The spectacle of Americans inflicting grievous injury on
the lives of a poor and helpless people,” said Kennan, “particularly a people of different race
and color, no matter how warranted by military necessity or by the excesses of the adversary,
produces reactions among millions of people throughout the world profoundly detrimental to
the image we would like them to hold of this country.” While the Vietcong are a “band of
ruthless fanatics, many of them misled, no doubt, by the propaganda that has been drummed
into them,” and while “their claim to represent the people in South Vietnam is unfounded . . .
our country should not be asked, and should not ask of itself, to shoulder the main burden of
determining the political realities in any other country, particularly not one remote from our
shores, from our culture, and from the experiences of our people.” To conclude, Kennan quoted
John Quincy Adams, who, in 1821, stated America

    goes not abroad in search of monsters to destroy. She is the well wisher to the
freedom and independence of all. She is the champion and vindicator only of
her own. . . .She well knows that by once enlisting under banners other than
her own, were they even the banners of foreign independence, she would
involve herself beyond the power of extrication, in all wars of interest and
intrigue, of individual avarice, envy and ambition, which assume the colors
and usurp the standards of freedom. The fundamental maxim of her policy
would insensibly change from liberty to force. . . .She might become the
dictatress of the world.

“I don’t know exactly what John Quincy Adams had in mind when he spoke those words,” said
Kennan, “but I think that without knowing it, he spoke very directly and very pertinently to us
here today.”¹¹⁴ Because America’s involvement in Vietnam was the logical extension of the
policy of containment that Kennan was instrumental in formulating, his testimony was
particularly powerful, especially as it reached the American public at large.

Both CBS and NBC televised the hearings, pre-empting their regular day-time
programming to offer full-day coverage each day. CBS sacrificed approximately $175,000 in

¹¹⁴ *The Vietnam Hearings*, 331-332, 335-336.
lost advertising revenue a day as a result. Frank Stanton, the president of CBS, had actually only intended to broadcast one half-hour of testimony per day, but Fred Friendly, who was in charge of CBS’ News division, chose to broadcast the entirety of Gavin’s testimony. He intended to do the same for each of the remaining witnesses, but Stanton, a close friend of Johnson, appointed a director of all broadcasting activities with power over the news division. The new director, John Schneider, refused to telecast the third day of hearings, Kennan’s testimony, on the grounds that “housewives weren’t much interested in Vietnam.” So incensed was Friendly that he publicly resigned over what he saw as CBS’ failure to cover “one of the crucial debates of our time.” NBC, however, carried full live coverage of Kennan’s appearance (NBC’s housewives were clearly interested, said Friendly in his letter of resignation) and continued to carry full coverage of the remainder of the hearings. Not surprisingly, given the relationship between Stanton and Johnson, CBS returned to offer full coverage of the last two days of the hearings—Taylor and Rusk’s appearances in support of Johnson’s Vietnam policy.

Having the hearings televised certainly facilitated Fulbright’s goal of informing the American public about America’s policy in Vietnam. During Taylor’s testimony, Gore spoke of a conversation he had had with one of the newsmen covering the hearings: “He said that during the recess he had checked with his wife by telephone . . . he said she reported that, ‘you have an unclean house but an informed wife.’” Gore also said that he had checked into the ratings for

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115 Fry, Debating Vietnam, 33-34
116 Fry, Debating Vietnam, 45. Speaking on behalf of the Johnson administration’s Vietnam policy, Taylor and Rusk attempted to rebut the testimony offered by Gavin and Kennan by arguing once again, the necessity of America’s intervention in the first place. For instance, in a comment indicative of the type of Cold War logic fueling American intervention, Rusk testified that while the introduction of American troops appeared unpalatable to some, America must put the situation in Vietnam “in perspective. We must recognize that what we are seeking to achieve in Vietnam is part of a process that has continued for a long time—a process of preventing the expansion and extension of Communist domination by the use of force against the weaker nations on the perimeter of Communist power…the underlying crisis of this postwar periods turns about a major struggle over the very nature of the political structure of the world.” The Vietnam Hearings, 564.
Kennan’s testimony: “I believe the estimate was 22 million.” Fulbright’s office also received many letters thanking him for holding public hearings. “Just wanted to take this opportunity to tell you I enjoyed all of the open Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearings very much,” said one of his constituents in a typical letter. The letter concluded: “I sat glued to my chair during all of the open hearings and kept my television on the whole time. I feel I am much, much more informed now that was previously the case. I hope you have these open hearings often in the future.”

Televising the hearings also served to fuel the debate on Vietnam. After just the first day of hearings, Jack Gould of the *New York Times* suggested that television “may turn out to be the catalyst that brought about a coast-to-coast debate that now cannot be avoided by the Administration leaders.” When looking back, several individuals felt this to be the case. Senator Claiborne Pell (D-RI) believed the hearings made disagreement respectable: “If such a group of stuffed shirts such as the Senate Foreign Relations Committee could question the war, it gave other people the courage to question it.” Senator Church also believed that, as a result of the hearings, “the general resistance to the war and the debate itself over the war began to spread . . . if we hadn’t gone out from behind closed doors, this never would have happened.”

Journalist David Halberstam also later wrote that the hearings “ended more than a generation of assumed executive branch omniscience in foreign policy.” The press, which had “accepted, with

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117 The Vietnam Hearings, 554.
118 Ruth Morris (West Memphis, Arkansas) to Fulbright, 19 February 1966, JWF Papers, Series 48, Subseries 18: Vietnam Correspondence, Box 49, Folder 2—1966-M. Fulbright, or course, also received letters with unfavorable reactions. Many of these suggested that by airing disagreements over US policy, the hearings were aiding the communist cause. See for example, Bernard Bailye (Jonesboro, Arkansas) to Fulbright, 8 February 1966, Box 47, Folder 2—1966-B.
119 New York Times, 5 February 1966,
very little questioning and debate, the President’s case of military intervention in Vietnam” no longer did so.120

The Vietnam hearings, then, represent an escalation of dissent. On one hand, they obviously helped make the American public aware that a group within Congress disagreed with the course being pursued by the President. In doing so, they provided fuel to the growing anti-war movement among the American people. On the other hand, even though some Senators had been expressing their doubts and concerns in public prior to February 1966, the hearings provided a focused yet amplified medium for doing so. It is one thing to voice one’s thoughts in a speech, but an active dialogue between many people makes a more nuanced examination and communication of ideas possible. Senators and witnesses debated large and complex issues: the derivation and nature of the commitment to Vietnam; the nature of America’s objectives; and the appropriateness and the morality of U.S. tactics. Even though the troops had already been committed and wide-scale debate really ought to have taken place beforehand, consideration of these issues proved to be important for charting the future of America’s course in Vietnam.

The Vietnam hearings thus provide a vivid a focal point in the debate over Vietnam. They do not, however, encompass the entirety of that debate. The hearings presented a culmination of some of the SFRC members’ thinking, but they also served as a bridge for further development of the critique of the Johnson administration’s policies for Vietnam. The next chapter, therefore, continues the examination of the Vietnam debate.

Chapter Four  
Vietnam Part II:  
“The Most Troublesome Question Before Our Country”

The foreign aid program might have been viewed, beginning in 1965, as “one of the most vexing problems of America’s foreign policy,” but by early 1968 Fulbright had come to characterize the situation in Vietnam as “the most troublesome” problem.\(^1\) The Americanization of the conflict, he believed, signified “a grossly miscarried effort to apply traditional American values,” like “self-determination,” abroad.\(^2\) But Fulbright did not simply describe Vietnam as a problem of American foreign policy; instead, he spoke of Vietnam as “the most troublesome question before our country.” Historian David Levy has written that “the debate over American participation in the Vietnam War was one of those times when the most basic faiths, the most dreadful fears, and the most profound hopes of the nation were spoken, considered, and judged.”\(^3\) Because the Cold War consensus was itself built upon certain faiths, fears, and hopes, such as the belief in American exceptionalism and the American mission to spread democracy and defend the free world, the Vietnam debate served as the foundation for much of the rift in that consensus.\(^4\) The debate thus featured more than just opposing viewpoints on America’s foreign policy; it also reflected ideas and concerns about America itself.

The previous chapter examined the path from private to public dissent, focusing in particular on the Vietnam Hearings of 1966. The SFRC held those hearings not just in order to examine the fallacies of Johnson’s Vietnam policy, but also to highlight alternatives to further

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4 See the introduction’s discussion of John Fousek’s concept of American Nationalist Globalism for a more detailed description of the Cold War consensus.
escalation. The hearings thus contained expressions of both the concerns members of the SFRC had with Johnson’s Vietnam strategy as well as their vision of what should be done with Vietnam, though the content and articulation of these concerns and ideas continued to evolve and amplify after the hearings. Beginning with an examination of the alternatives to further escalation offered by SFRC members, this chapter continues to explore the debate over Vietnam. The dissenters argued against further escalation—indeed, they had argued against escalation in the first place—because Johnson’s justifications for Americanizing the war increasingly failed to hold currency, and because they had a number of significant concerns about the path Johnson was following. The impact of Senate dissent on the direction of America’s Vietnam policy is then discussed. Anti-war senators remained in the minority, but by contributing to the larger anti-war movement within the American public, they helped to shape the discourse surrounding what constituted an appropriate exit strategy from the war.

I.

During the 1990s when the executive sessions of the SFRC were being declassified and organized into published volumes, Senator Claiborne Pell recalled that “despite their uneasiness, members of the Foreign Relations Committee were hardly of one mind over what course the United States should follow.” A minority of the committee, represented by Frank Lausche (D-OH), actually wanted to see “a more vigorous, less restrained military effort to destroy the enemy.” Of those critical of seeking a military solution, “a vociferous minority of one, Wayne Morse . . . would settle for nothing less than complete withdrawal.” But “perhaps the largest number of the members, led by [Fulbright], held out hope that some negotiated settlement could be reached, and took every opportunity to press administration witnesses to consider that
possibility.”

Given that the Johnson administration also claimed to be seeking a negotiated settlement, the major difference between it and dissenting Senators was the question of how best to arrive at negotiations. There was also a difference of opinion as to what constituted an acceptable outcome of a negotiated settlement. For the administration, and for the “hawks” in Congress, increased bombing and troop deployments represented the best path towards negotiations so that the United States would be in a position of strength to achieve the goal of “an independent South Vietnam—securely guaranteed and able to shape its own relationships to all others—free from outside interference.” For the Fulbright majority, halting the bombing campaign and curtailing further escalation on the ground represented the surest path to opening negotiations. There was also a strong desire to get the United Nations involved, or at least work through or with other members of the international community, so as to open negotiations—and the possibility of neutralizing Vietnam, if not all of Southeast Asia, was considered an acceptable end result, even if that meant allowing a coalition government that included communists.

Advocating negotiation over escalation was by no means an easy task. Those arguing for a political solution found themselves voting for the appropriations that funded the very war they sought to bring to a conclusion. Most of the SFRC felt compelled to support the soldiers already in Vietnam, even though they believed American troops should not have been sent there in the first place. As Gore put it:

As one who has had serious reservations about the wisdom and morality of our position in Vietnam, I have nevertheless strongly supported whatever votes or measures were necessary to supply the men, the United States Servicemen, soldiers who were there, not of their own choice but by order of their

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5 Executive Sessions of the Foreign Relations Committee, 1966, V-VI.
6 Johnson’s 7 April 1965 Speech at Johns Hopkins, Public Papers of the Presidents, Lyndon B. Johnson, 1965, 394-398
government. I have felt a deep obligation to provide . . . [them] with the materials . . . to execute their missions with the least danger to their own lives.7

The passage of appropriations bills undermined the position of dissenters by creating the appearance that they were not resolute in their dissent, that when it came down to it, they were not willing to back up their words with their votes. While dissenters tried to draw a distinction between supporting troops and affirming the policy that had sent them there in the first place, it was the vote tallies that mattered to the White House rather than the expressions that accompanied them. Indeed, during the Vietnam Hearings, Fulbright specifically asked Rusk whether the Johnson administration would publicly interpret a vote in favor of the supplemental appropriations request as an endorsement of its policies. Rusk would not give him a direct answer.8 Morse, who realized that votes counted and words did not, eventually made the tough decision to begin to vote against defense appropriations. “I shall not sit in the Senate and vote one single dollar to continue killing American boys in Southeast Asia,” he said. Gruening followed suit, but the two were a tiny minority.9

Complicating the situation even further was a growing belief that “a rapid solution to the conflict in Vietnam [wa]s not in immediate prospect. This would appear to be the case whether military victory is pursued or negotiations do, in fact, materialize.”10 Such was the assessment of a Congressional delegation, led by Mansfield and George Aiken (R-VT), that had

9 Drukman, Wayne Morse, 426; Gruening, Vietnam Folly, 300; Zelman, Senate Dissent and the Vietnam War, 183-85.
10 “Vietnam: The Substance and the Shadow,” 6 January 1966, Mansfield Papers, Series XXI: Speeches and Reports, Box 65. The report further stated that “the large scale introduction of U.S. forces and their entry into combat has blunted but not turned back the drive of the Vietcong…it is doubtful that…the constricted position now held in Vietnam by the Saigon government can continue to be held.” On the question of negotiations, “even though other nations may be willing to play third party role in bringing” them about, “any prospects for effective negotiations at this time (and they are slim) are likely to be dependent on the initiative and efforts of the combatants.”
traveled through Southeast Asia in December 1965. Despite feeling trapped into voting for funds to support the soldiers in Vietnam, and despite the generally gloomy prognosis for the immediate future, anti-war Senators tried very hard to influence the debate over Vietnam in the direction of negotiations. This was, in fact, one of the goals of the Vietnam Hearings. By inviting two highly respected individuals, Gavin and Kennan, who supported halting the bombing and favored a political solution over a wider military action, Fulbright hoped to demonstrate to the American public that there were alternatives to the course of increasing escalation. Indeed, the decision to hold the public hearings in the first place was prompted by Johnson’s unilateral decision to resume the bombing campaign after having called a halt towards the end of 1965.

Johnson had agreed to a truce over the holidays in December 1965; it was to last through the lunar new year. Upon announcing that the U.S. was halting its bombing campaign, Johnson also called on the North to enter into negotiations. George Ball told the Committee that he “didn’t want to make too much of this, of the point of the truce, other than to indicate that this simply marked a beginning of a process which for our own purposes the President decided was a useful one to pursue.” The Soviets had indicated that they might be able to help bring about negotiations, so it seemed to Johnson, said Ball, that

if we could give this a fair trial, we might equip the Soviet Union to resist the demands for greater involvement on its part . . . so there were considerations, plus the fact that we were becoming a little isolated in the opinion of friendly nations of the world. . . .If we continued to disregard that, there was a growing concern on the part of these countries that we were the ones who were foreclosing the possibility of a peaceful settlement.11

Whatever the reasoning behind the move, Johnson’s chief opponents on the SFRC were thrilled. Arthur Goldberg, America’s ambassador to the UN, had talked to the Committee about the

peace initiative and he reported back that Fulbright was “highly approving,” Mansfield and Aiken were “enthusiastic . . . [but] anxious that sufficient time be allowed for the peace moves to germinate and concerned and troubled about any escalation on the Vietnam War.” Church and McGovern were “similarly highly approving . . . and largely sharing Senators Mansfield and Aiken’s views.”

North Vietnam, however, rebuffed Johnson’s calls for negotiations, calling on the VC, as Rusk reported to the SFRC, to deliver “deadly blows at the United States aggressors.” When the truce expired on 26 January, the U.S. resumed bombing VC positions in the South and on 31 January, Johnson ordered a renewal of air strikes against North Vietnam citing its failure to accept American peace efforts. In response to Johnson’s 27 January announcement that the U.S. would resume bombing in Vietnam, Fulbright stated that he was opposed to any bombing “for the foreseeable future.” Hanoi had made it clear that it would not negotiate so long as the U.S. was attacking North Vietnam and being aggressive in South Vietnam. While the North had not responded to the bombing pause, Fulbright wanted to give it more time in order to show U.S. commitment to the idea of talking. Mansfield supported this position, even taking it a step further by suggesting there be “an indefinite suspension.” Aiken, the senior Republican on the Committee, agreed with Fulbright and Mansfield. Johnson received a letter signed by fifteen Democratic Senators stating their opposition to bombing in general. It read:

As members of the Senate, we take this occasion to express our general agreement with the recent statements of the Majority Leader, Mr. Mansfield, the senior member of the Republic party, Mr. Aiken, and the Chairman of the Committee on Foreign Relations, Mr. Fulbright, which relate to whether the national interests of the United States would be reserved by the renewal of the bombing at this time.

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Johnson responded to the letter by saying: “I continue to be guided in these matters by the resolution of the Congress approved on August 10, 1964—Public Law 88-408 [The Tonkin Gulf Resolution].”

Throughout 1965 Fulbright and Mansfield believed Johnson shared their desire to pursue a negotiated settlement. The renewed bombing campaign suggested that this faith might be misplaced, even though Johnson’s 31 January announcement on the resumption of the bombing of North Vietnam stated that he would also seek consideration of the situation in Vietnam by the United Nations. The decision to hold public hearings on the question of Vietnam was in part made because Johnson appeared more committed to a military solution than he was to a political one. Shortly after the hearings, Fulbright offered his own proposal for ending the conflict. He suggested it be resolved by working out an agreement with China for the neutralization of all Southeast Asia. He even commissioned a study, to be undertaken by the Center for International Studies at Princeton, as to the feasibility of a policy of neutralization in Southeast Asia. Mansfield had suggested neutralization to Johnson as far back as late 1963 but Johnson did not agree with this position. At that time, neither had Fulbright. At the behest of Johnson, he spoke out in the Senate against the idea. By 1966, however, much had changed—chiefly, the Americanization of the war. “On the theory that the maintenance of Western military forces in the territory of a sovereign state in Asia may turn out to be counterproductive, and that confrontations between the great powers are more likely to be avoided if their forces

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14 The New York Times reported on 1 February that “Mr. Johnson traveled a familiar path. He gave both extremes in the debate half of what they wanted: limited bombing for the hawks and a gesture toward the United Nations for the doves.”
are not in immediate proximity to each other,” he wrote Professor Klaus Knorr in commissioning the study, “the concept of neutralization should be explored.”

Stopping the escalation of the war and getting to the table was the primary wish of the anti-war dissenters. To that end, several Senators believed that the NLF and the Vietcong needed to be included if negotiations were to have any chance of getting started, let alone actually producing a settlement. Robert Kennedy (D-NY) voiced this suggestion just after the Vietnam hearings concluded. He went a step further and suggested that the U.S. ought to offer the NLF a share of power in the South. Mansfield also suggested, repeatedly, that the NLF should be included in any negotiations because “the National Liberation Front is the dominant force in South Vietnam.” As such it is folly to think negotiations could begin if the NLF were deliberately excluded. Fulbright, Morse, McCarthy, McGovern and Gore were also among those calling for inclusive negotiations.

Alongside Fulbright, Morse and Mansfield also believed that path to peace might be found through Beijing. This, in part, prompted the SFRC to hold hearings on United States Policy with Respect to Mainland China, just one month after the Vietnam Hearings. Whereas as the Johnson administration perceived China to be an aggressor nation in Southeast Asia, poised to take over Vietnam should the North win, members of the SFRC seriously questioned this

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15 Gibbons, The United States Government and the Vietnam War, Part II, 1961-1964, 221-23; Neutralization in Southeast Asia: Problems and Prospects, A study prepared at the Request of the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, 16 October 1966, 89th Congress, 2nd Session, III. RG 287, Box Y4-1465. When completed in October 1966, the study offered a candid assessment of neutralization. Pointing out the potential disadvantages alongside the potential advantages, it concluded that the United States should pursue negotiations leading to neutralization. The study concluded that “the main hazards to American interests associated with neutralization relate to its effect upon the prospect of curtailing indirect aggression,” but “a neutralization scheme that succeeded only in stopping direct aggression would be no small achievement in Southeast Asia.” The United States might benefit from a policy of neutralization “since the terms of the treaty would legitimize the very principle whose violation caused the United States to intervene in the Vietnamese conflict, namely, the right of these states to choose their own form of government without interference from outside forces. Effective neutralization would be a way of implementing this principle in a manner requiring a much less active participation of US forces.” In return, however, “the United States would have to accept communist takeovers in the guaranteed states so long as they resulted...from the evolving balance of domestic political forces.” See pages 2, 5, 13-15.

16 Congressional Record, 20 November 1967, 16754.
notion. In April 1967, Mansfield went so far as to volunteer to travel to the People’s Republic and test the waters.17

Whether or not China was ultimately included in any attempt at achieving a negotiated settlement for Vietnam, a majority of the SFRC did believe that other members of the international community needed to be involved. In particular anti-war Senators advocated taking the Vietnam conflict to the United Nations. This had been a long-standing suggestion. In June of 1964 Morse and Gruening suggested that the UN should sponsor and enforce a cease-fire in Vietnam as a means to get the two sides talking. A year later, when the introduction of large-scale American military forces was being contemplated, Morse again advocated placing the conflict before the UN:

The United States has more to gain from a UN imposed peace than from a continuation of the fighting, leading we know not where. It is frequently alleged that the United States has three courses of action in Vietnam: to escalate, to get out, or to stalemate the issue until the other side gets tired. But there is a course of action which is positive in a world framework, even if the short-range effect in Vietnam may be difficult, embarrassing, and involve the loss of face. This course is for the United States to call on the United Nations to make the Vietnamese war its business.18

Morse saw the UN option as a means to end the “outlawry” of the United States’ unilateral actions in Vietnam. Moreover, he saw the UN option as viable because U Thant, the Secretary General, had been trying to arrange private talks between the U.S. and North Vietnam earlier that spring. Even though the Johnson administration had responded coolly at the time, subsequently opting to escalate, Morse refused to give up on the idea of taking the conflict to the UN, even as the U.S. military commitment in Vietnam continued to deepen. He continued to believe that the organization could play some role in bringing about negotiations. Indeed,

Mansfield said of Morse in the summer of 1967 that he had “been the one man in the Senate who has been in the forefront of proposal to take this matter [Vietnam] to the Security Council of the United Nation.”

Morse was joined in this quest by others, however. In the fall of 1967, both he and Mansfield introduced resolutions to the Senate calling on the President to further his effort in bringing Vietnam before the UN. Taken together, these resolutions had approximately fifty co-sponsors. Mansfield believed that the adoption of a Senate resolution in support of continued efforts to involve the UN:

would say to the President, most respectfully, that the Senate hoped that he would see the desirability of trying again to open the question of Vietnam to formal consideration by the United Nations Security Council. Furthermore we would say to him that we think it is desirable to take note of the deep concern over Vietnam which has been expressed by more than one-hundred nations during the current session of the General Assembly and try to convert these worlds of concern into a UN action for peace. . . .In sum, the Senate resolution would suggest to the President that he consider acting on the premise that the UN could be a point of entry to the road to peace even if it is not the place where peace is negotiated in the end.

What was important, then, was that the U.S. try anything and everything to halt the escalation of the conflict and open up negotiations.

The resolution acknowledged that the Johnson administration had not ignored the possibility of UN involvement. Arthur Goldberg, who was appointed US Ambassador to the UN in July 1965 declared that, “at the request of the President,” he had made the Vietnam question his “very first order of business” by expressing America’s willingness to collaborate unconditionally with members of the Security Council in the search for an acceptable formula to restore peace and security to” Southeast Asia. Unfortunately, the Security Council was, at that

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19 Congressional Record, 28 August 1967, S12289.
time, uninterested in dealing with the matter of Vietnam because it believed, in the worlds of Goldberg, in “the competence of the Geneva machinery.”

When Goldberg next canvassed opinion in the Security Council, Johnson’s December 1965-January 1966 bombing pause was in progress. “This time,” he said, “I found a unanimous view that it would be very inappropriate to come to the Council while the peace initiative was going on. The reason for this is that in the eyes of those I talked to…this would interfere with the peace initiative.” After the resumption of bombing, however, Goldberg reported that he made the decision to try taking the Vietnam situation to the Security Council yet again. He thought it should be made “clear to the world that while, for military consideration, the bombing had resumed,” America’s objective “was not just to stop the bombing but was to stop the war.” Bringing the conflict to the Security Council would be “a demonstration of that fact.”

The UN, however, continued in its reluctance to take up the issue. For members of the SFRC, however, this did not mean that the U.S. should give up. As John Sherman Cooper (R-KY) put it: “It is argued that the submission of the issue to the Security Council would be of no avail. . . .This argument of possible failure is no argument against the duty of our country to submit the issue.”

In promoting his resolution, Mansfield himself stated: “I regret to say, that apart from the personal efforts of the Secretary General, the UN reaction to Vietnam has had something of the character of that of a disinterested, enervated or impotent onlooker.” However, “the non-role of the United Nations in this situation ought not to go unnoticed. An embarrassed silence is no longer a sufficient response.” While he had “no illusions” that the Security Council “or any

21 Ibid., 152, 157.
23 Congressional Record, 28 August 1967, S12287.
other organ of the United Nations” could “bring about a rapid settlement of the tangled issues in
the tragic Vietnam conflict” he nonetheless believed that the Security Council, “with its small
but varied membership provides a good forum for the airing of issues, for the clarification of the
positions of the parties, and for the mobilization of world concern.” That the Security Council
“may not be able to play a central role in the questions of peace does not rule out its playing any
role.”25 The Senate agreed. On 30 November 1967 it voted unanimously in favor of
Mansfield’s resolution, S. Res. 180, calling on the President to take the initiative in bringing the
Vietnam question before the United Nations. While S. Res. 180 was a “sense of the Senate”
resolution, meaning it was an expression of Congressional opinion only and was therefore non-
binding, it was nonetheless representative of the desire to de-emphasize the use of military force
as a means of bringing about a negotiated settlement.

By the end of 1967, eleven members of the SFRC had come out publicly, in the press as
well as in Congress, in opposition to the war: Democrats William Fulbright, Mike Mansfield,
Wayne Morse, Albert Gore, Frank Church, Claiborne Pell, Joseph Clark, Eugene McCarthy, and
Republicans George Aiken, Clifford Case and John Sherman Cooper. Indeed, in an informal
survey of 169 members of Congress that Johnson had conducted in August 1967, 104 disagreed
with Johnson’s conduct of affairs regarding Vietnam.26 This number includes, of course, those
of a “hawkish” persuasion, such as Senator John Stennis, a prominent member of the Senate
Armed Services Committee, who argued that Johnson was not using enough bombs against
North Vietnam. But it also includes those, such as the majority of the SFRC, who had adopted

25 Congressional Record, 28 August 1867, S12286; Mansfield, “Vietnam and the United Nations” 10 November
1966, Johns Hopkins University, Mansfield Papers, Series XXI, Box 43.
was conducted when Johnson asked each of the directors of Congressional Liaison in the major government
departments to speak privately with the five members of Congress they knew best in order to ascertain levels of
support for Johnson.
an anti-war perspective favoring negotiated settlement over further escalation, because the justifications Johnson offered for Americanizing the war in the first place had lost their power—particularly as American casualty figures continued to climb.

II.

Ultimately, the dissenters on the SFRC rejected all of Johnson’s justifications. When, for instance, Secretary of State Rusk tried to argue during the Vietnam hearings that American actions were necessary because they fulfilled the country’s SEATO obligations, Fulbright responded “We have a difference of view of what that alliance means.”\footnote{The Vietnam Hearings, 50-51.} Dissenting SFRC members simply did not see the alliance as binding America to use its own armies to defend South Vietnam. Gore epitomized this view. “I wonder why President Eisenhower, who signed it, did not interpret it as binding us to send combat forces to Vietnam,” he asked Rusk. “If indeed it was as binding as you [Rusk] today interpreted it,” Gore wanted to know, “why is that President Kennedy, under whom you served as Secretary of State, gave assurances to the American people that combat forces would not be sent to Vietnam?” Gore also tried to point out the weakness of the SEATO justification by quoting Johnson, who in a televised speech two days after the passage of the Tonkin Gulf resolution had said: “Some others are eager to enlarge the conflict. They call upon us to supply American boys to do the job Asian boys should do. They ask us to take a reckless action which might risk the lives of millions and engulf Asia and certainly threaten the peace of the world.” Clearly, felt Gore, these remarks showed that Johnson himself once “had a limited view of our commitment under SEATO.” Lastly, Gore argued that other signatories of SEATO, Britain and France in particular, obviously felt the
treaty did not compel a commitment of the sort Rusk claimed, since neither of those nations had fielded large numbers of combat troops in Vietnam.  

Ultimately, the SFRC felt that regardless of the specific justification offered, the fear of communist expansion lay behind Johnson’s steadily increasing commitment to Vietnam. American troops were not in Vietnam because of SEATO. Johnson could not even claim they were sent there at the request of a legitimate South Vietnamese government, since as Washington Post columnist Drew Pearson had pointed out as early as 1965, the contention that “we are in south Vietnam at the request of a popular government to protect freedom” was “pure bunk. The government has changed so often that no one can keep track of whether Big Minh, Little Minh, or Minnie Mouse is in power.” Mansfield echoed this sentiment when he wrote Johnson prior to the July 1965 escalations to argue that there was no real government in Saigon and that Johnson was just trying to prevent the collapse of South Vietnamese military forces.

Fulbright expanded on this theme in 1967 and further pointed out that “it is implausible to contend that we are defending a valiant democracy when everyone knows that the Saigon generals can inspire neither the loyalty of their people nor the fighting spirit of their sizable army.” And, as to the idea that America was defending the right to self-determination, Fulbright pointed out that President Truman’s aid to France “was just the opposite of self-determination.” Fulbright extended the point by arguing that American actions post-1954 also “den[ied] the Vietnamese their right to self-determination under the Geneva accords. We proceeded to create the Diem government and to support it morally and financially...the real
That fear was simply not sufficient to justify the presence of American troops in Vietnam, if in fact there really was an international communist conspiracy unfolding in Vietnam, as the Johnson administration contended.

Members of the SFRC increasingly grew increasingly both wary and weary of the Cold War logic that compelled America to sacrifice its own men in order stave off communism in the far corners of the globe. Morse, in particular, believed that concerns about Chinese communist aggression were vastly overblown. As he’d stated during the Vietnam hearings: “The interesting thing is, the major nations of Asia are not worried about it. I took a Senate delegation through Asia for five weeks [in the fall of 1965] and we found no support for our fear that China was about to take over.” Morse believed that the argument that American actions were warding off potential Chinese aggression was a “scarecrow” designed to “rationalize and justify the shocking killing of American troops in Asia.”

Fulbright, for his part, did not doubt the sincerity of Johnson’s belief in a communist threat: he doubted, instead, the actual existence of such a threat. Following the logic of his March 1964 “Old Myths and New Realities” speech, wherein he debunked the notion of a monolithic international communist conspiracy, Fulbright came to view Ho Chi Minh as a “nationalist” leading a “nationalist revolution”; communism, though an obvious component of the revolution, was incidental, and “the existence of an independent communist regime in a

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32 JWF, 18 November 1969, Briefing on Vietnam, Hearings before the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, 91st Congress, 1st Session, with Secretary of State William P. Rogers and Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird, 9-10. RG 287—Publications of the Federal Government, Box Y4-1513.

33 The Vietnam Hearings, February 1966, 214.
united Vietnam may be compatible with American interests.”34 The suggestion that American interests would not be negatively affected should the communists gain ground in Vietnam speaks to the extent to which the Cold War consensus had lost meaning for Fulbright, and for other members of the SFRC. Mansfield’s memoranda to Johnson, for instance, repeatedly stated that the United States simply did not have sufficient interests in Southeast Asia to be as involved in Vietnam as it was. “We are not an Asian power,” he told the Senate in 1967. “Our interests do not lie on the Asian mainland.”35

Just as they came to doubt that America’s interests required such an extensive commitment in Vietnam, so too did members of the SFRC reject the arguments that the North Vietnamese had an “appetite for an aggression” that could not be satisfied. Several times the Johnson administration had invoked the lessons of appeasement as a means of silencing critics, Eugene McCarthy tried to debunk this analogy in his 1967 book on America’s role in the world. He argued that there were no significant points of similarity between 1930s Europe and 1960s South East Asia. Speaking rhetorically, he asked: “Can anyone seriously believe that Ho Chi Minh, with his sixteen million poverty-stricken people, with scarcely an air force and almost no navy, with a primitive agricultural economy which has already been largely destroyed, presents the same kind of threat that Hitler presented in the 1930s?”36

The SFRC also rejected the arguments about American credibility, honor, and commitment that were offered by the Johnson administration. In the face of Johnson’s 1965 claim that every American president since 1954 had made a commitment to Vietnam, Gruening

35 Congressional Record, 20 November 1967, 16754-57.
pointed out that neither Eisenhower nor Kennedy had promised to send American combat forces there. Similarly, when Johnson argued that American honor was at stake because of the promises of these two presidents, Wayne Morse retorted, “I have heard of throwing the baby out with the bath water but never before have I heard it suggested that we should blow heads off to save face.”37 Over time, Fulbright further developed the rejection of the idea that American credibility was at stake, arguing that:

Far from demonstrating America’s willingness and ability to save beleaguered governments from communist insurgencies, all that we are demonstrating in Vietnam is America’s willingness and ability to use its B-52s, napalm and all other ingenious weapons of counterinsurgency to turn a small country into a charnel house. Far from inspiring confidence and support for the United States, the war has so isolated us that, despite all our alliances and the tens of billions we have spent on foreign aid, we cannot, according to the administration, get 9 out of 15 votes to put the Vietnam issue on the agenda of the United Nations Security Council. Far from demonstrating America’s readiness to discharge all of its prodigal commitments around the world, the extravagance and cost of Vietnam are more likely to suggest to the world that the American people will be hesitant indeed before permitting their government to plunge into another such costly adventure.38

As Church summed up: “It is not a question of American stamina or American determination… the question is the wisdom of the policy” itself.39

III.

Dissenting Senators, in fact, had a great many concerns regarding the course of policy the Johnson administration appeared to be following in Vietnam, some of which have already been hinted at in the previous chapter’s discussion of the growth of public dissent. The first concern, the most fundamental and the basis for the others, was a belief that Americanizing the war had

38 Congressional Records, 8 December 1967, 35557-60.
been a mistake in the first place, a mistake that was being compounded by further escalation. Opposition to Johnson’s policy was also based on the belief that American efforts in Vietnam were not succeeding, and that they might never succeed. From this stemmed distaste for the bombing campaign and a belief that sustained bombing was actually undercutting Johnson’s own stated goal of opening negotiations; many members of the SFRC came to believe that Johnson’s calls for negotiations were disingenuous. That other members of the international community appeared to be either indifferent to the situation in Vietnam—thus suggesting Vietnam was nowhere near as important to world stability as Johnson seemed to think—or critical of America’s actions in Vietnam also concerned the Committee, which was worried about America’s international image. Lastly, there was a growing concern that the war being waged was illegal. From all of these concerns grew the belief that the Vietnam War was not merely a mistake, but a tragedy and a betrayal of the very principles of Americanism.

Morse’s 4 March 1964 statement that the United States “should never have gone in” and “should never have stayed in,” is indicative of the belief that American involvement was a mistake in the first place. Indeed, Morse was the most vocal in pushing this argument forward. He believed that the Johnson administration was “writing one of the most shameful chapters in American history.” So vehement was the belief that instead of using his allotted time to question Under Secretary of State George Ball during one of his January 1966 briefings of the SFRC, Morse chose to make a speech: “From the very beginning we have been wrong in our policy in Vietnam,” he said. “We just don’t face up to the fact that we are the major aggressor in Southeast Asia and that we are following unilateral actions in violation of all of the obligations that our government owes the American people.”

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40 Congressional Record, 4 March 1964, 4357; Morse, 12 January 1966, Executive Sessions of the Foreign Relations Committee, 1966, 67.
Morse was not alone in believing America had erred in becoming involved in Vietnam. By mid-1967, Fulbright was responding to his constituents’ letters on Vietnam by saying: “The war in Vietnam is the most frustrating problem I have ever encountered…The truth is, I do not think we have any business in Vietnam. I think we became involved on a false premise, and, in short, made a mistake in ever backing Diem.”

McGovern shared a similar view. The original error was bad enough, but now “a strange syllogism has been constructed,” said McGovern. Because the United States was now deeply involved, many believed “we therefore have no recourse except to see it through at any cost, or force the other side to negotiate on our terms. It is a strange piece of logic indeed which holds that, once committed to an error, we must compound that error by more of the same medicine, to salvage the original mistake.”

