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lecture

WHERE ARE WE TODAY?

by

George F. Kennan
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(21 December 1948)

MR. KENNAN: Gentlemen, I have been asked to come down here
and talk to you this morning about where we stand, as a nation, on the
path of international affairs at this juncture. Most of you have been
sitting in these chairs for quite a number of weeks and months; some
eighty or ninety lectures have rolled out over you from this podium. I
don't think you will be helped at this late date by any more facts or
figures. And I think we have to assume that with the influence of this
course now behind you, you should be prepared today, if anyone should, to
take the facts of international life as they are in all their grim
reality and to look them in the face calmly and maturely. For that
reason, I propose to give you this morning a completely unvarnished
and unvarnished picture of what appears to me personally to be our present
international position. Most of it will be in broad terms. I am only
going to touch the specific situations very lightly and leave the rest
to be filled in by your questions afterwards.

If the question should be asked as to what is the single
more important determinant in the relation of this country to its world
environment, I think I would be inclined to answer: It is the fact that
this country has fifty percent of the wealth of the world and only six
percent of its population. I urge you, as you look back from here in
retrospect on the things that you have learned in this course, to ponder
the significance of that statement. It is human beings and human nature
that we deal with in foreign affairs; and their inherent traits are no
less apparent in the international field than they are in the lives of
individuals. You know, and I know, that there is one thing that is not easily forgiven in this life of ours, and that is to be elevated many times above the level of your fellows in privilege and riches and comfort and power. The rich man is rarely loved and never pitied.

I think this applies with tremendous force in the society of nations today, and we have to reckon with it. A great portion of the people of the globe, outside of this continent, live in bitter hardship and privation and discomfort. By and large, among them there is little understanding for the feats of imagination and hard work and self-restraint which have made this country the mighty economic unit that it is today. People are more apt to assume we have been favored by the Gods, and favored long enough; and that it is high time that the Gods shifted their favor and that our faces were ground into the dirt, and that someone else enjoyed the amenities of material prosperity which they think we earned by so easily.

Of the ninety-four percent of the world's population who do not live in this country, I think there are quite a few whom we must regard as definitely hostile to us. Those are the people who would not hesitate to tear us limb from limb figuratively, or perhaps even physically, if they could thereby get a share of our wealth or reduce the power we hold and of which they are envious.

There is a further part which is less bloodthirsty and violent, but which is, nevertheless, cynical and indifferent to us, animated by a sort of ill will and jealousy, impervious to the fact that never before in its history has the world known, or is it likely to know, a great power which has conducted itself more decently and more moderately in its foreign relations. This part is irresponsibly neutral in the
great issues of the day, with which we have to cope, as long as its own
toes are not stepped upon. That element I would call, from the stand-
point of our foreign policy, the irresponsible element on which we
cannot count.

There is a remnant of the outside world, chiefly in the
countries along the shores of the North Atlantic, where people are
intellectually aware that they have an important stake in our survival
and our prosperity, and that our strength is synonymous with their
security. But in many cases, here again, this is balanced off by a
natural bitterness over what the last two or three decades have brought,
over the decline from the glories of the European past to the present
condition of weakness and helplessness; by a natural resentment of our
monetary prosperity; and by a nervous anxiety — which is busily
nurtured by the communists and four-fifths of which is pure eyewash —
over the use we are going to make, or they think we are going to make,
of our great strength.

On top of this situation, which is the long-term, background
situation, we have, as you know, a very special and I hope a short-term
problem of the most serious dimensions. Some three hundred fifty million
people, inhabiting one of the most fruitful and strategically important
portions of the globe, have been enslaved by, and today constitute the
weapons of, a group of men who are dedicated to the destruction of our
national power and our way of life. These men are well aware of the
unsatisfactoriness of global warfare as a means of obtaining national
objectives, particularly if they can obtain them otherwise. They are,
therefore, conducting their attack primarily by means of political and
psychological warfare, utilizing the most ruthless and unscrupulous
propaganda and organisational techniques, coolly taking advantage of the
traditional national liberties and tolerances of Western civilization, and playing unhesitatingly on the evil of human nature, which they consider to be a more powerful force, and therefore a better bet, than the good.

