

ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: WALTER LIPPMANN, STRATEGIC INTERNATIONALISM, THE COLD WAR, AND VIETNAM, 1943-1967

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This dissertation examines the Cold War writings and activities of the American commentator Walter Lippmann—in particular his observations about U.S. policy in Vietnam. Lippmann was the preeminent columnist of his era, writing 2,300 installments of his *Today and Tomorrow* column between 1945 and 1967. Lippmann crafted a conceptual framework for promoting American internationalism that blended political realism, cosmopolitanism, and classical diplomacy. That approach shaped his role as a moderator of the domestic and international dialogue about the Cold War, as a facilitator of ideas and policies, and as a quasi-diplomat. Chapter one suggests that based on new archival sources a re-evaluation of Lippmann is necessary to correct inadequacies in the standard literature. Chapter two surveys his strategic internationalist approach to foreign affairs from the publication of his first foreign policy book in 1915 to three influential volumes he wrote between 1943 and 1947. Chapter three explores Lippmann's position on a prominent and controversial Cold War issue—the partition of Germany. Chapter four makes a comparative analysis of

Lippmann with the French commentator Raymond Aron, examining Lippmann's part as a dialogue-shaper and public broker during the Cuban Missile Crisis and the subsequent debate about nuclear sharing in the Atlantic Alliance. Chapter five moves the study toward his writings on U.S. policy in Asia—particularly U.S.-China policy and the Korean War. Chapter six examines Lippmann's analyses of U.S.-Vietnam policy from 1949 to 1963 framed by three consistent arguments: first, that America had no vital interests at stake there; second, that it could not win a military victory there at any reasonable cost; and, third, that its best course was to use diplomacy to promote Vietnamese neutralism. Chapter seven explores Lippmann's efforts to dissuade U.S. officials from intervention in 1964. Chapter eight details policymakers' elaborate efforts to delay Lippmann's public criticisms of the Vietnam policies. Chapter nine explores the Johnson administration's determination to discredit Lippmann's public criticisms of the war after July 1965. Chapter ten counters the standard literature's portrayal of Lippmann's Cold War commentary and suggests that his most influential activity as a public figure may have been as a quasi-diplomatist.

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For Mimi, Ella, and Evan

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Chapter 1:

Reconsidering Walter Lippmann

I.

I read my first *Today and Tomorrow* column in 1991, nearly twenty years after Walter Lippmann's death, as the Cold War—the term Lippmann coined for the long Russo-American rivalry—ended. For an aspiring journalist eager to craft sparkling sentences Lippmann proved an impossible model to resist. His columns, some of them six decades old, jumped off the page. They were engaging, vibrant, and supremely logical. Lippmann possessed an uncanny ability to reduce a complex problem to its simplest form, to offer the range of reasonable options, and to propose a thoughtful solution.¹ He arranged words to make arguments so convincing that they seemed at times like mathematical laws rather than the statements of opinion which they were. If one accepted the premise from which he proceeded, his conclusions were hard to refute. Lippmann's mastery of the language seduced, and I was not immune—like so many before me, drawn like iron filings to a magnet.

Of course, Walter Lippmann was often wrong. Anyone who wrote on average three times per week, for six decades was bound to make some gaffes and

¹ Ronald Steel, *Walter Lippmann and the American Century* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1980): especially, xvi; 201-202; Joseph Kraft, "Lippmann: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow," 11 September 1980, *Washington Post*: A19. Louis Auchincloss's novel, *The House of the Prophet* (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1980), based on Lippmann's career and his character, celebrates his prose and its power to persuade. See especially, pp. 254-255; 274-275.

contradictory statements. Many of his missteps also derived from what was an essentially humanist philosophy, anchored to his faith in rationality. At times, this approach led Lippmann to under-estimate the darker, irrational forces that influenced human actions.² In 1917, writing for *The New Republic*, Lippmann praised President Woodrow Wilson’s “Peace without Victory” speech which set lofty, idealistic American objectives for the post-World War I peace. He soon served as secretary of the Inquiry that helped draw up Wilson’s Fourteen Points. Disillusioned with the Paris Peace and Wilson’s idealism, however, Lippmann backtracked in 1919 and opposed American entry into the League of Nations. In 1932, he dismissed Democratic presidential candidate Franklin Roosevelt as an “amiable Boy Scout,” unprepared and unfit to face the problems of the Depression and foreign policy. Four years later, thinking the New Deal reforms had gone a step too far, Lippmann supported GOP presidential candidate Alf Landon. In 1940, on the eve of U.S. entry into World War II, he called for a smaller army and greater reliance on the navy and air force. In 1943, Lippmann supposed that a postwar alliance with the USSR was possible and would be the basis for a lasting peace. Facing an implacable challenge from Moscow in 1948, the columnist strongly advocated that the Allied nations splinter their occupation zones into a decentralized federation of historic German states—arguing that a unified West Germany would dominate Europe and soon cut a deal with the Soviets. On it went. Lippmann supported Lyndon Johnson in 1964 as “a man for this season.” Less than two years later, Lippmann condemned Johnson as a pathological liar who had deceptively brought America into the Vietnam War. In

² Joseph Kraft perceptively noted just this point in a eulogy of Lippmann; see Kraft, “A Courageous Voice of Reason,” 17 December 1974, *Washington Post*: A17.

1968, writing that the Democrats had become reckless and untrustworthy in office, he publicly endorsed Republican presidential candidate Richard M. Nixon (whom he routinely castigated as vice-president in the 1950s) as the last best hope to bring stability and normalcy to national elective politics.³

Despite these flaws and frequent reversals, there were powerful and persuasive consistencies that animated Lippmann's writings on foreign policy and the Cold War. Lippmann constructed a conceptual framework early in his career that eventually served as the centerpiece of his postwar analyses. The historian's curiosity which I soon cultivated for Lippmann was no less intense than my attraction to him as a journalist. As I pursued graduate degrees in 20th century political history and international affairs during the 1990s, the context of what was occurring around me imparted an entirely new dimension to Lippmann's columns. Sadly, straining to decipher 50-year-old *Today and Tomorrow* installments (on a microfilm reader of only slightly more recent vintage) proved a world more enlightening than the op-ed pages of most modern daily papers. The decade after the Cold War, with all its promise, contradictions, and disappointments badly needed a Lippmann-esque figure—but one never materialized.

The 1990s in America, to borrow one of Lippmann's phrases, were years of drift rather than mastery. Soviet power receded revealing long-neglected domestic institutions and concerns. The Cold War, Americans realized, had been waged at significant social cost: crime-ridden and decaying inner cities, obsolete public transportation systems, declining schools, a compromised environment, and massive

³ Steel, *Walter Lippmann and the American Century* touches on each of these episodes. For Lippmann's inconsistencies and frequent reversals see also, Barry D. Riccio, *Odyssey of a Liberal*

national debts. Americans gladly forfeited their global concerns for the pursuit of prosperity at home. Televised popular culture and the news media—often indistinguishable enterprises—served as a potent opiate for a surprisingly eager audience. The public knew more about the broken marriage of a football star accused of murdering his estranged wife, than it did about a Balkan war that killed thousands of civilians, threatened peace in Europe, and eventually required NATO’s first military offensive. Americans gawked at presidential peccadilloes, but were blasé about the very same president’s failure to act upon horrific genocide on the African sub-continent. American intellectuals fared little better, participating in their own myopic surfeit of “irrational exuberance” spawned by post-Cold War triumphalism.⁴ One prominent scholar-cum-policymaker even adopted Hegel’s line that history was politics and, that since democracy had vanquished its 20th century rivals, communism and fascism, that history itself was perhaps nearing an “end.”⁵ Even those whose approach was more tempered, surveyed the “American Century” and argued that the Wilsonian mission of creating stability by fostering democracy had been internalized implicitly—if not explicitly—by U.S. policymakers, and, moreover, was a successful program worth emulating in the 21st Century.⁶

Reading Lippmann’s columns closely for his perspective on a broad spectrum of Cold War crises, I discovered he had struggled with the same fundamental questions about American foreign policy debated in my classes, on the current op-ed

(New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Press, 1994).

⁴ The most triumphal of the lot was Francis Fukuyama’s *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Free Press, 1992). For a rather triumphal spin on the “necessity” and positive legacy of U.S. intervention in Vietnam, see Michael Lind, *Vietnam, The Necessary War: A Reinterpretation of America’s Most Disastrous Military Conflict* (New York: Free Press, 1999).

⁵ Fukuyama’s *The End of History and the Last Man*: especially, 39-51; 55-70; 338-339.

pages of the *Washington Post*, and, no doubt, in the councils of post-Cold War policymakers. As Americans in the 1990s sought to adjust to a world scene stripped of all its familiar markers and guideposts, so did Lippmann during the early Cold War try to prepare the country for its new role in an equally murky future. The questions he asked were eerily familiar ones:

- What constituted a sound foreign policy? Absent the old threat, how should America plan for future threats? Was preponderant power alone enough to enact Washington's plans and to achieve its goals?
- Should Washington actively promote democracy abroad or simply, by whatever contrivances necessary, construct an international system stable enough to protect it at home? Were these two courses compatible?
- Should the U.S. lead? Participate as one among equals? Or, go it alone?
- Finally, where in postwar modernity did America—the military, economic, and cultural superpower—end and the world begin?

If not uniformly practicable, Lippmann's answers to these questions and his solutions to specific Cold War crises—taken in their totality—offered an important alternative to the policy of global containment Washington officials pursued and most leading opinion-makers in America and Western Europe endorsed. Lippmann's road, however, was repeatedly not taken.

⁶ Tony Smith, *America's Mission: The United States and the Struggle For Worldwide Democracy in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996): especially, xiii-xv; 29-33.

Lippmann's contemporaries' reactions to his analyses intrigued me equally. My research revealed several audiences who attached different importance to certain aspects of his writing. Some journalistic colleagues took their cue from him, as did many regular readers of *Today and Tomorrow*. An influential few stridently denounced his ideas. U.S. officials, by and large, discounted Lippmann's proposals, though his arguments were often so grounded that he could not easily be dismissed. Forced to contend with Lippmann, they sometimes tried to co-opt him—never very successfully. Foreign leaders, from France to India and China to Russia, closely monitored his analyses. They judged Lippmann (correctly) as the voice of American moderation, though they often mistook Lippmann's attitude for that of official Washington which, in the heat of virtually every superpower crisis, did not share the columnist's emphasis on collaboration and diplomatic initiative.

Reading further into primary sources I, in turn, began asking questions about Walter Lippmann—this man who clearly played a significant part in the domestic, official, and even international discussion of the Cold War. How did he develop his philosophy of international relations? What was this plan for American internationalism that he proposed, which historians and political scientists alternately have called “realist” and “cosmopolitan”?⁷ How had so many of my contemporaries come to forget Walter Lippmann altogether? More broadly still: How had Lippmann, as an unofficial public figure, acted to shape the Cold War dialogue and policy itself?

⁷ On “realist,” see Steel, *Walter Lippmann and the American Century*: 486-490; and, for another conventional view, see Michael J. Smith, *Realist Thought from Weber to Kissinger* (Baton Rouge, Louisiana State University Press, 1985): 175-176; 182-183. On “cosmopolitanism,” see D. Stephen

II.

Looming beyond even these questions was one of vital significance for any diplomatic historian: Should one even attempt another study of Walter Lippmann? At first examination, that might seem a daunting consideration. I did not, however, determine it to be a prohibitive one. Lippmann has been the subject of roughly a dozen biographical and political-philosophical monographs and a score of articles. The standard by which all others are measured is Ronald Steel's award-winning biography, *Walter Lippmann and the American Century* (1980)—drawing heavily from the columnist's papers and correspondence to which Steel was granted exclusive access. In addition, Lippmann's role in critiquing the early phases of U.S. containment policy is a favorite episode covered in a number of Cold War-related studies and history textbooks. Though the public which once relied so much on Lippmann's writings largely forgot him, scholars for five decades have found him intriguing if sometimes enigmatic. Most often, he is portrayed as a detached spectator who struggled to graft a nineteenth-century worldview onto the twentieth-century crises through which he lived. Lippmann's intellectual biographers suggest the protean nature of his ideas about twentieth-century liberalism. Their title pages convey a theme of a shifting, often contradictory, intellectual journey: *Odyssey of a Liberal*, *The Five Public Philosophies of Walter Lippmann*, *Twentieth Century Pilgrimage*, *Crossroads of Liberalism*, and *The Intellectual Odyssey of Walter Lippmann*.⁸

Blum, *Walter Lippmann: Cosmopolitanism in the Century of Total War* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1984): especially, 9-18.

⁸ Hari Dam, *The Intellectual Odyssey of Walter Lippmann: A Study of His Protean Thought, 1910-1960* (New York: Gordon Press, 1973); Benjamin Wright, *The Five Public Philosophies of Walter*

Revisionist historians, of the William Appleman Williams school, largely won the battle to shape interpretations of Lippmann's Cold War commentary.⁹ Chief among these scholars, who viewed Lippmann's geopolitical orientation as a distinct liability, were Barton Bernstein and Ronald Steel. These writers were vexed by Lippmann's apparent blindness to non-colonial imperialism, rivalry for markets and raw materials, and conflict between competing economic systems.¹⁰ Viewing Lippmann through the lens of C. Wright Mills, they also expressed skepticism about his ability to be an independent and objective commentator because of his proximity to those in power.¹¹

Such approaches informed Bernstein's analysis of Lippmann, the earliest such examination of the columnist. Focusing on Lippmann's criticisms of U.S. policies in the late 1940s, Bernstein found that though the columnist objected to the global

Lippmann (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1973); Charles Wellborn, *Twentieth Century Pilgrimage: Walter Lippmann and the Public Philosophy* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1969); Charles Forcey, *The Crossroads of Liberalism: Croly, Weyl, Lippmann, and the Progressive Era, 1900-1925* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1961); and Riccio, *Walter Lippmann: Odyssey of a Liberal*.

Other works on Lippmann include: David E. Weingast, *Walter Lippmann: A Study in Personal Journalism* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1949); Anwar Syed, *Walter Lippmann's Philosophy of International Politics* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1963); Larry L. Adams, *Walter Lippmann* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1977); John Luskin, *Lippmann, Liberty and the Press* (Birmingham, AL: University of Alabama Press, 1972); Francine Curro Cary, *The Influence of War on Walter Lippmann, 1914-1944* (Madison, WI: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1967); and Edward L. Schapsmeier and Frederick H. Schapsmeier, *Walter Lippmann: Philosopher-Journalist* (Washington, DC: Public Affairs Press, 1969).

⁹ By this "school" of interpretation, I mean the economic determinist approach used by Williams in his *Contours of American History* (Cleveland: World Publishing Company, 1961) and in his classic *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy* (Cleveland: World Publishing, Company, 1959). Walter LeFeber, *America, Russia, and the Cold War, 1945 to 1991* (Boston: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1992), is just one of Williams' notable cast of students and another adherent to the idea that American economic objectives drove Cold War policy.

¹⁰ See, for example, Barton Bernstein, "Walter Lippmann and the Early Cold War," in *Cold War Critics*, ed. Thomas G. Paterson (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1971): 22-23. This interpretation has proven remarkably powerful. It persists through Steel's biography and into the 1990s, shaping, for instance, Eric Alterman's description of Lippmann as an "ambivalent general" in the government's effort to enlist Americans in the Cold War struggle for global supremacy. See Alterman's, *Sound and Fury: The Washington Punditocracy and the Collapse of American Politics* (New York: Harper-Collins, 1992): 37.

character of containment he largely shared in the liberal-capitalist ideology that guided planners in Washington. His dissent, such as it was, was limited to strategy rather than objectives. “Like most Americans, Lippmann did not believe that American policy-makers had an ‘ideology’ and a well-defined conception of the national interest,” Bernstein explained. “Where he saw innocence there was often, in fact, design; where he saw ignorance or blundering there was often purpose. In offering the counsel of realism, he failed to understand fully how much he ultimately shared of the vision of policy-makers and how much his dissent was limited to means and tactics, not goals and ends.”¹² Contrary to Lippmann’s insistence that U.S. officials pursued poor policies out of inexperience and naiveté, they were instead, Bernstein believed, acting out of ideology—one rooted in a political economy that linked peace and prosperity with free trade and civil liberties. Where Lippmann differed from officials, Bernstein observed, was not on the need to act in that national interest but on its applications.¹³ For Bernstein, Lippmann’s realism offered a blueprint for postwar American expansion.

Ronald Steel, Lippmann’s able biographer, amplified the New Left critique with the publication of his authorized biography, *Walter Lippmann and the American Century*. Steel told the story of Lippmann’s life within the framework of the age of U.S. ascendancy and decline. In this account, Lippmann not only was present at the creation of the American superpower state, critiquing it at a distance, but he participated as one of its architects and goodwill ambassadors. Parts of Steel’s book suggest Lippmann was independent, non-ideological, and—at times—an isolated

¹¹ C. Wright Mills, *The Power Elite* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1956).

¹² Bernstein, “Walter Lippmann and the Early Cold War,” 20.

critic. Yet from his post-Vietnam perspective, Steel also chastised Lippmann for sharing many of the same internationalist assumptions as U.S. officials. “He critiqued policymakers, but rarely what lay behind their policies,” Steel wrote. Though he found Lippmann to be a critical observer of each postwar administration from Truman to Johnson, Steel judged that the columnist did little to challenge the accepted orthodoxy: global containment. Tucked away in his fast-moving narrative were sharp revisionist asides. “Having only the guidepost of national interest, lacking a philosophical approach or ideological commitment, reluctant to accept the part that economic demands or imperial ambitions might ply in explaining American foreign policy, Lippmann was unable to take a consistent approach to this issues he wrote about,” Steel observed. “A critique so narrowly focused was not likely to threaten prevalent assumptions.” Lippmann often went along with these assumptions because he shared the same goals as those on the inside, Steel added: “He felt an insider’s responsibility for making the system work. He never was alienated and was in no sense a radical. He operated entirely within the system.”¹⁴

Thus, when Steel discussed Lippmann’s objections to Vietnam he strained to make the facts fit his framework by arguing that the columnist experienced a 1960s epiphany: dropping realism and embracing a defense of American “values.” It is difficult to exaggerate how much the Vietnam experience shaped Steel’s account. For the American Left, long uncomfortable with what they perceived to be Lippmann’s power-oriented calculations of the national interest, his strong dissent from the war amounted to an act of contrition. In this view, Steel agreed with fellow

¹³ Ibid., 45.

¹⁴ All the foregoing quotes are from Steel’s, *Walter Lippmann and the American Century*: 486-487.

revisionists. He declares Vietnam to be Lippmann's "finest hour," without satisfactorily elaborating on this pronouncement in his penultimate chapter.¹⁵ Later, however, Steel clarified some of the motives for his approach, suggesting that had Lippmann not opposed American intervention in Southeast Asia and waged his war of words on Lyndon Johnson, his long-running critique of global policies would have been insignificant. Lippmann "redeemed himself in the '60s," Steel said after the biography's publication. "Here was Walter Lippmann, pillar of the establishment, writing against the war, arguing for values rather than power, attacking what he called Johnson's 'messianic megalomania.' I wouldn't have written the book if he hadn't done that. He went out the way he came in, at Harvard, full of passion."¹⁶ Consequently, Steel's biography minimized the realism underlying Lippmann's long-standing refusal to commit American ground forces in Asia. Nor did Steel demonstrate how Lippmann's "passion" in his later years made him any more effective or insightful a critic—indeed, Lippmann's intensely personal characterization of the war tended to gloss over some of the hard questions about American globalism and imperialism which Steel credited him for raising.

Yet, as biography, Steel's book accomplished a remarkable synthesis of Lippmann's life—supplanting the old view of Lippmann as a detached Olympian figure with a more accurate account of his ceaseless activities to influence the powerful. Lauded by peers, it won the Bancroft Prize and the National Book Critics Circle Award. Former SHAFR president and prize-winning author Robert Dallek anointed it a model of the historical narrative "forsaken" by modern academe. So

¹⁵ Steel, *Walter Lippmann and the American Century*: xvi.

¹⁶ Henry Allen, "Chronicling Walter Lippmann," 11 September 1980, *Washington Post*: D13.

well-received was Steel's book that the current of conventional wisdom ran strongly against new efforts to study Lippmann. One reviewer surmised, "it is safe to conclude that there be no more Lippmann biographies—not for a long time."¹⁷

But the end of the Cold War revitalized interest about Lippmann's central role as a moderator of the debate about postwar American foreign policy. By the 1990s, awash in an impoverished culture of political analysis, Washington commentators recalled their prime forbear in tones of reverence and with a yearning to relive the golden age of political analysis. Lippmann's example as a participant in the community of dialogue about foreign policy was deemed worthy of emulation. The problem, as media critic Eric Alterman lamented, was that Lippmann's heirs fell far short of the task because of institutional changes within the media business, the far more adversarial role between journalists and politicians, and, quite often, the personal foibles of leading pundits.¹⁸ On this subject, the standard literature also disappointed. Steel's *Walter Lippmann and the American Century* shattered the illusion—long held by Lippmann's readers—that he was a detached outsider. But having proven that Walter Lippmann moved among "the men of action," Steel failed to analyze systematically his subject's many methods and roles for shaping the Cold War debate and policy. Nor did he calculate how effective Lippmann was in these different roles. Such tasks fell outside the scope of popular biography.

This dissertation aims at neither another intellectual history nor biographical reprise of Lippmann's life. Rather, the purpose of this project two-fold: 1) to offer a

¹⁷ Robert Dallek, quoted in *The New Yorker*, 9 March 1998: 24. Interestingly Dallek found it to be a "non-polemic" treatment. See also, Geoffrey Smith, "Walter Lippmann, the Fourth Estate, and American Foreign Policy," *Queen's Quarterly* 89 (Spring 1982): 2-14.

more accurate account of the development of Lippmann's approach to foreign relations, culminating in his writings on the Cold War and Vietnam particularly; and 2) to offer a case study of Lippmann's effort as a dialogue-shaper and quasi-diplomatist during the Cold War. If previous studies have not adequately analyzed Lippmann it may, in part, be due to the fact that it is so difficult to label him. There are at least six discernable roles I have identified in which Lippmann, using a combination of intellect and personality, acted to shape American *and* Western Alliance Cold War policies.

- First, Lippmann **advanced a conceptual model** with which to frame his discourse about the Cold War. The standard literature describes this as being Lippmann's practice of a rather mono-dimensional political realism.¹⁹ But building off the work of several political scientists I have

¹⁸ See especially, Alterman's *Sound and Fury*: 1-18; see also his first chapter, "The Road to Lippmannism." For some of the "yearning" for a Lippmann-like writer in the 1990s see, Philip Geyelin, "'Today and Tomorrow' in the Gulf," *Washington Post*, 6 January 1991: C2.

¹⁹ Steel is not alone in this assessment. From a non-revisionist perspective, Kenneth Thompson described Lippmann as one of the "four horsemen" of realism in postwar America—the other outriders being Reinhold Niebuhr, George F. Kennan, and Hans J. Morgenthau. Lippmann popularized political rationalism, contributing to a deeper understanding of the Cold War as an independent observer, "not through defending or condemning the United States nor by hewing to the official or revisionist line," wrote Thompson. Thus, Thompson observed, Lippmann and his "realist" counterparts rarely represented the dominant policy viewpoint nor did they ever become the voice of any major school of criticism. Realism, simply defined as the axiom that commitments must be balanced with available power, Thompson concluded, was the "primary thesis running through [Lippmann's] approach to every foreign policy problem." Lippmann's unswerving devotion to that single formula, Thompson proclaimed, was at the center of his triumphs. See Kenneth W. Thompson, *Interpreters and Critics of the Cold War* (Washington, DC: University Press of America, 1978): 61; 112-113; 80. Thompson's perspective was largely adopted by Michael J. Smith, a student of the political scientist Stanley Hoffman (a Raymond Aron student himself), in his book *Realist Thought from Weber to Kissinger*: see 175-176; 182-183.

come to describe his approach as “strategic internationalism”—a blending of great power politics, classical diplomacy, and “cosmopolitan” goals.²⁰

- Second, using this analytical framework, Lippmann attempted to **set an agenda** about the topics of debate within the domestic and international dialogue about the Cold War—using his books and his widely-read column, “Today and Tomorrow.”
- Third, Lippmann **acted as an educator** of both domestic and foreign public opinion about the Cold War conflict.
- Fourth, he sought access to decision-makers not merely for the vanity of being an insider or to produce journalistic “scoops,” but rather because he **aspired to be a participator and shaper** of Cold War policy itself—to bend it toward his own construct of strategic internationalism.
- Fifth, Lippmann occasionally **performed public relations tasks** for U.S. leaders, using his column to rationalize their policies to domestic and foreign audiences. Conversely, he popularized some of the ideas of leading foreign officials by facilitating debate about them in America and reporting conclusions from his private meetings to U.S. officials.
- Sixth, Lippmann **worked as an unofficial liaison**, a private minister without portfolio, who cultivated personal and professional relationships with foreign leaders and diplomats within the Western Alliance, among

²⁰ The most useful in this regard are: Blum, *Walter Lippmann: Cosmopolitanism in the Century of Total War*; Joel Rosenthal, *Righteous Realists: Political Realism, Responsible Power, and American Culture in the Nuclear Age* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1991); Greg Russell, *Hans J. Morgenthau and the Ethics of American Statecraft* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1990).

neutral nations, and inside the Soviet coalition, as well. His primary tasks in this regard were to promote diplomatic discussion among these three Cold War communities and, particularly, to foster clear channels of communication in the alliance.

Despite a considerable extant literature on Walter Lippmann, I found five compelling reasons to re-examine his career as a Cold War interpreter and quasi-diplomat. Of these, four have their basis in scholarly concerns—owing to limitations and inadequacies in the standard works on Lippmann. The final point touches on policy options in the 21st Century; specifically, in what directions Lippmann’s work might orient Americans and their leaders when they think about the *future* of U.S. foreign relations.

First, though Lippmann figured prominently for the American public, U.S. officials, and international leaders during the first two decades of the Cold War, no one has written a book-length study devoted solely to his commentary on foreign policy during this period. The biographical treatments of Lippmann tend to analyze his protean ideas about liberalism or the development of his philosophical works on democratic government. Even Ronald Steel’s book, which devotes substantial coverage to Lippmann during the Cold War, leaves much undone in coming to terms with the corpus of his foreign policy writing during this period. Steel offers a convincing and thoroughly readable biographical overview but fails to forward an analytical framework within which to better understand Lippmann.

Second, a massive amount of new archival evidence, particularly in the official records of the John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson administrations (but also in foreign archives), has been opened after the last substantial studies of Lippmann were published. Lippmann often wrote that knowledge is tentative and incomplete. By that logic, new evidence compels us to revisit and to rethink past assumptions. With the opening of Cold War archives around the world during the past two decades, there has been a bonanza of de-classifications relating to events central to this study, especially the Vietnam War. Consider, for instance, the releases at the LBJ Library alone. Since the late-1970s, more than 500 oral histories (approximately half the collection) and thousands of hours of the president's taped phone conversations have become available. Most of the national security files and the memoranda of McGeorge Bundy to Johnson were accessioned in the late-1980s and 1990s. My search through these records produced many documents unavailable to earlier scholars. At the JFK Library, in the last decade, more than 40 manuscript collections and 80 oral histories have been opened to researchers. During my visit there I was able to utilize the previously unopened White House confidential file containing Lippmann's correspondence with Bundy. Hundreds of thousands of documents have been declassified at the National Archives and Records Administration, from Policy Planning Council papers to the Records of Undersecretary of State George Ball. Nor had previous scholars had the benefit of searching in the papers of Joseph W. Alsop, one of Lippmann's chief critics, which were opened in the early 1990s at the Library of Congress. I also conducted interviews with several of Lippmann's key associates including his primary research

assistant during the 1960s, Elizabeth Farmer Midgley, who, in addition to providing many recollections about the process of Lippmann's column-writing, also opened her personal diaries to me, revealing accounts of the columnist's private meetings with and impressions of important American officials. Finally, the Lippmann papers at Yale University's Sterling Library constitute a treasure trove that still yields many gems—particularly Lippmann's correspondence with University of Chicago professor Quincy Wright, the diplomat George Kennan, and secretary of state John Foster Dulles, as well as Lippmann's appointment diaries which cover decades of his professional life. These untapped materials not only fill gaps in our knowledge about Lippmann, they reorient the way we should think about him.

Third, another historiographical motivation behind this dissertation seeks to reconsider the standard literature's treatment of Lippmann's "realism." Historians have held Lippmann to a rigorous standard of "realism" largely of their own construction, often to disparage him when he showed himself to be a great deal more practical than his abstract intellectual arguments might suggest. What I discovered along the way was that Lippmann's realism was not as static or simplistic as previous scholars have argued. Neither was it devoid of values nor, for that matter, moral considerations. Lippmann defied ready categorization. He was an internationalist, but he disparaged globalism. He was an American who supported his countrymen in their times of greatest crisis, but he also was a "cosmopolitan" who perceived and respected the interests pursued by a variety of foreign capitals when many of his contemporaries did not.²¹ He understood great power politics and applications of military force, but argued almost exclusively for diplomatic solutions to crises. Did

these traits distinguish him from other “realists”? Wasn’t his approach more complex than merely following ratios of power? Is there a richer perspective on Lippmann than the standard one that views him as a simple geopolitician?

Fourth, the inclusion of a new aspect that the existing literature misses also seems in order: An analysis of Lippmann’s multi-faceted role-playing during the Cold War. Based on the six categories of participation listed above, how should scholars treat Lippmann? As a journalist? An educator? A facilitator of dialogue or policies? A private diplomat? Did his analytical framework for understanding the Cold War complement or contradict the ideas and policies of Western Alliance leaders? How did decision-makers view him? Was Lippmann ultimately successful in his endeavors—more so in some aspects than others?

Fifth, my analysis carries an implicit political consideration, too. Simply put, it is that Lippmann’s Cold War writings are relevant for modern American policymakers and leaders, facing the most complex international scene in perhaps a century. Lippmann wrote when military and economic power was aligned in largely bipolar blocs dominated, if not always precisely directed, from Washington and Moscow. One might then be tempted to infer that in the unipolar early twenty-first century with many competing second-tier powers, “rogue states,” and dangerous non-state actors such as the al-Qaida terrorist network, that Lippmann’s analyses might be less useful. Instead, his emphasis on the limits of U.S. power, warnings against Wilsonian temptations to remake the world in America’s image, and admonitions against abandoning allies to act unilaterally have peculiar resonance and

²¹ Blum, *Walter Lippmann: Cosmopolitanism in the Century of Total War*: 9-18; 104-140.

relevance when one considers the implications of the “Bush Doctrine” of pre-emptive war or the prospects of an expansively-defined, global “war on terror.”

III.

The dissertation that follows is divided into nine additional chapters, arranged chronologically, and each deals with aspects raised in the points above. The opening sections span broad periods of Lippmann’s career, but the interior chapters come to focus particularly on the columnist’s writings and activities pertaining to American Cold War policies in Vietnam. There are several reasons for this emphasis. First, the bulk of new archival evidence, opened in presidential and diplomatic archives, relates to this facet of Lippmann’s work. Second, some of the greatest historiographical misconceptions about Lippmann’s career persist in the existing literature on his Cold War writings about Asia. Third, Lippmann’s writings on Vietnam between 1947 and 1967 provide a unique perspective from which to better understand his vision of American internationalism.

Chapter Two discusses the development of Lippmann’s analytical framework for international relations—from his earliest book on foreign policy, *The Stakes of Diplomacy* (1915) through his criticism of containment as expressed in *The Cold War* (1947). Lippmann stoked internationalist sentiment but also sought to contain unchecked American ambitions. Three books, written between 1943 and 1947, applied his strategic internationalist approach to the emerging Russo-American conflict. *U.S. Foreign Policy* (1943) and *U.S. War Aims* (1944) solidified Lippmann’s clout as a foreign policy analyst who advocated restrained

internationalism. His rejection of the administration's containment policy in *The Cold War*, set Lippmann on a parallel but separate trajectory from American officials. Whereas U.S. officials pursued national security by projecting abroad a colossal combination of military and economic might—"a preponderance of power" as one noted historian has described it—Walter Lippmann believed security derived from a balance between that power and enlightened diplomatic initiative.²² He took a long view of the Cold War, subordinating ideology and paranoia to explain the pragmatic mechanics of international relations.

Armed with this analytical construct, Lippmann then tried to set the parameters of the debate about key Cold War policies. He did this by being an educator of domestic and international opinion, a facilitator of trans-Atlantic dialogue, and a quasi-diplomat with key U.S. officials and foreign leaders. It is significant that when he debated postwar U.S. containment strategies, two of his principal opponents were other prominent "realists": diplomat George F. Kennan and French commentator Raymond Aron. Chapter Three offers a comparative analysis of this trio's writings on the partition of Germany and the disposition of West Berlin. As a U.S. official Kennan's set of priorities initially was different from Lippmann the journalist, but after he left government he moved far closer to Lippmann's vision of containment. Lippmann and Aron particularly clashed over the implementation of Western Alliance policies in postwar Germany: Lippmann wanted a loose federation

²² Melvyn Leffler, *A Preponderance of Power: National Security, the Truman Administration and the Cold War* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1992). Leffler's book is testament to the insights Lippmann raised in 1947 about the dangers of U.S. intervention in countries stretching from the Middle East to Asia. See especially Leffler's discussion in *Preponderance*: 289-98; 353-54. Interestingly, Lippmann receives little treatment either in Leffler's work or in other seminal Cold War syntheses, such as John Lewis Gaddis's *Strategies of Containment: A Critical Appraisal of Postwar American National Security Policy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982).

of historic German states; Aron, believing such a weak contraption would be vulnerable to Soviet machinations, pushed for unifying the Anglo-American-French zones into what became Western Germany. They disagreed about the importance of ideology in judging Soviet intentions and also about the prospects for reaching any kind of sustainable *modus vivendi*. How these “realists” persisted in such different beliefs suggests something about the vagaries of what it means to be a “realist” altogether. If realism itself is not a contested term, then it is at least more complex than scholars usually treat it.

Chapter Four discusses Lippmann’s role in acting as both an unofficial diplomat and facilitator of U.S. policy within the Atlantic Alliance and between the alliance and Moscow. New archival materials reveal Lippmann’s impact on U.S.-Russian negotiations during the Cuban Missile Crisis. This section also elaborates on the unique dialogue Lippmann opened with the *Le Figaro* columnist Raymond Aron over the issue of nuclear sharing and the French *force de frappe*. It explores their roles as quasi-diplomats: Lippmann in Paris and Aron in Washington. Lippmann’s developing relationship with National Security Adviser McGeorge Bundy also receives treatment.

Chapter Five examines the development of the columnist’s opposition to American military intervention in Asia, focusing on U.S. policy toward postwar China and in the Korean War. Unlike the standard interpretation of Lippmann’s commentary on this subject, which suggests that the columnist vacillated over time and geographical locations, my research concluded that he was remarkably consistent about U.S. intervention anywhere on or near mainland Asia from the Truman through

Kennedy administrations: time and again he opposed it. In Korea, particularly, the record demonstrates that the columnist bitterly criticized full-scale intervention and attempted to work with Indian diplomats to produce a settlement for the withdrawal of U.S. forces. During this period he also rejected U.S. intervention on Quemoy and Matsu, called for Washington to replace the Nationalist regime in Taiwan with a U.N.-monitored “internationalized” government, sought the end of U.S. military presence in Japan, and drew what he called a “strategic line” that stretched from roughly the Aleutian Islands to the Philippines—suggesting that the U.S. deploy its forces forward of this line only at its own peril. Lippmann’s later rejection of intervention in Vietnam fit this overall pattern.

Chapter Six argues that Lippmann was one of the earliest, most forceful, and most prescient opponents of an American military commitment in Southeast Asia. Indeed, more than two decades before Lyndon Johnson Americanized the war in Vietnam, Lippmann warned Washington policymakers not commit troops in Southeast Asia to contain Soviet or Chinese expansion. Lippmann criticized initial American aid to French Indochina in 1947-48 as a policy of underwriting Paris’s postwar colonialism. While he supported U.S. efforts to extricate the French from their increasingly burdensome and bloody colonial war in Indochina, he did not believe Americans should replace them. In 1954, he opposed Washington officials who sought direct military intervention at Dienbienphu, as well as those who proposed that the U.S. step in to relieve the French effort in South Vietnam afterward. In 1961, Lippmann advised a plan of “neutralization” in Laos—similar to the plan Charles De Gaulle would advocate for all of Southeast Asia two years later—in

which the U.S. and other concerned great powers and regional players work out a comprehensive peace settlement. He personally advised President Kennedy not to intervene with U.S. forces in Laos and, later, South Vietnam. At that point he initiated a pointed public debate with the columnist Joe Alsop, who urged full-scale U.S. intervention on behalf of the Saigon regime.

The next three chapters focus on the period from 1963 to 1967, providing a richer picture of Lippmann's part in critiquing American intervention in the Vietnam War. Chapter Seven details the Johnson administration's efforts to pacify its most potent potential critic as it escalated U.S. military involvement in Vietnam. I also reconstruct Lippmann's role as an "insider" with key U.S. officials—none more important, I argue, than his longtime friend and national security adviser McGeorge Bundy. Their special relationship was vital to President Johnson's success in preventing Lippmann's open break with the administration until after key decisions were made to mobilize for war. During this period Lippmann played dual roles. As an insider, he vigorously debated U.S. officials about the perils of intervention in Vietnam. His columns gave him a public platform to critique Vietnam policy based on the principles of strategic internationalism; although the criticisms during this period were couched to nudge gently the Johnson administration toward a diplomatic exit in Southeast Asia. In a sense, Lippmann's *realpolitik* convictions and his sense of classical diplomacy made him a prescient and feared (by U.S. officials) critic. Yet, in another sense, he critically compromised his status as an impartial observer because he softened his public doubts about administration policies while privately attempting to persuade officials not to intervene in Vietnam.

Chapter Eight extends the discussion from the previous chapter by focusing on U.S. officials' highly intensive efforts to court Lippmann and, finally, to counter him in the spring of 1965. Of particular significance in this discussion are the efforts of McGeorge Bundy and Under Secretary of State George Ball to ease Lippmann's concerns (if not to outright deceive him) about the administration's intentions in Vietnam. Lippmann's own overblown sense of being able to talk administration officials off the Vietnam ledge (coupled with his deep reservations about waging a public opinion campaign), momentarily, but significantly, mitigated the power of his arguments against intervention. This chapter challenges portrayals of Ball's role as an "in-house" critic of the war, primarily by demonstrating his efforts to convince Lippmann that the administration had chosen a moderate course. Bundy's pivotal role in keeping the columnist "on the reservation" also receives additional treatment—focusing on his orchestration of a dialogue between president and journalist. Lippmann's continued contact with French sources, particularly De Gaulle and foreign minister Maurice Couve de Murville, as well as his discussions with other prominent European statesmen, helped to counteract the administration's disinformation efforts.

Chapter Nine evaluates the consequences of Lippmann's break with the Johnson administration over Vietnam as well as his sharp public disagreements with key opinion-shapers outside the administration: among them, Dean Acheson and Joe Alsop. In the spring of 1966, when Walt Rostow succeeded McGeorge Bundy as national security adviser, the White House and the State Department Policy Planning Staff worked on the so-called "Lippmann Project"—an effort to cull through decades

of Lippmann's writings on the Cold War to retrieve inconsistencies and failed predictions to use against the columnist publicly. Eventually, Johnson's advisers persuaded him to halt the "war on Walter Lippmann," fearing that by making Lippmann a "martyr" the administration jeopardized alienating press and public sentiment. The chapter also discusses Lippmann's tendency after 1965 to personalize the war to such an extent his extended character attacks on President Johnson and administration principals supplanted searching critiques of strategy. In doing so, Lippmann became easier to cut-off and less relevant for readers—and eventually he left the capital altogether.

Chapter Ten considers useful lessons from Lippmann's legacy for modern U.S. officials, commentators, and the American public. An approach that analyzes Lippmann as a strategic internationalist—shaped in equal parts by a belief in great power politics, classical diplomacy, and also a compelling need to rid U.S. foreign policy of domestic parochialisms—provides a richer context in which to understand his work. It also offers a corrective to the standard literature that both portrays Lippmann as a rather mono-dimensional realist and skews a proper understanding of the strengths of his Cold War criticisms. Also analyzed in these closing pages are Lippmann's various efforts at role-playing—as an agenda -setter, educator, publicist, and quasi-diplomat. I suggest the strengths, weaknesses, and applications of Lippmann's approach to shaping the dialogue about and policies of the Cold War. Finally, I discuss the utility of Lippmann's approach in the post-September 11, 2001, world. In his book *America's Mission* (1996), historian Tony Smith, suggests that foreign policy planners, and Americans generally, might best be served by an outlook

that couples the cautionary skepticism of the Cold War realists with the internationalist commitment of Wilsonian followers. Lippmann's career was, I argue, more a marriage of these competing (but not mutually exclusive concepts) than previous scholars have allowed. Nor was his approach incompatible with *practicing*—as opposed to *propagating*—the best of American ideals when our nation's leaders act beyond our borders.

Chapter 2:

Walter Lippmann and Strategic Internationalism: Cosmopolitanism, Realpolitik, and the Education of “Fully Enlightened American Nationalists,” 1915-1947

I.

The recurring themes of Walter Lippmann’s analyses of American Cold War policy were derived from some of his earliest writings. Decades before developing his famous power-to-commitments ratio, the credo of postwar realists, he began to grapple with the problem which preoccupied him from his youthful days as a Greenwich Village Bohemian to his old age as a counselor to presidents: How to transform America from an isolationist, provincial power into a world leader guided by restrained, responsible internationalism.

Lippmann’s pursuit of this objective is sometimes lost in the standard literature about him. Most of the roughly dozen studies which analyze him group around two themes: (1) the protean nature of his political philosophy and public commentary; (2) his role as a leading proponent of twentieth-century political realism.¹ On the first count, Lippmann is a convenient archetype for the inception,

¹ For emphases on Lippmann’s evolving political liberalism, see Hari Dam, *The Intellectual Odyssey of Walter Lippmann: A Study of His Protean Thought, 1910-1960* (New York: Gordon Press, 1973); Barry D. Riccio, *Walter Lippmann: Odyssey of a Liberal* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Press, 1994); and Charles Wellborn, *Twentieth Century Pilgrimage: Walter Lippmann and the Public*

maturation, splintering, and decline of twentieth-century liberalism. Even his best biographer embraces this theme of change and constant adaptation, noting that Lippmann's "intellectual flexibility" accounted for his long-running success as a columnist.² Such emphases are perhaps appropriate, even insightful, in explaining Lippmann's transition from the idealistic progressivism of his youth to the classic liberal-conservatism of his later years. They also offer a window on his work as a columnist which daily required him to analyze fleeting, disconnected events and to impose a coherent, longer logic on them. In explaining, Lippmann's postwar commentary on foreign policy, scholars have adopted the opposite approach—describing the columnist as a rather straightforward practitioner of realism. In this argument, the central thread that held together Lippmann's thousands of columns on the Cold War was his single-minded devotion to the guidepost of the balance of power.³

Such analyses can distort our understanding of Lippmann, too. By focusing on discontinuity in his career, previous scholars have devalued the long-held ideas that formed the basis of his writing on foreign affairs in the post-World War II period. Conversely, over-simplification of his approach to international relations contributes to a less-than-complete picture of his commentary.

While the goal here is not to impose an order to Lippmann's thought where one does not emerge on its own (indeed, his inconsistencies are quite plain in this discussion), it is to suggest that several important components of his approach were

Philosophy (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1969). For an analysis of Lippmann as a realist, see Ronald Steel, *Walter Lippmann and the American Century* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1980); and Barton Bernstein, "Walter Lippmann and the Early Cold War," in *Cold War Critics*, ed. Thomas G. Paterson (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1971).

developed in the decades *before* World War II. Moreover, this merger of influences on Lippmann contributed to an intellectual framework that I describe as his *strategic internationalism*—a combination of realism, “cosmopolitanism,” and classical diplomacy. While my study identifies Lippmann as taking part in the realist tradition, I argue that he was not fully immersed in it. Those who would simply categorize him as a realist consign him to a rather sterile and unimaginative place in the annals of twentieth-century American foreign policy—one that belies his unique stature, contributions, and activities. This chapter asks the reader to consider that Lippmann’s realism was a single component—though an important one, indeed—of the larger strategic internationalist framework that he advanced to promote U.S. participation in world affairs.

Here, beginning with realism, several definitions are in order. Realists tend to have a rather pessimistic view of human nature. They regard all human relations and politics particularly as being based on the struggle for power. In the case of nations, this condition of rivalry is doubly inherent because no power exists above them to regulate their disputes. Rather than recoil from these facts of life, realists devise ways to adjust to them.⁴

While realists share this worldview, there are variants in the tradition—European adherents of Machiavelli versus American pragmatists.⁵ American post-

² Steel, *Walter Lippmann and the American Century*: 77.

³ Steel, *Walter Lippmann and the American Century*: 486-487.

⁴ My understanding of the realist tradition has benefited from several books: Michael J. Smith, *Realist Thought from Weber to Kissinger* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1986): 1-22; Greg Russell, *Hans J. Morgenthau and the Ethics of American Statecraft* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1990): 9-55; and Joel Rosenthal, *Righteous Realism: Political Realism, Responsible Power, and American Culture in the Nuclear Age* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1991): 1-36.

⁵ See for instance, Russell’s discussion in *Hans J. Morgenthau and the Ethics of American Statecraft*.

World War II realists most often are portrayed as being preoccupied with identifying, calculating, preserving, and acting upon the balance of power. Traditionally, their approach also has been described as being born in opposition to the American idealistic tradition. A nation's foreign policy—so the mythic average realist might argue—should be based solely upon vital national interests, shorn of ideological or moral considerations, and determined by the power available to achieve the desired ends.⁶

There were even variations in the practice of American realism itself.⁷

Lippmann belonged to a sub set of realists who were, to varying degrees, interpreters and critics of American Cold War policy: the theologian Reinhold Niebuhr, the political scientist Hans J. Morgenthau, and the historian Louis J. Halle.⁸ Not all realists were critics. Indeed, many key Cold War policymakers have been described by contemporaries and later scholars as realist thinkers, among them: Dean Acheson, Paul Nitze, and Henry Kissinger.⁹ These officials were the prime architects and practitioners of containment's various permutations: the Truman Doctrine, massive retaliation, rollback, brinksmanship, flexible response, and détente. Some exponents purported realism to be a general theory of international politics. Others trumpeted it

⁶ A classic statement of this definition may be found in Hans J. Morgenthau's *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, 6th edition (New York, 1985; 1st edition 1948). Morgenthau's thesis continues to be popularized by his students, including Kenneth Thompson, *Interpreters and Critics of the Cold War* (Washington, DC: University Press of America, 1978): especially, 1-13. See also, Thompson's *Political Realism and the Crisis of World Politics: An American Approach to World Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1960): especially Chapter One.

⁷ Smith, *Realist Thought from Weber to Kissinger*: 1-3.

⁸ See, for example, Thompson, *Interpreters and Critics of the Cold War*; Rosenthal, *Righteous Realists*; Russell, *Hans J. Morgenthau and the Ethics of American Statecraft*; and Richard Fox, *Reinhold Niebuhr: A Biography*. New York: Knopf, 1989).

⁹ For biographies which consider their subjects as prominent realists, see James Chace, *Acheson: The Secretary of State Who Created the American World* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1998); and Robert D. Schulzinger, *Henry Kissinger: Doctor of Diplomacy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989).

as a solution to the problem of morality in foreign policy. Still others—such as Lippmann—were selective realists, using *realpolitik* to criticize specific official policies but sometimes straying from it as a general theory.

In addition to the influence of *realpolitik*, “cosmopolitanism” and a belief in the practice of classical diplomacy informed Lippmann’s approach. I borrow the term cosmopolitanism from D. Stephen Blum’s stimulating intellectual study of Lippmann. It means, in Blum’s words, that Lippmann’s “views were unconstrained by the preoccupations and prejudices of his homeland; that he was receptive to diverse currents of opinion from abroad; that the value, ideas, and interests of many societies were interwoven with his methods and conclusions.”¹⁰ But it also connotes more than cultural refinement and civilized tastes. It suggests a worldview that implicitly recognized the inter-connectivity of domestic and foreign policies as well as the web of interests and institutions that had grown up between nations in the twentieth century.¹¹

Lippmann’s conception of classical diplomacy drew from his *realpolitik* understanding of a world in constant conflict and his cosmopolite cognizance that each nation had unique interests and objectives. For Lippmann, diplomacy was an active probing of a rival’s intentions, positions, strengths, and weaknesses. As well, it was a process involving argument and persuasion, inquiry and explanation, the removal of misapprehensions, the suggestion of obstacles and advantages, and, ultimately, conciliation and concession. At bottom, the method of diplomacy

¹⁰ D. Stephen Blum, *Walter Lippmann: Cosmopolitanism in the Century of Total War* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1983): 11.

¹¹ Blum, *Cosmopolitanism in a Century of Total War*: 12-14.

identified areas of mutual interest to promote a *modus vivendi* (a way of living together)—even if political intimacy was either impossible or undesirable.

Between 1915 and 1947, as the U.S. assumed world power status, Lippmann shaped an approach designed to facilitate that process. The first part of this chapter focuses on select events from which emerged the building blocks for Lippmann's post-World War II writings—i.e., his first efforts to sketch American national interests, idea of an “Atlantic Community,” criticisms of Woodrow Wilson's diplomacy, and his attitude toward Russian Bolshevism and Communism generally. Subsequent sections describe his efforts to insert himself into the national dialogue about foreign policy in the 1930s and, in the 1940s, utilizing his books and columns to educate public opinion.