That original mistake, the nature of America’s error, was the belief that a military solution was the answer to Vietnam’s problems. Church had “very serious doubts that American military intervention” was the best means of coping with “the likelihood of revolt in the underdeveloped world.” Senator Aiken agreed: “What makes the Vietnam War so incredible to so many is the spectacle of the United States, largely through deployment of its matchless military power, attempting to reengineer the society of Vietnam. Of course sweeping changes in Vietnamese society are needed…but how can we believe that this is a task which can accomplished largely by Americans, and by American armed forces at that?”

Even the Republicans, who largely remained silent as Johnson escalated, began to agree that a military

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41 Fulbright to W.J. Ketz, Batesville, Arkansas, 4 April 1967, JWF Papers, Series 48, Subseries 1: Foreign Relations Committee General, Box 8, Folder 4.
42 McGovern, “The Lessons of Vietnam,” Congressional Record, 25 April 1967; also cited in McGovern, A Time of War, A Time of Peace, 133. Republican Senator Aiken agreed that such a syllogism existed: “We are in a very real sense our own worst enemy in [Vietnam]. We have chosen a strategy that ill befits our vast military power; we have persevered in that strategy to the point that we are encouraging even our own people to believe that we face either an unthinkable retreat or a hideous escape into a wider and more terrible war. This is a strategy that denies options.” Congressional Record, 1 March 1967, 4938.
43 Church, “Towards A New Asian Policy,” 21 February 1966, in the JWF Papers, Series 48, Subseries 14, Box 43, Folder 11; The Vietnam Hearings, 75; Aiken statement found in Congressional Record, 1 March 1967, 4938.
solution was not the answer. The Senate Republican Policy Committee produced a paper entitled “The War in Vietnam” in 1967. Originally intended for confidential use by the GOP, the Policy committee decided to make it broadly available as part of the Republican case in the upcoming election campaign. The paper argued that Kennedy and Johnson had “fundamentally and detrimentally altered” the Southeast Asian policies of President Eisenhower. Johnson had made an “open-ended military commitment” whereas Eisenhower had believed the solution in South Vietnam was political, and not military, insofar as the United States was concerned.44

Because of the growing belief that American involvement in Vietnam was a mistake, many Senators came to regret having voted for the Tonkin Gulf Resolution, especially since Johnson referred to it continuously. He likened the resolution to “grandma’s nightshirt,” which “covered everything.”45 Despite later stating that “we did not think the resolution was necessary to do what we did and what we are doing,” so often did Johnson brandish his copy of the resolution in the faces of dissenters that one Democratic Senator noted: “it was so damned frayed and dog-eared . . . I wanted to give him a fresh copy.”46 Fulbright, who played the lead role in pushing the resolution through the Senate, expressed regret for having done so: “We very clearly, in my opinion, acted too quickly and I had a part in it of which I’m not very proud.”47 In steering the resolution through, though, Fulbright had not anticipated that it would be invoked as legal justification for a full-scale war. Only Morse and Gruening had foreseen that possibility; hence their vote against the resolution. In fact, when the overwhelming support for

45 Logevall, Choosing War, 205.
47 United States Commitments to Foreign Powers, Hearings before the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Congress, 90th Congress, 1st Session, RG 287, Box Y4-1479.
the Tonkin resolution was brought up during the Vietnam Hearings, Morse cut in to say: “We are still wondering how so many of you could be wrong.”48

As distaste for how the resolution was being used grew, so too did a belief that Congress had been misled regarding the attacks on American ships in the Gulf of Tonkin. In February 1968, the SFRC held hearings on the 1964 incidents to address the questions of whether the incidents had actually occurred and whether the attacks, if they did occur, were provoked by American actions. The hearings also raised questions about the magnitude of America’s response in the wake of the incidents. McNamara appeared before the Committee to say that since he had last testified, “over three and a half years have passed . . . however, even with the advantage of hindsight, I find the essential facts of the two attacks appear today as they did then.” Both attacks occurred as he originally outlined them back in 1964. The Maddox and the C. Turner Joy, the two U.S. destroyers fired upon, in no way provoked the attacks because they were well outside North Vietnam’s territorial waters and safely in international waters, and they were nowhere near Vietnam when South Vietnamese boats were shelling the North Vietnamese coast. Thus, they had not been providing cover for South Vietnamese aggression. Any insinuation, said McNamara, that “in some way the government of the United States induced the incidents on August 2 and 4 with the intent of providing an excuse to take retaliatory action which we in fact took” was “monstrous.” Lastly, the retaliation for these attacks was not “disproportionate to the offence.” It was “very limited in character; it was directed against the bases of attacking boats and their petroleum support facility” only. The incidents were not taken

48 The Vietnam Hearings, 204.
to the UN because “we had no reason to believe the United Nations could have acted in any effective manner.”

Not surprisingly, given that he had argued that the United States had long been the aggressor in Vietnam, Morse refused to swallow any of McNamara’s testimony: “I am not convinced by any thing the Secretary has said this morning that we followed the proper course in regard to the Maddox and the Joy in reference to the incident.” Fulbright also went on the attack. Even if the U.S. had not provoked the attacks, he asked McNamara, “considering the fact that the Maddox was headed for an island recently attacked by South Vietnamese raiders using American equipment, is it not possible that the North Vietnamese could have concluded the United States had a role?” Fulbright could understand why the North Vietnamese might have fired on the American ships; therefore the attacks were not the deliberate acts of aggression they had been painted as in 1964. Moreover, he had obtained records that showed that the United States flew sixty-four separate missions against North Vietnamese installations in retaliation. This was not a limited and proportional response, Fulbright argued; it was “a very dangerous attack.”

More importantly, however, Fulbright produced a cable from the Naval Communications Center in the Philippines that had been relayed to Washington in the immediate aftermath of the 4 August incident. It read: “Review of actions makes many recorded contacts and torpedoes fired appear doubtful. Freak weather effects and over-eager sonar man may have accounted for reports. No actual visual sighting by Maddox. Suggest complete evaluation before any further action.” Given the existence of this cable, Fulbright wanted to know why the Johnson

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49 The Gulf of Tonkin, the 1964 Incidents, Hearings before the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, 90th Congress, 2nd Session, with the Honorable Robert S. McNamara, Secretary of Defense, 20 February 1968, 1, 8-9, 13, 19, 70-71. RG 287, Box Y4-1508.

50 Ibid., 42, 70.
administration had not taken time to review the situation before presenting the situation to Congress and why the need for the passage of a resolution was presented with such urgency.

“We met, if you will recall, for one hour and forty minutes . . . and we accepted your statement completely without doubt . . . it never occurred to me that there was the slightest doubt . . . that this attack took place,” said Fulbright. “If I had known of that telegram, if that had been before me on the 6th of August, I certainly don’t believe I would have rushed into action.”

The re-examination of the Tonkin Gulf incidents, then, raised doubt as to most of the administration’s claims regarding the attacks and the response to them. Since Johnson appeared to be using the Tonkin Gulf Resolution as an authorizing force for the subsequent Americanization of the war, that escalation was fruit from a poisonous tree. Therefore, large-scale American military intervention in Vietnam in the first place was quite literally a mistake.

Dissenting Senators did not just believe that the Johnson administration had erred in escalating the conflict in the first place; they also believed that Johnson had little to show for the escalations—that his Vietnam strategy was failing. If the war effort was succeeding, why was it that more and more bombs were being dropped, more and more troops were being sent into combat, and more and more of those troops were coming home in caskets? By the end of 1965, twenty-five thousand bombing sorties had been directed against North Vietnam and there were one hundred eight-four thousand US troops in Vietnam. By the end of 1966, seventy-nine thousand bombing sorties had been flown and three hundred eight-five thousand troops were present in Vietnam. By the end of 1967, one hundred and eight thousand bombing sorties had been flown and all most four hundred and ten thousand troops were present.

51 Ibid., 55, 80. When later called the father of the Tonkin Resolution in an attempt by Nixon to discredit Fulbright’s antivar activities, Fulbright replied, “Lyndon Johnson was the father, I was the midwife to an illegitimate child.” Congressional Record, 10 July 1970, 23746.

52 Fry, Debating Vietnam, 77; Herring, America’s Longest War, 146, 150.
who had had a losing streak, the architects of the Vietnam War postpone facing up to their failure by throwing good money after bad, by escalating the level of violence,” said Fulbright in May 1967.53

What was even worse was each escalation tended to follow some statement on the part of the Johnson administration and the military command in Vietnam that progress was being made, that victory was at hand. “The fact is,” said Mansfield:

Reports of progress are strewn, like burned out tanks, all along the road which has led this nation even more deeply into Vietnam. They were present when the sole function of American military personnel was that of aid suppliers to the French-commanded Vietnamese loyalist forces. They were present when our military functions in Vietnam evolved into that of trainers and advisors of the South Vietnamese forces, to that of air transporters and supporters, to that of combat bulwarks and, finally, to that of combat substitutes for the South Vietnamese forces. . . . It has been present, this promise of progress, as the casualties have increased from less than ten a year, to ten a month, to ten a week, to ten a day, to ten an hour of every hour of every day. It has been present as the estimated expenditures of the federal government for Vietnam have increased from a few hundred million a year, to two billion, to twelve billion, to the current level of probably not less than twenty-five billion a year.”

“In that tortured nation,” concluded Mansfield, “the beginnings of the beginning of peace are not yet in sight.”54 This perceived failure of Johnson’s strategy to bring an end to the conflict in Vietnam buttressed the idea that seeking a military solution had been a mistake in the first place.

Perceptions of failure, or lack of progress, were also accompanied by a growing belief that, regardless of its tactics, the United States might not ever succeed in creating a stable, independent South Vietnam. First, the United States could not, in the words of McGovern, “create strong, effective, and popular national leadership where that leadership does not exist or does not exert itself.”55 Second, the South Vietnamese themselves seemed unwilling to fight

53 Fulbright, “What Find of Country do you Want America to Be?” Address as Kansas State University, Manhattan, Kansas, 5 May 1967, JWF Papers, Series 72, Box 28, Folder 18.
54 Congressional Record, 11 July 1967, S9353.
55 Congressional Record, 15 January 1965, 784.
whereas communist forces would not give up, even with upwards of three hundred thousand tons of bombs being dropped on the North and VC held areas of the South.56 Last, and most important, America’s efforts, as Gore argued, were “plagued by the legacy of colonialism.” “As long as we either attempt to make available to or force the values on Vietnam of a pro-Western, Christian-led democracy,” he said, “the war may last a long time.” When Rusk spoke of one man, one vote, and free elections, Gore responded: “It seems to me one of the basic fallacies of our policy is that it is based almost exclusively on Western values. . . . What right do we have to assume that the people of Vietnam want them or appreciate them or attach any particular value to them?”57 In asking this, Gore was questioning the long-standing assumption that American values were in fact universal values that America was obligated to bring to others. He was undercutting an idea that lay at the very heart of the Cold War consensus.

Even if some of the people of South Vietnam did want what America had to offer by way of things like aid and modernization projects, the military focus of American policy was undercutting any positive developments in such areas. Even before the July 1965 introduction of large-scale U.S. forces, Fulbright had argued that American efforts “to contribute to the welfare of the South Vietnamese people” through the building of health stations and classrooms, for instance, “have hardly been proportionate to our contributions to the war.”58

In particular, the bombing campaigns proved especially distasteful. “This mightiest nation in history—a nation with a glorious democratic tradition based on the dignity and

56 These views are expressed in Foreign Assistance Act of 1968: Part I – Vietnam, Hearings before the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, 90th Congress, 2nd Session, 167, RG 287 Box Y4-1478 and Hearing before the Foreign Relations Committee, United States Senate, with General David M. Shoup, Former Commandant, United States Marine Corps, 90th Congress, 2nd Session, 1968, 8-9. RG 287, Box Y4-1512.
brotherhood of man—is, with allegedly good motives, devastating an impoverished little state and ravishing the people whose freedom it would protect,” said McGovern in 1967. Gore also believed that the United States was “destroying the country [it] professed to be saving.” So too did Fulbright, who further believed that Johnson’s arguments about staying the course because American credibility was at stake were undercut by the bombing campaign. “The dignified and justified pride of a great democracy like the United States cannot be upheld by blasting an underdeveloped Asian nation ‘back into the stone age,’” he argued. “It can only be upheld by the honest acknowledgment that a mistake has been made and by an honest and magnanimous attempt to reverse that mistake.”

The first step towards doing so would be to halt the bombing, especially since, as Gore pointed out, “we set out to bomb North Vietnam until they [sic] come to the conference table. That has not succeeded either.”

In fact, nothing good was coming from the bombing campaign. General Gavin returned to testify before the SFRC in 1967 in support of halting the bombing, which had “not stopped the flow of supplies to the South” but which had succeeded in causing “considerable civilian casualties,” and arousing “the ill will of the people of the world.” Gavin further argued that “the concept that if you destroy enough people and enough property you overcome an enemy’s will” was “fallacious.” Indeed, when the SFRC held hearings on psychological aspects of foreign policy in 1969, ethnologist Margaret Mead pointed out that a great many bombing studies had been done at the end of WWII by social scientists: had the Johnson administration looked at those studies, “we would have known there was a good chance the bombing of North Vietnam

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60 Gore, 20 March 1968, *Hearings before the SFRC with General Shoup*, 18
would strengthen their determination rather than weaken it." Dissenting Senators were therefore concerned that the negative effects of the bombing campaign were not going to be balanced out by the campaign’s success in bringing the parties to the negotiating table. This was simply further evidence that Johnson’s strategy was mistaken.

Since the Johnson administration itself repeatedly stated that U.S. objectives were limited, that the U.S. was not seeking “military victory” in Vietnam but was instead applying force as a means to bring about a negotiated settlement, members of the SFRC came to believe that Johnson’s stated commitment to negotiations lacked consistency. How could the U.S. claim it had no permanent military designs in Southeast Asia when it was in the process of building a costly military infrastructure there? Did not Johnson’s statements that he would not negotiate with the NLF belie calls for negotiations by suggesting to the Vietcong that only their unconditional surrender would bring the U.S. to the negotiating table?

Failure to receive satisfactory answers to these questions led many to believe that Johnson’s calls for negotiations were disingenuous. Why else would he persist with a course of action that was failing to bring about negotiations? This question was increasingly on the minds of the SFRC, especially in light of information they received after the Vietnam hearing from U Thant, the UN Secretary General. In private conversation with the Committee in March 1966, Thant spoke of recent conversations he had had with representatives from Hanoi. They revealed feelings that whenever the North showed some flexibility, the U.S. escalated. They also made it clear that the North would “not move towards negotiations until the bombing stops. . . . Hanoi does not believe that the United States is willing to withdraw its troops from South Vietnam.”

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Gavin, 21 February 1967, Conflicts between United States Capabilities and Foreign Commitments, Hearings before the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, 90th Congress, 1st Session, 3. RG 287, Box Y4-1479; Margaret Mead, 20 June 1969, Psychological Aspects of Foreign Policy, Hearings before the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, 91st Congress, 1st Session, 118. RG 287, Box Y4-1501.
The U.S. must, therefore, work to “dispel this notion.” Thant also stated they he did not believe that the North would simply surrender because it was “convinced of the justness of [its] cause.”

These were ideas that Mansfield pressed on Johnson. In early 1967 Mansfield wrote a memo conveying his impressions of “signals” from North Vietnam. “It would appear these ‘signals’ are intended to get across to us a message which goes something like this,” he wrote:

1. Of course we are hurting and we want the bombing stopped, but let us be clear about one thing: we are not going to say ‘Uncle’ no matter what you do in the way of bombardment. 2. As of now we are still masters in our own house in North Vietnam . . . [but] our dependency on other Communist nations, particularly China, is bound to grow as you pile on pressure. 3. Of course we will talk to the United States about a settlement, but not unconditionally. We will not talk until it is clear that you Americans not only mean to withdraw your forces as you say you will, but also that there is no question they will be withdrawn . . . 4. There is no point in talking to you Americans unconditionally at this time, because you do not see the situation as we see it. Well, we can wait because you have come a long way to fight this war and you are spending a lot of money and you are in a strange and inhospitable place here in Vietnam and your allies in the South are not of much use.

Johnson, however, failed to listen to this assessment and he continued to escalate the conflict throughout 1967. Thus his critics saw his Vietnam policy as, at best, making the very negotiations he said he desired impossible. At worst, it was making a liar out of him. They also argued that even if the U.S. prevailed and North Vietnam capitulated, this would not mean Johnson’s policy was successful. “Grateful for peace though we may be,” stated Fulbright, “we would still have fought an immoral and unnecessary war. We would still have passed up opportunities which, if taken when they arose, would have spared us and spared the Vietnamese

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the present ordeal, and done so . . . with only trifling costs, if any, to American interests.”64 The belief that it had been a mistake to get so deeply involved in the first place continued to rest at the center of the various SFRC concerns with America’s Vietnam policy.

Tied to this belief was increasing concern that America’s war, which was unilateral in nature and lacking in international support, was tarnishing America’s image abroad. Church toured Europe in early 1966 and came home feeling “disturbed . . . at the extent of the criticism there of American policy toward Vietnam, from people who have long considered themselves friends of the United States.” This criticism derived from three different things, Church thought. First, America’s intervention, “both in its character and in the dramatic dimension of its size, is so much more obvious than that of the North Vietnamese.” Second, because the United States is “a tremendously big, powerful country” engaged in “in a large-scale military effort against a very small country, with very limited resources,” America was at “a serious psychological disadvantage as other people view the war.” Last, “our calls for peace do not seem to be matched by our deeds,” thus leading many people “to begin to question American motives.”65 Evidence of this questioning was also reaching the Committee in the form of letters written from Americans living abroad. For example, James Means, a student living in London, England, “in a residence hall with young men from most of the major nations of the world” wrote the Committee to say:

during this time it has been made very apparent to me that the course which our country is pursuing in Southeast Asia is running contrary to the tide of world opinion…Here in Britain, the students with whom I have talked to view the American intervention as another example of foolish over-extension on our part prompted by self-interest. The loud noises from Washington concerning the well-being of the Vietnamese people have received no credence whatsoever. 66

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64 Congressional Record, 8 December 1967.
65 United States Policy Towards Europe, Hearings Before the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, 89th Congress, 2nd Session, 288. RG 287, Box Y4-1472
66 James Means, 24 March 1966, JWF Papers, Series 48, Subseries 18, Box 49, Folder 2-1966—M.
This did not necessarily mean that the citizens of European allies were one hundred percent opposed to America’s presence in Vietnam, however. Donald Henderson, a staff worker for the SFRC had made his own tour of Europe in early 1966. He reported back that the “general informed European prescription for the difficulties faced in Vietnam” included the belief that the United States “should maintain a physical presence in Vietnam (but which will not require European forces.)” However, “the scope of the current military operations might well be increasingly restricted, to the limited degree possible, in order to promote talking rather than fighting.” It seemed clear to the Committee that there was a lack of general support from abroad for the course the Johnson administration was following in Vietnam. The international community, like many of the Senate’s own anti-war dissenters, believed that negotiations were needed.

Moreover, there were certain vocal elements in the international community who believed that America’s conduct of the war in Vietnam was especially questionable. Bertrand Russell, the renowned English philosopher and mathematician, established the Vietnam Solidarity Campaign in 1966 to bring together groups “which saw the Vietnam war as flagrant aggression by the world’s mightiest nation against a small peasant people.” Alongside the Solidarity Campaign, Russell advocated for the formation of an International War Crimes Tribunal. In an “Appeal to the American Conscience,” he called on Americans to “emancipate themselves for the usurpers of American society,” who had “traduced” America’s revolutionary tradition by waging a “barbaric…aggressive war of conquest.” Actions and statements like these led Fulbright to declare that “whatever the military outcome of the present war may be, its

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67 Donald Henderson to Carl Marcy, 28 March 1966, JWF Papers, Series 48, Subseries 11, Box 35, Folder 3.
moral outcome has already been decided. . . America has the ignominious role, whether she
wins or loses.”69

Anti-war dissenters did not believe that Johnson intended to literally conquer Vietnam
but they were very much concerned by America’s conduct of the war. Gruening believed the
bombing campaign to be “totally without justification morally, legally, militarily or otherwise. It
is the sort of performance American publican opinion condemned scathingly when done by
totalitarian powers in past years.”70 Morse concurred. From the very beginning, be believed
that American actions were “outside” the “framework of international law.” America had
violated the 1954 Geneva Accords by preventing national elections and by introducing arms and
munitions and, later, military personnel to South Vietnam, actions which were specifically
prohibited by the Accords. Moreover, the Southeast Asian Treaty Organization, the supposed
legal justification for American involvement in Southeast Asia, read, so Morse reminded Rusk
during the Vietnam Hearing: “The parties undertake, as set forth in the Charter of the United
Nations, to settle any disputes in which they may become involved by peaceful means in such a
manner that international peace and security and justice are not endangered, and to refrain in the
international relations from the threat or use of force in any manner inconsistent with the
purpose of the United Nations.” Since the UN Security Council had not authorized America’s
course of action, Morse believed America’s war in Vietnam to be “in violation of the [UN]
charter” as well as a “misappropriation of SEATO.”71 “We have been an outlaw nation over
there” from the start, said Morse, and “there is no reason, just because we are the most powerful
nation in the world, that we should be allowed to get away with our outlawry in Southeast

69 Fulbright, “Why Are We Fighting in Vietnam?” Temple Beth Forum, Miami, 26 January 1967, JWF Papers,
Series 72, Box 22, File 28.
70 Gruening, Vietnam Folly, 24.
71 The Vietnam Hearings, 455-57, 510.
Asia.” This outlawry—America’s support of “an amoral and illegal war” and its involvement “in a bloodletting in a country in which we had no right to be in the first place”—was only compounded by the “sad fact” that the US government was “supporting tyranny in South Vietnam, a brutal military junta that has not the slightest conception of the meaning of the word freedom.”

In addition to being illegal from the standpoint of international agreements, Johnson’s conduct of the war also violated the U.S. constitution and the very principles of democracy. The United States was effectively waging an undeclared war. The president had made the decision to escalate the conflict, when the power to declare war lay with the Congress. The Tonkin Gulf Resolution was only meant to express support of the actions Johnson had taken in retaliation for the alleged attacks on US vessels. It was not intended by those who voted for it to be used as an authorization for full-scale warfare, and by failing to seek a war declaration as he Americanized the war, Johnson had subverted the Constitution. Members of the Johnson administration repeatedly argued that a formal declaration of war would not reflect America’s very limited goals in Vietnam. “The purpose of the United States in the present conflict has not been to destroy North Vietnam but to end armed aggression and restore peace to South Vietnam. A declaration of war . . . would be regarded by the rest of the world as an announcement that our purpose is no longer collective defense, but an all-out military effort that will threaten the existence of the communist regime in North Vietnam,” said William Macomber Jr., the Assistant Secretary for Congressional Relations. Furthermore, he argued, a war declaration

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would “increase the danger of misunderstanding our objectives by the various communist states, and the risk of their expanded involvement in the conflict.”

The Johnson administration also argued that, in light of these facts, the Tonkin Gulf Resolution was more than sufficient. “Declarations of war are outmoded,” said Under Secretary of State Katzenbach, whereas the Tonkin Resolution served as a “functional equivalent of the constitutional obligation expressed in the provision of the Congress with respect to declaring war.” Members of the SFRC took grave offence to this statement. Fulbright argued that the resolution was not a proper substitute for declaration of war because it was “made under conditions of emergency. It wasn’t a deliberate decision by the Congress to wage war in that full-fledged sense against a foreign government.” Eugene McCarthy said Katzenbach’s statement was a prescription “for a kind of four-year dictatorship in foreign policy.” And Wayne Morse declared, “We have an Under Secretary of State, a former Attorney General of the United States, who, in public testimony tells us that a key section of the Constitution is outmoded. Did you ever think you would live so long to hear that?” As with the desire to hold public hearings on Vietnam, the dispute over the constitutionality of Johnson’s Vietnam policy reveals an increasing dissatisfaction with the President’s primacy in constructing foreign policy.

Anti-war dissenters were concerned with more than the question of war powers, though; they believed that the Johnson administration’s attempts to silence dissenters by labeling them as disloyal subverted the principles of democracy itself. Debate and discussion were vital to the

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73 William Macomber Jr., to Mike Mansfield, 25 May 1967. Remarks inserted into the record of, United States Troops In Europe, Hearings before the Combined Subcommittee of Foreign Relations and Armed Services Committees, United States Senate, 90th C, 1st Session, 1967, 89. RG 287, Box Y4-1472.
74 United States Commitments to Foreign Powers, SFRC Hearings, 79, 81.
75 Ibid., 83, 133; Congressional Record, 22 August 1967, 23463.
76 Ultimately this would lead to an attempt on the part of Congress to re-assert its foreign policy making powers, as will be discussed in Part II of the chapter, when the interplay between Congress and the Nixon administration over Vietnam is considered.
workings of democracy but harsh treatment of dissenters seemed aimed at creating “a climate of intimidation designed to silence dissent and meaningful discussion of policy.” So argued McGovern, who pointed to repeated efforts on behalf of the administration to blame dissenters for the prolonged war by arguing that dissent only encouraged continued aggression from the North. “Frustrated by the failure of the escalation policy to produce anything other than a bloodier war,” said McGovern, “the administration is now trying to blame their [sic] failure on those who have warned all along that they were playing with fire.” Pointing to an April 1967 speech General Westmoreland made in which he stated that popular opposition to the war only encouraged the North, McGovern concluded: “it is clear however, that there is a growing implication that dissent will only lead to charges of disloyalty and muddleheadedness and then finally to implications of treason.”

The irony of Vietnam, it was argued, was that while Johnson claimed the United States was standing up for the principle of democracy in South Vietnam, his administration was disregarding those very principles at home.

Indeed, constitutional violations and the suppression of democratic debate were evidence that Johnson’s war was as damaging to the United States itself as it was to Vietnam. The physical war might be fought in Southeast Asia, but it was having a large impact close to home, thus making the war, which was deemed a mistake in the first place, an outright tragedy. In December 1965, McGovern visited Vietnam. In early 1966, he reported back that if the situation in Vietnam did not move towards a peaceful resolution, it would soon “degenerate into a deepening morass that may claim the lives of our sons and the sons of Asia for years to come. A major war on the Asian mainland,” he predicted, “could exhaust America’s blood and treasure for all our days and in the end only create conditions of bitterness and despair that could

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curse us for a generation.” To antiwar dissenters, McGovern’s assessment of what “could” happen was exactly what was happening. Of obvious concern was the growing casualty rate for American soldiers. While all were upset by climbing death tolls, Mansfield was particularly sensitive to the loss of American lives. He began carrying with him at all times a card with up-to-date figures on American deaths and casualties. Don Oberdorfer conducted extensive interviews with Mansfield in the last years of his life. He writes: “the tragedy of Vietnam was the one subject that brought forth an emotional reaction from this calm, unemotional figure.” Speaking in 1998, Mansfield himself said: “It still haunts me. What a shame—55,000 dead, 305,000 wounded . . . a tragic mistake.”

While the loss of American lives was devastating enough, it was not the only impact the war was having on America itself. The great promise of Johnson’s presidency was his domestic agenda—the so-called attempt to build a “Great Society” by declaring war on poverty, by addressing racial divisions, by improving the standards of education and health care. The war in Vietnam was interfering with addressing America’s own problems by diverting funds away from Great Society programs, and by creating division amongst the American public. “We have wasted $130 billion in carrying on a war in Southeast Asia, a tragic war, a mistaken war, and a war in an area which is not vital nor essential to the security of the United States,” reflected Mansfield in 1971. “All of this money which we have spent, wasted—it is getting to be a popular term, they even apply it to human beings—could have been spent so much better at home in taking care of the needs of our people.”

As Fulbright put it 1968: “It is sometimes said that with our huge gross national product, we can easily afford the thirty billion a year we

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78 Congressional Record, 20 January 1966, 775
80 Mansfield, 7 July 1971, The 1971 Midyear Review of the Economy, Hearings before the Joint Economic Committee, Congress of the United States, 92nd Congress, 1st Session, July 1971, 6. RG 287, Box Y4-1137
are spending on the war in Vietnam. Perhaps in purely financial terms we can afford it, although I for one am far from convinced. But even if we can afford the money,” he asked rhetorically, “can we afford . . . the neglect of our own deep domestic problems?” Church and Gore certainly did not think so, as during the Vietnam Hearings they had provided a long list of domestic programs that were being cut back or eliminated outright so as to fund the war.82

Fulbright and company did not just doubt that the U.S. could truly afford the war financially. The number of things Fulbright doubted the U.S. could afford also included the “sacrifice of American lives in so dubious a cause,” the “alienation of our allies” and “the disillusionment of our youth…the loss of confidence in our Government and institutions.” And, what of the “fading hope and optimism, the betrayal of our traditional values,” he asked? These effects of the war were particularly disheartening because they called into question the very future of America. As Gruening put it: “The United States stands today at the crossroads of a great moral decision and must ask itself: What shall it profit a nation if it ‘gain the whole world but loses’ its own soul?”83

There was a very real concern within the SFRC that America was betraying the very principles it claimed it was standing for by conducting the type of war it was in Vietnam, thus compounding the tragedy. Aiken believed that the “tragedy of Vietnam is that we have prevented self-determination through the weight of our intervention, even while proclaiming the preservation of self-determination as our goal.” For Fulbright, “the tragedy of Vietnam is that a revolution against social injustice and foreign rule has become a contest between Asian communism and the United States.” “American interests are better served by supporting nationalism than by opposing communism,” he argued, “and when the two are encountered in

82 The Vietnam Hearings, 133, 139.
83 Ibid., Gruening, The Vietnam Folly, 383.
the same country, it is in our interests to accept a communist government rather than undertake the cruel and all but impossible task of suppressing a genuine nationalist movement.” For McGovern, Johnson’s Vietnam policy represented a “distortion of our most treasured ideals.”  

What was more, the United States was, in the words of Morse, writing “a bloody chapter in history.” The conduct of the war—the use of napalm, of chemical and biological agents, for instance—was perceived as particularly brutal. General Taylor contended that the military did its best to avoid unnecessary destruction or the killing of civilians while describing the atrocities committed by the North Vietnamese and the VC as deliberate and wanton but there was a growing belief that American actions were also morally questionable. Fulbright, for instance, argued that war was “inherently atrocious” and that America’s technologically sophisticated war was no less barbaric than the up-close and personal tactics used by the Vietnamese. There was little difference between “whether you shoot…or decapitate…or burn” an enemy. “One simply cannot engage in barbarous action without becoming a barbarian, because one cannot defend human values by calculated and unprovoked violence without doing mortal damage to the values one is trying to defend.” wrote Fulbright in his bestselling book, *The Arrogance of Power*.  

Thus, in addition to the death tolls, the diversion of attention and funds from vital problems within the United States itself, and the distortion, if not outright betrayal of American principles and values, the war was perceived as corrupting America’s moral sensibilities. This was simply further evidence of the tragedy of Vietnam. It was also further proof that the Johnson administration had erred in Americanizing the conflict in the first place. Thus, the anti-

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war dissenters argued against further escalation and sought alternatives policies for Vietnam, namely the opening of negotiations as soon as possible.

But while members of the Johnson administration did not take issue with the S. Res. 180 and its call to put the Vietnam conflict before the UN—Ambassador Goldberg had, after all, previously tried to involve the UN—Johnson’s response to other Senate initiatives regarding Vietnam was mixed at best. On the one hand, he repeatedly stated his desire to negotiate an end to the conflict, which was exactly what the anti-war critics wished to see happen. He also modified, over time, his pre-conditions for negotiations, going from the January 1966 demands that the U.S. would cease bombing only if North Vietnam reciprocated by withdrawing its forces from the South to the September 1967 stance that merely called upon the North to cease further infiltration of the South. But Johnson failed, on the other hand, to alter America’s stance on the acceptable outcome of negotiations—the independence of South Vietnam. While he did move towards a stated willingness to listen to the views of the NLF, Johnson did not budge on his requirements for South Vietnam’s future. Historian Allan Goodman has thus labeled American peace initiatives from 1965 to 1967 as “one of the most fruitless chapters in U.S. diplomacy.”

Johnson, moreover, continued to intensify the war, both in terms of U.S. troop commitment and of the bombing campaign, while knowing that one of Hanoi’s conditions for talks was a cessation of the bombing. While various bombing pauses were called—13 May to 17 May 1965, 14 December 1965 to 31 January 1966, 24 December to 26 December 1966, 31 December 1966 to 2 January 1967, 8 February to 14 February 1967, and 24 December to 25 December 1967—each ultimately ended with an intensification the of the bombing to new

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levels. Johnson did claim that the first two bombing pauses were partly in response to people like Fulbright and Mansfield, but he persistently ignored their calls to maintain the pauses for any lengthy period of time and he was unwilling to adopt their attitude as to what constituted an acceptable outcome of a negotiated settlement should talks ever begin. At first blush, then, it appears that the anti-war critics (and their proposed alternatives) had virtually no impact on the Johnson administration’s thinking, or at least little impact in persuading him of their idea of what constituted the clearest path toward achieving a negotiated settlement. A deeper look reveals otherwise, however, even though the dissenters themselves tended to feel they lacked the ability to influence Johnson on matters of policy, especially as escalation continued to define that policy.

IV.

In March of 1966, Fulbright told the Senate that “past experience provides little basis for confidence that reason can prevail in an atmosphere of mounting war fever. In a contest between hawk and dove the hawk had the greater advantage, not because he is a better bird but because he is the bigger bird with lethal talons and a highly developed will to use them.” A year later, Fulbright was echoing his concern about the inability to persuade Johnson of a different course in correspondence with the American people. He came to believe that the desire for an alternative policy in Vietnam was absent in Johnson’s mindset. “Until such a desire becomes apparent—on the part of the present administration or on the part of a new administration—the rest of us can do little to influence the immediate course of events,”

87 Regarding the May 1965 bombing pause, Johnson said to his advisors: “My judgment was that the public never wanted us to stop the bombing. We have stopped it in deference to Mansfield and Fulbright, but we don’t want to do it too long or else we’ll lose our base of support.” Quoted in H.W Brands, The Wages of Globalism: Lyndon Johnson and the Limits of American Power (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 244. Regarding the December 1965-January 1966 bombing pause, Johnson wrote Averill Harriman to say it was in part to placate “Fulbright, Scotty Reston, Mansfield, Arthur Krock and the New York Times.” Johnson to Harriman, 28 December 1965, FRUS 1964-1968, Vol. 3, 720.
concluded Fulbright.\textsuperscript{88} Part of the problem had to do with the fact that the Democratic Party had divided over the war, with some members favoring de-escalation and negotiations, while others pushed for an even greater military effort. Frank Valeo recalled that “the division in the party made it very difficult to draw up the kind of instruments that the Senate was capable of using constitutionally . . . so you had to find the right words which would begin to convey the great unease . . . to convey that took words which made the point but which really had no force in them whatsoever.” If the Senate managed to pass a resolution reflecting a certain desire, said Valeo, “they were mostly sense of Senate resolutions.”\textsuperscript{89} If the dissenters themselves felt they had little impact, given their inability to persuade Johnson to follow alternative courses of action regarding Vietnam, how, then, does one assess the impact of anti-war dissent in Congress?

While the anti-war Senators were unable to prevent the resumption of bombing campaigns or the further escalation in U.S. troop numbers from 1965 through 1967, they nonetheless had an impact. Johnson’s efforts to win them over, silence them, discredit them, or attract attention away from them, suggest quite strongly that their ability to influence further dissent was worrisome to the administration. His desire to avoid a major Congressional debate throughout the 1965, and his effort at doing so, has already been discussed. In addition, Johnson formed the Vietnam Information Group in late 1965. It was tasked with managing

\textsuperscript{88} \textit{Congressional Record}, 1 March 1966, copy or remarks found in JWF papers, Series 71, Box 32, File 2; JWF to Carl Wickum, Rockville, MD, 12 January 1967, JWF Papers, Series 48, Subseries 1, Box 8, Folder 4—1967; JWF, “What Kind of Country Do You Want America to Be?” 5 May 1967, Kansas States University, JWF Papers, Series 72, Box 28, Folder 18. Fulbright’s belief that anti-war Senators were unable to alter Johnson’s course of action regarding Vietnam did not mean, however, that the Senate had no role to play. The conflict in Vietnam convinced Fulbright of the necessity of Congress reviving the foreign policy making powers it had let atrophy since the start of the Cold War. Ultimately, this would lead to the passage of the War Powers Resolution in 1973. The Senate’s attempt to claim a stronger role in matters of foreign affairs through measures such as this will be discussed in subsequent chapters.