Alone, such an attack might not be mortally dangerous to us, but superimposed, as it is, on this background of world attitudes, which I have just described, with the basic unfriendliness and jealousy or unreliableness of the greater part of our world environment, from our standpoint it clearly constitutes a threat of deadly seriousness, and one which calls for our most determined, vigorous and imaginative resistance.

Now let us ask ourselves: What are our requirements in the field of foreign affairs in the light of this world situation? What would a country need to take care of itself in a situation of this sort?

First of all, it seems to me, it would need to see that all the various facets of its strength in the international field were gathered into the hands of a single thinking authority — a sort of political high command — and were then employed by that authority, with maximum economy, effectiveness and independence of action, in the promotion of the national interest. The need for this is self-evident, particularly to you who are familiar with command problems in the military field.

The second thing I think such a country would need would be the development of an overpowering military posture. I don't like war and I hope that there will not be another one on a world scale; but no one could be more conscious than I am of the importance of the shadow
of the bayonet on world events. I am sure that the significance of
military force as a deterrent and as a political weapon has been
stressed a thousand times from this platform, but I think it cannot
be stressed too often.

The next thing, it seems to me, that we clearly require is
the maximum development of the propaganda and political warfare
techniques as supporting weapons of our foreign policy.

The United States, by and large, is a misunderstood country
throughout the world. I say that with some trepidation, for there is
no more dangerous frame of mind individually and collectively than the
sense of being the victim of unjust malice and misunderstanding from
others. In private psychology that is the beginning of the persecution
mania. Practiced on a national scale, it can easily lead to the
impossible type of unrealism and fanaticism which we have seen in the
Nazis and the communists.

So I think when we say that, we have to define soberly and
realistically what we mean by it, and it is this: If the world knew
us better, it would not like us more, perhaps -- but it would certainly
fear us less. We must find means to offset the widespread misrepresenta-
tion and misunderstanding of our intentions. But we must go beyond this.
We must make people understand not only the decency of American intent,
in which I firmly and deeply believe, but the unbounded evil and malice
which are unquestionably present in the intent of others in certain
instances. And we must inculcate in other peoples not only the under-
standing of these things but also the will to conduct themselves in a
manner which will promote world stability. In this sense propaganda
must become the handmaiden of our diplomacy. We believe our purposes
to be identical, or closely identical, with the cause of world freedom and stability. And, believing that, we should have no hesitation in utilizing propaganda techniques to keep the world fashioned as nearly as we can to those purposes.

Finally, having provided ourselves in this way with the organizational background and the instruments for an effective, modern diplomacy, we require obviously a realistic and effective policy. And this policy, in my opinion, can only be one directed primarily at the establishment and maintenance of a workable balance of power which can absorb and contain those hostile or unruly forces in the outside world with which we ourselves cannot deal by direct action.

I use the word "containment" advisedly. I do so knowing that the word has fallen lately on evil days and has been the object of much criticism. We Americans are often faddists in our thoughts on foreign affairs, as in other matters; we drift rapidly from one concept to another. It is a pity if we permit this to interfere with the realism of our thinking. We are faced with the stark fact that the alternative to containment is war. If we are not to contain, it logically follows that we must retire or advance. If we advance, this is a preventative war, and then God help us. Clausewitz himself has pointed out the danger which dogs the footsteps of the aggressive party in modern total war, and the experience of two world conflicts has proved, I think, that there is something in his rule. If we retire, we will only present the Russians with a series of gratuitous political victories, and eventually we will have to begin a war ourselves to save the situation from our political incompetence. In either case, the prospects for success would be dim. In the dislocations, the bitterness, the confusion,
the destruction and brutalisation which it brings, modern war creates more questions than it solves; and the only issue it really determines is the question of who, among the main contestants, is to suffer the worst national catastrophe.