Strategic internationalism, which came to maturity with the publication of three books between 1943 and 1947, applied classical conceptions of great power politics to a dynamic world. But Lippmann's rendition of “realism” was less nationalist than that of many of his contemporaries; it was more malleable than his formulaic axioms might indicate; and it was far less apt to employ American military force overseas than it was to ensure American diplomatic participation abroad. Using this approach, Lippmann warned against U.S. unilateralism, disparaged the moralism and legalism to which Washington officials often resorted, recommended collaborative efforts at regional security, and emphasized diplomatic rather than military solutions to Cold War crisis. He struck an essential balance. In one sense, Lippmann offered Washington officials a blueprint with which to reorganize the postwar world, to employ sufficient power to achieve American security, and to

advance U.S. interests. Unlike so many of his contemporaries, however, Lippmann's framework also aimed to contain America's ambitions and to excise its vexingly parochial habits.

II.

The theme of rejecting the provincial in pursuit of the cosmopolite life offers an important insight into the development of Lippmann's approach to foreign affairs. Walter Lippmann was born on September 23, 1889, in New York City, in his parents' brownstone home on Lexington Avenue between 61st and 62nd streets. Jacob Lippmann and his wife, Daisy Baum, were first generation German Jews, born and raised in the city amid modest circumstances. Daisy graduated from Hunter College in Manhattan and Jacob began his career as a clothing manufacturer in his family's garment shop. They lived comfortably, but not elegantly, until Daisy's father died and left the couple a considerable inheritance from his late-in-life real estate speculation. The Lippmanns soon moved to a four-story brick home on East 79th Street and, eventually, resided in an even more upscale location at 46 East 80th Street.¹²

Young Walter Lippmann was raised in a uniquely insular community. The Lippmanns were part of a small universe of German-Jewish families of respectable means and a moderate level of success and accomplishment. They often toured

¹² Steel, *Walter Lippmann and the American Century*: 1-11. Francis Bator, a friend of Lippmann's and an advisor on European affairs to Presidents John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson, noted that Lippmann's intellect propelled him into a social station that would otherwise have been unattainable. Compared to many of the men with whom he worked and socialized later in life, "Lippmann really came from a very modest family himself," Bator observed. "It was his extraordinary talent, brightness,

Europe—taking young Walter to London, Paris, Vienna, Berlin, and, once, as far as Moscow and St. Petersburg. Yet, the Lippmanns were not part of the social circle inhabited by Manhattan’s super-wealthy Jewish families like the Warburgs or the Loebes. Nor did they associate with the recent Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe who lived further south in the Greenwich and Bowery sections of the city.¹³

According to biographer Ronald Steel, Lippmann’s assimilationist mentalite (held among many of his social peers, too) helped him breach the walls of his circumscribed ethnic station.¹⁴ Another powerful influence was his education at Dr. Sach’s School for Boys (later named the Sachs Collegiate Institute). The Sachs Institute, opened in 1871, was one of the first modern high schools in terms of its curriculum. Founder Julius Sachs adhered to a secular curriculum that integrated Classic languages with a core of courses that promoted the “faculty of expression,” writing, literary studies, and history. “A continuous study of *history* . . . is in importance, second only to the power of expression in the vernacular, and it should be presented so that the progress of human endeavor is revealed in the various stages of the study, in the tendencies and dominating principles of successive periods,” Sachs wrote in 1912, then a professor at Columbia’s Teacher’s College. “A combination of cultural and social with political history is necessary if we are to understand and

ability that led to Harvard and all that followed.” Francis Bator, interview with author, 25 January 2001, Cambridge, MA.

¹³ Steel, *Walter Lippmann and the American Century*: 7-8. This comfortable but unremarkable upbringing left Walter resentful later in life. James Reston, Lippmann’s protégé, was so struck by it that he noted in his memoirs the gulf between Lippmann’s writings about the importance of the family and the lack of affection he had for his own parents, “describing his mother as ‘a little too ambitious and worthy,’ and his father as a successful businessman ‘without much color or force.’” James Reston, *Deadline: A Memoir* (New York: Random House, 1991): 142-143. Steel also makes this point in *Walter Lippmann and the American Century*: 5.

¹⁴ Steel, *Walter Lippmann and the American Century*: 7, 9.

advance our own institutions.”¹⁵ Though Rankean in its concept and implementation of structured learning, and infused with a notion of Whiggish developmentalism, the Sachs School’s emphasis on understanding the past to think clearly about present problems and future solutions had a lasting and discernable influence on young Walter Lippmann.

Lippmann’s years as a Harvard undergraduate provided yet another cosmopolitan experience. Among his more famous contemporaries in Cambridge were the poet Robert Frost, the writer T.S. Eliot, the socialist Max Eastman, and the radical journalist John Reed. Two professors, in particular, expanded Lippmann’s philosophic pluralism and cultivated his internationalist orientation: the Spanish-born philosopher and author George Santayana and the psychologist-philosopher William James. Each imparted to the young Lippmann innovative ideas and, each in his own measure, an outsider’s perspective on mainstream American culture.

Santayana’s political conservatism—the notion that freedom derived from order and not an excess of liberties—resonated with Lippmann.¹⁶ Lippmann enrolled in his undergraduate courses and, in 1911, began work on a graduate degree in philosophy as a teaching assistant to the great philosopher. Santayana’s mistrust of the masses and the stultifying swell of public opinion in American life anticipated those of the more pessimistic Spanish writer, Ortega Y’Gasset.¹⁷ Santayana and

¹⁵ Julius Sachs, *The American Secondary School and Some of Its Problems* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1912): 122; see also Harry A Passow, “Julius Sachs,” *American National Biography* 19 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999): 179.

¹⁶ For the standard biography of Santayana, see John McCormick, *George Santayana: A Biography* (New York: Knopf, 1987).

¹⁷ Late in life, having long departed the U.S. for his native Europe, Santayana would write of American society, “you must wave, you must cheer, you must push with the irresistible crowd; otherwise you will feel like a traitor, a soulless outcast, a deserted ship high and dry on the shore.” Santayana, *Character and Opinion* (New York: W.W. Norton Company, 1937): 211.

Lippmann shared outsiders' perspectives on American culture. Having grown up in New England since his youth, Santayana's Spanish roots nevertheless made him an odd fit in the Brahmin-Yankee city of Boston. He remained deeply skeptical and suspicious of pervasive Anglo-Saxon political and religious ideas that he felt were too often foisted upon other cultures. Likewise, Lippmann's German-Jewish roots distinguished him in a dominant culture that valued conformity and homogeneity. Lippmann chose assimilation but he was not desensitized by that choice. He later evinced a sensitivity to foreign cultures and interests that often contrasted with the caste of postwar Washington policymakers who, in their youths, had been raised in an environment of "muscular Christianity."¹⁸

Santayana also imparted to his student an undercurrent of pessimism. In his writings, the philosopher displayed the nervous tension of a nineteenth-century man contending with the rush of modernity, urbanization, the growing pains of mass democracy, the rise of intense nationalism and totalitarian states, "total" warfare, social civil rights movements, and unrelenting scientific challenges to religion and other accepted traditions. Lippmann shared in this perspective, too, once referring to himself as an "antediluvian," coping with the tide of revolutions in twentieth-century life and trying to impose order and make sense of them.¹⁹

After graduation, Lippmann's decision to attach himself to the progressive journalist Lincoln Steffens and to apply the ideas he'd learned in the classroom to the larger world, had much to do with the influence of yet another profound thinker, the

¹⁸ Dean Acheson and McGeorge Bundy, graduates of Endicott Peabody's Andover School, are examples.

¹⁹ Steel, *Walter Lippmann and the American Century*: xvii.

psychologist and philosopher William James.²⁰ James was the son of Henry James, the philosopher and religious writer, and the brother of the novelist Henry James. He had first sought Lippmann out after reading an article that the sophomore had written in the Harvard student newspaper.²¹ Subsequently, Lippmann was invited to informal discussions at James's home. Though the great philosopher died shortly after Lippmann's graduation in 1910, his ideas stayed with his student for a lifetime.

James's humanism influenced Lippmann, the social activist and philosopher John Dewey, and other leading progressives. It was anchored in the idea that humankind's rationality and its development of science could be applied to solving social problems. James theory of radical empiricism held that reality is pluralistic and that the totality of existence cannot be explained by any kind of mono-causal theory. His philosophy of pragmatism held that truths emerged only from human experience and could not exist outside of it as absolute, eternal, sacrosanct laws. Much like a scientist, James claimed that *all* propositions had to be tested and proven through experience. These ideas suffused Lippmann's early writings. The Jamesian spirit is best captured in Lippmann's *A Preface to Politics* (1914), in which he wrote that "as there is no prospect of a time when our life will be immutably fixed, as we shall, therefore, have to go on inventing, it is fair to say that what the world is aching

²⁰ For two reliable scholarly works on James see, Howard M. Feinstein, *Becoming William James* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1984), and Gerald E. Myers, *William James: His Life and Thought* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1966). For a study that traces the effects of pragmatic thought in 20th Century American social and political movements, see John Patrick Diggins, *The Promise of Pragmatism: Modernism and the Crisis of Knowledge and Authority* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994): for its effects on Lippmann, see especially 322-359.

²¹ Steel, *Walter Lippmann and the American Century*: 17.

for is not a special reform embodied in a particular statute, but a way of going at all problems.”²²

The confluence between Santayana’s pessimistic absolutism and James’s emphases on contingency and practical applications of learning and scientific method to affect change in the world pushed and pulled on Lippmann throughout his long life. On the one hand, he believed firmly in the pre-eminence of order and stability in developing the good society. In international affairs this impulse drove Lippmann toward a *realpolitik* outlook that anchored state relations in power structures and prioritized policies according to a state’s means to fulfill them. Yet, echoes of James may be found in Lippmann’s commentary on Cold War crises, which repeatedly sought to implement expedient, inventive, and flexible solutions to superpower confrontations.²³

Finally, young Walter Lippmann’s political idol offers yet another example of his cosmopolitan orientation. Throughout his life, Lippmann was drawn to statesmen whom he believed to be in tune with the needs and demands of 20th century life. These were not enthusiasts for the old order but, rather, leaders who anticipated change and who made policy not just to satisfy immediate pressures but to prepare the

²² Lippmann, *A Preface to Politics*: 69; 201. It should also be noted that the one-time English Fabian socialist, Graham Wallas, also held some fascination for Lippmann when Wallas passed through Harvard as a visiting professor. His *Human Nature in Politics* (1908) pointed toward the irrational forces at work in shaping political attitudes and voter behavior. It had a lasting influence on Lippmann who took that critique a step further by applying a Freudian analysis of participatory government in *Public Opinion* (1922) and *The Phantom Public* (1925). Despite his determination to demonstrate the weak links in the democratic process—to force progressives to think practically about reform methods—Wallas retained faith in democratic government. The influence here was mutual. So indebted did he feel to Lippmann for their discussions and correspondence on the subject of the achievement of liberal social policy that Wallas dedicated his follow-on work, *The Great Society* (1914), to Lippmann. See Steel’s discussion of Wallas: 26-28; for an intellectual biography of Wallas, see Martin J. Wiener’s *Between Two Worlds: The Political Thought of Graham Wallas* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971).

way for further-reaching developments. No American leader, the youthful Lippmann judged (and maintained as an old man) did these things quite so well as Theodore Roosevelt. Lippmann's enduring political infatuation with TR began in 1898, just months after his legendary charge up San Juan Hill, as candidate Roosevelt made speaking engagements in upstate New York during his gubernatorial campaign. What Lippmann saw at the time and later as a commentator during the last years of Roosevelt's political career, were his resolute spirit, his decisive call to action, his ability to lift a crowd to higher purpose, and to harness intellect in the service of skewering old, socially-constructed shibboleths. Later in life he held onto his admiration for TR, noting, "I have been less than just to his successors because they were not like him."²⁴ Roosevelt, Lippmann observed, was the first president "who knew that the United States had come of age—that not only were they no longer colonies of Europe, and no longer an immature nation on the periphery of Western civilization, but that they had become a world power. He was the first to realize what that means, its responsibilities and its dangers and its implications, and the first to prepare the country spiritually and physically for this inescapable destiny." Yet having recognized that America must lead, TR was careful to define objectives. Among his "paramount political virtues" was the idea "that means and ends must not

²³ Charles Tarlton, "The Styles of American International Thought: Mahan, Bryan, and Lippmann," *World Politics* XVI (October 1964-July 1965): 584-614. Tarlton calls it "pragmatic internationalism."

²⁴ Walter Lippmann, "A Tribute to Theodore Roosevelt," 27 October 1935, speech to the Woman's Roosevelt Memorial Association on the 77th anniversary of Roosevelt's birth; reprinted in *The Essential Lippmann: A Political Philosophy for Liberal Democracy*, edited by Clinton Rossiter and James Lare (New York: Random House, 1963): 487-489.

be separated, that [Americans] must have no policy which they are not prepared for . . . [he] knew that wishful policies lead to disaster and humiliation.”²⁵

There also was a philosophical resonance that drew Lippmann to Theodore Roosevelt. The 26th President struck Hamiltonian chords in American life by embracing the interests and cause of a national society and by seeking to make democracy work and march with the pace of technological and social change. Rather than a sea of Jeffersonian islands, TR envisioned a great society of these individual communities fused by national purpose.²⁶ The Jeffersonian tradition violated Lippmann’s modernist inclinations. Its preference for isolated, small, self-sustaining communities that shirked central government and valued local autonomy above all else, struck Lippmann as anti-modern and backward-looking. TR’s Hamiltonian orientation, his intellectualism, his cosmopolitanism, and moderate progressivism had lasting appeal for Lippmann. Old and dying, he confided to Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., “Presidents in general are not loveable. They’ve had to do too much to get where

²⁵ Ibid., 488-489. He added, “Though [TR] did not see all that was in the world or its whole future, he was the first President to see that even for Americans the world is round and that even for them the future is not to be a repetition of the past.” For Lippmann, the anti-thesis of TR was William Jennings Bryan, whom Lippmann took to task in *A Preface to Politics* as the embodiment of so many of the nation’s long-cherished and closely-held ideals. The “Great Commoner” merged Mid-Western anathema to entangling alliances with evangelical fervor and a deep-seated pacifism. In Bryan, Lippmann found not a statesman but “a voice crying in the wilderness.” He continued, “There is a vein of mysticism in American life, and Mr. Bryan is its uncritical prophet. Bryan does not happen to have the naturalistic outlook, the complete humanity, or the deliberation of habit which modern statecraft requires. He is the voice of a confused emotion.” See *A Preface to Politics*: 100-101.

²⁶ For more on this aspect of TR, see John Milton Cooper, *The Warrior and the Priest: Woodrow Wilson and Theodore Roosevelt* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University, 1983): 115-117; 217-219. Cooper argues that TR’s “New Nationalism” shared Hamilton’s mistrust of human nature and his doubts about the efficacy of harnessing individuals’ self interests to achieve national objectives. The Jeffersonian vision, held by Woodrow Wilson, was nearly the opposite—believing that through encouraging people to pursue freely their self-interests that the public good would be achieved.

they are. But there was one President who was loveable—Teddy Roosevelt—and I loved him.”²⁷

III.

On August 5, 1914, the day England declared war on imperial Germany, Lippmann stood in the House of Commons listening to the debate. “My own part in this,” he recorded in his diary, “is to understand world-politics, to be interested in National and Military affairs, and to get away from the old liberalism which concentrates entirely on liberal problems. We cannot lose all that but see now that our really civilized effort is set in a structure of raw necessity.”²⁸ Indeed, the great conflict forced Lippmann to think expansively and rigorously as an internationalist for the first time in his life. He began collecting his thoughts for an extended essay. In a letter to Graham Wallas marking the anniversary of Great Britain’s entry into the war, Lippmann explained, “I feel now as if I had never before risen above the problems of a district nurse, a middle-western political reformer, and an amiable civic enthusiast.”²⁹

Working as a co-founder and editor of *The New Republic* magazine in New York City, Lippmann burrowed into the history of U.S., German, and Italian unification and early national periods. He focused particularly on the writings of Alexander Hamilton, Otto von Bismarck, and Count Camillo di Cavour, whom,

²⁷ Steel, *Walter Lippmann and the American Century*: 597.

²⁸ John Morton Blum, “Walter Lippmann and the Problem of Order,” in *Public Philosopher: Selected Letters of Walter Lippmann*, edited by John Morton Blum (New York: Ticknor and Fields, 1985): xxi. Blum’s fine edited collection of letters draws on some correspondence that Lippmann’s principal biographers, including Steel, did not use. When possible, I have tried to cite this published source

Lippmann wrote, “grasped the problem of constructive internationalism” as they “welded, and united, and submerged petty sovereignties” in their own fledgling states. He conclude that domestic and international politics were intertwined, “phases and aspects of one another.” In America’s case, states’ rights, the settling of the frontier, and the problems of race, trade, immigration, and federal governance were all lesser versions of an “infinitely complicated” world scene. Organization and structure in the young American Republic had been achieved through programs and projects such as the Northwest Ordinance, the Erie Canal, and the construction of postal routes, turnpikes, and transcontinental railroads. In international affairs, Lippmann came to understand that such developments would be achieved in the creation of multilateral commissions, webs of finance and capital, and, most importantly, in new alliances and communities of shared interests.³⁰

Lippmann also relied on ideas popularized by Alfred Thayer Mahan, the naval officer and promoter of sea power and Atlantic unity. Mahan wrote the first in a series of influential volumes— *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History, 1660-1783*—a year after Lippmann’s birth.³¹ During the next 23 years, through a combination of publishing and personal contact with leading U.S. politicians (most notably Teddy Roosevelt), Admiral Mahan exerted great influence over the development of U.S. strategic doctrine. Most read Mahan as an unabashed apostle of

rather than the originals in the Walter Lippmann Collection at Yale University’s Sterling Memorial Library.

²⁹ Lippmann to Graham Wallas, 5 August 1915, cited in Blum, *Public Philosopher*: 29.

³⁰ Hamilton had been an early American exponent of a strong, central national government. Bismarck had unified Germany through a succession of wars and annexations in the 1860s and 1870s. Similarly, Cavour who came to power in Sardinia in 1852, had (with the help of the French) fought Austria and unified the modern Italian state within the space of a decade. Lippmann to Graham Wallas, 5 August 1915, reprinted in Blum, *Public Philosopher*: 19.

constructing a dominant blue water navy to secure trade routes and project U.S. imperial power. In one of his lesser works, *The Problem of Asia* (1900), Mahan focused on the competition for China—describing the world as an arena of contest between land and sea powers. To counterbalance Russian influence in China, Mahan recommended that Washington partner with London. Lippmann seems to have been drawn to what later scholars stressed was Mahan’s true aim: the creation of an Anglo-American led consortium of naval power—a course Lippmann recommended shortly after World War I.³² Another chief corollary that Lippmann drew from Mahan and held into his old age, was that while the U.S. should project naval power in the Pacific region, it should not engage in military operations on the Asian mainland.

Lippmann’s musings found fuller expression in his first book on foreign relations—*The Stakes of Diplomacy* (1915). Lippmann wrestled with three key questions: How to defuse imperial rivalry among the great powers in undeveloped, colonial regions? How to educate the public and overcome its “natural” inertia toward diplomacy? Lastly, in offering an alternative to the pacifist movement (which Lippmann perceived as isolationism in disguise) how could U.S. leaders create a viable program for greater American participation in international affairs—one of restrained internationalism? Years later, Lippmann told an interviewer, “I had to find a solution to the wars, and I wrote a book . . . In fact, I knew what the trouble was

³¹ Standard biographies on Mahan include: Robert Seager II, *Alfred Thayer Mahan: The Man and His Letters* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1977); Richard W. Turk, *The Ambiguous Relationship: Theodore Roosevelt and Alfred Thayer Mahan* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1987).

³² For the argument that Mahan was not pushing American naval supremacy but instead an integrated naval consortium with Great Britain, see Jon Sumida, *Inventing Grand Strategy and Teaching Command: The Classic Works of Alfred Thayer Mahan Reconsidered* (Washington, DC: The Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 1997): especially 80-98.

with the world wars. It was the third world. The weak countries of the third world were the causes of the wars.”³³

For Lippmann, the drive for empire and the search for stability were symbiotic goals. He attributed the origins of the World War to imperial rivalry in modernizing “weak states” in Africa, Asia and the Middle East—to make them suitable producers and consumers in the world marketplace. “Imperialism in our day begins generally as an attempt to police and pacify,” to smooth the way for orderly and stable trade.

Lippmann assumed that nations would always compete for resources and wealth. The problem, therefore, was not one of extinguishing their rivalry, so much as structuring it, offering an administrative framework, creating accepted rules for the game. The question was how to bring these regions into a “framework of commercial administration . . . under which world-wide business can be conducted,” Lippmann wrote. “The pressure to organize the globe is enormous.”³⁴

Lippmann believed world organization required the acceptance of *realpolitik* and recognition of spheres of influence, international conferences and commissions—all the staples of classical diplomacy. He recommended creating “permanent international commissions” to oversee, manage, and administer on a continuing basis these places of market development and rivalry. “It is internationalism, not spread

³³ Unpublished transcript of Lippmann’s interview with Henry W. Brandon, 1970, “Walter Lippmann Interview File,” Box 17, Henry W. Brandon Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, DC (hereinafter referred to as “LC”).

³⁴ Lippmann, *The Stakes of Diplomacy*: 98. Lippmann drew upon domestic history to reinforce his point. A protracted period of “diplomatic struggle” between North and South, he noted, preceded the American Civil War. For better than half a century, each section sought to tip the balance of power in the undeveloped Western territories in its favor. Diplomatic maneuvering included the Constitution’s “three-fifth’s” clause, fugitive slave laws, the Missouri Compromise, the Compromise of 1850, and the Kansas-Nebraska Act. The struggle itself was to determine the order of things; whether the West would be slave or free, an extension of the wage labor North or the plantation economy South. “Until the problem of organizing the West had been settled,” through diplomatic maneuverings and force of

thin as a Parliament of Man, but sharply limited to those areas of friction where internationalism is most obviously needed,” Lippmann wrote.³⁵ He pointed to the example of the Algeciras Conference which his political idol, Theodore Roosevelt, helped convene in 1905.³⁶

National governments must also “excise” the “central nerve of imperialism”: the accepted notion that a trader or company turned to the “home government for protection in places of unorganized competition.”³⁷ If trade and business interests were made to rely on an international administrator, they would be compelled to support and strengthen international government, to take an interest in making it efficient and useful: “For the excuse, the power, the prestige of imperialism depended upon the theory that the flag covers its citizens in backward territory.”³⁸ This would deprive nations of both the stimulus and justification for intervention, and also rob them of the impact of appeals to sovereignty and nationality. In China, Turkey, Morocco, Mexico or Persia “mere laissez faire is an invitation to the adventurer to let her rip,” Lippmann told readers. “There is no way in which we can dodge the fact

arms, Lippmann wrote, “peace and federal union were impossible . . . The world’s problem is the same problem tremendously magnified.” Ibid., 109-110.

³⁵ Lippmann, *The Stakes of Diplomacy*: 131-135; quote on 135.

³⁶ Ibid., 144-149. The meeting defused tensions between Germany and France over access to, trade with, and administration of Morocco. Lippmann claimed that Algeciras conformed to the basic principles of his thesis: international control in weak states should be in the form of a “local government, with the power to legislate and to hold administrative officials accountable.” See Frederick Mark’s account of the Algeciras Conference in *Velvet on Iron*: 67-69. Lippmann’s specialized commissions would act as mini or “local world governments.” In areas of imperial friction, Lippmann argued, constructing the foundations of internationalism would be easier because it was here that trade and business would welcome the organizing principles of regional, multi-lateral administration. Lippmann, *The Stakes of Diplomacy*: 142; 155.

³⁷ Ibid., 159.

³⁸ Ibid., 157-159.

that we are deeply involved in the fate of backward countries . . . How to organize [them] is the chief task of diplomacy.”³⁹

Lippmann’s program required not only adroit diplomacy and compliant business interests but broad public support. Here, Lippmann addressed his second major problem—the task of enlisting enlightened nationalists and restrained patriots to enhance the cause of internationalism. Lippmann recognized the inherent limitations of participatory democracy in the conduct of foreign affairs. First, real power over diplomacy resided not in the “democratic machinery” of government but in one man, the president. With the ability to publicize his agenda, Lippmann noted, the president had enormous power to appeal to the public either through education or resort to patriotic sloganeering or jingoism.⁴⁰ Where American public opinion considered foreign policy at all it did so within “certain conventional ways of reacting, certain habitual associations about phrases, and a number of set loyalties which are easily aroused.” These were familiar catch-phrases: no entangling alliances, the Monroe Doctrine, Manifest Destiny, and the Open Door. Beyond these the average American knew little.⁴¹ Mass democracy was not merely fickle or undiscerning, it was inflexible—hamstrung by its size, complexity, and cumbersomeness. “The very qualities which are needed for negotiation—quickness of mind, direct contact, adaptiveness, invention, the right proportions of give and take—are the very qualities which masses of people do not possess,” Lippmann

³⁹ Ibid., 165-171.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 15-19.

⁴¹ Ibid., 19-20.

wrote. “This isn’t entirely due to the ignorance of the masses; it is a question of inertia.”⁴²

Such limitations abetted the “invisible diplomacy” of imperialist “interest groups.” These small but powerful constituencies used “modern methods of publicity” to create “national interests” (which obscured their own special stakes) and, then, to “educate” the public about them. The imperialist class merged a variety of motives: diplomatists were concerned with prestige; militarists wanted the chance to fight; financiers sought to safeguard investments, just as traders needed to secure protection and privileges; religious groups hoped to evangelize and civilize; intellectuals aimed to fulfill their theories of expansion.⁴³

How, then, did one deprive the imperialist elite of the ability to win public support for foreign adventures by wrapping their own special interests in the American flag? Lippmann hoped to de-couple trade interests from blind nationalism by stimulating a wider public awareness about foreign policy issues. This could be achieved once the “weak states” were organized and administered by international commissions, making them attractive to the managerial class of merchants, investors, and professionals who valued “stable markets and orderly development,” Lippmann wrote. “This would have an enormous effect on conditions at home, for it would

⁴² Ibid., 28-29.

⁴³ Ibid., 105-106. “The main point,” Lippmann wrote to an English jurist based in Egypt, “is that we have disputed and unorganized territories without some kind of authority in them which is strong enough to control the rights of traders and financiers and efficient enough to administer and police the territory so that riot and revolution cannot be made the excuse for intervention followed by commercial monopoly.” Lippmann to Sir Maurice S. Amos, 24 July 1916, reprinted in Blum, *Public Philosopher*: 55-56.

mean that foreign affairs became an interest . . . of the far more extended middle class, and even the working class.”⁴⁴

Lippmann maintained that from this process, “Publicity, criticism, and discussion must follow. From them education.”⁴⁵ Public debate and discussion would reveal the realities of a given crisis or problem, making it much harder to exploit nationalism and jingoism. “The people will be less easily led by the nose; diplomacy will become more and more the bargaining of groups, and cease to be the touchy competition of ‘national wills,’” he added. “The real effect of democracy on foreign affairs will be to make them no longer foreign.”⁴⁶ His views grew more pessimistic over time, but he never stopped grappling with this central issue: How did one educate the public enough to validate and support foreign policies that promoted enlightened nationalism?

A major part of Lippmann’s agenda was to prepare Americans for postwar responsibilities—arising either from direct intervention or from the nation’s new status as a major creditor and industrial power. The book’s central argument—that American officials must pursue an activist foreign policy—responded to the pacifist movement which enlisted domestic progressives such as Jane Addams, John Dewey, and others. Whether their particular causes were anti-interventionism, disarmament, or outlawry of war, Lippmann linked pacifists to America’s isolationist past. Rather than provide the framework for order, pacifism yanked the scaffolding out from under a potential solution, Lippmann argued. It offered no method other than abstention. In his penultimate chapter, he told readers that peace would not sprout from “any policy

⁴⁴ Lippmann, *The Stakes of Diplomacy*: 187.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 194.

so sterile as not fighting. Peace is to be had as the result of wise organization. It prevails not where men have failed to act, but in places where they have the sense and the power to legislate and administer well.”⁴⁷ All the remedies of the pacifist movement were negative policies seeking either to limit American participation in world affairs or to deny the government the support and domestic resources required to act definitively abroad. “A war fought to preserve the fabric of international order would be worth fighting, for that order is the only approach we have to the permanent peace of mankind,” Lippmann wrote. “To refuse defense to the international society is not a way of avoiding war. It is an invitation to many wars.”⁴⁸

Therefore, Lippmann prescribed American participation in the “Balance of Power.” By joining the concert of “Great Powers,” he argued, the U.S. could enforce peace. He outlined a four-step program: 1) enter into the theaters of trouble; 2) create domestic interests (trade/investment) to justify that participation; 3) bulk up its military, “to make it heard by the Great Powers”; 4) and, abandon its instinctive mistrust of foreign alliances.⁴⁹ Only through a “positive programme, requiring power and ability and inventiveness for its realization” could the U.S. organize the backward areas of the globe against the kind of imperial rivalry that incited World War I. “For the supreme task of world politics is not the prevention of war, but a satisfactory organization of mankind,” Lippmann wrote. “Peace will follow from that. That is, in fact, what peace is.”⁵⁰

⁴⁶ Ibid., 194.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 211.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 217.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 226.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 224.

There were pitfalls and risks to such an activist program that threatened democracy at home—not the least of which was the militarization of society. “To be sure, the mere fact that democrats possess force may destroy their democratic faith . . . Having tasted world power, we may go drunk with it,” Lippmann conceded. “But if that is the kind of people we are, how impudent of us to utter one word in criticism of military empires. If experience of democracy, if a century of comparative order and prosperity and human equality have made no difference, if we are bound to act like all the rest as soon as we touch the world’s affairs, then we might as well humbly retire and cultivate our private gardens.”⁵¹ But, Lippmann believed, the basis for a world state lay in the example of democratic government “as organs of leadership in world politics.”⁵² Isolationism no longer was an option; in fact it was but a “myth.” Lippmann contended that the alternatives were stark: “being the passive victim of international disorder” or taking a role as an “active leader in ending it.”⁵³

IV.

Lippmann’s emphasis on the need to integrate the international community, described in *The Stakes of Diplomacy*, merged with his evolving concept of America’s primary strategic interests. In 1917, he first proposed that the U.S. must participate in and defend something he called the “Atlantic community” of nations along the rim of the Atlantic Ocean. The nucleus of this community would be the combination of British and American naval power, he believed. Lippmann’s strategic interpretation of the

⁵¹ Ibid., 223-224.

⁵² Ibid., 228.

⁵³ Ibid., 227.

war proposed intervention based not on “principles” and “ideals” but upon fundamental national security interests. From 1914 to 1919, his views on American participation in a proposed postwar governing body—the League of Nations—underwent substantial revision. However, his confirmed belief in American internationalism did not change.

As a *New Republic* editor, Lippmann was inclined from the start of the conflict to support Great Britain and France—particularly in terms of economic and moral aid. But the magazine stopped short of advocating direct American military intervention on behalf of the Alliance nations. When Harvard professor Ralph Barton Perry accused the *New Republic* editors of holding a pro-German bias and dodging the primary “moral issue” of the war, Lippmann penned the publication’s reply. “There’s a moral issue, a supreme moral issue,” he wrote. “It turns on the question of whether this awful slaughter and waste is to help towards a just and lasting peace. The moral issue is whether we can make the war count for or against a civilized union of nations. . . . The question now is not who started the war, but to what end the fighting is to lead.”⁵⁴

Lippmann’s *New Republic* writings hewed to this long view, though the Wilson administration’s avowed neutrality concerned him. Privately, he wrote President Wilson “impossible . . . He has no grasp of international affairs, and his pacifism is of precious little help to the peace of the world.”⁵⁵ Only when President Wilson edged toward intervention on the side of the Allies did Lippmann’s evaluation

⁵⁴ Lippmann, “Are We Pro-German?” 18 December 1915, *The New Republic*; reprinted in *Early Writings: Walter Lippmann*, edited by Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. (New York: Liveright): 23 -25.

⁵⁵ For quote on Wilson, see Lippmann to Graham Wallas, 8 December 1915, reprinted in Blum, *Public Philosopher*: 31.

of his foreign policy (briefly) improve. Wilson's 22 January 1917 speech before the Senate—his so-called “Peace Without Victory” address—presented the President's vision of American participation in postwar peace. “Is the present war a struggle for a just and secure peace, or only for a new balance of power?” Wilson asked. “There must be, not a balance of power, but a community of power, not organized rivalries, but an organized common peace.” Wilson demanded “a peace without victory . . . a peace between equals . . . Mankind is looking now for the freedom of life, not equiposes of power.” Lippmann praised Wilson for framing the question correctly, as a choice between organized security and armed, “grudging isolation.”⁵⁶ Eventually, however, Wilson's vision of basing postwar peace on collective security clashed with Lippmann's idea that peace must be structured on power realities.

The danger of Allied collapse on the Western Front and Germany's resumption of unrestricted submarine warfare on 1 February 1917 brought Lippmann publicly into the pro-intervention camp. His justification for coming into the war on the Allied side linked American national security to the vitality of something he called “the Atlantic community”—a network of nations that rimmed the Atlantic Ocean, joined by trade, common security interests, shared culture, and political traditions. In advancing this strategic interpretation of the war, *The New Republic* editor appealed to President Wilson to state the internationalist imperatives for intervention rather than justify entry into the war in legalistic “technicalities,” moralistic aims, or thinly-veiled assertions of American exceptionalism in relation to Old World politics. “The safety of the Atlantic highway is something for which

⁵⁶ Lippmann, “America Speaks,” 27 January 1917, *The New Republic*; reprinted in Schlesinger, *Early Writings*: 63-68; quote on p. 68. Wilson's quotes are taken from Lippmann's article. See also, Steel,

America should fight,” Lippmann declared. “Why? Because on the two shores of the Atlantic Ocean there has grown up a profound web of interests which joins together the western world . . . [which is] in the main one community in their deepest needs and their deepest purposes.”⁵⁷

Prussian militarists, Lippmann observed, had “carried war to the Atlantic” by violating Belgian neutrality, invading France, and attempting to isolate Great Britain through submarine warfare. These threats jeopardized American economic and military security, he wrote, “and by attempting to disrupt us, neutrality of spirit or action was out of the question. And now that [Germany] is seeking to cut the vital highways of our world we can no longer stand by. We cannot betray the Atlantic community by submitting. If not civilization, at least our civilization is at stake.”⁵⁸ Lippmann demanded a candid acknowledgement of why America had engaged in a “neutral” policy that essentially supported Allied control of the seas in the preceding months. “It is because we cannot permit a German triumph that we have accepted the closure of the seas to Germany and the opening of them to the Allies,” Lippmann wrote. “That is the true justification of our policy, and the only one which will bear criticism.” As Lippmann explained privately to a reader, the disruption of Anglo-American sea-power posed an unprecedented threat to U.S. security: “the moment England is in danger of actual defeat by starvation or the crippling of her sea power, the whole world order in which this nation has grown is imperiled.” Lippmann feared a German victory would draw Russia and Japan into an alliance with Berlin, posing a

Walter Lippmann and the American Century: 109.

⁵⁷ Walter Lippmann, “The Defense of the Atlantic World,” 17 February 1917, *The New Republic*, reprinted in Schlesinger, *Early Writings*: 73.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

two-ocean threat, “and imperil us as we have never been imperiled before.”⁵⁹

Lippmann hoped that intervention on behalf of the Atlantic Community would cement a union between national interests and international cooperation which could not easily be dissolved by the acids of isolationism and pacifism.⁶⁰

Like many liberals at the time, Lippmann hailed U.S. intervention as an end to isolationism and a decisive step toward world government. The “great end” and “great hope” of U.S. intervention in World War I “is nothing less than the Federation of the world . . . The democracies, if they are to be safe, must cooperate,” Lippmann explained. “We can win nothing from this war unless it culminates in a union of liberal peoples pledged to cooperate in the settlement of all outstanding questions, sworn to turn against the aggressor, determined to erect a larger and more modern system of international law upon a federation of the world.”⁶¹ Swept up in these enthusiasms, Lippmann made a brief but spectacular foray into government work during the war. From July to October 1917, he served as a special assistant to Secretary of War Newton D. Baker. In the fall of 1917, Lippmann was appointed Secretary of the Inquiry answering directly to Colonel Edward M. House, the President’s chief war adviser, drafting the text for the nine territorial points of Wilson’s Fourteen Points proposal. Much of his language survived the editing

⁵⁹ Lippmann to Julius Kuttner, 19 February 1917, reprinted in Blum, *Public Philosopher*: 62.

⁶⁰ Lippmann to Norman Angell, 1 March 1917, reprinted in Blum, *Public Philosopher*: 65. He set three definitive objectives for the declaration of war, outlining them for Norman Angell, a contributing writer for *The New Republic* who advocated economic aid to Britain and France: 1) to repulse the German threat to freedom of the seas; 2) to commit America permanently to world affairs; and, 3) to ensure that Washington would have a touchstone role in the peace settlement, acting as a stabilizing force in the system that emerged. See also, Lippmann, “The Defense of the Atlantic World,” 75.

⁶¹ Walter Lippmann, “The World Conflict In Its Relation to American Democracy,” *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, July 1917, Pub. No. 1130 (reprint): 1-10; quote on p. 8; 9-10.

process and made the final draft.⁶² Lippmann then was commissioned as a captain in the Military Intelligence Division (MID) in June 1918—recommended by Colonel House, Herbert Hoover (who noted Lippmann’s “marked executive ability and general all round fitness”), and Assistant Secretary of the Treasury, F.H. Rowe, who wrote that Lippmann was “one of the clearest headed men of the younger generation.”⁶³ For four months he worked in MID propaganda and also was House’s representative to Allied intelligence officers and Secretary of State Robert Lansing’s envoy to make special economic and political studies. He returned to the Inquiry after October 1918 and traveled to the Paris peace conference late in the year. Effectively frozen out of the Inquiry by its director, Isaiah Bowman, Lippmann left Paris in February 1919 and returned to *The New Republic*. By that time he largely had come to repudiate the postwar world federation he had heralded in the spring of 1917.

Why did Walter Lippmann—member of the Inquiry, enthusiast for Woodrow Wilson’s re-election in 1916, and associate of Colonel Edward House—turn on the President and his League? In part, Lippmann believed that Wilson had sold out his program at Versailles by acceding to the territorial demands and harsh reparations sought by the victorious powers—France, Italy, and Britain. Wilson, Lippmann thought, also had failed to educate U.S. public opinion about the national security issues that ultimately compelled American intervention. Having justified entry into the war with rhetorical flourishes about making the world safe for democracy, Wilson

⁶² Steel, *Walter Lippmann and the American Century*: 128-140. President Wilson inserted the first five universalist points.

⁶³ Major Gilbert Marshall, “Walter Lippmann, File No. 10039-426,” Box 3055, Military Intelligence Division (MID), 10322-259/2, RG 165, National Archives, Washington, DC.

only magnified public and congressional disillusionment when—to salvage his League plan—he was forced to bow to the imperatives of power politics. At its root, however, Lippmann’s critique was neither a personal vilification of Wilson or a repudiation of his internationalism. Rather, Lippmann’s reversal on the League was based on his conviction that the articles of the League failed to provide the order and structure necessary to achieve Wilson’s dream of collective security.⁶⁴

V.

In the years after World War I, Lippmann castigated President Wilson for failing to state American reasons for intervention in terms of national security and instead substituting democratic rhetoric as a kind of moral justification. Wilson, Lippmann wrote, had provided no course of action with which to take Americans beyond their isolationist past. “Having learned that we must ‘participate,’ we are forgetting to specify,” Lippmann explained in September 1919. “We are resolved to take part in world affairs, but in our exhilaration we’re inclined to omit the inquiry as to what part.”⁶⁵ As for the Fourteen Points, Lippmann described them as “a vague attempt” to define the American role in the postwar world. Wilson had repeatedly stated but never himself “digested the idea, that a stable peace in Europe is the first and most important line of defense for the American democracy, that a democratic settlement there meant more to the security and prosperity of Americans than anything else in the world.”⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Blum, “Walter Lippmann and the Problem of Order,” xxiii-xxv.

⁶⁵ Lippmann, “Assuming We Join,” 3 September 1919, *The New Republic*: 145-146; reprinted in Schlesinger, 86-89.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

As the peace negotiations took shape, Lippmann described proceedings in Paris as “profoundly discouraging.”⁶⁷ Some of that disillusionment was due to the fact that the Allied governments imposed harsh peace terms on Germany and that Wilson’s European counterparts simply outmaneuvered him. But here, Lippmann pointed out, Wilson’s high-flown rhetoric came home to roost. For in having to adjust to the realities of peacemaking, it appeared that Wilson had abandoned his principles. Lippmann particularly objected to the *cordon sanitaire* of nations, carved out of central Europe and meant to insulate German revolutionaries from the Russian Bolsheviks, describing it as a “very dangerous bit of fooling.” He feared that the League of Nations would become the center of “anti-Soviet intrigue,” employed to promote counter-revolutionary actions. He strenuously objected to the Allied intervention in the Russian civil war.⁶⁸ Further, territorial and political concessions exacted in the treaty not only violated the spirit of Wilson’s Fourteen Points, they seemed likely to produce instability in Europe: French occupation of the Saar with its critical coal fields; the drawing of the Danzig-Polish corridor that put two million German nationals under Warsaw’s control; enforced separatism in Austria; and the decision to bar demilitarized Germany’s entrance into the League. “It seems to me,” Lippmann wrote Secretary of War Newton D. Baker on 9 June 1919, “to stand the world on its head to assume that a timid legal document can master and control the appetites and the national wills before which this Treaty puts such immense prizes.”⁶⁹

⁶⁷ Lippmann to Ray Stannard Baker, 15 May 1919, reprinted in Blum, *Public Philosopher*: 114. See also, Steel, *Walter Lippmann and the American Century*: 155-166.

⁶⁸ Lippmann, *The Political Scene: An Essay on the Victory of 1918* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1919): 70; 78-79.

⁶⁹ Lippmann to Newton D. Baker, 9 June 1919, WLC; reprinted in Blum, 117-119.

Having concluded that the Versailles Treaty was irrevocably flawed, Lippmann chose to scuttle the League of Nations unless major modifications were made. He published his argument in *The Political Scene*, a slim volume compiled from his *New Republic* commentary in the spring and summer of 1919. He made a temporary alliance with California Senator Hiram Johnson and Senator William Borah of Idaho in which all three men opposed entry into the League. This was not a matter of political convergence but rather a momentary coincidence. Lippmann objected to Article Ten of the League because he believed that it committed the U.S. to enforce an unworkable guarantee to preserve the deeply-flawed territorial demands imposed at Versailles. In short, Lippmann argued, it put Washington in a position whereby it must uphold the current balance of power in Europe.⁷⁰ For Johnson, Borah, and their like-minded colleagues, Article Ten threatened to deprive the Senate of its constitutional prerogatives to determine such basic foreign policy matters as treaties and the deployment of the American military. The issue of usurpation of sovereign powers also cloaked core isolationist impulses which guided the basic approach of these western politicians, but that Lippmann did not share.⁷¹

While the Wilson administration and progressive pacifists had “entered a monastery where they contemplate ecstatically the beatitudes” of the League, the *New Republic* editor busied himself at tearing away at the covenant’s veneer.⁷² Collective

⁷⁰ Lippmann, *The Political Scene*: especially 54-65.

⁷¹ For a study of Borah’s approach to foreign policy see Robert J. Maddox, *William E. Borah and American Foreign Policy* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana University Press, 1969): especially 3-27; 50-72.

⁷² Lippmann to Felix Frankfurter, 28 July 1919, reprinted in Blum, *Public Philosopher*: 123.

Lippmann told Frankfurter that there were three central problems with Wilson’s program: 1) the administration had never clarified its vital interest before intervening in the war; 2) Washington’s diplomacy suffered from an ill-informed and inadequate diplomatic corps that misread European developments (Lippmann expressed additional concern that Colonel House may have shielded Wilson

security most worried Lippmann. Article Ten pledged the signatory nations “to respect and preserve as against external aggression the territorial and existing political independence of all State members of the League. In case of any such aggression or in case of any threat or danger of any such aggression the Executive Council shall advise upon the means by which the obligation should be fulfilled.”⁷³ Lippmann argued that the provision failed to protect smaller nations against “economic penetration,” could not compel a repressive regime to change its domestic practices, did not protect the right of ethnic minorities, and permitted the development of militaristic states. “Article X is one of those grand generalizations,” Lippmann told readers, “behind which every opponent of change can barricade himself.”⁷⁴ Writing privately to Secretary of War Baker, Lippmann was even blunter. The treaty provisions set the stage for another European war: “We’ve got no business taking part in an authorized civil war in Europe.”⁷⁵ The only way in which Lippmann would consent to joining the League was “subject to reservations which release us from any automatic commitment to the present arrangement of power in Europe.”⁷⁶

to such an extent that he was deprived of even this flawed information); and 3) that President enunciated more than he negotiated.

⁷³ Text of the League Covenant in *The Political Scene*, appendix, pp, 110-111.

⁷⁴ Lippmann, *The Political Scene*: 56; 59. Lippmann added, “No printed text can govern the energies of a generation,” he wrote, “but it can stifle the more inventive but scrupulous minds.”

⁷⁵ Lippmann to Newton D. Baker, 19 July 1919, reprinted in Blum, *Public Philosopher*: 121-122. In a letter to Norman Hapgood, Lippmann wrote, “[Wilson’s] real politics should have been to purchase the renunciation of the Imperial program with the American guarantee. He saw all that clearly enough before we entered the war and he said many times that we could not guarantee the kind of peace that had not the elements of a real equilibrium. When he got to Paris, he seemed to forget that the character of the League is not something independent of the terms of peace, but a direct product of those terms and that the League at present is fundamentally diseased because it is designed to administer an impossible settlement.” Lippmann to Norman Hapgood, 28 July 1919, reprinted in Blum, *Public Philosopher*: 122-123.

⁷⁶ Lippmann to Norman Hapgood, 28 July 1919, reprinted in Blum, *Public Philosopher*: 122-123. The treaty, Lippmann argued, must provide for such “flexibility and the possibilities of growth,” and, in this respect, he far preferred the language of Article Eleven which created a forum before which to bring not only territorial disputes but a host of political issues. It provided flexibility to discuss crises and formulate solutions. It was the “friendly right” of League members, the text read, “to draw the

Lippmann renewed his advocacy for a formal Atlantic Alliance as the keystone for international organization. He specifically linked American and British naval power to create a combination of military force sufficient to impose League decisions—a “world pool” of power to serve as a “nucleus” around which might coalesce a stable postwar international structure. “If Britain and America work out their common purposes, then such a *preponderance of power* is created as to make all notion of a balance impossible,” Lippmann wrote. “An Anglo-American entente means the substitution of a pool for a balance, and in that pool will be found the ultimate force upon which rests the League of Nations.”⁷⁷ While both Washington and London would retain command and operational control over their forces, the conditions for their deployment would be dictated within the League covenant itself. “Anglo-American sea power, fortified by the abolition of neutrality, becomes the ultimate guarantor of the world’s affairs,” he explained. “It is the force by which such liberties as we may devise are finally secured.”⁷⁸

Lippmann also challenged the Wilson administration’s preoccupation with containing Bolshevism. Communism—Soviet or otherwise—Lippmann discounted as a form of despotism that thrived in politically-weak areas. “Bolshevism is extraordinarily easy to combat in a well-fed country,” he intoned, “and its existence is

attention of the body of delegates or of the Executive Council to any circumstances affecting international intercourse which threatens to disturb international peace or the good understanding between the nations upon which peace depends.” Lippmann, *The Political Scene*, appendix with text of the League Covenant: p. 111.

⁷⁷ Lippmann, *The Political Scene*: 41; my italics. This was not to be, he continued, a “policy of imperial alliance,” a bilateral agreement in which the foreign policies and economic ambitions of either country would whet “the worst appetites of each” and commit “both to all the troublesomeness of either.” Sea power, Lippmann judged, is “irresistible in conflict and yet cannot be used permanently to conscript and enslave alien peoples . . . Sea power can be all powerful without destroying the liberties of the nation which exercises it, and only free peoples can be trusted with great power.” Lippmann, *The Political Scene*: 50-51; 42.

⁷⁸ Lippmann, *The Political Scene*: 51-52.

a sign of disgraceful incompetence in the governing circles . . . Bolshevism arises only when rulers have made a botch of their duties.”⁷⁹ He had no empathy for Marxist ideologues, but neither did he harbor irrational fears of them. If the Soviet-American Cold War rivalry had its roots in the aftermath of World War I—as scholars have persuasively argued⁸⁰—then it is clear that from the start Lippmann saw it as primarily a conflict based upon national security imperatives and historical interests rather than political ideologies. Lippmann never succumbed to fears of Bolshevik expansion as did many of his contemporaries in the late-Wilson administration—and, as well, 30 years later during the era of HUAC and Joe McCarthy.

In the immediate post-World War I period, Lippmann was concerned with the manner in which the anti-Bolshevist obsession skewed Washington’s foreign policies.⁸¹ With Charles Merz, a future colleague on the staff of the *New York World*, Lippmann authored a study of the *New York Times*’ coverage of the Bolshevik

⁷⁹ Lippmann, *The Political Scene*: 65.