\textsuperscript{89} Francis R. Valeo, \textit{Secretary of the Senate}, Oral History Interviews, 3 July 1985 to 11 March 1986, (Senate Historical Office, Washington DC), 433-34, RG 46.
public relations by distributing pro-war advertisements, and helping pro-war Senators with their speeches.90

During the 1966 Vietnam Hearings, Johnson attempted to deflect attention away from them by calling a conference at Honolulu where he met with the leaders of South Vietnam. The U.S. and South Vietnamese government issued a joint communiqué affirming their commitment to improve the everyday lives of the Vietnamese people through agricultural, medical, and educational programs while lamenting “the total absence of a present interest in peace” by the North Vietnamese. The Honolulu declaration nonetheless stated that the U.S. and South Vietnam agreed upon the need for continued diplomatic efforts for peace. By downplaying the focus on America’s military effort in Vietnam and by placing the blame on the North Vietnamese for failing to respond to any peace initiatives, Johnson hoped to diminish the impact of the hearings.91 In addition, he had the FBI closely monitor statements being made by the anti-war wing of the SFRC so as to compare them to communist propaganda and thereby discredit the critics as puppets (whether unwitting or not) of Hanoi.92

Johnson’s efforts to combat anti-war dissent only intensified in 1967. He instructed the CIA, in violation of its charter, to undertake public surveillance of the leaders of the peace movement within Congress and beyond in order to dig up anything that might discredit them. In addition, he increased the efforts begun in 1965 to shore up public support for the war. Officials from the Johnson administration also worked behind the scenes to organize the

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90 Levy, The Debate Over Vietnam, 142,
92 See Randall Woods, Fulbright, Vietnam and the Search for a Cold War Foreign Policy (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 119. Fulbright later wrote that he believed Johnson’s actions to be “a form of intimidation and subversion of the democratic process of open and free discussion” but that he was “not surprised that President Johnson ordered the investigation of Morse and me and others.” Fulbright to Mark Kirchmeier, Washington DC, 24 June 1988, JWF Post-Senatorial Papers, Series 2: Foreign Relations, Box 14, Folder 3.
Committee for Peace with Freedom in Vietnam, “an ostensibly private organization . . . to mobilize the ‘silent center’ in American politics.” The Johnson administration also worked hard to supply pro-war Senators with materials they could use to combat the anti-war group. Lastly, Johnson sought to show dissenters, both in Congress and in the public, that the war was going well. For example, General Westmoreland was brought back to Washington, the first time in American history that a military commander left an active war theatre to address Congress. He spoke of the progress being made in Vietnam and assured Congress that the United States would prevail, if “backed at home by resolve, confidence, patience, determination, and continued support.” Speaking of the recent “unpatriotic acts here at home,” Westmoreland stated that Hanoi took comfort in the support it appeared to be getting from anti-war critics in the US itself. The subtext of this speech was clear: dissent inspired the enemy to keep fighting. Dissenters should blame themselves for the failure to begin negotiations. One does not bother to combat something with Johnson’s extensive energy unless a perceived threat exists.

Indeed, Melvin Small’s *Johnson, Nixon, and the Doves* argues that the “antiwar movement and antiwar criticism in the media and Congress had a significant impact” on the Johnson administration. Small concludes that on many occasions, “involving such issues as bombing pauses, diplomatic and military initiatives, and major speeches, antiwar activities and dissent were important factors for the decision makers.” George Herring is less enthusiastic about using the word “significant” to describe the impact of the anti-war dissenters, choosing instead to define their impact as “subtle.” He agrees, however, that they did have an impact by arguing that the anti-war movement “forced Vietnam into the public consciousness and

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93 Herring, *America’s Longest War*, 220.
challenged the rationale for the war. . . . It exposed error and self-deception in the government’s claims. . . . Perhaps most importantly, the disturbances and divisions set off by the anti-war movement caused fatigue and anxiety among the policy makers and the public, thus eventually encouraging efforts to find a way out of the war.”

Both Herring and Small were writing about the larger anti-war movement, of which Senate dissent was but a small part; however, their conclusions can be applied specifically to the anti-war critics in Congress as well.

The Vietnam Hearings, by exposing the American public to ideas and arguments different from the Johnson administration’s, certainly brought the conflict into the public consciousness in a way that was previously lacking. They were the first real instance wherein reasoned criticism, distinct from the primarily left-wing forces (such as the Students for Democratic Society) that had previously dominated public dissent, achieved national attention. Because the American public saw a group of U.S. Senators, not to mention prestigious figures of authority like Kennan and Gavin, advocating alternative courses of action, an air of respectability was lent to dissent that undoubtedly encouraged those with doubts about the war to voice them. As Emil Deutsch of Earlham, Iowa wrote to Fulbright over a year later: “We believe that the country owes you eternal gratitude for having made the American people aware of the reality by the public hearings of the committee . . . containing some of the most rational, pertinent, and mature observations about United States foreign policy in the Johnson Administration, and its pitfalls.” Karl Phaler, a lieutenant junior grade in the Navy serving in Vietnam perhaps put it best when he wrote to Fulbright to say: “I am probably violating seventeen thousand directives in writing to you but it is not possible to keep silent, as you so amply demonstrate. You remind me of Kent in Lear, who in the face of dire threats from his

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96 Emil Deutsch, Earlham, Iowa, to Fulbright, 10 September 1967, JWF Papers, Series 48, Subseries 18, Box 51, Folder 3—1967 D-E.
king replied, ‘Whilst my tongue can yet give vent to clamor I’ll tell thee though doest evil!’ I pray you fare better than Kent.”97

To the extent that Senate dissent inspired others to speak out, or fueled citizens already critical of the war, that dissent contributed to the public debate on Vietnam, which, in turn, contributed to a public mood of frustration, if not division, over the war the longer it dragged on. It also furthered the growing schism within the Democratic Party itself. Tired of hearing that the U.S. was in fact winning in Vietnam and that it just needed to stay the course, Senator Eugene McCarthy announced his intention to challenge Johnson for the party nomination in the upcoming 1968 presidential election. He first expressed this intention in August 1967. “I remember when Gene McCarthy decided to run for president,” recalled Carl Macy. “It was during a hearing in the new Senate office building. . . .It became clear that Senator McCarthy had had it. He stood up and stomped out of the hearing room. I could see he was distraught so I got up and followed him out. . . .About all I remember of that conversation was McCarthy saying, ‘Someone has got to take them on. And if I have to run for President to do it, I’m going to do it.’”98

McCarthy publicly announced his challenge on the last day of November 1967—nine months before the Democratic Convention was set to open, and two months before North Vietnam’s Tet offensive. He said he was disturbed “by the absence of any positive suggestion for a compromise or negotiated political settlement,” and by fact that the Johnson administration “seems to have set no limit to the price it is willing to pay for a military victory.”99 Convinced that Johnson would never listen to the suggestions and proposals of the anti-war dissenters,

McCarthy opted for a new, more forceful, tactic: if Johnson could not be persuaded to alter his tactics, then Johnson should be challenged for the Presidency. Ending the war had become more important than trying to save Johnson’s presidency, even though McCarthy, and many of the anti-war Democrats, believed in his domestic agenda.

Running on a peace platform and drawing on the support of anti-war college students who canvassed door-to-door for him, McCarthy went on to win the New Hampshire primary in March 1968. As the Johnson administration had not taken his challenge seriously, McCarthy’s victory was perceived as a huge defeat for Johnson and his Vietnam policy and the situation was made even worse when four days later, Robert Kennedy announced that he too would run against Johnson on a platform of opposition to the war. Given his family name and his connections within the Party, Kennedy presented a more alarming opponent. Those loyal to Johnson urged him to do something “exciting and dramatic to recapture the peace issue.”

The result was Johnson’s nation-wide address on 31 March. “My fellow Americans,” he said, “tonight I want to speak to you of peace in Vietnam. No other question so preoccupies our people. . . . Tonight, in the hope that this action will lead to early talks, I am taking the first step to deescalate the conflict. We are reducing—substantially reducing—the present level of hostilities. And we are doing so unilaterally, and at once.” Johnson announced that the bombing of North Vietnam was being dramatically reduced so that only those areas just outside the demilitarized zone would be considered as targets and that even this limited bombing “could come to an early end—if our restraint is matched by restraint in Hanoi.” He reiterated America’s desire for peace, and a willingness to “send its representatives to any forum, at any time, to discuss the means of bringing this ugly war to an end.” In addition, Johnson called upon Britain and the Soviet Union, as co-chairs of the original Geneva conference and as

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100 Herring, *America’s Longest War*, 243.
members of the UN Security Council, to “do all they can to move from the unilateral act of de-
escalation” that he announced in the form of limiting the bombing “toward genuine peace in
Southeast Asia.” Lastly, Johnson stunned the nation by announcing: “I shall not seek, nor will I
accept, the nomination of my party for another term as your president.”

Johnson’s speech needs to be placed into context, of course. In addition to serving as a
response to the challenges made against his presidency and his policy, it came in the wake of
the Tet Offensive, which offered the anti-war movement evidence of the war’s folly by seeming
to provide proof that the Johnson administration had been lying, that the war was not going
well, and that it might in fact be unwinnable, while simultaneously calling the morality of the
war further in to question, particularly with the statement that it became necessary to destroy
villages in order to save them. Nonetheless, the 1968 peace initiative and the decision to not
seek re-election speak to the effect anti-war Senators had on Johnson’s policy. If not directly
responsible for Johnson’s decisions, they contributed to the “fatigue and anxiety” amongst
policy makers that Herring sees as encouraging efforts to find a way out of the war. They
helped push Johnson into seeking a new peace initiative while limiting the further escalation of
the war. Congressional reaction to the possibility of another major troop increase was quite
strong, with Congress demanding an explanation for Tet’s initial successes and insisting it share
in any decision to expand the war. Secretary Rusk endured eleven straight hours of questioning
by the SFRC, the majority of which was nationally televised. This reaction convinced

102 Historian David Levy described the effect of the Tet offensive as “titanic…[it] was probably the single most
important event in reversing American support for the war.” Levy, *The Debate Over Vietnam*, 144.
Johnson that he could not escalate the war without setting off a bitter debate, and it helped to convince him that something had to be done to scale down America’s involvement.\textsuperscript{104}

The anti-war movement’s impact was limited, however; while Johnson was willing to try a change in tactics, he was not advocating a change in goals. That this was the case was also made clear in his 31 March speech. Johnson asked “all Americans, whatever their personal interests or concern, to guard against divisiveness and all its ugly consequences” and he professed his belief that “now, no less than when the decade began, this generation of Americans is willing to ‘pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe to assure the survival and the success of liberty.’ Since those words were spoken by John F. Kennedy, the people of America have kept that compact with mankind's noblest cause. And we shall continue to keep it.”\textsuperscript{105} Furthermore, Johnson may have decided to retire, but it is important to remember that his hand-picked successor would carry the nomination during the Democratic National Convention.

The anti-war Senators’ quest to bring about an end to the war would also continue. Humphrey would lose the election but while Nixon campaigned on a promise to end the war, his concept of “peace with honor,” much like Johnson’s belief in an just and honorable settlement, continued to hold fast to a Cold War logic that demanded a South Vietnam free of communist influence. As Chapter Six will show, the clash between the Nixon administration and Congressional dissenters would be fierce. Fed up with Presidents who said they would end the war but whose actions appeared to prove them liars, the anti-war dissenters would try to end the war themselves by using the constitutional powers granted to the Congress.

\textsuperscript{104} Herbert Schandler, \textit{The Unmaking of a President: Lyndon Johnson and Vietnam} (Princeton, NJ; Princeton University Press, 1977), 207-17.
\textsuperscript{105} \textit{Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Lyndon B. Johnson, 1968-69}, Volume I, 469-476.
Chapter Five
NATO: The Call for “A Long Overdue Adjustment”

Beginning in 1965, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee sought to open a dialogue on the shape of American foreign policy. That year, the Committee attempted to reconstruct the foreign aid program. In February 1966, the Committee, through its televised hearings on Vietnam, strove to present to the American people alternatives to a further escalated and Americanized war in Southeast Asia. In June and July of 1966, the Committee once again held public hearings, this time with regards to American policy towards Europe. “We turn,” said Senator Fulbright in introducing these hearings, “to the subject of ‘Europe today’—not Europe as it has been in the past, or Europe as we have sometimes wished it to be, but Europe as it is now more than twenty years after the end of the Second World War. It is essential for all of us—members of the Congress, officers in the executive branch, citizens whose government this is—to understand the proper role of the United States in the contemporary world.”

The Europe of 1966 was a very different Europe from that of the late 1940s. It seemed time, therefore, to consider updating American policy to better reflect new realities, the most immediate of which concerned the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Although the SFRC believed “the issues confronting us are not restricted to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization but involve our relations with all of Europe,” France’s decision to withdraw from the integrated military command of NATO and to evict NATO’s bureaucratic apparatus from French soil served as the catalyst for the hearings. Emerging from the summer hearings, as well as from discussions within the Democratic Policy Committee, was a growing conviction, championed by Senate Majority Leader (and SFRC Committee member) Mike Mansfield, that a

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2 Ibid., iii.
substantial reduction in American military forces stationed in Europe would be more appropriate for an altered environment. Many reasons were put forth, ranging from economic considerations to facing the reality of the increasing military burden in Vietnam, but, ultimately, it came to be argued over the next couple of years, “the reduction of United States forces in Western Europe is justified on its own merits, as a long-overdue adjustment in United States policy with respect to Europe.”

The debate surrounding the nature of NATO and of America’s commitment to its European allies was often overshadowed by the debate surrounding Vietnam. In fact, even when the SFRC endeavored to hold hearings focused on NATO, the topic of Vietnam inevitably came up. As Fulbright observed in 1967, “We have had six days of hearings to date on our policy toward NATO. It seems to be a symptom of the times that one of these six days has been devoted exclusively to Vietnam.” In part, this was because America’s NATO allies were not supportive of America’s policy in Southeast Asia. Nonetheless, the debate over NATO has its own substantial importance in analyzing the breakdown of the Cold War consensus in the 1960s. America’s extensive commitment to the North Atlantic Alliance was, after all, foundational. The origins of the Cold War lay in Europe and NATO was the original alliance in the network that would come to encompass the commitment to defend the “free world.” Thus, while the debate over what constituted the proper relationship between the United States and NATO was often overshadowed by the realities of fighting an actual war in Southeast Asia, that members of the SFRC would challenge the necessity of an extensive American military

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commitment in Europe may even be a better indicator of the extent to which Cold War conceptions were being challenged.

After briefly outlining the evolution of NATO, this chapter examines the movement spearheaded by Mansfield to reduce America’s military presence in Europe. It considers the reasoning behind this desire, as well as the Johnson administration’s reaction to suggestions that the United States reduce its forces in Europe. While the Johnson administration was not blind to changes taking place in Europe, and while, ironically, it spoke of détente as a goal of American policy, it nonetheless remained committed to a strategy that, in the minds of those favoring a reassessment of that role, revealed little development beyond traditional Cold War blocs.

I.

The product of lengthy and complex negotiations, the North Atlantic Treaty (NAT) was signed 4 April 1949 by the United States, Canada, and ten European nations. The ultimate instrument of collective security, Article 5 of the NAT stated that “an armed attack against any one or more of [the parties] shall be considered an attack against them all and consequently they agree that . . . each of them . . . will assist the Party or Parties so attacked by taking forthwith . . . such action as it deems necessary . . . to restore and maintain the security of the North Atlantic area.” Article 3 of the treaty read: “In order more effectively to achieve the objectives of this Treaty, the Parties, separately and jointly, by means of continuous and effective self-help and mutual aid, will maintain and develop their individual and collective capacity to resist armed attack.”

While it took some time to create an organizational structure out of this defensive

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4 The full text of the NAT is appended in Lawrence Kaplan, NATO 1948: The Birth of the Transatlantic Alliance (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2007). This latest work by Kaplan on NATO provides an excellent overview of the origins of NATO. See also, Kaplan, NATO and the United States: The Enduring Alliance, Updated Edition (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1994); Kaplan, The United States and NATO: The Formative Years (Kentucky:
pact—to put the “O” in “NATO”, as it were—the NAT was a significant step in its own right because it was from within Article 3 that the seeds for the North Atlantic Treaty Organization sprouted. And while alliance systems may have been nothing new for Europe, the NAT was nonetheless a remarkable achievement because the United States, having eschewed any “entangling” connection with European nations for over one hundred and fifty years, became the cornerstone of the Alliance.

Though European in formation, it was North Korea’s invasion of South Korea in June 1950 that triggered the effective implementation of the NATO defense structure. The Truman administration perceived the attack as the opening gambit in a larger world-wide communist offensive.\(^5\) As the Korean War was waged, the United States pressed for the rearmament of West Germany, and the allies agreed to integrate NATO forces under a unified command headed by (at that time) General Dwight Eisenhower. NATO force levels also received a substantial boost with the decision to send four American divisions to Europe to complement the two divisions that had remained stationed in Germany after the war. It should be noted, of course, that neither the NAT itself nor the subsequent decision to station military forces in Europe passed without debate in the United States. The latter triggered, in the language of the SFRC at the time, a “so-called great debate.”\(^6\)

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\(^5\) Kathryn Weathersby’s working paper (#8) for the Cold War International History Project, “Soviet aims in Korea and the Origins of the Korean War, 1945-1950: New Evidence from the Soviet Archives,” discusses how the North Korean Invasion did not, in fact, signal any desire on Stalin and the Soviet Union’s part for aggression. She nonetheless argues, however, that “it was not the objective significance of the attack but rather the perception of what this event signified about Soviet intentions that so galvanized the American government.” See Page 6. Weathersby’s paper can be accessed at: [http://www.wilsoncenter.org/topics/pubs/ACFB76.pdf](http://www.wilsoncenter.org/topics/pubs/ACFB76.pdf)

\(^6\) *Legislative History of the Committee on Foreign Relations, 82nd Congress,* Senate Document 82-161, 21.
As implied by the use of “so-called” and as historian Robert David Johnson has noted, this debate was, in reality, “neither great nor a debate.”\(^7\) Both Johnson and the *Legislative History of Committee on Foreign Relations* for the 82\(^{nd}\) Congress (1951-1952) acknowledge that certain issues were debated, primarily (in Johnson’s words) “the balance of power between Congress and the Executive,” but, as the *Legislative History* states: “the preponderant sentiment was in favor of sending the four divisions to Europe to partake in the defense of that continent, on the belief that an attack on free Europe would endanger the security of the United States.”\(^8\)

Senate Resolution 99, which passed 69-21, stated that the NAT, “approved by the Senate by a vote of 82-12, is a major and historic act designed to build up the collective strength of the free peoples of the earth.” Because “the security of the United States and its citizens is involved with the security of its partners under the North Atlantic Treaty,” and “whereas Article 3 of the North Atlantic Treaty pledges” its signatories to “mutual aid” and “recent events have threatened world peace,” resulting in the parties of the NAT “mobilizing their productive capacities and manpower for self-defense,” the Senate resolved to station American forces in Europe as part of NATO and approved of the appointment of General Eisenhower as Supreme Allied Commander, Europe.\(^9\)

Following the stationing of American forces, NATO expanded in membership, as well as its military capacity. Greece and Turkey were admitted in 1952, and West Germany was included, via the Western European Union, in 1955. In 1952, the North Atlantic Council approved force levels of between twenty-five and thirty combat-ready divisions for central

\(^7\) Robert David Johnson, *Congress and the Cold War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 50.

\(^8\) Johnson, *Congress and the Cold War*, 50; *Legislative History of the Committee on Foreign Relations, 82nd Congress*, 22-23.

\(^9\) A copy of S.R. 99 can be found in *Background Information Relating to Peace and Security in Southeast Asia and Other Areas, 1970*, 24-25. RG 287, Box Y4-1465. Subsequent Supreme Allied Commanders were American as well.
Europe, to be in place by 1954; however, while NATO force levels increased over time, those goals were not met, even by the mid 1960s, and American forces continued to constitute the bulk of NATO’s military apparatus.\textsuperscript{10} As the Military Committee of the North Atlantic Assembly reported in 1968, the U.S. had 304,000 military personnel in Europe. In West Germany alone, the U.S. had over four combat divisions, and several battalions of medium and short-range missiles with nuclear warheads and their supporting troops. America had also stationed in Europe an air force of 85,000 men, with nine hundred tactical aircraft whose weaponry included nuclear weapons, and the Sixth Fleet, which consisted of a two carrier task force and a total of fifty ships, two-hundred air craft, and twenty-five thousand men. Additionally, of American forces stationed elsewhere, five divisions, two hundred-fifty ships, twenty-five hundred planes, 240,000 men in the Atlantic fleet, and “a considerable portion of the United States Tactical Air Force” could also be committed to NATO. In sum, “the American military contribution to NATO constitutes a formidable military organization.”\textsuperscript{11}

If NATO’s forces seemed secure and stable in 1968, the same could not be said of the situation at the time of Charles de Gaulle’s 7 March 1966 notification by letter to Lyndon Johnson that France was discontinuing its membership in NATO’s integrated military command structure and requiring that NATO forces, councils, and headquarters be removed from French soil. De Gaulle’s decision was not that surprising to the Johnson administration; the “crisis” had, in fact, been incubating for some time. Since the late 1950s, relations within NATO had

\textsuperscript{10} By 1967 NATO force level commitments were as follows: Belgium - 2 divisions; Canada - 1/3 of a division; West Germany - 12 thin divisions, or the equivalent of 8 full divisions; Luxembourg - one artillery battalion attached to the American forces in Germany; the Netherlands - 2 divisions: the United Kingdom - 3 thin divisions which were not combat ready; and the US - 5 divisions and three armored cavalry regiments (approximately 210,000 to 250,000 men) stationed in Germany. Mansfield had obtained this information. See Mansfield Papers, Series XIII: Senate Leadership, Sub-Series 3: Foreign Affairs, Box 41, Folder 4.

been complicated by questions of organizational command, particularly as it related to nuclear weapons. The Berlin situation, as well as the growing nuclear and missile capability of the Soviet Union, created doubts in Europe that the U.S. would actually use nuclear weapons to defend Western Europe, even if it was willing to integrate them into NATO’s forces. De Gaulle, in particular, expressed this doubt upon regaining power in 1958. Related to this concern was de Gaulle’s adamant belief that France ought to actively participate in the planning of any NATO nuclear strategy and that France should have some control over any nuclear weapons placed in French territory as well as be permitted to pursue its own nuclear program. De Gaulle thus proposed a tripartite body—a Franco-American-British directorate—that would coordinate and oversee NATO strategy.

De Gaulle was concerned about more than the nuclear question, however. For de Gaulle, the question of nuclear integration was part and parcel of the larger question of the very nature of the Atlantic alliance. To him, the alliance was fundamentally imbalanced, with the United States frequently placing it allies and their concerns in a position subordinate to America’s own interests. Even though the United States possessed far greater military power, this subordination was unacceptable to de Gaulle and it become all the more so as European strength—economically, politically, and militarily—continued to grow in the 1960s. The real dilemma facing the alliance as the 1960s progressed was, in the words of the Political Committee of the North Atlantic Assembly, “how to establish equality of rights and duties between the Allies within a politico-military framework in which the actual preponderance of one of them produces permanent imbalance.”¹² These questions seemed all the more important as doubts about American’s military commitment to Europe continued to fester as a result of the

increasing military commitment of the United States in Vietnam—a commitment which might well draw American strength, and not just attention, away from Europe.

Ultimately, de Gaulle held a different vision of Europe and the Alliance than the United States. While the United States tended to favor the status quo, de Gaulle sought, from 1958 onward, to bring about his “revisionist” design—a design that foresaw a more independent Europe within the context of the Atlantic alliance on the one hand, while seeking on the other to transform Europe and, indeed, the international system itself, beyond Cold War blocs. Much of the contest between the differing strategies and visions for Europe and NATO would play out over the issue of strategic coordination in general, and the nuclear question more specifically.

The Eisenhower administration rebuffed the original 1958 proposal for the creation of a tripartite body, although talks did commence in December 1959. The Kennedy administration, although it pursued a “grand design” intended to bring about a “true partnership” between the United States and Europe, focused far more on economic relations and questions of trade than it did on plans for a multilateral force (MLF) for NATO. The MLF, which called for the creation of a naval fleet armed with U.S. nuclear warheads but jointly manned and controlled by various NATO nations, was more the dream of “Atlanticists” within the State Department, such as George Ball, then it was of Kennedy himself, or of Johnson when he assumed office. Neither pursued it with much conviction and de Gaulle, for his part, nicknamed the MLF the “multilateral farce” because the Americans insisted on retaining a veto over the authorization of the use of nuclear force as well as limiting France’s own nuclear program, thus undermining both the spirit of the MLF itself as well as the attempt to create the strategic foundation for a

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more independent Europe. Moreover, de Gaulle did not like the prospect of a nuclearized West Germany, for which its participation in the MLF would open the door. France’s refusal to join the MLF as proposed combined with British reticence and Soviet opposition—which greatly concerned Johnson, who had an interest in détente in Europe—to effectively kill the MLF in 1964.14

During the course of the MLF negotiations, de Gaulle had already taken steps to begin withdrawing France from NATO’s integrated command. In fact, he made the first move in this direction in 1959 (after Eisenhower first rebuffed the tripartite plan) by withdrawing France’s Mediterranean fleet from NATO’s Supreme Allied Command and refusing to allow American nuclear weapons to be stored on French soil. In June 1963, de Gaulle withdrew France’s Channel and Atlantic fleets while simultaneously insisting on building France’s own nuclear deterrent. Thus, his March 1966 decision to remove the remainder of French forces from NATO’s integrated command was but a continuation of a policy already underway. The Political Committee at the NATO Parliamentarians Conference in 1965 had noted: “the year just past has been marked by a permanent division between the allies on the organization’s political and strategic concepts.”15 By the start of 1966, the only question really left was one of when, exactly, de Gaulle would complete what he had already started.


Because it did not come as a surprise to the Johnson administration, however, does not mean that de Gaulle’s action had minimal effect. Historian Lawrence Kaplan calls it “the most traumatic moment in NATO’s history” even though France made it clear it was not leaving the alliance itself, just its integrated command.\textsuperscript{16} As Frédéric Bozo writes, “the structural crisis of NATO was transformed into an existential crisis.” Bozo is quick to point out, however, that Gaullism did not originate this crisis all on its own, although it certainly “diagnosed” it. The real origins of the crisis are found in the changing international situation itself: the growing détente between Western and Eastern European blocs—which de Gaulle had been pursuing as part of his design for Europe and for which the successful outcome, so he believed, depended on reforming the Atlantic alliance—and the emerging détente between the United States and the Soviet Union themselves within Europe. These factors challenged the “raison d’être of a NATO whose creation had been shaped under the massive and imminent threat of the USSR.”\textsuperscript{17} Nonetheless, it was how the United States and the other NATO members responded to the structural crisis generated by France’s 1966 actions that would determine the extent of the existential questions facing NATO. While the SFRC wanted to explore the impact of France’s decision in greater depth, which is why it elected to hold hearings on American policy towards Europe in the summer of 1966, the Johnson administration felt no existential questions needed to be raised. NATO was just as important in 1966 as it had been in 1949 when founded, and while the Soviet threat may have diminished since that time, it had not disappeared. Thus, it was felt, France’s actions should not be allowed to lead to further drastic change within the alliance.

\textsuperscript{17} Bozo, \textit{Two Strategies for Europe}, xvi.
II.

On 23 March 1966, in his first public address on NATO in the wake of France’s actions, Johnson declared that the United States was “determined to join with thirteen of her other allies to preserve and strengthen the deterrent strength of NATO,” which had to that date succeeded in deterring war

not only because of our integrated military power, but because of the political unity of purpose to which that power has been directed . . . there is a political integrity and identity of interests that transcends personalities and issues of the moment . . . NATO today, therefore, must be shaped on the experience of the past . . . for the world is still full of peril for those who prize and cherish liberty.

Johnson further stated:

if our collective effort should falter, and our common determination be eroded, the foundation of the Atlantic’s present stability would certainly be shaken. . . . It is this strength—of ideas as well as strength of arms, of peaceful purpose as well as power—that offers such hope for the reconciliation of Western Europe with the people of Eastern Europe. To surrender that strength now . . . would imperil the promise of that day when men and women of all Europe shall again move freely among each other.18

Similar sentiments about the importance of NATO were put forth by representatives of the Johnson administration during the SFRC’s summer hearings on the question of American policy towards Europe. General Lauris Norstad, former Supreme Allied Commander (1956-1962), used his testimony to laud NATO for its success: “No NATO territory has fallen behind the Iron Curtain.” Moreover:

This committee will remember that neither the Truman Doctrine nor the Marshall Plan, brilliant and generous concepts as they were, achieved great success on their own. The full promise of these noble efforts was not realized until NATO was organized and defensive strength started to come into being, thus supplying the missing ingredient—confidence—on which the security of

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our Middle Eastern allies was established and on which the growth of the
European economy has been built over the last ten to fifteen years.\textsuperscript{19}

NATO was thus portrayed as a building block in the Cold War struggle with the Soviet Union, a
cornerstone in American foreign policy. As such, it was necessary to maintain America’s
commitment to the organization, especially in the face of the challenge created by de Gaulle.
“We have taken a position of leadership,” he concluded, “and whether we say so or not, we like
it, and it is good for us, and, fortunately, it is good for the world.”\textsuperscript{20}

McGeorge Bundy’s testimony in his capacity as former Special Assistant to Kennedy
and Johnson on National Security Affairs was similar in tone and content. “The United States is
the prime mover of NATO.” “We have power,” he said, and Americans “have accepted
responsibility.” Anything that the United States does in Europe, Bundy declared, “must build
on the old things: on the basic commitment of the United States as written and ratified in Article
5; on the effective assertion of that commitment in the person of the Supreme Allied
Commander; and on the continued presence of major American fighting forces. . . .NATO is not
all we care about in Europe, but nothing that we care about in Europe is possible without
NATO.”\textsuperscript{21} “The Atlantic Alliance,” he concluded, “is not ours alone, but it is ours for good; we
can be proud of it; we must work on it; we must build on it for peace.”\textsuperscript{22}

If the Johnson administration and its spokesmen believed that France’s decision to
withdraw from the integrated military command should not affect NATO other than in terms of
reorganization, there were some in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that thought
otherwise. Shortly after de Gaulle’s letter to Johnson had been made public, but before

\textsuperscript{19} United States Policy Towards Europe, SFRC Hearings, (June-July) 1966, 86-97.
\textsuperscript{20} Ibid., 111.
\textsuperscript{21} Ibid., 6-7.
\textsuperscript{22} Ibid., 11.
Johnson’s first publicized response on 23 March, Carl Marcy, the Chief of Staff of the SFRC, wrote to Fulbright:

I think the time has come to give de Gaulle a pat on the back instead of a kick in the pants. . . . He and the French have some very real and justifiable grievances against the way the U.S. operates its bases in France.

I also suspect that State Department policy toward NATO is frozen in the old NATO straitjacket and all they think of is how to keep the old boy alive even if French defections means putting NATO in a wheelchair.

The myth is that NATO keeps the Soviets from overrunning Western Europe, whereas the reality is that they no longer want to overrun Western Europe, but wish they could be a part of it.23

Even as Marcy’s letter circulated through the SFRC in mid-March, Mansfield was calling for a re-evaluation of NATO. This call, alongside Marcy’s suggestion that thinking on NATO had become frozen, provided the specific impetus (in the general wake of France’s actions) for the SFRC hearings that commenced in late June. Fulbright wanted the opportunity to discuss NATO with individuals who could speak on the matter with some authority on the Alliance itself, while also providing an indication of the Johnson administration’s thinking on NATO.

As Bundy and Norstad, as well as George Ball, and C. Douglas Dillon (Johnson’s Secretary of the Treasury, and former U.S. Ambassador to France, 1953-1957), spoke during the SFRC hearings of the success of NATO, the importance of the larger Atlantic alliance to the United States, the importance of a strong American commitment to the Alliance in turn, and the continued need to work in and build towards greater partnership with Europe, some members of the committee expressed sympathy for some of de Gaulle’s viewpoints. George Aiken, for instance, believed that behind de Gaulle’s complaints that the Supreme Allied Commander was always an American rested a valid point. France and other nations also contributed to NATO; therefore it was not unreasonable for them to expect a greater share of authority.24

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23 Marcy to Fulbright, 14 March 1966, Carl Marcy Files, RG 46, National Archives, DC.
wondered if “we have not, perhaps unconsciously, assumed an attitude that everybody ought to accept our views. . . . It seems to me that in Europe, as in other parts of the world, we have shown a tendency to insist that our views as to what is in the best interests of others must be right—for us and for them—and that if their views do not agree with ours they must be wrong.” While Fulbright did not dispute the success of NATO regarding the original purpose for which it was founded, he nonetheless believed that “the very fact that NATO has been successful tends to make us feel that it is the only answer, and yet many changes in other relationships have taken place and I am beginning to think the General [De Gaulle] may be right in seeking some new kind of organization.”

Senator Frank Church, who had toured Europe in the wake of de Gaulle’s March pronouncements in order to assess European views of the alliance, concurred.

The thing that strikes me . . . is that little attention has been given to the subjects that were most plainly on the minds of Europeans when I visited Western Europe in May. There has been a good deal of comment here this morning upon what a fine instrument NATO has been, and I concur in that. . . . I found very little feeling in Europe that NATO should be abandoned. . . . On the other hand, there is a strong feeling in Europe that, partly because of the success of NATO, but for other reasons as well. . . . the danger of war has subsided. . . . Therefore Europeans were talking about seizing the opportunity to bring down some of the cold war barriers. . . . I think we ought to be asking to what extent American policy in Europe moves in this direction.

Church was willing to concede that the American objective in Europe, which he believed to be integration, was “pregnant in the promise it holds out for Europe and the world,” but he was not certain that “the only alternative to our protection is retrogression to the kind of Europe that existed prior to the wars, that such a black and white, either/or proposition does, in fact, accurately represent the range of alternatives that do exist.” “If we reach eastward with our

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26 Ibid., 99.
27 Ibid., 41-2.
diplomacy,” believed Church, “I think American policy will remain relevant to European aspirations. . . If we content ourselves instead with emphasizing the rather negative aspects of the old status quo, dwelling endlessly on what it has accomplished in the years past, then I think there will be growing indifference towards American policy and American objectives, and our influence in Europe will wane.”

As some of these larger, almost philosophical issues, regarding America’s policy towards Europe in general were considered in the SFRC hearings, a separate body, the Democratic Policy Committee (chaired by Mansfield), began to focus on the specific question of the size and scope of America’s military presence in Europe. On 14 July 1966, Mansfield wrote Johnson to inform him that:

during a Democratic Policy Committee meeting yesterday, the question of the size of the U.S. military contingent in Western Europe was raised. . . In response to a request for an expression of the wishes of the Committee, it was suggested and agreed that I should communicate to you, as the unanimous judgment of the Committee, the following:

1. There should be a “substantial” reduction of U.S. forces stationed in Europe;
2. Unless tangible and significant steps are taken promptly in this direction by the Executive Branch, it should be anticipated that the Senate, by a sense resolution or in some other fashion, may be expected to try stimulate a reduction of U.S. forces in Western Europe.

Some members of the Policy Committee, such as Senators Stuart Symington and Russell Long, sought to reduce America’s military present in Europe because of a growing balance-of-payments crisis and out of a belief that the Europeans had themselves reneged on their

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28 Ibid., 351, 372
29 A copy of this letter was included in the Minutes of the Meeting of the Democratic Policy Committee, 18 July 1966. Don Oberdorfer Mansfield Biography Research Papers, Box 17, Folder 3: Troops in Europe 1966-1968, K. Ross Toole Archives, Mike and Maureen Mansfield Library, University of Montana, Missoula. The members of the Policy Committee included, in addition to Mansfield, Senators Daniel Breswter (Md), Philip Hart (Mi), Carl Hayden (Az), Danieil Inouye (Hi), Russell Long, (La), Warren Magnuson (Wa), Edmund Muskie (Me), John Pastore (RI), Richard Russell (Ga), George Smathers (Fl), and Stuart Symington (Mo). Long, Symington and Smathers were also members of the SFRC (alongside Mansfield).
commitment to their own defense and America thus should not be expected to bear the burden all by itself. Others, such as Richard Russell and Mansfield, while in agreement with these reasons, focused on the changing conditions within Europe itself as reason for reducing the military contingent in Europe.  