It is also advisedly that I speak of the balance of power as the only real means of affecting such containment, on the scale and throughout all the areas where it must be affected. If there is any one failing which stands out above all others in the attitudes of Americans on international problems, it is the overestimation of the capabilities of this country for influencing and shaping the course of events all over the world. We are not prepared — and I say this without hesitation — to take over the running of the world. Our task and our destiny, if we are going to face facts frankly, is to defend and protect our extraordinary and very vulnerable position in the midst of a jealous and embittered world. We cannot alter or conceal this fact by high-sounding phrases about democratic ideals, about our idealistic purposes in world affairs. We cannot, and will not, remake the world in our own image.

International society is not advancing toward peace and enlightenment and prosperity, certainly not advancing very fast. International society is still an arena of deadly contest and rivalry and in many respects hatred and fanaticism. Not only in Russia are forces unleashed which are dangerous to our position and to our way of life. We are great and strong; but we are not great enough or strong enough to conquer or to change or to hold in subjugation by ourselves all these hostile or irresponsible forces. To attempt to do so would mean to call upon our own people for sacrifices which would in themselves completely alter our way of life and our political
institutions, and would lose the real objectives of our policy in trying to defend them.

Our safety depends, therefore, on our ability to establish a balance among the hostile or undependable forces of the world. To put them where necessary one against the other; to see that they spend in conflict with each other, if they must spend it at all, the intolerance and violence and fanaticism which might otherwise be directed against us, that they are thus compelled to cancel each other out and exhaust themselves in internecine conflict in order that the constructive forces, working for world stability, may continue to have the possibility of life.

If we are to accomplish this end, on which the future of our country depends, we have no time for sentimentalities or fine phrases in which we like to indulge. I am not advocating that this country be unjust or cynical or oppressive with regard to anyone in the world. I hope it never will be. But I am saying that we cannot afford the wastage of an unnecessary dollar of our resources or an unnecessary man-hour of our governmental labor on misplaced international altruism and we must bring all our national power to bear, with clinical coldness and objectivity, to obtain conditions more favorable than those we have today to the survival of western civilization.

Now where do we stand with the implementation of these requirements which I have outlined?

First of all, how about the gathering of the strength of this country in the international field, and how about its effective employment in the national interest?

I am afraid that the conduct of foreign affairs within this
government is poorly organized. There is no real cabinet functioning for foreign affairs as yet. The National Security Council is a tremendous help, but I do not think it has yet entirely reached the zenith of its usefulness. Only too infrequently do the men responsible for United States foreign policy sit down calmly and systematically, as do members of the Politburo, survey the world scene in terms of objectives which they have before them, and determine their moves accordingly. The progress of our government through the maze of foreign affairs is too often not that of a single thinking entity, planning and reacting like an intelligent individual or an astute business firm, but rather the gross product of a series of isolated and haphazard actions, uncoordinated among themselves and only vaguely related to specific concepts. I understand there are at present some thirty-three interdepartmental committees and one hundred forty-two interdepartmental subcommittees dealing with foreign affairs in Washington, and for the most part without any really adequate system of coordination. We may hope — I think we have good reason to hope — that the Hoover Committee report and its consequences will help to correct this situation, but at present it seems to me still clearly and dangerously unsatisfactory.

In addition to our failure to coordinate within our own government the exercise of our power, we have dispersed a considerable area of our power of decision by our pre-occupation with internationalism as a method of foreign affairs. The chief agency of this process, of course, has been the United Nations, but you can also count in many other international bodies in which we work: FEC, CEF, IAR, commercial and technical bodies. Remember that every question which
we place before the United Nations means one more question in which we have forfeited the possibility of acting boldly and independently in our own interests. Every question on the United Nations agenda represents one more derogation of our freedom of disposal over our strength and our resources. Occasionally this is useful and necessary and it is better that matters should be handled in this way. But in other cases I am afraid that we have turned with relief to the deliberations of an international agency only because we have been shrinking at the responsibility of taking action ourselves which might involve risks or criticisms here or abroad. I am going to speak further about this in a few minutes. I only wish to say that if we want to play our cards effectively in this poker game in which the international stakes are life or death, we have to be careful how much we dissipate in international organization the freedom of decision which is so necessary to a controlled and incisive national policy.