⁸⁰ For the earliest and still best study of this subject, see Arno Mayer, *Politics and Diplomacy of Peacemaking: Containment and Counterrevolution at Versailles, 1918-1919* (New York: Knopf, 1967). A more recent survey which links post-World War I anti-Bolshevism with American Cold War policy is Melvyn Leffler’s *The Specter of Communism: The United States and the Origins of the Cold War, 1917-1953* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1994).

⁸¹ Lippmann to Newton D. Baker, 17 January 1920, reprinted in Blum, *Public Philosopher*: 133-134. Lippmann contrasted President Wilson’s democratic rhetoric with the administration’s draconian domestic policies—in the wake of the Red Scare of 1919, the Palmer raids, and the government clampdown against dissent, particularly in labor affairs. For *The New Republic* editor it represented yet another manifestation of the xenophobia that had long checkered American history. “It is forever incredible that an administration announcing the most specious ideals in our history should have done more to endanger fundamental American liberty than any group of men” since the John Adams administration, Lippmann told Newton Baker. Harsh sentences for political offenses, censorship, the Justice Department’s sedition bill, and the hysterical fear and summary deportations of immigrants which arose out of the fear of Bolshevism, were among the developments that most concerned Lippmann. It was a “determined . . . dangerous . . . attack upon the constitutional liberties of the country,” he added. “These are dreadful things and they will have dreadful consequences. They have instituted a reign of terror in which honest thought is impossible, in which moderation is discountenanced, in which panic supplants reason. It was the solemn duty of this administration to

revolution during a three-year period from 1917 to 1920. Their final report, “A Test of the News,” convincingly demonstrated the *Times*’ journalistic sloppiness but also showed a clear bias toward the “Whites.” Lippmann and Merz found that on at least 91 occasions the *Times* had enthusiastically forecast the fall of the Bolshevik regime.⁸² When Allied leaders were concerned that Russia would precipitously leave the war in early 1918 and allow the German army to shift its focus to the Western Front, Lippmann counseled patience with the new Bolshevik regime. He explained to Secretary of War Newton D. Baker, “we must beyond question, I think, maintain as friendly as possible an attitude towards the Russian revolution. We should not scold the Russians, no matter what peace they make. We ought to make it as clear as possible to them that we have not lost faith in the revolution, even though it is costing us so much. We ought to continue to speak to the Russians with charity and understanding, and let them know that we see that they are acting under duress, and that we mean if possible at the settlement to safeguard Russia’s interests as much as those of anyone else.”⁸³ Two weeks later, on 3 March 1918, the Russians signed the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, yielding Poland and large swaths of the Ukraine to Germany.

Meanwhile, Lippmann worked quietly behind the scenes to set up diplomatic channels between President Wilson and the new Russian government.⁸⁴ He bitterly opposed Allied intervention in that civil conflict, particularly the British and French occupations in Siberia and Murmansk and the American deployment of 14,000 troops to Archangel in 1919. Lippmann described it to Secretary of War Baker as “one of

allay fear and restore sanity. It has instead done everything humanely possible to add fresh excitement to an overexcited community.”

⁸² Lippmann and Charles Merz, “A Test of the News,” 4 August 1920, *New Republic*. The episode is evaluated in Philip Knightley, *The First Casualty* (New York: Harcourt, 1975): 138-170.

the least gratifying episodes in our history . . . We've got no business taking part in an unauthorized civil war in Russia."⁸⁵ During his final year in office, Wilson instructed Secretary of State Bainbridge Colby to announce a policy of non-recognition of the Bolshevik regime because it had subverted popular government—a policy as near-sighted as it was preposterous, Lippmann believed.

Lippmann also dismissed speculation about Bolshevik expansion into the Western Hemisphere. In the mid-1920s, when U.S. oil companies feared that the Mexican revolution would jeopardize their holdings and market access south of the Rio Grande, Secretary of State Frank B. Kellogg alleged that Mexico was ripe for a Communist revolution—a charge that Lippmann viewed as a pretext for American intervention. As executive editor of the *New York World*, Lippmann worked feverishly behind the scenes to prevent military action—first writing editorials to promote the Morgan partner and his friend Dwight Morrow as ambassador to Mexico and then, once Morrow was installed in Mexico City, suggesting to him strategies and traveling there to conduct secret peace negotiations.⁸⁶ On the *World's* editorial page Lippmann dismissed the argument that the Mexican revolutionaries planned a subversive strategy to bolshevize Latin America. He wrote, “the thing which the ignoramuses call bolshevism in these countries is in essence nationalism, and the whole world is in ferment with it.”⁸⁷ In a public debate on intervention he described the posturing of the Coolidge administration as “vicious. It represents the most disreputable and discarded practice of an old diplomacy.” He added that Kellogg’s

⁸³ Lippmann to Newton D. Baker, 26 February 1918, Box 2, Newton D. Baker Papers, LC.

⁸⁴ Steel, *Walter Lippmann and the American Century*: 137-138.

⁸⁵ Lippmann to Newton D. Baker, 19 July 1919, Box 4, Newton D. Baker Papers, LC.

press release which made the Communist charge “was one of the most absurd documents ever issued by an American official.”⁸⁸ He struck a theme he repeated in later decades: the need for American maturity in foreign affairs writing, “the task of statesmanship is to avert irreconcilable collisions and to find ways of adjusting conflicting interests.” He insisted in a “*modus vivendi*”—a solution “respecting the national pride of sensitive peoples, and refraining, so far as it is humanely possible to avoid so great a temptation, from enunciating great general principles.”⁸⁹ Lippmann deeply regretted even the implied threat of U.S. unilateral action in Mexico on such flimsy evidence.

In the late-1920s Lippmann also supported normalization of relations with the Soviet Union. In 1929, he used the occasion of fighting between Chinese and Russian nationalists in Manchuria to prompt Senator William Borah to begin a campaign for recognition of Moscow; Borah complied but President Herbert Hoover could not be swayed.⁹⁰ Four years later, when President Franklin Roosevelt did normalize relations with the Soviet Union, Lippmann welcomed it as a long overdue development. The Russia of Stalin, he told *Today and Tomorrow* readers, was not that of Trotsky. With Joseph Stalin’s consolidation of domestic power, the columnist degraded the role of Marxist ideology in determining Soviet foreign policy. “While

⁸⁶ See Steel’s account that uncovered what had up until its publication been an unknown facet of Lippmann’s career at the *World: Walter Lippmann and the American Century*: 238-243.

⁸⁷ Steel, *Walter Lippmann and the American Century*: 238.

⁸⁸ “Kellogg’s Course in Caribbean Assailed,” 27 March 1927, *New York Times*: E7.

⁸⁹ Walter Lippmann, “The Kellogg Doctrine: Vested Rights and Nationalism,” in Lippmann’s *Men of Destiny* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Press, 2003; first edition 1927): 213. Americans, Lippmann concluded, must “recognize the fact that they are no longer a virginal republic in a wicked world, but they are themselves a world power, and one of the most portentous which have appeared in the history of mankind . . . [then] they will cast aside the old phrases which conceal the reality, and as a fully adult nation, they will begin to prepare themselves for the part that their power and their position compel them to play.” Quoted in *Men of Destiny*, 222.

⁹⁰ Steel, *Walter Lippmann and the American Century*: 255.

the Bolsheviks cannot formally renounce their revolutionary rhetoric, to the present rulers of Russia, the doctrine of world revolution is a sentimental memory, a considerable embarrassment and in practice a dead letter,” Lippmann wrote on 25 October 1933.⁹¹ The benefits of recognition, he added, far out-weighed the risks. “Russia is the great power which lies between the two danger spots of the modern world—in Eastern Asia and in Central Europe,” he explained. “If Russia wants peace, and it is plain that she does, then it is of great advantage to the world that she should be encouraged to act as a responsible world power interested in the maintenance of peace. American recognition can have no direct influence upon Russian policy, but it would undoubtedly add some reinforcement to those who, like Stalin and Litvinoff, are interested in socialism for Russia, in peace and trade outside of Russia.”⁹² In these views he would remain consistent for decades.

Though thoroughly disillusioned with the League of Nations as it evolved from the Paris Peace Treaty, Lippmann did not surrender the idea of international cooperation. In tandem with his refusal to interpret Russian foreign policy as primarily the product of Bolshevik ideology, Lippmann pressed for an internationalist agenda—supporting the Washington Naval Disarmament Conference, the reduction of German war debts (the Young Plan), and the refinancing of Germany’s reparation payments through U.S. loans (the Dawes Plan). Lippmann also criticized the Coolidge and Hoover administrations for their restrictive tariff policies which, he

⁹¹ Lippmann, T&T, “Relations with Russia,” 25 October 1933, *Los Angeles Times*: A4.

⁹² Ibid. Interestingly, Lippmann did not emphasize the benefits of opening up a new trade market—as did some administration officials eager to stress the economic opportunities of recognition for the Depression-beleaguered American economy.

believed, ultimately hurt the U.S. economy by slowing the recovery of European economies.⁹³

Lippmann reacted acidly in the early 1920s when “irreconcilables” and “isolationists,” particularly Senator Philander Knox of Pennsylvania and Senator Borah, appropriated arguments for creating international legal mechanisms to keep the peace: such as the World Court and the “outlawry of war” movement. Lippmann believed that these were thinly-veiled efforts to maintain isolationism by making paper pledges rather than by participating fully in world affairs. He interpreted the outlawry of war movement as yet another combination of pacifist-isolationist interests which sought to exclude America from the vital conduct of classical diplomacy. “The genius of civilization has invented . . . diplomacy, representative government, federalism, mediation, conciliation, friendly intervention, compromise and conference” to settle international disputes, Lippmann wrote. “For as long a future as we can foresee, there will remain whole classes of the most dangerous disputes which no code and no court can deal with. For them diplomacy is required, diplomacy working by conference, compromise, bargaining, good offices, and, also, in the last analysis, I believe, by the threat of force.”⁹⁴ Here, Lippmann was combating two tendencies: first, the American resort to legalisms—the notion that paper agreements could tame geopolitical necessities and ambitions; and, second, the residue of 19th century political immaturity, i.e., that Americans had enjoyed relative domestic peace and prosperity for so long without having to engage the world, that they did not know

⁹³ See Steel’s account of Lippmann’s various foreign policy positions in the 1920s, *Walter Lippmann and the American Century*: 252-256.

⁹⁴ Walter Lippmann, “The Outlawry of War,” *Atlantic Monthly* 123 (August 1923): 245-253; quote on pp. 251-252.

the rudiments of diplomacy. As Lippmann saw it in the 1920s, “the reform of that [diplomatic] method is one of the most urgent of human needs.”⁹⁵

In an August 1928 essay titled “The Political Equivalent of War,” Lippmann again challenged the pacifist and isolationist supporters within the outlawry of war movement—the same month that the Kellogg-Briand Pact was signed. What had been an effort by French foreign minister Aristide Briand to lock the U.S. into a bilateral agreement to renounce either country declaring war upon the other, would also have compelled the U.S. to uphold the European security system in the event that Germany declared war on France. Secretary Kellogg outmaneuvered Briand by pressing for a multi-lateral treaty. Embarrassed, Briand could not decline. When dozens of nations signed on, the pact became so watered-down as to be completely meaningless.⁹⁶

Lippmann understood that any viable international organization must be born of the cooperation and consent of the great powers. World government would follow geopolitical alignments of power, Lippmann explained. Any workable League must “command the assent of those who have the power to enforce it and have an interest in enforcing it,” he wrote. “It must appeal to those governments which are strong because they enjoy the advantages of the status quo. Only when the support of these governments is assured does there exist any guaranty of order in international affairs.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 252.

⁹⁶ The classic on the subject of Kellogg-Briand is still, Robert Ferrell, *Peace in Their Time* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1952).

Only when there is order can any pacific method of effective change be successfully introduced.”⁹⁷

What Lippmann was calling for, then, was not really a system to abolish war at all, but a working international organization to mediate disputes and to seek solutions to specific crises that would—because of the condition of permanent rivalry that existed between nations—always arise between them. “It might be truer to say that we should have a *modus vivendi* which will for a time postpone war,” Lippmann explained to *Atlantic* readers. “For war will not be abolished between nations until its political equivalent has been created, until there is an international government strong enough to preserve order and wise enough to welcome changes in that order.”⁹⁸

VI.

Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, Lippmann engaged the problem of educating public opinion about foreign relations—at times with greater analytical rigor than the foreign policy issues themselves. He served as executive editor of the *New York World* in the 1920s, developing the first modern opinion-editorial page. He also published three books on the role of media in mass democracy: *Liberty and the News* (1920), *Public Opinion* (1922), and *The Phantom Public* (1925). In 1931, when Scripps-Howard bought the bankrupt *World* Lippmann transferred to the conservative daily *New York Herald-Tribune*, to write the signed column *Today and Tomorrow*—which would

⁹⁷ Lippmann, “The Political Equivalent of War,” *Atlantic Monthly* 142 (August 1928): 181-187; quote on p. 186. He added, “I cannot take seriously any project of peace which does not rest upon a clear acceptance of the premise that the establishment of order in international society depends upon the development of agencies of international government.” Lippmann’s essay was an answer to an argument advanced by his mentor William James in “The Moral Equivalent of War,” *American Association for International Conciliation*, 1910): 20 pp.

appear uninterrupted for 36 years. By the time of the Second World War, through a combination of philosophical inquiry, self-positioning within the profession, and syndication, Walter Lippmann had transformed political analysis into an art form peculiarly his own.

Lippmann's brief experience with the American propaganda machine during World War I, clarified for him the problems that he first raised in *The Stakes of Diplomacy*. In that book, one of his chief tasks had been to inform otherwise disengaged and ignorant Americans about the conduct of foreign affairs. Wartime information controls, propaganda, and overt manipulations of public opinion by isolationists and League supporters alike cast further doubt on whether the public could be trusted with deciding national policies. In 1919, Lippmann wrote an *Atlantic Monthly* article describing a "pseudo-environment" in which the public acted on information drawn from shadowy "reports, rumors, and guesses" rather than established facts. How could voters be asked to decide issues at the ballot box if they were ill informed? "Not what somebody says, not what somebody wishes were true, but what is so beyond all our opining, constitutes the touchstone of our sanity," Lippmann told readers. "And a society which lives at second-hand will commit incredible follies and countenance inconceivable brutalities if that contact is intermittent and untrustworthy."⁹⁹ His *Liberty and the News*, published shortly afterward, diagnosed the shortcomings of journalism and the need to professionalize the trade. Lippmann knew, however, that the problem was not confined to sloppy journalism itself.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 187.

Public Opinion challenged Americans' mystical faith in the "omnicompetent citizen" and the absolute rule of the majority. Its fusion of institutional controls on information, with a Freudian interpretation that stressed irrationality in human decision-making, produced a book that John Dewey called the most damning indictment of democracy ever penned.¹⁰⁰ Lippmann elaborated on his idea of the "pseudo-environment"—the forum in which political decisions were most often made—which was constructed from crude prejudices, "stereotypes," and incorrect "pictures in our heads." Human distortions of reality were exacerbated by a variety of external pressures, among them: censorship and propaganda, time restrictions, culture ("social set"), moral codes, the crush of new international responsibilities, misperceptions of overseas events, the cumbersome mechanisms of democratic government, and imperfect media coverage.¹⁰¹

Complicating the problem of public ignorance were the institutional flaws in the press, the outlet to which the public so often turned to inform itself. Americans too often regarded the press as "an organ of direct democracy," a surrogate for "the initiative, referendum, and recall." Yet it was, Lippmann explained, inherently incapable of producing truths or deciding policy. "News" concerned only "an aspect that has obtruded itself"—treaties, wars, birth, death, marriage, crimes, and accidents. Without providing a synthesis of events, the modern newspaper presented little more than a menagerie of disconnected events. The press, Lippmann wrote in a memorable

⁹⁹ Walter Lippmann, "The Basic Problem of Democracy: I. What Liberty Means," *Atlantic Monthly* 124 (November 1919): 625.

¹⁰⁰ John Dewey, Review of *Public Opinion*, *The New Republic* 30 (3 May 1922): 286-288. Dewey's response to the book and its sequel, *The Phantom Public*, can be found in *The Public and Its Problems* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1927). For more on the Lippmann-Dewey debate, see Robert B. Westbrook, *John Dewey and American Democracy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991); James Carey, *Communication as Culture: Essays on Media and Society* (Boston: Unwin-Hyman, 1989).

analogy, acted “like a beam of a searchlight that moves restlessly about, bringing one episode and then another out of darkness into vision.”¹⁰²

Lippmann’s remedy aimed to create a government *for* the people to replace government *by* the people.¹⁰³ His first solution was the development of government “intelligence bureaus” of experts drawn from academia to study policy issues; to collect, process, and analyze information; and to distribute those findings to the government and the press.¹⁰⁴ He later dropped that idea, however, believing that as government-funded entities, they would be prone to propaganda and official controls.

Lippmann eventually settled on a second method of improving the flow of information both to the rulers and the governed masses: the political commentator. Writing for a newspaper, the commentator functioned as a one-man intelligence bureau, providing disinterested and unbiased information to both government officials and the public and fulfill one of the central reforms Lippmann believed necessary. “My conclusion is that public opinions must be organized for the press if they are to be sound,” he wrote in *Public Opinion*, “not by the press as is the case today.” A commentator might not steer public opinion to a pre-determined destination, Lippmann realized, but could shape the analytical itinerary, determining the topics and parameters of public dialogue. Sans the intelligence bureaus, Lippmann opted to offer his own services—advising policy and educating public opinion in equal doses. In doing so, the historian Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., once observed, Lippmann crafted a niche for the intellectual in modern society. “Whereas the role of the intellectual had

¹⁰¹ See Lippmann, *Public Opinion*: especially the first chapter.

¹⁰² Lippmann, *Public Opinion*: 341; 362-364.

once been to declare the constitutional pattern of the universe to all mankind, now it was to serve up neutral facts to the ruling elite,” Schlesinger wrote.¹⁰⁵

Lippmann’s decision to initiate a signed column in 1931 profoundly changed his career. It was the key move that positioned him in the role of the political commentator that he had invented in *Public Opinion* and *The Phantom Public*. Writing for the *Herald-Tribune*, with its sizeable and growing syndication net, also expanded Lippmann’s reach. In 1931, he became a coast-to-coast phenomenon, read in New York City and Los Angeles and, eventually, in hundreds of cities and towns in between.

Contingency also shaped Lippmann’s career late in the decade. In 1938, following a love affair with Helen Byrne Armstrong, wife of his best friend and the publisher of *Foreign Affairs*, Hamilton Fish Armstrong, Lippmann left New York City to escape the scandal which had beset him in his old social circles.¹⁰⁶ The affair resulted in divorce from his wife of 20 years, Faye Albertson Lippmann, and ruined the Armstrongs’ marriage. Within a year Walter and Helen were married, and sought to make a new life in neutral territory. They settled in northwest Washington, D.C., in the former rectory across from the National Cathedral along Woodley Road.

This change of venue powerfully altered Lippmann’s career. That, at first, seemed an improbable outcome. In the late-1930s, the nation’s capital was still a

¹⁰³ See for example Roderick Nash’s thoughtful analysis of Lippmann’s writings on democracy in the 1920s, *The Nervous Generation: American Thought, 1917-1930* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee Publishers, 1990): 57-61; see also, Carey, *Communication as Culture*: 89-91.

¹⁰⁴ See *Public Opinion*: especially, 392-393.

¹⁰⁵ Lippmann, *Public Opinion*: 32; 401; Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., “Walter Lippmann: The Intellectual v. Politics,” in *Walter Lippmann and His Times*: 203-204. For an overview of Lippmann’s role in shaping political commentary see, Eric Alterman, *Sound and Fury: The Washington Punditocracy and the Collapse of American Politics* (New York: Harper-Collins Publishers, 1992): 31-47; 300; 308-309.

provincial Southern town, lacking the social amenities of New York City, including a selection of restaurants, vibrant theater, or museums. To compensate for the deficiencies of their adopted city, Walter and Helen became supreme entertainers on the Washington dinner party circuit. Two or three times per week, the Lippmanns entertained the city's elite politicians, officials, journalists, academics, and, most importantly, foreign diplomats. Other evenings, they attended social gatherings and private dinner parties elsewhere in the city, often at foreign embassies. A quiet evening at home was a rare occurrence. Lippmann's research assistant, Elizabeth Midgley, recalled that well into their seventies, the couple kept up a dizzying schedule.¹⁰⁷

For Lippmann, these gatherings were a form of work—where he culled information that filled his columns. His rival, Joe Alsop, observed that working pattern and, despite the perpetual tension that existed between he and Lippmann, admired the columnist's commitment to it.¹⁰⁸ The move to Washington brought Lippmann into a new world of sources—one with a perspective distinct from Washington officialdom. He had long been granted access to primary Washington policymakers—Wilson, Baker, House, Hughes, and Stimson. But the new arrangements in Washington exposed him to foreign diplomatists in a way that, except for his trips abroad, Lippmann had never been. Foreign diplomats—in the British and French embassies, the Indian embassy, and the Soviet and Polish embassies—became primary sources. As a nexus point for so many diplomatic

¹⁰⁶ See Steel's account, *Walter Lippmann and the American Century*: 354-356. Steel focused on the affair itself—little of which was known prior to publication of his book. He spends less time discussing the practical ramifications on Lippmann's career.

¹⁰⁷ Elizabeth (Farmer) Midgley, interview with author, 28 February 2000, Washington, DC.

contacts, Lippmann not only advocated international participation, his writing took an internationalist perspective and his reach was greatly magnified. His columns, which began appearing regularly on the op-ed page of the *Washington Post* at about the time of Munich crisis in 1938, became the staple of the embassies along Massachusetts Avenue. His opinions, expressed in person and in print to scores of foreign diplomats, were the subject of innumerable dispatches back to capitals around the world.

The move to Washington also put him at the geographic center of national affairs in the 1930s, as the capital city took on unprecedented significance in the everyday lives of Americans—with the Federal Government’s New Deal programs to combat the economic problems of the Great Depression and its response to the increasingly foreboding international scene. Lippmann was cognizant of the historical forces at play. “The kind of journalism we practice today was born out of the needs of our age—out of the need of our people to make momentous decisions about the worldwide revolutions among backward peoples, decisions about the consequences of technological transformations of our own way of life right here in this country,” Lippmann told a gathering of journalists at the National Press Club on his 70th birthday in 1959.¹⁰⁹ In the early 1930s, he had joined other capital columnists—David Lawrence, Joe Alsop, and Robert Kintner—in explaining to

¹⁰⁸ Interview with Joseph Alsop (1979), Box 1, Kern-Levering Papers, John F. Kennedy Library, Boston, MA.

¹⁰⁹ Lippmann, Address to the National Press Club, 23 September 1959, Washington, DC, WLC, Series VI, Box 231, Folder 491. A decade earlier he had explained to a gathering of the American Society of Newspaper Editors that he had been compelled to write columns because “by and large the news stories do not, and I think cannot, alone present intelligible pictures of events. If the picture is to be intelligible, what happened yesterday has to be fit in with what happened last week and long before that, and with what could happen, and what may happen tomorrow and in the future.” Lippmann, Speech to the ASNE, Washington, DC, 16 April 1948, WLC, Series VI, Box 227, Folder 367.

readers how Washington's policies affected them and the world. Fortified by his new sources and the growing relevance of the issues he was writing about, Lippmann gained "an authority, a confidence" that his writing had sometimes lacked before.¹¹⁰ Increasingly, he came to focus on the subject to which he had been drawn repeatedly for a quarter century—foreign affairs.

On his writing days, Lippmann retreated to his study ritualistically to compose a draft for the following morning's paper.¹¹¹ He went to it as a scientist experimenting in a laboratory—with patience, precision, and discipline. Asked which aspect of his career he considered more important—his books or his columns—Lippmann chose the books. These he described as the distillation of his journalistic inquiries. "I always viewed journalism as the place where I accumulated facts and information that I used for my books," Lippmann told Ronald Steel. "Being a journalist was rather like being a doctor, you know, one has to go and practice."¹¹² No less, however, were the columns authoritative sources for the reading public and, indeed, the author himself. The art critic Bernard Berenson, one of Lippmann's closest friends, told the story of one bright morning asking Lippmann his opinion on a current problem. "I don't know yet," Lippmann replied. "But I am going to write my column about it this morning and I will be able to tell you after I have finished it."

¹¹⁰ Marquis Childs in *Walter Lippmann and His Times* 16.

¹¹¹ Elizabeth (Farmer) Midgley, interview with author, 28 February 2001, Washington, DC; James Reston, "The Mockingbird and the Taxi Cab," in *Walter Lippmann and His Times*. See also an article by Lippmann's friend, Alfred Friendly, "Lippmann's Legmen Are Legion," 23 January 1951, *Washington Post*: C22, for information on his work habits and his assistants.

¹¹² "Walter Lippmann at 83: An Interview with Ronald Steel," 25 March 1973, *Washington Post*: C4. A second part to this interview (the last before Lippmann suffered a series of debilitating strokes) was published in the *Post* a week later, on 1 April 1973.

There was, noted the journalist Henry W. Brandon, a “single-minded sureness of purpose” to Lippmann’s work.¹¹³

Today and Tomorrow, or simply T&T as it became known in the newspaper trade, ruminated about the choices confronting policymakers. It had a rhythmic quality, dissecting the most difficult issues of the day in about 1,000 words. Reduced to outline form, a typical Lippmann column stood as a model of pragmatic analysis. It opened with an objective, succinct statement of the problem; moved to a section drawing on lessons of the past to provide historical context; offered a recitation of the choices available to U.S. officials, followed by a dispassionate analysis of the consequences; and, finally, the suggestion of a solution that—weighed against the alternatives—would produce more positive than negative results.

Thus did *Today and Tomorrow* come to compose a virtual insider’s diary of the Cold War—representing not only Washington’s perspectives but those of the larger Atlantic Alliance as well. Three times per week (until he cut back to twice weekly in the 1960s) Lippmann wrote principally about foreign relations, critiquing the policies of five administrations and analyzing the central events of the Cold War: the Truman Doctrine, Marshall Plan, creation of NATO, Korean War, H-Bomb, Hungarian Uprising, Berlin crises, *Sputnik* and the space race, Bay of Pigs, Cuban Missile Crisis, and Vietnam War. Between January 1945—on the eve of the Yalta Conference—and the time he retired the column in May 1967, Lippmann produced more than 2,200 installments. At the peak of its syndication, his column appeared in

¹¹³ Henry W. Brandon, “On Walter Lippmann, The European Statesman,” delivered at the 1990 conference on the occasion of the 101st anniversary of Lippmann’s birth, Bard College, NYC, Box 27, Henry W. Brandon Papers, LC, Washington, DC.

nearly 300 newspapers and directly reached an international audience through publication in the *International New York Herald-Tribune*.

More than mere chronicler, Lippmann scrutinized Cold War policies. “The sense of alternatives, a feel for the available choices, for the open options, the shots on the board, was for Lippmann the beginning of a formal, almost Euclidean, process of reasoning,” columnist Joseph Kraft observed. “He worked hard to make out what he really thought. He tried hard to examine the unforeseen bad consequences of pure intentions.”¹¹⁴ James Reston, the *New York Times* columnist and editor and Lippmann’s protégé, observed that Lippmann’s central achievement was that he “provoked thought, encouraged debate, forced definition, and often revision, of policies, and nourished the national dialogue on great subjects for over half a century.”¹¹⁵

Lippmann’s nearly single-minded focus on foreign policy after 1945, his free access to leaders at home and (more often) abroad, and his powers of observation powerfully crystallized the core issues of the Soviet-American conflict and, more broadly still, outlined the contours of twentieth-century U.S. foreign policy. Several times each week he opened a dialogue with an educated and engaged public in capitals around the world—a readership that included diplomats, government bureaucrats, businessmen, and, quite often, world leaders. His first intent was to instruct readers on how to be “fully enlightened nationalists,” who learned from the mistakes of Wilsonian policies, could calculate the nation’s primary interests, and

¹¹⁴ Joseph Kraft, “Lippmann: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow,” 11 September 1980, *Washington Post*: A19.

¹¹⁵ Lippmann’s acid observations about the coda to Kennan’s “X-Article” come first to mind; Reston and Childs, *Walter Lippmann and His Times*: 235.

pursue them through diplomatic engagement. The distinguished newsman Eric Sevaried once told Lippmann, “you’re a power in the land, like no other journalist, a kind of fourth branch of government.” Reston put it simply: Lippmann “was the most influential columnist of his day, or any other day I knew anything about.” He hardly exaggerated.¹¹⁶ That influence began during World War II with the publication of a remarkable set of books which, in turn, led the public and leading diplomatists to pay even greater attention to his columns.

VII.

Three volumes, published between 1943 and 1947, framed Lippmann’s position on the Cold War and, in particular, American intervention in Asia: *U.S. Foreign Policy: Shield of the Republic* (1943), *U.S. War Aims* (1944), and *The Cold War: A Study in U.S. Foreign Policy* (1947). In rapid succession Lippmann outlined the core beliefs that informed his unique assessment of containment in *Today and Tomorrow*, as it applied in places from Germany to Indochina. Much more, these books brought Lippmann to a conception of foreign policy that differed substantially from the orthodoxy of Washington officials and set him on a collision course with officials from four successive administrations.

U.S. Foreign Policy firmly rejected isolationism—a parochialism which Lippmann had attacked since *The Stakes of Diplomacy*.¹¹⁷ Portraying the American

¹¹⁶ Eric Sevaried to Walter Lippmann, 22 May 1962, Folder 1923, Box 19 (101), Series III, WLC; James Reston, *Deadline: A Memoir*: 137.

¹¹⁷ In the book’s preface, Lippmann disarmingly identified himself as one who also had lived through and, to a degree, participated in the mistakes of Woodrow Wilson’s foreign policies. Much of the book is an implicit, and at times quite explicit, rejection of Wilsonian themes, expressed in a forceful and disdainful voice belonging to one who’d once embraced the faith but then lost it.

founders as sure-handed geo-politicians who skillfully navigated a series of European conflicts, Lippmann maintained that American foreign policy had gone astray in the long inter-regnum in which the British navy commanded the world's oceans. In this unique period America was able to accomplish its chief foreign policy goal of expanding its contiguous territory with little or no interference from outside powers. That long era, which lasted roughly from the end of the War of 1812 to the Spanish-American War of 1898, had produced a series of unexamined assumptions that formed the basis of American foreign policy. "The habits of a century have fostered prejudices and illusions that vitiate our capacity to think effectively about foreign relations," Lippmann explained to readers.

Those false assumptions, Lippmann called them "mirages," in America's approach to foreign relations included pacifism, isolationism, and one-worldism. He explained that nineteenth-century American security derived from none of these things but instead was based on the power of the British navy and a temporarily favorable alignment of power in Europe. Peace, Lippmann explained, was not the ultimate end of foreign policy, but instead a condition that existed only when a nation possessed security. "A nation has security," he wrote, "only when it does not have to sacrifice its legitimate interests to avoid a war and is able, if challenged, to maintain them by war."¹¹⁸ He attacked the American attraction to disarmament, the notion that U.S. must avoid alliances, and the Wilsonian ideal of collective security. All three of these habits of thinking about foreign policy ultimately "disorganized" and worked to undermine the very things that nations always did to protect themselves: such as arming for defense and negotiating bilateral security alliances. Wilsonian

collective security, Lippmann found particularly damaging because it rejected the necessity of groupings of power around which peace was actually organized. In the 1930s, the impotent League of Nations would have been able to enforce peace, Lippmann wrote in an argument that echoed *The Political Scene*, had it been based upon “a strong combination of powers.”¹¹⁹

Lippmann proceeded to outline the areas of vital American defense including the North American continent, the Western Hemisphere, and the approaches to them. The primary interest of U.S. policymakers since the republic’s founding had been the defense of “the continental homeland . . . against foreign powers.” By the early nineteenth century, the Monroe Doctrine had extended that defensive perimeter to “the whole of the Western Hemisphere.”¹²⁰ Then, as in the twentieth century, Lippmann argued, it was the determination of U.S. leaders that that sphere must “be defended against the invasion, intrusion, and absorption by conspiracy within; and, if lost, would have to be liberated.” Especially with technological developments in the twentieth century such a protective plan required a forward-deployed defense structure. Washington could not defend the homeland “by waiting to repel an attack by a formidable enemy.”¹²¹ Instead, strategic defense demanded that America extend its reach “across both oceans to all trans-oceanic lands from which an attack by sea or by air can be launched.” Thus, Great Britain, Japan, and Russia were three principal countries that had a direct impact on American security. A fourth country, Germany, had played a unique role in the twentieth century because it affected the balance of

¹¹⁸ Lippmann, *U.S. Foreign Policy*: 51.

¹¹⁹ Lippmann, *U.S. Foreign Policy*: 74.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 88-89.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 92, 95.

power by allying itself or confronting as a rival these three nations. Therefore, Lippmann wrote, looking to the postwar world, American policymakers must “with cold calculation organize and regulate the politics of power” among these key nations.¹²²

As one of the “three great military states” that would emerge after the war—Lippmann included Russia and Great Britain in this triumvirate—America would have a vested interest in ensuring that the arrangement of power did not threaten the Atlantic Community. Most importantly, it was vital that the wartime alliances remain intact, he wrote, because if one of the three powers sought to realign itself with either Germany or Japan it could radically changed the balance of power. Thus, as Lippmann had in *The Political Scene*, he pushed for an Anglo-American entente that would serve as “the nucleus of force around which the security of the whole [Atlantic community] must be organized.” He described an enlarged “nuclear alliance,” composed of the Big Three wartime allies plus, potentially, China.¹²³ Lippmann described the British-American relationship as a “natural” alliance forged by the “facts of geography” and “historic experience.” So vital was this partnership that it had in fact become symbiotic: “the overthrow of the American position in the world would mean the break-up of the British community of nations,” Lippmann wrote, just as the destruction of British power “would mean a revolutionary change in the system of defense within which the American republics have lived for more than a century.”¹²⁴

¹²² Ibid., 95, 100.

¹²³ Ibid., 136; 161-177; for “nuclear alliance” quote, see p. 168.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 127, 129.

Though the Soviet Union clearly fell outside this special community, Lippmann nevertheless believed that a mutually agreeable European settlement was a primary interest for both Moscow and Washington, and one that he optimistically hoped would compel cooperation. Geopolitics would override ideological disparities, Lippmann wrote, just as it had in previous Russo-American encounters. “The story of Russian-American relations is an impressive demonstration of how unimportant in the determination of policy is ideology, how compelling is the national interest,” he added.¹²⁵ He briefly sketched the need for a neutralization of Germany and the nations that lay on the borderland between the Atlantic community and the Russian sphere.¹²⁶ These were Lippmann’s broad outlines for a postwar arrangement of power—ideas that he would refine in *U.S. War Aims* a year later. But already it was clear that, at its base, this arrangement would have a classical division of the world into spheres of influence controlled by great powers.¹²⁷

U.S. Foreign Policy provided not just a sketch of likely alliances and interests but a powerful theory for determining them. Lippmann believed the U.S. would have a successful foreign policy only when “we can become fully enlightened American

¹²⁵ Ibid., 101.

¹²⁶ Ibid., 143-152.

¹²⁷ Lippmann was influenced by the work of Yale strategic theorist Nicholas J. Spykman who, just a year earlier had published *America’s Strategy in World Politics: The United States and the Balance of Power* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Company, 1942). In his preface, Spykman posed the central problem of American participation in international politics which Lippmann directed himself to in *U.S. Foreign Policy*. “International society is . . . a society without central authority to preserve law and order, and without an official agency to protect its members in the enjoyment of their rights,” Spykman explained. “The result is that individual states must make the preservation and improvement of their power position a primary objective of their foreign policy. A sound foreign policy for the United States must accept this basic reality of international society and develop a grand strategy for both war and peace based on the implications of its geographical location in the world.” See pp. 7-8. Spykman died in 1943; there is no correspondence between the two men on Lippmann’s *U.S. Foreign Policy*, published in the summer of that year.

¹²⁷ Lippmann T&T, “On ‘Power Politics’” 18 December 1943.

nationalists.”¹²⁸ What he offered was a formula of the national interest that was clear, compelling, and crafted in prose that even the lay person could understand. It seemed, upon quick examination, to subordinate all other considerations—including economic, ideological, and moral factors—to the equation of power: Who had it? How much did they have? Was it enough to achieve a goal? As Lippmann explained, “in foreign relations, as in all other relations, a policy has been formed only when commitments and power have been brought into balance.” He elaborated:

Without the controlling principle that the nation must maintain its objectives and its power in equilibrium, its purposes within its means and its means equal to its purposes, its commitments related to its resources and its resources adequate to its commitments, it is impossible to think at all about foreign affairs . . . The constant preoccupation of the true statesman is to achieve and maintain this balance. Having determined the foreign commitments which are vitally necessary to his people, he will never rest until he has mustered the force to cover them. In assaying ideals, interests, and ambitions which are to be asserted abroad, his measure of their validity will be the force he can muster at home combined with the support he can find abroad among other nations which have similar ideals, interests, and ambitions.¹²⁹

This thesis shaped Lippmann’s commentary on foreign affairs for the rest of his life and provided insights into the limits of American power and its frequent misapplications. It is no small irony that in the hands of U.S. officials, Lippmann’s stratagem for the “national interest” provided an expedient rationale for an expansive national security program. It fitted precisely the ideas they needed to circulate about America’s expanded postwar responsibilities to justify the financial outlays that the American taxpayer would be asked to bear. Not surprisingly, they were enthusiastic about the book. John McCloy, then the assistant secretary of war and soon-to-be high

¹²⁸ Ibid., 137.

commissioner of occupied Germany, thought Lippmann's look forward into the political reconstruction of Western Europe an "enlightening" and "excellent" discussion. Assistant Secretary of the Navy James Forrestal wrote the columnist that *U.S. Foreign Policy* deserved "as wide [a] circulation as possible and I shall, therefore, do my best to see that it is a best-seller." The future first secretary of defense made Lippmann's book required reading for a class of businessmen he taught in a course at Columbia University.¹³⁰ *U.S. Foreign Policy*, a "Book-of-the-Month-Club" selection, sold nearly half a million copies and was, by far, Lippmann's largest commercial publication success. Within months, the book was serialized in *Readers' Digest* and *The Ladies' Home Journal*. Large portions were reprinted in the *Washington Post*, *Los Angeles Times*, and the *Sunday Times of London*.¹³¹

Washington officials embraced *U.S. Foreign Policy* for its emphasis on America's leading part in the future of power politics. In fact, they would read into this book—as they would later read into George F. Kennan's "The Sources of Soviet Conduct"—a militarized worldview, a justification for constructing an insuperable ring of military bases and an air and naval umbrella to protect the American mainland and key allies. But Lippmann's intent—indeed the book's very title—made an important distinction here. *U.S. Foreign Policy* reminded those same officials of the primary importance of setting a sound *diplomatic* strategy.¹³² Lippmann's vision for

¹²⁹ Lippmann, *U.S. Foreign Policy*: 7; 9-10.

¹³⁰ McCloy was responding to Lippmann's columns and both *U.S. Foreign Policy* and *U.S. War Aims*. See John McCloy to Walter Lippmann, 30 June 1944 and 28 September 1944, Folder 326, Box 98, Series III, Walter Lippmann Collection (WLC), Sterling Memorial Library, Yale University, New Haven, CT. James Forrestal to Lippmann, 16 May 1943, Folder 794, Box 71, Series III, WLC.

¹³¹ R. Van G., "Books and Authors," 15 August 1943, *New York Times*: BR8.

¹³² The standard work on the subject of postwar U.S. national security planning is Melvyn Leffler, *A Preponderance of Power: National Security, the Truman Administration, and the Cold War* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992).

postwar U.S. foreign policy was not exclusively a militarized one. Planes, ships, and guns were ancillary parts of a national strategy within which military, economic, and diplomatic assets could be operationalized. How American planners chose to use their power, where they projected it, for what ends they employed it, and whether it was used in cooperation and consultation with U.S. allies mattered as much as the number of bombers in the Air Force and the number of carrier battle groups in the Navy. Lippmann's approach called for an appraisal of new responsibilities from a classical conception of alliances and diplomacy.

Lippmann's correspondence with one of the country's prominent Wilsonians elaborated on some of the arguments he made in *U.S. Foreign Policy*. Lippmann and Quincy Wright, the University of Chicago professor of international relations (and, later, distinguished professor at the Woodrow Wilson Department of Foreign Affairs at the University of Virginia), had known one another since the late-1920s. In a warm correspondence, they exchanged views on U.S. foreign affairs for forty years.¹³³

In July 1943, Wright told Lippmann that he agreed with *U.S. Foreign Policy's* argument that the postwar peace would be fundamentally shaped by the Big Four alliance's ability to cohere. As Wright put it, the alliance must "manifest a degree of solidarity which will lead them actually to make the nuclear pooling of forces or we can't begin to build" a workable postwar international structure. Yet, he added, that power must be accompanied by political and judicial organizations—which Lippmann seemed less inclined to support initially. "If we have nothing but a

¹³³ Lippmann's correspondence with Wright spanned a period from 1936 to 1966: Series III, Box 111, Folder 2280, WLC.

‘nuclear alliance’ among the big four without any political or legal guaranty as to how the alliance will be used, it will look to the little powers like imperialism,” Professor Wright insisted. If the alliance and the postwar organizations it forged failed “to command general confidence,” Wright feared, a “counter-power” would likely arise and create yet another balance of power system. Such an arrangement, with so many vacuums of power in world politics, would be highly unstable, he concluded.¹³⁴ Wright, moreover, was confused about Lippmann’s definition of the “Wilsonian conception” he had attacked. Hadn’t, Wright asked, Wilson “insisted strongly on the need of a ‘foundation of power,’” and that the League of Nations had been designed to sell the powerful combination of Anglo-American sea power to the world? Wright’s implication being—wasn’t Lippmann really doing the same in his book?

In his reply Lippmann professed that he and Wright were in agreement on all except the critical issue of collective security. By “Wilsonian conception,” Lippmann wrote, he meant “an organization of the nations more or less led by the Big Four, committed to suppressing aggression, no matter by whom.” The columnist intended no such arrangement himself. The “great object of international organization in the next generation is to hold together the alliance and to hold it together at almost any cost . . . so as to ensure us against another great war within the next thirty years and in order to give us . . . a period of grace in which to do a lot of things that need doing to make the world more peaceable. Therefore, I want to find ways of binding together the Allies which are sure to bind them, and I do not believe they will be successfully bound together by any general covenant.”¹³⁵ Though he did not state it explicitly to

¹³⁴ Wright to Lippmann, 13 July 1943, Box 111, Folder 2280, WLC.

¹³⁵ Lippmann to Wright, 22 July 1943, Box 111, Folder 2280, WLC.

Wright, Lippmann's corollary concern was that a postwar reprise of the League of Nations would too quickly become bogged down in specific political and economic disputes over which it would have dubious jurisdiction and virtually no power with which to enforce its decisions. Rather, Lippmann proposed to Wright a common project, working toward an outcome in which all the major powers had a vested interest—preventing Germany and Japan from reviving themselves as dominant military powers.

Wright agreed that it was of the “utmost importance” to keep the wartime alliance together as the “nucleus of a world order.”¹³⁶ But he rejected the proposition that the pacification of the Axis Powers should be the core project around which to build such an organization of power. Wright estimated that the memory of fascist aggression would soon fade and, that in any case, Berlin and Tokyo would be too weak to provoke the fear necessary to focus world opinion on such a program. “It seems to me there is more hope in keeping [the Alliance] together through the influence of customs, developing an institution, through the habits of continuous discussion in an institution, and through common interest in stability,” Wright replied. This proposition, after all, was not far different from what Lippmann had envisioned in *U.S. Foreign Policy*—although Lippmann saw it as the outcome, not the origin, of a stable world order. “I believe a ‘general covenant’ facilitating continuous collaboration in leadership among the Great Four for the purpose of maintaining certain generally accepted principles essential for stability is the only thing that can

¹³⁶ Wright to Lippmann, 18 August 1943, Box 111, Folder 2280, WLC.

keep them together,” Wright concluded. “As long as Germany and Japan are dangerous, those countries will keep the allies together, but no longer.”¹³⁷

The Wilsonian scholar proved far more prescient than Lippmann regarding the time frame in which the wartime alliance could convert a military victory into a diplomatic program for lasting peace. Lippmann seemed to imply that the powers would have a generation to organize the peace. Wright disagreed: “I estimate the political memory much shorter and doubt whether it will be over two or three years after the fighting stops in which that new order must be organized.”¹³⁸ Lippmann’s reply to that note was short, but got to the essence of his differences with Wright. Simply put, Lippmann mistrusted America’s frequent resort to legal mechanism in international affairs. “I not only do not object to a general organization,” Lippmann countered, “but favor it provided our own people enter it with some clearer conception than most of them now have of the power politics involved in it. One of our national vices is an undue trust in mechanical legal forms.”¹³⁹ Indeed, Lippmann’s supported the internationalist agenda pursued by the Franklin Roosevelt administration during World War II: including the creation of the United Nations Organization (UNO) and its controversial relief and rehabilitation administrative arm (UNRRA), the Bretton Woods agreements including the establishment of the World Bank and U.S. participation in the International Monetary Fund (IMF), direct loans to allies, and the implementation of a foreign aid program.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁷ Wright to Lippmann, 18 August 1943, Box 111, Folder 2280, WLC, Wright’s emphasis; see Lippmann, *U.S. Foreign Policy*: 174-175.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*

¹³⁹ Lippmann to Wright, 3 September 1943, Box 111, Folder 2280, WLC.

¹⁴⁰ For two appraisals of the Roosevelt administration’s role in creating the UNO, see Townshend Hoopes and Douglas Brinkley, *FDR and the Creation of the U.N.* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997); and, Stephen C. Schlesinger, *Act of Creation: The Founding of the United Nations* (Boulder,

The Lippmann-Wright conversation was prompted, in part, when freshman U.S. Representative J. William Fulbright of Arkansas introduced a resolution to commit America to a postwar international organization in the summer of 1943. Lippmann endorsed Fulbright's plan, telling readers that its "substance . . . is a pronouncement in favor of a foreign policy which is neither isolationist nor conducted on the theory of the balance of power, but rests upon the concentration under rules of law and morals of the power of the great nations guaranteeing the peace."¹⁴¹ Lippmann believed that Washington and London were in accord on postwar planning and that U.S. officials should seek a similar agreement with Moscow. In much the same way as he explained in private to Quincy Wright, Lippmann told *Today and Tomorrow* readers, "A perfunctory agreement made up our of high sounding generalities would not be too difficult to get . . . But we need something much better than that, and it is better to be thorough . . . than to be impatient and superficial."¹⁴² As it developed, Lippmann came to support the creation of the UNO, managed largely by a "security council" composed of the primary world powers. But he never saw the UNO as an instrument to enforce the peace. It has "a very important role, which is the role it's always had, as a place where people can meet and talk to each

CO: Westview Press, 2003). FDR, so long an object of scorn for Lippmann because of his domestic policies, had gone at least part of the way for creating the mechanisms to make America's participation in international affairs permanent. For this reason and FDR's near evisceration of the isolationists during the war, Lippmann heaped praise on him. One week before Roosevelt's sudden death in April 1945, Lippmann wrote. "For cool, objective realism about what matters most, the President has been quite the equal," of Churchill and Stalin. "The President has his failings as an organizer and administrator of his policies, and he has made mistakes of judgment, and has listened to poor advice, and has indulged his temperament. But taken all in all, and measured by the results achieved, since the summer of 1940 his estimate of the vital interests of the United States has been accurate and far-sighted. He has served these interests with audacity and patience, shrewdly and with calculation, and he has led this country out of the greatest peril in which it has ever been to the highest point of security, influence, and respect which has ever attained. If we do not recognize that he is a great war President, history will." Lippmann, "The President as Strategist," T&T, 7 April 1945.

¹⁴¹ Lippmann, T&T, "The Fulbright Resolution," 25 September 1943, *Washington Post*: 9.

other both privately and publicly,” Lippmann observed nearly three decades after its establishment in 1945. In the sense that the UNO could ever intervene with force to settle a dispute between the great powers, Lippmann was far less certain. “Once in a while when conditions are very favorable and most of the big powers want it anyway,” then it could play a role by dispatching peace-keeping forces. “But the U.N. is not a great power in itself,” he added. “For it to do any more would be to approach world government, which is an absolute fantasy, absolute nonsense.”¹⁴³

VIII.

U.S. War Aims (1944) was a slender volume with big ideas, which Lippmann meant to write as a continuation of the dialogue he had begun in *U.S. Foreign Policy*. He dedicated the book to William Allen White who reviewed the proofs of *U.S. Foreign Policy* and urged Lippmann to write an additional chapter “stating more positively and at greater length a positive program for keeping the peace after the war.”¹⁴⁴ The suggestion came too late for the first volume, and White died in January 1944 while Lippmann was expanding that chapter into a second book. *U.S. War Aims* is his most interesting effort of the three foreign policy books he published during this period—but one that Lippmann scholars least acknowledge.¹⁴⁵ At the time, it was somewhat lost in commotion over Sumner Welles’s controversial book, *Time for Decision*, which revived the Wilsonian notion of a League of Nations. Consequently, its sales

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ “Walter Lippmann: America’s Role,” part two of an interview with Ronald Steel, 1 April 1973, *Washington Post*: C1.