At the end of August, Mansfield and the twelve other members of the Policy Committee proposed Senate Resolution (S.R.) 300, a sense of the senate resolution calling for “substantial reduction” of U.S. forces stationed in Europe. In introducing the resolution, Mansfield stated it was the product of seven meetings held by the Policy Committee in which “concern over what appeared to be an excessive and unchanging deployment of ground troops in Western Europe” was “raised in connection with a general discussion of the international position of the nation” in light of “balance of payments difficulties and enormous and growing military costs [associated with Vietnam].” Moreover, the relationship between Western and Eastern Europe had been “altered for the better” since 1951, when America initially committed extra divisions to European defense. After its introduction, seventeen additional Senators added their name in sponsorship to S.R. 300.

S.R. 300 was not voted on, however. It created substantial debate within the Senate as a whole, so much so that Fulbright, though a supporter, believed that the matter was significant enough that the SFRC and the Armed Services Committee should hold hearings before the Senate voted on it. As the Eighty-Ninth Congress was about to come to close, there would not be time for this happen. The resolution also faced strong opposition from the White House, with the Johnson administration arguing that a reduction in U.S. forces in Europe, especially in

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31 Congressional Record, 31 August 1966, 20554-20560.
the face of France’s withdrawal from the military organization of NATO, would be interpreted as a sign of weakness by the other members of NATO and, more importantly, by the Soviets. The administration also argued that it was in the delicate process of negotiating with the rest of the alliance members about increasing their military commitment to NATO so any U.S. reduction would be detrimental as well as blatantly hypocritical. Furthermore, the resolution would undercut American efforts to negotiate with the Soviets for a mutual scale-back of military forces in Europe.32

Mansfield was somewhat shocked by the reaction the resolution had produced. “I am a little disturbed,” he said, by “the violent attack which has been launched against this sense of senate resolution. I do not regard it as cause for hysteria when it proposed to do no more than give expression to what the Senate thinks about a question of some importance to the nation.”33 Nonetheless, out of deference for the trilateral talks that were about to convene between the U.S., Britain, and West Germany, Mansfield agreed to defer the issue until the Ninetieth Congress convened the following January.

Mansfield wasted little time, however; on 19 January 1967, less than ten days after the Ninetieth Congress opened, he introduced S.R. 49, which stated that it was the sense of the Senate “that a substantial reduction of United States forces permanently stationed in Europe can be made without adversely affecting either our resolve or our ability to meet our commitment under the North Atlantic Treaty.” The resolution had forty-five additional sponsors.34

basic idea behind the resolution would remain the subject of consideration for the next year and a half.

III.

Why did Mansfield, and those of like-mind, believe so strongly in the idea that the level of forces stationed in Europe could be substantially reduced? Arguments for a reduction in force-levels had, of course, been raised before. Indeed, Eisenhower had argued, in 1963, that “one American division can ‘show the flag’ as definitely as can several.” In stating this, though, Eisenhower was in no way suggesting a reduction in America’s general commitment to Europe. “Our country’s responsibility for helping to maintain world peace, for meeting and turning back the enslaving forces of Communism, for aiding the family of free nations to build a more secure future—these are not distant and apart from our daily life,” he argued; “they are an extension of it.” To Eisenhower, America did not need six divisions in Europe to prove to the Soviets its commitment to defend the region; America’s “inner courage, strength, and wisdom…even more than sheer power, is the deciding factor.”

Mansfield himself shared this view for a time. In the face of over twenty-five Russian divisions stationed in Eastern Europe, he said as early as 1961,

it is clear that the U.S. divisions in Europe, as such, have lost real meaning in terms of the shield concept of NATO. Protestations to the contrary, their real significance is as a symbol of our commitment to join in the defense of Western Europe with all our strength and all our weapons if that area is invaded. A symbol of this kind would be no less a symbol if the U.S. commitment were to consist of two or three divisions.

While not for a moment suggesting that America should reconsider its commitment to Europe, Mansfield nonetheless hoped that a reduction of U.S. forces might be possible if the Soviets showed “willingness to cut their forces in Hungary, Poland, and Germany by a roughly proportionate number…That would be an important step towards easing tensions in Europe.”

Thus, as early as 1961, Mansfield saw that an alteration in U.S. force-levels could be used to bring about a form of détente in Europe, even if any alteration was conditional upon a corresponding reduction in Soviet forces.

By 1966-67, Mansfield no longer believed U.S. reductions need be conditional upon mirrored Soviet actions. This is not to say, however, that the Mansfield of this period was suggesting the U.S. abandon its commitment to Europe. Indeed, in introducing S.R. 49, Mansfield noted:

> a substantial reduction of United States troops in Europe would still leave an impressive military presence on the European continent. . . . Indeed, what nation would be so foolhardy as to believe that a reduction . . . is evidence of weakness or lack of will? What nation would be so foolhardy as to conclude that the United States, which has fielded several hundred thousand men in Vietnam, on the fringes of its national interests, would abandon the North Atlantic region which is the cornerstone of those interests? If there is war again in Europe, or over it—make no mistake—the United States will be a party to it, whether or not there are six divisions or six battalions of American forces on the European continent.

While not advocating a change in America’s basic commitment to Europe’s security and defense, Mansfield (and others) nonetheless believed that the U.S. could reduce the size of its military force.

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36 Personal Opinion of Mansfield, for release 2 January 1961, Mansfield Papers, Series XXI: Speeches and Reports, Box 41.
37 Congressional Record, 19 January 1967. Mansfield statement was inserted in United States Troops in Europe, Report of the Combined Subcommittee on Foreign Relations and Armed Services Committees on the Subject of United States Troops in Europe to the Committee on Foreign Relations and Committee on Armed Services, United States Senate, 15 Oct 1968, 16-17. RG 287, Box Y4-1472.
There were several reasons for this. As noted in the discussion of S.R. 300, economic
considerations were a factor. By extension, so too were considerations of burden-sharing within
the alliance. The maintenance of substantial forces in Europe was costly, and the foreign
exchange costs incurred by the U.S. through stationing its forces in Europe placed a strain on
America’s balance of payments. In light of the recovery of European economies it seemed only
fair that they bear some of the costs as well. Mansfield began making this argument in the
early 1960s when he advocated for “the continuing and deepening of military cooperation under
NATO, with the Europeans bearing an increased share of the costs in manpower and materiel,
commensurate with the improvement of their economic situation.”\(^{38}\) Concerns about the
economy continued to persist, especially as the cost and manpower requirements of the Vietnam
War escalated. Stuart Symington was perhaps the biggest proponent of making cutbacks to
alleviate pressures on the American economy, although Mansfield certainly shared his views.
As he pointed out in the summer of 1968:

[Senator Symington] has been trying for sometime to impress upon us the
significant relationship which exists between overseas costs of defense on the
one hand and budgetary deficits and balance of payments difficulties on the
other...He has been saying, further, that it is no longer very wise or prudent
to go on spending billions each year as we have been for so many years to
keep six divisions of U.S. forces in Western Europe...My own view on this
point goes back a long time to the days of the Eisenhower administration.\(^{39}\)

Indeed, Mansfield thought the financial agreement the Johnson administration had
worked out with West Germany—as part of a series of trilateral talks between the U.S, Britain,
and West Germany held in the wake of France’s withdrawal and as the Senate drive to reduce

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\(^{38}\) Mike Mansfield, “Changing Europe and United States Policies,” Speech delivered at Springfield Educational
Council, Springfield, Massachusetts, 10 October 1962. Mansfield Papers, Series XXI: Speeches and Reports, Box
41. See also Don Oberdorfer, Senator Mansfield: The Extraordinary Life of a Great American Statesman and

\(^{39}\) Statement by Mike Mansfield, 22 July 1968, Mansfield Papers, Series XXII: Senate Leadership, 1961-1975m
Sub-Series 3—Foreign Affairs, Box 41, Folder 1.
forces in the summer of 1966 got underway—was useless. West Germany had agreed to offset
the foreign exchange costs the U.S. incurred by stationing troops there by purchasing $500
million in medium-term U.S. government bonds by the end of 1968 as well as by decreasing the
amount of U.S. dollars it converted to gold, thereby lessening the strain on the American dollar.
To Mansfield, the agreement was “of little value, and . . . at best, only a stop-gap proposal”
since it cost over $800 million dollars to maintain the four hundred thousand troops, and their
dependants, stationed in West Germany.40 By mid-1968, Mansfield believed “the hour is late—
very late—for the orderly redeployment of American forces in Europe. For too long there has
been dodge, delay and distortion in the examination of the issue. What should have been done
as a matter of reasoned policy a long time ago . . . may now be bursting upon as a matter of
fiscal anxiety and monetary inevitability.”41 As this last sentence implies, however, economic
considerations alone did not drive Mansfield’s movement for the reduction of U.S. forces
stationed in Europe.

If, in the early 1960s, Mansfield was advocating a reduction of U.S. force levels as a
means to reflect changing economic realities, of greater importance to him were the changing
international realities—beyond the mere recovery of European economies. “What begins to
emerge,” said Mansfield in 1962

is a far different portrait of the all-European situation than that which
prevailed a decade or more ago in the period in which our general
comprehensions were formed and our basic political and defensive policies
established. The contemporary portrait hardly suggests a Western Europe
cowering in fear before the threat of imminent Soviet invasion, or subversion

40 Statement by Mike Mansfield, 14 June 1968, Mansfield Papers, Series XXII: Senate Leadership, 1961-
1975m Sub-Series 3—Foreign Affairs, Box 41, Folder 1. See Lawrence Kaplan, The Long Entanglement: NATO’s
First Fifty Years (Westport: Praeger, 1999), 140-141 for more on the trilateral agreements. See also, H.W. Brands,
The Wages of Globalism: Lyndon Johnson and the Limits of American Power (New York: Oxford University Press,
1995).
41 Statement by Mike Mansfield, 22 July 1968, Mansfield Papers, Series XXII: Senate Leadership, 1961-1975,
Sub-Series 3—Foreign Affairs, Box 41, Folder 1.
from Eastern Europe. It hardly suggests a Britain, Germany, France, or Italy which hold that the way to induce change in Eastern Europe is to isolate it. It hardly suggests Western Europe standing firm, or even standing still, insofar as contact with Eastern Europe is concerned. On the contrary, the current situation appears to be that of a Europe which, while it may be separated on ideological lines, is finding, through an extensive commerce and other contacts, a tolerable way to live with that division.  

Since the situation in Europe had changed then it naturally followed that American policies in Europe ought to evolve as well. Indeed, Mansfield prefaced some of the arguments Fulbright made in his ground-breaking “Old Myths and New Realities” — when he spoke of cutting loose from “established myths” and facing the new realities of “the cold war and East-West relations” — a year and a half later.

The unfolding of the drama with France, which culminated with the 1966 withdrawal, served only to provide further evidence of the changing conditions in Europe. In introducing S.R. 300 in 1966, Mansfield pointed to Europe’s lack of initiative in striving to meet the force goals established in the early 1950s as well as to the increased trade and communication between Western Europe and Eastern Europe as evidence that NATO allies have themselves “recognized a significant change in the East-West relationship.” In introducing S.R. 49, Mansfield stated that the resolution “calls upon those who remain shackled to an outdated policy based on Europe as it was yesterday to face up to the fact that tomorrow will always seem to be a better time to take the action which is urgently required today.” The subtext was quite clear: American policy towards NATO and Europe was stuck in the past, and it would do the Johnson administration well to recognize this and begin to formulate new policies. It seems

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43 See Chapter One, 36-37.
44 Congressional Record, 31 August 1966, 20554-60.
to me,” said Mansfield, “that it is long past time not only to recognize contemporary European realities but also to act on them.”45

Other members of the SFRC had developed a similar viewpoint. Fulbright had introduced the 1966 hearings on U.S. policy towards Europe with a reminder that the Europe of the 1960s was markedly different than the Europe of the late 1940s and that it was essential for America to adjust to contemporary realities. Church was discontented during those hearings with testimony focusing on NATO’s success in holding back a major communist take-over in Western Europe because he believed that it indicated a failure on the part of the Johnson administration to acknowledge contemporary European ideas of seizing the opportunity to “bring down Cold War barriers,” and to start shifting America’s European policy in that direction. After touring Europe to assess viewpoints on NATO in the wake of the French decision to withdraw its military contribution, Church had reported back that one of the objectives “in the revision of NATO should be to make the alliance outward looking, an instrument concerned not only with the negative aspects of military defense, but also with the positive aspects of the quest for peace.”46 Wayne Morse was also interested in this. The “big outstanding issue in Europe is still the peace settlement of World War II,” he said, and “the question is whether the huge military force of NATO, including some 300,000 Americans, will ever contribute to a settlement of that issue, or whether it will only serve to make the [division of Europe] permanent.”47

46 United States Policy Towards Europe, SFRC Hearings, June-July 1966, 1, 41-42; Executive Sessions of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Volume XVII, 1966, 836
47 United States Policy Towards Europe, SFRC Hearings, June-July 1966, 152.
By 1966-67, then, there was a growing belief that America’s European policy, particularly as expressed through its extensive military presence in NATO, was not only outdated, but that it might actually be hindering the movement towards relaxed tensions in Europe, and, by extension, between the U.S and the Soviet Union—a movement the Johnson administration itself spoke of as one of its goals.\(^48\) The economic arguments for the reduction of U.S. force levels in Europe, and the corresponding demands for increased burden-sharing within the alliance, would become increasingly emphasized in the face of America’s growing economic difficulties in the last few years of the decade. References to the growing burden of fielding nearly a half a million men in Southeast Asia were also increasingly made as further rationale for reducing the size of America’s military presence in Europe, especially by Stuart Symington\(^49\) and usually as part of a larger discourse on the over-extension of American power in general. Mansfield also frequently pointing to these reasons, but he continued to focus on the changing realities in Europe as the primary reason for reducing America’s military presence on the continent: “My own view, I reiterate,” (he said in early 1967) “is that with or without a problem of balance of payments, with or without the immense requirements of Vietnam, the reduction of United States forces in Western Europe is justified on its own merits, as a long-overdue adjustment in US policy with respect to Europe.”\(^50\)

\(^{48}\) For example, in October 1966, Johnson delivered a speech were he said: “We want the Soviet Union and the nations of Eastern Europe to know that we and our allies shall go step by step with them as far as they are willing to advance. He spoke of trade liberalization and scientific and cultural exchange as a possible means to bring about "peaceful engagement.” See Schwartz, *Lyndon Johnson and Europe*, 135-136.

\(^{49}\) Symington gave an address in March 1968 in which he recommended that “any new troops for Vietnam be taken from the troops we now have stationed in Europe instead of asking for new draftees.” Remarks inserted into *United States Troops in Europe*, Report of the Combined Subcommittee on Foreign Relations and Armed Services Committees, 186.

\(^{50}\) Mansfield Statement, 19 January 1967, reprinted in *United States Troops in Europe*, Report of the Combined Subcommittee on Foreign Relations and Armed Services Committees, 17. Mansfield reiterated the primary reason for his sponsorship of S.R. 49 a few months later, on 13 April, stating: “Insofar as I am concerned, my support of a reduction of US forces in Europe is based not on the competing military demands of Vietnam. It is not based on the cost or exchange problem, nor even on the indisposition of the Western Europeans to meet their mutual commitments to NATO, except, as it is evidence of a change for the better in the situation in all Europe. Rather, I
Mansfield was deeply disturbed by what he saw as the “rigidity” of American policy, as expressed through Johnson’s opposition to a substantial reduction in American forces, which he interpreted as an attempt to simply “maintain the status quo and postpone the hard decisions.” He no longer believed, by 1966, that the U.S. should only reduce its force levels in Europe if the Soviet Union reciprocated, or even for that matter, that reductions should come only as a result of negotiations with the other members of NATO. “I do not believe that we must wait for others to act first or that we must negotiate formal agreements on troop reductions in order to do what is right,” he stated; “the actions of others may or may not be reciprocal or syncretic with our own. Both the western European nations and the Soviet Union have made individual decisions of this kind.” Because a reduction in U.S. force levels in Europe could have been achieved earlier in the 1960s, even before de Gaulle’s announcement that France was leaving NATO’s integrated command necessitated reorganization, Mansfield believed the U.S. “should make up for some of the lost time now by assuming the initiative ourselves; because if we do not assume the initiative here, every administration that comes into office will say the same thing their predecessor said. They will say we are going to keep the defenses there.” S.R. 49 represented, then, an attempt “to halt a long inertia” in policy making circles and, by extension, to make the most of the growing détente in Europe as a means to move beyond outdated Cold War conceptions. S.R. 49 faced an uphill battle, however.

IV.

While there were a great many in the Senate who were supportive of the idea that force reductions should at least be considered, many of these individuals were wary of the possible consequences of unilateral U.S. action. The Johnson administration, along with the U.S. military command in Europe and other members of NATO, opposed substantial reduction of U.S. force levels in Europe, particularly if it resulted from a unilateral action on behalf of the United States.

S.R. 49 was followed by the introduction of S.R. 83 a month later, in February 1967. Sponsored by Senator Jacob Javits (R-NY) and eleven other signatories, this resolution declared it the sense of the senate that the European members of NATO “be urged to make a greater contribution”; however, any redeployment of U.S. forces was “properly an item for determination in consultation with out NATO allies.” While not opposed to a reduction in America’s European force levels, Javits offered his resolution as an alternative to Mansfield’s, in that it expressed support for a reduction but only through negotiations within the alliance, rather than as a result of any unilateral action.

The SFRC and the Senate Armed Services Committee created a joint subcommittee on the subject of U.S. troops in Europe to consider these two resolutions and the larger issues they touched upon.53 Appearing before the subcommittee, Defense Secretary McNamara reported that five trilateral meetings between the U.S., Britain, and West Germany had been held, with a sixth underway, the result of which was new financial arrangements to address the balance of payments problem created by stationing troops in Germany. In addition, the talks were

53 United States Troops in Europe, Hearings before the Combined Subcommittee of Foreign Relations and Armed Services Committees on the Subject of United States Troops in Europe, United States Senate, 90th Congress, 1st Session, 26 April & 3 May, 1967 (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1967), 1. RG 287, Box Y4-1472. The members of the subcommittee included: Mansfield (Chair), Fulbright, John Sparkman, Frank Church, Bourke Hickenlooper, George Aiken, John Stennis, Stuart Symington, Henry M. Jackson; Jack Miller, and James B. Pearson.
broaching the subject of or redeployment to the U.S. of 35,000 of the military personnel now in Germany. Thus, the resolution would only interfere with Johnson’s efforts to achieve these goals, goals which would address the resolution’s intent without the need for the actual resolution to go before the Senate. “I think there is such ferment in Europe at this time that such action by the Senate might well be misconstrued,” he concluded. “The foundation of the defense of Europe is, of course, the political commitment of the United States to that defense. For either the western Europeans or the Soviets to begin to doubt the force of that political commitment, I think our own security would be impaired, and it would be almost as serious for Western Europeans to doubt it as it would be for the Soviets to doubt it.” Moreover, argued McNamara, a reduction in America’s NATO forces might well give the Soviets room to move in Europe in order to “pull [American] strength away from Southeast Asia.”54 The general thrust of his remarks was in keeping with his previous statements on NATO. Speaking before the Senate Appropriations Committee in 1966 regarding foreign assistance funds for 1967, he had stated that he “did not believe the Soviets have changed their basic policy of probing for weakness in the West and taking advantage of it when they find it…the Soviets can’t be deterred with a potential capability. They can only be deterred with force in being.”55

Undersecretary of State Nicholas Katzenbach (testifying on behalf of Dean Rusk) concurred with the larger thrust of McNamara’s assessment. While willing to concede that “Cold war tensions may have eased,” Katzenbach was adamant in the belief that “confrontation remains. The Soviet Union is not merely a great power, armed with nuclear might. It remains the center of ambitious ideology.” His presentation to the subcommittee emphasized that “our

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54 United States Troops In Europe, Hearings before the Combined Subcommittee of Foreign Relations and Armed Services Committees on the Subject of United States Troops in Europe, 6-7, 17, 39.
55 McNamara, 20 April 1966, Foreign Assistance and Related Agencies Appropriations for 1967, Hearings before the Committee on Appropriations, United States Senate 89th Congress, 2nd Session, 1966, 14-16. RG 287, Box Y4-534.
fundamental aims remain: to deter any potential military aggression; to defend against such aggression should it occur; to lesson tension and improve east-west relations; and to provide the essential political strength and cohesion necessary to help secure a lasting and stable settlement with the Soviet Union and its allies.” If the U.S. were to reduce its forces as per the Senate’s resolution, these aims would be damaged because it would be tantamount to encouraging the self-interest of individual European nations: “If we were to make major withdrawals of troops from Europe, changing the strategy . . . the arrangements within NATO, changing the Alliance itself, I think there would be a major tendency in European countries . . . to search for new and essentially nationalist answers.” Given Europe’s history in the first half of the twentieth century, concluded Katzenbach, this would be dangerous indeed.56

William MacComber Jr., the Assistant Secretary for Congressional Relations, summed up the administration’s viewpoints in answering a letter Mansfield had written to Secretary of State Rusk after his one brief appearance before the committee. Mansfield had asked Rusk if he thought “inertia is leading us to keep more troops and dependents in Germany and the rest of Europe than necessary?” The answer that came back through MacComber’s office stated: “It is the Administration’s view that no further redeployment of United States forces in Europe, and no changes in the present United States commitment of forces to NATO, are warranted by the present international situation.”57

The viewpoint of the Johnson administration was reflected by the U.S. military command in Europe. USAREUR (United States Army, Europe) Pamphlet 360-2, dated March 1967, listed the NATO mission of USAREUAR as follows: “1. To deter Soviet aggression. 2. To defeat Soviet aggression if it occurs. 3. To modernize NATO armies. These NATO missions

56 United States Troops In Europe, Hearings before the Combined Subcommittee of Foreign Relations and Armed Services Committees on the Subject of United States Troops in Europe, 42-43, 46.
57 Ibid., 89.
call for U.S. forces which are combat ready and well equipped, and which possess the means to
counter any Soviet aggression.” The pamphlet concluded that “the military threat facing
USAREUR is massive. Communist forces are strong and versatile. Soviet ground forces are
well trained, well equipped, and maintained in advanced state of combat readiness.” Therefore,
undertaking a substantial reduction in the strength of USAREUR would be foolish.58

America’s allies also had doubts about the wisdom of U.S. force reductions. The
Political Committee of the Twelfth NATO Parliamentarians Conference, held in late fall of
1966 when S.R. 300 was still being discussed, noted that the possibility of a U.S. troop
reduction was of “special concern to West Germany—but also to NATO as a whole.” While the
committee believed that some troop reduction was likely in the future, “its size and timing, and
the principles which will guide it,” were very important.

Three considerations should be paramount: First, decisions made on NATO
force levels have been and should continue to be a subject strictly for
multilateral resolution. Reductions must be a matter for alliance consultation,
not unilateral action. Second, such reductions as are mutually agreed to
should be geared to technological and logistical capability to return these
troops to the Europe continent if the need arises. . . . Third, reductions should
be so timed and so numbered as not to place undue strain on West Germany
political stability. United States military presence on West German soil
serves as a key element of solidarity in that nation’s political life.

In sum, “substantial United States troop reduction does not seem wise at this time. Reductions
on the order of magnitude of 100,000 to 200,000 would raise serious intra-alliance difficulties, to
say nothing of how the Soviet Union would interpret them.”59 This theme was returned to the
following year as well. The Political Committee here noted that the “threat of overt Soviet
military intervention in central and western Europe has receded in recent years,” but “Soviet

58 USAREUR Pamphlet 360-2 was found in the Mansfield Papers, Series XXII: Senate Leadership, 1961-197,
Sub-series 3 – Foreign Affairs, Box 41, Folder 4.
59 Twelfth NATO Parliamentarians Conference, Report of the United States Delegation to the Twelfth
Conference of Members of Parliament from the NATO Countries, Paris, November 14-18, 1966 (Printed for the
use of the Committee on Foreign Relations, 31 March 1967), 11-12. RG287, Box Y4-1498
military activities in the Middle East and the Mediterranean underline the need for continued vigilance on the part of the alliance.\(^{60}\)

The Johnson administration was concerned over the balance of payments deficit and offset costs, and therefore supportive of the idea of increased burden-sharing within the alliance, and while it also recognized that changes had taken place in Europe and even spoke of improving East-West relations as one of the goals of NATO, the administration (as well as other NATO members) clearly had a less optimistic view of the changing international circumstances that Mansfield believed justified a reduction in America’s military presence in Europe. Moreover, as evidenced by the testimony of officials before the Combined Subcommittee on the question of U.S. troops in Europe, the administration was less willing to see beyond the original Cold War blocs. If Johnson was willing to concede that the situation in Europe had improved and that further cooperation between East and West was not only desirable but possible, he was nonetheless worried that others might follow in De Gaulle’s footsteps and seek, as he saw it, East-West rapprochement without regard for alliance interests as a whole, thereby jeopardizing the alliance as a whole. If Johnson was willing to concede that NATO might play a role in improving East-West relations, he was adamant that “continued governmental and public support for the goals of Western cohesion and the Alliance’s deterrent strength” not be jeopardized in the process.\(^{61}\) In Mansfield’s eyes, American policy thus appeared to be mired in the status quo.

\(^{60}\) Thirteen Meeting of the North Atlantic Assembly (Formerly Named the NATO Parliamentarians Conference), Report of the United States Delegation to the Meeting of Members of Parliament from the North Atlantic Assembly Countries, Brussels, November 20-24, 1967 (Printed for the use of the Committee on Foreign Relations, 23 April 1968), 8. RG287, Box Y4-1498

\(^{61}\) Bozo, Two Strategies for Europe, 191.
While there were many in the Senate who wanted to see a reduction in America’s European force levels, the Johnson administration succeeded in stalling a vote on S.R. 49 with its arguments that the resolution would: 1) interfere with delicate negotiations between the U.S. and the other members of NATO; 2) have a shattering affect on NATO as it adjusted to the withdrawal of France; 3) suggest to America’s allies, not to mention the Soviets, a weakening in America’s determination in Europe, thus making it difficult for the U.S. to negotiate with the Soviets from a position of strength; 4) endanger U.S. security if not also accompanied by a similar reduction of Soviet and Warsaw Pact forces in Eastern Europe. This did not mean, however, that arguments in favor of the resolution were overwhelmed. Indeed, Senator John Sherman Cooper was convinced that some form of resolution or amendment on troop reduction would have eventually been passed were it not for the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in August 1968. So convinced was Cooper of this that he included his belief in the U.S. report to the Military Committee at the fourteenth meeting of the North Atlantic Assembly that fall.62

The Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia did indeed bring the movement behind Mansfield’s resolution to a halt. It seemed to offer irrefutable evidence that Soviet intentions, as the Johnson administration had argued, had not changed, and that the USSR did, in fact, still pose a considerable danger in Europe. It is difficult to say if Mansfield’s resolution would have succeeded in passing the Senate at some point were it not for the Czech invasion. The Combined Subcommittee on the question of U.S. troops in Europe was prompted by that invasion to finally issue its report on the Mansfield and Javits resolutions, a year and a half after

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having held hearings on them, and almost two years after they were introduced. “The invasion and occupation of Czechoslovakia have had a profoundly disturbing effect on the political atmosphere all over the world, but particularly in Europe,” it read. “In the present unsettled conditions, the time is obviously not propitious for any diminution in the defense efforts of our NATO allies.” That did not mean, however, that the issue should be tabled permanently. The report noted that the members of the Subcommittee were in agreement on the basic propositions that “the level and composition of United States forces in Europe should be studied on a continuous basis and should be reassessed periodically,” that the other members of NATO should contribute more, and that “changes in any NATO assigned forces are properly matters for consultation among the NATO allies.” The Subcommittee was willing to reconsider troop reduction in the future, although the majority of members were more supportive of the multilateralism embodied in Javits’ resolution (S.R. 83) than the potential for unilateralism contained in Mansfield’s resolution (S.R. 49).63

Mansfield himself agreed that the invasion of Czechoslovakia had changed things. Even before the Combined Subcommittee issued its report in October he stated: “We can hardly make a substantial reduction in United States forces in Western Europe while the Soviets have vastly increased their forces in Eastern Europe countries, and have done so, furthermore, in connection with the military steamrolling of the independence of a small country…a reduction in the U.S. contingents in Europe in present circumstances could be subject to misinterpretation in both

West and East," stated Mansfield; “However,” he concluded, “my views on the anachronistic size of the deployment of American forces and dependants in Europe have not changed.”

Thus, if the events of the summer of 1968 temporarily stalled Mansfield’s drive to reduce the number of American military personnel stationed in Europe they did not halt it. Indeed, by the end of 1969, Mansfield had once again introduced a resolution dealing with the issue, arguing that “the presence of American forces in Europe in such large numbers, in my judgment, has vestiges, if not of empire in the nineteenth century sense, then of military occupation and of the costly cold war and the one-time complete predominance of the dollar in international finance. Yet the age of empire, the era of occupation, the period of the Cold War and the one-sided financial preeminence are of the past.”

In addition, while the Combined Subcommittee on U.S. troops in Europe dissolved, it was replaced by the Subcommittee on United States Security Agreements and Commitments Abroad. Chaired by Stuart Symington, this subcommittee, which convened its first set of hearings in the fall of 1969, undertook the most extensive Congressional investigation of policies undertaken in the course of the Cold War to date. Though its focus was global, and not limited to Europe, Symington’s committee spent a substantial amount of time on Europe, even devoting specific sessions to the question of U.S. forces stationed there.

Thus, as with continued Senate dissatisfaction over the shape of the foreign aid program and America’s Vietnam policy, the Nixon administration would also have to contend with a movement to reduce America’s forces in Europe. This time, the call for reduction came in the form of binding amendments to actual bills, not just “sense of the Senate resolutions.”

64 “The Situation in Czechoslovakia and U.S. Forces in Europe,” Statement by Mansfield, 13 September 1968, Mansfield Papers, Series XXI: Speeches and Reports, Box 44. See also Congressional Record, 13 September 1968, S10716-16.

continued to believe that changing international circumstances, and not just those in Europe, spoke to the need for a reduction in America’s military presence in Europe, only this time he broadened the call into a reduction in U.S. military forces world-wide. The continuing contests over NATO, foreign aid, and the American involvement in Southeast Asia serve as the focus of the next chapter.
Chapter Six
“The Time Has Come for Congress to Draw the Line”:
Debating Foreign Aid, Vietnam, and NATO in the Nixon Administration

By 1968, three pillars of America’s Cold War foreign policy—the foreign aid program, the war in Vietnam, and the massive military commitment to NATO—had come under heavy criticism and sustained attack by members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. The battle to rebuild the foreign aid program had been reinvigorated with the attachment of an amendment to the Foreign Assistance Act of 1968 requiring a review and reorganization of the foreign assistance program. Criticism of the war in Vietnam had reached the point where Senators Eugene McCarthy and Robert Kennedy had openly challenged Johnson for the Democratic nomination in the 1968 election, while the outcry in the aftermath of the Tet offensive pushed Johnson to announce he would not seek re-election. And, while the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in the summer of 1968 prompted Mansfield to withdraw his amendment calling for a reduction in the size of American forces stationed in Europe as part of NATO, Mansfield made it clear that the issue had not been permanently tabled.

In their respective memoirs, both Nixon and Kissinger recalled the gravity of the situation facing their administration as it assumed power after the 1968 election handed the White House back to the Republicans. Nixon spoke of an “almost institutionalized enmity between Senator Fulbright’s Foreign Relations Committee and the White House,” which he believed “had become damaging to the national interest.” Kissinger noted that despite the United States having accomplished a great deal, “the fact remained that at the end of twenty years of exertion America was not at peace with itself. The consensus that had sustained our postwar foreign policy had evaporated.”\(^1\) As much as the Nixon administration hoped to

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convince the SFRC of its “reasonableness and our openness, as well as the soundness of our policies,” though, it failed in this task. The debates over foreign aid, Vietnam, and NATO that had begun during the Johnson years became increasingly amplified in the Nixon era, with the Committee, and, indeed, the Senate as a whole, ultimately assuming a much more forceful stance.

During the Johnson years much of the effort (save in the case of foreign aid) had been directed towards making the administration aware of the “sense of the senate” on a particular issue, with the hopes of prodding moves in certain directions. During the Nixon years members of the SFRC adopted a much more direct approach by attaching amendments to legislation under consideration (thus making them legally binding if approved by Congress as a whole), revoking previous “sense of” resolutions passed in support of long-standing foreign policies, and drafting legislation on its own initiative, such as the War Powers Act—all actions designed to allow Congress itself to shape and make policy.

This chapter therefore examines the continuing debates over aid, Vietnam, and NATO in the Nixon era—though it is intentionally designed to serve as a somewhat impressionistic overview. The specifics sketched out here are deserving of more detailed consideration than the focus here otherwise warrants, but this briefer narrative and analysis nonetheless indicates the trajectory of the 1960s developments considered in greater depth in the previous chapters.

The mounting economic problems facing the United States are a factor in examining the increasingly forceful dissent. The growing balance of payments problem, increasing inflation, the gold-crisis of the late 1960s, and the turn in the balance-of-trade crises which would lead Nixon to devalue the U.S. dollar in 1971 and effectively end the Bretton Woods economic

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2 J.F Lehman (member of the National Security Council) to Henry Kissinger, 2 August 1971, Nixon Presidential Materials Project, College Park, Maryland, NSC Name Files, Box 815-Fulbright.
system—led to a sense of greater unease. Indeed, the SFRC held hearings on the “Impact of the War in Southeast Asia on the United States Economy” in 1970. These considerations by no means served as the only, or even the most important, source of increasing and more forceful dissent during the Nixon years—Mansfield, for instance, listed the fiscal and monetary problems facing the United States last when rationalizing his revived amendment to reduce the size of American forces abroad—but the larger economic context is worth keeping in mind the continuing debates over aid, Vietnam, and NATO in the Nixon era are examined.

Though the SFRC continued to tackle foreign aid and the size of American forces in Europe as issues important in and of themselves, Nixon’s policies for Southeast Asia tended to serve as a focal point. Many of the amendments designed to end the military presence in Vietnam were attached to various foreign and military aid bills presented by the Nixon administration, for example, while Mansfield attempted to apply Nixon’s doctrine for Southeast Asia (based on the philosophy that the peoples there bore primary responsibility for their own defense) first to Europe and then the entire globe.

I.

When outgoing Secretary of State Dean Rusk noted in 1968 that “striking changes in the costs, composition, methods, problems and prospects of foreign aid” had occurred, arguing that the Johnson administration had “learned to do the job better,” the SFRC failed to agree. Indeed, the aid legislation for 1968 and 1969 barely made it through Congress. Johnson’s requests for the 1968 fiscal year were reduced to the point that the amount authorized was $28.8

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4 Rusk, 26 September 1968, Foreign Assistance and Related Agency Appropriations for Fiscal Year 1969, Senate Appropriations Committee Hearings, 266. RG 287, Box Y4-543.
million less than the smallest total ever appropriated (which was in fiscal year 1956). In addition, Congress refused to grant the advance authorizations sought for the 1969 fiscal year, even going so far as to withdraw authorizations for that year that had been granted back in 1966 when multi-year authorizations had first been introduced. A number of policy-related amendments reflective of the SFRC’s concern regarding military assistance overshadowing genuine economic development were also attached to the bill. One such amendment required the termination of foreign assistance to any country whose defense spending inhibited its capacity for economic development, while another revoked the Defense Department’s ability to finance credit arms sales to underdeveloped nations after 30 June 1968.