As for the development of an overpowering military posture, there is very little that I need to say to you. You know the facts as well as I do, and probably better. All I can say is this: if, indeed the greatest importance of our armed forces lies today in their psychological significance and their psychological effect at the present moment, then I think we still have a lot to do if we are going to make the best use of them.

The probabilities still are that the pattern of the future will be profoundly influenced by the political war which is now in progress. This, rather than some future possible military conflict, may, and probably will, prove, I think, to be the decisive turning point in our civilization. The impression of military strength and a readiness to use that strength (because either one without the other
is quite useless) are together one of the major weapons with which
we have the possibility of operating in the cold war. If we renounce
the use of this weapon, we will take upon ourselves a responsibility
as heavy as he who in a shooting war would renounce the use of the
strategic air arm or of any other of the major modern weapons. And the
worst about it is that we would never know, and unless we do this we
will never know, whether or not we could have won the cold war without
it. That applies particularly to the situation in Berlin.

How about the development of propaganda, and political war-
fare techniques, as supporting weapons? I can only say that we have
done a little but it is as yet hardly a beginning. In a way, with
respect to propaganda, we are under tremendous handicaps. We don't
like to operate cynically with words and ideas, and I think that is a
commendable trait in our national character. Yet we face the terrifying
fact that anything is more easy to enthrone people over than the truth.
The ideologies with carrying power unfortunately are not the temperate
and moderate ones; they are the phony ones. They are the ones that are
based on appeals to the passions rather than to the reason of men; and
the uglier the passions to which the appeal is made the more successful
they are in wounding the thoughts and actions of men, and particularly
in causing them to rise up like the children of Hamlin and to follow
the Pied Piper to their own enslavement and destruction. Man is an
irrational animal. Error, because there are no strings attached to it
and because it can be easily fitted to men's wildest dreams and
instincts, is often stirring and alluring. Truth, which is a hard-
to-come-by alloy of a thousand conflicting ideas, is often relative and
frustrating and unsatisfying. Can honesty ever compete with the Pied
Piper in swaying the minds of men? I don't know. Our survival as a
nation depends on the answer to this question. My hunch would be that it can — it must. But those who operate with the weapon of truth are under a handicap, for they have to be stronger and keener and more understanding and more efficient if they are going to beat those who operate with the weapon of the lie.

Today I do not think we can yet say we are stronger or keener or more efficient than those who operate with the weapon of the lie. We haven’t yet begun to be. Despite the almost heroic efforts of many people working today, and working very well, our informational activities are by and large much too small, and to a large extent they are perfunctory and uninspiring and unexciting to others. They suffer throughout from the quality of what we were taught in college to call anthropomorphism. They rest on the erroneous thesis that others are like ourselves, and that what appeals to us will necessarily appeal to them. Before we can speak effectively to the world outside our borders there has to be a new preoccupation with that world, a new understanding of it, and a new readiness among us to accept the validity of things which are displeasing and shocking to us. We have before us, as a nation, the experience, and I think the saddening experience, of making the closer acquaintance of a world which is largely devoid of the health and the hope which mark our own country, and of finding words in which to speak not to those who look with eagerness and confidence to the future, but to those whose lives take place in the shadow of disease, hardship, hunger, violence and despair.

So much for the improvement in the instrumentalities of our foreign policy. Now how about our policy itself?

I have stressed the need for maximum freedom of action on our part and for a policy designed to create a balance in the forces
potentially dangerous, or semidangerous to us in the outside world. How does our actual policy stack up against these requirements?