¹⁴⁴ Lippmann to Sallie L. White, 27 April 1944, cited in Blum, *Public Philosopher*: 451.

¹⁴⁵ For instance, Steel devotes four pages of text to discuss *U.S. Foreign Policy*, but less than one page to *U.S. War Aims*. See, *Walter Lippmann and the American Century*: 405-408; 409-410.

were not nearly as brisk as *U.S. Foreign Policy*. But in many respects, this volume, more than its predecessor, set the tone for the 2,300 installments of *Today and Tomorrow* that followed. While *U.S. War Aims* hewed to the great power concepts Lippmann outlined in the first book, it offered a strikingly less strident approach to the question of merging core ideals and interests. There was something of a slight of hand occurring here, although Lippmann was certainly not yielding to Wilsonian core values. In a deft move, he substituted parochial American values with internationalist aspirations. On this basis, years later Walter Lippmann would recall *U.S. War Aims* as his favorite work on foreign relations.¹⁴⁶

The principal critique of Wilsonian diplomacy remained: that peace could only be had through organized power produced by a combination of regional alliances. It could not, Lippmann argued, be accomplished in a world organization to establish peace—along the lines of a League of Nations. The failure of Wilsonian principles and the Fourteen Points, Lippmann contended, was that they disorganized power. He described the Fourteen Points as a “series of prohibitions” which prevented nation states from doing those things necessary to defend themselves and preserve their viability. “The Wilsonian principles are negative rules which, though meant to prohibit aggression and tyranny, in fact prohibit national states from making the provisions which will ensure their own survival against aggression and tyranny,” he wrote. Here again, Lippmann maintained, that meant creating a security structure that made lesser states dependent upon regional great powers. In short, Lippmann

¹⁴⁶ Lippmann’s reminiscences subject of author’s discussion with Ronald Steel, June 2002, Washington, DC.

called for arresting the Wilsonian trend toward a world state that would have each nation be the theoretical equal of any other:

We should seek to conserve the existing political states, rather than dismember them on the ground of self-determination, and that we should approve, not forbid, should protect and not dissolve, the regional groupings of national states. The true constituents of the universal society would not then be seventy-three political molecules, likely to split up into no one knows how many atoms; the universal society would be the association of the great communities of mankind.

We have to reverse the Wilsonian pattern of collective security. We cannot build a universal society from the top downwards. We must build up to it from the existing national states and historical communities.¹⁴⁷

Lippmann did not object to Wilsonian goals per se, though he rejected any attempt to actuate them that ignored the proper power structure necessary to support them. To the prominent New York lawyer Grenville Clarke, a proponent for creating a constitutionally-based world government, Lippmann put it succinctly: “the principal conclusion which I reached was that the world could not be pacified and united by a constitution but had to be pacified and united in order that a constitution could be made operative. I believe this to be the critical lesson of the Wilsonian effort.”¹⁴⁸

In large measure, however, Lippmann softened his rather axiomatic treatment of the national interest which he laid out so forcefully in *U.S. Foreign Policy*. While not a full retreat from his earlier position, this “realist” made the startling concession early in the book that Americans could not divorce core values from their calculations of the national interest. But it would have to be for something larger than previous nationalistic ideologies that motivated American actions abroad. “The persistent evangel of Americanism in the outer world must reflect something more than

¹⁴⁷ Lippmann, *U.S. War Aims*: 191-192; 195.

meddlesome self-righteousness,” he wrote. “It does. It reflects the fact that no nation, and certainly not this nation, can endure in a politically alien and morally hostile environment; and the profound and abiding truth that a people which does not advance its faith has already begun to abandon it.”¹⁴⁹ What then would be the new American faith? Lippmann’s answer was to link American core values to the “Western tradition.” Here existed a fusion between values and realities, Lippmann conceded, for a properly functioning democracy “is nothing if it is not a positive faith and a way of life. It has the right and the duty, and it must have the energetic will, to defend itself against all its enemies.” Looking to the history of American foreign relations, Lippmann believed that the unifying factor behind U.S. commitments overseas was the fact that they “enlist the American democracy as the champion of democracy.” But it was when that impulse, that sense of mission became “separated from the strategic and economic realities of the world” that the nation began to move down the path of “quixotic and sentimental interventions, to disappointment, frustration, and cynicism, and into grave trouble.”¹⁵⁰

In a concluding chapter, with a title (“The American Destiny”) one would not associate readily with a practitioner of classic *realpolitik*, Lippmann coupled the defense of America from totalitarian dangers to the protection of Western culture from those same threats. In effect, he swapped out the nationalistic and peculiarly American notions of Manifest Destiny, innocence, and exceptionalism and substituted the more cosmopolite, civilizational notions in the Western political tradition—the

¹⁴⁸ Lippmann to Grenville Clark, 19 September 1944, cited in Blum, *Public Philosopher*: 453-456; quote on page 454.

¹⁴⁹ Lippmann, *U.S. War Aims*: 40.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 154.

reason of man, natural law, minority rights, and civil liberties. “For America is now called to do what the founders and pioneers always believed was the American task: to make the New World a place where the ancient faith can flourish anew and its eternal promise at last be redeemed,” Lippmann explained. “To ask whether the American nation will use this occasion and be equal to its destiny is to ask whether Americans have the will to live. . . . The American idea is not an eccentricity in the history of mankind. It is a hope and a pledge of fulfillment . . . it is indeed historic and providential.”¹⁵¹ As political scientist D. Stephen Blum has pointed out, this facet of Lippmann’s argument rendered ineffective those criticisms that he simply was propagating a version of *realpolitik* whereby might (i.e., American postwar power) made right—or, in this case, that these books created a permissive rationale for pursuing U.S. ambitions in a world diminished by war.¹⁵²

In mid-1944 Lippmann still had reason to be optimistic about the development of Soviet-American relations, though he understood clearly that the structure of postwar peace depended in equal parts on self-restraint in Washington and Moscow. Here, he saw the essential problem as being the disposition of both Germany and Japan. “Russia and America can have peace,” Lippmann forecast, “if they use their alliances to stabilize the foreign policy of their allies. They will have war if either of them reaches out for allies within the orbit of the other, and if either of them seeks to incorporate Germany or Japan within its own strategical system.” Notably, Lippmann backed away (momentarily) from the notion of a neutralized buffer belt of states in Eastern Europe such as he had envisioned a year earlier. He was prepared to

¹⁵¹ Lippmann, *U.S. War Aims*: 208-209.

¹⁵² See Blum, *Walter Lippmann: Cosmopolitanism in a Century of Total War*: 130-131.

concede that this lay in the Russian sphere of influence. His vision of America's role was more or less to hold the balance of power between Europe and Russia and to play a circumscribed role in reconstruction. Lippmann argued America must yield to the European countries to reconstruct and rehabilitate postwar Nazi Germany, while China should play the primary role in the reformation of Imperial Japan. Just how the prostrate nations of Western Europe and a China divided by a civil conflict were to manage and mediate such monumental projects, Lippmann did not say.¹⁵³ He also believed that competition in former colonial regions also could lead to breakdown of the wartime alliance. "It will disrupt the peace of the world if the Soviet Union and the Atlantic nations become rivals and potential enemies in respect to China, India, and the Middle East," he wrote.¹⁵⁴ In much the same way as President Roosevelt, he viewed colonialism as obsolete. "Colonial policy," he wrote, "can no longer be the sole prerogative of the imperial state, and will have to be set by consultation and agreement."¹⁵⁵

Conflicting political ideologies—like geopolitical priorities—Lippmann perceived, also could undermine postwar peace. Here his optimism overrode the realities. True collaboration, he maintained, could exist only when the Soviets and Americans agreed on a set of basic political and human liberties. That agreement, he wrote, would have to be forged in the postwar world organization which would be the guarantor of national sovereignty, and the "protector and active champion of democracy and freedom." Lippmann continued, "If it is not that, it will be a mere mechanism and procedure, divorced from the vital realities of the world, and without

¹⁵³ See for example, *U.S. War Aims*: 105; 116.

¹⁵⁴ Lippmann, *U.S. War Aims*: 95.

a living faith which enlists the devotion of mankind. It will be a mere forum for contention, an arena of conflict and maneuver.” This muddled his argument. For, in essence, what Lippmann was saying was that the Soviets must be asked candidly to embrace what were perceived as democratic values but might, more properly, be identified as Western values. Failing that, he wrote, there would be rivalry and only a modicum of cooperation. “Only the inviolability of the human spirit can ever be the criterion of a universal standard,” Lippmann wrote. “Nothing else unites men beneath their differences. The outward and visible sign of faith in this inviolability is, in the realm of politics, to guarantee freedom of thought and expression, and thus to found government upon the continuing consent of the governed. When these guarantees are effective, a national state is affirming its adherence to the only conceivable standard of morals which can be universal.”¹⁵⁶ If the Soviet Union did not liberalize, however, repression and authoritarianism would take hold and make relations with democratic governments, fearful of domestic subversion, nearly impossible. Structured peace would not follow, “only a *modus vivendi*, only compromises, bargains, specific agreements, only a diplomacy of checks and counter-checks.”¹⁵⁷ In short, what Lippmann was describing came to pass—a cold war based on mutual suspicions.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ Lippmann, *U.S. War Aims*: 152.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 141; see pp. 136-141.

IX.

U.S. War Aims and *U.S. Foreign Policy* made Lippmann the authoritative American foreign policy commentator.¹⁵⁸ From the summer of 1945 into the spring of 1947, Lippmann believed that the U.S.'s role was to act as the mediator and counter-balance between Moscow and London. He viewed these two as the primary rivals in the wartime alliance because their interests in the Balkans and the Middle East brought them into direct conflict. He was fearful, for a time, that British officials would align the U.S. against the Soviets to protect their interests. Lippmann grew increasingly frustrated with Harry S. Truman's confrontational style with the Soviets, believing that the President's inexperience and impulsive style unsuited to the kind of personal diplomacy that FDR had crafted to hold together the fragile wartime alliance. The columnist was critical of Anglo-American efforts to isolate the Soviets at the May 1945 UNO meeting in San Francisco. He believed that the German occupation zones should be reunited, economically de-centralized, and demilitarized even as U.S. and British officials were consolidating power in the Western zones. He dismissed

¹⁵⁸ In this respect, Lippmann was a moderate around whom like-minded domestic politicians rallied. J. William Fulbright, who was elected to the Senate in 1944, would become one of Lippmann's confidants on Vietnam. He was but one a number of the columnist's Capitol Hill admirers who regularly read *Today and Tomorrow* installments into the *Congressional Record*. In 1945, making the case for international control of atomic energy, Representative Helen Gahagan Douglas of California—another stalwart internationalist—quoted whole sections of Lippmann's columns which outlined a plan for a United Nation's nuclear regulatory council. Lippmann called for a wide dissemination of atomic information among the international scientific community, so as "to prevent the secret use of [nuclear] knowledge as a military surprise." He outlined a program of oversight, inspections, and international monitors, insisting that the pretense that atomic energy could be kept "secret . . . could only give us, as it has already given many, a false sense of security and a false sense of our own power." Congresswoman Douglas worked straight from these premises in sponsoring a plan for an international atomic agency with California colleague Jerry Voorhis. "This false sense of power could lead us straight into the old isolationism," Douglas told colleagues in a floor speech. "Our faith in the future cannot be built upon the sands of isolationism or in the false security of any secret weapons." Lippmann, T&T, "The Atomic Secret," 2 October 1945. See also, *Congressional Record*, House, 4 October 1945, 79th Congress, 1st Session: 9460-9461. During her six years in the

Churchill's "Iron Curtain" speech in March 1946, as a "counsel of despair" and a bald attempt to bring the U.S. into an Anglo-American front to protect British imperial interests.¹⁵⁹ Lippmann further insisted that Europe could not be divided indefinitely into two armed camps. He feared by late 1946 that Washington was inclined toward a "policy of lend-leasing American power and influence to an anti-Soviet coalition . . . a heterogeneous collection of unstable governments and contending parties and factions" which would pull the U.S. into conflicts with the Russians.¹⁶⁰ While he supported economic and some military aid to Greece and Turkey the following year, when Britain revealed it could no longer afford to support anti-insurgent programs, Lippmann lambasted President Truman's policy of protecting free peoples across the globe from communist subversion as an ill-advised, anti-communist crusade.¹⁶¹

In July 1947 the journal *Foreign Affairs* published an anonymous article, written by "X," titled "The Sources of Soviet Conduct." Shortly thereafter *New York Times* columnist Arthur Krock identified the author as George F. Kennan, an upper-level, career U.S. diplomat who had just concluded a long tour of duty in Soviet Russia. A year before, Kennan had written the unpublished "Long Telegram" warning his Washington superiors of imminent conflict with Moscow. In 1946, Kennan was appointed as an instructor at the Army War College. In May 1947, Secretary of State George Marshall named him the director of the State Department's newly-created Policy Planning Staff. James Forrestal, the Secretary of Defense, prodded Kennan to publish his ideas in a public format that might explain the

House Douglas read dozens of Lippmann's columns into the *Record* and incorporated them into her addresses.

¹⁵⁹ Lippmann, T&T, "Mr. Churchill's Speech," 7 March 1946; Lippmann, T&T, "The U.S..S. Missouri," 9 March 1946.

American rationale for dealing with the Soviets. “The Sources of Soviet Conduct” was that product. Coming when it did—on the heels of the Truman Doctrine—and considering the position and intellectual gravitas of its author, the article had a sensational effect on public opinion and was taken, both in the U.S. and abroad, as an official explication of American policy.¹⁶²

The picture Kennan conjured of Kremlin leaders was bleak: an oppressive central regime that subordinated all facets of society to party; a paranoid leadership, informed by the darker lessons of Russian history and driven by an overly-determined view of world history, that had as its central thesis the inevitable conflict with and collapse of capitalism; and a plodding but unrelenting bureaucratic, political, and military machine bent on world domination. Soviet power, Kennan explained, exploited vacuums of power. “Its political action is a fluid stream which moves constantly, wherever it is permitted to move, toward a given goal,” he wrote. “Its main concern is to make sure that it has filled every nook and cranny available to it in the basin of world power.” The only thing the Russians understood and respected, he added, was sheer, raw, undiluted power. This created a unique challenge for American leaders since the “patient persistence” which animated Soviet foreign policy precluded “sporadic acts” of resistance which one might expect to be mounted by unfocused democratic governments and, instead, demanded “intelligent long-range policies on the part of Russia’s adversaries.”¹⁶³

¹⁶⁰ Lippmann, T&T, “For America to Decide,” 7 September 1946.

¹⁶¹ Lippmann, T&T, “Policy or Crusade?” 15 March 1947.

¹⁶² Miscamble, *George F. Kennan and the Making of American Foreign Policy, 1947-1950*: 64-70.

¹⁶³ George F. Kennan, “The Sources of Soviet Conduct,” *Foreign Affairs* 25 (No. 4, July 1947): 574-575.

Kennan proposed that the primary element of American policy toward Russia “must be that of a long-term, patient but firm and vigilant containment of Russian expansive tendencies.”¹⁶⁴ The diplomat, in effect, gave a name to a policy which American leaders had been developing since 1946. There was little specificity as to what form containment would take: military, political, and/or economic. Years later Kennan regretted that he had been so vague on this point.¹⁶⁵ But he was preparing fellow citizens for a long, twilight struggle of a minimum of 10 to 15 years, wherein vigilant resistance to Soviet encroachments would gradually mellow and disperse Soviet power and promote its destruction through the intensification of its own internal contradictions.

In 14 *Today and Tomorrow* columns published over the course of September 1947, Lippmann probed Kennan’s argument, found its inherent contradictions, and judged it supremely troubling. The serial installments began in early September, and were compiled and published as *The Cold War* in November. Lippmann mounted a three-pronged attack on the X-Article questioning its analysis of Kremlin intentions; its strategic conception and soundness; and, most significantly, its tone of resignation to the task which, as Kennan concluded in his coda, “history had so plainly intended

¹⁶⁴ Kennan, “The Sources of Soviet Conduct,” 574-575. Kennan added, “the Soviet pressure against the free institutions of the western world is something that can be contained by the adroit and vigilant application of counter-force at a series of constantly shifting geographical and political points, corresponding to the shifts and maneuvers of Soviet policy.” See, “The Sources of Soviet Conduct,” 576.

¹⁶⁵ George F. Kennan, *Memoirs: 1925-1950* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Co., 1963): 357-359. See also Kennan, “Containment Then and Now,” *Foreign Affairs*, 65 (No. 4, Spring 1987): 885-890. Kennan explained that he did not see the Soviet Union as a military threat at the time but rather as an “ideological-political threat.” The point of the X-Article, Kennan claimed, “was simply this: “Don’t make any more unnecessary concessions to these people. Make it clear to them that they are not going to be allowed to establish any dominant influence in Western Europe and in Japan if there is anything we can do to prevent it. When we have stabilized the situation in this way, then perhaps we will be able to talk with them about some sort of a general political and military disengagement in Europe and in the Far East—not before.”

the American people to bear.”¹⁶⁶ Politically, militarily, and diplomatically Lippmann found that analysis wanting.

Lippmann first addressed himself to the optimistic assumption upon which Kennan based his argument: that Soviet power would collapse from within because “it bears within itself the seeds of its own decay, and that the sprouting of these seeds is well advanced.” Lippmann, who was not a Sovietologist, could not evaluate that claim entirely. But, he pointed out, neither could Mr. X who admitted that this central conviction around which containment was constructed: “cannot be proved. And it cannot be disproved.”¹⁶⁷ This assumption was too great a gamble, Lippmann objected, especially in that, if enacted, it would fundamentally reorient American foreign policy. Containment was not prudently constructed on a worst-case scenario; even its author presumed it unworkable “unless there are miracles and we get all the breaks.”¹⁶⁸ Therefore, Lippmann set himself to answering the question which Kennan ignored: Could the Western Alliance bear the strain of containment? Or, to phrase it slightly differently, Lippmann asked not what the Russians were capable of achieving but what the U.S. had the power to withhold from them.

Kennan’s containment, Lippmann argued, was not suited to the American system of government or any government which operated under the constraints of democratic machinery, a Constitution, and checks and balances. Mr. X failed to address the means to secure the two vital components that a successful policy of containment demanded: money and political authority. “How, for example, under the

¹⁶⁶ For Kennan’s distinctly un-realist coda, see, “The Sources of Soviet Conduct,” 582

¹⁶⁷ Kennan, “The Sources of Soviet Conduct,” 580.

¹⁶⁸ Walter Lippmann: *The Cold War: A Study in U.S. Foreign Policy* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1947): 11-12.

Constitution of the United States is Mr. X going to work out an arrangement by which the Department of State has the money and the military power always available in sufficient amounts to apply ‘counterforce’ at constantly shifting points all over the world?” Lippmann asked. “Is he going to ask Congress for a blank check in the Treasury and for a blank authorization to use the armed forces? Not if the American constitutional system is to be maintained.”¹⁶⁹ Moreover, how would the undirected and unplanned American economy adjust to the ebb and flow of demand from those countries “containing” the Soviet Union’s constantly shifting probes? Lippmann projected that it could not. If containment was intended to try Russia’s patience, he countered, it would be more likely to frustrate the American taxpayer and soldier far sooner than it did their Soviet counterparts.

Studying its military aspects, Lippmann declared containment to be a “strategic monstrosity.”¹⁷⁰ Severe domestic political constraints existed. The American system was woefully inadequate to react quickly to Russian provocations at a series of constantly shifting points around the globe. Authorization for the use of military force would not be readily forthcoming. Soviet troops would already be consolidating their positions in those places they chose to attack or invade, before Congress had even begun committee hearings on whether to send U.S. forces in response. More significantly, containment misrepresented the real sources of American military power which were its air and naval forces. Whereas to meet Soviet probes all along the borderlands in Europe and Asia, as Kennan envisioned it, American sea and air power would be impotent and ground forces would be required.

¹⁶⁹ Lippmann, *The Cold War*: 15.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 18.

Here, the Soviets who still fielded the world's largest army had a dramatic advantage, while the Western Alliance nations, which were in the midst of demobilization and already demographically disadvantaged, were at their weakest. "American military power is distinguished by its mobility, its speed, its range and its offensive striking force," Lippmann wrote. "But it is not designed for, or adapted to, a strategy of containing, waiting, countering, blocking, with no more specific objective than the eventual 'frustration' of the opponent." Finally, containment ceded strategic initiative to the Soviets who could pick and choose places to test the military power of the Western alliance, for the policy of containment required the United States "to confront the Russians with counterforce 'at every point' along the line, instead of at those points which we have selected because . . . our kind of sea and air power can best be exerted."¹⁷¹

Lacking the ground forces to check Soviet moves on a global front, Washington policymakers would be tempted to wage proxy wars by drawing on the reserves of infantry forces from an unstable conglomerate of developing nations and countries bordering the U.S.S.R. Here, Lippmann found appalling military and diplomatic consequences. First, the creation and support of such containing ring of alliances would be a Herculean task. He reminded readers of the prodigious effort it took to assemble and then preserve the United Nations alliance during World War II—and that was between well-developed and mostly homogeneous nations. Even if patched together, Kennan's containment required alliances of warlords, tribal chiefs, strongmen, and petty dictators along the Russian periphery. It would be inherently unstable, lacking many modern institutions, and still dragging under the weight of the

¹⁷¹ Lippmann, *The Cold War*: 18-20.

legacy of colonial rule. It would be a prime arena in which the Soviet Union could disrupt Western programs with a modicum of effort. The greatest single liability, however, would be the tendency of these minor players to draw the superpowers into their own regional rivalries and civil conflicts.

Lippmann perceived just how easily the proxy players could co-opt superpower strategy to pursue their own ends. With uncanny accuracy he predicted the pitfalls that awaited American policymakers in places like Korea, Taiwan, and, especially, South Vietnam—where they were out-maneuvered and entangled by the authoritarians whom they under-wrote: Syngman Rhee, Chiang Kai-shek, and Ngo Dinh Diem. Lippmann warned,

A diplomatic war conducted as this policy demands, that is to say conducted indirectly, means that we must stake our own security and the peace of the world upon satellites, puppets, clients, agents about whom we can know very little. Frequently they will act for their own reasons, and on their own judgments, presenting us with accomplished facts that we did not intend, and with crises for which we are unready. The ‘unassailable barriers’ will present us with an unending series of insoluble dilemmas. We shall have either to disown our puppets, which would be tantamount to appeasement and defeat and the loss of face, or must support them at an incalculable cost on an unintended, unforeseen and perhaps undesirable issue.¹⁷²

Lippmann also perceived the diplomatic travails that the containment policy would cause within the Western Alliance. The orthodoxy of containment, he said, offered American allies in Western Europe “intolerable alternatives.” Either the Western nations would fall under indirect Russian domination or the whole of Europe would become, at best, a military redoubt or, at worst, the principal battlefield of a Russian-American war. The inclination of these lesser powers would be to extricate themselves from the Soviet-American conflict. They might, Lippmann speculated,

seek to act as mediators and, thus, balance off Moscow and Washington; but they might also, and here the prospects were bleak, move toward an isolating neutrality in order to avoid the dual catastrophe of being invaded by the Red Army and bombed by the American Air Force. An element of benign neglect also was at work in containment in that it assumed that Washington would *dictate* policy to the allies rather than *consult* with them about it. To illustrate this point, Lippmann drew a stark comparison between the Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan. The former “treats those who are supposed to benefit by it as dependents of the United States, as instruments of the American policy of ‘containing’ Russia,” Lippmann explained. Conversely, the Marshall Plan treated the European governments “as independent powers, whom we must help but cannot presume to govern, or to use as instruments of an American policy.”¹⁷³

Moreover, Lippmann warned against the temptation to use the newly-organized UNO as a proxy arena for waging the Cold War—particularly by using the veto on the Security Council or by creating voting blocks within the General Assembly. The UNO could not be given the task of making the peace, Lippmann wrote; that would come about only when the great powers had made their own peace treaties. A Cold War, carried out by means of containment, Lippmann was convinced, would either kill or permanently cripple the functions and authority of the United Nations.¹⁷⁴

Underlying this analysis of the effects of containment upon America’s relations with its friends and with the wider community of nations, was an insightful

¹⁷² Lippmann, *The Cold War*: 23.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, 54.

criticism that Kennan's policy, did "not have as its objective a settlement of the conflict with Russia."¹⁷⁵ Lippmann bristled at containment's subtle implication that diplomacy was *not* a viable pursuit between Washington and Moscow. He tweaked the career diplomat for attempting to rationalize a policy that, if followed to its logical conclusion, would have ignored the fundamental facts of life about relations between nations. "The history of diplomacy is the history of relations among rival powers, which did not enjoy political intimacy, and did not respond to appeals to common purposes," Lippmann wrote. "Nevertheless, there have been settlements. . . . For a diplomat to think that rival and unfriendly powers cannot be brought to a settlement is to forget what diplomacy is about. There would be little for diplomats to do if the world consisted of partners, enjoying political intimacy, and responding to common appeals."¹⁷⁶

Lippmann already had outlined in *U.S. War Aims* the challenge of maintaining the wartime partnership between the authoritarian Moscow regime and the American democracy. He agreed with Kennan that these differing political systems would circumscribe the relationship: that there would, in Kennan's words, be "no political

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., 58.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., 59.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., 60. This was not the last time Lippmann offered such advice to Kennan. After his brief stint as U.S. Ambassador to the Soviet Union, Kennan wrote to McGeorge Bundy that diplomatic recognition of the Soviets had been a mistake, Lippmann gently prodded his friend to rethink his position. Kennan's "doctrine about *de jure* recognition of a government contains within it the implication of sufficient ideological harmony between the two governments to rule out any fundamental conflict of ultimate purpose." Lippmann preferred that recognition signify only the "pragmatic rule that the government governs the area under a certain jurisdiction and that it wishes to establish diplomatic intercourse." By attaching moral and political preconditions to establishing diplomatic contact, America complicated, indeed subverted, the relationship. "May I raise the question of whether the position you are taking here is not a throw-back to the kind of moralistic, legalistic thinking which your book [*American Diplomacy*] attacks?" Lippmann concluded. "I think that if we reduce the act of recognition by eliminating moral implications to its pragmatic core, we can in perfectly good conscience take the attitude towards the Soviet Government which you describe in your letter." Kennan to McGeorge Bundy, 11 February 1953, as attachment to Walter Lippmann, 11

intimacy,” that they would be “rivals not partners,” and that they would have few, if any, “common purposes.”¹⁷⁷ However, there was still room for diplomacy between the Soviets and Americans. It was simple but vital. The diplomat’s ultimate role in this superpower stare-down was to construct a balance of power that did not hold for one or the other power an opportunity for geopolitical aggrandizement. That was it. Diplomacy would not end all rivalry, it would not spread American democracy to implacable communist rivals, but it would maintain order, stability, and peace.

The implicit message in *The Cold War* reinforced Lippmann’s earlier warnings against a Wilsonian sense of mission. The U.S. should meet the Soviet challenge as it would any other great power rivalry, he wrote, balancing it off with appropriate counter-force and resourceful diplomacy. At all costs American leaders must avoid the habit of transforming such power contests into ideological conflicts or crusades bent on universalizing democratic ideals. “The method by which diplomacy deals with a world where there are rival powers is to organize a balance of power which deprives the rivals, however lacking in intimacy and however unresponsive to common appeals, of a good prospect of successful aggression,” Lippmann concluded. “That is what a diplomat means by the *settlement* of a conflict among rival powers. He does not mean that they will cease to be rivals. He does not mean that they will all be converted to thinking and wanting the same thing. He means that, whatever they think, whatever they want, whatever their ideological purposes, the balance of

February 1953, WLC, Box 81, Folder 1201, Sterling Memorial Library, Yale. Lippmann to Kennan, 12 February 1953, WLC, Box 81, folder 1201.

¹⁷⁷ Kennan, “The Sources of Soviet Conduct,” 580-581.

power is such that they cannot afford to commit aggression.”¹⁷⁸ Lippmann, in essence, called for an *offensive* diplomacy in the sense that it was to be a continual, active probing of Soviet intentions and security concerns.

What Lippmann instantly perceived in Kennan’s essay, and that deeply disturbed that core of him that was a cosmopolitan internationalist, was the implication that Washington officials were prepared to defer diplomacy indefinitely. The entire subtext for Lippmann’s reply came precisely on the grounds that in Kennan’s version of containing Soviet ambitions there was a decision to suspend diplomacy—a conviction that neither cooperation, nor coexistence itself, were any longer options. The central danger of containment, Lippmann warned in *The Cold War* and in thousands of columns thereafter, was that diplomacy—in the regular sense of dialogue, constructive initiatives, and negotiation on issues of mutual interest—would vanish. As containment evolved, military options displaced diplomatic options in a preponderant fashion. To his credit, Lippmann perceived in 1947, how this process might unfold. He understood, moreover, that this tendency would be repeated in American relations with other emerging Communist governments. Without diplomacy—without the mechanisms to resolve crises—containment perforce would become globalized as the U.S. moved to meet

¹⁷⁸ Lippmann, *The Cold War*: 60-61. My italics for emphasis. There were problems with Lippmann’s analysis. He over-stated the case that Kennan had neglected the material and historical motivations of Russian foreign policy and that the diplomat had over-emphasized the role Marxist ideology played in directing Moscow’s hand. See for example, Kennan, “The Sources of Soviet Conduct,” 568-569; 575. In fact, Kennan evinced a sound appreciation for the lessons of Russian history on Moscow’s security concerns. Also, revisionist historians have quibbled with the fact that Lippmann did not challenge Kennan’s basic assumption that Soviet expansion should be checked aggressively; strictly speaking they are right. Lippmann did not object to Kennan’s central assumption which was that Russian expansion should be confronted; indeed, as a geopolitician, Lippmann was undeniably sympathetic on this count. See also, Lippmann, *The Cold War*: 29. But revisionists conflate their disappointment

Communist expansion at all points all over the map. What became apparent by the Eisenhower years was that in meeting that challenge, U.S. officials had created a series of stalemates—some stable, some fluid, some provocative, some not—which became increasingly burdensome because the U.S., in the absence of a meaningful diplomatic program, had no way to disengage. Washington did not have to like the Soviets, Lippmann said, just talk about their differences and negotiate about the vital issues of Germany and Central Europe.¹⁷⁹ As a political analysis by one of the nation’s most astute commentators, the publication of the collection of columns, titled *The Cold War* in the fall of 1947, gave a name to the nascent Soviet American struggle. In retrospect, it also marked the point at which Washington suspended its efforts to talk out its differences with the Kremlin and prepared for a long, armed struggle.¹⁸⁰

regarding Lippmann’s geopolitical disposition with their more fervent dispassion for American globalism—which Lippmann himself clearly rejected.

¹⁷⁹ Lippmann, T&T, 31 October 1939, no title, *Washington Post*: 11. Lippmann wrote this column in reference to retaining diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany in the months after the Second World War broke out in Europe. “For an Ambassador is not a certificate of our admiration for the government to which he is accredited,” Lippmann once wrote. “An Ambassador is an agent for communicating our views to the head of a foreign state. And the more difficult our relations with that state, the more desirable it is to have an Ambassador.” In making essentially the same argument in 1947, Lippmann merely continued his long effort to educate U.S. government officials and public opinion about the conduct of classical diplomacy. He did not interpret the failure of U.S. officials to conduct diplomacy as an aberration peculiar to the Cold War. Rather, with considerable justification, he feared that once the World War II alliance slackened that Washington officials would *revert to old practices*, treating diplomatic contact as a sign that they conferred approval upon the government with whom they were engaged in diplomatic negotiations.

¹⁸⁰ Historian Anders Stephanson has acknowledged an implied rejection of diplomacy such as I discuss here; he writes that an “essential aspect” of Lippmann’s book was that it found in Kennan’s argument a “certain gesture of diplomatic refusal vis-à-vis the U.S.S.R.” See his essay, “Fourteen Notes on the Very Concept of the Cold War, *H-Diplo* (1996), <http://www2h-net.msu.edu/~diplo/stephanson.html> .

Lippmann’s critique of the X-Article casts doubt on the charge made by some scholars that practitioners of *realpolitik* ignore the domestic motivations and consequences of foreign policy. Not only did Lippmann point out the home-front causes and costs of the Cold War but he proved exceedingly prescient in this regard. He touched on the constitutional problems of waging containment in a state of permanent mobilization, the centralization of executive powers, the impact on the economy, and the price Americans would pay for racing off to all corners of the globe to meet the Communist challenge—social, cultural, institutional, industrial, and technological. Few at the time fully appreciated that a prolonged and extravagant concern with Communism overseas might erode the

Rivalry and conflict among nations, Lippmann believed, was the normal condition of humanity. The “American ideology,” however, rejected that worldview; strife among nations, according to Wilsonianism, was “wrong, abnormal, and transitory.” That approach to world affairs, Lippmann wrote, produced a predictable pattern of behavior: either the U.S. sought to abstain from the struggle, to abolish it immediately and unconditionally, or to conduct crusades against those nations that most actively engaged in that struggle. A nation’s ability to learn to navigate the rivalry of nations, he argued, marked its maturity. In 1948, delivering a Phi Beta Kappa Address at the College of William and Mary, he employed a metaphor he often used in his columns. “Our aim is not to marry the Russians and then to live with them happily ever after,” he told the audience, “nor is it to fight them and let the whole world be devastated. Our aim is to transact our necessary business with the Russians, at arm’s length, coolly, shrewdly, without fear and without extravagant hope, and with as much justice as may be possible where there *is as yet* no agreement on first principles and where the rivals do not live in the same moral order.”¹⁸¹

pillars of the good society at home. He also presaged Kennan’s arguments of the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s—insisting (often) that there was an overriding need for U.S. officials to legitimate the exercise of such vast powers abroad by projecting “a vision of the good society” at home—and by moving toward its fulfillment. “The costs of the prolonged political military struggle that Lippmann called the Cold War can be counted not only in the neglect and deterioration of domestic institutions but also in the loss of American capacity to exercise constructive influence abroad,” remarked Richard Barnet shortly after the fall of the Berlin Wall. “The world’s only global military superpower lacks the material resources to maintain a competitive industrial base, the infrastructure on which a strong economy depends, or even the necessities, much less the amenities, of a good society.” See, Richard J. Barnet, “A Balance Sheet: Lippmann, Kennan, and the Cold War,” in Michael Hogan, ed. *The End of the Cold War* (New York: Oxford, 1994): 113-126. Barnet’s observations are all the more interesting because he is a principal member of the “revisionist” grouping. His *Roots of War* is a classic critique of the foreign policy elite that led America into the Vietnam War.

¹⁸¹ Walter Lippmann, “The Rivalry of Nations,” *Atlantic Monthly* 181, no. 2 (February 1948): 17-20; quote on page 20. The magazine reprinted his address. *Italics* are mine—stressing Lippmann’s belief that the Soviet-American conflict was not irretrievably irreconcilable. It would not be a settlement that “aims at unanimity, not at ideological harmony, not at the abolition of all our differences and disagreements, but at a truce in the cold war, a *modus vivendi* during which the nations can recover

The realist calculation of the national interest, stated so forcefully in *U.S. Foreign Policy*, was adapted to fit new international developments—as we have seen—in *U.S. War Aims* and in portions of *The Cold War*. What resulted when Lippmann applied these ideas in his many columns over the course of the next two decades, was a uniquely internationalist perspective. Lippmann put particular emphasis on diplomatic engagement, negotiation, multi-lateral cooperation rather than unilateral intervention, mediation through extra-national institutions, and sensitivity to the values and interests of many other nations as they navigated the superpower struggle. At the pinnacle of American influence, he not only set limits to that power but warned against militarizing foreign policy in place of a more constructive diplomatic approach designed to resolve the strategic and political conflicts central to the Soviet-American rivalry. When Russians broke the U.S. monopoly on the atomic bomb and “massive retaliation” became doctrine in the 1950s, Lippmann redoubled his commitment to this approach. From Taiwan to Berlin to Cuba, his form of crisis management and conflict resolution stood out—not

from World War II, at treaties which end in the withdrawal of the armies of occupation of Europe, and the restoration of Europe to the Europeans.”

American officials, both Wilsonians and isolationists, often presented issues to the American public “not as relative but as absolute” choices, thus, reinforcing the old habits of thinking. Lippmann wrote, “We are disposed to think that the issue is either this or that, either all or nothing, either isolationism or globalism, either total peace or total war, either one world or no world, either disarmament or absolute weapons, either pious resolutions or atomic bombs, either disarmament or military supremacy, either non-intervention or a crusade, either democracy or tyranny, either the abolition of war or a preventative war, either appeasement or unconditional surrender, either non-resistance or a strategy of annihilation. There is no place in this ideological pattern of the world for adoption of limited ends or limited means, for the use of checks and balances among contending forces, for the demarcation of spheres of influence and of power and of interest, for accommodation and compromise and adjustment, for the stabilization of the status quo, for the restoration of an equilibrium. Yet this is the field of diplomacy. These are the substance and matter of an efficient diplomacy . . . A diplomacy for the world as it is, which is not to expend itself in verbal declarations on the one hand, and on crusades of annihilation on the other, must deal with the balance of power and the determination of spheres of influence.” Lippmann, “The Rivalry of Nations,” 19.

because his solutions were uniformly practicable (for they were not), but for the fact that no other powerful voice offered an alternative to military confrontation.

X.

Strategic internationalism—which fused Lippmann’s realism with a devotion to classical diplomacy and a cosmopolitan perspective—emerged as the centerpiece of Walter Lippmann’s commentary in the immediate postwar years. It certainly had strategic implications in the military sense of the word, for part of what Lippmann was trying to achieve was the fulfillment of basic national security imperatives. But in this usage, the adjective *strategic* is meant to convey the broader meaning of the word: a plan or method to achieve a goal. Lippmann’s goal was to provide a framework to achieve full U.S. participation in world affairs. At bottom, strategic internationalism sought to engage America—with permanence, responsibility, and restraint—in foreign affairs. It had five key principles that Lippmann had developed in the period between 1915 and 1947 and repeatedly returned to in his post-Second World War writing.

First, the permanent participation of the U.S. in postwar international politics, commensurate with its relative power and influence. Lippmann built on the lessons of the failed Wilsonian effort to bring America out of its isolationist past, prioritizing U.S. goals, demonstrating the inter-connectivity of domestic and foreign policies, and attacking entrenched notions ranging from pacifism to manifest destiny. All the other points that flowed from his objective of enlightened internationalism

were subsidiary but vital to making the transition from the old American diplomacy to the new a stable, orderly, and responsible one.

Second, an acute awareness of the limits of American power. In military terms Lippmann understood American strength to be based on its mobility and firepower rather than its ability to wage a sustained, virtually indefinite, siege action as prescribed by containment. American power also was based on its air and naval forces, not land forces need to contain Communist advances in peripheral countries. Thus, American strategists would, he believed, have to prioritize their geo-strategic interests—pick specific, vital points of defense—rather than disperse their limited forces along a global containment front. Whereas U.S. officials believed they could enlist the help of indigenous factions to offset their shortfall in ground troops, Lippmann, for political and military reasons, believed this to be an ultimately self-defeating exercise.

Third, an insistence that the U.S. conduct Cold War international relations within a collaborationist framework. Lippmann's writings are replete with this theme: America's best interests were to be served by cooperative, alliance-building and should avoid—at almost all costs—unilateralism. Lippmann was, at his core, a diplomatist. His unusually intimate relations with the foreign diplomatic corps in Washington, DC, shaped this perspective. These contacts were his most important sources and helped him both to gauge international reaction to U.S. policy and to develop policy alternatives. Chief among his objectives was the cultivation and preservation of what he first called the “Atlantic Community” during World War I. So important was this principle to Lippmann that he acted as a private diplomat

during the Cold War, shaping the trans-Atlantic dialogue and even facilitating communication between the superpowers. His column was his medium, fortified by personal discussions with De Gaulle in Paris, Macmillan in London, Adenauer in Bonn, Nehru in India, Khrushchev in Moscow, and scores of second-tier officials in these capitals.

Fourth, the rejection of anti-Communist ideology and its parochial perspective. Here there were foreign and domestic emphases. As regards the former, Lippmann demanded that Washington officials set clear, concrete objectives when they employed American power abroad. That power, he believed, as it related to containment, should be used to precipitate great power agreements in contested places such as Germany or Japan—but it should not be used in the service of ideology. U.S. officials, he warned as early as 1945, should not assemble an anti-Communist “crusade” in the hopes of vanquishing Marxism and spreading liberal capitalist ideology. Dismissive of these particularly Wilsonian goals abroad, Lippmann disparaged domestic anti-Communism and the destructive influence of the activities of HUAC or the McCarthyite purges. He sought, instead, to elevate the Cold War conversation above and beyond the politics of domestic fear and subversion. He chose to frame the issues within a larger context—one in which nationalist zeal was restrained, indeed, subsumed by an internationalist cognizance.

Fifth, an explicit emphasis on using diplomacy—not military confrontation or stockpiles of ever more terrifying weapons—to resolve core and long-term tensions between the Cold War’s principal antagonists—the U.S., U.S.S.R., and, later, the Peoples Republic of China. Since Lippmann viewed the Cold War as

primarily a great power struggle, he did not object to the necessity of balancing off Russian and Chinese expansion with American power. He believed, however, that there were legitimate interests upon which U.S. diplomats and those from both Communist powers could—and must—agree. This final point truly distinguished Walter Lippmann from his contemporaries: More than any other public opinion leader—certainly far more than any Washington columnist—Lippmann advocated diplomatic solutions at key crises points around the globe from Berlin to Cuba, but especially in Southeast Asia. His vision contrasted vividly with the militarized global containment policy that U.S. officials chose.

These principles underlay a conceptual framework of American foreign policy that set Lippmann on a parallel but separate track from U.S. officials. Lippmann did not deviate from his strategic internationalist principles, particularly in his determination to avoid military confrontation and to define narrowly vital U.S. interests. Washington leaders were disinclined to give such counsel a full hearing, much less follow it. In the immediate postwar years, flush (temporarily) with a monopoly on the atomic bomb and a vastly expanded, indeed, dominant industrial capacity, American officials sought to create a situation of preponderant military, economic, and political power with global reach. In administration after administration, Washington policymakers expressed ambivalence or outright impatience toward Lippmann's steady emphasis on accommodating Communist powers. What they found more troubling, perhaps, was that the columnist's ability to shape the public debate about Cold War programs was disproportionately great

compared to his direct knowledge of events on the ground and, even, the validity of his past predictions.

Frustration and resentment flowed in both directions. Lippmann wrote with mounting incredulity as successive waves of twentieth-century American leaders embraced the 28th President's agenda for advancing liberal-capitalist democracy.¹⁸² Indeed, the American Cold War presidents and their principal advisors imbibed freely from Wilson's cup.¹⁸³ They usually conceived of their rivalry with the Soviet Union as a global struggle between a "free society" and a "slave society." They too often failed to distinguish between Communists (and their various nationalist cadres) in Moscow, Beijing, Hanoi, or Pyongyang. Believing in the inherent virtue and superiority of American political culture, they also chose to project democratic ideals upon faraway places as the basis for building nations in their image. Finally, they shared a hubris—not only in their sublime faith in American moral authority—but in their expectations for American power and what they perceived to be its nearly inexhaustible reserves. These chimeras had no hold on Lippmann. And, it is within the context of his rejecting Wilsonian parochialisms as the basis for Cold War policy, that the continuity in his writings between 1947 and 1967 becomes readily apparent: the rebuke of the Truman Doctrine and its avowed purpose to aid any government

¹⁸² For a scholarly evaluation critical of the origins and tradition of Wilsonian foreign policy, see Lloyd E. Ambrosius, *Wilsonian Statecraft: Theory and Practice of Liberal Internationalism During World War I* (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources Inc., 1991: especially, 125-144. Conversely, one of Wilson's defenders, historian Thomas J. Knock, maintains that while President Wilson "was the father of internationalism" but that "his children—those who fashioned Cold War *globalism*, as distinct from internationalism—were, in the main, illegitimate. What triumphed in the postwar period was at best a mutant form of Wilson's internationalism, and Wilson almost certainly would have denied paternity." See Knock's *To End All Wars: Woodrow Wilson and the Quest for a New World Order* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992): especially, 271-276.

¹⁸³ For a favorable assessment of Wilson's "liberal democratic internationalism," which makes precisely this argument, see Tony Smith's *America's Mission: The United States and the Worldwide Struggle for Democracy in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995).

anywhere against external and even internal subversion; his sharp dissection of Dean Acheson's equivocal China and Korea policies; his repudiation of John Foster Dulles's moral streak and his resort to legalisms and defense pacts; and his deep misgivings about John F. Kennedy's rhetoric and brinksmanship in Berlin, Laos, and Cuba. Lippmann's strategic internationalism also placed him on a collision course with President Lyndon Johnson over his decision to "Americanize" the Vietnamese civil war in the 1960s—for that commitment magnified all the most disruptive Wilsonian traits: moralism, exceptionalism, and hubris.

Chapter 3:

Conflict and Convergence: Walter Lippmann, George Kennan, Raymond Aron, and the Problem of German Partition, 1947-1962

I.

The struggle for control over postwar Germany was the pre-eminent stake of the Cold War. It was primarily—if not exclusively—a contest waged for national security imperatives on both sides of the Iron Curtain. For the Western Alliance, particularly France and Britain, the first order of business was to dismantle German war-making potential and, thus, prevent Berlin from assaulting Western Europe for a third time in the twentieth century. Second, the economic rehabilitation and integration of Germany into a postwar European system of trade was deemed essential for recovery and sustainable prosperity on the continent. Finally, it also was a central geo-strategic imperative that Germany not be incorporated into the Soviet sphere of influence—for the specter of German industry and technology, coupled with the manpower of Soviet Russia, menaced European security.¹

From the Kremlin's vantage point the stakes were no less enormous, though they were nearly the mirror opposite of those imperatives that drove policy in Paris,

¹ Caroline Eisenberg, *Drawing the Line: The American Decision to Divide Germany, 1944-1949* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1966). See also, Melvyn Leffler, *The Struggle for Germany and the Origins of the Cold War*, Alois Mertes Memorial Lecture (Washington, DC: German Historical Institute, 1996): especially, 71-77.

London, and Washington. German militarism, responsible for the deaths of some 25.5 million Russians and the devastation of much of the western part of the country, had to be crushed definitively. Stalin also was determined to control the land approaches in Eastern Europe through which the *Wehrmacht* had invaded the homeland. With the Russian industrial base decimated by Hitler's armies, Moscow also viewed the expropriation of industrial equipment and facilities from eastern Germany as vital to the rejuvenation of the Soviet economy; a unified, independent Germany would thus hinder Soviet economic recovery. Lastly, from Moscow's perspective, the integration of the whole or part (the three western zones) of Germany into the Western Alliance would be an intolerable development since the Germans would perforce anchor a European military alliance and, perhaps, act as a springboard for a Western military attack.²

In seeking to understand Lippmann's approach to international relations, the previous chapter isolated and amplified his work. Realizing that it also is incumbent upon the historian to determine how Lippmann fit into the larger realist dialogue about the Cold War, this chapter offers a comparative analysis of Lippmann position on Germany as opposed to those of prominent U.S. officials, such as Dean Acheson and Paul Nitze, as well as key realists such as the American diplomat and scholar George Kennan and the French sociologist and political commentator Raymond Aron. In the decade after the X-Article, Kennan's gradual alignment with Lippmann as an articulate critic of global containment offers a perspective on the convergence

² William I. Hitchcock, *The Struggle for Europe: The Turbulent History of a Divided Continent, 1945-2002* (New York: Doubleday, 2003): 19-30. See also, Norman M. Naimark, *The Russians in Germany: A History of the Soviet Zone of Occupation, 1945-1949* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995).

points of postwar realism. This chapter also focuses attention on a less-explored subject: the American columnist's trans-Atlantic dialogue with Aron, the noted *Le Figaro* writer. That emphasis reveals a more conflicted aspect of inter-alliance realism over the long term of the Cold War. Among the central questions with which Lippmann and his contemporaries contended were these: Should Germany be integrated into the Western Alliance? Could it be partitioned indefinitely? How should the problem of administering Berlin—deep inside the Russian zone—be resolved? Could, in fact, the Western Alliance (Washington particularly) negotiate with the Kremlin on any of these points without weakening the bonds of their own partnership? Could negotiations address genuine security concerns on both sides of the Iron Curtain? Or, were ideological divisions so deep as to prevent any meaningful dialogue? The positions of each of these men on the German question demonstrate that realists could markedly disagreed about even the core concerns of Cold War strategy.

II.

Walter Lippmann's diplomacy-oriented approach toward the Cold War often paralleled, but at times conflicted with, George Kennan's ideas as the diplomat made a decade-long, gradual but steady public drift toward many of Lippmann's core assumptions. By the time Kennan published his Reith Lectures on "disengagement," he and Lippmann shared fundamental beliefs about the weaknesses of containment, particularly in Germany, but also in its global context. From the perspective of the late-1950s, Lippmann appeared more a mentor than famous detractor of Kennan.

Their public dialogue on Western European issues and their considerable correspondence also suggests the gradations, subtleties, convergence points, and contradictions of postwar realism.

