

STATEMENT BY SENATOR WALTER F. MONDALE
ON THE SENATE FLOOR
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AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY AFTER VIETNAM

Mr. President. Let me express my appreciation to Senator Cranston, Senator Kennedy, and others who have arranged this historic discussion. It is fitting that we begin the debate on the future course of America's post-Vietnam foreign policy in the context of the Senate's consideration of the military authorization bill. For it was our tragic experience in Vietnam which showed how empty is a foreign policy based on military power alone.

As we try to define America's future world role, we must take full account of the fact that the citizens of this country are profoundly skeptical. They know only too well that their patriotism has been exploited by political leaders who could no longer justify their actions with candor. I do not believe that the United States is about to become an isolationist country, but the American people no longer want to be the world's policemen nor go on one-man crusades. I believe that Americans are willing to continue to shoulder our fair share of the world's responsibilities, but only if these responsibilities are defined in terms that make sense, that are consistent with our basic values and that relate to our real concerns. This requires that we go back to basics--in the terms that we use to think about foreign policy, in the values we pursue, and in the way we view the real sources of America's prestige and power.

The first step in revising our thinking about foreign policy should be to jettison the amorphous term "national security," and to get back to

talking concretely about our diplomatic, military, economic and other interests.

The term "national security" has dominated our thinking in foreign affairs for three decades. In the late 1940's, when the National Security Council was established by law, we were concerned about a monolithic enemy-- the Soviet Union, the Peoples Republic of China, and Communist parties throughout the world appeared to be acting in concert, using every means of diplomacy, military coercion, economic leverage and propaganda, orchestrated on behalf of Soviet imperialistic expansion. With the lessons of Hitler fresh in our minds, we felt, and I believe quite rightly, that we had to meet this threat with a comprehensive national effort. Otherwise we believed that the United States and the American people would ultimately be placed in direct jeopardy.

But as the years passed, the Sino-Soviet alliance cracked apart. Communist parties outside the Soviet Bloc began to define their interests to suit themselves and not the Soviet Union.

Our own problems became more complicated and the concept of "national security" was not much of a guide to solving them. For example, the idea of national security has militarized our foreign policy to the point of being virtually helpless when confronted by major international economic problems such as energy. All we could do to respond to OPEC's fourfold increase in the price of oil was to mutter empty threats about invading the Middle East.

But even worse, I believe the fog of national security helped to lead us into the tragic swamp of Vietnam, into the morass called Watergate.

In the early 1960's we saw Vietnam as a threat to our overall national security. We could not see that our interests in Southeast Asia were diplomatic, not military. The problem was to contain the threat of Soviet and Chinese Communist influence, and not as some suggested at the time, to defend Hawaii.

While there was nothing wrong with encouraging a democratic, pro-U.S. government in Saigon, we failed to recognize that our bottom-line interest only required a reasonably independent South Vietnam, regardless of the complexion of its government. Skillful diplomacy, not military intervention, might have achieved--and in fact might still achieve--that basic diplomatic objective.

National security confused our objectives at home, as well as abroad. If we wanted to support higher education, we had to justify it in terms of national security. When we wanted to make sensible long-term investment in basic scientific research, we found we could only do it in the name of national security. When we faced the choice between a Great Society at home and defending our so-called national security in Southeast Asia, you know what took priority. The war on poverty was lost long before the war in Vietnam ground to its tragic finale.

In time, this bloated concept of national security ultimately came home to us with Watergate. Who can forget the passage in the White House tapes when Richard Nixon is groping for a way to try to justify to the American public the break-in of Daniel Ellsberg's psychiatrist's office?

John Dean suggests, "You might put it on a national security grounds basis." The President responds, "National security. We had to get information coming out and everything coming out. The whole thing was national

security." John Dean adds, "I think we could get by on that."

And there was an even more chilling exchange in the Watergate hearings when Senator Talmadge asked John Ehrlichman, "Now if the President could authorize a covert break-in, and you do not know exactly how that power would be limited, you do not think it could include murder or other crimes beyond a covert break-in, do you?" Mr. Ehrlichman answers, "I do not know where the line is, Senator."

Let's retire this term "national security" and get back to defining our interests more concretely, in terms of diplomatic interests, military interests, and economic interests; or political, humanitarian, ethnic and cultural interests.

I see nothing wrong in being frank about the fact that in the Middle East our support for Israel is based on political and cultural affinity, that our desire for good relations with the Arab states is based on economic interests, and that our hope for peace between the two is based on concern that war could prompt a military confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union.

Portugal offers another example of how dealing with specific interests rather than the concept of national security helps clarify what is at stake. While we would like to see a democratic Portugal, and should do what we can to encourage that, our primary interest is military. We must not be too pious in our criticism of the present government and forget that we were willing to tolerate a truly odious dictator for generations--precisely because the Salazar regime provided us with a military base in the Azores that enabled us to control the Atlantic and support the Middle East.

By putting our interest in Portugal's internal affairs into perspective,

I think it should make it even more possible for us to be patient, to be more understanding of the very difficult internal problems of establishing a reasonably representative and progressive government in the aftermath of decades of tyranny. I believe we need not worry too much about how the political complexion in Portugal may change from day to day. Personally, I will be rooting for the moderate and democratic forces in Portugal, but as a government we should be clear that the essential American concern is for the continuation of our military relationship.