More important, however, was the inclusion of an amendment evocative of Wayne Morse’s 1966 attempt to completely reconstruct the program. Though Johnson was pleased when the House failed to support this amendment, which the Senate as a whole had approved, he nonetheless tried to placate the SFRC by agreeing to conduct a study of the aid program paying “particular attention to the issues raised by [the SFRC].” By 1967, Johnson even spoke of the possibility of reconstructing the foreign aid program, but he had not carried through on these vague ideas and the SFRC grew impatient and succeeded in adding an amendment to the Foreign Assistance Act of 1968 which required the President to make a “comprehensive review and reorganization of all foreign assistance programs, military assistance and sales programs, and programs involving contributions and payment by the United States to international lending institutions and other international organizations concerned with the development of friendly foreign countries and areas.” The executive was to report back to Congress no later than 31 March 1970.\(^5\) The Johnson administration did not undertake this review before leaving the

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\(^5\) See Foreign Assistance and Related Agencies Appropriations for Fiscal Year 1970. Hearings before the Committee on Appropriations, United States Senate, 91st Congress, 1st Session, 1969, 84. RG 287, Box Y4-543.
White House, but Nixon appointed a task force—known as the Peterson Task Force (after its chair, Rudolph Peterson, president of the Bank of America) in September 1969.

The foreign aid requests for fiscal 1969 and fiscal 1970 also met with harsh treatment, in part because of a general feeling in the Senate that foreign aid desperately needed an overhaul, but also because the Senate was awaiting the findings of the Peterson Task Force. Each year’s authorization was lower than the previous year’s, with Congress failing to even finish considering the fiscal 1970 appropriations before adjourning. Final action was deferred until Congress reconvened in 1970, and aid was allowed to function at the previous year’s authorization levels. Eventually, Congress passed a foreign aid authorization for fiscal 1970, but once again at a substantially reduced amount from that originally requested by Nixon.6 The SFRC report on the original *Foreign Assistance Act of 1969* (which would contain appropriations for fiscal 1970) said that its focus in examining the initial requests had not “been the size or make-up of the aid bill, but whether there should be an aid bill at all.” Given that the Peterson task force had yet to report, however, the Committee supported extending the 1969 authorizations into fiscal 1970 as “a stop-gap measure.”7

Pending the Peterson task force’s review of the aid program, Nixon’s foreign aid request for fiscal 1970 placed emphasis on “the opportunities for private enterprise and private initiative to apply their vast resources and energies to the work of development”; the “transfer of American knowledge and skills through technical assistance”; “support of multilateral aid programs and efforts to coordinate [American] aid with other donors”; and “food production and

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6 “Foreign Aid Appropriations Bill Rejected By Senate,” *Congressional Quarterly Almanac, Volume XXV – 1969, 91st Congress, 1st Session, (Washington: CQS, 1970), 448-453; “Foreign Aid Authorization Lowest in Program’s History,” *Congressional Quarterly Almanac, Volume XXV – 1969, 91st Congress, 1st Session, 434-453.* The cuts and amendments had to do with increasing dissatisfaction with the overall conduct of American foreign relations, as exemplified by the war in Vietnam—to be examined in further detail later in the chapter—as well as growing concerns within the House over the budget deficit and the resulting threat of inflation.

the reduction of population growth." Each of these was expected to meet with Congressional approval in the short-term, but in the long-term, the Nixon administration felt it had to “come up with a truly new approach to foreign aid or the aid program will die.”

The “new approach,” which constituted, in the words of Nixon, “a program for the next twenty years rather than one that had been patched and painted over as has occurred repeatedly in the past,” was embodied in the two bills Nixon transmitted to Congress in 1971: the *International Security Assistance Act*, which would separate security and military assistance programs (which included military assistance, military credit sales, economic supporting assistance and public safety programs) from economic and development programs by bringing together the various aspects of security assistance under the direction of the State Department; and the *International Development and Humanitarian Assistance Act*, which would transfer the function of AID to two new agencies that would provide technical assistance to developing countries.

The Peterson Task Force’s recommendations had formed the basis for Nixon’s aid proposals. The task force strongly advocated the separation of security and development assistance (military and economic aid respectively) because the two programs “have different purposes, and each should be managed separately to get the best results.” Security assistance was “directed toward more immediate foreign policy purposes” while development assistance “serves foreign policy objectives that are necessarily long-term. We cannot get quick results . . .

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9 Memo of Conversation on the President’s Task Force on Foreign Aid, White House, 2 September 1969, Nixon Presidential Materials Project, NSC Files, Presidential/HAK Memcons, Box 1026—Senate Foreign Relations Committee.
the process of economic development is a difficult and complicated one.” Peterson subsequently commended the *International Security Assistance Act* for providing “a high-level coordinator in the Department of State to carry out the Department’s responsibility for policy direction of the program and to assure that military assistance and supporting assistance be considered together in security planning.” He also lauded the *Act* for laying “the basis for shifting military assistance from a grant to a loan basis” and for assuring “that recipient countries make their decisions on security expenditures with full recognition of competing development and other budgetary requirements. . . .It should make for a more healthy relationship as well as a more effective program.” In addition, Peterson supported the *International Development and Humanitarian Assistance Act* for recognizing that there was “no longer a need for the elaborate system of large overseas missions and country programming that was marked in the 1960s” on the one hand while also recognizing, on the other hand, that the growing capacity of international organizations along with other developed countries increasing their aid programs meant that for “the coordination of development assistance to be meaningful, [it] should be conceived in multilateral rather than bilateral terms.” That did not mean, however, that bilateral assistance programs should be terminated “as a strong United States bilateral assistance program remains one of the essential means of maintaining a reasonable flow of development resources to poor countries, of fulfilling long-term United States foreign policy interests in specific countries and regions and of participating in the international development effort.”

Congressional deliberations on Nixon’s two bills reveal the state of deadlock which had come to exist over the aid program. The House did not formally consider the two new Acts; instead, the House Foreign Affairs Committee held hearings on the general idea of reorganizing

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12 Rudolph Peterson, 10 June 1971, *Foreign Assistance Legislation, Fiscal Year 1972*, Hearings before the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, 92nd Congress, 1st Session, 1971, 152-157. RG287, Box Y4-1491.
foreign aid completely. (It had rejected this in 1965, when the Senate had supported Morse’s amendment to terminate the aid program and start over.) The House Committee then reported on its own aid bill, a single bill, with contained authorizations for both fiscal 1972 and fiscal 1973, although at substantially reduced levels from what Nixon had asked for in his separate requests. The SFRC actually held hearings on Nixon’s two Acts, but it ultimately refused to report them to the Senate as a whole. Mansfield stated he was unable to vote for the two-package foreign assistance program because he “felt the net results would be a return to the old concept . . . with its overwhelming reliance on military support, arms sales, grants and the like. If a new concept on the basis of humanitarian and economic aspects is forthcoming,” he said, “I can support that.”13 While Nixon had created a bill for these purposes, his security assistance bill demonstrated a continued devotion to military assistance as a core aspect of America’s foreign aid program that was unacceptable – of the $2.2 billion dollars in aid requested in total, close to two billion of that was for military assistance.14

Nixon believed strongly in military assistance because he saw it as an integral part of the Nixon Doctrine. His vision to phase out direct American military action in Southeast Asia was accompanied by a corresponding belief that for the doctrine to work, military assistance aboard would have to be increased. Lt. General Robert Warren (USAF), the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Military Assistance and Sales, testified on 27 August 1970 that, “the military assistance program and foreign military sales are essential to the Nixon Doctrine. . .

14 Foreign Assistance Legislation, Fiscal Year 1972, SFRC Hearings, RG287, Box Y4-1491. Nixon requested $780 million for grant military assistance, $527 million in foreign military sales credits, and $844 million for security supporting assistance (85% of which was for Southeast Asia).
implementing the Nixon Doctrine, not only in Southeast Asia but throughout Asia. The Nixon Doctrine will cost us less as far as our military manpower, military equipment are concerned; but it will cost us more in the form of military assistance . . . we must be willing to go forward with an enlarged commitment as far as military assistance is concerned." \(^{15}\)

Deeply unhappy with this reasoning, the SFRC ultimately reported the House’s aid bill to the entire Senate, but not before commenting on the “depth of dissatisfaction of many members with the existing foreign aid program” and not before attaching some fairly significant amendments. These included the John Cooper/Frank Church amendment prohibiting the use of funds for U.S. forces in Cambodia and the George McGovern/Mark Hatfield and Mansfield amendments setting a specific date by which all U.S. forces must be withdrawn from Southeast Asia. \(^{16}\)

When it came time for the Senate as whole to consider the aid bill reported to it, the bill was rejected. Immediately after the vote was cast, Mansfield stated that as far he was concerned, the existing aid program was dead and there should be no effort to save it. The whole program needed to be restructured along entirely different lines if it were to be revived.

In addition to highlighting Mansfield’s views here, The Washington Post chalked the defeat of

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\(^{15}\) See Foreign Assistance and Related Agencies Appropriations for Fiscal Year 1971, Hearings before the Committee on Appropriations, United States Senate, 91st Congress, 1970, 128. RG 287, Box Y4-543. Kissinger himself told Nixon that he should convince reluctant senators on the merits of his aid requests by arguing that military and economic assistance are “a vital element in the Nixon Doctrine Approach of helping countries to help themselves.” See Memo from Henry Kissinger to Richard Nixon Regarding Your Meeting with Senators Aiken and Cooper, 29 November 1970, Nixon Presidential Materials Project, NSC Files, Name Files, Box 807—Aiken-Cooper Mtg.

\(^{16}\) “Foreign Aid: Senate Rejection of Twenty-Four Year Program,” Congressional Quarterly Almanac, Volume XXVII – 1971, 92nd Congress, 1st Session, 394-399. Evidence of the unease over the manner in which Nixon linked increased military aid with the Nixon doctrine can be found as early as 1969. Mansfield had been saying that while he believed the Nixon Doctrine allowed for the “orderly contraction of the prevailing United States presence in Asia,” more pressing was “an immediate need for restraints on the built-in tendency of the presence to grow. There is room, example, for…a rigid and immediate curb on military aid…[and] official encouragement and support of commercial, cultural, technical and all other forms of non-military interchange on a mutual basis.” See Perspectives on Asia: the New U.S. Doctrine and Southeast Asia, Report of Senator Mike Mansfield to the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, 91st Congress, 1st Session, 14. RG287, Box Y4-1465. For a discussion of the Cooper/Church and McGovern/Hatfield Amendments, see pages 255-58.
the bill up to several factors, which included Senator Church blasting foreign aid as “an increasing failure and relic of the Cold War,” an attitude widely shared by liberal critics of the program, a general disillusionment with the aid program as “not achieving real economic progress in recipient nations in Asia and the developing nations of the third world,” and continued anti-war sentiment.17

The Senate defeat of the aid bill marked the first time in the history of America’s Cold War foreign aid program that one of the two chambers of Congress had voted to reject an authorization bill for aid. The SFRC then held hearings on a revised foreign aid package, reporting to the Senate two separate aid bills this time around—one for economic assistance and the other for military assistance. These two bills were accepted and sent to conference with the House. The attempt to keep the foreign aid program alive while fundamental reforms were being considered stumbled, however, when the House refused to support the amendments setting a fixed date for withdrawal from Indochina. After nearly a month of deadlock, Congress adjourned for the session. Thus no aid authorization for fiscal 1972 was actually approved, although Congress passed a continuing resolution funding foreign aid at the previous year’s levels until 22 February 1972.18

The crisis over foreign aid was not yet over, however, as the Senate voted to reject the military assistance authorizations for fiscal 1973. After the Senate’s initial vote to reject the economic and military assistance authorizations for fiscal 1972 in 1971, Fulbright wrote to

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17 “Senate Kills Foreign Aid,” Washington Post, 30 October 1971. The Congressional Quarterly Almanac reported that the bill’s defeat “was the product of opposition from both conservative and liberal Senators, some of whom had previously supported foreign aid. Conservatives argued that the billions poured by the United States into foreign aid had failed to gain international support for U.S. policies. On the other hand liberals contended that the aid mechanism had been taken over by military considerations, that it was not effective in its humanitarian efforts and should be funneled through international organizations.” See “Foreign Aid: Senate Rejection of Twenty-Four Year Program,” Congressional Quarterly Almanac, Volume XXVII – 1971, 92nd Congress, 1st Session, 387.

some of his constituents that he would do all he could to “ensure the phase out and liquidation of our bilateral aid program and cut back drastically on military aid.” Forcing a continuing resolution on military aid for fiscal 1973 was a part of his promise to cut down military aid and when Nixon presented his requests for economic and military assistance for fiscal 1974, Fulbright, in an unprecedented move, countered with the introduction of a bill of his own, which the SFRC chose to consider in place of Nixon’s bill. Fulbright’s legislation separated foreign economic assistance programs from military aid programs as Nixon had done, but his military assistance bill cut Nixon’s request by more than a half billion dollars while calling for military grant assistance to be phased-out over a two-year period and an end to all military aid missions abroad by 1977. Grant aid and supporting assistance in the meantime was to be done on a country-by-country basis, “thus ending the situation where the president has complete freedom to allocate as he pleases from lump sums Congress provides.” “For years the [SFRC] has called for changes in aid policy,” Fulbright said. “Each year the Committee has nibbled away at the fringes of current policy but, to date, has failed to bring about significant changes.” His legislation was an attempt to reverse the pattern. Ultimately, however, while the Senate voted in favor of reduced levels of military assistance, Nixon’s supporters were able to defeat the provisions calling for the end of all military assistance by 1977.

Fulbright thus lost the battle when it came to removing military assistance from America’s foreign aid program, although reductions in the amount of military assistance appropriated were seen over time. When it came to economic aid, however, some success was

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19 JWF to Laura Pierson, Fort Smith Arkansas, 16 November 1971, Fulbright Papers, Series 48, Subseries 9, Box 33, Folder 2.
achieved. Increasing amounts of American aid flowed through multilateral channels and what remained of bilateral aid shifted “to concentrate on sharing American technical expertise, farm commodities and industrial goods to meet development problems, rather than rely on large-scale money transfers.” The focus of development assistance was also shifted by 1973 in an attempt to save the aid program. The old categories of technical assistance and development loans were replaced with “new functional categories aimed at specific problems such as nutrition, population planning, and education”—each of which was aimed directly at the recipient nation’s population, “rather than relying on a ‘trickle down’ approach.”

As had his predecessor, Nixon had made some effort to respond to proposals relating to the shape of the aid program, or at least the aspects focusing on development. In the end, however, and as with Johnson, Nixon could not conceive of aid as independent from Cold War considerations. He could not let go of aid as a useful tool in helping to achieve Cold War objectives for the United States, even if that came at the expense of true development in some situations, and he could not let go of military aid as a central component of the foreign assistance program.

If the consideration of aid reached a deadlock during the Nixon era because of increasing dissatisfaction with the conceptualization of aid as a Cold War tool, then nothing served to highlight this dissatisfaction more than the prolonged conflict in Vietnam—the ultimate example of why conceiving of aid in Cold War terms was problematic. The SFRC had come to believe that the war had become Americanized because of the aid presence in Southeast Asia. The Committee also believed that the foreign assistance program served to sustain the conflict during the Johnson administration and even to widen it in the Nixon era, despite Nixon’s

promise to end the conflict. Increasing opposition to the war resulted in attacks on the aid program, which contributed to the crisis foreign aid suffered during Nixon’s first administration. Also contributing to the deadlock over foreign aid in the early 1970s, though, was opposition on behalf of Nixon supports to attempts made by Mansfield, Church, Cooper and others to limit the conflict—to bring it to a close—by attaching amendments to foreign aid legislation which proscribed the use of aid in Southeast Asia for any purpose other than to assist in the withdrawal of American troops. Either way, then, the question of foreign aid was tied, at least to some extent, to what was taking place in Vietnam.

II.

Johnson’s 31 March 1968 speech, which contained his announcement that he would not seek the Democratic nomination in the upcoming election, had laid out a tentative path for de-escalating the conflict in Vietnam. This included limiting the bombing in North Vietnam to areas just outside the demilitarized zone, and a call to the international community to join in the effort to bring “genuine peace in Southeast Asia.” Johnson made it clear that America was willing to “send its representatives to any forum, at any time, to discuss the means of bringing this ugly war to an end.”

It seemed, then, that peace had been placed on the agenda, especially since, with the Nixon campaign also speaking in terms of ending the conflict, both political parties seemed committed to finding a way out of Vietnam.

Reality differed from appearance, however. While the Johnson administration had indeed opened up negotiations with Hanoi, it refused to compromise on any issues of real significance, and while the Nixon administration continued with those negotiations, Nixon insisted that the war must be ended “honorably.” To that end, America could not simply

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withdraw its forces in one fell swoop. As Nixon put it in a message to the American people on 3 November 1969, “the precipitate withdrawal of American forces from Vietnam would be a disaster not only for South Vietnam, but for the United States and for the cause of peace. . . A nation cannot remain great if it betrays its allies and lets down its friends. Our defeat and humiliation in South Vietnam without question would promote recklessness in the councils of those great powers who have not yet abandoned their goals of world conquest.”

Since unilateral withdrawal was impossible from Nixon’s standpoint, two options remained: “we can persist in our search for a just peace through a negotiated settlement, if possible, or through the continued implementation of our plan for Vietnamization, if necessary.” Vietnamization referred to building up the South Vietnamese capability to bear the burden of its own defense, even as the United States slowly withdrew its fighting men. This was to take place in three stages, with ground combat activities being turned over to the South Vietnamese in phase I; air, military, and logistical support activities turned over in Phase II; and, in phase III, the complete reduction of the U.S. presence to nothing more than a military advisory mission. The idea of Vietnamization had been broached by Johnson in his attempts to end the conflict—or at least limit future American involvement—in his last year in office, but it did not really come into practice until Nixon assumed office, though the Nixon administration stressed that the program was “not a substitute for negotiations. This program is a complement to negotiations.”

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24  Ibid., 907.
The larger concept behind Vietnamization had been articulated during a press conference held in Guam on 25 July 1969 at the start of Nixon’s tour of Asia:

I believe that the time has come when the United States, in our relations with all of our Asian friends, be quite emphatic on two points: One, that we will keep our treaty commitments . . . but, two, that as far as the problems of internal security are concerned, as far as the problems of military defense, except for the threat of a major power involving nuclear weapons, that the United States is going to encourage and has the right to expect that this problem will be increasingly handled by, and responsibility for it taken by, the Asian nations themselves. . . .If the United States just continues down the road of responding to requests for assistance, of assuming the primary responsibility for defending these countries when they have internal problems or external problems, they are never going to take care of themselves.26

Nixon’s pronouncement that Asians must bear primary responsibility for Asian security came to be known as the Nixon Doctrine, and as Defense Secretary Melvin Laird put it to the SFRC later that fall, “Vietnamization is the first step in implementing our new Asian policy . . . the broad purpose of Vietnamization is to bring our Asian doctrine that much closer to fruition in all of Asia, by applying these principles in Vietnam . . . the narrower, but equally important, purpose of Vietnamization is to end the war in Vietnam so that the men, women and children of Vietnam can enjoy peace and self-determination.”27

The promulgation of the Nixon Doctrine, combined with the pursuit of negotiations, suggested, on the surface, at least, that Nixon was living up to his promise to put an end to conflict. Indeed, Nixon told the American people in November 1969 that air operations had been “reduced by twenty percent” and that, “after five years of Americans going into Vietnam, we are finally bringing American men home. By December 15 [1969], over 60,000 men will have been withdrawn from South Vietnam, including twenty percent of all our combat forces.”


27 *Briefing on Vietnam*, Hearings before the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, 91st Congress, 1st Session, with Secretary of State William P. Rogers and Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird, November 18-19, 1969, 56-57. RG 287, Box Y4-1513.
Unfortunately, he reported, the negotiation efforts were not bearing fruit, though this was through no fault of America’s. Nixon spoke of how, even before his inauguration, he had made two private offers for a “comprehensive settlement”; of how he had been in contact with the Soviet Union in hopes of enlisting its “assistance in getting meaningful negotiations”; of how he had written directly to Ho Chi Minh, “outside of the usual diplomatic channels”; and of how he had made clear on a number of occasions, including a speech before the UN, what America’s peace proposals were, but “Hanoi has refused to even discuss our proposals.” “It has become clear,” said Nixon, “that the obstacle to negotiating and end to the war is not the President of the United States; it is not the South Vietnamese Government. The obstacle is the other side’s absolute refusal to show the least willingness to join us in seeking a just peace.”

On the surface, then, Nixon appeared to be pursuing peace and the de-escalation of American involvement in Vietnam. For Nixon, however, an honorable end to the war meant only one outcome: an independent, non-communist South Vietnam. To that end, Nixon pursued a strategy that actually widened the conflict (secretly, of course, at least initially). In order to make Vietnamization possible, and to force Hanoi’s hand at the negotiating table in a way that was beneficial to American interests, Nixon massively increased the bombing campaign in Vietnam while also widening the war’s field of conduct into Cambodia and Laos. This was done, according to Nixon, in response to North Vietnamese and communist aggression.

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On 30 April 1970, just tens days after announcing that 150,000 American troops would be withdrawn from Vietnam over the course of the coming year, Nixon announced to the American public that American forces, “in cooperation with the armed forces of South Vietnam” had moved across the border in order “to clean out major enemy sanctuaries on the Cambodian-Vietnamese border.” He stressed that the move was “not an invasion of Cambodia. The areas in which these attacks will be launched are completely controlled by North Vietnamese forces.” Furthermore, the move was “indispensable for the continuing success of [Vietnamization]. We take this action not for the purpose of expanding the war into Cambodia, but for ending the war in Vietnam and winning the just peace we all desire.”30 What Nixon neglected to tell the American people, however, is that the United States had secretly been conducting bombing raids in Cambodia for the past fifteen months, dropping more than 100,000 tons of bombs.31

The incursion into Laos came the following year, in February 1971. Nixon ordered the removal of 100,000 American troops by the end of that year, but he also increased the aerial bombardment of North Vietnamese staging areas in North Vietnam itself, as well as in Cambodia and Laos. Ultimately, Nixon approved of a major South Vietnamese ground operation in Laos, to be covered by U.S. air support. When asked by the media about the move into Laos, Nixon said:

I will restate our policy. I stated that policy on November 3 [1969] and have restated it at least nine different times publicly since then. . . .I stated then that a time we are withdrawing our forces, that if I found that the enemy was stepping up its activity through infiltration in a way that would threaten our remaining forces that I would take strong action to deal with the new situation. . . .We are not going to use ground forces in Laos . . . those are limitations . . . [but] I am not

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31 George Herring, America’s Longest War, 276.
going to place any limits upon the use of airpower except, of course, to rule out . . . that our air power might include the use of tactical nuclear weapons.32

The decision to provide air support for the South Vietnamese incursion into Laos, then, was seen by Nixon as entirely consistent with the strategy of Vietnamization, as well as with his attempts to achieve a “just” peace.

Similarly, Nixon felt justified in conducting heavy saturation bombing in North Vietnam itself while seeding seven North Vietnamese ports with mines in response to Hanoi’s invasion of the South during Easter of 1972. “In the face of a massive invasion do we stand by, jeopardize the lives of 60,000 Americans and leave the South Vietnamese to a long night of terror?” he asked. “That will not happen . . . I know Americans favor immediate withdrawal . . . but abandoning our commitment in Vietnam now would mean turning seventeen million South Vietnamese over to communist tyranny and terror.”33 As Secretary of State Will Rogers had previously told the SFRC, Nixon had taken the action he had “to protect American troops that are in South Vietnam. . . . We are doing it to make certain the withdrawal program that the President has announced can continue and we are doing it to give the South Vietnamese a chance to defend themselves.”34

In an attempt, then, to allow for the smooth transfer of responsibility to South Vietnamese forces, and to force North Vietnam into a favorable negotiating position, Nixon fell into a pattern, beginning in late 1969, of combining the withdrawal of U.S. ground forces with a seemingly paradoxical increase of U.S. airpower, above and beyond what even the Johnson

33 Nixon, Address to the Nation on the Situation in Southeast Asia, 8 May 1972, Public Papers of the Presidents, Richard M. Nixon, 1971, 584.
34 Rogers, 17 April 1972, Foreign Assistance Act of 1972, Hearings before the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, 92nd Congress, 2nd Session, 14. RG 287, Box Y4-1478)
administration had used. Not surprisingly, this did not sit well with those who had already
developed opposition to America’s policies for Southeast Asia.

When Nixon was first inaugurated, dissenters within Congress had toned down their
criticisms in order to give Nixon time to fulfill his promises of extricating the U.S. from the war
in Vietnam. A survey of members of the SFRC, as well as the Armed Services Committee,
revealed that in February of 1969, “the key Senators agree: an orderly withdrawal soon—but no
abrupt pullout from Vietnam.”35 When George McGovern launched the first real attack on
Nixon’s policy on 17 March 1969, his remarks were met with cool reception by other members
of the Senate.36 That summer, upon hearing of Nixon’s remarks in Guam (the promulgation of
the Nixon Doctrine), Mansfield told the Senate that be believed Nixon’s intent was “to avoid
future Vietnams but, at the same time, to render what assistance is feasible and possible to the
nations of Asia. . . .He has our full support.”37 In early fall 1969, Mansfield spoke before the
Senate offering his support of Nixon’s Vietnam policy, although his remarks were slightly
double-edged. “What we have seen,” he said, “is the inauguration of a new policy. . . .I would
like to see the country get behind President Nixon, not for the purposes of prolonging the war
but for the purposes of bringing about a responsible settlement and a reasonable peace at the
earliest opportunity. I would like to see us encourage President Nixon in the efforts he has
made in this direction.” Mansfield concluded by saying “I would like to see [Nixon] pull out
our troops faster. I would like to see the war brought to an end sooner . . . but the President is
the one at whose desk, in the words of Harry S. Truman, ‘the buck stops.’”38

February 1969, found in the JWF Papers, Series 48, Subseries 17, Box 45, Folder 2.
36 Congressional Quarterly Almanac, Volume XXV (1969), 91st Congress, 1st Session (Washington DC:
Congressional Quarterly Service, 1970), 1002.
38 Congressional Record, 20 October 1969, S12778.
Mansfield’s remarks on this occasion were prompted by the 15 October Vietnam Moratorium. Organized by anti-war liberals within the larger American public, this was the first of two demonstrations designed to call an end to the violence in Southeast Asia (this one nation-wide, while the second, held one month later, saw a mass rally in Washington DC). Attracting millions of middle-class citizens, the moratoriums constituted the “greatest outpouring of mass protest the country had ever known.”

Opposition within the American public, which had also temporarily quieted down as the election drew to a close and Nixon took office, had reignited because Nixon was not seen to be moving fast enough to end American involvement in the war. Fulbright happened to agree with the public on this. While Mansfield followed the familiar path of initially offering subtle and quiet dissent, Fulbright said, “rather than a moratorium on criticism, which kills no one, we who criticize continuation of the war seek, instead, a moratorium on the killing. When will this administration bite the bullet instead of firing it and present the American people the plan to end this war?”

More than eighty members of Congress announced their support for the moratorium, while over fifty actively participated in it, with George McGovern calling the demonstrations expressions of “the highest patriotism.”

As the fall of 1969 progressed, dissenting voices continued to grow louder. The moratoriums are what prompted Nixon’s 3 November address to the nation, in which he first laid out his strategy for ending the war—not precipitate withdrawal but Vietnamization, combined with a continued push for a negotiated settlement. This was the same speech in

39 Charles De Benedetti, The Peace Reform in American History, 184, cited in Herring’s America’s Longest War, 282.
which Nixon appealed to the “great silent majority” to support him. The predominant Congressional reaction was one of support—indeed, Senate Resolution 289 affirmed the Senate’s support of Nixon’s efforts “to negotiate a just peace”\textsuperscript{42}—but if Nixon’s speech proved to be a “shrewd and, for the most part, successful political maneuver,” as George Herring writes,\textsuperscript{43} his victory was nonetheless limited. The April 1970 announcement of the Cambodian incursion provided plenty of fuel for the larger anti-war movement’s fires. Fulbright noted that he received over three hundred and fifty thousand letters against the invasion, while Jacob Javits wrote in his autobiography that “I was deluged with so much antiwar mail that my other office letters were buried and lost in the pile; it took my office two months to open and sort one week’s mail.”\textsuperscript{44} By the time of the move into Laos, Louis Harris (of the Harris Polls) wrote “the tide of American public opinion has now turned decisively against the war in Indochina.” The results of his poll revealed that:

For the first time, by a narrow plurality of 42 to 39 percent, most Americans would agree to “a coalition government in Saigon which would include the Communists in it,” if that were the “only way to get peace in Vietnam.” In late 1969, the public opposed such a coalition government by a margin of 49 to 33 percent.

By 60 to 26 percent, a majority of the American public would now favor continued withdrawal of American troops from Vietnam, “even if the government of South Vietnam collapsed.”

For the first time, by 58 to 29 percent, a majority of the public now agrees that it is “morally wrong” for the United States to be fighting in Vietnam.\textsuperscript{45}

Even before this point, though, there some among the SFRC who rejected the notion of a “silent majority” in support of Nixon. Al Gore Sr. was one such individual. “The concept of a silent majority, as it has been portrayed seems to be of a people who speak softly or preferably

\textsuperscript{42} Background Information Relating to Peace and Security in Southeast Asia and other Areas, Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, Jan 1970, 91\textsuperscript{st} Congress, 2\textsuperscript{nd} Session, 4. RG 287, Box Y4-1465.

\textsuperscript{43} Herring, America’s Longest War, 282.


\textsuperscript{45} Washington Post, 3 May 1971.
not at all,” he said shortly after the Cambodian invasion. Gore shared with the Committee how “yesterday [6 May 1970] a young lady sat in my outer office all day. I shook hands with her but I didn’t have time for a conference. I learned only after she left that she was a timid soul who told my secretary that she didn’t want to be part of a marching demonstration but she had ridden a bus for hours just to come, and she wanted to whisper to me encouragement. . . .There are millions of people like this.”

Gore was also representative of those on the SFRC who had begun to question Nixon’s strategy by the fall of 1969. For Gore, Vietnamization was not a new strategy at all: “I respectfully submit that Vietnamization is a long word that is applied to a policy we have had for a long time. . . .In 1964, President Johnson sent a message to the government of South Vietnam: ‘As the forces of your government become increasingly capable of dealing with this aggression, American military personnel in South Vietnam can be progressively withdrawn.’” Frank Church was likewise troubled by Vietnamization: “At best, we may find ourselves with a large force left in Vietnam indefinitely, a kind of interminable war, and the American people will wake up to the fact that it is still costing us twenty billion a year. . . .I just do not have much confidence that Vietnamization is going to work out well.” Just a month before, on 8 October 1969, Church had sponsored Senate Resolution 270, which expressed the Senate’s belief that Nixon had “made a step in the right direction” in announcing at that time the withdrawal of 60,000 troops, “but this is just a start . . . the time has arrived for the people of South Vietnam to take charge of their own

46 Gore, 7 May 1970, Moral and Military Aspects of the War in Southeast Asia, Hearings before the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, 91st Congress, 2nd Session, 18-21. RG 287, Box Y4-1465.
47 Gore, 19 November 1969, Briefing on Vietnam, Hearings before the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, 91st Congress, 1st Session, with Secretary of State William P. Rogers and Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird, November 18-19, 1969, 85. RG 287, Box Y4-1513’ Church, 18 November 1969, Ibid., 29.
destiny. This can only be accomplished through a more rapid withdrawal of American troops
and a commitment by the United States to fully disengage from South Vietnam.”

Fulbright also expressed doubt about Nixon’s course of action. As he put it in the spring
of 1970, “I welcome the change: Vietnamization is better than escalation but I welcome it only
in a sense that I would rather be riding in a car headed for a precipice at thirty miles an hour than
at eighty miles an hour. If I really had my choice, I would not be in the car at all.” “Although
the tactics have changed,” he said a year later, “the objective of the Nixon administration in
Indochina is by all available evidence the same as that of the Johnson administration: to win the
war in the sense of establishing viable anti-communist regimes in South Vietnam, Cambodia,
and probably Laos.”

Concerns that nothing had really changed led to the repeal of the 1964 Gulf of Tonkin
Resolution—which Johnson had widely used as justification for escalating American
involvement without seeking direct congressional approval. As a group, the SFRC had repealed
the resolution just prior to the Cambodian invasion, but on 24 June 1970, the Senate as a whole
did so. The House followed suit within six months. Mansfield, who had backtracked on his
earlier statement that the “buck stops” with the President, said the repeal “served notice once and
for all that whatever its initial responsibility, the Senate was henceforth disassociating itself from
a course of policy which had enmeshed us and was tending still to plunge us deeper in
Indochina.” Nixon, for his part, was indifferent, claiming that the President, as Commander in

48 Committee on Foreign Relations, Background Information Relating to Peace and Security in Southeast Asia
and other Areas, 4-5.
49 Fulbright, “Old Myths and New Realities,” 2 April 1970, RG 46: U.S. Senate, Committee on Foreign
51 Mansfield Statement, 1 September 1970, Mansfield Papers, Series XXI: Speeches and Reports, Box 46.
Chief, needed no Congressional authorization in the first place for the use of force in Southeast Asia.\textsuperscript{52}

Nixon’s response seemed to offer further evidence of the growing concern that little had really changed—refrains of which would be heard time and again. Indeed, in the midst of the debating a supplemental foreign aid request for Vietnam during the Easter 1972 bombing campaign of North Vietnam, Fulbright called Secretary Rogers out:

Only a little more than 6 years ago, in hearings on a similar legislative proposal. . . we began public discussion of the war in Vietnam with your predecessor, Secretary Rusk. It is ironic and tragic that today—6 years later—after hundreds of thousands of lives have been lost; after much of North Vietnam, South Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia have been ravaged and destroyed; after the economic and social fabric of our own nation has been seriously undermined—we are still discussing the war in Vietnam with the members of the Cabinet even though we have a president who came into office in January of 1969 promising to end the war either through negotiations or through Vietnamization. Instead, three years after that President took office, we find the largest force of combat aircraft and naval vessels the United States has ever assembled in Southeast Asia, massive bombing of North Vietnam resumed, and the port of Haiphong and the capitol of Hanoi under attack. . . .Apparently, President Nixon believes that we can accomplish with air power alone what President Johnson failed to do with airpower plus more than 500,000 American soldiers.\textsuperscript{53}

One can not help but see the similarities between Fulbright in 1972, and Mansfield’s 1967 comments that “reports of progress are strewn, like burned out tanks, all along the road which has led this nation even more deeply into Vietnam.”\textsuperscript{54}

When Rogers tried to point out that Nixon was acting in response to an invasion of South Vietnam—which he believed should prove once and for all the conflict in Vietnam resulted from

\textsuperscript{52} Randall Woods, \textit{J. William Fulbright, Vietnam, and the Search for a Cold War Foreign Policy} (New York, 1998), 226-227; William Bundy, \textit{A Tangled Web: The Making of Foreign Policy in the Nixon Presidency} (New York: Hill and Wang, 1998), 162-163, 223. The Senate also repealed the 1955 Formosa resolution, the 1957 Middle Eastern resolution, and the 1962 Cuba resolution, each of which contained recitals of basic principles of American policy towards the affected areas (much like the Tonkin resolution had done for Vietnam). The Department of State was concerned that these repeals “would raise questions about current United States policy in the areas concerned” but from the Senate’s view, that was the whole point. The repeal of these resolutions will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter.


\textsuperscript{54} See Chapter Four, 171.
blatant aggression and was, therefore, not a “civil uprising” as so many Americans has been duped by the communists into believing—Church pointed out the North Vietnamese had invaded because they are determined, and have been from the beginning, to accomplish two objectives: to drive the foreigner out of the land and to reunite Vietnam under a revolutionary government in Hanoi. That has been their objective all along. You are unable to negotiate a settlement with these people because you can’t agree to their terms and they can’t agree to ours. That is plain. And they are not going to stop fighting. . . .Vietnamization . . . as you seem to define it, means a continuous involvement for the indefinite future because the North is not going to call this war off.

Republican Johnson Sherman Cooper agreed. Speaking to Defense Secretary Laird he said: “It seems to me even this invasion describes a pattern which could continue to escalate: the North Vietnamese invade, the South Vietnamese with the assistance of our air power repel the invasion, and the North Vietnamese retire, regroup, reequip and attack again, and the United States will have to use its air power to protect our forces, and…protect the South Vietnamese. It could be interminable, just like getting your hands in flypaper.”