The most curious aspect of the Lippmann-Kennan relationship was that it not only survived the X-Article episode but that it flourished for more than two decades afterward.³ This alone suggests that philosophically they were perhaps not as far apart as Lippmann's rejoinder to "The Sources of Soviet Conduct" suggested. And, indeed, Kennan himself—as well as at least one of his biographers—maintains that the misunderstanding was more of Lippmann's invention (and of Kennan's loosely worded article) than any significant divergence of opinion. They had collaborated on aspects of the Marshall Plan as it was being formulated during the spring of 1947. State Department speechwriter Joseph W. Jones maintained that Lippmann had a profound impact on internal discussions about the Marshall Plan. Lippmann's

³ In early 1965, as his first act presiding over the National Institute of Arts and Letters, Kennan conferred on Lippmann the gold medal for essays and criticism. See the correspondence in the WLC, Box 92, folder 1585. Kennan's meteoric rise to prominence, based on his sharp powers of observation and Russian expertise, obscured other elusive character traits. He proved to be something of a contrarian. He was given to long periods of introspection, sometimes debilitatingly so. Kennan, recalled the columnist Joe Alsop, was "an emotional man and not above self pity. Often his moods were linked to his status at the department, real or imagined, or to the seriousness or lack thereof with which he felt his views were being received." See, Joseph Alsop with Adam Platt, *I've Seen the Best of It—Memoirs* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1992): 306-307. One also is impressed with the sense that Kennan felt like an outsider in his own culture—a function of his long absences abroad and his habitually elitist views. His ideas, moreover, were protean and evolved with developments in the postwar years. His career spanned a long, gradual transition from the 1946-47 period, when he was concerned chiefly with the exercise of U.S. military power to check Soviet advances, to an emphasis on diplomacy and disengagement a decade later, and finally, to a position in the 1970s in which he repudiated much of the original containment policy and assigned responsibility for the Cold War in equal parts to Moscow and Washington. By that juncture, as a scholar and elder statesman, he had come to believe that the best way to win the Cold War was through improving the good society at home and addressing corrosive internal problems: race relations, urban decay, adequate transportation and infrastructure, environmental degradation and, in the field of foreign affairs, nuclear disarmament. But in 1947, Kennan had not yet traversed this long path and his authorship of the "X-Article" alerted Lippmann to the possibility that official Washington was floating a policy trial balloon—or, worse still, announcing a *de facto* policy shift.

appointment diaries show that he and Kennan met on at least three occasions in the spring of 1947—once at the War College and twice after George Marshall appointed Kennan as the first director of the newly-created Policy Planning Staff.⁴

Kennan later recounted in his memoirs that the “egregious” errors he made in the X-Article created in the columnist’s mind the “most unfortunate of

⁴ Wilson Miscamble, *George F. Kennan and the Making of American Foreign Policy, 1947-1950* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992): 65-68. For a similar assessment see, Walter Hixson, *George F. Kennan: Cold War Iconoclast* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989): 73-74. For Lippmann’s impact on the thinking of Kennan and other officials at the time of the Marshall Plan see, Joseph W. Jones, *The Fifteen Weeks* (New York: Viking Press, 1955): 224-227; 155. Jones writes particularly about Lippmann’s 5 April 1947 “Cassandra Speaking” column which spelled out the case for large-scale economic aid to Britain and Western Europe: “The effects of such a statement . . . are several: it makes top officials feel they are in the spot and challenges or encourages them to broader thinking and speedier and more effective action; it gives lesser officials arguments with which to convince their colleagues and a lever with which to prod their superiors on specific approaches; and it enlarges the realm of what men are inclined to regard as possible. Such were the effects of Lippmann’s column of April 5. For example, when Acheson was considering what he should say to the Delta Council, the April 5 column specifically came up.” Others disputed Lippmann’s effect on official thinking. In drawing up an internal State Department history of the Marshall Plan, Charles P. Kindleberger believed that *New York Times* writer James Reston had more influence on inside developments. “Walter Lippmann, without claiming credit for the origin of the Marshall Plan, has told me that he wrote a series of columns (not the one on the cold war) setting forth the necessity for a plan of European reconstruction. This I do not recall and didn’t when he told me.” See, Kindleberger, “Memorandum for the Files: Origins of the Marshall Plan,” *Foreign Relations of the United States*, Volume 3, 1947 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office): 241-247. Hereinafter referred to as “FRUS.”

Lippmann and Kennan collaborated in the spring of 1947, before the X-Article episode, to push the Marshall Plan. The parallel’s between Lippmann’s columns of that period and Kennan’s proposals in the Policy Planning Staff’s first paper of 23 May 1947 (Kennan had been appointed director only on May 5) were striking. Among the paper’s major points, several sought clarification of the Truman Doctrine that Lippmann had publicly demanded in his column. The PPS requested that: “Steps should be taken to clarify what the press has unfortunately come to identify as the ‘Truman Doctrine,’ and to remove in particular two damaging impressions which are current in large sections of American public opinion . . . 1.) That the United States’ approach to world problems is a defensive reaction to communist pressures . . . 2.) That the Truman Doctrine is a *blank check* to give economic and military aid to any area in the world where the communists show signs of being successful.” *The State Department Policy Planning Papers, 1947-1949*, Volume 1, edited by Anna Kasten Nelson, with a foreword by George F. Kennan (New York and London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1983): 11.

According to Lippmann’s appointment diaries from the spring of 1947 he met at least three times with Kennan as the Marshall Plan was being considered in the State Department. The meetings coincided with the height of Kennan’s influence over the plan and, also, Lippmann’s public campaign on behalf of an economic aid package for European reconstruction. The entries read as follow: 22 April—“Lunch—Mr. George Kennan at the Army War College and discussed at length his assignment to be announced in a few days as head of the Planning Dir. in Secy. Marshall’s office.” 16 May—“Lunch with George Kennan at the Metropolitan Club and discussed formation of American policy for a united union in Europe.” 19 June—“Lunch with George Kennan at Club, re: diplomatic aspects of Marshall Plan.” See the Lippmann Appointment Diaries, Series XII, Box 237, Folder 10, Walter Lippmann Collection, Sterling Memorial Library, Yale University, New Haven, CT (hereinafter referred to as “WLC”).

misunderstandings . . . almost tragic in its dimensions.”⁵ Kennan explained that Lippmann imparted to containment the “military sense” which the author had never intended. “And, on the basis of these misimpressions he proceeded to set forth,” the diplomat wrote, “as an alternative to what I had lead him to think my views were, a concept of American policy so similar to that which I was to hold and advance in coming years that one could only assume I was subconsciously inspired by the statement of it—as perhaps, in part, I was.”⁶ With customary candor, former Secretary of State Dean Acheson confirmed this process. “The ‘X’ article was a perfectly fine article,” Acheson told *Washington Post* reporter Bob Woodward in a 1970 interview. “Then Walter Lippmann decided he didn’t like it; well, it was as if God had looked over George’s shoulder and said, ‘George, you shouldn’t have written such a bad article.’” Acheson maintained that “The Sources of Soviet Conduct,” in fact summarized what American policy was at the time rather than lay out a new concept of it. Lippmann and others, he maintained, “thought that containment applied everywhere, but it was nothing of the kind.”⁷

Kennan privately fumed about Lippmann’s response. Stress sent him to a hospital bed the following spring from where he wrote a scathing letter to Lippmann which he never sent. The diplomat’s ire was somewhat justified, for he and Lippmann had shared such similar views on the pitfalls of the Truman Doctrine.

⁵ George F. Kennan, *Memoirs, 1925-1950* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1967): 359-363. Kennan’s understated point, magnified by his biographer Wilson D. Miscamble, was that in doing so Lippmann contributed to the impression that containment *was* principally conceived in a military sense—thus exacerbating the problem. See Miscamble’s *George F. Kennan and the Making of American Foreign Policy, 1947-1950*: 66-68.

⁶ Kennan, *Memoirs, 1925-1950*: 360. See Lippmann’s note regarding Kennan’s memoirs: Lippmann to Kennan, 2 November 1967, Box 81, Folder 1202, WLC. Lippmann wrote: “What you say about X . . . is the most generous and high-minded account of our misunderstanding that I could have imagined.”

Kennan's sensitivity was made more acute because he was at a loss for explaining the magnitude of Lippmann's response—14 closely-argued installments of the nationally syndicated column. "I am a little non-plussed to find myself sternly rebuked as the author of the 'Truman Doctrine' and confronted with the Marshall Plan as an example of constructive statesmanship from which I might derive a useful lesson and improve my way," Kennan vented in his unsent missive.⁸ After Kennan cornered Lippmann and exacted verbal revenge on a long train ride from Washington to New York City a year later, the men patched up their differences. Still, Kennan grasped for a rationale to the response. Years after Lippmann's death, the diplomat suggested to biographer Wilson Miscamble that perhaps the columnist had been motivated by his resentment of Hamilton Fish Armstrong, editor of *Foreign Affairs*, who enjoyed greater prestige after the containment thesis was published in his journal.⁹ Nevertheless, Kennan and Lippmann increasingly were drawn together by similar views on the disposition of occupied Germany

III.

⁷ Quoted in Raymond Aron, *The Imperial Republic: The United States and the World, 1945-1973*, translated by Frank Jellinek (Washington, DC: University Press of America, 1974): 298; originally published in *Foreign Policy*, No. 7 (Summer 1972) in a series of articles titled "X Plus 25."

⁸ George F. Kennan to Walter Lippmann, 6 April 1948, unsent, Box 17, George F. Kennan Papers, Mudd Library, Princeton University.

⁹ Lippmann had an affair with Armstrong's wife in 1937, breaking up his own marriage and that of the Armstrongs. Helen Byrne Armstrong and Lippmann then married causing a social stir in New York City elite circles. It was an act of betrayal for which Armstrong forever banished Lippmann from the pages of *Foreign Affairs*—even going so far as to strike out any reference to Lippmann in articles submitted to the journal. Steel's account discusses the falling out between the two men, see especially pp. 361-363. See also, Miscamble, *George F. Kennan*: 67.

Even while the war still raged against the Third Reich, Lippmann opposed proposals for a long-term Allied military occupation of postwar Germany. In *U.S. Foreign Policy*, Lippmann conceived of a “buffer belt” of states, running roughly from the Baltic to the Adriatic, which would be neutral and detached from any potential conflict between Moscow and the Western Alliance. Germany, he believed, should be the anchor in this neutral zone. After occupation became a reality in May 1945, Lippmann repeatedly pressed U.S. policymakers to forge a European peace settlement that would provide for the timely withdrawal of the Soviet, British, and American armies from the continent.

Lippmann also vigorously opposed the merger of the three Western zones into a unified West Germany administered from Bonn, on the basis that such a move would be provocative towards Moscow and that it would provide West German leaders with a mechanism for making a deal with their countrymen to the East. As early as May 1946, he proposed breaking Germany into decentralized confederation of 10 to 12 historic states.¹⁰ A rearmed Germany—either in its entirety or the merged Western zones—he warned, could not be drawn into the Western Alliance without violating Russian security interests. This was a major point of Lippmann’s attack against Kennan’s containment thesis in 1947. “The idea that we can foster the sentiment of German unity, and make her a truncated Germany economically strong, can keep her disarmed, and can use her in the anti-Soviet coalition is like trying to square the circle,” he wrote. “Applied to Germany, the policy of containment is a

¹⁰ Lippmann, *Today and Tomorrow*, 9 May 1946, “America in Germany.” Hereinafter Lippmann’s column is referred to as “T&T.”

booby-trap, constructed by men who do not understand the politics of power.”¹¹

Above all else, he argued that West Germany should not be drawn into the Western Alliance. Germany, he insisted, must remain “disarmed and demilitarized” to ensure that “the door is still open to a peaceable settlement.”¹² Even as Western diplomats negotiated the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, Lippmann recycled his earlier idea of a “buffer belt” of nations that would separate the Soviets and the West. He believed that there was “no tolerable line of policy for Germany except that agreed on during the war: that Germany shall be for this generation a neutralized and demilitarized nation. That solution, and there is no other, is possible only if Germany is not morally and politically isolated—if Germany, that is to say, is invited to take her place in a widening zone of buffer nations not actually participating in the world-wide conflict of the great powers.”¹³

In 1946-1947, George F. Kennan had hoped that by creating a unified, pro-Western German state from the American, British, and French occupation zones that the Western Alliance would have a magnet with which to lure countries from Eastern Europe. Like Aron, he saw German industrial recovery as the key to the economic rehabilitation of Europe generally. He considered it an absolute necessity to keep the bulk of German industrial potential (centered in the western zones) out of Soviet control.¹⁴

¹¹ Lippmann, *The Cold War*: 47.

¹² Lippmann, T&T, 3 January 1949, “On the Projected Alliance.”

¹³ Lippmann, T&T, 15 January 1949, “The Buffer Belt.”

¹⁴ John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment*: 38. See also Kennan’s *Memoirs, 1925-1950*: 332 - 334. During a May 6, 1947 lecture at the War College, Kennan told his audience, “In my opinion it is imperatively urgent today that the improvement of economic conditions and the revival of productive capacity in the west of Germany be made the primary object of our policy in that area and must be given top priority in all our occupation policies and that this principle be adopted as a general line of procedure of this government, binding on all of its departments and agencies.”

But by 1948, Kennan had begun to shift his position on Germany. In part, this was due to his approach to resolving the conflict with Moscow, which differed from that of other U.S. officials. Kennan came to believe that long-term tensions with the Soviets could be resolved only through a process of “behavior modification”: reacting positively to the Moscow’s substantive proposals, while firmly dismissing unacceptable actions. Kennan insisted that to effect change in Soviet foreign policy, the U.S. must be willing to acknowledge positive Russian actions with as much alacrity as it condemned aggressive actions. In practice this meant engaging the Russians in negotiations that held out some hope of addressing both sides’ security interests.¹⁵ Most principal U.S. policymakers did not share that viewpoint. Unlike Kennan, the principal decision-makers in the Truman administration far preferred the stick to the carrot. Kennan, in turn, grew increasingly alarmed that the Western policies of 1948-1950 would provoke the Russians and exacerbate their security concerns and mistrust of the West: the creation of NATO, development of the hydrogen bomb, the continued occupation of Japan and, most importantly, the creation of a West German state anchored in the Western Alliance. The net result (one which Lippmann feared as well) would be a narrowing, if not full foreclosure, of avenues to bargain and negotiate with the Soviets.¹⁶

In response to plans at the spring 1948 London Conference to unify the three western zones of occupation, Kennan countered with a Policy Planning Staff (PPS) proposal. Dubbed “Program A,” it set forth the basis for a four-power settlement in Germany that, not coincidentally, would have met all of the conditions that Lippmann

¹⁵ Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment*: 71.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

had been proposing in his columns: the military neutralization of Germany with the evacuation of all occupying armies; the eradication of zonal boundaries; the creation of a unified provisional government representing all four zones; international supervision of general elections; and the promotion of economic revival through free trade between East and West.¹⁷ Importantly, like Lippmann, Kennan believed that even though chances were slim that the Soviet Union would accept “Program A,” at least the proposal would provide the U.S. with diplomatic initiative and would squarely place the moral onus of rejection on the Kremlin.¹⁸ This was an argument similar to the one that both Lippmann and Kennan advanced in support of the Marshall Plan. So close was Kennan’s position to that of the columnist by the fall of 1948 that one can draw the inference that Lippmann contributed at least partially to turning Kennan away from a policy of division in Europe toward one of disengagement.¹⁹

¹⁷ For Kennan’s account of his shift on the German problem see his chapter titled “Germany” in volume 1 of his *Memoirs, 1925-1950*: 415-448; for “Plan A” see especially, pp. 422-426. Reprinted as Policy Planning Staff Paper #37/1, 12 November 1948, *FRUS*, Volume II, 1948: 1287-1297. See also, Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment*: 75.

¹⁸ Lippmann and Kennan by late 1948 and early 1949 were communicating regularly about the German problem. For instance, see Lippmann’s letter to Kennan of 1 February 1949, WLC, Box 81, Folder 1201—all emphasis are his. Lippmann laid out “an unequivocal set of principles” which, he told Kennan, should guide State Department policy in Germany: “(1) That the German problem is soluble only (as per your memorandum) within the framework of a European (not a west European) system . . . It is a positive and constructive way of refusing to recognize the permanence of the Iron Curtain. We should never be in the position of accepting the Iron Curtain, always in the position of insisting that it must be lifted. (2) That the partition of Germany and of Europe is, therefore, transitory. We must never allow the Russians to be the champions of German unity. We must be the champions, and put them in the position of preventing it. (3) That the liquidation of military government and the *scheduled*, though gradual withdrawal of occupation troops is a real and present objective, not a remote and theoretical one. We must put the Russians in the position of being the power that won’t evacuate Germany, and therefore won’t liberate eastern Europe from the grip of the Red Army. (The western anxiety about *our* leaving Europe and withdrawing across the Atlantic can be met by the North Atlantic Security Pact. In fact that is its chief advantage, that it supplies a juridical basis for remaining in Europe.”

¹⁹ Hixson, *George F. Kennan: Cold War Iconoclast*: 74.

Writing from Paris, Raymond Aron, the noted French sociologist and political commentator for the Paris daily *Le Figaro*, saw matters far differently from Lippmann and Kennan in 1948. In essence, the French columnist believed that European reconstruction depended on a stable German state being reincorporated economically and, eventually, militarily into the Western European community. Whereas Lippmann saw such a development as provocation, Aron regarded Germany's temporary prostration as an opportunity to end decades of Berlin's expansionism which had pitched his country into war three times in 80 years. Writing in January 1949, Aron noted "never have circumstances been so propitious for putting an end to a century-long conflict."²⁰ His ultimate goal was to create a democratic German state, anchor it within the Western Alliance, and then allow it the means to play a defensive role within the alliance.²¹

Aron had paid close attention to the Lippmann-Kennan debate in 1947. In *Le Grand Schisme* (1948), he weighed in on the plausibility of containment largely on the side of the Policy Planning Staff director. In a chapter entitled "The Alternatives to Belligerent Peace," the French commentator attacked several underlying assumptions, which framed Lippmann's *The Cold War*.²² Notably, Aron disagreed with the American columnist's contention that containment, as Kennan defined it, exceeded American capabilities; that it was a waste of valuable resources; and that the true path to a peace settlement for Europe should be based on the simultaneous

²⁰ Aron, "L'Échec des Négociations Franco-Britanniques sur l'Assemblée Européenne," 26 January 1949, *Le Figaro*; quoted in Judt, 160-161. See also, Aron, "Staline et la Révolution (Stalin and the Revolution)," 29 January 1949, *Les Articles des Politiques Internationales Du Figaro, Volume I: La Guerre Froide, 1947-1955*, edited by Georges-Henri Soutou (Paris: Editions de Fallois, 1990-1993): 167-170.

²¹ Tony Judt, *The Burden of Responsibility: Blum, Camus, Aron, and the French Twentieth Century* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1998): 161.

evacuation of Germany by both superpower armies. In attacking Lippmann's core assumptions, Aron was challenging several basic "realist" principles.²³

First, Aron rejected Lippmann's assertion that Eastern Europe belonged within the Soviet sphere of influence, noting that it was the abnormal extension of the Soviet Army into the west that allowed Communist "minorities" to set up governments obedient to Moscow. Aron argued that a true great power "determines its policies on the importance of the issues, not according to some anachronistic conception" of geographic spheres. He determined that Lippmann and American policymakers had adopted the sphere-of-influence approach "to appease Soviet fears and ambitions, without changing the global balance of forces, or opening the way for later [Soviet] expansion." Aron labeled it as a Munich-like gambit, for by yielding Poland and the other Eastern European countries on the basis of a "realist" calculation of power, the U.S. merely had whet the Kremlin's appetite. "The pseudo-realist reasoning that invokes the balance of local forces results inevitably in defeatism," Aron wrote. "How many times has one heard the same kind of reasoning, from the era when Hitler realized his first conquests!"²⁴

Turning to Lippmann's contention that American policymakers must pace themselves and be selective about applying U.S. power, Aron confronted yet another

²² Raymond Aron, *Le Grand Schisme* (Paris: Gallimard, 1948): 32-51.

²³ A useful analysis of Aron's particular version of "realism" is found in Stanley Hoffman, *Janus and Minerva: Essays in the Theory and Practice of International Relations* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1987): 52-69. Hoffmann, an Aron student, suggests "four series of differences" separated the French realist and his American counterparts: (1) his rejection of the idea that the central purpose of politics was a quest for power; (2) his critique of abstract realism and refusal to accept "normative" approach of those who use realism to predict events; (3) a keen appreciation for the domestic influences of foreign policy and a corollary belief that power ratios alone do not determine the external behavior of nations; and (4) a keen appreciation autonomy of the "world economic system" separate from the interstate system and diplomatic-strategic maneuvering. See especially, Hoffmann, *Janus and Minerva*: 55-57.

²⁴ Aron, *Le Grand Schisme*: 47.

“realist” axiom. True enough, he conceded, the American economy was not “inexhaustible” and U.S. resources and surplus food supplies “are not sufficient to feed the remainder of the world.” Aron also acknowledged the danger of runaway inflation in the American economy and, as well, that the U.S. taxpayer might be overburdened with global responsibilities. But, he countered, the Cold War would be no less expensive to wage from successively weaker geo-strategic positions. “Ask yourself, at which points in Europe the State Department could tolerate Soviet progress without suffering a resounding defeat with incalculable consequences?” Aron wrote, sketching a version of the domino theory, later widely accepted by Washington officials. Prestige was a key factor for Aron, too. One Communist success would breed another. “If [Greece and Turkey] fell, the Soviet Union would not stop in the Mediterranean, the Arabic countries would be subjected to increased pressure and would have to pullback behind a barrier that would cost no less in dear dollars.”²⁵

At the core of his critique of *The Cold War*, was Aron’s conviction that Lippmann’s prescription for evacuating all foreign armies from Germany would not provide the basis for a peace settlement. Rather, he argued, the removal of military forces would incite chaos and provide Moscow a pretext for reinserting its forces to restore order—perhaps into a unified Germany with an East-leaning government. Aron maintained (incorrectly) that Lippmann did not understand the “symbolic value” behind stationing U.S. troops in Germany—that they acted as a tripwire since “the advance of the Russian army [against them] would constitute a cause for war” and

²⁵ Aron, *Le Grand Schisme*: 47-48.

involve the Americans in hostilities from the outset.²⁶ If the withdrawal took place, Aron wrote, Europeans “would be inclined to think that the Americans would leave definitively and that the Russians will only withdraw provisionally.” With no troops in place, Washington’s loud declarations that it would not tolerate Soviet military initiatives west of the Iron Curtain would carry no weight. What Lippmann “considers an advance of progress on the road to peace is, in the eyes of Europeans, a step towards capitulation,” Aron proclaimed.²⁷

Moreover, the Frenchman challenged Lippmann’s implication that the evacuation of the Red Army from its German zone, Poland, and the rest of Central Europe would restore self-sovereignty to the eastern capitals. The Soviets already had installed their own political parties and would certainly leave behind a network of secret police and partisans. The Czechs, Aron pointed out, had capitulated to the Communists and installed a puppet government without one Soviet troop based on their soil. In Germany particularly Aron worried that the withdrawal of the occupation forces would lead to disorder which the entrenched Communists in the east would manipulate to their advantage. In the three years of occupation both Germanys had been transformed politically and economically and Aron saw little hope that their rulers could share power or work from common ground. “The Germans themselves are inclined to believe that they would sink into civil war without the occupation armies,” he observed. “Certain authoritarian practices are inevitable when millions no longer have a roof, when misery holds sway, when the

²⁶ Ibid., 49.

²⁷ Aron, *Le Grand Schisme*: 49.

ruling class has disappeared and discredited itself. If the occupying armies left, which German government would be able to master the chaos?”²⁸

Taking these factors into account, Aron judged Kennan’s containment program to be a sound, prudent, and necessary policy to achieve the prime requisite of Western European rehabilitation: halting Soviet expansion. “The political truth is that in Europe America began the fight already cornered to the wall because she lost the first battles at Tehran and Yalta,” he wrote. “When Europe east of the Stettin-Trieste line belongs alone to a tremendous military power, there are no more concessions that remain [to be given], unless one plans to yield all and withdraw from Europe. *The strategy of containment marks a final and reasonable attempt to save the part of the continent that has not yet been swallowed up.*”²⁹ Ultimately, Aron observed, Lippmann’s reservations had validity according to the rules of classical great power politics. However, they did not take into account the unusual circumstances posed by the Soviet threat against the Western nations. Aron believed that Lippmann had failed to offer a viable alternative; though, he conceded, this was not because the American had overlooked an obvious solution. “Let us say it brutally: for the moment, there is not one,” he concluded. European unity and the withdrawal of the armies of occupation were secondary objectives. The paramount goal “is to stop the expansion of the Soviets, to put back on its feet the economy of the countries west of the Iron Curtain. We must not compromise the accomplishment of this task while dreaming momentarily of an unachievable peace.”³⁰ Thus, as did leading Western

²⁸ Ibid., 49-50.

²⁹ Ibid., 47-48. My italics.

³⁰ Ibid., 50.

policymakers, Aron believed that there was virtually no room for diplomatic negotiations with Moscow.

In 1949 Lippmann and Aron offered starkly contrasting interpretations when the three powers merged their zones and created the Federal Republic of Germany. Lippmann's criticisms of U.S. policy derived from De Gaulle's own reservations about centralizing power in Bonn. Lippmann wrote that the end of military governance surely foreshadowed the end of allied occupation. "Self-government and military occupation are like oil and water, and they cannot be mixed," Lippmann told *Today and Tomorrow* readers. "We must not expect to see a German federal republic governing Western Germany while we occupy it. We must expect the parliaments and the parties which we have authorized to become the organizers of a German movement to end the occupation, and to negotiate a settlement with Eastern Germany if we are not able to negotiate it . . . That should surprise no one who is not beguiled by the notion that the postwar Germans are less nationalistic and less patriotic than any other people would be in their circumstances." Allied military occupation, he declared, was "a rapidly wasting asset."³¹

Lippmann was willing to commit American troops to Western Europe with the caveat that they not be stationed in Western Germany, which he believed ought to be neutralized and outside of the NATO Alliance. He understood perfectly well the significance—or, as he wrote, the "token" nature—of such a commitment of American forces; that, in fact, the presence of U.S. armed forces in Europe was for political rather than strategic reasons. He knew that the view from Paris, for instance,

³¹ Lippmann, T&T, "End of Military Control in Germany Foretells the End of Occupation," 15 April 1949, *Los Angeles Times*: A4.

comprehended that the commitment of these troops provided relief from renewed German militarism and domestic political chaos which allowed a focus on economic recovery. “The American guaranty, decisive as it is against Russia and against Germany, will not carry any conviction unless the western Europeans know that it will come into effect ‘automatically,’” Lippmann told readers. “It will come into effect automatically if . . . there remain on the frontiers of western Europe some Americans—it does not really matter how many—who will be involved in war the first day that war breaks out. Under the pact it should be quite feasible to work out arrangements for a permanent screen of American troops, however thin, as tangible proof of the reality of the American guaranty.”³² The real weight behind the American guaranty, Lippmann believed, lay in the threat of retaliatory nuclear and conventional air strikes against the Soviet heartland rather than a defensive action against the invading Red Army.

Further, Lippmann maintained that West German leaders would move swiftly to seek an accommodation with the Soviets and reunification with East Germany. “The Germans,” he wrote, “do not believe in our conception of the western German state. They would rather not have it. But if we insist that they have it, they will make the most of it, using the machinery of government to liquidate or nullify our controls and to work out their own terms of settlement” with the Moscow.³³ He reminded readers that the Kremlin possessed all the geographic enticements to lure the West Germans into an agreement—particularly the Danzig corridor. In making this argument, the columnist specifically raised the specter of a modern adaptation of the

³² Lippmann, T&T, “Russians, Germans, and the Pact,” 3 May 1949, *Washington Post*: 11. Lippmann still held this position even after the Soviets successfully tested their first atomic bomb later that year.

Rapallo Treaty or a new kind of Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact that could fuse Russian manpower with German industrial might. As American, British, and French foreign ministers prepared to meet with the Soviets on the German issue, Lippmann warned that the proposed Bonn government would be but a “transitory phase . . . on the way to a much more radical settlement.”³⁴ He later explained that “the Bonn constitution is manifestly an ambiguous document, designed for negotiation with the Russians . . . That does not mean that [the Germans] intend to become a Soviet satellite. [They] have bigger idea than that. But it does mean that they have, with our approval, put themselves in a position to negotiate with the Russians while we negotiate with the Russians.”³⁵

Aron interpreted the German situation in precisely the opposite manner. Partition with the development of a unified, economically revived western zone, fulfilled Paris’s two principal strategic objectives. First, a divided Germany posed a minimal military threat to France. Aron differed with Lippmann in this aspect, insisting that troops must be stationed in Germany proper as the best means both to demonstrate resolve to the Soviets and the East Germans and to provide security for Western Europe against potential future German aggression. Second, the integration of Western Germany into a pacific, Western European economic community, Aron believed, was essential to ensure full economic recovery on the continent. The true threat would be a united Germany dominated by Communists—a prospect he

³³ Lippmann, T&T, “The Soviet Feelers,” 21 April 1949.

³⁴ Lippmann, T&T, “End of Military Control in Germany Foretells the End of Occupation,” 15 April 1949.

³⁵ Lippmann, T&T, “From Bonn to Berlin,” 17 May 1949, *Washington Post*: 11.

believed to be very real. He concluded that “without Germany the West is indefensible.”³⁶

Moreover, the French columnist doubted Lippmann’s primary strategic assumption: that if the Soviets ever fully evacuated East Germany (a prospect he found unlikely) that they would honor an agreement not to intervene, especially if the political situation turned against Moscow’s favor.³⁷ At length, Aron described the transformation that had occurred in the Soviet zone of occupation between 1945 and 1948. Moscow, he explained, had created a dependency in both an economic and political sense. “At present we believe that the policy of the Kremlin aims to Sovietize Germany, in order to integrate it into the empire that Stalin is in the process of erecting in Europe,” Aron wrote. The “collective and authoritarian” economy of the East, contrasting as it did with the free market structure of the western zones, precluded a merger he argued.³⁸

Years later the French commentator recalled in his memoirs Lippmann’s “unbelievable confidence” and “intellectual arrogance” in advancing these arguments.

³⁶ Raymond Aron, “Politique Allemande (German Politics),” *Le Figaro* 30 March 1949; Aron, “La Reconstruction des Zones Occidentales (The Reconstruction of the Western Zones),” part two of “Les Deux Allemans (The Two Germanys),” in *Le Figaro* 31 August 1948. These articles are from Soutou’s collection of Aron columns in *Volume I: Le Guerre Froide: 195-199; 138-141*.

³⁷ Nor did Lippmann’s idea resonate with U.S. officials who, like Aron, deeply mistrusted Soviet intentions. John Foster Dulles, in particular, later claimed to be perplexed by it. In April 1950, for example, as U.S. officials briefed Dulles in his law office as he prepared to become the Truman administration’s top negotiator for the Japanese peace treaty, the Sullivan & Cromwell attorney made the unsolicited observation that Lippmann’s “neutralization arrangement” in the case of Germany “did not make sense” and that it seemed inappropriate in Japan as well. The problem wasn’t necessarily with rehabilitating the internal political systems in either country; rather, it lay with Moscow’s Marxist viewpoint. “Neutrality [has] no meaning for the Russians,” Dulles told his State Department briefers. Dulles’s appraisal of Lippmann was widely-held in U.S. government from the Truman years through the Johnson years. Lippmann’s writing on postwar Germany did much to discredit his analyses in the eyes of American officials. See, “Memorandum of Conversation: Japanese Peace Settlement,” 7 April 1950, 694.001/4-750, *FRUS*, Volume 6, 1950: 1161-1162.

³⁸ Aron, “La Sovietisation de la Zone Orientale (The Sovietization of the Eastern Zone),” part 1 of “Les Deux Allemans (The Two Germanys),” *Le Figaro* 25 August 1948, in Soutou, *Volume I: Le Guerre Froide: 134-136*.

“Since the Federal Republic of Germany insisted on being born, despite the prophecies of the master thinker,” Aron wrote, Lippmann “found in his imagination secret causes . . . for the reality which was incompatible with the representation he made of it.”³⁹ Why, Aron asked incredulously, would Lippmann suspect that Konrad Adenauer would conduct secret reunification negotiations with a man as ideologically incompatible with him as East German Chancellor Walter Ulbricht—a hypothesis that, Aron wrote, “anyone with a little knowledge” of either man would recognize as implausible. “The reason seems simple to me: Lippmann refused to recognize the facts and the men, because neither acted according to his global conception of history, with his theory of the primacy of nation over ideology,” Aron judged. He admitted, however, that such an emphasis, so ill-suited to events in Germany, could offer insights elsewhere. Aron’s own predilection to “the force of ideological bond in communism” caused him to come late to awareness of the depth of the Sino-Soviet split—a condition Lippmann recognized as early as 1949.⁴⁰

IV.

Despite his abiding doubts about reaching any settlement with the masters of the Kremlin, Kennan moved further toward Lippmann’s position during the 1950s. In December 1957, on the eve of NATO’s decision to deploy tactical nuclear weapons in Western Europe, Kennan delivered the Reith Lectures in a series of radio talks on the British Broadcasting Corporation. Believing the military alliance itself, but especially

³⁹ Raymond Aron, *Memoires* (Paris: Julliard, 1983): 351.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.* The English translation of Aron’s memoirs omits much of his most pointed criticism of Lippmann on these points. See Raymond Aron, *Memoirs: Fifty Years of Political Reflection*, translated by George Holloch (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1990): 184.

the placement of such nuclear weapons at the center of the great power standoff, impeded a negotiated settlement, Kennan made public the case for disengagement which he had privately argued for within the four walls of the Truman administration in 1948. Later published as, *Russia, the Atom, and the West* (1958), the Reith Lectures ignited a spirited debate on both sides of the Atlantic. Kennan proposed a program based on withdrawal, neutralization, and the preservation of a nuclear-free zone in Central Europe, the first two points closely paralleling what Lippmann had been writing in *Today and Tomorrow* for much of the decade. Kennan's plan featured four principle parts: (1) the removal of all foreign armies from Germany and the establishment of a large demilitarized zone around central Europe; (2) the unification and neutralization of Germany—most significantly that it would not be integrated into NATO; (3) the removal of nuclear weapons from continental Europe; (4) a recognition that Germany was the center of the Cold War conflict and that interests in Asia and Africa should, at most, take secondary precedence.⁴¹

Raymond Aron, one of the earliest and most perceptive critics of Kennan's Reith Lecture thesis, delivered powerful commentary at the January 1958 meeting of the Congress of Cultural Freedom in Paris which Kennan also attended. Aron attacked Kennan's central argument which, in Kennan's words, was that "the existing division of Europe was unsound, intolerable, and had to be changed." Without challenging the truth of that statement, Aron confined himself to discussing its practicality. In fact, the *Le Figaro* columnist argued, Western Alliance leaders and the men in the Kremlin rather valued the stability that inhered in partition. He explained, "the present partition of Europe has been held to be less dangerous than

⁴¹ George F. Kennan, *Russia, the Atom, and the West* (New York: Harper and Company, 1958): 32-82.

any other solution. Why? Because if we try to change it, we have to restore the fluidity to the European situation.” Admitting that the division of Germany was “abnormal,” even “absurd,” Aron nevertheless maintained that “it is a clear-cut” situation “and everybody knows where the demarcation line is and nobody is very much afraid of what could happen . . . So a clear partition of Europe is considered, rightly or wrongly, to be less dangerous than any other arrangement.”⁴² Aron also argued that mutual disengagement was liable to Soviet a reinsertion of military forces into Eastern European nations in which internal political conditions did not meet the Kremlin’s expectations. He explained that the Soviets “have formulated a new doctrine of what I call *la Sainte Alliance*. It is the right of ‘disinterested help’ to any Communist government threatened by ‘counterrevolution.’” Kennan, who at the time thought this the weaker of the Frenchman’s objections later admitted, “in retrospect, [I] give Aron credit for a most remarkable prophetic insight, because in making this point he offered, ten years in advance of the event, a classic formulation of the so-called Brezhnev doctrine.”⁴³

⁴² George F. Kennan, *Memoirs: 1950-1963* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1972): 252-253.

⁴³ Kennan, *Memoirs: 1950-1963* 254. Reflecting on the Reith Lectures 25 years later, Aron was most struck by Kennan’s naivete about Western statements calling for German reunification. “Even today, Kennan’s indignation astonishes me,” Aron wrote. The Frenchman maintained that Kennan (like Lippmann) had badly under-estimated the political support for the partition of Germany. The West was at a completely disadvantageous position: possessing no means to enforce free elections in the GDR; unable to accept “legally or politically” the *status quo*, e.g., Soviet troops stationed 250 kilometers from the Rhine. Partition suited their purposes so long as they did not formally endorse it with a settlement. Western leaders, Aron recalled, “rejected in principle the division of Germany and Europe, realizing that this rejection helped to maintain it.” Aron was at a loss to explain Kennan’s “confidence in a Russo-American disengagement agreement,” since the lesson of Hungary was that an Eastern European communist government would invoke the Warsaw Pact to bring help from their Soviet allies.

On Kennan’s move away from containment generally, Aron wrote perceptively of the diplomat. “Reserved almost to the point of being cold, a profound moralist, an ‘elitist’ perhaps without knowing it, he was less and less fond of an America that was becoming more and more populist,” Aron observed. “His evolution, from the article he signed as X to his current positions, can probably be explained by his growing detachment from his own country . . . Since [his X-Article] he has

The Reith Lectures also elicited a flurry of editorial commentary in the U.S.—much of it negative. Washington commentator Joe Alsop, who generally took a hard line position toward the Berlin problem in his “Matter of Fact” column, gave Kennan a respectful hearing as a Soviet expert. But Alsop believed that Kennan also “suffers from an almost neurotic horror of military power in all its modern forms” and that that “weakness led him into patches of plain silliness” such as his call to pull strategic nuclear forces off the continent. Alsop also believed that American troops must remain in the former German capital and that any negotiations with the Soviets or East Germans would be a form of appeasement. While taking a fairly gentle line toward the diplomat, Alsop told readers that Kennan’s Reith lectures, whether or not he intended it, fed “a hunger for cozy self-delusion” among those who were firm proponents of accommodation with Soviets.⁴⁴

James B. Conant, then head of the American Council on Germany (a group that counted among its leadership Mrs. Ellen Zinsser McCloy, wife of former High Commissioner John McCloy) rallied Dean Acheson and other prominent foreign policy official to debunk Kennan’s claims. The American Council on Germany drew up a press release and statement for Acheson in which Kennan’s old boss and erstwhile defender of the postwar world he’d done so much to shape, denounced his former subordinate. Acheson complained of Kennan’s fuzzy thinking and insisting that his former PPS director had “never . . . grasped the realities of power

constantly repented his ‘finest hour,’ expatiated his historical role.” See Raymond Aron, *Memoirs: Fifty Years of Political Reflection*: 195-196; 175.

⁴⁴ Joseph Alsop, “A Hunger for Self-Delusion,” *Matter of Fact*, 19 January 1958, *Washington Post*: E5.

relationships but takes a rather mystical attitude toward them.”⁴⁵ The *Washington Post* wrote that Acheson had “gone a lot further than necessary” in differentiating the views of the Democratic Party foreign-policy makers from Kennan’s disengagement thesis. “To characterize Mr. Kennan’s views as ‘mystical’ and his statements as ‘almost Messianic,’” the *Post* editors observed, “is to engage in the same sort of unfair attack of which Mr. Acheson himself was so often the target.” Columnist James Reston described the Achesonian assault as a “murderous haymaker.”⁴⁶ A few months later, this time with his own pen, Acheson attacked Kennan’s plan as a form of “new isolationism,” a “timid and defeatist policy of retreat,” and a return to “the old yearnings and errors” of the interwar years. Acheson’s gift for invective, so often aimed at Lippmann, now trained on the diplomat. “‘Disengagement’ it is called now; but it is the same futile—and lethal—attempt to crawl back into the cocoon of history,” Acheson declared in a *Foreign Affairs* article in the spring of 1958.⁴⁷

The episode marked one of the strange role reversals of the intellectual feud over containment. Kennan, the architect, simultaneously was excoriated by one of the principal developers of the policy he had hatched a decade earlier and defended by the man who had inspected and failed that same articulation of containment.

Kennan forwarded a copy of the Reith Lectures to Lippmann, lamenting that his BBC broadcasts had been “widely misinterpreted.” Lippmann replied, “I need hardly tell

⁴⁵ See “Acheson Rebuffs Kennan on Withdrawal of Troops,” 12 January 1958, *New York Times*: 1, 25. See also Hixon’s capable account of the Reith Lecture episode in *George F. Kennan: Cold War Iconoclast*: 171-193. For a recent overview of the Acheson-Kennan dynamic see, Robert L. Beisner, “The Secretary, the Spy, and the Sage: Dean Acheson, Alger Hiss, and George Kennan,” *Diplomatic History* 27 (No. 1, January 2003): 1-14.

⁴⁶ “Kennan in the Cold,” 14 January 1958, *Washington Post*: A14; James Reston, “Washington: Elevate Them Guns a Little Lower,” 19 January 1958, *New York Times*: E10.

⁴⁷ See Dean G. Acheson, “The Illusion of Disengagement,” April 1958, *Foreign Affairs* 36 (No. 3): 371-382.

you how much I am in sympathy with the general line.”⁴⁸ He wrote an April 1958 *Atlantic Monthly* article “supporting the central thesis” of the Reith Lectures as he told Kennan weeks before publication.⁴⁹ Lippmann’s examination of disengagement was equal parts defense of Kennan and attack on Acheson. In Western Europe, he explained, “the Western allies have come to a dead end in the road which they had been following in the postwar years. The road which Mr. Kennan pointed out is the only alternative which has some promise of leading to the reunification of Germany and to the national independence of the East European states.”

Lippmann had been writing about alternatives to European occupation for 15 years and, to highlight the point, quoted at length from a 5 October 1943 *Today and Tomorrow* column, written at the start of Allied deliberation over the postwar German state. Lippmann had favored sending Allied armies into Germany “for the purpose of disarming her, of arresting the criminals, of recovering the loot, and of making visible the reality of her defeat, and then to retire outside the frontiers, except perhaps to hold the strategic gateways and certain strategic economic resources such as the Ruhr and Silesia.”⁵⁰ To do otherwise, to conduct a prolonged occupation would create such a stilted European reliance on the presence of armed forces that “as soon as the occupying powers leave, all of Europe will tremble at what may happen, and the whole artificial settlement will be in turmoil after ten or fifteen years hence.”

Lippmann would find confirmation for these ideas in General Charles De Gaulle’s

⁴⁸ Kennan to Lippmann, 4 December 1957, WLC, Box 81, folder 1202; Lippmann to Kennan, 10 December 1957, WLC, Box 81, folder 1202. Kennan would again write Lippmann to complain of the “malice and irresponsibility of some of the attacks on me at home. . . .” See Kennan to Lippmann, 10 February 1958, WLC, Box 81, folder 1202.

⁴⁹ Lippmann to Kennan, 1 February 1958, WLC, Box 81, folder 1202. Walter Lippmann, “Mr. Kennan and Reappraisal in Europe,” *Atlantic Monthly* 201 (No. 4, April 1958): 33-37.

⁵⁰ Lippmann, T&T, “Occupying Germany?” 5 October 1943.

own opinions—which the French leader would express to the columnist later in the 1940s. Kennan’s notion of disengagement, of course, had set off European fears of American withdrawal within Lippmann’s time frame.⁵¹

Thus, disengagement was hardly a “newfangled theory, the pipe dream of a mystic, the imagining of an unworldly scholar, or worse still, the design of an appeaser of Communism.” It represented an “alternative” road the Allies may have chosen were it not for their “war psychosis” and “had they been lucid and realistic about Stalin.” The policies of Truman and Acheson, followed by Eisenhower and Dulles, “combine advocacy of unification and liberation with a stern opposition to military evacuation.” These “great realists,” Lippmann wrote, based their foreign policy on an “extraordinarily naïve notion . . . that the Western power is paramount and that Soviet power is certain to decline.” *Sputnik* and the robust expansion of the Russian economy, Lippmann noted, suggested otherwise.

Although “an old believer in Mr. Kennan’s side of the argument,” Lippmann had reservations. Disengagement was a good starting point for the “process of reappraisal, reorientation, and re-education” of policy. But he did not agree with three of Kennan’s points: 1) a neutral Germany should remain completely disarmed of its own conventional forces; 2) continental Western Europe should be entirely free of nuclear weapons; and 3) the U.S. should not be required to assist developing countries through an enhanced foreign aid program.⁵²

Despite these differences, Lippmann momentarily shared Kennan’s core contention that foreign troops should be removed from Germany as the basis upon

⁵¹ Lippmann, “Mr. Kennan and Reappraisal in Europe,” 33-34.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 35-36.

which to move toward a political settlement. In early 1959, he made just that point to Netherlands Ambassador to the U.S., J. Herman Van Roijen. “I am sure you cannot suspect me of denigrating the NATO guarantee, which is something I have advocated continuously since before the First World War, and about which I have written innumerable articles and several books,” Lippmann explained to Van Roijen, in a letter which followed a spirited face-to-face exchange. “My point about the NATO guarantee is that it will be in effect even if there are no United States ground forces of German soil, and that U.S. involvement in a war would be as automatic as anything can be, once a Soviet missile or a bomb were launched against any NATO country. I do not believe that the United States guarantee depends upon the five divisions on German soil.”⁵³ Kennan, he argued publicly, had demonstrated “that the Acheson-Dulles-Adenauer policy is at a dead end, and that it has become necessary for the Western allies to reorient themselves from a policy based on a military occupation to a policy directed toward military disengagement.” In conclusion, Lippmann wrote, the “principle of disengagement” acknowledged “that *we are dealing with an equal power, not an inferior one*, and that a settlement must therefore be based on bargaining.” He added, such a settlement is “designed not only to protect our own vital interests. It must respect the vital interests of the Russians.”⁵⁴

The disengagement debate lingered into 1959 when Lippmann abruptly modified his position—accepting the semi-permanent partition of Germany on much the same basis that Raymond Aron had argued for a year earlier. In a four-part series of *Today and Tomorrow* in April 1959, Lippmann explained that he had now shifted

⁵³ Lippmann to J. Herman Van Roijen, 9 January 1959, reprinted in John Morton Blum, *Public Philosopher: Selected Letters of Walter Lippmann* (New York: Ticknor and Fields, 1985): 593.

from advocacy of reunification to a settlement over the status of West Berlin. “I belong to the minority who have argued that German national feeling will not accept the partition of Germany, that some day and somehow the West Germans will come to terms with East Germany and the Soviet Union in order to reunite their country,” Lippmann told readers. “The case for a politically neutral Germany and the disengagement of non-German troops has been inspired by an attempt to find an orderly settlement of the problem of German reunification—to avert a disorderly deal brought about by an explosion of frustrated national German patriotism.”⁵⁵ But Lippmann’s sources—particularly those within the new government of French president Charles De Gaulle—were telling him that this position contradicted the political realities. His side of the argument, he admitted, failed principally because both Western and Soviet leaders valued the relative stability that partition engendered. The rhetoric of re-unification, Lippmann explained, had been superseded by this practical effect; in short, there was no political will to reunite Germany. Western leaders “do not say it but they have come to know that the two Germanys cannot be ‘reunited in freedom,’ that is to say by liquidating the Communist regime in East Germany,” he wrote in *Today and Tomorrow*. “There are now two German states, and every respectable European statesman realizes that they cannot be united within any foreseeable future and under any conditions which are now conceivable.”⁵⁶

Lippmann adjusted his position in part because Nikita Khrushchev had raised tensions over Berlin in late-1958, demanding a final settlement for the status of the

⁵⁴ Lippmann, “Mr. Kennan and Reappraisal in Europe,” 37.

⁵⁵ Lippmann, T&T, 9 April 1959, “The Two Germanys and Berlin, III: The Berlin Crisis.”

city and postwar Germany. In October 1958, Lippmann interviewed the Soviet premier in Moscow. Khrushchev's belligerence and the depth of his paranoia about Western efforts to re-arm Germany disturbed Lippmann who thought that the Kremlin had crawled back into a "cocoon of pre-1941" fears.⁵⁷ Khrushchev pressed for a resolution of the German peace treaty and a new status for Berlin. He expressed fears that Washington was preparing to furnish West Germany with nuclear weapons and turn it eastward toward Russia. The Soviet leader described Chancellor Adenauer as "belligerent" and equated him with Paul von Hindenburg, the man who helped elevate Hitler to power. Khrushchev read developments in Germany to be "much like the eve of the Second World War," and accused Washington officials of "actually contributing to the remilitarization" of West Germany. "Americans seem not to realize the dangers that may come to themselves," Khrushchev warned Lippmann. "The U.S. may someday pay with her blood for having encouraged such people."⁵⁸ Lippmann's book which recounted that interview, *The Communist World and Ours* (1958), forecast the difficulties that lay ahead on the German issue and suggested possible avenues for negotiations on Berlin that would meet some of Khrushchev's security concerns.⁵⁹

By April 1959, Kennan had quietly scuttled his disengagement thesis and, like Lippmann, had come to accept the permanent division of Germany. Also, like Lippmann he was beginning to look for a settlement on Berlin—the flash point that

⁵⁶ Lippmann, T&T, 6 April 1959, "The Two Germanys and Berlin, I: The Berlin Crisis."

⁵⁷ Steel, *Walter Lippmann and the American Century*: 510-511. For the reference to "cocoon," see also Vladislav Zubok, "Working Paper No. 6: Khrushchev and the Berlin Crisis, 1958-1962," Cold War International History Project, Virtual Archive, available on-line at: <http://www.wwics.si.edu> .