Here again, I have to say to you that in my opinion we have scarcely begun. And our capability for making progress in this direction seems to me to be restricted above all by two major handicaps, both of which are ones we ourselves have created, and for which we ourselves must take the responsibility. The first is our commitment to the principle of universal international organisation for the preservation of peace. The second is our failure, up to this point, to handle the problem of the occupied areas in such a way that these areas could make their maximum contribution to the restoration of a balance of power in the world.

I have already mentioned the potential danger of world organisation from the standpoint of the dispersal of the control over our own resources. I must now mention it to you from the standpoint of the creation of a balance of power.

In my opinion, the principle of world organisation, as it is embodied in the United Nations, is of questionable accord with the requirements of a stable world order at this time. Universal International organisation, as we know it and as we knew it in the old League, has for its object the elimination of armed conflict by means of the preservation, really, of an existing status quo. Its advocates will deny this, but it seems to me that is what it amounts to. People don't depart from the status quo peacefully when it is in their interest to maintain it; and when you rule out other than peaceful means as ways of changing it, you say, in effect, there should be a freezing and perpetuation of it, or at least that it is very, very
difficult to have it changed at all.

The principles on which this concept rests, it seems to me, are open still to very serious question. It is a fallacy that war is always reprehensible and peace is always good. Neither war nor peace is an abstraction. Neither can be judged outside of its specific context. It is not always a question of "whether war"; it is very often a question of "what war" or "what is the alternative to war." It is not always a question of "whether peace"; it is more apt to be a question of "what peace" or "whose peace." There is "peace" behind the bars of a prison, if you like that. There is "peace" in present-day Czecho-Slovakia.

Unpleasant as this may be, we may have to face up to the fact that there may be instances where violence somewhere in the world on a limited scale is more desirable than the alternatives, because those alternatives would be global wars in which we ourselves would be involved, in which no one would win, and in which all civilization would be dragged down. I think we have to face the fact there may be arrangements of peace less acceptable to the security of this country than isolated recurrences of violence.

International organization has not yet been strong enough, and I don't think it will be strong enough, to inhibit violence entirely or to determine the nature of peace. But if we don't watch our step, and if we are not extremely careful in our participation in it, it is capable of creating such confusion, and of involving this country in such bewildering and confounding commitments, as to prevent us from employing our influence in world affairs in ways which would be beneficial to world security and world stability. It is capable of
compelling us to uphold peace as an inevitable good, which it is not. In this way it can, if carried too far, constitute a great network of restrictions and inhibitions in which we will only work ourselves deeper as we struggle to escape.

In 1944 and 1945, viewing the world scene from Moscow, I personally had considerable misgivings about our entrance onto this path of universal world organisation, because I felt that we instinctively saw in it an escape from the painful necessity of having an independent foreign policy and standing up in world affairs with a maturity and a courage and a sense of responsibility commensurate with our real strength. I was afraid we had a neurotic guilt-complex about the possession and exercise of power, and that we were trying to hide our strength under the bushel-basket of collective action.

When I weigh this experiment of world organisation today after three and a half years of test, I see that it has accomplished many fine things, but I am still not finally convinced that we can accept it as an unmitigated benefit or an unmitigated good. I am afraid that the principle as we have tried to practice it in the past three years has in certain respects run counter to the healthy development in world affairs. It has often substituted the vagaries of a sterile and independent world parliamentarianism for the vigorous implementation of great power influence which alone today could give leadership and direction to a constructive development of international life.

How don't misunderstand me, I realise very well that we are deeply into this today. We have taught ourselves, and more than that, we have taught our own people and many of the other peoples of the world to look to internationalism for salvation. We have permitted
the idea of the United Nations to be come identified in the minds of our people with idealism and decency and hope in international relations. We have been so successful in this that a great part of our public is not even satisfied with what we have done so far; they would like to see us plunge further along this road toward a complete sublimation of United States national interests in the will of an international majority. It is useless to say to them along this road lies disaster; that the will of the majority of the governments of the world, if really given its expression today, would be neither enlightened or constructive, and that it might very well finally put an end to the relative power and prosperity of the North American continent and reduce its people to that level of abject misery and poverty which is the only real measuring stick of world equality. They will not believe it. It would take years of education to change them.