Coming from Church and Cooper, these comments are no surprise. These two were among the Senators who proposed binding amendments to limit American involvement in Southeast Asia. The initial attempts at doing this had come in the form of sense of the Senate resolutions, and were often offered as encouragement for Nixon to live up to his promises of ending American involvement, though each tried to make that end more tangible. For example, Senate Resolution (S.R.) 270 (as we have seen) supported Nixon for having begun the withdrawal of American troops, but made it clear that withdrawal should be more rapid. S.R. 268, also offered in the fall of 1969, expressed the sense of the Senate that the government of South Vietnam should be given sixty days to “permit political parties the freedom to organize and operate with governmental controls,” and “present a plan for provisional government,

55 Church, 18 April 1972, and Cooper, 18 April 1972, in Briefing on Vietnam (with Rogers and Laird), 22, 133.
broadly representative of the main political, ethnic and religious groups of South Vietnam,” 
otherwise the U.S. “should officially declare that its commitment…is ended, and that with all 
reasonable haste will terminates its military, political, and economic assistance to that 
Government.”56 Church, who had been listed as a sponsor of both these resolution, came to feel 
that they were not forceful enough expressions of Senate desire, particularly when Nixon seemed to be widening the war by moving into Cambodia by the spring of 1970.

Alongside Senators Cooper, Mansfield, and Aiken, he proposed an amendment to the 
1970 Foreign Military Sales Act in order “to protect against the danger that the continuing 
presence of United States Forces in Cambodia may expand the Vietnam War into a new theater.” 
The Cooper-Church amendment stated that no funds in the Military Sales Act could be used for 
the retention of American ground forces in Cambodia past 1 July 1970, the instruction of 
Cambodian forces, or the hiring of mercenaries to fight in Cambodia.57 It further forbade the 
use of any appropriation for support of combat activity in the air above Cambodia, unless 
specifically authorized by Congress. “In sum,” said Church, “the amendment is directed against 
those very activities which led to our entrapment in Vietnam.” The amendment was viewed as 
realistic, because “it does not attempt to undo what has already been done,” and it was 
necessary, its sponsors believed, because:

another front as been opened in this interminable war—again as a result of a 
Presidential decisions taken without so much as a bow to Congress. The

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56 SFRC, Background Information Relating to Peace and Security in Southeast Asia and other Areas, 3. 
57 The amendment was actually the second of its kind. Cooper and Church had succeeded, in late 1969, in 
attaching an amendment to the Defense Appropriations Bill that prohibited the introduction of U.S. ground troops 
in Laos and Thailand (which is one the reasons, come 1971, that Nixon was only able to offer air support to the 
South Vietnamese when they moved into Laos). The amendment was the result of the investigation into U.S. 
commitments to Laos that was undertaken by the SFRC Subcommittee on United States Security Agreements and 
Commitments Abroad. See, the “Final Report of the Subcommittee on United States Security Agreements and 
Commitments Abroad, United States Security Agreements and Commitments Abroad, Hearings Before the 
Subcommittee on United States Security Agreements and Commitments Abroad of the Committee on Foreign 
2416. The Subcommittee will be discussed in greater detail later in this chapter and in the next.
dispatch of American troops in Cambodia, though presently limited in scope, could easily become the first step towards committing the United States to the defense of still another government in Southeast Asia. Sobering as this specter should be in light of our experience in Vietnam, it nonetheless presents Congress with an historic opportunity to draw limited on American intervention in Indochina. . . . The crisis in our land, the deepening of divisions among our people, the festering, unattended problems at home, bear far more importantly on the future of the Republic than anything we have now, or have ever had, at stake in Indochina. *That is why the time has come for Congress to draw the line.* . . . Too much blood has been lost, too much patience gone unrewarded, while the war continues to poison our society. *If the executive branch will not take initiative, then Congress and the people must.*

During the Johnson administration, members of the SFRC had became increasingly distrustful of the President exercising control in questions of foreign affairs, but the Cooper-Church amendment offers conclusive evidence that they were ready to reassert Congressional authority. The SFRC approved of the addition of the amendment to the Military Sales Act, declaring that it “reflects both the members’ grave concern over recent developments in Southeast Asia and a conviction that the time has come for the Congress to assert its constitutional powers in order to prevent a widening of the war.” After six weeks of debate, the Senate as a whole adopted the Cooper-Church amendment and in so doing, “launched a session-long effort to restrain the power of the President to commit United States troops and wage war without specific Congressional approval.”

The Senate vote came, however, on the day U.S. ground forces actually withdrew from Cambodia. The House, for its part, rejected the amendment, thus launching a six month long deadlock over the passage of the 1970 Military Sales Act and making the 1 July deadline moot. A version of the amendment was successfully added to a supplementary foreign aid

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58 See *Foreign Military Sales Act Amendment: 1970, 1971*, Hearings before the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, 91st Congress, 2nd Session, 24-25 March 1970, 77-80. RG287, Box Y4-1494. Emphasis added, though “(Applause)” was inserted into the record after his statement that the Congress must act.


authorization bill, though, which allowed its Senate supporters to relinquish their insistence on its inclusion in the military sales bill. Thus, while the Cooper-Church amendment was ultimately dropped from the Military Sales Act, a version of it managed to become force of law by becoming part of the more general foreign aid legislation, although it took slightly over a year for this happen. When finally adopted, the Cooper-Church amendment prohibited the reintroduction of U.S. ground troops in Cambodia, but allowed for U.S. combat air action if directed against North Vietnamese supply or forces buildup in Cambodia. Nixon, for his part said:

The Congress has expressed its will in the form of law and the Administration will obey that law. I cannot do so, however, without stating my grave personal reservations concerning the dangerous potential consequence of this measure . . . the incentive to negotiate a settlement in Cambodia has been undermined . . . the abandonment of a friend will have profound impact on other countries, such as Thailand, which have relied on the constancy and determination of the United States . . . I can only hope that the North Vietnamese will not draw the erroneous conclusion from the congressional actions that they are free to launch a military offensive in other areas of Indochina.

The Cooper-Church amendment was not the only attempt at voicing Congressional views on the situation in Southeast Asia, however. In another Republican-Democratic alliance, Senators McGovern and Mark Hatfield (R-OR) had proposed at amendment to the 1970 Defense Procurement Bill to eliminate all spending for military operations in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia by the end of 1971. Mansfield saw their amendment as an attempt “to bring an end

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61 Ibid., 927, 947-8.
63 In his autobiography, McGovern writes that “from 1965 to 1970 I have been concentrating my opposition to the war on pressing the Administration to begin negotiations, to halt the bombing and to stop the escalation of all forms of military activity [but] it was my view that the proper role of the Congress was to urge a change in Administration policy, while recognizing that the conduct of policy rested in the executive branch. By early 1970, however, I was coming to the conclusion that appeals to the Administration from the Senate floor and through public mass demonstrations that I had joined were falling on stony ground…Thus, on April 30, 1970, I introduced to the Senate the McGovern-Hatfield Amendment to End the War.” George McGovern, Grassroots: The Autobiography of George McGovern (New York: Random House, 1977), 164.
to a mistaken policy; to save American lives, to help restore the inner unity of this nation—reasons enough to support.” Vice President Agnew called it “a blueprint for the first defeat in American military history.” It failed, however, to pass in the Senate (by a vote of 39 for and 55 against) though the pair would repeatedly try again, while Mansfield also proposed several different amendments calling for a specific date by which America must be out of Southeast Asia. John Irvin II, the Under Secretary of State argued before the SFRC in 1971:

in the circumstances of a long and costly war, it is easy to understand how a specified date for an early withdrawal could appear attractive. . . .However the administration believes strongly that such an announcement would not serve the interests of securing an orderly end to American involvement in the war or an early release of our prisoners [of war]. To announce a fixed date for withdrawal would remove one of the few bargaining counters we have to bring about a negotiated settlement—Hanoi’s uncertainty about the precise withdrawal timetable.

Nixon himself repeatedly stated that he considered such proposals “disastrous” on any number of levels: “for the South Vietnamese people, who would have lost their collective political choice and countless individual lives. For other non-communist countries, especially in Asia…For the global credibility of the United States’ word. For those Americans who made such heavy sacrifices, and for the integrity of American society in the post Vietnam-era.” Each of the attempts to fix a date for total withdrawal were either rejected by the House, if they made it that far, or were otherwise watered down such that no specific end date was included—though the Nixon administration had to spend a considerable amount of time working to defeat them. A quick glance through the National Security Name Files in the Nixon Materials shows this.

65 McGovern called this a victory, because “for the first time in American history, more than a third of the Senate and publicly voted to terminate a war in which the Commander in Chief was most anxious to continue. McGovern, Grassroots, 167-68.
Kissinger routinely wrote Nixon memos on strategies for meetings with individual senators to persuade them to leave well enough alone.67

Nixon also had to contend with George McGovern, at least, in a more direct fashion during the 1972 presidential elections. McGovern had announced his intention to seek the Democratic nomination on 18 January 1971. His campaign was about more than just ending the war in Vietnam but because of McGovern’s status as a prominent anti-war Senator, as reflected in his sponsorship of an amendment to end the war by a specified date, opposition to war became the leitmotif of his campaign. As McGovern himself said in a nationally televised broadcast during the fall of 1972, just prior to the election:

Under three separate presidents—two of them Democratic and one of them a Republican—I have opposed this war. During these same long years Mr. Nixon has supported the war. This, I think, is the sharpest and most important difference between Mr. Nixon and me in the 1972 presidential campaign. Mr. Nixon has described the war as our finest hour. I regard it as the saddest chapter in our national history. . . . As a bomber pilot in World War Two . . . I did what had to be done. . . . I loved America enough to offer my life in war thirty years ago. And for nine years I have loved this country enough to risk my political life to call us home from a war in Asia that does not serve the interests and the ideals of the American nation.68

McGovern’s 1972 campaign is thus an integral part of the evolving tale of debate and dissent over Vietnam, all the more so for the manner in which Nixon campaign kept dissenters at bay by portraying them as unpatriotic and unwilling to stand up for America’s interests. Spiro Agnew called McGovern “an apostle of appeasement,” but perhaps nothing exemplified the Nixon administration’s intended message better than something McGovern himself noticed at one of

67 See, for example, the NSC Name Files, Box 807 (George Aiken); Box 811 (Frank Church, John Cooper); Box 815 (Fulbright); Box 821 (Edward Kennedy); Box 824 (Mansfield).
his televised rallies: “Right behind me was a couple carrying a big banner with hammer and sickle, saying ‘McGovern for President.’ That had to be a Nixon operation.”

Nixon won the 1972 election in landslide. McGovern’s campaign was troubled for a great many reasons from the very beginning—not least of which had to do with the debacle over McGovern dismissing Thomas Eagleton from the ticket when evidence of mental illness came to light—but foreign affairs did play a role. Nixon was able to point to his great successes with the Soviet Union and the People’s Republic of China, as well as to present himself as in a better position to bring about an end to American involvement without sacrificing American “honor” in the process. McGovern later recalled that “nothing frustrated me more, not even the landslide defeat itself, than my failure to arouse public indignation at Nixon’s manipulation of the war.”

But if McGovern failed in 1972 to extend the anti-war message, and if the Senate in general failed in its attempts to bring about an end to American involvement in Southeast Asia itself, the passage of the War Powers Resolution in 1973, over Nixon’s veto, spoke to the goal of preventing future Vietnams. The resolution required the president to consult with Congress before introducing American armed forces into “hostilities or into situations where imminent involvement in hostilities is clearly indicated by the circumstances” and to continue to do so until those forces returned home. In the event a president felt that time was of the essence and there was insufficient opportunity to consult before dispatching American forces, he would have sixty days to obtain Congressional authorization, otherwise the forces must be withdrawn.

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71 McGovern, Grassroots, 245.
Primarily the work of Jacob Javits, the War Powers Resolution had its roots in Cooper-Church and McGovern-Hatfield amendments. “I supported and worked-hard for those measures,” Javits wrote in his autobiography, “but I did not regard them as sufficient…” Furthermore, although the two amendments aimed at getting us out of the war, they did not address the question of how we got into it; they did nothing to prevent such tragedies in the future.” Thus, Javits wanted to construct “a law by which Congress could regain its constitutional power to control the use of armed forces.” More than anything, the passage of the War Powers Resolution speaks to the extent to which the Congress no longer wished to leave foreign policy in the hands of the President, particularly as regarded the deployment of American forces abroad.

That dissenting voices grew more vocal, with the Senate attempting to end the war itself through a series of legislative amendments, was the product of disappointment with Nixon’s failure to live up to his promises of ending the war, a disappointment that stemmed from fundamentally different interpretations of just exactly what an “honorable” or “just” peace meant.

Nixon’s concept of peace with honor continued to hold fast to a Cold War mentality that would not accept anything less than a non-communist South Vietnam (or, at least, the appearance thereof in the peace accords themselves). Following very much in the footsteps of Johnson when he decided to escalate, Nixon’s concept was also about preserving American credibility while now ostensibly disengaging. As Nixon put in when announcing the Cambodian incursion:

> If when the chips are down, the world’s most powerful nation, the United States of America, acts like a pitiful, helpless giant, the forces of totalitarianism and anarchy will threaten free nations and free institutions throughout the world. . . .It is not our power but our character and will that are being tested. . . .Does the richest and most powerful nation in the history of the world have the character to

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meet a direct challenge? . . . It is tempting to take the easy political path: to blame the war on the previous administration and to bring all of our men home immediately, regardless of the consequence, even though that would mean defeat for the United States. . . . I would rather be a one term president and do what I believe is right than be a two-term president at the cost of seeing American become a second-rate power and to see this Nation accept the first defeat in its proud 190-year history.73

Compelling as Nixon’s arguments sounded to many, to those who believed Vietnamization was not working fast enough—or even at all—to bring about an end to American involvement, they represented nothing more than an attempt to saving face. If Nixon did not want America to become “a pitiful, helpless giant,” “a second rate power” and “accept the first defeat in its proud 190 year history,” for Mansfield it was “long since past time to stop worrying about saving face and start concentrating on saving . . . our own sense of decency and humanity.”74 For Fulbright, Nixon may have been able to show statistical and graphical evidence his policy of Vietnamization was working, “or what we have done to the enemy, but not what we have done to ourselves.” America had become not a pitiful or helpless giant; instead, it was a “crippled giant”—the title of Fulbright’s 1972 book. “We cannot—and dare not—divest ourselves of power,” wrote Fulbright, “but we have a choice as to how we will use it. We can use it, as Mr. Nixon would have us do, to compel ‘respect’—or fear—throughout the world . . . or we can try adapt our power to our traditional values . . . while seeking every opportunity to discipline it within an international community.” 75

Because they believed Nixon’s attempts to save face were actually doing more harm than good to the American nation, internally and in terms of its position in the international

community, the Senate dissenters were no longer satisfied with suggesting and backing alternative courses of action, as they had done during the Johnson administration. In the Nixon era, they tried to directly shape policy themselves. Their concerns were not limited solely to Southeast Asia, however, as the earlier discussion of foreign aid reveals.

The SFRC had begun a process of rethinking America’s larger foreign policy, a process that Nixon himself seemed willing to participate in, on the surface at least. As he said to the students of the Air Force Academy in June 1969, “something far deeper is stirring in the body politic. It goes beyond dissent about the war in Vietnam. . . .The underlying questions are really these: What is America’s role in the world? What are the responsibilities of a great nation toward protecting freedom beyond its shores?”

The Nixon Doctrine was an attempt to answer those questions, albeit in a framework specific to Asia. But if Nixon’s pronouncements in Guam were aimed at Asia, there were those on the SFRC that believed the general idea behind that Nixon Doctrine had wider application. Mansfield, in particular, hoped the doctrine’s “affects would in time be extended around the globe” as is evidenced by his renewed attempt in 1969 to bring about a reduction of the American military presence in Europe and, by 1973, by broadening the call into a reduction in U.S. military forces world-wide.

III.

In January 1967, Mansfield had introduced Senate Resolution (S.R.) 49, which declared it the sense of the Senate that the number of American military personnel stationed in Europe could be substantially reduced. By the time the Nixon administration assumed office, the resolution had been taken off the table. It had faced fierce resistance from within the Johnson

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administration, with the Senate itself divided on the issue, but it was the Soviet invasion of
Czechoslovakia in the summer of 1968 that halted the drive behind the resolution. Though
Mansfield himself agreed that the invasion had changed things for the time being, he did not
believe the issue should be permanently tabled, nor was he alone in thinking that way.

By the end of 1969, Mansfield had once again introduced a resolution regarding troop
deployment in Europe. S.R. 292, which had forty-five additional sponsors, resolved that it was
the sense of the Senate that “a substantial reduction of United States forces permanently
stationed in Europe can be made without adversely affecting either our resolve or ability to meet
our commitment under the North Atlantic Treaty.” As rationale for such a reduction, the
resolution took note of the appreciable improvement of “the condition of our European allies,
both economically and militarily”, the “substantial change” in East-West European relations,
which “are now characterized by an increasing two-way flow of trade, people, and other
peaceful exchange”, and lastly, the ways in which “the present policy of maintaining large
contingents of Unites States forces and their dependants on the European continent also
contributes further to the fiscal and monetary problems of the United States.”

In introducing the resolution, Mansfield pointed to Canada, specifically quoting Prime
Minister Pierre Trudeau, who in April of 1969 stated “‘NATO itself is continuously reassessing
the role it plays in light of changing world conditions . . . it was, therefore, in our view entirely
appropriate for Canada to review and re-examine the necessity in present circumstances for
maintaining Canadian forces in Western Europe.’” “I would hope this nation would study the
Canadian action most carefully,” said Mansfield. “To me, it seems an adjustment which looks to
the future instead of the past.” Mansfield further argued that “the presence of American forces

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78 Background Information Relating to Peace and Security in Southeast Asia and other Areas, Committee on
Foreign Relations, United States Senate, Jan 1970, 91st Congress, 2nd Session, 14. RG 287, Box Y4-1465.
in Europe in such large numbers, in my judgment, has vestiges, if not of empire in the nineteenth century sense, then of military occupation and of the costly cold war and the one-time complete predominance of the dollar in international finance. Yet the age of empire, the era of occupation, the period of the Cold War and the one-sided financial preeminence are of the past.”79 It was time, then, Mansfield believed, for the United States to begin readjusting policies that had been formed under very different international circumstances, especially in light of the fact that the Nixon administration seemed to be doing this elsewhere in the world. As Mansfield later put it, S.R. 292 called for the “Europeanization” of NATO, much like Nixon had called for “Vietnamization” in Indochina.80

Mansfield was not alone in his views. The SFRC Subcommittee on United States Security Agreements and Commitments Abroad—which was struck in January 1969 and tasked with investigating many of the world-wide commitments America had made to others in the course of waging the Cold War—undertook a specific investigation of U.S. forces in Europe as part of its larger investigation. The hearings on Europe were spread out over five days through the late spring and early summer of 1970. Stuart Symington, the chairman of the Subcommittee, wanted to know “why does the situation have to stay exactly as it was twenty years ago when NATO was formed?”81 especially since there had been several developments, such as NATO having successfully moved past the shock of the French withdrawal in 1966; Germany having signed the [nuclear] nonproliferation treaty, thus eliminating “the divisive nature of that negotiation”; the launching of Willy Brandt’s Ostpolitik; the Sino-Soviet split; and a sitting

American President [Nixon] who is “European interested” and “who made that clear by his first trip abroad.”

General David Burchinal, the Deputy Commander in Chief of U.S. European Command, General Andrew Goodpaster, the Supreme Allied Commander of NATO’s forces (SACEUR), and Martin Hildebrand, the Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs were each brought before the Subcommittee. Each was asked if they thought “in light of several facts that exist today, this may be the best time we have had in a long-time to reduce our forces in Europe” and each spoke in opposition to a major American troop reduction in Europe. Burchinal argued that the invasion of Czechoslovakia had “clearly demonstrated” the military capability of the Warsaw Pact” and that reductions should only come if mirrored by the Soviet Union. For America to unilaterally reduce its forces in Europe would be to undermine the mutual balanced force reduction talks Nixon was hoping to engage in with the Soviet Union. Goodpaster said the “principal risk” of reduction is that “it could bring to an end the stability and security that have been achieved and are being successfully maintained in the European area.” Hildebrand echoed this view, stating that he felt any unilateral reduction on the part of the United States “would likely set in train a sequence of actions and reactions whose ultimate result could be the effective dismantling of the collective security system we have built up and kept in place for two decades.”

Despite the overwhelmingly negative view presented to the Subcommittee, its members (which included Fulbright, Mansfield, Javits, and John Sherman Cooper) felt that in the face of the changing international environment—the Strategic Arms Limitations Talks on which America was engaged with the Soviets and the growing détente in Europe as evidenced by

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82 This general list of changes was compiled by the staff members of the SFRC. *Ibid.*, 2258-59.
Brandt’s Ostpolitik, for example—reductions were not impossible. The final report of the Symington Subcommittee (issued 21 December 1970) concluded: “There is nothing ambiguous about the United States’ commitment to its partners in the North Atlantic. . . Similarly the importance of Western European to the security of the United States remains undiminished . . . yet the military role which the United States plays in Europe has acquired a life and momentum of its own quite apart form the changing circumstances of the members of the alliance, and quite apart from changing relations between members of the Alliance and members of the Warsaw Pact.”

Needless to say, the Nixon administration failed to be guided by the sense of the Senate, as expressed in S.R. 292, or by the implication of the Symington Committee’s report. Nixon saw the financial benefits of a reduction, but he was willing to pursue it only if the Soviets reciprocated. Fed up with the seeming immobility of U.S. policy towards NATO, even as the Nixon administration worked hard to alter old Cold War lines through its policy of détente, which itself altered long-standing assumptions about America’s larger foreign policy, Mansfield opted for a more forceful approach than his previous sense of the senate resolutions. In February 1971, he said: “As I understand the Nixon Doctrine, its purpose is to bring about a gradual withdrawal of American troops abroad and to emphasize that the people in the regions involved should defend themselves with our material assistance. Yet the doctrine does not seem to be applied to Western Europe.”

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Mansfield resolved to try and change this, and on 11 May 1971, he announced his intention to seek, as a matter of law, a fifty percent reduction in U.S. forces stationed in Europe by attaching an amendment to a draft extension bill then being considered that read: “No funds appropriated by the Congress may be used after December 31, 1971 for the purpose of supporting or maintaining in Europe any military personnel of the United States in excess of 150,000.” (Fulbright, Church and Symington listed themselves as sponsors) “Several times I have introduced resolutions making clear our belief in the need for a substantial reduction in our forces in Europe,” Mansfield said. “Several times I have held off action because I have not wished to disrupt an allegedly delicate situation.” The implication was that this would be the case no more. On the back of his copy of the bill, Mansfield had written “sometimes I think it takes a sledgehammer to make an impact and place an issue on the table. . . .The debate has been emotional in part, and in my opinion, not as practical as it might be. No compromise from downtown. No compromise from overseas. No facing up to reality today.”

Mansfield suspected his amendment would fail—that it was “too much of a cut, too quickly and too soon”—but he pitched it anyway because he believed in the need to “put United States troop levels into a contemporary perspective . . . the time has come, in my judgment, to strike a course that will free us from certain shackles forged originally to bind us to policies and positions that have lost their meaning. . . .Nostalgia for great achievements of the past cannot replace constructive approaches to a foreign policy designed for the future.”

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88 Cited in Oberdorfer, Senator Mansfield, 390.
exactly what he had been arguing since the summer of 1966 when he first introduced a resolution to deal with that matter of troops in Europe.

During the nine days in which the amendment was debated, it stirred up a fire-storm in Washington. CBS News stated: “the focus is on Senator Mike Mansfield’s amendment to reduce American troop strength in Western Europe . . . and it has triggered a major hassle between Congress and the Administration . . . enough of both institutions to have turned the capital on its collective ear. Everyone loves a rip-roaring battle…this is such a battle.” Indeed, the Nixon administration rallied to oppose the amendment by marshalling opposition from ex-Presidents, ex-Secretaries of State (Dean Acheson called the amendment “asinine” ex-SACEURs, ex-Joint Chiefs of Staff, and prominent intellectuals. The Legislative Interdepartmental Group coordinated the campaign against Mansfield, drawing up target lists of Senators to vote against him. As the group noted during a meeting on 12 May, “the president feels very strongly that there is no acceptable compromise . . . once we accept the basic principle of such a resolution, we will be giving up one of the basic principles of our postwar foreign policy.” As Henry Kissinger put it: “It is one thing to have a debate on how we withdraw from Vietnam. . . .It is another thing to strike at our whole foreign policy without even consulting our allies and with no idea of where this might be taking us.”

Arguments put forth in opposition included statements about how Mansfield’s amendment “would rip away the cornerstone of a highly successful, bipartisan, post-World War II foreign policy pursued by five administrations” and “seriously damage all three major elements in our foreign policy—partnership, strength, and negotiations.” The Nixon

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91 Ibid
92 Minutes of the Legislative Interdepartmental Group, 12 May 1971, Nixon Presidential Materials Project (National Archives II, College Park, MD), NSC Name Files, Box 824 (Mansfield).
administration also argued that the Soviets could well use the opportunity granted by a U.S. force reduction to move into Europe, in which case the U.S. would have to resort to nuclear weapons to push back Warsaw Pact forces, or simply yield to them. A memo entitled “How the Mansfield Amendment Imperils the National Security,” listed the following additional concerns:

- It would seriously undercut are bargaining position with the Soviet Union in SALT negotiations which offer a historic opportunity to limit the danger to world peace.
- It would damage the four-power discussions underway to improve access to a divided Berlin.
- It would create an added peril to the Southern flank of NATO and the Middle East at a time when the Soviet Union has significantly increased its naval forces in the Mediterranean.
- Any unilateral reduction would cause European allied governments to question gravely the credibility of formal commitments by the United States government and the reliability of American promises.
- It is irresponsible to seek to destroy the central pillar of our post-war security policy.93

Mansfield, of course, could not help but note the “steady stream of old government officials dating back to the 40s retelling us the story they told us in the 40s and 50s and 60s about the absolute necessity of maintaining more than 300,000 American forces in Europe”—a group of individuals Symington referred to as “a lot of cold warriors.”94 Mansfield liked to point out, however, that “the one distinguishing feature of all the luminaries who have coalesced on this issue is not only their absoluteness and rigidity . . . but also the fact that I have never known any of them to have admitted that any of their policies have been wrong!”95

Nonetheless, Mansfield was correct in his assessment that the amendment would fail; on 19 May, it was rejected by a 36-61 roll call vote in the Senate. On leaving the senate chamber,

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93     Nixon Presidential Materials Project (National Archives II, College Park, MD), NSC Name Files, Box 824 (Mansfield).
however, Mansfield noted “the issue of troop reduction will not disappear.” Indeed, he revived it two years later—in the context of a move towards increased burden-sharing with NATO itself, the growing détente between the United States, the Soviet Union and the People’s Republic of China, and hopes for mutual balanced force reduction talks with the Soviets (developments that spurred another set of hearings on United States Forces in Europe during the summer of 1973)—but to the shock of the Nixon administration, he broadened the call to a world-wide reduction in U.S. forces stationed abroad over a three-year period. “Not since the days of the British Empire, or probably more truly, the Roman Empire, have so many been required to ‘maintain the peace’ away from our shores,” said Mansfield. “It is my opinion that a very sound international policy for the United States could be implemented with a reduction of fifty percent of the over 500,000 troops stationed on foreign soil, throughout the world.” Why? Because “the commitment and level of United States forces abroad has determined our policy rather than our policy determining the level of U.S. forces abroad,” and because “the enactment of this amendment would be totally consistent with the Nixon Doctrine of worldwide presence manifested by other than land forces on foreign soil.” Clearly, Mansfield remained reluctant to think of the Nixon Doctrine as only being applicable for Asia when many of the same assumptions that had led to American involvement there (specifically in Southeast Asia) had also led to American involvement elsewhere in the world. “Mr. President, the time has

96 Congressional Record, 19 May 1971, 15903.
97 Said Mansfield: “Today we find ourselves in a new situation. Success has been achieved in the first and most important round of SALT talks; the Warsaw and Moscow treaties have been concluded, the status of Berlin has been regularized; through the exchange of visits between president Nixon and Chairman Brezhnev a new and better climate has been created which allows us to talk about the Cold War in terms of the past.” United States Forces in Europe, Hearings before the Subcommittee on Arms Control, International Law and Organization, of the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, 93rd Congress, 1st Session, 1973, 13. RG 287, Box Y4-1472.
98 Mansfield, 25 July 1973, United States Forces in Europe, Hearings before the Subcommittee on Arms Control, International Law and Organization, of the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, 93rd Congress, 1st Session, 1973, 4, 15. RG 287, Box Y4-1472.
come to set aside the rhetoric of the Cold War used to justify a status quo of military involvement around the world. The time has come to recognize action that is long overdue…It is now time to respond to the spirit of détente . . . to respond to the realities of the 1970s.”

Nixon was not unreceptive to arguments like this, having worked hard to build the very détente Mansfield was referencing, and he was not committed to maintaining such high levels of troops in Europe indefinitely. As Kenneth Rush, his deputy Secretary of State, told the SFRC during the 1973 hearings on Europe, however, “the matter in which we reduce our forces is at least as important as the reductions themselves. We want to bring about these reductions in a way that will neither damage the Atlantic Alliance nor tempt our adversaries to return to a policy of aggressive confrontation.” To that end, Nixon was willing to nudge the NATO allies in the direction of increased burden-sharing, and he was willing to negotiate with the Soviets for mutual and balanced reductions in both NATO and the Warsaw Pact. But he was unwilling to accept the point of view that the Cold War was increasingly a thing of the past. The building of détente may have reconfigured the Cold War international system but détente was essentially another tool—albeit a rather different one—for waging the Cold War, and for maintaining—or regaining—American hegemony within the international sphere in the process.

100 Ibid.
That this was so was disappointing for individuals like Mansfield and Fulbright (for example) who were not simply re-examining certain Cold War assumptions and policies derived from those assumptions, but who were rethinking, and had been since the mid-1960s, the very nature of what constituted America’s “proper” role in the international sphere. The debates over America’s foreign aid, Vietnam, and NATO policies were significant in and of themselves, but collectively they spoke to a larger debate over the nature of just what exactly America’s place in the global arena should and ought to be. Two visions were in operation, one held by the Johnson and Nixon administrations and the other held by some members of the SFRC. These competing visions provide the focus of the next chapter.

Chapter Seven

Debating America’s Place in the World: Specters of “Isolationism”?

It may sound absurd to ask at this point in time whether the United States is on the verge of reverting to something closer to her historic policy of maximum isolation from international politics instead of the policy of maximum involvement that she has pursued over the past twenty years. There are more than a quarter of a million Americans in Vietnam, Washington is deep in negotiations to save NATO as an integrated military alliance . . . there is no corner of the globe that is not affected by American power. Yet it is a question which thoughtful Americans are beginning to ask themselves.¹

British journalist Alastair Buchan, a former Washington correspondent for the *London Observer* who had been “listening to American dialogue” for over thirty years, penned these words in the *Washington Post* on 21 August 1966. While the phrases “maximum isolation” and “every level of opinion” may have been an overstatement, it was certainly true that the majority of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee had begun to reconsider the merits and necessity of America’s self-appointed role as defender of the “free” world. Rising opposition to foreign aid, America’s involvement in Vietnam, and America’s NATO policy have been discussed thus far—in terms of the origins of debate over these issues during the Johnson administration and the ways in which debate continued to evolve during the Nixon years. Each of these issues prompting debate implicitly raised questions about America’s “proper” role in the international sphere.

The debates over foreign aid, Vietnam, and NATO, indeed, often overlapped and connected with one another. Fulbright believed America’s military commitment to Vietnam had grown out of the aid program to Southeast Asia in the first place, for example, while Mansfield came to believe the Nixon Doctrine—designed to theoretically enable the de-escalation of America’s presence there—ought to be adapted and applied to Europe (and indeed, the entire

globe). That the three specific issues tended to become linked is not surprising; what was really being debated, after all, was the larger scope of America’s Cold War foreign policy. Ultimately, America’s global presence writ large was held up against notions of power, responsibility, and identity—and it was found wanting. Those who questioned the Cold War consensus were concerned that America was exercising great power, as opposed to actually being a great power, and that, in so doing, America was doing damage to itself. Out of this belief grew an attempt to alter certain policies to bring them in line with both changing realities (international and domestic) and with certain ideals.

The vision for American foreign policy, and of America’s place in the world, that developed in the SFRC did indeed reflect a rethinking of several assumptions that had guided American foreign policy since the onset of the Cold War, but the Johnson and Nixon administrations saw more than just the collapse of previous consensus. They believed that Fulbright and Mansfield, and those of like mind on the SFRC, were seeking to inaugurate a new era of “isolationism” in American foreign relations. Johnson and Nixon made constant references to what they saw as a return to “isolationism” or, at the very least, a form of a neo-isolationism. Indeed, the SFRC’s increasingly vocal dissent led several journalists and intellectuals to ponder the possibility of America’s return to older, more isolationist values, especially as American involvement in Vietnam began to wind down. Yet those painted with the isolationist brush refused to acknowledge that label as an accurate description of their viewpoint; Fulbright and Mansfield, for example, repeatedly referred to themselves not as isolationists, but as the true internationalists.

This chapter thus considers the big picture, focusing on the ways in which the SFRC was questioning and examining the very nature of American foreign policy itself. It begins with an
examination of the common concerns underlying each of the more specific issues of foreign
aid, Vietnam, and the size and scope of America’s military presence in Europe, which, when
taken together, add up to a critique of America’s foreign policy as a whole. This first section
also considers how efforts to restrain or correct some the more problematic tendencies seen to be
guiding the United States’ actions abroad led the SFRC to attempt a reassertion of
Congressional authority in the field of foreign policy making. Underlying (or perhaps
overarching) the rather tangible concerns discussed in the first section, however, were
considerations about the nature of American power and identity itself. These are examined in
the chapter’s second section, which also endeavors to elucidate in greater detail the nature of the
SFRC’s vision of America’s proper role in the international sphere. Because the vision
Fulbright and others articulated was frequently referred to as representing a call for a return to
an isolationist foreign policy, the last section of the chapter focuses on this perception and
assesses its accuracy.

I.

In a public address given in March 1968, on the theme of reappraising America’s
international responsibilities, Mansfield argued that it had become “apparent that there are flaws
in the instruments of policy by which we have pursued our security over the years.”

The concept of mutual defense, for example, has been and remains, in practice,
overwhelmingly weighted on the side of American contribution of resources,
even though other nations are quite capable of increasing their contribution.
Foreign aid, too, has been seen not always to yield the intended result. . . In
short, while we may point the blade of military aid in one direction, once the
sword is in the other hands, it is not always possible to say where or when it will
fall. It is now apparent, too, that economic aid does not act in non-industrialized
nations as it did in helping the industrialized nations of Europe and Japan. . . Most
important, we are learning in Vietnam, at tragic cost, that an immensity of military power is not enough to safeguard peace or to yield a relevant freedom.\(^2\)

Because of these facts, Mansfield believed it was time for the United States to reconsider the nature of its foreign policy, especially since it was also becoming obvious that “our international circumstances are not as they were a decade and half ago. Nor is the world as it was a decade and a half ago.” Mansfield pointed to the receding of mutual fears in East and West Europe, the recovery of Western European economies “to levels of unprecedented productivity and prosperity,” the collapse of the Communist monolith which had so shaped America’s basic policies, the emergence of more than fifty independent nations and the corresponding growth of the United Nations, and the inclusion of France and China in the nuclear club as evidence of change. “Can it be said, however,” he asked, “that policy itself—the fusing of understanding, ideas and commitment which should form policy—has been adjusted adequately in light of these changes?” Mansfield believed the answer was no; “on the contrary, a foreign policy grown routine over many years may well be taking too much out of this nation.”\(^3\)

Mansfield was not alone in this assessment. Fulbright believed that “quite fundamental changes have taken place in the world during the past twenty years [but] it is equally clear, however, that we continue to apply the vocabulary created two decades ago to the shape of current events.”\(^4\) George McGovern similarly felt that “in the enigmatic field of foreign policy, we have been slow to break free from the tyranny of slogans . . . we are still guided in some areas by notions that have little relevance to present realities.” While President Johnson had stated that Americans “must change to master change,” McGovern felt Johnson had yet to

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\(^2\) Mike Mansfield, “International Responsibility: Reappraisal and Reappointment,” Address given at the University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, 9 March 1968, Mansfield Papers, Series XXI: Speeches and Reports, Box 44.