⁵⁸ Helen B. Lippmann, "Notes on conversation with Khrushchev," 24 October 1958, Moscow, WLC, Box 238, Folder 27, Series VII.

⁵⁹ Walter Lippmann, *The Communist World and Ours* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1958).

might upend that tenuous division. Reading several installments of *Today and Tomorrow*, Kennan sent Lippmann an advance copy of a speech he delivered before the Executives' Club in Chicago. "I am greatly encouraged to know that our thoughts are running along lines so similar but fearful that if I do not show you this draft, as it stood when I finished it yesterday, you will suspect me of plagiarism."⁶⁰ In his "The Two Germanys and Berlin" series Lippmann had counseled that policymakers negotiate a three-part program for the withdrawal of all foreign armies from Berlin, *de facto* recognition of East Germany, and international city status for the historic German capital.⁶¹ "If we could bring the two German states into a legal relationship with each other, there would be a chance that the movement toward Germany unity, which is certain to grow, would be open and visible rather than clandestine and conspiratorial," Lippmann told readers. The plan aimed "to buy a temporary standstill at the risk that at some later date there will be an explosion of pent-up popular feelings which we have managed to frustrate."⁶² Kennan largely agreed on this course as a basis to proceed with negotiations.

Exasperated with Washington's diplomatic intransigence, Lippmann lashed out at Dean Acheson and others who were publicly propagating a hard-line stance in Berlin. In his 22 October 1959 installment of *Today and Tomorrow* the columnist criticized the "old soldiers" of the Truman administration—naming Acheson, the former president, and former PPS director Paul Nitze, the chief author of NSC-68—for leading the chorus against a diplomatic settlement. "Their thesis is that the status

⁶⁰ Kennan to Lippmann, 8 April 1959, WLC, Box 81, folder 1202. See Lippmann's brief reply of 9 April 1959 in the same folder.

⁶¹ See, Lippmann, T&T, "The Berlin Crisis (Part 3 of 4), 8 April 1959; Lippmann, T&T, "The Berlin Crisis (Part 4 of 4), 9 April 1959.

of West Berlin is not a negotiable question; that the right policy for this country is to refuse to discuss the status of West Berlin; and to defy the Soviets to do anything about West Berlin,” Lippmann explained.⁶³ Either Moscow would be “overawed by our firmness” or the U.S. would be prepared to wage a “limited” war over access to the city. Lippmann dismissed these officials as intent on trying “to relive the battles in which they won their fame and glory.” They practiced, he wrote, a form of “negativism” that “compels the country to oppose all moves toward accommodation . . . an impossible platform from which to exercise world leadership.” His harshest assessment, a familiar one stated more bluntly, was that they were scaring public opinion into supporting “a rigid and unchanging diplomacy.” As they had done to win public sanction for the Marshall Plan, NATO, and vast defense expenditures, Acheson and company were now acting on the “belief that without perpetual tension and fear the democracies cannot be induced to support the necessary armaments, or trusted not to appease the adversary and to sink into cowardice and lethargy. What lies at the root of this thing is the belief that democracies cannot be led and that they must be terrorized.” American officials must “learn how to persuade and convince . . . not merely [how] to frighten and stampede” the public, Lippmann concluded.⁶⁴

Nitze, in answering Lippmann’s column, dismissed the option of bargaining with the Soviets. “The main questions for us about Berlin are two: (a) Shall we venture war rather than yield? (b) If not, shall we acquiesce through a negotiation?” Nitze replied in a personal letter on 26 October 1959. “My answer to each is

⁶² Lippmann, T&T, 9 April 1959, “The Two Germanys and Berlin, IV: The Berlin Crisis.”

⁶³ Lippmann, T&T, “Choppy Waters,” 22 October 1959.

⁶⁴ Ibid. Lippmann’s description of the state of perpetual tension that U.S. officials believed that they must create to carry forward their policies, resembled the political philosophy which Nitze expressed

negative. We should not venture a war. If we are to be routed out of a rightful position, we should not legitimate the act through a negotiated agreement.”⁶⁵

Furthermore, Nitze disputed Lippmann’s solution that a phased withdrawal of allied and Soviet forces over a five-year period, followed by emplacement of United Nations observers, would provide sufficient assurances for the political autonomy of the city. “With the emergence of a clear prospect that the legitimacy of the East German regime was to be conceded at some further date and the protection of allied forces withdrawn from West Berlin, the West Berliners would perform feel compelled to accommodate as best they could with the surrounding superior power,” Nitze insisted. “The result—however the language of the agreement might tend to obscure it—would be a defeat for us and an overturning of our rights.” Lippmann’s reply cut quick to the heart of the difference between he and the principal Washington architects of cold war policy. “As far as I can see, in your mind negotiating means yielding,” Lippmann wrote Nitze. “That I do not believe. I am looking for a settlement in Berlin which will last for a long period of time, if necessary for a generation if it is going to take that long before Germany is reunified. *I am unprepared to believe that any negotiation means acquiescence in abandoning Berlin.*”⁶⁶

V.

years later. See Nitze’s *Tension Between Opposites: Reflections on the Practice and Theory of Politics* (New York: Scribners, 1993): especially pp. 7-21.

“Choppy Waters” also produced a spirited defense from Dean Acheson who drafted a blustery letter to the *Washington Post*, which had printed Lippmann’s column. Unsurprisingly, he also rejected Lippmann’s contention that the status of West Berlin was negotiable. Acheson, the brilliant, blunt, at times bullying, secretary of state was one of the prime architects of the postwar world. His biographer, James Chace, noted with admiration that Acheson was “the quintessential American realist” in the later half of the 20th Century and the most influential foreign policy shaper since John Quincy Adams. Acheson, Chace judges, knew the uses and possibilities of applying American power better than any of his contemporaries.⁶⁷ Nevertheless, Lippmann hotly contested Acheson’s Cold War strategies for more than two decades. On this point of dramatizing and exaggerating the ideological dimensions of the Cold War—and in no small measure because Acheson helped globalize the containment policy—the columnist and secretary of state famously and angrily parted. Their division widened after Acheson left office.

Acheson and Lippmann clashed over the scope, definition, and various incarnations of the containment strategy. Acheson, though not an ideologue, took a hard-line, militarist approach to containing the Soviet Union and, later, China. Where Lippmann was likely to counsel negotiation, Acheson was equally likely to recommend force and intimidation—especially in the years after he left government.⁶⁸ The Truman Doctrine, which Acheson helped craft during his term as

⁶⁵ Paul Nitze to Lippmann, 26 October 1959, Box 32, Folder 5, Nitze Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

⁶⁶ Lippmann to Paul Nitze, 27 October, Nitze Papers, Box 32, folder 5, LC. My italics.

⁶⁷ James Chace, *Acheson: The Secretary of State Who Created the American World* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1998): 12; and see especially, 439-442.

⁶⁸ Douglas Brinkley’s *Dean Acheson: The Cold War Years* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1992).

undersecretary of state, was the first point of contention. Lippmann supported the bill to aid Greece and Turkey against Communist-led insurgencies. But he warned readers in March 1947 that in practice the Truman Doctrine was open-ended, that it dispersed American power, and transformed the Soviet-American power struggle in Europe into a global “ideological crusade.”⁶⁹ Acheson retaliated at an April 1947 dinner party, accusing the columnist of “sabotaging” U.S. foreign policy. They almost came to blows—as Lippmann’s protective wife, Helen, kept a careful eye on the combatants.⁷⁰ From that episode forward neither man would agreed on the basic goals of U.S. containment strategy: Acheson, the unilateralist, pushing an expansive policy and Lippmann, the collaborationist, countering with limits and reservations.

Acheson had a long memory about Lippmann’s attacks during his term as secretary of state.⁷¹ At the end of the McCarthy period, Lippmann published a gloomy book on the failures of democratic government, *The Public Philosophy*, for which Acheson gave a stormy private review. Lippmann “makes the amazing discovery,” Acheson wrote Harry Truman, that a principal defect of modern democracies was the encroachment on executive power by legislative bodies “pandering to an ignorant and volatile public” through mass media. “If he had known this and used his power—which isn’t much but something—to support the executive when we really had one instead of joining the chorus of misrepresentation, I could read him with more patience,” he concluded.⁷² James Chace notes that much of the

⁶⁹ See, for example, Lippmann, T&T, “Policy or Crusade?” 18 March 1947; Lippmann, T&T, “Outline of a Working Policy,” 25 March 1947.

⁷⁰ Steel, *Walter Lippmann and the American Century*: 439-440.

⁷¹ A subject covered in Chapter Five.

⁷² Dean G. Acheson to Harry S. Truman, 20 January 1955, Papers of Dean G. Acheson, Harry S. Truman Presidential Library, Independence, MO (hereinafter referred to as “HSTL”).

diplomat's deep resentment was due to Lippmann's peer status within the same establishment circles; that, in fact, both men shared so many mutual friends. Yet, "Lippmann rarely hesitated to attack Acheson frontally when he disagreed with him," Chace writes. "Precisely because of Lippmann's brilliance and authority, Acheson found his attacks particularly galling."⁷³

Out of power, Acheson showed less restraint when it came to using military muscle to confront the Soviets.⁷⁴ This further drove a wedge between he and Lippmann. Their fundamental differences on containment resurfaced along those fault lines during the Berlin crises in 1959 and 1961. Acheson felt Eisenhower should have been more assertive in the face of Khrushchev's threats in 1959 and, during a trip to Berlin that fall, he told German officials as much and issued hard-line public statements. When Lippmann rebuked him in a column, Acheson expressed impatience with those who "call a retreat a negotiation" in the hope that "the element of consent prevents it from being a defeat and a loss." He told Manlio Brosso, Italy's ambassador to the U.S., "I am most unsympathetic to this sort of self-deception."⁷⁵ Acheson advised Kennedy that he must be "willing to fight for Berlin" and advised a military buildup in Europe to the exclusion of economic or diplomatic initiatives. If the Russians or East Germans cut off access to Berlin, he told Kennedy, then NATO should send an armored division eastward on the autobahn to see how serious they were.⁷⁶ By contrast, the columnist counseled the administration to avoid a direct confrontation with Khrushchev by offering *de facto* recognition of East Germany in

⁷³ Chace, *Acheson*: 199.

⁷⁴ A theme stressed in Brinkley's *Dean Acheson*.

⁷⁵ David McLellan and David Acheson, eds., *Among Friends: Personal Letters of Dean Acheson* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1980): 173.

exchange for unfettered access to Berlin. “Walter Lippmann is the archangel of appeasement,” Acheson thundered in another letter to Truman.⁷⁷ “The negotiation would provide some decent covering for the nakedness of the submission,” he sneered, analyzing Lippmann’s position in a letter to Eelco Van Kleffens, the former Netherlands ambassador to the U.S. from 1947-1950.⁷⁸ He continued to push his case for bold action partly because he was concerned that Lippmann might influence the impressionable and inexperienced New Frontiersmen with his message of accommodating the Soviets. So stark was the division between the two men on the Berlin issue that national security adviser McGeorge Bundy coined the terms “Achesonians” and the “Lippmanns” for the firm and soft approaches, respectively. Both wanted to preserve Western access to Berlin, Bundy explained to President Kennedy, but they diverged “on whether there is any legitimate Soviet interest to which we can give some reassurance . . . At one extreme are those who feel that the [Soviets’] central purpose is to drive us out of Berlin and destroy the European alliance as a consequence. On the other extreme are those who feel that if we think in terms of accommodation, we should be able to avoid a real crisis.”⁷⁹

Acheson’s unpublished reply to “Choppy Waters” fit the pattern. He wrote, “Mr. Lippmann is a master of words and can use the nicest words to cover the ugliest

⁷⁶ Chace, *Acheson*: 385-386.

⁷⁷ Acheson to Harry S. Truman, 21 September 1961, Box 166 (1961), Dean G. Acheson Papers, HSTL.

⁷⁸ McLellan and Acheson, *Among Friends*: 211.

⁷⁹ McGeorge Bundy to President Kennedy, “Specific answers to your questions of May 29th relating to the USSR,” 29 May 1961, President’s Office Files, USSR-Vienna Meeting, Background Documents, 1961 (A), John F. Kennedy Library, Boston, MA, (hereinafter referred to as “JFKL”). For Acheson’s aggressive advice for handling the Berlin Crisis see, Chace, *Acheson*: 383-394. One NSC staff member from the period seemed to sum up Kennedy administration perceptions of Acheson. “He was a great man,” recalled Francis Bator, a European specialist. “But his judgment by then, on a lot of things, was, I think, in error. And I think it was in error in the Cuban Missile Crisis and was in error when he said, ‘Put tanks in Berlin.’ My own guess is that during any of those incidents, if he had been Secretary of

situations.”⁸⁰ To illustrate that claim, Acheson referenced the 19 May 1933 *Today and Tomorrow* column (a favorite for the Lippmann’s detractors) in which he had described a moderate speech by Adolf Hitler as representing “the authentic voice of a genuinely civilized people.”⁸¹ From there, Acheson proceeded to argue that negotiating on West Berlin was not a “coming to terms” with the Russians so much as it was a capitulation, a decision to abandon Western interests and the city’s populace. “It’s my view that to sell West Berlin would not only be beneath contempt but would justifiably destroy all confidence which others nations have in the United States and dissolve our alliances,” Acheson wrote. Khrushchev’s proposal—mirroring Lippmann’s—to create a free city and evacuate foreign troops was mitigated, Acheson argued, by the fact the Kremlin’s “East German puppets” already were on the record as saying that Allied withdrawal would be a prologue to Berlin’s incorporation into East Germany.

Further, Acheson rejected the notion that U.N. forces could guarantee the free status of the city. “All such formulae ignore the basic reality that the security of West Berlin depends upon the presence of the allied troops now there and the readiness of the three governments to defend their rights by force if they have to,” he wrote. Under present circumstances, the former secretary of state concluded, negotiations were tantamount to “concession and retreat.” He added, “To this I am completely opposed and I am not deceived by calling a retreat a negotiation. On this point I am, as Mr. Lippmann charges, ‘rigid,’ and I believe any man of honor and sense should be

State, his own decisions would have been very different than the advice that he gave.” Francis Bator, interview with author, 25 January 2001, Cambridge, MA.

⁸⁰ Dean Acheson, Letter to the Editor of the *Washington Post* (unsent), 26 October 1959, Box 32, folder5, Nitze Papers, LC.

. . . and to do so requires steady nerves. To lack them is not a disgrace; but it is a handicap which unfits one for the role. Perhaps one thing can be said for old soldiers; it is generally known what sort of nerves they have.”⁸² Acheson, like Nitze, preferred to focus on the mechanics of negotiating over West Berlin. Neither man challenged Lippmann’s under-girding criticism that in order to win public support for their policies they had promoted public fears of Soviet aggression by inflating the Kremlin’s relative power and speculating wildly about Russian intentions.⁸³

VI.

Lippmann clearly preferred diplomacy and accommodation to military confrontation as he continued to write during the Kennedy administration about the contentious issue of access to West Berlin. Worrying about the potential for minor superpower infractions there to spiral into a nuclear confrontation, he repeatedly counseled administration officials to negotiate a new status for the city that would preserve Western freedom and access but also recognize the permanent division of Germany. In addition, he urged calm in the wake of the Vienna meeting during which Soviet premier Nikita Khrushchev ratcheted up the pressure by demanding that a solution to the division of Germany be reached by the end of 1961. “The wave of the future is not Communist domination of the world . . . [but it] is social reform and social

⁸¹ See Lippmann, T&T, “Hitler’s Speech,” 19 May 1933, *Los Angeles Times*: A4.

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ Lippmann had been troubled by the Truman administration’s tendency to stoke fears in Congress and the public to win support for its programs. In 1948, he wrote, in order to justify the Truman Doctrine “it has been necessary to argue ourselves into the assumption that nothing can be settled. From that it is a small step to the view that nothing ought to be settled since any settlement requires concessions and compromises, and thus to acquire the habit of not looking for, of not trying to think out, ways and means of breaking the stalemate.” Lippmann, T&T, “The Costs of Containment,” 10 February 1948.

revolution driving towards the goal of national independence and equality of personal status,” Lippmann comforted readers. “In this historical tendency, Mr. Khrushchev will be . . . ‘the locomotive of history’ only if we set ourselves up to be the road blocks of history.”⁸⁴

Neither President Kennedy nor his advisors shared Lippmann’s emphasis on accommodating Soviet interests in Germany. Berlin was one of the Cold War crises points that was of minimal strategic importance to Washington but was of incalculable value because of its symbolism and the American prestige invested in its independent status. The Kennedy administration believed it could not consider Khrushchev’s demands, nor even negotiate with East German officials to preserve access to the city, lest it cause the West German government in Bonn to become disillusioned with the Western Alliance and move toward a closer accommodation with the East. Above all else, they feared the destabilizing effect upon their alliance and the existing power structure for, if nationalists came to power in Bonn, West Germany might as easily strike off on its own and seek to reunify Germany forcibly.⁸⁵ The columnist, however, believed Kennedy could not “stand pat” on the issue of the future of Berlin, continuing to rely on a policy based upon Western threats of waging a thermonuclear war to preserve freedom in West Berlin.

Having met again with Khrushchev in April 1961, Lippmann was convinced of the Soviet premier’s resolve to stem the flow of East Germans and to limit the

⁸⁴ Lippmann, T&T, “The Folly of Despair,” 13 June 1961.

⁸⁵ Frank Costigliola, “The Pursuit of Atlantic Community: Nuclear Arms, Dollars and Berlin,” in Thomas G. Paterson, ed., *Kennedy’s Quest for Victory: American Foreign Policy, 1961-1963* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989): 37-47.

impressive Western spy apparatus in the city.⁸⁶ At that meeting in Sochi on the Crimean, Khrushchev told Lippmann that the Soviets wanted a decisive settlement on the status of West Berlin and Western *de facto* recognition of the East German regime. He described these outstanding issues as the “last piece of shrapnel” left in the flesh of Europe. “If none of this is acceptable, we will sign [a separate peace treat] with East Germany, refuse to recognize the status of West Berlin, and then all contact with West Berlin will have to be [through] East Germany.” He added that in the event of a Western Alliance dispute with the East Germans over access to the city, that Moscow “would stop by force” access to Berlin “in support of our allies.” The Soviet premier seemed eager to make Washington officials live up to their bellicose rhetoric. “Will the West really start a war over West Berlin? I answer, ‘No, no, no!’” Khrushchev shouted at his guest. “I can’t believe western statesmen are so insane as to go to war over 2.5 million people in West Berlin who are threatened by no one.” But, Khrushchev observed, “better [that it be] done now before the former Hitler officials in the West [German] government receive atomic arms.”⁸⁷ Lippmann, in several columns after that meeting, described Berlin as a pressure point where the Soviets could, with minimal effort—“simply by closing a bridge or losing some papers”—exert great pressure upon the West. Accordingly, Lippmann counseled Kennedy to disregard his advisors who recommended that Russia “could be driven

⁸⁶ See for example Lippmann’s account in his book, *The Coming Tests with Russia* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1961).

⁸⁷ Helen B. Lippmann, “Notes of Meeting with Nikita Khrushchev, 10 April 1961, Sochi, Crimea, WLC, Box 239, Folder 31, Series VII.

into a corner, that it can be intimidated, and that it does not have to be listened to.”⁸⁸

It was time to negotiate, Lippmann wrote.

By publicly renouncing the fiction that the ultimate objective was to reunify East and West Germany, Lippmann believed Kennedy could win points by taking the initiative. In a 29 May 1961 memorandum preparing the president for the Vienna meeting, national security adviser McGeorge Bundy outlined Lippmann’s three-part recommendation. According to Bundy, the columnist encouraged Kennedy to “stand absolutely firm” on Western right of access to Berlin while pointing out the “extreme danger” of interfering with that right. Lippmann also suggested Kennedy defer negotiations on the Berlin question until after the German elections in September 1961. Most significantly, he raised the possibility of offering “*de facto acceptance*” of the East German Republic in exchange for Soviet guarantees of Western access to Berlin. “Lippmann thinks that without recognizing the GDR in formal terms, we can yet find ways of meeting what he thinks may be the fundamental Soviet impulse,” Bundy explained, “—a need for security in Eastern Europe and the fear of what the post-Adenauer Germany may look like.”⁸⁹ This put Lippmann at odds with prominent members of the Washington intelligentsia. “[Joe] Alsop is for a strong and essentially unyielding position, carried all the way to war,” Bundy pointed out in the days after the Vienna Summit. “Lippmann is for a negotiated solution . . . he would like to have us to propose measures looking toward the genuine neutralization of West Berlin, in return for guarantees spelled out in detail by all parties, along the

⁸⁸ Lippmann, T&T, “Vienna,” 6 June 1961; “The President’s Report,” 8 June 1961.

⁸⁹ Bundy to President Kennedy, “Specific answers to your questions of May 29th relating to the USSR,” 29 May 1961, President’s Office Files, Box 126, “Countries: USSR-Vienna Meeting,” JFKL.

lines of the Lateran Treaty.”⁹⁰ Lippmann ratcheted up the pressure on Kennedy to open discussions with the Soviets, telling his readers soon after seeing Bundy, “If there is nothing he wants to do in Germany except to do nothing, the President will have lost the power to direct and control the struggle, and to use force and the threat of force intelligently to achieve real results.”⁹¹

Aron’s position on the Berlin Crisis and negotiating with Soviets was just as firm as, if less strident than, Joe Alsop’s counsel. In mid-July 1961, the *Le Figaro* columnist sketched for his readers “three schools” which had emerged to answer Khrushchev’s demand for a settlement: “pure and simple rejection,” “partial concessions,” and “fundamental concessions.” Aron placed Lippmann in the second grouping. He accurately sketched Lippmann’s position on the Berlin problem. While the American commentator maintained that the U.S. could not abandon two million West Berliners, he nevertheless proposed that their freedom should rest on some kind of guarantee other than “the right of conquest. What remains in Berlin of the quadripartite is a holdover from the time when it was hoped to re-establish a united Germany,” Aron continued. Since, as Lippmann argued, the division would last for a long period, “To preserve the freedom of West Berlin, it is necessary to give it a new juridical foundation.”⁹² Of the three proposed courses, Aron did not immediately dismiss this option, though his inclinations against it later became clearer. He did

⁹⁰ Memorandum from the President’s Special Assistant for National Security Affairs (Bundy) to President Kennedy (“Subject: Berlin”) 10 June 1961, *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Vol. XIV: 107-109. The Lateran Treaty of 1929 was an accord between the Holy See and Benito Mussolini’s Italy which recognized the new state of Vatican City as a fully sovereign and independent entity. In addition, the treaty gave Italy the responsibility to provide public services and to prosecute crimes committed inside Vatican City.

⁹¹ Lippmann, T&T, “The Problem of Berlin,” 29 June 1961.

reject the “third school” which offered to extend *de jure* recognition to the Democratic Republic of Germany. Such a concession, Aron pointed out, would give Khrushchev more than he asked. Any legitimization of the Pankow government, he feared, would embolden it to “be even less tolerant of the present occupation regime in one part of its capital; the recognition would not give an additional assurance that the status of the free city would long be respected.” Aron described this path as acquiescence to a “limited defeat.”⁹³

Aron clearly valued more than Lippmann the fact that Western firmness in West Berlin would serve as a symbol of its resolution against the Soviets elsewhere—a determination that he, like many American policymakers, thought critical in the battle for European public opinion. In the sense that Lippmann’s proposal tended only to answer the local problems occasioned by the division of Berlin, Aron could not completely accept it. He wrote that “the stakes interest the whole of both [superpower] blocks and the solution must not be determined by the local situation alone.” As Aron viewed it, Premier Khrushchev had three objectives in forcing a showdown in Berlin: 1) to bolster and legitimize the Pankow regime; 2) to close the routes by which East Germans fled to the West; and 3) to demonstrate the weakness of the Western Alliance. “Those who imagine that in consecrating the territorial status of Europe, the West would insure a stable peace don’t understand anything about Soviet strategy,” he concluded. “Beyond the two million Berliners, it is the fate

⁹² Aron, “L’Enjeu de la Crise de Berlin (The Stakes of the Berlin Crisis),” 19 July 1961, *Le Figaro*, reprinted in Soutou, Volume II, *La Coexistence: Les Articles de Politique Internationale Dans Le Figaro* (Paris, Editions de Fallois: 1993): 882-885

⁹³ *Ibid.*

of Germany and of Western Europe that threatens to be in play.”⁹⁴ The notion of “free city” status (an idea that Lippmann supported as “international city” status) would, Aron argued, have cut off East Germans from their primary escape route. Though he held back from attacking Lippmann’s position frontally, by Aron’s logic any settlement that would have recognized the legitimacy of East Germany—in formal practice or in fact—would have weakened the Western position and contributed to Khrushchev’s attainment of his goals.

President Kennedy reacted boldly to the Kremlin’s challenge, linking the defense of West Berlin to America’s larger commitments to NATO and Western Europe and threatening military confrontation. In late-July 1961, he requested from Congress an additional \$3.2 billion in military appropriations, tripled draft calls, mobilized more than 150,000 reserves, and sent 40,000 more troops to Europe.⁹⁵ On the evening of July 25, 1961, Kennedy spoke to the nation on television from the Oval Office with grim determination about the Berlin Crisis. He described the old German capital as a symbol of freedom, a source of hope behind the Iron Curtain, and a window of escape for East Berliners. “West Berlin is all of that,” Kennedy told viewers. “But above all it has now become—as never before—the great testing place of Western courage and will, a focal point where our solemn commitments stretching back over the years since 1945, and Soviet ambitions now meet in basic confrontation . . . we cannot separate its safety from our own.”⁹⁶ The President also laid out the

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Stephen Ambrose, *Rise to Globalism: American Foreign Policy Since 1938* (New York: Penguin Books, 1991): 189-191.

⁹⁶ John F. Kennedy, “Radio and Television Report to the American People on the Berlin Crisis,” 25 July 1961, *Public Papers of the Presidents: John F. Kennedy, 1961*, item #302 Washington, DC. Available on-line at:

<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/site/docs/pppus.php?admin=035&year=1961&id=302> .

rationale for the military alert as deriving from the administration's policy of flexible response. American policymakers were intent on developing a strategy "to meet all levels of aggressor pressure with whatever levels of force are required. We intend to have a wider choice than humiliation or all-out nuclear war." Kennedy, however, urged American to contemplate how they might best prepare for that latter scenario.⁹⁷ There was, much to Lippmann's dismay, little diplomatic effort to complement the resolute military display.

Just days after President Kennedy's decision to move U.S. forces in West Berlin closer to a war footing, Aron wrote an approving column in which he described the administration's diplomacy as "firm and measured."⁹⁸ At this point, the *Le Figaro* columnist was much less reserved in his criticism of the proposal for an internationalized status for Berlin. "The transformation of the whole of Berlin into a free city runs into obstacles nearly as difficult to surmount as the unification of Germany," Aron wrote. What kind of coalition regime would run the city? West or East in its orientation? "In the first case Pankow would lose its old sector of the capital," he added. "In the second, it is the West which would *abandon* what is the stake of the crisis."⁹⁹ Dismissing this idea as one of several "frivolous" proposals, Aron argued that Western leaders should not be forthcoming with any plan based on the aim of persuading the Kremlin to tolerate the Western presence in Berlin. Aron feared that any Western concession would provoke bolder demands from Khrushchev. "The error is to believe that we can satisfy so easily the appetite of the

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Aron, "Jeux de Strategie (Strategic Games)," 28 July 1961, *Le Figaro*, reprinted in Soutou, Volume II: *La Coexistence*: 885-887.

⁹⁹ Ibid. My italics.

Soviet Premier,” he told readers. Western leaders must recall that any diplomat “is always ready, in certain circumstances, to bring the desirable down to the level of the possible. In other words, it is our reaction or challenge on which will depend, in part, the goals of M. Khrushchev.” In the contest for Berlin, Aron admitted, Khrushchev might settle for the free city proposal or a pledge to remove nuclear weapons from Germany and Europe to create a “denuclearized” zone. “It is perfectly possible that M. Khrushchev will be provisionally happy with a Berlin status which is not unacceptable to the West,” Aron concluded, “but he will not be content if we go beyond what he wants and offer to capitulate before there is even a test of wills.”¹⁰⁰

On 13 August 1961, Khrushchev broke the impasse, erecting a wall that divided the city and powerfully symbolized German partition and the Cold War division of Europe. Lippmann rebuked the Kennedy administration for its singular reliance on a military buildup in response to Khrushchev’s provocations. The “excessive preoccupation” with proving its will to fight a Stalin-like blockade left the West completely unprepared to deal with a deft move that stopped short of war. De Gaulle, Adenauer, and advisers within the administration had told Kennedy that if he “stood pat” he could call the Russians’ bluff and they would back down. Lippmann wrote sharply, “this pipe dream clouded the vision and narcotized the will to face the realities of the German situation.”¹⁰¹

Aron’s inclination toward a firm U.S. stand in West Berlin was conveyed in a remarkable column, which McGeorge Bundy personally brought to President Kennedy’s attention later that fall. The *Le Figaro* commentator’s article, which

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Lippmann, T&T, “Since Vienna,” 7 September 1961.

addressed Kennedy directly, taking the tone of a private conversation, was, in equal parts, criticism of the administration's policymaking process and encouragement toward a decisive policy of avoiding or, at the very least, forestalling negotiations with the Soviets. "The attached excerpts from a column by Raymond Aron seem to me so precisely pertinent to our Berlin problem that I venture to call them to your attention," the national security adviser told the president. "Aron is one of your real supporters . . . and his worry is not expressed out of anything but the deepest desire for your success."¹⁰²

Aron commented first on the Kennedy administration's reliance on a host of advisors drawn from academic and intellectual circles. Such an organization, Aron wrote, had built-in advantages. For instance, the President would receive counsel that approached a problem from many angles and he was "not in danger of ignorance of one of the possible choices." This process, however, also suffered from a "terrible danger: a man like yourself in a situation in which you are, with the crushing responsibilities to which you are condemned, is inevitably tempted not to go right to the end of any one of the available policies," Aron wrote. "On all subjects you hear men who tell you black and others tell you white: so far your choices have been gray. Now in foreign policy the half measure and the compromise generally combine the disadvantages of the two possible policies."¹⁰³

Aron pointed to the Bay of Pigs fiasco as the result of such a half-measure, gently reminding Kennedy that Nikita Khrushchev would see in that failed policy a "proof of weakness." That, he implied, had profound implications for the Berlin

¹⁰² Bundy to President Kennedy, 20 October 1961, NSF, Bundy Correspondence, Box 405, JFKL.

¹⁰³ Ibid., as attachment to Bundy's memorandum.

standoff. “I am afraid that you may be on the way to a repetition of the Cuban error, that is to say the adoption of a middle line,” Aron observed. “I do not know whether you ought to ‘negotiate,’ but if you are ready today to recognize the government of East Germany, it would have been better to do it earlier, or it would be better to wait several months than to do it now, because what is at stake today, in the eyes of the world, is not simply the fate of two million Berliners: it is your capacity and the capacity of the United States to convince Khrushchev that you have the nerve not to give in to blackmail.”¹⁰⁴ While Aron, again avoided directly embracing one line of action over the other, it was clear that he was inclined toward the firm approach upon which Kennedy eventually settled. As the columnist concluded, with such a decision “inspired with one conception—and one alone—hope will be reborn that we may preserve peace, Berlin, and the future of Europe—all three.”¹⁰⁵

During the fall of 1961, Lippmann told readers that the construction of the wall gave the Soviets what they would have gotten out of a peace treaty. Khrushchev read those remarks with approval, noting later to Averell Harriman that Lippmann’s position demonstrated Washington’s “acceptance of the two Germanies [sic] as they now exist.”¹⁰⁶ In September 1961, Khrushchev ordered that a key *Today and Tomorrow* installment be reprinted when he read and agreed with two of Lippmann’s assertions in the column, “After the German Elections.”¹⁰⁷ The Soviet leader agreed with Lippmann’s statement that “the physical partition of Germany has become a fully accomplished fact and this fact has been acquiesced in by the whole NATO

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Harriman, Memorandum of Conversation with President Kennedy re: Harriman’s trip to Soviet Union, 10 July 1963, Box 587, Averell Harriman Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, DC.

alliance.” Similarly, he shared the columnist’s observation that “for ten years or more, the Western powers have built their whole German policy on the partition of Germany. NATO is based on the partition of Germany. The Common Market is based on the partition of Germany.”¹⁰⁸ Llewellyn Thompson, U.S. Ambassador to Moscow, reported back to Washington that when Khrushchev read the Lippmann piece, he “underlined two passages with which he particularly agreed, and handed the translation to his son-in-law, Aleksei Adzhubei, the editor of *Izvestiya*, with the order that the article be published.”¹⁰⁹ It was published in its entirety in both *Izvestiya* and *Pravda*, despite the fact that Lippmann also made statements that no doubt met with official Soviet disapproval, particularly his prediction that once the Germans officially recognized partition, the effect would loosen the reliance of Eastern European satellites on Moscow because the fear of revived German power would be removed. “Presumably only a direct order from Khrushchev could cause the Soviet press to carry such a paragraph in full and honest translation,” Thompson concluded.¹¹⁰

Khrushchev’s remark to Harriman and his repeated attention to Lippmann’s columns confirmed one of Kennedy’s nagging apprehensions. Though ready to use Lippmann as a domestic spokesman to blunt the rhetoric of hawks in the Congress and Pentagon, the president could not associate himself too closely with the columnist unless foreign powers read into the softer tones of *Today and Tomorrow* a preview of

¹⁰⁷ Lippmann, T&T, 19 September 1961, “After the German Elections.”

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ Thompson to Secretary of State, 26 September 1961, “Khrushchev Orders Reprinting of Lippmann Article,” RG 59, decimal files 911.61/9-2661, TS, National Archives and Records Administration II, College Park, MD.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

administration policy.¹¹¹ In the summer of 1961, while he built up the U.S. military presence in Germany, Kennedy worried that Lippmann's call for negotiations would undermine his brinkmanship. At about that time two prominent correspondents, the *Chicago Daily News*' bureau chief Peter Lisagor and European correspondent William Stoneman, visited the president to discuss Berlin policy. Kennedy laid out his general approach to which Stoneman interjected, "Why that's wonderful Mr. President. That's exactly what I think ought to be done." Kennedy shrugged off the compliment. "You know what our policy is but the Russians read Walter Lippmann. They read Walter Lippmann and Khrushchev reads him," he remarked. "I know Khrushchev reads him, and he thinks that Walter Lippmann is representing American policy. Now how do I get over that problem? It's a problem that's been in this town for many years, of course."¹¹² That Kennedy at least partly blamed Lippmann for his problems in dealing firmly with Khrushchev points to the power of Lippmann's writing and the danger of too closely associating with opinion leaders. But it also reveals a unique side to a president who often is celebrated as a master of media manipulation and whose few anxieties about press coverage are usually perceived as having been directed at conservative elements in the press, not liberal quarters.¹¹³

¹¹¹ Ronald Steel's treatment of Lippmann in this respect is vague—alternately treating Lippmann as an independent commentator during the Kennedy years and then as a willing mouthpiece. There is no sense in his account of Kennedy's conflicting desire to secure Lippmann's approval for certain policies while, at the same time, distancing himself from Lippmann's inclination to seek accommodation with the Soviets. He also over-states Lippmann's direct access to Kennedy. See, Steel, *Walter Lippmann and the American Century*: 524-538. For a more balanced treatment of Kennedy's press relations, including his views on Lippmann, see Montague Kern, Patricia Levering, and Ralph Levering, *The Kennedy Crises: The Press, the Presidency, and Foreign Policy* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1983): especially, 71-72.

¹¹² Peter Lisagor, Oral History, JFKL.

¹¹³ John Tebbel and Sarah Watts, *The Press and the Presidency: From George Washington to Ronald Reagan* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985): 476-489.

Kennedy ultimately thought Lippmann's emphasis on accommodation to be incompatible with the brinkmanship he preferred.

German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer read Lippmann's columns on the Berlin Crisis with incredulity. Adenauer and his Social Democratic Party had pursued *Westpolitik*—the integration of the western German zones into the Western Alliance—as their primary policy. Reunification with East Germany was a secondary priority at best. Adenauer's first objective was “the protection of the Federal Republic's freedom . . . our main goal must be to secure irrevocably the liberty of our fifty-two million people.” Only when that was achieved, the pragmatic German leader would turn his sights toward “the liberty of the seventeen million on the other side of the Iron Curtain.”¹¹⁴ Adenauer also feared, however, (and here is where Lippmann's columns played a part) that the U.S. might negotiate with Premier Khrushchev—that the Atlantic Alliance might yield to the inducements of disengagement by seeking to end the division of Europe, reduce nuclear arms deployed on the continent, and seek the reunification of a neutralized Germany. That outcome would rob *Westpolitik* of its meaning, and scotch the Social Democrats' political platform. Konrad Adenauer had no intent—political, ideological, or in terms of national security—to cut a bargain with Walter Ulbricht regime in Pankow.¹¹⁵

In November 1961, when Chancellor Adenauer met with President Kennedy in Washington, Kennedy opened a discussion on the Berlin Crisis by citing a Lippmann column that warned of the dangers of a West German-Soviet

¹¹⁴ Hitchcock, *The Struggle for Europe*: 224-227.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.* Hitchcock maintains that Adenauer nevertheless sought to “prepare for this eventuality by making West Germany as strong as possible both economically and militarily so that unification, if it ever took place, would be on Western terms.”

rapprochement. Lippmann suggested that Bonn might adopt a policy of neutrality in the U.S.-Soviet dispute in order to extract a reunification pledge from Moscow and the East Germans. JFK asked Adenauer for his evaluation of “Lippmann’s view.” Admitting that he once became “excited” by the proposals contained in Lippmann columns (that they might indicate a desire on the part of U.S. officials to negotiate with the Kremlin), the Chancellor told the President that he now shared John J. McCloy’s evaluation of Lippmann’s prognostications: “They always prove false.” For emphasis, he added, that “he would wager his head” that this latest prophecy would prove false, too.¹¹⁶

Not only foreign leaders but also the foreign press paid close attention to Lippmann’s position in the Berlin situation. With the American commentator advocating negotiations, French and German correspondents believed that the Kennedy administration also was leaning in that direction. Jean Knecht, *Le Monde’s* Washington correspondent, reported that the anti-German core of JFK’s advisors were “following Walter Lippmann’s line.” He included Bundy, Rostow, Kennan, Charles Bohlen, and Foy Kohler. The *Die Welt* writer Peter von Zahn went a step further. Lippmann, Zahn told German readers, was a “sophisticated isolationist who is masterminding a German Munich.” *New York Times* bureau chief James Reston quickly challenged those assertions. As a frequent resource for Mac Bundy, one can justifiably infer that he did so primarily to refute the idea that Lippmann was speaking

¹¹⁶ Memorandum of Conversation—President Kennedy and Chancellor Adenauer, Washington, DC, 21 November 1961, *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume 14, Berlin Crisis, Nov-Dec 1961: 614-616. In his role as High Commissioner of Germany, McCloy would counsel a sometimes agitated Adenauer that Lippmann’s views on German reunification were not synonymous with those of official Washington. Adenauer recalled McCloy’s words: “Do not worry about Lippmann’s prophecies because they always prove false.”

on behalf of key administration sources and only secondarily to deflect unfounded accusations and defend Lippmann.¹¹⁷

Lippmann continued to push Kennedy to reject the “narrow” objective of preserving access to West Berlin in favor of a comprehensive settlement. A perpetually divided Berlin would be a “doomed and dying city,” he wrote. On 12 September 1961, Lippmann publicly proposed the program he had been advising to Mac Bundy for months: (1) offer *de facto* recognition of East Germany; (2) change Berlin’s status to that of an international city, to be “held in trust” unless and until German partition ended; and (3) seek an agreement for controlled nuclear disarmament and reduction of conventional forces in a wide area of central Europe.¹¹⁸ Throughout the fall he pressed his plan to internationalize Berlin—making it a site for United Nations agencies and a center for science, the arts, and sports. Though “utopian and idealistic”—by his own admission—such a proposal offered a far better future than to mortgage Berlin’s freedom with American subsidies and the West’s willingness to live on the brink of nuclear war.¹¹⁹ Even after tensions eased late in the year, Lippmann continued to advocate the plan.

At the height of tensions, when West Berlin was the fulcrum for a possible thermonuclear showdown, Lippmann observed that there was little precedent for conducting diplomacy in the nuclear age. “There is a line of intolerable provocation beyond which the reactions are uncontrollable,” he warned. “The governments must know where that line is and they must stay well back of it.” The only way to decrease

¹¹⁷ James Reston, “Washington: How To Make Things Worse Than They Really Are,” 27 October 1961, *New York Times*: 32. Bundy’s role as an adept press handler is discussed in greater detail in Chapter Seven.

tensions was to broker an “honorable and tolerable accommodation.” The first rule of international politics in the nuclear era, he wrote, is that a “great nuclear power must not put another great nuclear power in a position where it must choose between suicide and surrender.”¹²⁰ Kennedy was not pleased with that analysis. At a White House dinner for the Sudanese president, Kennedy called Lippmann to the head of the table and began debating him about Berlin policy: “You were wrong, Walter!” The columnist’s claim that Washington had been caught off guard by the construction of the Berlin Wall, especially irked the president. “He didn’t like that, I know, but he wasn’t angry,” Lippmann recalled. “He just didn’t like to have it shown that we had missed the point. And he argued a good deal about that . . . He didn’t convince me anyway that we really had anticipated what the Russians really did.” Reflecting on the more troubling moments of the Kennedy administration, Lippmann singled out JFK’s brinkmanship in Berlin. “I was disturbed by the way Berlin was handled,” he added. “I didn’t think [Kennedy] had really grasped the realities of the thing. And my proof of it was that the Russians did the opposite of what he expected them to do”—building a wall rather than sending in tanks.¹²¹ His grave doubts about the president’s diplomacy repeatedly resurfaced.

VII.

¹¹⁸ Lippmann, T&T, “On Negotiating About Berlin,” 12 September 1961; see also Lippmann, T&T, “After the German Elections, 19 September 1961.

¹¹⁹ Lippmann, T&T, “The Berlin Talks,” 10 October 1961.

¹²⁰ Lippmann, T&T, “Nuclear Diplomacy,” 14 September 1961.

¹²¹ Walter Lippmann, Oral History Interview (April 1964): pp. 11, 18, 22 JFKL. Portions of the interview are still closed in accordance with Lippmann’s deed of gift.

The outcome of the disengagement debate and Berlin quarrel suggested Lippmann's marginalization far from the levers of Western security policy planning—a position the columnist had occupied since 1947. By the late-1940s, Lippmann and Kennan viewed the Cold War in Europe through a similar lens—one that clashed with the belief of “realist” policymakers like Acheson and Nitze that the division of Europe was essential to stability and a long peace. Lippmann and Kennan believed that the Cold War division in Germany represented an impermanent and abnormal configuration that posed problems of rapid destabilization and nuclear confrontation. Both advocated a flexible diplomatic component to a sharply curtailed containment strategy. But, in the final analysis, their solutions for settling the German problem proved unsuited to the task because they for so long underestimated the reality that Western leaders valued the stability that inhered in that division.

Conversely, Aron, who tended to view the struggle through the prism of ideology, minimized the possibility that either side might find much room for accommodation. Aron's views, while not fixed, were most consistent. From an early point, he realized that the division of Germany (and of Europe) ultimately conferred a measure of stability. In 1959, contributing to a collection of essays commemorating Lippmann's 70th birthday, Aron used the occasion to strike at Lippmann's de-emphasis of the importance of ideology in explaining Soviet foreign policy.¹²² The columnist, Aron wrote, believed that “the rulers of the Soviet Union . . . are, in the final analysis, in the long view, first Russians . . . not communists.” Thus, his

¹²² See Aron's, “The Columnist as Teacher and Historian,” in *Walter Lippmann and His Times*, Marquis Childs and James Reston, eds. (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Company, 1959): 111-125. My italics are added for emphasis. The essay is striking for its critical tone which contrasted sharply with the roughly dozen other contributors.

prescription for Germany was based on the belief that for both the Soviet bloc and the Atlantic Alliance the neutralization of a unified Germany secured core national security objectives that outweighed all other factors. Aron did not agree. “Is a liquidation of the Communist zone compatible with the interests not of eternal Russia, but of a Russia whose leaders consider themselves interpreters of a revolutionary movement with universal aspirations?” Aron asked. Simple disengagement raises a world of problems.” Would the West accept German military neutralization at the price of a Communist political system remaining in Pankow? Could Soviet diplomacy accept political liberalization in Germany as the cost for meeting its own security concerns? None of these scenarios seemed remotely possible to Aron. “Following this line of thought, one would oppose the buffer-zone (neutralization) theory of Walter Lippmann with the idea of the division of the contested countries,” Aron concluded, “the division being a substitute for the buffer zone when the conflict is *ideological as well as military*.”¹²³

Lippmann’s public part in the debate about German partition was but a prelude to his maneuverings as an insider during another momentous Cold War episode: the Cuban Missile Crisis. It is within the context of that event that Lippmann can be seen to move beyond his attempts to shape the public dialogue about policy and to act as a quasi-diplomat, policy broker, and public relations spokesman for American policy. It is in this respect, too, that Lippmann continued his trans-Atlantic dialogue with Aron, French officials, Soviet diplomats, and Washington policymakers.

¹²³ Aron, “The Columnist as Teacher and Historian,” 123-124. It is interesting to note that Aron believed Lippmann already had answer these questions when, in *U.S. War Aims*, he argued that a

country which does not advance its political faith already has abandoned it.

Chapter 4:

Trans-Atlantic Brokering: Walter Lippmann, Raymond Aron, the Cuban Missile Crisis and Nuclear Sharing, 1962-1963

I.

Walter Lippmann's participation as a public figure in the Cold War debate extended beyond his efforts to shape an abstract conceptual framework for Washington's postwar foreign policy. Lippmann also actively sought to *shape* policy both by interjecting himself as a facilitator in the public and private dialogue process and, on occasion, by performing public relations duties for American officials.

Two primary examples of his efforts to mediate among Washington, its Alliance partners, and Moscow, occurred during the Cuban Missile Crisis in October 1962 and, in its aftermath, the reinvigorated debate about nuclear sharing within the Alliance—particularly between the U.S. and France. During these episodes, Lippmann played a variety of roles. Critical of the Kennedy administration's brinkmanship at the height of the Cuban Missile Crisis, he publicly and independently proposed a "missile base trade" to end the nuclear confrontation in the Caribbean. That proposal carried weight with the Russians since Premier Nikita Khrushchev, who had met twice with the columnist, respected his judgments and, further, knew that Lippmann was close to key Kennedy administration officials.

Indeed, even though Lippmann was not personally close to the President, he enjoyed enhanced access to his principal advisors, particularly National Security Adviser McGeorge Bundy. The columnist had opposed French plans for an independent European nuclear force in early 1962 and, that November, accepted the White House's invitation to act as a public spokesman on behalf of the American position of retaining unified nuclear command under Washington's aegis. This chapter highlights Lippmann's complex efforts to steer the Cold War policy and the Trans-Atlantic debate.

In this process, Lippmann and the French commentator Raymond Aron acted as principal interpreters of the nuclear debate within the Western Alliance. There were apparent parallels between them in that they were arbiters of the Cold War dialogue and opinion shapers who had access to the political elite on both sides of the Atlantic. Aron met with Kennedy administration officials; Lippmann enjoyed unprecedented access to French President Charles De Gaulle. For decades, Lippmann facilitated the spread of General De Gaulle's ideas in America—though he firmly disagreed with French President's pressures for nuclear sharing. Aron, served as a publicist for the Kennedy administration's policies in Europe and its strategy of "flexible response." National Security Adviser McGeorge Bundy once described the *Le Figaro* columnist to President Kennedy as "the most perceptive political observer in France and perhaps on the continent."¹ Over the subsequent decades, Aron's reputation grew among the American policymaking elite, with whom he often agreed on Cold War policy. At Aron's death in October 1983—an event that received

¹ McGeorge Bundy to Kennedy, 30 April 1963, Bundy Correspondence, National Security Files (NSF), Box 405, John F. Kennedy Library, Boston, MA (hereinafter referred to as "JFKL").

significant press coverage in America—observers described him as “the Walter Lippmann of France.”² It is not evident, however, that Aron would have received comparisons to Lippmann as compliments.

Though they have both been described as prominent realists, Lippmann and Aron came to very different conclusions about some of the core issues and persons who shaped the Atlantic Alliance between 1945 and 1967. They not only disagreed over Alliance policy in Germany they also disagreed about French efforts to secure an independent nuclear strike force. But the differences between the *Le Figaro* commentator and the syndicated American columnist ran deeper than the shallows of the policy debate *de jure*. There also was a conflict about the fundamental motivations that lay behind leaders’ foreign policy decisions. Should they properly—as Lippmann seemed to argue—derive solely from a desire to fulfill vital national security objectives? Or—as Aron believed—did domestic ideologies (in both positive and negative aspects) fundamentally shape the way nations acted abroad? By using the Lippmann-Aron dispute as a case study, this chapter also highlights some of variance between American realists and their Alliance brethren.

II.

Lippmann and Aron had known each other since before the Second World War, having met at a Paris gathering in honor of the American columnist—the “Walter

² See for example, William Echikson, “Raymond Aron Saw His Liberal Pluralism Triumph Over Marx,” 18 October 1983, *Christian Science Monitor*: 1; “Raymond Aron,” 19 October 1983, *Wall Street Journal*: 30 (op-ed piece).

