

A. A New Look in Foreign Policy

I. Secretary John Foster Dulles Warns of Massive Retaliation (1954)

In 1950, NSC-68 (see p. 455) had proposed an enormous, and enormously costly, program of U.S. military expansion to support a tougher foreign policy in the Cold War. Although Republican critics admired the toughness of Truman's and Acheson's policies, they choked on the price tag. Accordingly, the new secretary of state, John Foster Dulles, announced in 1954 that the United States would henceforward rely less on conventional military forces and more on "massive retaliation" with nuclear bombs to support its international policies. In fact, the policy of massive retaliation proved scarcely less expensive and considerably less practical than reliance on an array of conventional military means. (It was impossible, for example, to imagine incinerating Moscow with atomic bombs in order to induce the Soviet Union to halt the invasion of Hungary in 1956.) Dulles announced the new doctrine in the following speech of January 12, 1954. What were his chief criticisms of the foreign policy of his predecessors? What did he see as the advantages of the massive retaliation doctrine? In the light of history, how successful was "massive retaliation" in the examples that Dulles cites—in Korea, Indochina, Germany, and Austria? Was the arms race actually accelerated by the desire to buy security on the cheap?

We live in a world where emergencies are always possible and our survival may depend upon our capacity to meet emergencies. Let us pray that we shall always have that capacity. But, having said that, it is necessary also to say that emergency measures—however good for the emergency—do not necessarily make good permanent policies. Emergency measures are costly; they are superficial; and they imply that the enemy has the initiative. They cannot be depended on to serve our long-time interests.

This "long time" factor is of critical importance.

The Soviet Communists are planning for what they call "an entire historical era," and we should do the same. They seek, through many types of maneuvers, gradually to divide and weaken the free nations by overextending them in efforts which, as Lenin put it, are "beyond their strength, so that they come to practical bankruptcy." Then, said Lenin, "our victory is assured." Then, said Stalin, will be "the moment for the decisive blow."

In the face of this strategy, measures cannot be judged adequate merely because they ward off an immediate danger. It is essential to do this, but it is also essential to do so without exhausting ourselves.

When the Eisenhower administration applied this test, we felt that some transformations were needed.

It is not sound military strategy permanently to commit U.S. land forces to Asia to a degree that leaves us no strategic reserves.

It is not sound economics, or good foreign policy, to support permanently other countries; for in the long run, that creates as much ill will as good will.

¹State Department Bulletin 30 (January 25, 1954): 107–110.

Also, it is not sound to become permanently committed to military expenditures so vast that they lead to "practical bankruptcy."...

What the Eisenhower administration seeks is a...maximum deterrent at a bearable cost....

The total cost of our security efforts, at home and abroad, was over \$50 billion per annum, and involved, for 1953, a projected budgetary deficit of \$9 billion; and \$11 billion for 1954. This was on top of taxes comparable to wartime taxes; and the dollar was depreciating in effective value. Our allies were similarly weighed down. This could not be continued for long without grave budgetary, economic, and social consequences.

But before military planning could be changed, the President and his advisers, as represented by the National Security Council, had to take some basic policy decisions. This has been done. The basic decision was to depend primarily upon a great capacity to retaliate, instantly, by means and at places of our choosing. Now the Department of Defense and the Joint Chiefs of Staff can shape our military establishment to fit what is *our* policy, instead of having to try to be ready to meet the enemy's many choices. That permits of a selection of military means instead of a multiplication of means. As a result, it is now possible to get, and share, more basic security at less cost.

Let us now see how this concept has been applied to foreign policy, taking first the Far East.

In Korea this administration effected a major transformation. The fighting has been stopped on honorable terms. That was possible because the aggressor, already thrown back to and behind his place of beginning, was faced with the possibility that the fighting might, to his own great peril, soon spread beyond the limits and methods which he had selected....

I have said in relation to Indochina that, if there were open Red Chinese army aggression there, that would have "grave consequences which might not be confined to Indochina."

I expressed last month the intention of the United States to maintain its position in Okinawa. This is needed to insure adequate striking power to implement the collective security concept which I describe....

We have persisted, with our allies, in seeking the unification of Germany and the liberation of Austria. Now the Soviet rulers have agreed to discuss these questions. We expect to meet them soon in Berlin. I hope they will come with sincerity which will equal our own.

We have sought a conference to unify Korea and relieve it of foreign troops. So far, our persistence is unrewarded; but we have not given up.

These efforts at negotiation are normal initiatives that breathe the spirit of freedom. They involve no plan for a partnership division of world power with those who suppress freedom....

2. President Eisenhower Calls for "Open Skies" (1955)

The end of hostilities in Korea in 1953, Stalin's death in the same year, and the withdrawal of Soviet occupation forces from Austria in early 1955 brought a

²The Public Papers of the Presidents: Dwight D. Eisenhower, 1955 (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Service, 1956), pp. 713-716.