You do not play lightly with the faith and the idealism of great masses of people. When you bespeak that faith and idealism in an international venture, you have to go through with it. Today we have no choice but to continue with world organization. Not only do we have to give it lip service, we have to route a large proportion of our international business through it and support it strongly. But I think we have to be very careful about taking things for granted in our use of that machinery, and exercise the greatest caution to see that every time we use it we are sure that the outcome is going to be more beneficial to our purposes than would have been the outcome if we had acted ourselves on our own discretion and on our own responsibility.

The second great handicap under which I think we labor in the
effort to restore a world balance of power stems from the policies we have been following with regard to the occupied areas of Germany and Japan. These areas, as I told you earlier in a lecture during this term, contain two of the five important accumulations of military and industrial power in the world. No world balance can be established without them. Any world balance of power means first and foremost a balance on the Eurasian land mass. That balance is unthinkable as long as Germany and Japan remain power vacuums.

This simple process of thought would have indicated, it seems to me, a policy toward Germany and Japan designed to bring back the strength and the will of those peoples to a point where they could play their part in the Eurasian balance of power, and yet to a point not so far advanced as to permit them again to threaten the interests of the maritime world of the West. This admittedly is a formidable undertaking. It is a fine line to draw, but it should not be an impossible one to find, and it is absolutely indispensable to the success of our own purposes.

How to have made progress in this direction we would have needed, again it seems to me, to observe certain basic rules. We would have had to refrain from binding ourselves too specifically to the principle of demilitarization. We would have had to preserve the maximum freedom of action, and independence of action, internationally. Finally, we would have had to be very careful to find a constructive and realistic psychological approach to the respective peoples, an approach which would take into account their tradition, their psychology, and which would imbue them with the will and the hope to assume positions in world affairs more modest, to be sure, than
those they would have been content with in the days of their wildest dreams and greatest successes, but by no means incompatible with their national qualities and resources. And, in order to carry out this approach effectively and skillfully, we would have acquired here the utmost in the way of utilization and coordination of all our governmental resources, intellectual and otherwise, and of all private readiness to assist among the American public.

I don't think that we have met as yet those qualifications. We have committed ourselves in both instances in the most serious way to the principle of demilitarization. It is going to be a hard commitment to get out of. We have dispensed with a great deal of our freedom of action by entering into international agreements governing occupational policies. I am thinking particularly of Potsdam and many of the PEC agreements which often embody unrealistic, sometimes even farcical concepts. Our psychological approach to the peoples in question has been at best spotty. Such commendable and constructive efforts as we have made along these lines have only too often been cancelled out by a lack of coordination within our own Government which permitted us concurrently to do things which were injudicious and unhelpful. By and large, I think we have been too punitive in the concepts of our policies. We have taken too little pains to see that people had really something they could look forward to in the future and for which they could work. We have to overcome those things before we will have a frame of mind in those countries which is satisfactory to us. We have permitted to endure up to the present date within our government a state of administrative cumbersome and inelasticity which is often the despair of the people who try to
work within it. Our official establishments in the occupied areas, with all due respect, and in some instances great and sincere respect, for the abilities and devotion of the men who head them and comprise them, have become of necessity, I think, great governments in themselves with their own momentum and their own inertia. Today they are hard to handle. It is not always easy to coordinate them into the general processes of our purposes here, and policy with respect to the occupied areas, despite its profound importance for our foreign policy as a whole, is still dispersed and scattered somewhere between the field commanders, who, although they are not supposed to, have it, can't help but have it, the Department of the Army, the Department of State, the Treasury Department, the ESA, Congress and probably several others.