Lippmann Colloquium” in 1939.³ For the next three decades they met occasionally during Lippmann’s biannual visits to Western Europe or Aron’s frequent trips to the U.S. East Coast. In 1959, Aron wrote a contribution to a book commemorating Lippmann’s 70th birthday, *Walter Lippmann and His Times*. In that essay, the French commentator with customary graciousness, described Lippmann as “a political teacher, inspired by a certain philosophy of diplomatic history.” Aron admired Lippmann’s effort to educate Americans about foreign policy as well as his emphasis on the necessity of developing the Atlantic Alliance.⁴

There indeed were a number of parallels between these men which at least suggested the possibility for congruent outlooks on the Cold War and, as well, a similarity of purpose in their respective efforts to explain that conflict to their countrymen. These commonalities are worth stating here if, for no other reason, than that no published account previously has explored them.⁵

Both Lippmann and Aron were among the most brilliant intellectuals of their generations, rising to prominence not through family connections or inherited wealth but by dint of intellect and their talent as writers. Lippmann studied with William

³ Ronald Steel, *Walter Lippmann and the American Century* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1980): 368.

⁴ Raymond Aron, “The Columnist as Teacher and Historian,” in *Walter Lippmann and His Times*, Marquis Childs and James Reston, eds. (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Company, 1959): 115.

⁵ Here I must state my great debt and gratitude toward my friend and colleague, Carl Ashley of Catholic University, who defended his dissertation “Raymond Aron: International Politics and the Transatlantic Dialogue During the Cold War,” in 2003. My knowledge of Raymond Aron has been augmented by our frequent discussions and our sharing of both men’s correspondence from their respective manuscript collections. Little has been published on Aron in English. His memoirs have been translated: Aron, Raymond. *Fifty Years of Political Reflection*, translated by George Holoch New York: Holmes and Meier, 1990. Two useful essays on Aron also contributed to the foregoing analysis: Tony Judt’s “The Peripheral Insider: Raymond Aron and the Wages of Reason,” in Judt’s *The Burden of Responsibility: Blum, Camus, Aron, and the French Twentieth Century* (Chicago: University Press of Chicago, 1998): 137-182; and Stanley Hoffman’s “Raymond Aron and the Theory of International Relations,” in Hoffmann’s *Janus and Minerva: Essays in the Theory and Practice of International Politics* (Boulder and London: Westview Press, 1987): 207-223.

James, George Santayana, and Graham Wallas at Harvard. Aron, was educated at the Lycee Condorcet before enrolling at the elite Ecole Normale Superieure. He wrote a dissertation that marked him as a leading philosopher and sociologist, taking the *agregation* in philosophy and finishing first-place nationally in 1928. Both men had their choice of academic appointments. Lippmann was Santayana's teaching assistant and for years was pursued by elite institutions, the University of Chicago among them, to teach political science and international relations. Lippmann resisted that career path, however. Aron immersed himself in it, as a distinguished professor at the Sorbonne. Neither man, however, would have been content to participate exclusively in academe.

As well, Lippmann and Aron were assimilated, non-practicing Jews who sought to mitigate their Jewish-ness by refusing to make parochial ties to distinctive communities within their larger cultures.⁶ Their experiences as men from an unfavored ethnic minority who, nevertheless, excelled in their respective mainstream cultures, likely added to their unique abilities to dissect events as detached outsiders. The middle ground both occupied was not an especially comfortable place. Both were roundly criticized for perceived insensitivity toward Jews in 1930s Nazi Germany and, as well, for their tendency to avoid writing about Israel in the post-World War II period (a more pronounced aversion on Lippmann's part).⁷

⁶ Steel, *Walter Lippmann and the American Century*: 3-9; 186-196. For Aron, see Judt, *The Burden of Responsibility*: 174-177.

⁷ Steel, *Walter Lippmann and the American Century*, 188-189; 453-454. Lippmann's research assistant, Elizabeth (Farmer) Midgley, recalled that Lippmann often was approached by French and Middle Eastern diplomats to write on the subject Israeli statehood, especially in the 1960s, though he consistently demurred. She believed that Lippmann though his Jewish ancestry Elizabeth (Farmer) Midgley, interview with author, 28 February 2001, Washington, DC. For Aron's position on writing about Israel, see Judt, *The Burden of Responsibility*: 175.

Their choice of career—both became prominent political commentators—also invites comparison. Both men were political liberals who wrote for conservative newspapers: for much of his career Lippmann’s column was based in the New York *Herald Tribune* syndicate; Aron’s ran for decades in *Le Figaro*. They focused primarily on international relations and particularly Cold War developments. Moreover, they wrote prolifically. Between 1931 and 1967, the span of Lippmann’s *Today and Tomorrow*, he wrote approximately 4,000 installments. During Aron’s tenure as a public commentator, from 1947 to 1983, he, too, amassed an opus of about 4,000 columns.

In choosing to be interpreters of events, Aron and Lippmann occupied that strange gray area between officialdom and the public. For a brief time, during moments of national crisis, each worked as an official within his respective government in jobs closely aligned with official propaganda organs. During World War I, Lippmann worked in a series of jobs ranging from policy development on the Inquiry to military intelligence and propaganda. Aron joined the Free French during the Second World War and later served for a short term as *chef de cabinet* in the Ministry of Information in 1946. Neither Lippmann nor Aron was drawn to a long government career, though these experiences provided them many important future contacts. In moving into their roles as opinion shapers, they both had access to, but never really were a part of, their respective political establishments. Tony Judt has observed of Aron: “He thus wrote from the outside, but with an insider’s sense of realities and limits.”⁸ That analysis may be applied in equal measure to Lippmann.

⁸ Judt, *The Burden of Responsibility*: 139.

Each enjoyed privileged access to the powerful—perhaps most remarkably within the other’s country. Lippmann and Aron maintained high-level contacts with the political classes in Washington, London, Bonn, and Paris. In France, particularly with respect to Charles De Gaulle and other prominent Gaullists, like Maurice Couve de Murville, Lippmann acted as a virtual ambassador—bringing De Gaulle’s ideas across the Atlantic to discuss them with American leaders and using his column to give them a respectful and, quite often, endorsing boost. Aron often framed American Cold War policy for his fellow Frenchmen as a kind of necessary power politics rather than the imperial aggrandizement condemned by many on the French Left. This opened many doors in Washington for him since, as U.S. Ambassador to France David K.E. Bruce once put it in understated fashion, Aron was the “most sympathetic of all French writers” to U.S. policy.⁹ By the Kennedy years, he had established several enduring personal relationships with several high-ranking U.S. officials—Bundy, Undersecretary of State George Ball, and presidential adviser Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. If in a somewhat more disinterested vein than Lippmann, Aron tended to explain with both sympathy and objectivity the motivations behind much of JFK’s foreign policy—particularly regarding the Berlin Crisis of 1961 and the topic of nuclear sharing within the Alliance. Again, Bundy described him as “very cordial to the administration” even in 1963 after considerable tension arose

⁹ Quoted in Nelson D. Lankford, *The Last American Aristocrat: The Biography of Ambassador David K.E. Bruce* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1996): 231. Bruce’s private diaries indicate that he socialized often with Aron and was likely the source for some of his columns. Personal Diaries of David K.E. Bruce, Bruce Papers, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, VA.

between Paris and Washington over French officials' plans for an independent nuclear striking force.¹⁰

While acting as private diplomats within the Alliance, both Lippmann and Aron resisted, within their own respective nations, the dominant intellectual and elite opinion currents during the Cold War. Aron firmly supported the Western Alliance at a time when most of the French intelligentsia were drawn to Marxism or to Gaullist visions of a neutral “third way” that rejected U.S. leadership.¹¹ Lippmann, too, championed the Alliance—a vision he had developed in 1917 and one which, admittedly, he shared with many figures in the U.S. establishment. Significantly, however, he rejected using that Alliance as chiefly an anti-Soviet instrument and also dismissed the ideological obsession of Washington officials who tended to view the Cold War as a crusade to spread democratic values. Indeed, Lippmann and Aron were among the most cosmopolitan-oriented intellectuals within their respective capitals.

In both cases, the tendency of these commentators to push enlightened nationalism rather than parochial interests or antiquated visions of national exceptionalism or grandeur, derived from their early insights into the interconnectivity of foreign and domestic policy. As discussed in the previous chapter, Lippmann recognized this fact as early as 1915 with the publication of *The Stakes of Diplomacy*. His cognizance is especially apparent in the discussion of how imperial interests routinely appealed to democratic ideology to win support for

¹⁰ Bundy to the President, 30 April 1963, NSF, Box 405, JFKL.

¹¹ Aron made this point clear in his book *The Century of Total War* (New York: Doubleday, 1954). He advocated an Atlantic Community rather than a federal Europe because he believed that there was a

foreign programs. Aron was one of the early post-World War II Frenchmen to perceive the vital link between domestic politics and international affairs—in his case because of the rise of the communist party in national politics. “The truth is that in our times, for individuals as for nations, the choice that determines all else is a global one, in effect a geographic choice” Aron wrote. “One is in the universe of free countries or else in that of lands place under harsh Soviet rule. From now on everyone in France will have to state his choice.”¹²

Lippmann and Aron both saw the U.S. as far preferable to the Soviet system because it was the final guarantor of Western ideals of liberty—even if, as both men often wrote, it was an imperfect guardian of those values. Neither had much patience for Marxist fellow-travelers or, on the opposite pole, the anti-Communist demagogues whose methods directly threatened the civil society both men cherished. Similarly, both Lippmann and Aron possessed a level of detachment—a “cool realism” as Judt wrote of Aron; an “Olympian” remove as Alistair Cooke once wrote of Lippmann—that insulated them from the disillusionment with the Soviet Union that often enveloped Western Alliance leaders and public opinion.¹³ Finally, both men tended to view the maturation of the Western Alliance as primarily political in nature, not military. After the late-1940s, neither Lippmann nor Aron ever seriously believed that Kremlin leaders would move to the brink of war in Europe and, in this respect,

place for Great Britain in the former but not the latter. See also, Max Freedman’s review of *The Century of Total War* in “A Realist Looks at European Unity,” 21 March 1954, *Washington Post*: B6.

¹² Aron, “La Fin des Illusions,” 5 July 1947, *Le Figaro*, in *Raymond Aron: Les Articles de Politique Internationale dans Le Figaro de 1947 a 1977*, Volume 1, *La Guerre Froide (Juin 1947 a Mai 1955)* edited by Georges-Henri Soutou (Paris: Editions de Fallois, 1990).

¹³ Judt, *The Burden of Responsibility*: 157; Alistair Cooke, *America Observed: From the 1940s to the 1980s* (New York: Collier Books, 1989): 79-82. Cooke’s original radio essay was broadcast on 8 May 1956.

they agreed with Kennan who argued that Moscow would seek to achieve its objectives through long-term, subtle pressure.

Lippmann and Aron—like Kennan—also were prominent popularizers and devotees of *realpolitik* from very early points in their public careers—and they never retreated from the centrality of these beliefs. Tony Judt has explained that Aron’s “fundamentally tragic vision—the belief that there can be no end to the conflict among states and the best that could be hoped for was a constant vigilance to limit the risks and damage of confrontations” pervaded his writings. Likewise, as described in Chapter Two, Lippmann ascribed to a similar view—arguing that the basis for diplomacy was not to achieve perpetual peace but to structure a *modus vivendi* between nations whose interests would forever conflict. Judt has written that Aron’s espousal of realism “placed him at odds with the dominant sensibility of his era: the view, held by many on both sides, that the object of international relations was somehow to put an end to all wars; whether through nuclear stalemate, the negotiation of a definitive ‘peace settlement,’ or else a final victory by one side or the other.”¹⁴ In working against Wilsonian internationalism in America, Walter Lippmann shared Aron’s foundational view of state-to-state relations.

Frenchman and American also shared a yearning for order and stability that shaped not only their view on foreign affairs but which inhered in their commentary on developments within their own countries. Their responses to student protests, the anti-war movement, and counter-cultural spasms of the late-1960s, offer an interesting parallel. Aron, despite sympathy with students’ criticisms of higher education and his deep disapproval of Gaullist authoritarianism at home (and grand

designs abroad) refused to support student radicals and repeatedly worried about the disruption and social chaos they engendered. Likewise, Lippmann empathized with some aspects of the campus protests in America—particularly their anger at LBJ’s Vietnam policies. Yet, he, too, withheld his endorsement. The violence, vulgarity, and rejection of authority violated his sense of order and civility.¹⁵

Finally, both men displayed independence of mind, revealing intellectual and, at times, physical courage. One observer noted Aron’s ability to withstand “the provocations of the powerful.”¹⁶ Lippmann’s ultimate refusal to support Lyndon Johnson’s escalation of the Vietnam War demonstrated a fidelity to personal convictions sorely lacking in most Washington circles in the 1960s—political and intellectual.

III.

What makes the palette of similarities between Lippmann and Aron all the more remarkable is that in spite of these shared traits that afforded them much common ground, they diverged on the core issues confronting the Atlantic Alliance. The Lippmann-Aron conversation of the late-1940s to the mid-1960s, carried on largely

¹⁴ Judt, *The Burden of Responsibility*: 158.

¹⁵ See, for example, Lippmann, “The Gaullist Question,” 17 June 1968, *Newsweek*: 62. “The active student leaders in Paris, Berlin, Rome, and New York are not acting in order to bring about reform and the redress of grievances in existing institutions,” Lippmann wrote. “They are acting in order to ignite insurrectionary violence. For they believe that out of this violence itself a new society will be born . . . The active student leaders are not progressive or leftist, or socialist or Communist. They are in literal truth nihilists.” For an interesting recent discussion of the protest movements of the 1960s and early 1970s and their impact on superpower foreign policy, see Jeremi Suri, *Power and Protest: Global Revolution and the Rise of Détente* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003).

¹⁶ Manes Sperber, *Until My Eyes Are Closed with Shards* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1994): 137, 234; cited in Judt, *The Burden of Responsibility*: 174.

through their columns, focused exclusively on trans-Atlantic issues.¹⁷ In particular, three salient, contested points emerge from their long dialogue: (1) the problem of postwar Germany and how it should fit into Europe—a subject both men debated for 20 years; (2) the question of nuclear control and command within the Alliance, particularly as it came to a head in the early 1960s as part of the repercussions emanating from the Cuban Missile Crisis and De Gaulle’s proposal for an independent French atomic striking force; and (3) interpreting the foreign policies and significance of De Gaulle within the Alliance generally.

Chapter Two discussed how Aron and Lippmann conflicted over the disposition of postwar Germany, the necessity of partition, and a solution to tensions in West Berlin from 1958 to 1961. As late as 1966, Aron tweaked Lippmann on his German predictions from two decades before. The *Le Figaro* columnist was worried about two outcomes at that juncture: 1) that the Western Alliance had so successfully waged the Cold War up until that point that it might be lured into complacency and acquiesce to divisions then arising—particularly between De Gaulle and the Anglo-Americans; 2) this at a time when the American commitment in Vietnam threatened to siphon off resources from the defense of Western Europe. Lippmann, who at the time was publicly questioning the necessity of maintaining the NATO organization, seemed to embody these threats for Aron. The Frenchman voiced his worries in a *Herald Tribune* article in late 1966. “Our friend Walter Lippmann is now proclaiming the bankruptcy of Western policies,” Aron wrote. “He should re-read the

¹⁷ There exists very little correspondence between the men though, from Lippmann’s appointment diaries, it is clear that they met on a fairly regular basis. Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., confirmed that Lippmann and Aron had virtually no personal relationship. Based on their commonalities, “[Lippmann] should have known Aron better,” added Schlesinger, who maintained a cordial

articles he wrote when the Americans and the British created the German Federal Republic. He then affirmed that the men in power in Bonn would have no concern more immediate than negotiating reunification with their countrymen on the other side of the demarcation line. The events contradicted those forecasts. What actually took place was the exact opposite of what our colleague forecast: The Germans have accommodated themselves to their country's partition in the last 15 years."¹⁸ When the vigilant Helen Byrne Lippmann wrote Aron asking for the exact column citations upon which Aron based his criticisms, the *Le Figaro* writer responded with a subtly cutting reply. "Allow me to add that Walter finds himself in excellent company since General De Gaulle made the same predictions at the time," Aron wrote.¹⁹ Implied in that comment was Aron's similar disapproval of Lippmann's enthusiasm for dismantling NATO, another issue on which the columnist closely aligned with De Gaulle, who eventually withdrew from the organization in 1966.

In fact, one of the most interesting of Lippmann's Cold War ideas was the evolution of his position on the North Atlantic Treaty Alliance. While he applauded the NATO alliance as confirmation of the historic and cultural ties between the community of nations that rimmed the Atlantic Ocean, Lippmann feared it would be contrived into a "temporary diplomatic and strategic contraption" for containing Russia. In the months preceding the U.S. Senate debate and ratification of the Brussels Pact (roughly from November 1948 to the spring of 1949), he wrote

correspondence with the *Le Figaro* columnist for several decades. Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., interview with author, 12 March 2002, New York City.

¹⁸ Raymond Aron, "Winning the Cold War Has Deprived the West of Its Sense of Danger That Maintained Its Unity," 11 December 1966, *Washington Post*: 104.

¹⁹ Raymond Aron to Helen Lippmann, 20 December 1966, Archives Personnelle Raymond Aron (hereinafter cited as APRA), COTE, AP 126, *Centre de Recherches Politiques Raymond Aron*, at

frequently about the dangers of using NATO to divide Europe into two armed camps. He believed the odds that the Red Army would invade Western Europe—seemingly so imminent in the spring of 1948—had become by that fall rather remote.

Repeating his argument from *U.S. War Aims*, Lippmann opposed German, Italian, and Scandinavian membership in the NATO alliance and military structure. He insisted that these nations belonged in a “buffer belt” of central European countries. Drawing them into the defenses of the Western Alliance would make NATO “weaker and more provocative,” he wrote. Instead, Western Germany should be demilitarized and the other countries be encouraged to sit out the Soviet-American conflict as neutrals, committed only to their self-defense.²⁰ “Since our real purpose in Europe is not to create a satellite system of our own but to dissolve the Soviet satellite system, there are immense diplomatic and moral advantages to be had by making it respectable for nations to become part of the buffer belt,” Lippmann told readers. “For then the satellites have some place to go as they detach themselves.”

He also warned against selling the program to the public based solely on its military merits. European security was guaranteed by the threat of full American intervention in any potential war initiated by the Soviets, not through a grand alliance composed of a weak array of recovering European nations. In this sense, NATO would act as a tripwire that would bring American power to bear directly against Soviet power. Concerned that it might become a mechanism for enlisting countries in an expansive—and again provocative—anti Soviet coalition, Lippmann opposed the NATO pact’s linkage to the U.S. military aid bill. The alliance would not work,

L'Ecole Des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, Paris, France. For more on the Aron papers, visit <http://www.ehess.fr/centres/crpra/pages/archives.html>.

Lippmann wrote, if it were based on “strategic boondoggling on the part of military theorists . . . [who would] pepper the earth with military missions, and would develop, if the Treasury did not go bankrupt, three omnipotent forces, each capable all by itself of winning not only a war but any war anywhere anytime.”²¹ NATO provided a legal and practical basis for stationing American power in Europe—albeit a symbolic force—to discourage a Russian advance; Lippmann believed a token force to be plenty.²²

De-emphasizing an overly militarized conception of NATO, Lippmann pointed out the diplomatic benefits that would accrue from coordination of allied policy—especially toward the three zones of occupation in Western Germany. Further, the pact enhanced diplomatic engagement. The management of NATO would demand more frequent consultation between the signatories. No member could act unilaterally. War would have to be a collaborative act and not an accident precipitated by a rogue decision. As Lippmann put it, “a collective system of defense cannot be created unless there is a collective policy.”²³

Nevertheless, Lippmann sharply criticized the military institution that came to dominate the NATO alliance. Increasingly he viewed it as an instrument for American domination of the Western Alliance—leveraged by its overwhelming monetary and material contributions, as well as its firm grasp on the command structure. It also proved costly because the debate about its leadership and structure in the 1960s worsened an already bad rift between the U.S. and France. In late-1966,

²⁰ Lippmann, T&T “On the Projected Alliance,” 3 January 1949; “The Buffer Belt,” 15 February 1949.

²¹ Lippmann, T&T, “Background of the Pact,” 31 January 1949.

²² Lippmann, T&T, “The North Atlantic Pact,” 28 October 1948.

²³ Lippmann, T&T, “The Pact Before the U.N.,” 11 April 1949.

at a private lunch at St. James Court, Lippmann told the U.S. Ambassador to Britain, David K. Bruce, that NATO had out-lived its purpose. When Bruce pressed him to elaborate, Lippmann explained, as he told readers shortly after, that the military organization was “obsolete and superfluous” because of the greatly diminished threat of a Soviet invasion, the burden of the war in Vietnam, and France’s withdrawal from NATO. The true issue—as it had been all along for Lippmann—was how to preserve the Atlantic Alliance while de-linking and retiring the military machine from it. NATO was “no longer a genuine military investment but an expensive and deteriorating ruin,” Lippmann concluded in December 1966. “It is a mansion, once the pride of the neighborhood, from which the tenants have moved away, for which no new tenants can be found. There is no use cutting the grass and mending a few window panes if nobody will live in the mansion.”²⁴

IV.

On NATO, as he had on Germany, Lippmann’s views were heavily influenced by French President Charles de Gaulle—and that relationship bears explaining. The columnist’s attachment to De Gaulle extended to World War II when Lippmann began to promote the General as a leader of Free France. This was at a time when Franklin Roosevelt and his Secretary of State Cordell Hull would not even speak to the General.²⁵ In October 1942, at a dinner talk commemorating the World War I exploits of Marshal Ferdinand Foch, Lippmann urged the Roosevelt administration to

²⁴ Lippmann, T&T, “NATO and Its Future,” 12 December 1966. See also David K.E. Bruce Diaries, 3 November 1966, Mss1B8303:58, page 32, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, VA.

²⁵ For Roosevelt’s frustrations with De Gaulle see, Robert Dallek, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and American Foreign Policy, 1932-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979): 376-379; 406-409; 458-463.

recognize De Gaulle as an ally and to permit him to participate in the strategic planning of the war.²⁶ He used his column to criticize the President and State Department officials—Charles Murphy among them—of undercutting De Gaulle’s organization in Allied-liberated North Africa. By late-1944, after the liberation of Paris, Lippmann met with De Gaulle and began urging (at De Gaulle’s personal prompting) that certain U.S. embassy staff in Paris, including Murphy, be removed. “It is a capital error not to staff the embassy with men who have no prejudices from the bad past, against whom Frenchmen hold no prejudices from the bad past,” Lippmann told readers in a Paris dispatch.²⁷

Lippmann tended to be enamored of leaders whom he believed to possess a historical “long view” or “second sight,” as he sometimes described it.²⁸ He often cited Teddy Roosevelt and Winston Churchill as leaders who displayed this quality. But, for Lippmann, no figure had it in such quantity or utilized it so well for so long as De Gaulle. In making this claim, the columnist was fond of repeating De Gaulle’s wartime remarks to a U.S. diplomat. The diplomat had just finished telling De Gaulle his expectations for the structure of postwar France; the General disagreed. “But, I am sure I am right,” the diplomat protested. “I know France well—I lived there thirteen years.” De Gaulle countered, “Ah, you forget that I have lived in France for two thousand years.” U.S. officials took this statement as proof of De Gaulle’s grandiose, almost delusional, sense of self. Lippmann interpreted it as confirmation of De Gaulle’s greatness. He explained, the General “feels the historic destiny of his people and therefore he knows what in the end they respond to and will do. Ordinary

²⁶ “Lippmann Urges U.S. Recognize De Gaulle,” 29 October 1942, *New York Times*: 2.

²⁷ Lippmann, “Report from France,” T&T, 2 December 1944, *Washington Post*: 5.

politicians who practice what might be called Gallup poll democracy find such a man impossible to understand and exasperatingly difficult to get on with. For he disregards the appearance of things, the immediate preoccupations on the surface, the practical difficulties of the moment. Yet his prophecies come true . . . in General De Gaulle the French have found a leader who acts in the present on what he knows will happen in the future.”²⁹

It is not difficult to understand, then, why Lippmann was one of the few journalists to whom De Gaulle regularly made himself available. In 1945, when the columnist initiated his regimen of twice-yearly trips to Western Europe, the General was one of Lippmann’s regular hosts and a principal source on a range of issues. That the Lippmann-De Gaulle meetings became matter-of-fact over the years was revealed in an anecdote told by the longtime French ambassador, Herve Alphand. Only once during his many visits to Paris—in 1963 specifically—had Lippmann *not* requested an audience with the French leader. Discovering that the columnist had avoided a personal call, De Gaulle instructed Alphand “to find out why [Lippmann] had not asked to see him.” Lippmann’s explanation, which he later shared with the journalist Henry W. Brandon, was that he had ignored De Gaulle because “he had such disagreements with him currently that he did not think it would have been *convenient* to meet with him.”³⁰ It was not the response of a newspaperman who looked to capitalize on the revelations that might be made in an important interview.

²⁸ See, for instance, Lippmann, T&T, 7 June 1960, “Listen to De Gaulle,” *Washington Post*: A15.

²⁹ Lippmann, T&T, 2 December 1944, “Report From France,” *Washington Post*: 5.

³⁰ Henry W. Brandon, “On Walter Lippmann, European Statesman,” delivered at a 1990 conference on the occasion of the 101st anniversary of Lippmann’s birth, Bard College, NYC, Box 27, Henry W. Brandon Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, DC.

Rather, it reflected the attitude of a seasoned diplomat who, realizing that relations were strained, preferred to postpone discussions until a more propitious moment.

With his wife, Helen (a zealous Francophile herself), Lippmann hosted in Washington a series of French officials aligned with De Gaulle from the 1940s through the 1960s.³¹ For instance, as early as 1945 he entertained Maurice Couve de Murville, a promising young diplomat. When De Gaulle named Couve de Murville his foreign minister in 1958, Lippmann described it in his column as a “most gratifying and reassuring” development and lauded the General’s consul “as penetrating a judge of international affairs, as any Western diplomat now in active service.”³² He regularly lunched at the French ambassador’s residence as the guest of a series of Paris’s envoys: Henri Bonnet, Alphand (who served as Ambassador to the U.S. from the critical 1955 to 1965 period), and Charles Lucet. When he left town in 1967, the French embassy threw Lippmann a bash at a time when most of official Washington ignored him completely.

But it was for De Gaulle that Lippmann prepared some of his most gratuitous prose. By the early 1960s, Lippmann believed the French president to be “the chief spokesman of the Western alliance,” and the man who had earned “the first position in the intellectual and moral leadership of the West.”³³ What qualities could elicit such praise from such a supposedly detached observer as Lippmann? Two considerations were paramount in Lippmann’s judgment of De Gaulle. First, the

³¹ According to Francis Bator, Helen Lippmann may actually have “imposed” some of her enthusiasms for the French on her husband. Francis Bator, interview with author, 25 January 2001, Cambridge, MA.

³² Eva Hinton, “Town Talk,” 21 November 1945, *Washington Post*: 16; Lippmann, T&T, 3 June 1958, “The Task of De Gaulle,” *Washington Post*: A17.

³³ Lippmann, T&T, 26 April 1960, “The New Leadership,” *Washington Post*: A13; Lippmann, 7 June 1960, *Washington Post*: A15.

General tended to stress the primacy of nationalism over ideology in the affairs of nations—a worldview that Lippmann shared. Moreover, Lippmann detected in De Gaulle a kindred realist spirit. “Perhaps the greatest difference between General De Gaulle’s way of thinking and the conventional thinking of the day is that he sees and treats the Soviet Union as primarily a European great power, and only incidentally as the headquarters of world communism,” Lippmann explained on 26 April 1960. “For him Russia existed long before Lenin and will exist long after Khrushchev. Russia is a European nation with national interests in Europe, and the central clue to policy in dealing with Russia is to be found not in the writings of Marx and Lenin but in the history of Russia.” De Gaulle had shunted aside ideology and rhetoric, Lippmann wrote, and “has given the Alliance a new lead in how to think and how to talk about the Cold War and about Germany.”

Moreover, Lippmann identified with the General’s cosmopolitan sensibilities—his ability to calculate French interests and to oppose Soviet aggrandizement without resorting to anti-Communist demagoguery. “When he speaks of the Soviet Union, he does it with cool and impeccable courtesy,” Lippmann wrote on 31 January 1963. “He does not stoop to the vulgar epithets which the ghost writers feel they must sprinkle through almost every official utterance. This courtesy comes from the fact that General de Gaulle sees France and he sees Russia as perennial nations within a European society.” Even when Lippmann disagreed with the French leader, as with De Gaulle’s insistence on an independent French nuclear force (the so-called *force de frappe*) in 1962-1963, he still looked to the General’s far-reaching grasp of European affairs. “We shall delude ourselves also if we regard

the General as a relic of the past, say as an imitation of Napoleon,” he explained to readers at a time when Franco-American relations were at a nadir. “For however irritating he may be, General De Gaulle is not and never has been a fool, and though his roots are deep in the past, again and again it has been shown that he is endowed with second-sight about the future.”³⁴

Certainly, Lippmann agreed with De Gaulle’s views on European affairs far more than he opposed them. In the late-1940s, Lippmann’s writings on Germany, particularly his emphasis on the need to keep Germany politically decentralized, demilitarized, and neutral, took their cue from the General’s views and many public speeches. It was only when De Gaulle came to power and himself dropped the rhetoric of German reunification that Lippmann publicly ditched his own long-standing position on the necessity of “disengagement” from Germany. There is good reason to believe that Lippmann was following De Gaulle’s lead in this regard as well. For it was after successive trips to Europe in 1959 and 1960 that Lippmann acquiesced to permanent German partition, citing among other things the imperatives of French national interests to promote that division. Having just returned from a trip that included stops in Paris, Bonn, Rome, and London, Lippmann informed readers that reunification “no longer represents the real expectations and practical hopes of the principal Western governments. After another visit to Western Europe in spring 1960, Lippmann declared German reunification a “dead” policy goal: “It has been dead not only because the Russians would have none of it but because so many in the

³⁴ Lippmann, T&T, 31 January 1963, “The General as Prophet,” *Washington Post*: A19.

West never wanted it at all.”³⁵ This shift is all the more curious because only a year earlier, in 1958, Lippmann had come to the defense of George Kennan during the “disengagement” debate occasioned by the diplomat’s Reith Lectures.

De Gaulle and a string of French ambassadors to Washington also exercised considerable influence on Lippmann’s conception of Western policy in Southeast Asia. In 1961, the columnist embraced the French leader’s notion of neutralization in Laos and welcomed France’s return to a position of political leadership in Asia. Two years later he applied the same neutralization plan in recommending the creation of a coalition government to unite North and South Vietnam. These were views largely adumbrated by De Gaulle and actively pursued by French diplomats in Saigon and Hanoi. When De Gaulle publicized this plan in August 1963 (much to the anger of JFK administration officials) and, then, just four months later followed it up by extending Paris’s formal diplomatic recognition of the PRC (to the great discomfort of the Johnson administration), it was Walter Lippmann who was left to offer a rationale that tried to make the General’s action as non-threatening and logical-sounding as possible. “Far from being arbitrary, personal gestures, the major French policies are widely prepared, long-range diplomatic operations,” Lippmann assured readers at the highest levels of the U.S. Government. “We are missing the main point and we are stultifying our influence when we miss the French policies as not really

³⁵ Lippmann, T&T, 6 April 1959, “The Two Germanys and Berlin—I”; Lippmann, T&T, 26 April 1960, “The New Leadership.”

serious, as expressions of personal pique or personal vanity on the part of General de Gaulle, as inspired by ‘anti-Americanism’ and a wish to embarrass us.”³⁶

Whereas Lippmann practically idolized De Gaulle for his historical vision, Raymond Aron perceived in many of the General’s actions a distressing pattern of irresponsibility. Although Aron had participated in the Free France movement during World War II, his support for De Gaulle in the postwar period, and especially after the General came to power in 1958, was rather lukewarm. It was based more on Aron’s identification with the interest of France, rather than any deep affinity with Gaullist visions. The *Le Figaro* columnist, like many Frenchmen in 1958, welcomed De Gaulle’s ascendancy to power in large measure because he believed the General’s military experience would help resolve the longstanding Algerian conflict (at the time, Lippmann compared that sentiment with the election of Eisenhower in 1952 to resolve the Korean War). Aron supported aspects of De Gaulle’s foreign policy—making a strong argument for the utility of an independent French nuclear program and arsenal within the NATO alliance.³⁷ But the commentator never shared the grand design of the General’s foreign policy—the creation of a front-rank role for France in the superpower struggle. As Tony Judt observes, “Aron regarded the Gaullist approach to foreign policy, nuclear arms, and the Atlantic Alliance as cavalier, contradictory, and at times irresponsible.”³⁸

Aron’s estimates of De Gaulle shaped the views of key officials within the Kennedy and Johnson administrations—McGeorge Bundy, George Ball, Arthur

³⁶ Lippmann, T&T, 21 January 1964, “Red China and the General,” *Washington Post*: A13; T&T, 4 February 1964, “The French-American Argument,” *Washington Post*: 13; T&T, 21 May 1964, “III—France and America in Asia,” *Washington Post*: A23.

Schlesinger, Jr., and Ambassador to France Charles Bohlen. Part of De Gaulle's belligerence had to do with his relishing the role of saying something outrageous and then relegating himself to watching people react to his statements. Aron described these provocations as little more than the "temporary instruments of his acts."³⁹ Much of the time, Aron maintained, De Gaulle did not take half of what he said seriously. When McGeorge Bundy prepared President Kennedy for a meeting with Aron in 1963, he noted the columnist's advice "that absolutely nothing is gained by criticism of de Gaulle in public—it simply builds him up." Aron believed that Kennedy showed "great restraint" in that regard and Bundy replied that the commentator ought "to make the same argument with George Ball," who was less circumspect in his public assessments of the General.⁴⁰ Interestingly, Ball in making criticisms of De Gaulle in his memoirs chose to quote from Aron. In *Peace and War*, Aron had noted the obsolescence of the idea that any single state within the Western Alliance could act independently without seriously impairing the balance of power with the Soviet bloc. A foreign policy such as De Gaulle's, the notion of a Europe from the Atlantic to the Urals, "assumes, in our period, the appearance of an irrevocable destiny. The approximate proportionality between force and resources, between resources and the number of men and the amount of raw materials, between mobilizable force and power, does not permit any hope that the leader's genius or the people's virtue might

³⁷ Raymond Aron, *The Great Debate: Theories of Nuclear Strategy*, translated by Ernest Pawel (New York: Doubleday, 1965).

³⁸ Judt, *The Burden of Responsibility*: 179.

³⁹ Judt, *The Burden of Responsibility*: 179; see also, Aron's *Memoires* (Paris: Julliard, 1983): 286-300.

⁴⁰ Bundy to the President, 30 April 1963, NSF, McGeorge Bundy Correspondence, Box 405, JFKL.

reverse the verdict of number.”⁴¹ In making such criticisms of De Gaulle, Aron no doubt regretted the tendency of the General’s enthusiasts, such as Lippmann, to accept his statements at face value and sometimes compound the misunderstanding and contribute to the mischief that the French leader sometimes clearly meant to inspire.

V.

Lippmann and Aron acted as unofficial ambassadors by explaining the policies of their respective nations to leaders on the opposite side of the Atlantic, a dynamic mostly clearly demonstrated in the dialogue that developed in the early 1960s on nuclear policy within the Western Alliance. That debate was intensified by the Cuban missile crisis in October 1962. Lippmann’s role during and immediately after the Cuban missile crisis warrants close analysis. His actions both as an independent observer, public broker, and unofficial diplomat shaped perceptions in Moscow and impacted negotiations in Washington. Kennedy administration officials reacted sharply to his efforts at facilitation. Nevertheless, in the wake of the crisis, Lippmann was amenable to taking their message on the dangers of nuclear sharing to De Gaulle in a public forum—an action that precipitated yet another debate with Aron, this time over the issue of nuclear command and control.

Historians now know that Lippmann acted as a public broker in the Cuban Missile Crisis of October 1962, but the full extent and effect of his participation

⁴¹ George W. Ball, *The Past Has Another Pattern: Memoirs* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1982): 96; quoted from Aron’s *Peace and War: A Theory of International Relations*, translated by Richard Howard and Annette Baker Fox, (Garden City, NJ: Doubleday and Company, 1966): 18-19.

became clear only with the publication of Soviet and U.S. documents in the 1990s.⁴² Because of Lippmann's White House access and Nikita Khrushchev's respect for him, this was a Cold War crisis in which he played a direct role—at a critical stage, proposing the idea of a “missile swap” to defuse the crisis. Nevertheless, this was an *exceptional* instance of Lippmann's ability to shape events. It was, however, typical in one aspect: Lippmann surpassed the administration's lead on negotiations with the Soviets, causing discomfort at the highest levels in Washington. He was less critical of Kennedy than he had been during the Berlin Crisis, giving him high marks for deflecting the more militant advice of his advisers. But Lippmann also published his estimate that the American and Soviet brinkmanship that precipitated the crisis was needlessly provocative.

During September and early October 1962, U.S. intelligence monitored a large conventional military buildup in Cuba, assisted by the Soviets. It had become a mid-term election issue in Congress, where Senator Kenneth Keating, a New York Republican, had held hearings into the buildup which were intended to embarrass the Kennedy administration by showing it was not firm enough with the Soviets. On 9 October, Lippmann responded, by writing that Russian weapons shipments to Cuba—mostly defensive arms according to Undersecretary of State George Ball's testimony before Congress—were probably meant to fend off another Bay-of-Pigs-style invasion. Lippmann also perceived that the situation was shaped more by Castro's

⁴² See, for instance, Steel's account in *Walter Lippmann and the American Century*: 534-537. The Cold War International History Project (CWIHP) at the Woodrow Wilson Center in Washington, DC, has done much to fill out the Soviet side of the crisis. For a book that utilizes both sides' perspective see Timothy Naftali and Alexander Fursenko, *'One Hell of a Gamble': Khrushchev, Castro, and Kennedy, 1958-1964* (New York: Norton, 1997). See also Ned Lebow and Janet Stein, *We All Lost the Cold War* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993): 19-145; and, for a more recent

cunning manipulation of the superpower rivalry than any insidious design on the Kremlin's part to establish a beachhead in the Western Hemisphere. "Mr. Khrushchev is in Cuba because he has talked so loudly about helping revolutions," Lippmann told readers. "Castro has thrown himself into Khrushchev's arms, and is blackmailing him. The Castro regime has made itself the prime and public test of whether international communism is a real force or a lot of words."⁴³ The evidence simply did not support the contention that the U.S. should launch a pre-emptive attack, he added. Lippmann counseled patience and caution recalling the words of Winston Churchill, whom he was fond of quoting in such situations: "How many wars have been averted by patience and persisting good will? How many wars have been precipitated by firebrands?"⁴⁴

Five days later, American U-2 spy planes photographed long-range missile sites in Cuba that Russian technicians were constructing. When complete the facilities would be able to launch nuclear missiles more than 1,000 miles—threatening much of the U.S. East Coast and the Mid-West. Kennedy set up a special White House group, Ex-Comm, to meet several goals: get the missiles out of Cuba; avoid a nuclear war; prepare for a Soviet countermove in Berlin; and settle on a policy that would not jeopardize American credibility. Despite Ex-Comm's range of more militant suggestions, including preemptive air strikes and an outright invasion of the island, Kennedy decided to impose a naval "quarantine" on Soviet cargo ships bound for Cuba. With U.S. forces on full alert, the president spoke to the American

assessment, see, John Lewis Gaddis, *We Now Know: Rethinking Cold War History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997): 260-280.

⁴³ Lippmann, T&T, "On War Over Cuba," 9 October 1962.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

public on the evening of 22 October. He warned that any missile launched from Cuba would be considered an attack by the Soviet Union and that it would require a full U.S. retaliatory response against Russia. Kennedy requested the Soviets remove the missiles under U.N. supervision.⁴⁵ With Soviet supply ships sailing westward toward the island, both sides readied for a tense showdown.

On 25 October, Lippmann published a column that caught the attention of leaders in Washington and Moscow. Despite the standoff's rapidity, he warned that the U.S. should not abandon diplomatic initiatives toward the Kremlin. In both world wars, Lippmann recalled, "we made the same tragic mistake. We suspended diplomacy when the guns began to shoot."⁴⁶ Lippmann criticized Kennedy for not confronting Soviet foreign minister Andrei Gromyko during a private meeting days after the president had first learned about the missiles. Instead, the columnist wrote, the president spurned private talks in favor of a public confrontation. He committed, Lippmann explained, one of the cardinal mistakes of diplomacy: delivering an ultimatum without first attempting to negotiate the issue. Kennedy should have given the Russians, "what all wise statesmen give their adversaries—the chance to save face." Moreover, though the quarantine stopped the flow of offensive weapons onto the island, Lippmann wrote, it could not resolve the question of how to dismantle the existing missiles. "It is here," he proclaimed, "that diplomacy must not abdicate."⁴⁷ He proposed a horse-trade, a *quid pro quo*: removal of the launch sites and Soviet

⁴⁵ "Radio and Television Report to the American People on the Soviet Arms Buildup in Cuba," 22 October 1962, item #485 *Public Papers of the Presidents: John F. Kennedy (1962)*. Available on-line at: <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/site/docs/pppus.php?admin=035&year=1962&id=485>.

⁴⁶ Lippmann, T&T, "Blockade Proclaimed," 25 October 1962.

⁴⁷ One may only speculate why Lippmann chose to lead a column proposing a solution to the dramatic crisis with sharp criticisms of Kennedy's diplomacy. These admonishments may have been included

missiles in Cuba for the dismantling of an American Jupiter missiles and their bases in Turkey. These were two locales where each of the superpowers placed strategic missiles on one another's frontiers. "The Soviet missile base in Cuba, like the U.S.-NATO base in Turkey is of little military value," Lippmann wrote. "The Soviet military base in Cuba is defenseless, and the base in Turkey is all but obsolete. The two bases could be dismantled without altering the world balance of power." Such an agreement, Lippmann added, could provide a first step to removing offensive weapons from other secondary countries. He concluded, a Cuba-Turkey trade was the only way to get out of the "tyranny of automatic and uncontrollable events."⁴⁸

The genesis of Lippmann's idea of a missile swap is disputable, though the newly-released Kennedy tapes and Lippmann's rigorously-kept appointment diaries suggest a likely source.⁴⁹ The columnist knew about the positioning of U.S. Jupiter missiles in Turkey from earlier research on the subject of nuclear disarmament. During his first meeting with Khrushchev in 1958, the topic of forward-arrayed American missiles in Turkey recurred throughout their conversation with the Soviet leader expressing deep frustration about their existence; the missiles, after great delay, had finally been fully deployed by March 1962.⁵⁰ Lippmann may have

by design to demonstrate to Kremlin leaders that he was *not* writing with administration sanction. If so, this was a signal that Kremlin leaders missed.

⁴⁸ Lippmann, T&T, "Blockade Proclaimed," 25 October 1962.

⁴⁹ Dino Brugioni, *Eyeball to Eyeball: The Inside Story of the Cuban Missile Crisis* (New York: Random House, 1991): 421-422. Brugioni implies that Lippmann's column of 25 October echoes Kennedy's emphasis on the lessons of World War I—that is, how the allied nations stumbled into war. On several occasions during the crisis Kennedy mentioned Barbara Tuchman's *The Guns of August*. Brugioni speculates—without any evidence—that intelligence officers or even Kennedy had broached this idea with Lippmann personally. The evidence does not support that conclusion.

⁵⁰ Helen B. Lippmann, "Notes on conversation with Khrushchev," 24 October 1958, Moscow, Series VII, Box 238, Folder 27, Walter Lippmann Collection, Sterling Memorial Library, Yale University, New Haven, CT (hereinafter referred to as "WLC"). Khrushchev told Lippmann that the U.S. missiles in Turkey made the proposals for international inspection and control of nuclear arms seem "ridiculous." See Lippmann's *The Communist World and Ours* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company,

conceived of the offer based on these prior discussions alone. Yet another theory is that a well-connected official in the Atomic Energy Commission, perhaps even John McCloy, may have alerted Lippmann that the administration was considering such a missile swap—though the columnist’s scrupulous appointment diaries do not bear out this theory.⁵¹ According to those diaries, however, Lippmann did meet with Undersecretary of State George Ball and Assistant Secretary of State for Latin American Affairs Edward Martin, hours after filing the 25 October column; both men participated in the high-level ExComm meetings.⁵² That appointment appears highly suggestive in retrospect. It is not implausible that Ball, who attended the ExComm meetings on 16 and 18 October in which a Cuba-Turkey missile trade was discussed, earlier had leaked the idea to Lippmann thus inspiring him to pen the column.⁵³ A longtime friend and neighbor of Lippmann’s, the undersecretary was one of the

1958): 28. Lippmann was sympathetic. He wrote that the American “policy of military containment with its forward positions on [Soviet] borders is in their minds conclusive proof that Lenin was right” about an inevitable war provoked by capitalist encirclement of the USSR. *Ibid.*, 38. Broadly, Lippmann called for a policy that preserved America’s defensive capabilities without provoking undo fear of the Soviet threat; diplomacy that realized the US could make friends in the world without signing them on as military allies; and a foreign aid program premised on development and modernization rather than subsidization of governments threatened by the rise of Communist movements in their own countries. Americans, Lippmann wrote, must “relax their fears in order to fortify and clarify their purposes. But we do not live and cannot live in the same intellectual and political world [as the Soviets] . . . formidable as the Communists are, they are not ten feet tall, and the less we plunge ourselves in hysterics, the more likely we are to take good care of our affairs.” *Ibid.*, 56.

⁵¹ Naftali and Fursenko, *‘One Hell of a Gamble’*: 273, 394-395. Indeed, the McCloy connection—a man with whom Lippmann had no close association and who had little respect for the columnist—fails under scrutiny. Moreover, McCloy was an organization man and it seems unlikely that he would have approached Lippmann on his own initiative. Nor is there supporting evidence that John Kennedy or his key subordinates asked McCloy to speak to Lippmann about such a trade. Moreover, Lippmann’s meticulous records do not mention such a meeting. See Lippmann’s Appointment Diaries, Series VII, Box 240, WLC.

⁵² Lippmann’s biographer noted that meeting, too, adding that Ball did not object to the basic thrust of the column. But Steel does not consider that Ball may have been the actual source for the idea. See, *Walter Lippmann and the American Century*: 535.

⁵³ See, for instance, *The Presidential Recordings: John F. Kennedy—The Great Crises, Volume II, September-October 21, 1962*, Timothy Naftali and Philip Zelikow, eds. (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2001): 397-468; 518-572. A private meeting at Lippmann’s or Ball’s home is something that likely would not have been recorded in Lippmann’s appointment diaries.

columnist's most intimate and discreet sources. Since the column already had been submitted, Lippmann's visit to the State Department probably meant to confirm key points he had made rather than—as Lippmann's biographer suggests—to seek approval from officials of what would appear the following morning. Though inconclusive the Ball connection offers the most likely scenario for the origins of the 25 October column.

Proof for the assertion that Kennedy and Bundy did not approach Lippmann to write such a column, is found in the Kennedy tapes—where U.S. officials, including the president, reacted to the column with surprise and some anxiety about its effect on the bargaining process. On 26 October, Khrushchev sent Kennedy a rambling, disjointed letter in which he made an offer to remove Soviet missiles from Cuba in exchange for an American pledge not to invade the island. When Attorney General Robert Kennedy met with Anatoly Dobrynin later that evening to discuss the proposal, the Soviet ambassador, echoing Lippmann's column which he'd read in the *Washington Post* and the *New York Herald Tribune*, suggested that the crisis might be resolved if the Americans pledged to dismantle the Jupiter missiles in Turkey. After a brief phone call to the president, the attorney general (apparently unaware of Lippmann's public suggestion of such a trade) gave that assurance to Dobrynin. The next morning, Saturday 27 October—before ExComm had been able to debate the offer in Khrushchev's first letter—a second note arrived from the Soviet premier. Taking a firm line, Khrushchev demanded that the missiles be removed from Turkey. It further implied—echoing the language of the Lippmann column—that the Turkish

bases also be removed in an exchange for the withdrawal of Soviet military advisors and hardware from their Cuban outposts.