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The second major issue we need to confront in defining our future foreign policy is how to support our basic values without winding up back in places like Vietnam. I do not believe the American people will support a foreign policy devoid of human values, yet how do we stop short of meddling in other peoples' affairs?

I believe strongly that we can and should support human rights, individual freedom and justice, governments who derive their power from the consent of the governed. I have always opposed communism because it has jeopardized these values. But somewhere along the line we lost sight of the fact that we were contesting tyranny, regardless of its political coloration.

We became absorbed in the narrower struggle against communism, and in the process supported and ultimately overcommitted ourselves to some of the most outrageously oppressive regimes in the world. And ironically, the consequence has often been to give a boost to the Communists by identifying the United States and our values with petty tyrants.

The lesson, I believe, is to support those who truly favor democracy, freedom, and social justice and treat with equal disdain tyrants, whatever their political label.

A second major lesson that we should have learned by now is that our commitment to freedom and justice cannot substitute for the lack of commitment on the part of others. We cannot care more about the integrity and independence of a country being threatened than its leaders. We must not offer to make sacrifices that are greater than the sacrifices to be borne by those we would help.

A third way to be true to our values, yet avoid the pitfalls of another Vietnam, is to turn our attention to the great unfinished business on the world's agenda: hunger, development, economic stability and progress, a new equitable regime for the oceans, a more effective control of conventional and nuclear arms. There is a very long list that has received too low priority for too great a time. By tackling these problems, I believe that we can fulfill our responsibilities, pursue our basic values, without inevitably being drawn into the agony of war. We may, in fact, even be able to make a contribution to reducing some of the causes of human conflict.

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Finally, if we are to define a new direction for American foreign policy, we must have a more balanced appreciation of the real sources of American power and influence in the world. With military power second to none, we were unable to alter the course of history in Vietnam. With the ability to destroy the world we could not prevent the oil-producing countries from bringing truly agonizing hardship to millions upon millions of Americans in the form of inflation and the deepest depression since the 1930's. And all the military might in the world does not enable us to command the respect we once had in the international arena.

Military power is increasingly irrelevant to the host of economic,

social and political issues confronting this country. This is not to say that we do not have a fundamental military interest in a stable strategic relationship with the Soviet Union or with a secure Europe, Japan and Israel. But the oil cartel, the threat of other commodity cartels, the problem of world hunger, worldwide recession and inflation--none of these issues, which immediately affect the security of every American, can be resolved by military force.

Moreover, I am convinced that the basic source of American power to deal with these issues lies in the ability of the American people and their government to solve this nation's problems. Our ability to manage a growing and vibrant economy, to be first in the world in technological innovation; to lead the world in efforts to bring equality to all of our citizens; to provide social justice, good housing, jobs, schools; to take care of our old; to insure equal opportunity to our young--these are the things that once were the hallmark of America. We were respected for these things. Nations sought our advice and our counsel, because they had confidence in our leadership, in our sense of priorities, and in our humanity.

Now, after decades in which considerations of national security have taken priority over all others in this country, we have squandered \$150 billion worth of investment in the quagmire of Vietnam. We have spent over \$1 trillion in arms. We have sent our best and brightest into the defense industries, into the military services, into the secret intelligence agencies. We have kept our military machine polished, but have let our cities decay, our transportation systems collapse, our national unity dissolve.

We have pursued American ideals in the jungles of Southeast Asia and have ignored them in the jungles of our cities.

If there is anything that must underline a new foreign policy for the United States, it should be the recognition that the source of America's strength and influence in the world is our ability to meet our needs at home. If we can't solve our problems here, we are not going to solve our problems, or anybody else's problems, abroad.

This is not a call to isolationism, nor unilateral disarmament. We must keep this country strong militarily, and we will no doubt devote the resources to do so. The Soviet Union and others should not be tempted by recent events into miscalculating our commitment to our friends and allies. We are not opting out of the world.

In fact, I think that perhaps we have finally turned the last page on isolationism in the United States. Isolationism is an unwillingness to deal with the world as it is. At one time America demonstrated this by having nothing to do with international affairs. And when we became involved in world affairs, we seemed to want to control everything, to transform other countries in our image, to leave nothing to chance. This too was an unwillingness to deal with the world as it is, and really is a kind of isolationism.

Perhaps now we will begin to accept the diversity, the conflict, and even the disorder that are inherent in the world. We cannot completely control such things, and we have found, to our tragic dismay, that if we try, they only end up controlling us.

Mr. President. I have tried to outline my views on the basic principles

underlying the development of a new American foreign policy in this post-Vietnam period.

--First, our policy must be one that is not dominated by elitist abstractions like "national security," but which is grounded in concrete interests which the American people can identify with and support.

--Second, we must be more disciplined, but no less determined, in the pursuit of our ideals. The response to our overinvolvement in Vietnam is not a Philistine policy devoid of values. Rather, it is to re-dedicate ourselves more conscientiously to democracy, freedom, justice and the international agenda of human needs.

--Third, we must draw upon sources of national power and influence in addition to military power in the pursuit of our foreign policy. We must recognize that America is strong abroad only insofar as it is strong at home. World leadership and respect will be determined by how well we meet the needs of our own people-- for only in that way can this nation recapture its unique claim to being the last, best hope for mankind.



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