The result is that in both countries we are still in considerable danger today of getting a bear by the tail, of not being able to carry out our occupation to its real goal, which is a condition where we can withdraw our troops safely and know that the country is left on the rails on which we want it to be. We have not been able to build up political attitudes in either of those countries as yet on which we can depend as a reliable factor for the future. We cannot restore the balance of power, I am afraid, without rearming those countries to some degree, yet we cannot rearm them without violating our own obligations and starting things which in the present temper and spirit of their peoples we cannot be sure that we can finish. We are beginning to feel the effects of this dilemma more and more, and it is dragging us into bitter and dangerous difficulties with our own allies.
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One of the crying needs of our foreign policy is therefore a thorough review, on a general governmental level, of where we have been and where we are going with respect to the defeated nations of Germany and Japan, and the threshing out of a line of conduct which will give us some hope of fitting these countries more realistically to the pattern of the balance of power which must be created if this country is not to break its back in the effort to create a stable world out of its own resources and with the assistance only of the United Nations.

As a result of these deficiencies, and of the bitter difficulty of some of the problems we face, I think we find no cause for complacency when we review our world position today. In Europe, the ERP has initially gone well, but recently it has begun to bog down in some of its most important aspects, and it is clear that today there is a need for a new impetus in it, a new approach which will be sensitive and imaginative and adapted to the needs of the European people at this time. When the ERP was first planned in this government, the original plan contained the recommendation that it be based on the principle of declining shipments from year to year—shipments automatically declining through each of the four years until they were down at the bottom by the fifth year. That was not adopted by Congress; but I think it is a principle which we will have to take up again at this time, and in some way or other it will have to be implemented this winter. Unless we do that, unless we make this surgical incision which cuts off a certain layer of the present support for Europe, the European countries will not, and cannot, adjust themselves to a decline in our aid; and we will end up at the end of the four-year period with a Europe almost as dependent as that with which we began.
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In the French prejudices about Germany, in the irrationalism of the French position about Germany, we have a real and bitter problem. This problem for the most part is not a question of our own deficiencies or fault. It is a situation we find before us. Unfortunately this French attitude forces us to do something today which is unfortunate in the light of our Russian policy. It forces us to take our eye off the ball, which is really Russia, and to occupy ourselves at a very unfavorable moment with the long-term question of Germany's place in Europe. What we need, if we are to break this problem, is a much better presentation of our position to the peoples of Europe, of both France and Germany. We need the very best that we can give in informational and propaganda work. We have done hardly anything along those lines in this respect.

Our whole containment policy in Western Europe today is placed in jeopardy by the Berlin situation. I know that there is a feeling that we may, by holding out with the air lift, place so great a strain on the Russian controls in Eastern Germany that they will finally crack. I agree I think that is a possibility, but I think it is a dangerous possibility to bet on. The Russians are ruthless people, and I believe that they would be prepared to deport people by the millions or to kill them in great numbers in Eastern Germany if people get too discontented or become too much of a problem to them. We would then be faced with Russian military control of a depopulated area. That is half of what we have today, that is part of our problem. If we don't get a favorable solution to the Berlin question, the whole future of our containment policy in Western Europe, seems to me to be jeopardized. We have allowed things to bog down psychologically over
Berlin. Our action with respect to Berlin came in like a lion and went out like a lamb. We talked last summer as though the appeal to the United Nations was merely a last clearance before we ourselves would begin to take strong measures in the Berlin situation. Instead of that, we have permitted — and I ask you to note this again in connection with what I have said about international organization — the deliberations in the United Nations to string out to a point where our own public has lost the sense of urgency with regard to the situation, and where the Russians have certainly lost any tinge of fear that we might do anything drastic which would hurt them if they hold out.

In the Near East we are in a curious position. We have staked everything in reality on the character of the state of Israel. If that state turns out to be resistant to Communist pressures, if it turns out — which seems to me to be less likely — to be non-aggressive in the framework of its immediate neighbors, we may be all right. Today there is a great deal more flirtation than I personally like to see between the state of Israel, or its agents, and the satellite powers of Eastern Europe and the Russians. That is a dangerous game. Perhaps the Israelites are smart enough to play it — Other people have thought, before that, they were smart enough to play it. Most of them haven't been. If the Israeli aren't, I believe we are in a very disadvantageous situation; because we have staked a great deal on their character.