\(^3\) Ibid.

\(^4\) Fulbright, 30 January 1967, The Communist World in 1967, Hearings before the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, 90th Congress, 1st Session, with Former Ambassador to the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia George F. Kennan, 2. RG 287, Box Y4-1469.
“apply the imaginative, up-to-date approach” to foreign policy that he had brought to domestic concerns.\footnote{George McGovern, \textit{A Time of Peace, A Time of War} (New York: Random House, 1968), 104. McGovern was quoting from a speech he’d delivered in the Senate on 3 May 1966.}

Contained in these comments are effective statements of one of the major concerns that linked together the SFRC’s efforts to alter the foreign aid program, end America’s military engagement in Vietnam, and reduce the level of America’s military presence in Europe: the belief that foreign policy was based on outdated ideas about the Cold War and a corresponding misunderstanding of the world of the 1960s and 1970s. During the later Johnson years, in particular, the SFRC was concerned that the Johnson administration presented an insufficient understanding of the communist world. To that end, in 1967 the Committee organized a public hearing on the shape and state of the communist world relying on none other than George Kennan to voice for the American people the need for a deeper, more accurate, understanding of that world. Kennan testified that:

To attribute to the various parties and regimes and factions that make up the world communist movement any sort of unified political personality . . . is to fly in the face of an overwhelming body of evidence, to move intellectually into the realm of patent absurdity, to deny by implication the relevance of external evidence to the considerations and decisions of foreign affairs. . . . Not only does international communism present itself today in many diverse aspects, and not only is it a phenomenon in constant process of change, but it is also something that reacts sensitively in many respects to what we do and say, and must, therefore, be regarded as partially subject to our influence. Almost everywhere in the communist world there are forces more inclined to appreciate the value of a peaceful world and contribute where they can to development along that direction.\footnote{George Kennan, 30 January 1967, \textit{The Communist World in 1967}, 7-9. RG 287, Box Y4-1469.}

Belief that American foreign policy failed to account for changes within the communist world represented but one aspect of the SFRC’s overall concern, however, as members of the Committee felt that foreign policy more generally was often based on an inadequate
understanding of the world. In particular, Fulbright believed America needed to stop making foreign policy by analogy, and Church felt the United States need to devise a new policy for Asia and Africa; one better “designed to cope with the phenomenon of revolution in the newly developing parts of the world.” Americans are “severely, if not uniquely, afflicted with a habit of policy-making by analogy,” wrote Fulbright in 1966. Although he referred specifically to the ways in which North Vietnam’s involvement in South Vietnam was equated with Hitler’s invasion of Poland and to the idea being voiced by the Johnson administration that to parlay with the Vietcong would represent another “Munich,” Fulbright actually thought that policy-making by analogy was a more general phenomenon. The viewpoint that developing nations needed to follow the American model, for example, was also a product of false-analogy. It was important that America “set aside false analogies and recognize the social revolutions of the ‘third world’ as alien phenomenon, as phenomenon to which the American experience has little relevance.”

Church shared a similar viewpoint. He issued his call for a new policy towards the developing world because he believed that “change in the underdeveloped world is going to come through revolution and violence [and] not free elections because the countries are not democratic enough to allow for peaceful change, and the people don’t trust one another to open the ballots and read them fairly.” “I think,” said Church, “we have made no mistake so fundamental in American foreign policy than concluding that a design that was suitable for Europe would also be suitable for those regions of the world that have just thrown off European

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rule. We’ve failed to take into account how very different the underlying situation is in Asia
and Africa, in the ex-colonial regions of the world.”

The extent to which America acted unilaterally, as opposed to within the framework of
the international community and multilateral bodies, served as yet another perceived problem
with American foreign policy more generally. “In the twentieth century events beyond our
control have brought us into two world wars and imposed upon us responsibilities far beyond
our borders,” said Fulbright. “Until quite recently, however, our policies for meeting those
commitments have been guided by two extremely important qualifying principles: first that
those responsibilities were limited to certain countries and certain purposes; second, that they
would be discharged collectively under the United Nations or in cooperation with our allies.”

As Fulbright looked around in the mid-1960s he saw ample evidence that the United States had
lost sight of the limitations that had guided its foreign policy before the onset of the Cold War.
“In the wake of our disappointment with the United Nations in the late 1940s, we have taken it
upon ourselves to preserve order and stability in much of the world, purporting to do on our own
the things [Woodrow] Wilson and [Franklin] Roosevelt hoped to accomplish through world
organization but never dreamed of America doing on its own.” Fulbright could understand,
how, as the Cold War had developed, this had happened: “I am not one of those who believe
those commitments were taken out of delusion or a conscious lust for power. The threat, though
exaggerated and distorted in some instances, has been real enough in others.” He was
concerned, however, that America was now being carried along by force of “habits,” to the

9 Church, The Vietnam Hearings, 8-9.
Senate—Committee on Foreign Relations, Records of the Chairman, J. William Fulbright, Speeches and
Statements 1966-1975, Box 2.
detriment of the larger international community, and to America itself. Hence his desire to multilateralize the aid program, for instance, to involve the United Nations in the peace process for Southeast Asia, and to start considering what “restraints that participation in a multilateral alliance, like NATO, requires.”

McGovern concurred. Speaking specifically of Vietnam, he wrote that “the day of unilateral intervention is over; the need for more effective international peacekeeping machinery is clear.” Speaking of foreign aid, McGovern supported Fulbright’s initiatives. “The practical advantage of directing economic development assistance through multilateral channels is equally clear,” he wrote. “No single nation has the power, the wisdom, or the mission to be the world’s policeman, banker, or judge. These are the functions of the United Nations, the World Bank, the World Court and other agencies of the international community.” Ultimately, McGovern agreed with Fulbright’s statement that the “United States government apparently has reached the point where it believes the doctrines and interpretations it has created are more just and compelling that those of the United Nations.” Wayne Morse also agreed. “My concern,” he said, “is about the unilateral American foreign policy of so-called containment—a unilateral policy of setting ourselves up as the enforcers of the world to carry out what we think is best for the world.”

Linked with the concern over the unilateral nature of American foreign policy was a deep concern about the extent to which America had come to be defined by militarism, both as

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12 United States Policy Towards Europe (And Related Material), Hearings Before the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, 89th Congress, 2nd Session, 1966, 2. RG 287, Box Y4-1472.
14 Ibid., 201.
the most common type of conduct America seemed to resort to and as a general phenomenon afflicting American society. Even prior to the escalation in Vietnam, Fulbright believed that “one of the guiding principles of our foreign policy must be the accommodation of conflicting interests in the world by means other than military conflict,” even if that meant “peace without victory, or at least without the kind of total victory for American ideals and values.”\textsuperscript{17} Morse felt the United States was “substituting the jungle law of military might” for “international law doctrines,”\textsuperscript{18} and many members of the SFRC came to distrust the growing sense of militarism in American society, as evidenced by the existence of the military-industrial complex within America itself, close to four hundred major American military bases world-wide, and the frequent reliance on military solutions. They disagreed with the idea that “peace in the world can only be maintained through sufficient military strength.” Nixon’s Secretary of Defense, Elliott Richardson, had used these words during the 1973 hearings on foreign military sales and assistance, to which Fulbright replied: “I think fundamentally this is one of the principal differences between your approach and that of some of the members of the [SFRC]. . . . We feel that there are other matters that are just as important as military strength in the maintenance of peace, especially under present conditions.”\textsuperscript{19}

Also at issue was the perceived ineffectiveness of military solutions for problems which were conceived in other terms. Eugene McCarthy best summed up this belief when he pointed out that the military pacts created during the Eisenhower/Dulles era “were not able to cope with essentially political challenges.” Military containment may have worked in Europe and even in

\textsuperscript{17} Fulbright, “Bridges East and West,” Address Given at Southern Methodist University Convention, Dallas, Texas, 8 December 1964, RG 46: United States Senate—Committee on Foreign Relations, Records of the Chairman, J. William Fulbright, Speeches and Statements 1958-1965, Box 1.

\textsuperscript{18} Congressional Record, 28 August 1967, S12290.

\textsuperscript{19} Foreign Military Sales and Assistance Act, Hearings before the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, 93rd Congress, 1st Session, 1973, 287. RG287, Box Y4-1494.
Korea, McCarthy said, “but the conditions under which containment was effective” in those
areas did not exist is the rest of the world, marked as it is “by deep ethnic and social divisions;
by instability, political and social; by deep antagonism to the remnants of western colonialism;
and by a desire for change rather a return to the past.”\textsuperscript{20} The specific reliance on militarism,
then, served as evidence of the larger, overarching view that U.S. foreign policy was often based
on a misunderstanding of the world as it had developed by the 1960s.

Related to the issue of militarism was a growing fear that the United States had become
over-extended. In the name of defending the free world from the forces of communist
aggression, there was a continuing tendency to make commitments which Fulbright described as
“so far reaching as to exceed even America’s great capacities.”\textsuperscript{21} Church believed that “no
nation—not even our own—possesses a treasury so rich, or an arsenal so large, as to quench the
smoldering fires of revolution throughout the emerging world.”\textsuperscript{22} After touring Europe and the
Far East in early 1966, Stuart Symington returned convinced “that [America] is over-committed,
especially if these commitments continue to grow in the future as they have in the past; in fact...
I believe we face in the not too distant future a fiscal and monetary crisis.”\textsuperscript{23} Fulbright, for his
part, wanted to explore the “question of whether or not the United States in effect has
overextended itself” because he believed that question “is one which increasingly has engaged
public opinion,” especially in light of the “enormous domestic problems” facing America.\textsuperscript{24}

\textsuperscript{20} Eugene McCarthy, \textit{The Limits of Power: America’s Role in the World} (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and
Wilson, 1967), 56, 231.
\textsuperscript{21} Fulbright, \textit{Arrogance of Power}, 4.
\textsuperscript{22} Church, “Towards a New Asian Policy,” 21 Feb 1966, Copy found in JWF Papers, Series 48, Sub-series 14,
Box 43, Folder 11.
\textsuperscript{24} Fulbright, 21 February 1967, \textit{Conflicts between United States Capabilities and Foreign Commitments},
Hearings before the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, 90\textsuperscript{th} Congress, 1\textsuperscript{st} Session, 1967, 1. RG 287, Box Y4-1479.
Comments such as these speak to the belief that the United States had limits and that by pursuing a foreign policy that failed to realize or respect this, America was doing damage to itself. Symington’s concern was primarily about economic matters—rising debt, the balance of payments crisis, the integrity of the American dollar—and it would only become more focused over time. He believed that it was impossible for America to remain solvent if it continued to make commitments to the tune of “384 major bases around the world, 42 bilateral commitments to defend various countries” and the giving of foreign aid to much of the world population. Others on the SFRC tended to focus more inwardly. As Fulbright put it, “there is something unseemly about a nation conducting a foreign policy that involves it in the affairs of most of the nations of the world while its own cities are wracked by violence, its streets choked with traffic, its rivers open sewers and its air unfit to breathe. . . . It seems unnatural and unhealthy for a nation to be engaged in global crusades for some ostensible principle or ideal while neglecting the needs of its own people.” Regardless of the lens with which one chose to view the domestic situation, however, the bottom line was that America itself was suffering, beyond the climbing casualty rates in Vietnam.

That suffering was a product of the mistakes being perpetrated by those making foreign policy, individuals who remained guided by assumptions about the world that had been made when the Cold War was just beginning. As a result of those initial assumptions, the U.S. had become involved in virtually every so-called crisis that came along; because of this, policymakers lost their understanding of the limits of American power, and so began the process of

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26 Fulbright, “What Kind of Country Do You Want America to Be?” Address given at Kansas State University, 5 May 1967, JWF Papers, Series 72, Box 28, Folder 18. The second half of this quotation had been used in previous speeches before. See for example, in Box 25, Folder 11, “Putting Our Own House in Order,” Address given at the Virginia Polytechnic Institute, 3 April 1965.
over-extension. The crisis-mentality that had governed the making of foreign policy during the late 1940s and early 1950s remained in effect in the 1960s, and it had led America to adopt increasingly unilateral responses, while also fostering a reliance on militarism. Worst of all, American foreign policy remained committed to assumptions about the world that were often based on an incorrect understanding of that world. Similarly, it remained committed to assumptions about the nature of American power that failed to take into account that just as the international situation had changed from the late 1940s, so too had America’s own situation.

These concerns of the SFRC developed during the Johnson administration, and while initially hopeful that Nixon’s foreign policy would offer something different, the SFRC came to feel that this wasn’t the case. As Fulbright put it in 1970, “For all the sophistication and fine distinctions that are supposed to have refined our policy since the bad old days of the Cold War, there is little difference in spirit between Mr. Nixon’s ominous reference to ‘those great powers who have yet to abandon their goal of world conquest,’ and the language of President’s Truman’s proclamation of national emergency twenty years ago—which, by the way, is still in force.”

Even Nixon’s pursuit of détente with the Soviet Union and China, which was viewed as an “improvement on the ideological crusade of the Cold War” and, therefore, “of merit” failed to completely satisfy. While it offered an attempt to bring America’s foreign policy better in line with changing international circumstances, Nixon’s actions in Southeast Asia suggested his administration still held to certain Cold War dictates, and détente itself was criticized, at

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27 Fulbright, “Old Myths and New Realities,” 2 April 1970 (speech delivered before Congress), RG 46: United States Senate—Committee on Foreign Relations, Records of the Chairman, J. William Fulbright, Speeches and Statements 1966-1975, Box 2. In 1972 Fulbright specifically pointed to the Truman Doctrine as “the guiding spirit of American foreign policy” since its inception: “First there was the conception of communism as an international conspiracy…Later, after the Sino-Soviet break, sophisticated foreign policy analysts disavowed a conspiracy thesis, but at the same time…showed that the faith still lingered on.” See J. William Fulbright, “The Conduct of United States Foreign Relations,” New Yorker Magazine, 8 January 1972. Fulbright’s article was placed into the Congressional Record at the behest of Mansfield on 19 January 1972. Regarding the Nixon remarks Fulbright quoted, see Chapter Six, page 243. For the text of Truman’s Declaration of Emergency, see the Introduction, 9-10.
least by Fulbright, for being “oriented for process rather than purpose, as if the ‘game’ of
nations were nothing but a game, conducted for the sake of the game . . . for the sake of
winning, for being Number One.”

Based on their collective assessment of the major faults of foreign policy as a whole, the
SFRC endeavored to try to rein in some of what it viewed as the problematic impulses guiding
American actions abroad—specifically, the ability of presidential administrations to further
commit the United States to the defense of others around the world. As Fulbright put it: “In the
last twenty-five years American foreign policy has encountered a shattering series of crises and
inevitably the effort to cope with these has been Executive effort, while the Congress, inspired
by patriotism, importuned by the presidents, and deterred by lack of information, has tended to
fall in line behind the Executive.” In attempting to alter this pattern, the Committee also
hoped to check Presidential authority by re-asserting Congress’ role in the foreign-policy
making process. While once supportive of the primacy of the president in matters concerning
foreign affairs, members of the SFRC increasingly came to believe Congress needed to re-assert
itself so as to correct some of what they believed had gone wrong. This process is something
that previous chapters have alluded to through their explorations of the alternative policies
offered by the SFRC for the foreign aid program, Vietnam, and NATO, often initially by way of
“sense of senate” resolutions and then increasingly, during the Nixon years, through binding
Congressional action—a process that ultimately culminated with the passage of the War Powers

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28 Fulbright, “Aspects of the National Interest,” 8 October 1973, RG 46: United States Senate—Committee on
29 Fulbright, The Arrogance of Power, 45.
30 See Chapter Six, 257-58.
Primarily an attempt to “avoid future Vietnams,” as Jacob Javits, the primary sponsor of the War Powers Resolution, put it, the first steps towards that legislation began at the end of 1966 with a consideration of the issue of U.S. military commitments abroad more generally. At that time the SFRC held an executive session hearing on America’s relations with Thailand, specifically the nature of the commitments the U.S. had in and with that country and how those commitments had come into being. Carl Marcy (the SFRC’s chief of staff) recorded that “Fulbright wants to use the occasion to get into the subject of how we get into these commitments without more formal action by the Congress. . . . What, in fact, do treaty commitments to forty-three nations mean? . . . Do we interpret these as obligatory whilst others treat them as simple agreements to consult?”31 These were questions to be asked in general, not just in regards to the U.S.-Thai relationship, and when Johnson sent armed forces to the Congo the following July, Fulbright proposed a resolution, Senate Resolution (S.R.) 151, asserting Congress’ role in the making of national commitments. S.R. 151 read:

Whereas accurate definition of the term ‘national commitment’ in recent years has become obscured: Now, therefore, be it resolved that it is the sense of the Senate that a national commitment by the United States to a foreign power necessarily and exclusively results from affirmative action taken by the executive and legislative branches of the United States government through means of a treaty, convention, or other legislative instrumentality specifically intended to give such a commitment.

Consideration of this resolution became the basis for SFRC hearings, held in August and September 1967 on the question of U.S. commitments to foreign powers.32

Fulbright opened the hearings by stating that “our purpose goes beyond the present resolution” to an “evaluation of the responsibilities and current roles of Congress and of the

32 United States Commitments to Foreign Powers, Hearings before the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Congress, 90th Congress, 1st Session on S. Res. 151, 4. RG 287, Box Y4-1479.
Executive in making foreign policy.” Fulbright further stated that an imbalance had come to exist “as a result of which the Executive has acquired virtually unrestricted power to commit the United States abroad politically and militarily.”\textsuperscript{33} He was fully willing to admit that he had once supported the notion of executive primacy in foreign affairs, but “having now experienced the frenetic mobility of the 1960s, the overheated activism, and the ubiquitous developments in the mounting sense of global mission often referred to as the responsibilities of power,”\textsuperscript{34} he now saw merit that he formerly did not for the rebalancing of the executive-legislative relationship.

“We are groping for something,” said Fulbright, though “none of us quite positive or certain as to what we are groping for because we are dealing with a situation that has been developing for at least sixty or seventy years. Beginning at the turn of the century, the gradual erosion of the participation of Congress in [foreign affairs] is now confronting us. . . .We certainly cannot undo it all of a sudden, but if we can make a start in expressing our view, then that is about all I think we can do.”\textsuperscript{35} While Fulbright deemed the resolution a “modest” course of action, Mansfield thought the discussions surrounding it represented “one of the most significant debates” that he had heard in all his years in the Senate. Symington echoed this statement, calling the resolution “one of the most important presentations before this body since I have had the privilege of being a member.”\textsuperscript{36}

During the course of the hearings, S.R. 151, “the national commitments resolution,” was discussed and debated by legal experts, as well as members of Johnson’s cabinet (all of which

\textsuperscript{33} Ibid., 1.
\textsuperscript{34} Ibid., 3.
\textsuperscript{35} Ibid., 41.
\textsuperscript{36} Mansfield and Symington’s remarks were included in an article in the National Observer (7 August 1967) titled “Lassoing the Locomotive.” The article was inserted into the record of the committee hearings on the question of U.S. commitments to foreign powers. Ibid., 6-7.
opposed it) and of Congress. It was revised and reported to the full Senate as S.R. 187 in November 1967:

Whereas the executive and legislative branches of the United States Government have joint responsibility and authority to formulate the foreign policy of the United States; and Whereas the authority to initiate war is vested in the Congress by the Constitution: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, that a “commitment” for the purpose of this resolution means the use of, or the promise to a foreign state or people to use, the armed forces of the United States either immediately or upon the happening of certain events; and

That it is the sense of the Senate that, under any circumstances which may arise in the future pertaining to situations in which the United States is not already involved, the commitment of the armed forces to hostilities on foreign territory for any purpose other than to repel an attack on the United States or to protect United States Citizens or property properly will result from a decision made in accordance with the constitutional processes which in addition to appropriate executive action, require affirmative actions by Congress specifically intended to give rise to such commitment.37

Fulbright noted that, if adopted, the resolution “will not carry the force of law, but only express the judgment or opinion of the Senate. . . . At best it will help create a new attitude within the Congress . . . of caution and precision in legislative authorizations, of care in the oversight of the foreign activities of our government, and of healthy skepticism towards the urgings and importunings of the Executive.” He believed that, in the long run, all of this depended on decisions of a more fundamental nature, decisions of what kind of country we want America to be. . . . If America is to try on its own to do all the things that Wilson and Roosevelt hoped to accomplish through the collective power of world organization but never conceived of having the United States undertake alone, then the future can hold nothing for us except more foreign exertions, chronic warfare, burgeoning expense and the proliferation of the already formidable military-industrial complex.38

No action was taken on S.R. 187 during the remainder of the 90th Congress. The SFRC withheld debate on the Senate floor so as to not jeopardize the movement towards peace in

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37 Legislative History of the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, 91st Congress, January 3, 1969-January 2, 1971, 57, RG287, Box Y4-1491
Vietnam that Johnson had initiated with his 31 March 1968 speech. When the 91st Congress convened in 1969, however, such considerations were no longer in play and the resolution, now numbered S.R. 85 (given the new congress), was passed in the Senate by a vote of seventy to sixteen on 25 June 1969.\textsuperscript{39} On the one year anniversary of its passage, Fulbright commented that Nixon’s April 1970 initiation of hostilities in Cambodia “without the consent or even the prior knowledge of Congress or any of its committees” revealed that the Executive branch “has shown disregard not only for the National Commitments Resolution, but for the constitutional principles in which that resolution was rooted . . . Congress shall have to resort to measures more binding than a sense of the Senate resolution.”\textsuperscript{40} The War Powers Resolution ultimately became the solution, though it would take a few years to pass—years in which the Senate became increasingly frustrated with Nixon’s Southeast Asian policies.

Legislation specific to the question of war powers was first introduced by Jacob Javits in June 1970 in the wake of the collapse of the Cooper-Church amendment to the foreign military sales bill of 1970.\textsuperscript{41} The Senate failed to act on his resolution, however, so Javits reintroduced it in the spring of 1971, only to be followed by three other Senators putting forth similar legislation. Collectively these resolutions required the President to obtain advanced Congressional authorization for the commitment of U.S. forces in hostilities abroad, except in the cases of emergency wherein the president could act without prior authorization but had to seek Congressional approval within thirty days.

With these various resolutions on the table, the SFRC decided to hold hearings on the question of war powers, with the view that war powers legislation would provide a “practical

\textsuperscript{39} Congressional Record, 25 June 1969, 17245.
\textsuperscript{40} Documents Relating to the War Power of Congress, the President’s Authority as Commander-In-Chief and the War in Indochina, Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, 91st Congress, 2nd Session, July 1970, 41-42, RG287, Box Y4-1483.
\textsuperscript{41} See Chapter Six, 253-55, for a discussion of the Cooper-Church amendment.
means for implementing the National Commitments resolution." The individual resolutions were merged to create the War Powers Act, which was reported out to the Senate as a whole late in 1971. After a week’s debate on the Senate floor in the spring of 1972, the Senate passed the Act by a vote of 68-16, but the House rejected the bill later that fall because it felt the thirty-day window to obtain congressional approval for forces dispatched abroad in cases of emergency was too small. Javits reintroduced the legislation in April 1973 stating that “the war powers bill under consideration today has survived three years of the most searching scrutiny and debate by and among the best and most experienced minds in our country. This is the year to settle the problem.” Modified to allow a sixty-day window for the president to report on the dispatch of forces and obtain approval, the War Powers Resolution passed the Senate in July 1973 and the House in November, only to be vetoed on 7 November by President Nixon. His veto was overturned by Congress on 13 November, however, making the Resolution law.

The War Powers Resolution was ultimately an effort to “avoid future Vietnams,” as Javits himself put it, but the connection made by Fulbright between the question of war powers and the National Commitments resolution serves as a reminder that the War Powers Resolution was rooted in the larger concern with American military commitments abroad more generally. Even before the specific question of war powers was first broached in 1970, the SFRC was interested in investigating the exact nature of the existing commitments that the

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United States was said to hold, which included, among other less formal agreements, forty-two bilateral commitments to defend various countries. In 1969 a subcommittee on United States Security Agreements and Commitments Abroad was struck, with Stuart Symington assuming the position of chair. In announcing the creation of the subcommittee, Fulbright stated that its purpose “will be to make a detailed review of the international military commitments of the United States and their relationship to foreign policy. It is hoped that this review will result in constructive recommendations concerning the involvement of United States armed forces abroad, the impact of overseas commitments and the relationship between foreign policy commitments and the military capacity to honor them.” Vietnam was to be excluded from the scope of the subcommittee’s study “because it raise[d] a number of complicated and unique questions which [would] continue to receive the close attention of the full [SFRC].”

In his statement on the planned hearings to be held by the subcommittee, Symington noted that “questions of commitments and security agreements go far beyond words on paper. They include facilities and deployments of U.S. troops and equipment abroad; financial and equipment support for foreign forces and foreign government operations; bilateral contingency planning and joint exercise; and the storage of special weapons outside the United States.” Symington believed that “after studying the details of our activities overseas, one comes to realize that there is no single, simple thing to be labeled ‘commitment’—rather we have constructed a complex series of relationships…that have been based on a variety of justifications. Though times and circumstances have changed rapidly, frequently the programs have not.” Indeed, Symington pointed to the findings of the staff members of his subcommittee

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46 Fulbright’s statement was inserted into the record of the subcommittee’s hearings. See United States Security Agreements and Commitments Abroad, Hearings Before the Subcommittee on United States Security Agreements and Commitments Abroad of the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, 91st Congress, Volume II (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1971), 2302-04.
who had gone abroad to some of the countries America had security agreements with only to
discover that “in almost every country we visited, the staff found military facilities whose
original mission had long since faded.”

Symington’s subcommittee ultimately held thirty-seven days of hearings, conducted
between Sept 1969 and mid-July 1970, featuring forty-eight witnesses—usually members of the
American military or diplomatic missions abroad. The presence of U.S. military forces,
facilities and security programs in thirteen countries—the Philippines, Laos, Thailand, the
Republic of China (Taiwan), Japan and Okinawa, South Korea, Greece, Turkey, Ethiopia,
Morocco, Libya, Spain, and Portugal—as well as NATO as its own institution provided the
specific focus of the hearings, but the subcommittee had sent staff to twenty-three nations for on-
site investigations. The goal of both the on-site investigations and the hearings themselves was
to provide Congress with detailed information about American commitments—commitments
which, in many cases, the Congress knew virtually nothing about. Symington believed that
“both the Executive and Legislative branches are entitled to have . . . complete factual
information pertaining to matters of foreign policy.” But more than simply an information
gathering exercise, the subcommittee’s work was important because America stood at a
“crossroad” and it was necessary “to reassess the way it is traveling, the direction it is seeking to
take.” The hearings, it was hoped, would “play a part in this reassessment.”

In addition to examining the foreign policy implications of America’s treaty commitments
and security agreements, as well as the world-wide network of military installations, the

47 Symington, Statement on Planned Hearings on Foreign Commitments, 13 August 1969, found in Fulbright
48 Opening Statement by Symington, 30 September 1969, United States Security Agreements and Commitments
Abroad, Hearings Before the Subcommittee on United States Security Agreements and Commitments Abroad of
the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, 91st Congress, Volume I (Washington DC: Government
Printing Office, 1971), 2
Subcommittee also looked into the foreign policy implications of major Congressional resolutions that delegated various degrees of authority to the president to involve the U.S. in military or political action abroad in Taiwan (Formosa), the Middle East, Cuba, and Southeast Asia. Passed in 1955 (in the wake of the Taiwan Straits crisis), 1957 (in support of the Eisenhower Doctrine), 1962, and 1964 (the Gulf of Tonkin resolution) respectively, each of these resolutions was repealed in 1970. In addition, the State of Emergency President Truman had declared back in December 1950 during the Korean War, which was still in effect, was officially terminated. This last action, in particular, was designed to make the point that the international situation had changed and it was time for American foreign policy to begin reflecting that fact. If the Executive was not going to take action, then the Congress would.

II.

Thus far, this chapter has discussed the concerns that various members of the SFRC had over the shape and direction of American foreign policy as a whole, and their efforts, because of these concerns, to reassert Congress’ voice in the process of foreign policy making. There is yet one more problem that Fulbright in particular perceived, one that underlay the more tangible and tactical concerns that America’s foreign policy was based on assumptions that did not adequately reflect international realities, was over-reliant on the principles of unilateralism and militarism, and, as a result of these things, was over-extended. This overarching concern had to do with questions of power and identity.

In 1966 Fulbright published a *New York Times* bestselling book entitled *The Arrogance of Power*. Its basic thesis was that the United States had reached a point where “having done so much and succeeded so well” it was in danger of “losing its perspective on what exactly is

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within the realm of its power and what is beyond it.” Fulbright believed that the great powers and empires of the past had collapsed because they had not used their power wisely or well and the U.S. appeared to be falling into the same trap. America had fallen prey to the “arrogance of power—a psychological need that nations seem to have in order to prove they are bigger, better, or stronger than other nations.” He further defined the arrogance of power as “the tendency of great nations to equate power with virtue and major responsibilities with a universal mission.” The U.S. had become so intricately involved in Vietnam, for example, because of “the view of communism as an evil philosophy and the view of ourselves as God’s avenging angels, whose sacred duty it is to combat evil philosophies.” While it was true that Americans had brought many good things like medicine and education to many parts of the world, they had also brought “the condescending attitudes of a people whose very success breeds disdain for other cultures.” Ultimately, the United States brought “power without understanding.” Fulbright further argued that, because the U.S. “lack[ed] an appreciation of the dimensions of [its] power,” there was a tendency to “fail to understand our enormous and disruptive impact on the world.”

These ideas had been germinating in Fulbright’s mind for some time. In a December 1964 address on the theme of building bridges between the West and the East, Fulbright stated that “every society has its shortcomings of style and character.” America’s shortcoming was “the mischief of too great virtue, of idealism insufficiently tempered by the sobering wisdom of experience. It is the crusading tendency, so noble in intent, so potentially destructive in its consequences, that we must guard against in our relations with the communist world. . . . We must acknowledge, however regretfully, that it is not open to us to remove the threat of

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51 Ibid., 13, 21.
communism from the world.” In a March 1965 address on the relationship between ideology and foreign policy, Fulbright had emphatically stated that “We are not God’s chosen people, any more than anyone else is, but simply a very rich, powerful, industrious and very lucky nation, endowed, because we are so rich and powerful, with a responsibility to behave as intelligently and generously as we can, but with nothing whatsoever resembling a mission to regenerate mankind.” As the Johnson administration’s foreign policy seemed to suggest that it subscribed to the view that it was America’s duty to remove the communist threat and regenerate mankind, Fulbright’s thoughts coalesced and evolved into the “arrogance of power” thesis by spring of 1966.

The viewpoint outlined in *Arrogance of Power* would continue to find expression after its publication. Fulbright made repeated references to the tendencies of self-righteousness and the confusing of power with virtue. Increasingly he came to feel America was drunk with power. In an address delivered at the end of 1969 on why the Vietnam War needed to be ended, Fulbright referenced the opposing viewpoint: “The familiar image is invoked: of America, the martyred giant, manning the ramparts of freedom, humoring the recalcitrance and enduring the insults of those who are free from the ‘discipline of power,’ bearing without complaint the unfair burdens which destiny as thrust upon us. Diplomats have described this role as the

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53 Fulbright, “Ideology and Foreign Policy,” the George Huntington Williams Memorial Lecture, Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, Maryland, 12 March 1965, JWF Papers, Series 72: Speeches Elsewhere, Box 14, File 20.
'responsibility of power.'” That was “nonsense,” according to Fulbright, who believed, “power is a narcotic, a potent intoxicant, and America has been on a ‘trip.’”

Fulbright possessed a different understanding of the sources of American power. “When you read about great nations and great men, almost invariably it has to do with military power. The word ‘great’ is often synonymous with military power.” Rather than this raw form of power, however, Fulbright believed that “inevitably and demonstrably, our major impact on the world is not in what we do but in what we are. For all their worldwide influence, our aid and diplomacy are only mere shadows of America; the real America—and the real American influence—are something else. They are in the way our people live . . . the way we treat each other, the way we govern ourselves.”

The nation performed its essential functions not in its capacity as “power” but in its capacity as a society. “New concepts are required, not only as applied to international relations but for the nation itself and the purposes it is meant to advance,” said Fulbright. “It is a curious thing when you think of it, that we refer to nations as ‘powers’, as if the exercise of power in foreign relations rather than the . . . organization of societies were the principal reason for their existence.” Fulbright saw a “fundamental distinction between the concept of the nation as essentially a power, defending or pursuing power for its own sake as if that pursuit were . . . the major reason for the state’s existence, and the concept of the nation as essentially a society, organized not as an end in itself but as an instrument or arrangement for the advancement of the welfare of its citizens.” Particularly

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56 Fulbright, 1 June 1969, Psychological Aspects of Foreign Policy, Hearings before the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, 91st Congress, 1st Session, 1969, 40. RG287, Box Y4-1501.
concerning was the fact that since the onset of the Cold War, the “United States have become unhealthily preoccupied with its function as a power, to the increasing detriment of American society.”\textsuperscript{59} As he expressed it in 1973 to Elliott Richardson, Nixon’s new Secretary of Defense, “the point I am trying to make is that we disagree as to what the strength of the country consists of. I cannot agree it consists of more and more arms abroad. . . .It consists of getting our own house in order.”\textsuperscript{60}

Ultimately, Fulbright believed that the United States was not a power simply by virtue of the fact that it could bring immense power to bear anywhere on the globe it chose. America’s internal make-up combined with its actions abroad to define whether or not America was truly a Power (with a capital P). There was a difference between exercising power and actually being a Power, and while it was clear America was doing the former, it was not so clear America was the latter, especially in light of the deteriorating image of the United States abroad—something of increasing concern to many.

During the Vietnam Hearings, Kennan spoke of the increasingly negative image attached to the United States by others, especially in light of the conduct of the war in Vietnam. “Our motives are widely misinterpreted, and the spectacle emphasized and reproduced in thousands of press photographs and stories that appear in the press of the word,” he said, was “of Americans inflicting grievous injury on the lives of a poor and helpless people, and particularly a people of a different race and color.”\textsuperscript{61} This spectacle “produces reactions among millions of people throughout the world profoundly detrimental to the image we would like them to hold of this


\textsuperscript{60} \textit{Foreign Military Sales and Assistance Act}, Hearings before the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, 93\textsuperscript{rd} Congress, 1\textsuperscript{st} Session, 1973, 289. RG287, Box Y4-1494.

\textsuperscript{61} \textit{The Vietnam Hearings}, 334.
country.” Fulbright could not agree more, though he believed it was more than just America’s actions in Vietnam that were problematic. “America is top dog in the world,” he said, and although we may be convinced that we are good top dogs, most people in the world are convinced there is no such thing. Because we are rich, we are perceived as voracious; because we are successful, we are perceived as arrogant; because we are strong, we are perceived as overbearing. These perceptions may be distorted and exaggerated, but they are not entirely false. Power does breed arrogance and it has bred enough in us to give substance to the natural prejudices against us.62

This was confirmed in a 1970 New York Times interview with Arnold Toynbee, a British historian. When asked “how does the United States look to the rest of the world these days?” Toynbee replied:

America now looks like the most dangerous country in the world. Since America is unquestionably the most powerful country, the transformation of the American image within the last thirty years is very frightening. . . . Who would have foreseen that . . . America would cease to be the land of hope? And who would have expected to find himself wishing that America would box the campus . . . wishing, I mean, that American would retreat again into the isolation from which we were once so eager to see her emerge?