I am not going to try to speak of the Far East in a detailed way right now. I know you will want to return to it in the question period. I personally am not too worried about what has happened in China, not because it is in any sense favorable to us but because I
think it was a necessary clearing of the atmosphere and a clearing of our subjective attitude toward events on the mainland of Asia. I would hope that now, as this process completes itself, for the first time we, in this country, will have a realistic and a workable attitude toward things that go on there. But everything is going to depend on our ability really to use the weapons of propaganda and of political warfare to see to it that this situation in China, which can get out of hand for the Russians almost as rapidly as it got out of hand for us, does develop in that direction.

We have very considerable power, we have great economic bargaining power, between ourselves and the Japanese. If we want to, we have great psychological power to wield in China, and this may be a situation which we can turn very much to our advantage. The other day I read a book written by a brilliant foreign observer in Russia in 1839, and he said an interesting thing. He said: "The 'old Russia hands' here in St. Petersburg tell me it is not Europe which the Russians will crush; their destiny is to go to the East and eventually to break in two over the task of trying to administer a conquered Asia." He was looking far into the future. At any rate, that is our chance, and that is what we have to take advantage of. Our policy from now on, on the mainland of Asia and in Southeast Asia, must be to set up a workable balance between the forces which inhabit that area, looking at all of them unsentimentally and realistically. I am sorry to say I think the action which the Dutch have taken in the last three or four days, which was profoundly ill-advised and unjustified, has made that task of the establishment of a workable balance of power in Asia far more difficult for us than it otherwise would have been.
I am afraid, gentlemen, that I have painted a pretty grim picture of where we stand today in foreign affairs. I think we have no choice but to face up to these stark, unpleasant facts. But I don't think that we should be too discouraged by all this. The substance of international affairs is a fluid substance; it is always moving, always changing. This is a world in which nothing is ever final, not even catastrophe. Life begins again every morning, and there are no situations except death itself to which no adjustment is possible.

We are still potentially the strongest nation in the world. We still have the inestimable advantages of overpowering economic strength, of internal health, of alertness, of freshness, of emotional vigor. It is in no sense impossible for us, starting where we are today, to take the measures which would assure the security of our own country of those other countries whose security is dependent on ours and essential to ours. It is not even impossible that we should eventually go further beyond that and develop our diplomatic influence and capabilities to a point where they could determine the shape of world affairs in a degree far better than they do today, although I think the need for some balance between the outside forces would always be there.

But I doubt that we can do this on the patterns of even the most recent past. We are going to require a great deal more along the lines I have outlined to you today: a streamlining and collecting of our own strength and authority within this government and throughout the whole international field; a development of the weapons of propaganda and political warfare; a far more adept development and use of the armed force in being as opposed to armed force in application; and above all, a policy related to the realities of our world situation.
and not to a picture of a world society, and of us in it, conjured up from the troubled conscience of the frustrated puritan or from the imaginations of well-meaning people who are reluctant to grow up to the responsibilities of national maturity.

You men are going out today from what I believe to be the finest course on international affairs that is taught anywhere in this country. Many of the details of what you have heard will not remain long in your memories. It is not essential that they should. But I do hope you will at least take away with you a new feeling for the complexity and the seriousness of our international position. I hope that on the basis of this course you will be able to help to sweep away the cobwebs of smugness and self-satisfaction from the cupboards of our official thinking on foreign affairs. I hope that when you meet again with the bitter, stubborn realities of practical work in the services of our government, you will bend and measure against those realities the concepts that you have gained in this lecture hall, and that you will then come forward yourselves with appreciations, concerning the role of this country in foreign affairs, which will be deeper and more penetrating and more useful than those of us have been able to produce who have borne responsibility in these affairs the last few months.