Toynbee concluded by saying he would rather be a Czech “saved” by the Russian army than a Vietnamese “saved” by the Americans because the destruction the Soviets caused in Czechoslovakia was “small, measured by the standard of America’s record in Vietnam.”63

While America’s actions abroad in general served to create a negative image—as Wayne Morse put it, “we are having the charge made against us in many quarters of the world that we have developed a new form of imperialism . . . consist[ing] of a strong military presence and

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63 New York Times, 10 May 1970. Article printed in the record of Moral and Military Aspects of the War in Southeast Asia, Hearings before the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, 91st Congress, 2nd Session, 1970, 92-93, RG287, Box Y4-1465.
expansion of that presence around the world”64—the conflict in Vietnam tended to serve as the focal point for fears about America’s deteriorating image. Church felt “very disturbed” by the fact that America’s allies in Europe disapproved of U.S. actions in Vietnam; this “affect[ed] the moral position of the United States in the world and our opportunity to exercise the kind of leadership I think we should.”65 McGovern concurred: “America’s greatest asset in the world has been our democratic tradition, our concept of human dignity, and a humane society devoted to peace. But Vietnam represents a different view of America…America’s actions in Vietnam, however initially well intentioned, do not square with the image of America that the world has traditionally admired.”66 By the early 1970s, McGovern was calling the obliteration of villages, food supplies, foliage, and family life by American bombers in Southeast Asia “crimes against humanity” that “contradict everything decent in the America tradition. They cannot be permitted to go on any longer if we expect to preserve our greatness as a nation and our self-respect.”67 Fulbright agreed; “The greatest discrepancy of all,” he said,

is the discrepancy between present policies and the traditional values of America. There was a time not so long ago when Americans believed that whatever else they might do in the world—whatever wars they might have to fight, whatever aid they might have to provide—their principle contribution to the world would be their own example as a decent and democratic society. Now, with our country beset by crises of poverty and race . . . with our allies alienated and our people divided by the most unpopular war in our history, the light of the American example burns dim around the world. More alarming still is the dimming of the light of optimism among the American people, especially among the youth.”68

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64 Morse, 20 February 1967, Changing American Attitudes toward Foreign Policy, Hearing before the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, 90th Congress, 1st Session, 1967, 52, RG287, Box Y4-1479.
67 McGovern, 20 April 1971, Legislative Proposals Relating to the War in Southeast Asia, Hearings before the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, 92nd Congress, 1st Session, 1971, 24-24, RG287, Box Y4-1465.
A common threat connected Church, McGovern and Fulbright’s comments: the growing concern that the exercise of raw power abroad was having the unintended consequence of imperiling a more meaningful source of American power—its democratic traditions. “We cannot, without doing to ourselves the very injury we seek to secure ourselves against from foreign adversaries, pursue policies which rely primarily on the threat or use of force because policies of forces are inevitably disruptive of democratic values,” wrote Fulbright.69 There was a growing concern that the U.S. was distorting its most treasured ideals. “Freedom is worth fighting for,” argued McGovern, “but it cannot be achieved through an alliance with unpopular forces abroad that deny freedom.”70

Ultimately, there were two ways in which American democracy was imperiled—by the distortion of its ideals abroad, and by the growing constitutional imbalance in the field of foreign policy making at home. The two were intimately related, however. The latter is reflected in the SFRC’s efforts to restore some constitutional balance with measures like the War Powers Resolution, but the attempt at reasserting congressional authority in the field of foreign affairs was about much more than constitutional principle; it also represented an effort to correct the course of foreign policy and bring it back in line with perceived notions of American identity. Members of the SFRC increasingly came to fear that America was becoming no different then the empires of the past and as Fulbright put it, “the price of empire is America’s soul and that price is too high.” That is why Fulbright believed there was so much dissent over the war in Vietnam—“the dissent in the Senate and the protest marches in the street, the letters to the president from student leaders and former Peace Corps volunteers . . . the letter to the Senator

from a soldier in the field who can no longer accept the official explanations of why he has been sent to fight in the jungles of Vietnam. All believe their country was cut out for something more ennobling than an imperial destiny.”

A belief that the price of empire was America’s soul led Fulbright and those like him to feel compelled to air their dissenting views. In the Arrogance of Power, Fulbright wrote that the United States was “not living up to [its] capacity and promise as a civilized example for the world. The measure of our falling short is the measure of the patriot’s duty to dissent.” He would later write that perhaps it was vanity for America to assume it could be an example to others; “our practice had not lived up to that ideal, but from the earliest days of the Republic the ideal has retained its hold upon us.”

Pointing to opposition to the Mexican-American War of 1848 and the Spanish-American-Filipino War of 1898, Fulbright noted that “every time we act inconsistently with it—not just in Vietnam—but every time, a hue and cry of opposition has arisen.” What was sad was not that America was a bad country, “but that it falls so short of what it might be and what it could do with all its resources.” To point this out, to dissent, was to express the highest form of patriotism. “What then is Americanism?” asked McGovern.

Who is the true patriot? I am certain this question cannot be answered with a flip declaration “My Country, right or wrong.” I am equally certain that America’s interest is not served by empty-headed flag-waving, devoid of any reflection and understanding. . . . Therefore the highest faithfulness to our country does not lie in blindly accepting the ideas of the past or the policies of the present, but rather in

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71 Fulbright, “The Price of Empire,” Address delivered to the American Bar Association, 8 August 1967, JWF Papers, Series 72, Box 29, Folder 12. Fulbright was not the only one to speak in terms of America’s “soul.” Ernest Gruening believed that “the United States stands today at the crossroads of a great moral decision and must ask itself: ‘What shall it profit a nation if it gain the whole world but loses its own soul?’” See Ernest Gruening, Vietnam Folly (Washington DC: The National Press, 1968), 383. By the early 1970s, McGovern was convinced that “the very soul of this nation demands that we take positive action now to terminate our role in the killing and destruction of Indochina.” See, Legislative Proposals Relating to the War in Southeast Asia, Hearings before the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, 92nd Congress, 1st Session, 1971, 23, RG287, Box Y4-1465).


73 Psychological Aspects of Foreign Policy, SFRC Hearings, 63, RG287, Box Y4-1501.
the willingness to question and challenge all that we are and all we do, so we may bring the reality of America closer to the ideal.\textsuperscript{74}

It went without saying, or rather it should have, so dissenters thought, that the disagreements between the SFRC and the administration had nothing to do with whether one was for or against the United States. “We are all for America and for America’s interests,” said Fulbright; “We just disagree as to what those interests are and how they can best be advanced.”\textsuperscript{75}

Ultimately, it was this disagreement that fostered the concern that American had fallen prey to the arrogance of power, “the presumption of the very strong who confuse power with wisdom and set out upon a self-appointed mission to police the world.”\textsuperscript{76} And it is this disagreement that lay underlay much of the tension between the SFRC and the Johnson and Nixon administrations over the shape and direction of foreign policy. At the center of that tension were competing visions of what constituted America’s “proper” role in the global arena.

In January 1967, the SFRC decided to conduct hearings on the general subject of the “responsibilities of the United States as a world power.” The genesis for this had come from the 1966 Vietnam Hearings, the purpose of which Church believed was “to inquire both behind and beyond Vietnam to try to determine where we are, how we got here, and where we are going.” The hearing on the shape of the communist world in 1967 at which George Kennan offered his views (see page 279) was organized as a part of this larger investigation. So, too, were hearings focused on the subjects of “changing American attitudes towards foreign policy” and the “conflict between United States capabilities and foreign commitments.”\textsuperscript{77} While these hearings

\textsuperscript{74} McGovern, \textit{A Time of War, A Time of Peace}, 187-88
\textsuperscript{76} Fulbright, \textit{Arrogance of Power}, 138.
\textsuperscript{77} See \textit{The Communist World in 1967}, Hearings before the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, 90\textsuperscript{th} Congress, 1\textsuperscript{st} Session, with Former Ambassador to the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia George F. Kennan (RG287, Box Y4-1469); \textit{Conflicts between United States Capabilities and Foreign Commitments}, Hearings before the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, 90\textsuperscript{th} Congress, 1\textsuperscript{st} Session, 1967 (RG287, Box Y4-
were specifically organized under the larger theme of the America’s global responsibilities, most of the hearings the SFRC held from the Vietnam Hearings onwards in fact addressed this theme in some fashion. As Fulbright put it: “if there is one commanding purpose to be served by public discussions of foreign policy, that purpose is the gaining of perspective—perspective about others and perspective about ourselves and our place in the world.”

In the *Arrogance of Power*, Fulbright asked as a series of questions reflective of this larger probing of American foreign policy:

> Are we to be the friend or the enemy of social revolutions in Asia, Latin America, and Africa? Are we to regard the communist countries as more or less normal states with whom we can have more of less normal relations, or are we to regard them indiscriminately as purveyors of an evil ideology with which we can never reconcile? And, finally, are we to regard ourselves as a friend, counselor, and example for those around the world who seek freedom and who also want our help, or are we to play the role of God’s avenging angel, the appointed missionary of freedom in a benighted world?  

Fulbright believed that America should choose the former in each of the options he presented. It was his hope that the U.S. would conduct its “affairs with a maturity which few if any great nations have ever achieved: to be confident but also tolerant, to be rich but also generous, to be willing to teach, but also willing to learn, to be powerful but also to be wise.” If America was to be these things, it could not continue in the role of self-appointed arbiter of world affairs.

This is precisely why the Committee came to dispute the unilateral nature of American foreign policy, as well as its reliance on military solutions. When Undersecretary of State Nicholas Katzenbach testified during the 1967 hearings on U.S. commitments to foreign powers

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1479); and Changing American Attitudes toward Foreign Policy, Hearing before the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, 90th Congress, 1st Session, 1967 (RG287, Box Y4-1479).


that it was America’s “policy to be opposed to aggression wherever it occurs in the world,”
Fulbright immediately asked “if this is our policy, doesn’t this mean we have without any
formalizing of the idea substituted ourselves as carrying out the policy of the United Nations
where this matter of intervention and keeping the peace rests? We have . . . without formality,
ourselves become the policemen and keeper of the peace?” This was not to say that the United
States bore no responsibility whatsoever for the welfare of others, but that, as McCarthy put it:
“America’s contribution to world civilization must be more than a continuous performance
demonstration that we can police the planet.”

Part of the problem, it was believed, lay in the manner in which the Johnson and Nixon
administrations had conflated the UN charter and the Truman Doctrine. William Sullivan,
Nixon’s Deputy Assistant Secretary for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, testified before the
Symington Subcommittee that the goal of America’s foreign policy was the “existence of
independent states and the ability of those states to exist and be free of change by external
application of force,” and that this “has been something of an underlying point in our general
policy ever since the United Nations Charter was signed by us.” Fulbright interrupted Sullivan
to ask if he was talking about the UN charter or “about the so-called Truman doctrine. There is
a difference you, know.” When Sullivan responded that “one is a parsing of the other,”
Fulbright replied that the Truman doctrine, a unilateral construction of the United States that led
to bilateral security agreements, was “something very different.”

A larger part of the problem, however, lay in prevailing view that, as General Maxwell
Taylor (former Ambassador to South Vietnam) had put it during the Vietnam Hearings, the

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United States “cannot escape its destiny as the champion of the free world.”\textsuperscript{83} Morse equated this line of reasoning with the old doctrine of “manifest destiny,” which he felt to be ludicrous because it lacked “discretion,” “discrimination,” and “thoughtfulness.”\textsuperscript{84} McCarthy believed that because of the experience of Vietnam, it was now time to “re-examine the role of the United States in history, to put aside such old concepts of manifest destiny and the rather widely accepted idea that America has a mission to sit in judgment of other nations.”\textsuperscript{85} Fulbright felt Taylor’s viewpoint to be symptomatic of the arrogance of power. Dissenters did not accept the “romantic view that the nation is powerless to choose the role it will play in the world.” As Fulbright later said in response to some of Nixon’s comments: “Lost to view is the real possibility that things may be as they are not because they have to be, but because they happen to be. We ‘have to’ play this superpower role, says the President—as if the matter were patently beyond the range of human choice, as if some heavenly force had decreed it.”\textsuperscript{86} This was not true.

The United States did have a choice as to what role in the world it would play and given the changing circumstances both internationally and domestically, the time was particularly ripe for the contemplation of the options available to America. “Before the Second World War our role was a potential role,” said Fulbright. “We were important in the world for what we could do with our power, for the leadership we might provide, for the example we might set. Now the

\textsuperscript{83} The Vietnam Hearings, 296.

\textsuperscript{84} Ibid.,


choices are almost gone. We are *almost* the world defender of the status quo.”\(^{87}\) “The essential question today,” Fulbright declared in a 1967 address entitled “What Kind of Country Do You Want America to Be?” was:

> whether we want our country to be the world’s policeman, the arbiter of every conflict and, therefore, an imperial power, or whether we want it to be what it has sometimes been in the past: an intelligent and humane society whose principal contribution to the outside world has been the power of its own example, a nation which cooperates with other nations and with international bodies like the United Nations to maintain peace.

America’s power and influence were “largely an accident of history and geography,” not the product of the Lord’s favor or “a sign of some special mission we are meant to carry out.” The United States might very well decline as the great empires of the past had, Fulbright believed, “or maybe—just maybe—if we are very wise and very farsighted, we may escape the pattern of past empires and survive to play a new and different kind of role in the world.” The events that made America into a power with significant global responsibilities could not be undone, but “there were still choices to be made about how we meet those responsibilities.” America could choose to build an empire, or it could choose to be “a model of dignity and decency, deeply involved in the world as it must be . . . but not so deeply involved entirely on its own so as to become the proprietor of some nations and the bully of others.”\(^{88}\)

Individuals like Fulbright clearly believed that America’s proper role in the global arena should consist of something other than being a world policeman and the self-appointed arbiter of others’ affairs. That role led, as McCarthy expressed it, to the United States assuming “even

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88 Fulbright, “What Kind of Country Do You Want America to Be?” Address Given at Kansas State University, 5 May 1967, JWF Papers, Series 72, Box 28, Folder 18.
without consciously knowing it, the characteristics of an imperial power."\(^8^9\) To don this mantle was dangerous: it made America the defender of the status quo in an international system where change was constant; it robbed America of the opportunity to lead by force of example; and it ultimately betrayed the principles on which the nation professed to operate, while endangering American democracy and society in the process. Thus, instead of assuming the self-appointed mission of defender of the free world, the United States should seek to cooperate on a greater scale with the larger international community, and to lead by example. As, Fulbright put it:

> By our unrestrained use of physical power, we have divested ourselves of a great power: the power of example. How, for example, can we commend peaceful compromise to the Arabs and Israelis when we are unwilling to suspend our relentless bombing in Vietnam? How can we commend democratic social reform [to others] when the crime and poverty of our cities give evidence of our own inadequate efforts at democratic social reform?

He did not doubt that America had the great potential to be a positive force in the world, but Fulbright felt that this potential was being impaired by both a lack of attention to domestic affairs, which served to weaken America overall, and by many of the United States’ actions abroad—though none so obvious as the conduct of the war in Vietnam.

In articulating this vision of America’s role in the world, Fulbright and his like-minded colleagues on the SFRC did not mean to imply the belief that the United States lacked a fundamental role to play in the search for order and international stability; they were, however, questioning the manner in which America was pursuing that role. The Johnson and Nixon administrations did not see it that way, however, nor did certain political commentators in the larger American public. Taken in conjunction with the SFRC’s specific efforts to alter the American aid program, end America’s participation in the Vietnam War, and reduce the level of

\(^8^9\) Eugene McCarthy, *First Things First: New Priorities for America*, (New York: Signet Books, 1968), 8. Fulbright also believed that America’s growing imperialism was not intended. “For reasons partly of necessity, partly of misjudgment,” he wrote, “we have strayed from the course for which our experience and values prepared us into the uncongenial practices of power politics and war.” See the *Crippled Giant*, 13.
armed forces stationed in Europe, the overarching vision of American foreign policy being developed—based as it was on opposition to the long-standing idea that it was America’s duty to defend the free world and concern for the shape of America domestically—led to a the belief that what was really being called for was not a reformulation of America’s place in the global arena, but a withdrawal from that arena. As Alastair Buchanan’s observation at the beginning of this chapter notes, they were seen as advocating a reversion to the historic policy of “isolationism”.

III.

In February 1965, Walter Lippmann wrote an article in the Washington Post entitled “Globalism and Isolationism.” “The debate about Vietnam is taking place amidst uncertainty and confusion about our overall foreign policy,” he said, and underlying that debate was a “passionate emotional issue. It is whether the security of the United States, which must be the primary preoccupation of United States foreign policy, depends on a limited or unlimited engagement of our military power.” Lippmann defined “limited” engagements as those which are “made only when our vital interest is clear and our military capacity is adequate.” This view, he said, was “now called ‘neo-isolationism’ because it differs from a commitment to engage our forces anywhere…where freedom as we understand it is threatened by communists,” and it stood in contrast to the “ideological globalism” then currently driving U.S. foreign policy.90

If Lippmann implied a certain questioning of the appropriateness of the neo-isolationist label, others did not. An article appearing in the New York Times on 16 May 1965 argued that “the unadorned truth is that isolationism is reviving in our midst.” It noted that advocates of this position now called themselves “neo-isolationists” so as “to distinguish them from, but associate

them with, their fellows of the nineteen-thirties and early nineteen-forties.” The article’s author, Henry Graff, professor of diplomatic history at Columbia University, noted some differences between the new isolationists and their earlier counterparts: new isolationists were not necessarily guided by the same revulsion of war, for example, and they were wedded to the idea of collective security. Nonetheless, while “it may be too early to say that a debate on isolationism vs. internationalism is at last shaping up,” Graff felt “a cast of characters [wa]s waiting in the wings.” Specifically identified as a part of that cast were Fulbright, Mansfield, Church, McGovern, and George Aiken. All of these men served on the SFRC. Ultimately Graff argued that “neo-isolationism is another way of expressing fatigue with the burdens of the Cold War. It appeals to people who simply want ‘out,’ or at least a rest from the trials of leading the free world.”

Graff’s article elicited a fair amount of response. Thomas Ranob, a fellow professor from Columbia contributed an article to the Times that sought to more accurately define neo-isolationism in comparison to more traditional isolationism: “Whereas isolationists challenge the very principle of involvement [in world affairs], neo-isolationists question not the principle but it form, extent and attendant risks.” The isolationists of the 1930s and early 1940s shied away from the involvement in the world, but the neo-isolationists of the 1960s were not advocating this; they merely “seek to define” the implications of world involvement “as precisely as possible and—recognizing certain obvious limitations imposed on United States foreign policy by the unique characteristics of post-war international politics—to establish criteria by which United States involvement might be required and justified.”

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more accurate definition of the term neo-isolationist, George McGovern took issue with the term entirely. He wrote into the Times saying:

> to argue that such Senators as Fulbright, Mansfield and Church are the nation’s new isolationists is so incredible that one wonders how a serious scholar could advance such nonsense. According to Mr. Graff’s reasoning, anyone who questions such articles of faith as the monolithic character of world communism, or America’s deepening military involvement in Vietnam, is an isolationist. Again, those who prefer collective actions through the United Nations rather than free-wheeling unilateralism are guilty of reviving isolationism!

McGovern continued by saying that he and his colleagues followed not the creed of isolationism, but that of “enlightened internationalism.”

Despite McGovern’s efforts to reject the term, political commentators frequently referred to the rise of a new isolationism from 1965 onwards, and both the Johnson and Nixon administrations would frequently speak of those who expressed disagreement with their foreign policies as isolationists. For example, Johnson said of Mansfield that he was “a cross between Jeanette Rankin and Burton K. Wheeler” both of whom were prominent isolationists from Montana in the lead-up to American entry into World War Two. Walt Rostow once said that Johnson used to say “out there in Montana there’s something in the water that makes them isolationist. He said it about [Frank] Church too.” The Nixon administration also liked to label the SFRC members as isolationist. Spiro Angew charged the Senate critics of Nixon’s policies with trying to foster a “whimpering isolationism,” while Fulbright, in particular, was pegged as calling for “the baldest and most reactionary plea for isolationism heard in the Senate since the

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95 Don Oberdorfer Interview with Walt Rostow, 31 January 1999, in the Don Oberdorfer Mansfield Biography Research Papers, Box 2, File 5, at the K. Ross Toole Archive, the Mike and Maureen Mansfield Library, University of Montana, Missoula.
heyday of the America Firsters”\textsuperscript{96}—the most prominent citizens organization aimed at keeping the United States out of the Second World War. Nixon, for his part, deemed it ironic that “the great internationalists of the post World War Two period have become the neo-isolationists of the Vietnam War period.”\textsuperscript{97} Within six months of assuming office, he had warned against a return to isolationism saying that America would meet both its responsibilities abroad and the needs of its people at home. Isolationism could not be tolerated because foreign policy decisions had to be based “on the hard realities of the offensive capabilities of our adversaries and not on our fervent hopes about their intentions.” “If America were to turn its back on the world,” Nixon said, “a deadening form of peace would settle over the planet—the kind of peace that suffocated freedom in Czechoslovakia.”\textsuperscript{98}

By the early 1970s, especially as Congress’ efforts to end the Vietnam War intensified, speculation about a return to isolationism in American foreign policy gained new ground with the publication of Robert Tucker’s \textit{A New Isolationism: Threat or Promise}? Tucker, a professor of American foreign relations at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Study, postulated that a new isolationism was possible, and indeed likely. This isolationism was “not to be identified with ‘quitting the world’, something we have never done and will never do.” It would not represent an absence of “significant relations” but of “certain relations” and it would be “characterized by refusal to enter into alliances and to undertake military commitments.” In his estimation, an “isolationist” America would not, of course, “be an isolated America” but it would “be an America that has given up the preponderant role it has played since World War Two.” Tucker pointed out that the individuals labeled as isolationist, such as Fulbright, did not,

of course, see themselves as being isolationist, but he nonetheless believed “a new isolationism might well develop under the banner of a new internationalism. However it is termed, it would still be isolationism if characterized by the refusal to enter into certain relations and to undertake certain actions.”

Tucker’s statement that a new isolationism might appear under the banner of a new internationalism might seem curious, but he was responding to the way in which those labeled as isolationists referred to themselves. SFRC members vehemently rejected the application of the isolationist label to themselves on the grounds that they too agreed that the United States had a fundamental role to play in the search for world order, and that no one was advocating a withdrawal from the world; they were simply suggesting there might be a better role for America than that of “God’s avenging angel.” Indeed, they themselves rejected any call for a return to isolationism. “There has been a great deal of talk in recent months about neo-isolationism,” said Fulbright in 1965.

It is true that a growing number of Americans—and I am one of them—are expressing concern with what they regard as the over-involvement of the United States in certain parts of the world and with the consequent neglect of important problems here at home. It is not true that this concern indicates a willingness to abandon vital American interests abroad and let the whole world go its way while we retreat to an illusory isolationism. There are important differences between making our influence felt in the world to advocate our interests and being deeply involved in the foreign and domestic politics of most of the countries in the world.


100 Fulbright, “Putting Our Own House in Order,” Address given at the Virginia Polytechnic Institute, 3 April 1965, JWF Papers, Series 72, Box 25, File 11.
He believed the charge of neo-isolationism was “defective” because “it is based on the premise that the United States has a vital interest in just about every country in the world, when in fact many things happen in many places that are either none of our business or, in any case, are beyond the range of our power, our resources, and our wisdom.” Eugene McCarthy agreed, and said he was merely advocating that the U.S. “be more responsible and self-consciously modest” in its engagement with the world. McGovern, for his part, was worried that “we are in danger of seeing the isolationists of the 1920s and 1930s replaced by the neo-imperialists, who somehow imagine that the United States has a mandate to impose an American solution the world around.” Indeed, he saw greater parallels between the Johnson administration and the old isolationists than he did between himself and that group in that both the Johnson administration and the old isolationists “look with disdain on the claims of the international community in contrast with the American way.”

Fulbright believed it was clear that “what is being called for is not the wholesale renunciation by the United States of its global responsibilities” but “a redress in the heavy imbalance of the side of foreign commitments that has prevailed for the last twenty years.” Mansfield agreed. Adjustments to American foreign policy were necessary in order to bring its “commitments into better rapport with the current international situation and with the inner needs” of the nation. In fact, in light of the negative image of the United States held abroad, foreign policy needed to be adjusted so as “to check the drift of this nation towards an isolated

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101 Ibid; See also The Arrogance of Power, 218.
102 Eugene McCarthy, The Limits of Power, 152. Dominic Sandbrook, McCarthy’s biographer, argued that McCarthy was not an isolationist; he was just increasingly critical of the American military and its role in diplomatic policy. See Dominic Sandbrook, Eugene McCarthy: The Rise and Fall of Postwar American Liberalism (New York: Alfred Knopf, 2004), 150.
and, hence, irrelevant internationalism.” Interestingly enough, the SFRC dissenter believed that in pursuing a unilateralist foreign policy, the Johnson and Nixon administrations were practicing a perverted form of internationalism that might actually be closer to the older isolationist tendencies, while what the SFRC was calling for was a return to the true internationalism that had been envisioned by Woodrow Wilson and Franklin Roosevelt.

Indeed, George McGovern’s 1965 statement that his colleagues followed the creed of “enlightened internationalism” would be echoed time and again. Fulbright, in particular, engaged with Nixon’s statement that the internationalists of the early postwar years had become the isolationists of the Vietnam years. Fulbright believed this statement “raised the question of what an authentic internationalist is.”

It is true that many of us who supported the United Nations Charter, the Marshall Plan and the North Atlantic Treaty have become critical of our worldwide military involvements and of bilateral foreign aid. Nonetheless, I consider myself an internationalist. . . .I believe that, even at this late date, we should be doing everything in our power—and that there is a great deal we can do—towards building the United Nations into a genuine world security organization. . . .That is the kind of internationalism which was held by Presidents Wilson and Franklin Roosevelt, and the entire generation who led the United States out of its nineteenth century isolationism. It arose not out of the obsoleteness of isolationism but, far more importantly, out of an active repudiation of the power politics which had culminated in two world wars.

He further believed that the people “who are now being called ‘neo-isolationist’ are by and large those who make a distinction between the new internationalism and the old, who regret the reversion to the old power politics, and who retain some faith in the validity and viability of the United Nations idea.” Fulbright further stated that he did not think there was, “or ever has been, the slightest chance of the United States returning to the isolationism of the prewar years.

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105 Mansfield “International Responsibility: Reappraisal and Reassessment,” Address given at the University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, 9 March 1968, Mansfield Papers, Series XXI, Speeches and Reports, Box 44.
106 Fulbright, “The New Internationalism,” Address given at Yale University, 4 April 1971, RG46 – Records of the United States Senate—Committee on Foreign Relations, Records of the Chairman, J. William Fulbright, Speeches and Statements 1966-1975, Box 2; See also, Fulbright, The Crippled Giant, 10-11
It will not happen because it cannot happen: we are inextricably involved with world politics, economically, militarily, and—in case anyone actually cares—legally.” The word “neo-isolationist” was the “invention of people who confuse internationalism with an intrusive American unilateralism, with a quasi imperialism. Those of us who are accused of neo-isolationism are the opposite: internationalists in the classic sense of that term. . . .We believe in international cooperation through international institutions.” 107

In light of the use of the labels “isolationist” and “internationalist,” it is worth taking a step back and examining their respective meanings—at least as applied in the American lexicon—in part because both isolationism and internationalism are viewed as traditions within American foreign relations,108 but more importantly because the two are often interpreted as mutually exclusive opposites. At its most basic definition, isolationism refers to the tradition of avoiding entangling alliances with other nations and abstaining from conflicts not directly related to territorial defense. It never suggested, as the term itself might imply, a withdrawal from the world. Indeed, George Washington’s Farewell address, which is often pointed to as containing the founding statement of American isolationism, called on America to practice good relations, cultivate peace, and extend commercial relations with as many nations as possible, but to “steer clear of permanent alliances” and have “as little political connection as possible.” America is usually portrayed as having had an isolationist policy until the time of the Spanish-American war, at which point internationalism began to rise as the dominant tradition, though the period of neutrality during World War I, the rejection of the League of Nations in 1919 and

the interwar years—the 1930s specifically—are often depicted as times when America’s isolationist tradition was dominant.\textsuperscript{109}

In the wake of the bombing of Pearl Harbor and American entry into World War II, however, “isolationism” became conflated with the idea of abstention from world affairs, while “internationalism” came to imply a necessary and expansive involvement around the globe. Thus these so-called traditions are viewed as opposites, in large part because of the origins of the word “isolationism/ist.” As Walter McDougall points out, the term itself was not used in the United States until the 1890s, when proponents of American imperial expansion sought to discredit anti-imperialists by depicting them as advocates of an isolated America. “Isolationist” then came into more common usage during the late 1930s when some Americans sought to keep the U.S. out of the Second World War. Again the word was applied by those who favored intervention. McDougall writes that isolationism is, in fact, “no tradition at all, but a dirty word that interventionists, especially since Pearl Harbor, hurl at anyone who questions their policies.”\textsuperscript{110} Indeed, “isolationism/ist” has taken on an extremely negative connotation since 1941. In examining post-World War Two historical assessments of American isolationism, Ronald Radosh notes that “isolationists” are seen “as the bad guys – severe nationalists, whose desire to see America First led them to try prevent the U.S. from fulfilling its international responsibilities, [while] internationalists’ are the good guys – men of maturity and


\textsuperscript{110} McDougall, \textit{Promised Land, Crusader State}, 40.
responsibility.’’ 111 As Andrew Bacevich once put it: ‘‘in the hierarchy of American knaves, isolationists still rank on par with robber barons and segregationists.’’ 112

In light of the negative connotation of the term, and its historical usage by one group of Americans to discredit the clashing viewpoints of others, it is not surprising that the Johnson and Nixon administrations were willing to brandish the ‘‘isolationist’’ label when it came to describing dissenters on the SFRC. Nor is it surprising that those labeled as isolationist rejected the application of that term to their viewpoint, especially considering that even the so-called isolationists of the late 1930s/early 1940s objected to the term on the grounds that they were against intervention in the war and not suggesting that America should, or even could, isolate itself from international affairs in general. What is particularly compelling, however, is not that Fulbright and his colleagues objected to being called neo-isolationists, but that they saw themselves as the true internationalists. How, then, should their vision for American foreign policy be assessed?

In the tradition of American (so-called) ‘‘isolationism’’, as rooted in George Washington’s dictum that America steer clear of entangling alliances, Fulbright and company were clearly not isolationist. They were, after all, advocates of international institutions like the United Nations, and despite Mansfield’s desire to reduce the American military commitment to NATO, he never once suggested that the United States should leave NATO. In advocating for withdrawal from Vietnam and a more limited military engagement abroad by the United States in general, they were not shying away from the idea that the United States had significant responsibilities in the international arena. They were suggesting, instead, that Americans needed to be more discerning in their calculations of just what was, and what was not, in the

national security interests of the United States, the calculation of which, in turn, needed to be based on a greater understanding of the nature of the international arena itself, the limits to what America could achieve within that arena, and the best means by which to pursue America’s international goals. Thus, rather than representing a debate between “isolationism” and “internationalism”, the growing dispute between the SFRC and the Johnson and Nixon administrations can better be described as a debate in which different visions of “internationalism” were pitted against each other.

This is not to say, however, that there are no continuity in thinking between the SFRC members and the so-called isolationists of the pre-World War II era. While the distaste for American unilateralism and the corresponding preference for making greater use of collective security organizations such as the UN stand in contrast with older “isolationist” thinking, some of the SFRC’s concerns and assumptions were nonetheless similar. The SFRC’s growing distrust of executive primacy in foreign affairs—or what Arthur Schlesinger Jr. dubbed the “imperial presidency”—echoed the fears of the America First Committee, many of whose members believed Franklin Roosevelt’s 1940-41 policies were single-handedly leading America into the war, and were thus in defiance of constitutional principles.113 Likewise, the SFRC concern that domestic considerations were being ignored to the detriment of American society itself because of the overwhelming focus on foreign affairs was an echo of pre-war isolationist fears that extensive commitments abroad would stunt development at home. For Fulbright, who wrote about this problem in *The Crippled Giant: American Foreign Policy and its Domestic*

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Consequences, this was no longer a hypothetical. His solution, however, was not to avoid commitments abroad, as the pre-war isolationists suggested; rather it was to undertake those commitments through multilateral bodies such as the United Nations and the World Bank, and with understanding of the limits of America’s resources and capabilities. Though the former prescription defied traditional isolationist thinking, the latter was precisely what pre-war isolationists felt they were calling for. Charles Beard, the eminent historian and a prominent pre-war “isolationist,” wrote that “‘isolationists’” favored discharging responsibilities always with due regard for the physical, economic, and political limits of the powers of the United States and the solemn obligation to protect the Republic.”

That some of the concerns shared by the members of the SFRC resonated with some of the thinking of pre-war isolationists—while the former also accepted a great many things that the latter did not—is indicative of the fact that, though there may be trends in the history of American foreign relations, the attempt to firmly label those trends can be problematic, no matter how politically (or analytically) convenient it may be to do so. Nonetheless, given the lengthy history of both these so-called traditions, the application of the isolationist and internationalist labels by the SFRC and the Johnson/Nixon administration is revealing of the extent to which foreign policy as a whole, and not just individual policies, was being debated. Ultimately, both (so-called) isolationism and internationalism represent differing viewpoints as to just what exactly America’s role in the global arena ought to be.

Perhaps more important than the application of these labels are the references that Fulbright made to past episodes in American foreign relations—to the Mexican-American and Spanish-American wars when he was talking about the tradition of dissent; to the intentions of Wilson and Roosevelt in advocating American membership in world organizations when

114 Charles Beard, A Foreign Policy for America (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1943), 152.
criticizing the reliance on unilateralism and suggesting he and his colleagues were not isolationists, but internationalists in the classic sense; even to the long-standing ideal of America itself. To these can be added the references Morse and McCarthy made to manifest destiny and the need to “re-examine the role of the United States in history,” as well as George Kennan’s quoting, during the Vietnam Hearings, of John Quincy Adams’ 1821 dictum that America go not “abroad in search of monsters to destroy.” When combined with the accusations of isolationism and the arguments over the meaning of internationalism, these references serve to prompt the realization that the 1960s-70s debate about America’s place in the global arena must be seen against a broader historical backdrop. That is to say, the 1960s-70s debate is a part of the lengthy and continuously ongoing process by which America (like all nations) works out its relationship with the larger international community.

Key elements of the issues debated during the Johnson and Nixon administration—unilateralism vs. multilateralism, the question of who makes foreign policy, the relationship between foreign policy and domestic considerations, the relationship between foreign policy and ideas about American national identity, even the very nature of America’s mission in the world—are tied to the past, and, indeed, project into the present. Recognizing that the 1960s-70s debates are a part of a larger historical process does not take away, however, from the significance of that debate itself. Some periods—such as the debate in 1898 as to whether the United States should annex the Philippines and the fight over membership in the League of Nations in 1919—stand out as particularly vivid and important manifestations of the ongoing debate over the nature of America’s role in the world. So too should the 1960s-70s debates. Given the extent to which the Cold War had fostered the creation of a globalized foreign policy—or “universalized,” to use Fulbright’s terminology—it is certainly legitimate to see the
debate between the SFRC and the Johnson and Nixon administrations as particularly important and dramatic.

Through the course of their disputes with the Johnson and Nixon administrations, the SFRC dissenters saw both success and failure. They succeeded in moving American foreign economic aid more towards the actual goals of development, with increasing amounts of that aid channeled through multilateral institutions, but they failed in their efforts to significantly reduce the importance of military assistance as a component of the aid program. They succeeded in overseeing the passage of war powers legislation, but ultimately they failed in their efforts to end American military involvement in Vietnam. Similarly, they failed in reducing the size and scope of America’s military presence in Europe, though their efforts did inspire the Johnson and Nixon administrations to seek greater burden-sharing in NATO.

Of much greater significance than the outcome of specific policy debates, however, is the fact that the Committee, under Fulbright’s leadership, succeeded in opening up a dialogue on American foreign policy. If was Fulbright’s concern over the lack of discussion and debate in the making of foreign policy back in 1964 that prompted him to break with the Johnson administration in the first place, initially over the intervention in the Dominican Republican and then more broadly because of the escalation in Vietnam. Though the SFRC might not have always been able to shape policy in the way that it wanted, it at least made it more difficult for the Johnson and Nixon administrations to continue with past policies or initiate new policy without any discussion, or reaction, whatsoever. Through holding public hearings, the Committee helped educate the larger American public as to the range of options available to the United States. Through a continuing voicing of dissent, despite the efforts made to depict them
as somehow disloyal or un-American for that dissent, they showed that it was both permissible and necessary to probe, from time to time, the path the United States was following. The current debate over the war in Iraq and its possible dénouement suggest that this tradition is alive and well—though the frequent references on the part of the George W. Bush administration to the need to avoid the specter or “lure of isolationism” would likely suggest to Fulbright and his colleagues that America is moving in circles more than a straight line.
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