In a late-afternoon meeting on 27 October, several members of ExComm, debated the meaning behind Khrushchev's shift. "I think they've been put off by the Lippmann piece," U.S. Ambassador to the Soviet Union Llewellyn Thompson said, "—encouraged to think that we really are prepared to swap Turkey for Cuba."⁵⁴ Treasury Secretary C. Douglas Dillon interjected that the idea had been broached a week before in ExComm debates. Thompson clarified, however, that that discussion had been about missiles not bases. Vice President Lyndon Johnson asked the Soviet expert why he thought Khrushchev sent the second letter, to which Thompson replied that the premier may have been "overruled." He thought it more likely however that "Khrushchev and his colleagues were deceived by the Lippmann piece" and a 26 October speech by Austrian foreign minister Bruno Kreisky which proposed a similar trade. These public proposals "made [Khrushchev] think that we were putting this out—that we were willing to make a trade. . . And, too, [Lippmann] has a close relationship with Mac [Bundy]. [Khrushchev must be thinking]: 'These boys are beginning to give way. Let's push harder.'" A few minutes later, when the president entered the room, Thompson recapitulated this analysis for Kennedy: "The Lippmann article and maybe the Kreisky speech has made them think they can get more and they backed away" from the 26 October offer. Kennedy, apparently unaware of

⁵⁴ I take this quote not from the Zelikow and May translation but from a review article by former JFK Library historian Sheldon M Stern, which is highly critical of the editing and transcribing job in the Zelikow-May publication. Their version of that line version did not ring true to the context of what Thompson was talking about which was, in fact, centered on the terms of Khrushchev's contradictory offers, not terms proposed by the U.S. The Zelikow-May version reads, the Soviets have "been put up by the Lippmann piece. It occurs to me that we really weren't prepared to talk Turkey for Cuba." See

Lippmann's 25 October column, inquired when the Lippmann proposal appeared and Bundy replied it had been published two days prior. "Two days ago?" Kennedy shot back. "Shit!" the president exclaimed. An unidentified subordinate offered consolation, "It's been around; [we] can't avoid it."⁵⁵

Days after the crisis was resolved, Lippmann told Soviet Ambassador Anatoly Dobrynin that he "caught it hot" from administration officials for publishing the column. "A lot of people here," Lippmann told Dobrynin at a diplomatic reception, "considered [the 25 October] article had suggested to N.S. Khrushchev the idea of raising such a question."⁵⁶ The Soviet diplomat reported back to Moscow that as the basis for his column Lippmann claimed to have used data provided by members of the U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency. Whatever its source, the exchange idea elicited White House displeasure. As Walt Rostow recalls, the Ex Comm reaction was one of shock. Lippmann's lecture on diplomacy, coupled with his public exposition of sensitive initiatives the administration was then contemplating, infuriated Kennedy. Privately, he complained that Lippmann "almost blew it."⁵⁷ Administration officials also took the unusual step of warning Soviet diplomats directly that they must not regard Lippmann as a voice of administration thinking.⁵⁸

Stern's essay "The JFK Tapes: Round Two," *Reviews in American History* 30 (2002): 680-688; quote on p. 684.

⁵⁵ *The Presidential Recordings: John F. Kennedy, The Great Crises, Vol. III, October 22-28* Philip Zelikow and Ernest May, eds. (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2001): 470-472; 478-479. See also Richard Reeves *President Kennedy: Profile of Power* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1993): 405.

⁵⁶ Cable from Soviet Ambassador to the U.S.A., Anatoly Dobrynin, to Soviet Foreign Ministry, 1 November 1962, [translated by Vladimir Zaemsky], Cold War International History Project (hereinafter cited as CWIHP), Washington, D.C. Available on-line at: http://wwwics.si.edu/index.cfm?fuseaction=library.document&topic_id=1409&id=763 .

⁵⁷ Walt Rostow, interview with author, 26 March 1998, Austin, TX.

⁵⁸ Days after the passing of the crisis, Kennedy's press secretary Pierre Salinger told Russian embassy official Aleksander Fomin that "everything Mr. Lippmann writes does not come straight from the White House, that he is frequently wrong, and that if the Soviets were going to seek to judge

Lippmann's column also surprised Soviet diplomats who, nevertheless, attached great significance to its publication. The Soviet embassy carefully monitored administration reaction to the 25 October column. The day it was published in the *Washington Post*, Dobrynin cabled the Soviet Foreign Ministry that the column was a trial balloon. He noted, however, that when probed, Secretary of State Dean Rusk "refuted" Lippmann's suggestion about American "readiness to 'exchange' Soviet bases in Cuba for American bases in other countries, for example in Turkey."⁵⁹ On 26 October 1962, at a meeting of Eastern European diplomats at the Soviet Embassy in Washington, Dobrynin put the question to his colleagues about whether Lippmann's 25 October column "should be regarded as an indirect suggestion on the part of the White House." The consensus, apparently, was that it was indeed just that.⁶⁰

The best evidence for the column's influence, however, appears in a memorandum of conversation in Havana on 4 November 1962 between Soviet envoy A.I. Mikoyan and Cuban leader Fidel Castro. During the discussions, as Mikoyan explained to Castro why "it was necessary to use the art of diplomacy" rather than continue to face down Washington, he admitted that the Lippmann column provided a solution at a critical impasse. "Speaking frankly, we were not thinking about bases in Turkey at all," Mikoyan told Castro. "But during discussion of the dangerous

administration intentions by following the words of reporters, they should back-read or listen to different reporters than the ones they have been following." See Salinger's *With Kennedy* (New York: Doubleday, 1966): 279.

⁵⁹ CWIHP, Cable from Soviet Ambassador to the U.S.A., Anatoly Dobrynin, to Soviet Foreign Ministry, 25 October 1962, *Bulletin 8-9: Cold War in the Third World and the Collapse of Détente*.

⁶⁰ Janos Radvanyi, *Hungary and the Superpowers: The 1956 Revolution and Realpolitik* (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 1972): 130-131. According to Radvanyi, Hungary's Ambassador to the U.S. at the time of the missile crisis, the Rumanian ambassador announced that a "reliable source" had told

situation we received information from the United States of America, including an article by Lippmann, where it was said that the Russians could raise the question of liquidating the USA bases in Turkey.” This indicated to Kremlin leaders that U.S. officials “were speaking about the possibility of such a demand inside American circles.”⁶¹ Because they were uniquely attentive to the columnist, Soviet officials also tended to overestimate Lippmann’s role as a spokesman for administration policy—evidently relying on their own perspective of the press as an instrument of the government. This assumption precluded the possibility that Lippmann might hold forth on such a sensitive topic without the sanction of high U.S. officials. This seems to be precisely what he did—in a column that somewhat muddied the negotiations because it substituted the proposal of a missile swap for the dismantling of entire bases.

Ultimately, the administration ignored Khrushchev’s 27 October letter, responding instead to the 26 October communication that had indicated the Kremlin’s willingness to negotiate. On the evening of 27 October, Robert Kennedy again met with Dobrynin and assured him that the Turkish missiles would be removed but not as part of the public negotiations—there would be no *quid pro quo*. He also delivered an ultimatum that the U.S. would destroy the missile sites in Cuba if the Soviets did not act promptly to remove them. The next day, Khrushchev relented. So concerned was he to preserve his image of steadfastness that President Kennedy hid the details of the resolution from the public, which knew nothing of the swap until long after his

him that the “administration had communicated to Lippmann the idea for his compromise solution.” Radvanyi concluded that later reports tended to disprove that theory.

⁶¹ CWIHP, Memorandum of Conversation, The Second Castro-Mikoyan Conversation, 4 November 1962, *Bulletin 5: Cold War Crises*. Published as part of a set of documents titled “Mikoyan’s Mission

death. During the crisis, the administration (most likely McGeorge Bundy) convinced James Reston to counter Lippmann's trade proposal on two grounds: first, that Khrushchev had probably precipitated the crisis to achieve the removal of American missiles from Turkey and, second, that such a trade might prompt French president Charles de Gaulle to undertake construction of his own nuclear force.⁶²

In the aftermath of the crisis, Lippmann continued to be a point of contact for Soviet officials. On 31 October, he hosted G. A. Zhukov, Information Counselor at the Soviet Embassy, and his colleague Georgi Bolshakov. Bolshakov rated low on the embassy's seniority list but by some accounts he was Khrushchev's secret liaison with President Kennedy.⁶³ Over tea at the columnist's home the three men discussed the need to create an inspection process in Cuba, right-wing criticism of Kennedy, the prospects for a prohibition on nuclear testing, and the likelihood of another meeting between the president and Khrushchev. Lippmann expressed concern that conservatives would use the Cuban missile crisis to assert that "Kennedy has once again become the victim of Soviet deception." Zhukov reported to Moscow that Lippmann—like White House press secretary Pierre Salinger and diplomat W. Averell Harriman—"was decidedly cordial . . . and expressed gratitude for [Khrushchev's] wise actions that have opened a way toward a settlement of the Cuban problem." Lippmann, meanwhile, telephoned Mac Bundy to apprise him of

to Havana: Cuban-Soviet Negotiations, November 1962." Available on-line at: http://wwics.si.edu/index.cfm?fuseaction=library.document&topic_id=1409&id=32 .

⁶² James Reston, "Kennedy's New Diplomacy in Cuba," *The New York Times*, 26 October 1962: front section p. 30; Reston, "To Deal or Not to Deal: That's the Question," *The New York Times*, 28 October 1962: section 4, p. 10. The Lippmann v. Reston counterpoint is discussed in Montague Kern, Patricia Levering and Ralph Levering, *The Kennedy Crises: The Press, the Presidency, and Foreign Policy* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1983): 127-128.

the discussions.⁶⁴ The next day in a conversation with Dobrynin, Lippmann renewed his warning that the while the “mood” at the White House boded well for removal of the Jupiter missiles that “by no means can it be related to the Cuban events.”⁶⁵

Without alluding to the backroom bargaining in his column, Lippmann praised JFK’s use of force “to boldly and successfully . . . achieve a specific and limited objective.” The president had kept his diplomatic options open and had opted for a “settlement” not a “crusade,” Lippmann wrote on 30 October 1962. “The world will be impressed by Kennedy’s resolution,” he concluded. “It will also be impressed by his wisdom.”⁶⁶ Privately, however, he still harbored concerns about the brinksmanship that precipitated Kennedy’s eleventh-hour diplomacy.⁶⁷

VI.

Lippmann’s public brokering in the Cuban missile crisis underscored his close ties with key administration officials. Lippmann’s access to Kennedy—such as it was⁶⁸—

⁶³ See Richard Reeves *President Kennedy*: fn. 137-138. Ostensibly, Bolshakov was identified by the Soviet Embassy as a newspaper editor. He was well-connected and an especially close friend of Khrushchev’s son-in-law.

⁶⁴ CWIHP, Forwarding Telegram from G.A. Zhukov, 1 November 1962, *Bulletin 8-9: Cold War in the Third World and the Collapse of Détente*. On-line at: <http://wwics.si.edu> .

⁶⁵ Dobrynin cable to Foreign Ministry (Moscow), 1 November 1962.

⁶⁶ Lippmann, T&T, “The Cuban Arrangement,” 30 October 1962.

⁶⁷ This is quite apparent from the transcript of Lippmann’s oral history interview available at the JFKL. His research assistant, who had many contacts in the administration, confirmed Lippmann’s attitude; Elizabeth Midgley, interview with author, 28 February 2001, Washington, DC.

⁶⁸ According to Lippmann’s appointment diaries he met with Kennedy on four, perhaps five, occasions during his presidency—the last in the spring of 1963. According to his JFKL oral history, Lippmann recalled meeting alone with Kennedy only once—in the aftermath of the Cuban Missile Crisis. Lippmann believed that his criticisms early in the Kennedy presidency had mitigated his personal influence. “I may as well say here, for the sake of the historical record, that I only saw him once along in his office [on 8 November 1962]. I talked with him several times at various occasions. But after [Kennedy went to the Vienna meeting in June 1961] I did my second broadcast, and in that broadcast I was asked what was his weakness. I said he was not a good teacher. He has no instinct to teach what he is trying to do and doesn’t explain himself, and therefore he is failing to communicate adequately with the people. And he didn’t protest to me about that, but I know that was the end of any close

came most often through advisers acting as go-betweens, particularly Schlesinger and Mac Bundy. As a special assistant to Kennedy, Schlesinger brought Lippmann in to speak to the president in advance of the Vienna Summit. Columnist and historian had socialized since the 1940s and, during the JFK years, often met alone for late-afternoon cocktails to discuss events. Here and there Schlesinger included a Lippmann observation in a memo to the president: how to handle Laos, how to effectively manage public information.⁶⁹

To a far greater degree, Kennedy's national security adviser, Mac Bundy, was Lippmann's most important government contact—eclipsing even those days when, as a youthful *New Republic* editor, Lippmann had known Wilson's confidant, Colonel Edward House, and his Secretary of War, Newton D. Baker. There were several reasons for this. Bundy, like Schlesinger, befriended Lippmann years earlier, establishing a relationship with the columnist that fit Bundy's overall pattern of

personal relationship because his military aide, now General Clifton, called CBS and protested violently about the whole thing. They never protested to me, but after that it was over." Lippmann, oral history, JFKL: p. 10. This was the same CBS program in which Lippmann described the Kennedy administration as just like the Eisenhower administration in its approach to Cold War "only thirty years younger." Walter Lippmann, *Conversations with Walter Lippmann* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1965): 39-40.

What Lippmann perceived as Kennedy's failure to educate public opinion, concerned the columnist all the more because he believed the President to be a bright man and a potentially talented communicator of ideas. "The President was a man who understood things very quickly," Lippmann recalled. "He would get to a point like that—without any difficulty. But he was never a man to commit himself. He never said, I agree. He always maintained an escape hatch. I found that in all my dealings with him. He always had an escape hatch. You see, he never could say, 'Yes,' he agreed on it. He was going to listen to somebody else first. He was a great listener and a most intelligent listener." Lippmann, oral history, JFKL: 8.

⁶⁹ See for example, Schlesinger to Kennedy, "The Administration and Public Information," 16 March 1961, President's Office Files, Staff Memos (Arthur Schlesinger, Jr.), Box 65, JFKL. Schlesinger had known Lippmann during World War II when he researched at the Library of Congress for a book that eventually became *The Age of Jackson*. That path-breaking study earned Schlesinger a Pulitzer Prize, celebrity, and a Harvard professorship at a precocious age. The historian and his wife, Marion, were close friends of the portrait painter Gardiner Cox and his wife, Phyllis Byrne Cox, the sister of Helen Byrne Lippmann. The Lippmanns hosted the Schlesingers regularly at dinner parties, striking up a lasting acquaintance. Even though Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., went overseas during the war and, later, settled in Boston, he and Lippmann corresponded and socialized frequently.

ingratiating himself to powerful role models.⁷⁰ For Lippmann, Bundy represented the nexus of the government bureaucracy—the man who synthesized information from the Defense and State departments, National Security Council, and intelligence agencies. In his position, Bundy listened to Lippmann’s initiatives over lunch and recapitulated them later that afternoon to Kennedy either as debating points or as viable policy alternatives.

Reversing the flow, Bundy also communicated Kennedy’s opinions to the columnist. In March 1962, for example, Lippmann published a column critical of French leader Charles de Gaulle who had refused to participate in a conference on nuclear disarmament negotiations. De Gaulle instead planned to develop an independent French nuclear force—the *force de frappe*. Lippmann dismissed the general’s initiatives—arguing that the American nuclear deterrent made it possible for De Gaulle to pursue a “hitchhiking diplomacy” wherein American military might offered security for Paris officials to reassert a role in the alliance disproportionate to their power.⁷¹ Bundy wrote the columnist to express Kennedy’s appreciation and amusement: the president thought the phrase “belongs in the history books as a precise description of what De Gaulle has been trying to do. You must have had fun thinking it up, but it must also have taken some courage for a determined Francophile like yourself to use it.”⁷² When Lippmann criticized Kennedy’s decision to visit Berlin in the summer of 1963, and then reversed himself in a column admiring the historic trip, Bundy again communicated the president’s appreciation. President

⁷⁰ Kai Bird, *The Color of Truth: McGeorge Bundy and William Bundy—Brothers in Arms* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1998): 99-101.

⁷¹ Lippmann, T&T, “Why Go to Geneva?” 8 March 1963.

⁷² Bundy to Lippmann, 9 March 1963, White House Central Name File (WHCNF), Box 1631, JFKL.

Kennedy “asked me to thank you for the very handsome remarks about his expedition to Europe,” Bundy wrote. “He has admired many of your columns, but in reading this one he is reminded of the remark of James Russell Lowell that the three words in the English language which are hardest to pronounce are ‘I was wrong.’”⁷³

These letters allude to a strikingly informal connection Bundy made with Lippmann—the kind of comfortable and jocular exchanges that befit the relations of a mentor and his prized protégé rather than a journalist and high government official. Theirs was—as one observer remarked—an “intense relationship . . . almost like that of father and son.”⁷⁴ During their long friendship the columnist had reciprocated many-fold, recommending Bundy for president of Harvard in the 1950s and, suggesting him to Kennedy as a possible secretary of state. This friendship increased in importance after 1961. By the time LBJ succeeded the slain President Kennedy in November 1963, Bundy provided the vital link between a new president desirous of establishment approval and a columnist drawn to power.⁷⁵ Bundy brought Lippmann access. The columnist, of course, reflected elite opinion and his writing influenced thinking in the capital and in foreign ministries around the world. Of equal significance, Lippmann produced powerful insights that the national security adviser on occasion used to frame complex issues for Presidents Kennedy and Johnson, to

⁷³ Bundy to Lippmann, 13 August 1963, WHCNF, Box 1631, JFKL. President Kennedy had read: Lippmann, T&T, “Reasonable Hopes,” 13 August 1963, *Washington Post*: A19. Lippmann wrote, “President Kennedy has been proved right, in spite of the doubters, among them myself, about his trip to Germany. For Bonn to diverge from Paris on the issue of nuclear testing is a sharp deviation from the treaty with General De Gaulle. It leaves Gaullist France isolated, not only from all the outer world except Red China, but in the heart of the European continent itself.”

⁷⁴ Elizabeth Midgley, interview with author, 28 February 2001, Washington, DC.

⁷⁵ Kai Bird covers this aspect of the relationship somewhat more satisfactorily in his biography of Bundy than does Steel in his book on Lippmann. See, for instance, Bird, *The Color of Truth*: 101-105; 309-310; 314-316. Steel, covers the Lippmann-Bundy relationship in a scattered fashion. See, for example, Steel, *Walter Lippmann and the American Century*: 455; 524.

bring a fuller perspective to policy debates, often irrespective of whether or not he accepted Lippmann's premises or conclusions. Once, when LBJ complained early in his presidency that his advisors must formulate a peace proposal to answer overtures from Nikita Khrushchev, Bundy recommended the columnist as a font of "sweeping policy initiatives." Bundy declared, "Old Walter Lippmann's got more per square inch than anybody else!"⁷⁶ Insofar as the national security adviser considered Lippmann's proposals, there was a kind of intellectual honesty—a willingness to give various sides of a debate a respectful hearing—in the Kennedy White House that seemed thoroughly lacking in LBJ's tenure, particularly in 1965. This special relationship conferred to both Bundy and Lippmann benefits that concealed large liabilities. It would be years, however, before either man realized that their ideas about America's global responsibilities were so different.

If anything, they became more intimate during the Kennedy administration, lunching at the Metropolitan Club, discussing this policy or that at diplomatic receptions around town. Bundy demonstrated that he could sign on Lippmann for administration programs. On one occasion, he convinced the columnist to act as an advocate for administration policy. Shortly after the Cuban missile crisis, the President and national security adviser invited Lippmann for a talk about the course of events and to show the columnist Khrushchev's communications. On 8 November 1962, Lippmann met alone with President Kennedy in the Oval Office for one hour—the only time he would ever meet privately with Kennedy.⁷⁷ They began the conversation talking about the Cuban Missile Crisis. The President showed

⁷⁶ LBJ-Bundy telephone conversation, 2 January 1964, reprinted in Beschloss, *Taking Charge*: 145.

⁷⁷ Lippmann, Oral History, April 1964, JFKL: 14.

Lippmann the exchange of letters between himself and Premier Khrushchev which, the columnist recalled, “were not very entertaining reading . . . stilted and officialese.” The conversation ranged over the lessons and implications of the crisis: “about whether you could have an independent nuclear striking force, such as the French wanted, or whether air power was indivisible.”⁷⁸ The main point President Kennedy impressed on Lippmann was that the crisis clearly demonstrated that nuclear decision-making should be kept in as few hands as possible. After the Oval Office meeting, Bundy persuaded Lippmann to make a public statement to this effect, in an effort to counter Charles de Gaulle’s insistence on an independent French-European nuclear striking force. Lippmann obliged. He promptly drafted a speech to deliver in Paris at a gathering arranged months before to celebrate the anniversary of the *Herald Tribune International Edition*. Bundy previewed the text, making two pages of editorial suggestions that Lippmann incorporated.⁷⁹ “I wish we were free to say what you are going to say,” Bundy told Lippmann a few days before the columnist departed for Paris.⁸⁰

Not that this necessitated a radical departure for Lippmann. In the spring of 1962, the columnist had launched his first editorial salvo against De Gaulle’s *force de frappe*—the independent, Paris-controlled nuclear striking force which, by some estimates, would achieve enough power to kill as many as 20 million Russians in a first exchange. Lippmann squarely opposed its development, arguing that the splintering of control and authority over the use of nuclear weapons could only lead

⁷⁸ Lippmann, Oral History, April 1964, JFKL: 14-16.

⁷⁹ Bundy to Lippmann, 13 November 1962, McGeorge Bundy Correspondence, National Security File (NSF), Box 402, JFKL. Some of this episode is covered in Steel, *Walter Lippmann and the American Century*: 537-538.

to mischief. “The [French] rebellion against the American monopoly is taking place within the context of the American capacity to prevent nuclear war,” because of Washington’s massive deterrent strength, Lippmann wrote. De Gaulle’s *force de frappe* would have to exist as a minority partner of the Atlantic Alliance’s nuclear force—managed from Washington, since it could only initiate, but not decisively win, a confrontation with Moscow. Lippmann interpreted the French program as a clever move whereby De Gaulle could argue for the retirement of U.S. occupation forces from Western Europe by inserting a nuclear tripwire which he would control. “We do not have a divine right to have in our own hands, rather than in European hands, the ultimate decision,” Lippmann admitted. “But it is in our interest to hold on to the ultimate decision, if we can.”⁸¹

Shortly thereafter, in a slim volume titled *Western Unity and the Common Market*, Lippmann caustically attacked De Gaulle’s efforts to foster a Franco-German locus of power on the continent—one that sought to exclude Britain and create a Europe from the “Atlantic to the Urals.”⁸² Moreover, he wrote, the *force de frappe* was De Gaulle’s mechanism to engage America in the defense of Europe while he simultaneously tried to end U.S. military occupation and economic participation on the continent. Lippmann wrote:

. . . within the Western Alliance the ultimate responsibility in nuclear affairs must be in one capital, not in two or three. For the United States the predicament would be intolerable if the key to the use of our strategic nuclear

⁸⁰ Lippmann, Oral History, April 1964, JFKL: 14.

⁸¹ Lippmann, T&T, 15 May 1962, “Gaullist Rebellion Against the U.S. Nuclear Monopoly.”

⁸² For De Gaulle’s efforts to reduce U.S. influence in Europe generally, his courtship of German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer and, diplomacy to exclude Britain from continental affairs, see, William I. Hitchcock, *The Struggle for Europe: The Turbulent History of a Divided Continent, 1945-2002* (New York: Doubleday, 2003): 221-241.

forces were not in Washington . . . We cannot allow this power to be set in motion by others. We must keep the ultimate right to decide whether and when it shall be used. A weak and independent nuclear force within the Western Alliance, a force which could start a world war but could not finish it, would be a danger to the peace of the world and to our own national security.⁸³

Lippmann's Paris speech deviated little from that line of reasoning principally because he understood precisely how narrowly nuclear war over Cuba had been averted. The final draft—vetted by Mac Bundy—sounded much more like a statement delivered by an administration spokesman than the impartial observation of a prominent political commentator. On 29 November 1962, at the Palais d'Orsay Hotel, Lippmann addressed a gathering of the American Press Association. The Cuban missile crisis, Lippmann told listeners, "has confirmed us in the view that the command of nuclear power to balance Soviet nuclear power cannot be divided or shared." He employed a particularly blunt metaphor. Western nations, he said, were passengers in the same car on a windy, mountainous road. While it was perfectly legitimate for the passengers to consult one another and decide collectively on a route, once a decision had been arrived at, "there can be only one driver at the wheel." Clearly, it had been decided years earlier that the U.S. would provide the nuclear protection for Western Europe, he continued. Instead of modifying that policy at crises points, Lippmann proposed a "division of labor." He argued against De Gaulle's *force de frappe* plan, instead urging European nations "to take upon themselves the burden of the conventional defense of Europe" while the U.S. shouldered the nuclear responsibility. Bundy had told Lippmann that that phrase

⁸³ Lippmann, *Western Unity and the Common Market* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1962): 36-37.

offered an interesting insight into the highest level of administration thinking on the nuclear sharing idea. “It is just this word ‘burden’ that is so interesting,” Bundy wrote Lippmann.

We think of nuclear weapons as a terrible burden and more and more in this Administration we prefer to think about modernized regimental combat teams and tidy little naval task forces, so that the pressure for increase in our own conventional budget is generated partly by ourselves, as well as the Army and Navy. These conventional forces are not a burden; they are in the most intimate psychological terms a means of escape from nuclear confrontation. For our European friends, on the other hand, conventional forces are forever associated with the two World Wars and their terrible personal and social consequences. So they find comfort and escape in tidy little nuclear forces that will never be used. The new pattern of national defense of General De Gaulle is the extreme case and the most instructive one. Many professional military men in France are against General De Gaulle’s concepts, and he has been heard to complain that they are trying to do a generation late, what they should have done for the war of 1940.⁸⁴

Lippmann stressed the necessity of European contributions in a conventional sense. “To those who tell us that we are trying to monopolize the big weapons which give prestige, or that we are trying to reduce Europe to the prosaic role of supplying the foot soldiers,” he concluded, “my reply is that we are providing for the defense of Europe a big share—perhaps a disproportionate share—of the conventional forces, including the foot soldiers.”⁸⁵

Lippmann’s speech brought him into conflict yet again with Raymond Aron. Immediately after delivering it, he met with Aron, then a cautious supporter of an independent nuclear force.⁸⁶ Though not an ardent Gaullist, Aron sympathized with

⁸⁴ Bundy to Lippmann, 13 November 1962, Bundy Correspondence, NSF, Box 402, JFKL.

⁸⁵ For the full text of Lippmann’s speech, see, Walter Lippmann, “Cuba Etched the Diplomacy of the Nuclear Age,” 2 December 1962, *Washington Post*: E1; portions of Lippmann’s address were reprinted in *The New Republic*, “Only One Driver Can Sit at the Wheel,” *TNR*, 22 December 1962, Vol. 147: 7-8.

⁸⁶ Lippmann Appointment Diaries, 29 November 1962, Box 329, Folder 32, Series III, WLC.

the De Gaulle's general policy of seeking a measure of political and military autonomy within the Western Alliance. Citing the sharing of U.S. nuclear technology with Britain in the late 1950s, Aron famously asked why Washington could export nuclear secrets across the Atlantic but not across the Channel. On the *force de frappe* issue he had communicated with Bundy earlier in 1962, complaining that the unique U.S. consultation with the British on nuclear matters offended French interests.⁸⁷

Aron rejected Bundy's implicit message that France should consult the U.S. but accept its status as a secondary nuclear power. As early as November 1959, Aron supported Paris officials' plan to develop a small nuclear striking force. He viewed it not as a strategic deterrent but as a useful diplomatic tool. "The strike force has a certain prestige value," Aron noted at the time. "It has an incontestable diplomatic value in negotiating with the United States on the communication of secrets. It represents a sort of supreme recourse . . . Finally, it gives France a greater voice in the counsels of the Alliance, when it develops a strategy of resistance to the Soviet Union."⁸⁸ Aron had earlier tried to persuade President Kennedy that the U.S. should cooperate with the French nuclear program. He dismissed administration arguments that aid to the French would stimulate the West Germans to develop their own nuclear

⁸⁷ McGeorge Bundy to Raymond Aron, 24 May 1962, APRA, Boite 210. McGeorge Bundy privately countered Aron's complaints. "You are right to say, for the most part, that our feelings derive from our own conviction that the nuclear defense of the West is indivisible," Bundy replied. "On this point, in fact, our estimation of British nuclear capacity is no different from our estimation of French nuclear capacity." From the American perspective, Bundy wrote, British nuclear policy "has been not so much to establish autonomy as to maintain a right of cautionary counsel" to Washington. French demands for an independent nuclear force were perceived as "increasing independence" and "immediate control of [the nuclear] trigger"—a development which U.S. officials could not countenance. As Bundy explained to Aron, when Lippmann published a column about that distinction "one of the senior members of President de Gaulle's defense team promptly said to one of our people that he thought Lippmann was entirely right." In that context, Bundy asked whether the French commentator's "argument that what is given to the British must in decency be given to France is not open to some question." See also Aron's discussion of this letter in his *Memoires*: 589-590.

⁸⁸ Aron, *Memoires*: 594-595. Aron was quoting from a November 1959 *Le Figaro* column.

weapons. He believed that military and political obstacles to such a course would lead Bonn to “prefer the provision of tactical atomic weapons from the U.S.,”⁸⁹ although he was not personally receptive to the notion of a Multi-Lateral Force (MLF) which emerged a few years later.

In 1963, Aron tried his own hand at public intra-Alliance mediation with the publication of *The Great Debate: Theories of Nuclear Strategy*, based on his 1962-1963 lectures at the Institut d’Etudes Politiques. The book was partly a response to General Pierre Gallois—chief French critic of the Kennedy administration’s decision to abandon massive retaliation in favor of flexible response. It also raised concerns about President De Gaulle’s effort to carve out an *independent* deterrent role for France. Finally, it offered an analysis of U.S. policy. “For those who hope for the survival of the Atlantic Alliance,” Aron wrote, “it is of primary importance that the policy makers and the public on either side of the Atlantic gain a greater understanding of the positions held on the other side.”⁹⁰

Aron’s essential point was that while the *force de frappe* created a useful political role for France it did not—nor would it soon—constitute a viable deterrent. “The French force may someday form the nucleus of a *European deterrent*; in any event it has persuaded our ally, the United States, to enter upon a dialogue with Europe on the subject of strategy,” Aron wrote. “It constitutes an incipient protection against the unpredictability of future diplomacy. The French decision remains a subject for discussion so long as we confine ourselves to the coming decade and

⁸⁹ Schlesinger to President Kennedy, 23 May 1961, President’s Office Files, Staff Memos, Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., Files, Box 65, JFKL.

⁹⁰ Raymond Aron, *The Great Debate*: viii. For a recent study of De Gaulle’s foreign policy in this regard, see Frederic Bozo, *Two Strategies for Europe: De Gaulle, the United States, and the Atlantic*

regard it as a sort of premium paid now for insurance against an unknown future. Downright absurd, however, is the attempt to transform the project into a symbol of patriotic pride that in ten years' time will replace the American deterrent, consolidate the balance of terror, and at the same time enhance our national self-esteem."⁹¹ Aron later maintained that from the start his goal was to persuade De Gaulle to integrate the French nuclear force into the Alliance; to that end, he was highly critical of Paris' refusal to discuss the American offer of the development of a multi-lateral force—a subject broached at the 1963 Nassau meeting of Western officials. He rejected also the “detonateur” argument some French officials used to justify the *force de frappe*—“that the national force would oblige the U.S. to use nuclear arms also.” Finally, he accepted the development of the flexible response strategy. It was strategically “unassailable,” Aron wrote. He added, “it is contrary both to common sense and to elementary prudence to stake everything on the threat of massive retaliation and to revive time and again the choice between passive inaction and total disaster . . . the strategy of graduated retaliation is both less immoral and more efficient.”⁹²

Alliance, translated by Susan Emanuel (New York: Rowan & Littlefield Publishers Inc., 2001). For a brief discussion of Aron, see pp. 122-123.

⁹¹ Aron, *The Great Debate*: 120.

⁹² Aron, *The Great Debate*: 171. Aron saw that Paris's independent striking force could have applications in a conflict between NATO and the Soviet Union but that it did little to answer French problems in Africa or the Middle East. Significantly, too, Lippmann and Aron disagreed over the implications of superpower nuclear deterrence strategies. Lippmann was constantly concerned that proxy wars or competition in the developing world could precipitate direct confrontation between Moscow and Washington—in essence, a game of nuclear brinkmanship. To varying degrees this assertion was proven correct in the Tachens, Cuba, Laos, and in the Arab-Israeli conflicts. Aron viewed it differently. If the nuclear deterrent did anything, he argued, it provided more not less room for both the superpowers and secondary powers and their lesser allies to engage in local conflicts. “One does not increase the risk of total war by accepting the obligations of local wars,” Aron wrote in 1950, in a sentence that foreshadowed his own support of a doctrine of flexible response a decade later. Quoted in Judd, *The Burden of Responsibility*: 159. “Neutralite ou engagement,” presentation to the Congress for Cultural Freedom in Berlin, July 1950. Reprinted in *Polemique*: 199-217.

Aron brought De Gaulle's policy in for especially tough criticism believing that while France should develop its nuclear potential it must do so within the alliance. All three of De Gaulle's chief objectives—the prevention of a superpower “extra-European” nuclear monopoly, influence on U.S. strategic policy, and the acquisition of prestige—were, Aron argued, not incompatible with an integrated nuclear force. Cooperation, however, would “preclude . . . pretensions to a wholly independent diplomacy and strategy, which, I am aware, are General de Gaulle's main concerns. But in this respect I am afraid that his philosophy derives from nostalgia for the kind of independence vanished with ‘the good old days.’”⁹³

In this aspect, Aron was nudging his countrymen toward a reasonable, responsible conception of national policy—one that affirmed the realities of France's declining international power in postwar politics. On the other side of the Atlantic, Lippmann, too, tried to outline a course for Americans commensurate with their new power. Both men sought to supplant old conceptions—with the latter urging acceptance of larger responsibilities and the former pressing for the acceptance of a more circumscribed role. In concluding his discussion of the *force de frappe* Aron wrote, “To value the power of independent choice between war and peace above national security may once have been a sign of greatness. But I do not believe that in the thermonuclear age this should be considered an appropriate goal for the national ambition of a nation such as France.”⁹⁴

Nevertheless, Aron dismissed Lippmann's 29 November 1962 speech as a “scandalous” appeal to European nations to accept a role not only as junior military

⁹³ Aron, *The Great Debate*: 261.

⁹⁴ Aron, *The Great Debate*: 265.

partners but also secondary diplomatic actors within the alliance, “dependent proteges, if not satellites.” Aron warned that for De Gaulle, “Atlantic interdependence (or Atlantic association) is sheer window dressing, barely veiled hypocrisy designed to camouflage Europe’s reduction to political vassalage by the United States in the guise of protection.”⁹⁵ Aron challenged the stark distinctions that American officials—and Lippmann—drew between consultation and control of nuclear weapons since, he believed, effective diplomacy with Moscow required the implied threat of nuclear force. In a rebuttal to Lippmann’s speech, he wrote, “it is obvious that when Lippmann asks Europeans to let America handle the wheel of the car, he is really asking them to abdicate after a fashion. To the extent that diplomacy in the atomic age uses the threat of nuclear force as a deterrent weapon, the combination of an American monopoly and non-consultation with its allies reduces the European countries, in the last analysis, to the status of protectorate nations. General de Gaulle, whose projects are such a source of concern to Lippmann, could not have asked for a more striking confirmation of his contentions.”⁹⁶ Aron countered that if U.S. official pressed this case, demanding De Gaulle and Europeans generally “to have total confidence in the driver,” that they would be driven to an independent policy: “they will consent to sacrifices in view of acquiring a deterrent force, even perhaps [if it is] ineffective.”⁹⁷ French diplomats in Washington apparently used Aron’s response to frame Paris’s argument in meetings with U.S. diplomats at Foggy Bottom. Amused by French irritation at the speech Mac Bundy

⁹⁵ Aron, *Memoires*: 593; Aron, *The Great Debate*: 169.

⁹⁶ Raymond Aron, “Must We Have Blind Faith?” *The New Republic*, 22 December 1962, Vol. 147: 9-10. See also Raymond Aron, “Reponse A Walter Lippmann Le Monopole Atomique Americain Et

wrote Lippmann, still traveling in Europe, to express the White House's gratitude. "The President admired your Paris *Tribune* speech as much as one or two of the French newspapers seem to have been displeased by it," Bundy quipped. "You are in danger of becoming an Administration spokesman—which is of course just what the French fear."⁹⁸

Lippmann responded to Aron with a velvet glove—hoping to impress upon U.S. policymakers the need to minimize Franco-American divisions. Two weeks after returning home, he explained to *Today and Tomorrow* readers that there was no readily apparent solution to the nuclear impasse with De Gaulle. The dispute would have to be "arbitrated by events." He added, "It will take many years before France can make itself a serious nuclear power, and the fact that we stand aside passively while she works at it and realizes the gigantic costs will constitute notice that were she to take nuclear action outside the Alliance, the United States government would not be morally and legally obligated to follow her." That said, Lippmann also counseled patience and perspective, insisting that the breach not be allowed to develop into a wide rift. "Believing as I do that the American view of nuclear power is right, I would be happier if, on our part, we do not allow the discussion with our allies to degenerate into a debating wrangle conducted with that moral self-righteousness which is the besetting temptation of those who on intellectual grounds believe, perhaps even know, that they are right."⁹⁹

L'Europe," 3 Decembre 1962, *Le Figaro*, reprinted in *Les Articles Du Figaro: Tome II, La Coexistence, 1955-1965*, Georges-Henri Soutou, editor (Paris, Editions de Fallois, 1993): 1110-1113.

⁹⁷ Aron, *Memoires*: 593.

⁹⁸ Bundy to Lippmann, 4 December 1962, WHCNF, Box 1631, JFKL.

⁹⁹ Lippmann, T&T, 20 December 1962, "The Agitated Alliance."

Years later Lippmann recalled somewhat ruefully that his delivery of the Paris speech was the closest he ever came to advocating on behalf of the Kennedy administration.¹⁰⁰ Such appearances perpetuated foreign misperceptions that much of what Lippmann wrote received official sanction or that he regularly served as the government's informal spokesman. The reality was that the Kennedy administration used Lippmann when it suited its needs and Lippmann, who had a weakness for being drawn to power, on occasion let himself get closer to officials than was proper. Relatively minor infractions during the Kennedy years prepared the way for a more complex period of personal persuasion between the columnist and the Johnson administration.¹⁰¹

Access to powerful leaders, however, did not equate to influence in many instances and Lippmann's true ability to shape ideas still lay in communicating alternatives through his column. In setting the parameters of the debate and, at times, the very language employed by the discussants, Lippmann exercised his greatest influence. Especially at crises points, and there were not a few during the Kennedy years, Walter Lippmann used his access and his column to try to defuse tensions—with varying emphases. The political scientist Charles Tarlton once observed that Lippmann was most perceptive and insightful in moments of “dangerous disorder”—at times when the superpowers stood on the threshold of war, conventional or thermonuclear; that, at these moments, Lippmann brought to bear his insights on

¹⁰⁰ Lippmann, oral history interview, April 1964, JFKL: 16. Lippmann recalled, “My speech was as conscious an attempt as I’ve ever made in anything to explain the American official view. Although I agreed with it, I took care to see that I wasn’t off base, because it was a kind of official occasion where I couldn’t afford just to speak my own views.”

¹⁰¹ See, for example, Steel, *Walter Lippmann and the American Century*: 557-572. My analysis of this episode is extensive in chapters 7-9.

history with a very pragmatic approach to problem-solving—one that eschewed the rigidity and formalism of ideology or “isms” to reach a practical solution. In this regard, Tarlton observed (at the time the columnist was breaking with the LBJ administration over its Vietnam policies), Lippmann’s commentary best represented a maturing of American foreign affairs. Unlike the “deterministic, pessimistic, and realistic” view of a geo-politician like Alfred Mahan, or conversely, the “utopian, optimistic, and moralistic” thinking of a pacifist like William Jennings Bryan, Lippmann’s outlook was one of “pragmatic, sociological, and almost scientific” dimensions.¹⁰² Within the Atlantic Community he sought to minimize frictions between Paris, Bonn, London, and Washington. Toward the Soviet Union, Lippmann highlighted those areas in which the superpowers could reach an accommodation. Increasingly, as Laos and then Vietnam became prickly foreign policy problems, he reminded readers that the core Cold War conflict existed between America and the Soviet Union (and that it was centered in Western Europe)—and that both powers could disastrously de-stabilize their rough equilibrium of power if they waged proxy wars in the jungles of Southeast Asia.

VII.

Lippmann and Aron also conflicted over the influence of ideology versus geo-strategic imperatives in shaping decision-makers’ policies. Aron believed that Kremlin leaders acted primarily upon the dictates of their Marxist ideology and that, therefore, the Cold War would not follow the patterns of traditional great power

¹⁰² See Charles D. Tarlton, “The Styles of American International Thought: Mahan, Bryan, and Lippmann,” *World Politics* XVI (October 1964-July 1965): 584-614.

conflicts. In contrast, Lippmann assigned little importance to communist ideology when explaining the foreign policies of Moscow, Beijing, Pyongyang, or Hanoi.

Herein, lay a contradiction in Lippmann's thinking. For he clearly believed ideology affected American policymakers—if in an overly negative sense. On a basic level, Lippmann and Kennan shared the view that Wilsonian foreign policy had badly derailed American diplomacy. In 1951, Kennan published his landmark work, *American Diplomacy: 1900-1950*, a sustained attack on Wilsonianism. In parts, it so closely resembled Lippmann's argument in *U.S. Foreign Policy* and *U.S. War Aims* that one could only conclude that Lippmann had deeply impressed the diplomat with his construction of a postwar internationalism that replaced Wilson's concept of collective security with a classical arrangement of great powers. In 1943, Lippmann explained in words that foreshadowed Kennan's prose, that Wilson had unwisely chosen to define American foreign policy aims with “legalistic and moralistic and idealistic reasons, rather than the substantial and vital reason that the security of the United States demanded that no aggressively expanding imperial power, like Germany, should be allowed to gain mastery of the Atlantic Ocean.”¹⁰³ This mis-education of the public proved tremendously harmful for it obscured prerequisites of a strong network of allies and the application of power politics in order to promote international stability. Kennan's book *American Diplomacy* echoed Lippmann's language, followed its periodization, and similarly asserted that the central flaw of

¹⁰³ Walter Lippmann, *U.S. Foreign Policy: Shield of the Republic* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1943): 37-39.

American foreign policy was “the legalistic-moralistic approach to international problems.”¹⁰⁴

A year later, in a series of lectures Lippmann delivered to British audiences, published as *Isolation and Alliances* (1952), he elaborated the critique of Wilsonian foreign policy he had last focused on in *U.S. War Aims*. His argument amplified Kennan’s. The roots of American isolationism, Lippmann explained, emanated from Jefferson’s warning against entangling alliances and, correctly, added that it had neither a neutralist or pacifist impulse but, rather, derived from unilateralist assumptions. “The isolationists of the twentieth century have wished to isolate not merely the American continental domain and the Western Hemisphere,” he wrote. “In the last analysis they have wanted to isolate American decisions and actions, to have the final word whenever Americans are involved.”¹⁰⁵ Lippmann also noted the “exceptionalist” habits of American foreign policymakers. By this he meant their conception that Manifest Destiny was somehow different from European colonialism, that instead of conquering a continent Americans were—in Jefferson’s rhetoric—creating a “new domicile of freedom” open to all mankind (at least, white European mankind).¹⁰⁶ Finally, in much the same fashion as he had in his earlier expositions of Wilsonianism, Lippmann argued that Wilson exported these “principles of American

¹⁰⁴ George F. Kennan, *American Diplomacy, 1900-1950* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press): 95. Kennan elaborated, drawing on a long list of pacts and schemes, many of which Lippmann had also singled out for attack. Kennan wrote, “This approach runs like a red skein through our foreign policy of the last 50 years. It has in it something of the old emphasis on arbitration treaties, something of the Hague Conferences and schemes for universal disarmament, something of the more ambitious American concepts of the role of international law, something of the League of Nations, something of the Kellogg Pact, something of the idea of a universal ‘Article 51’ pact, something of the belief in World Law and World Government. But it is none of these, entirely.”

¹⁰⁵ Walter Lippmann, *Isolation and Alliances: An American Speaks to the British* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1952): 14-15.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

democracy . . . [making them] universal throughout the world” in his attempt to safeguard democracy at home. Lippmann concluded, “The Wilsonian ideology is American fundamentalism made into a universal doctrine.” It was the 19th century American experience—as a geographically isolated nation—writ large; one in which there are “no lasting rivalries, no deep conflicts of interest, where no compromises of principles have to be made, where there are no separate spheres of influence, and no alliances.” War could only be waged to fend off attack against the universal order. When carried out, war was waged like a crusade, partly because it was believed to be an “intolerable criminal interference with the nature of things” and partly because Americans perceived the centralization of powers to make war as an invasion of their domestic rights. Finally, Lippmann observed, “In the Wilsonian ideology aggression is an armed rebellion against the universal and eternal principles of world society” and could be ended only by “unconditional surrender” and the political rehabilitation and reconstruction of the offending regime.¹⁰⁷

Although Aron believed communist ideology to be the prime mover for Soviet actions he disagreed with Lippmann and Kennan that Wilsonian parochialisms underlay American Cold War initiatives. He tended to regard American policy as prudent and emanating from legitimate security concerns—or, at least, security concerns that seemed especially immediate on his side of the Atlantic Ocean. “Containment in its *original* sense is less the result of ‘Wilson syndrome,’ or the dream of peace through the universalization of democratic regimes, than its critics make out,” Aron wrote in *The Imperial Republic* (1973). “It is rather due to the American style and the specific traits of the external behavior of a republic which has

¹⁰⁷ Lippmann, *Isolation and Alliances*: 22-23.

never accepted the *Realpolitik* or Machiavellianism of old Europe; the concept, rather than the doctrine, of containment represented the defensive version of the inevitable rivalry with the Soviet Union.”¹⁰⁸ Aron did not identify what he meant by “the American style,” which leaves room for interpretation. For, if he meant ideologies like Manifest Destiny and U.S. exceptionalism, or traits like isolationism or xenophobia, then he and Lippmann and Kennan were talking about similar things. The difference is that the American realists did not think of these parochialisms as being separate from Wilsonianism—but rather as being central to it. While Aron’s assertion may have applied to containment in its original conception—with Germany as the locus of the conflict—it is far less persuasive when measured against the globalized version.

It was principally on the different emphases that Aron and Lippmann assigned to ideology, where they disagreed on their brand of realism. The Frenchman was not part of the wing of the *realpolitik* school which he described as a kind of “theoretical realism,” that he believed to be both impractical and unrealistic in its expectations. He objected, for instance, to the kind of rigidity and empiricism of the realism advocated by academics such as Hans J. Morgenthau. “In my opinion pseudo-certainty, based on the relationship between the states and the risks, on some rational calculation ascribed to a likely aggressor, is of no more value than the dogmatism of the Maginot Line.”¹⁰⁹ Yet, Tony Judt believes, Aron was indeed a realist for he sought to come to terms with only those things he perceived to be *real* about the world. Where he differed from Lippmann was that Aron ascribed real weight to the

¹⁰⁸ Raymond Aron, *The Imperial Republic: The United States and the World, 1945-1973*, translated by Frank Jellinek (Washington, DC: University Press of America, 1974): 300. My italics.

power and influence of *ideas*. For Aron, personal convictions, political ideologies, and moral considerations shaped human behavior as much as alignments of power, strategic interests, and armaments.¹¹⁰

In this respect, Aron shared the worldview of U.S. officials who interpreted the Cold War within an ideological framework and a civilizational context. His perspective was not that different from Paul Nitze and others who adhered to the assumptions of NSC-68—that is, that the Soviet-American rivalry was an irreconcilable conflict between a “free society” based on Western liberties and a “slave society.”¹¹¹ Aron always believed that Lippmann under-estimated the ideological convictions of the men in the Kremlin. He made this point most clearly in a column that examined Lippmann’s famous 1958 interview with Khrushchev in Moscow. Aron rejected Lippmann’s notion of achieving a *modus vivendi*, a “pacific coexistence” as the French columnist described it, with Moscow. “Only a radical ignorance of the theory and practice of communism would allow misunderstanding of the notion of status quo [i.e., official recognition of the division of Germany and Europe] which, at bottom, is another name for pacific coexistence,” Aron wrote. “No more than that the pacific character of the coexistence eliminates the death struggle between the two systems, does the *status quo* imply a stabilization, even temporary, of current borders or of the organization of states. According to his philosophy, M. Khrushchev cannot but believe in the irresistible evolution toward the expansion of

¹⁰⁹ Cited in Judt, *The Burden of Responsibility*: 163; quoted from Aron’s *Clausewitz*, Vol. 2: 179.

¹¹⁰ Judt, *The Burden of Responsibility*: 164-165.

¹¹¹ A very useful reader on NSC-68 which includes commentary by historians and policymakers is Ernest R. May (editor), *American Cold War Strategy: Interpreting NSC-68* (Boston: Bedford Books-St. Martin’s Press, 1994): especially, pp. 27-29. For the original text of NSC-68, see *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1950, Volume I, National Security Affairs; Foreign Economic Policy* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1977): 234-292.

universal communism. Walter Lippmann objects to this millenarianist interpretation of history (and to Western victims of an analogous error [i.e., Wilsonianism]) believing that there is space on the planet for different regimes. How can we say he is not right? But how can we forget that M. Khrushchev believes in the long run that his regime will be imposed on all of humanity?”¹¹² For Aron and most American Cold War leaders the irreconcilable ideological gulf between Moscow and the Western Alliance left no room for meaningful diplomatic engagement.

Ideology mattered in the Cold War. “Authoritarian romanticism,” for instance, helps explain otherwise inexplicable positions taken by Communist leaders: Stalin’s expectations for a war between capitalist nations after the Second World War; Mao Zedong’s willingness to subordinate national interests to secure a treaty with Moscow, as well as his readiness to absorb horrific losses in the Korean War; and even Nikita Khrushchev’s insistence on making a strategic commitment in Cuba—based on the thin hope it would act as a revolutionary springboard for Latin America.¹¹³ But ideology also tended to obfuscate geopolitical motivations and to obliterate a necessary internal sense of limitations. It was precisely Lippmann’s de-emphasis of ideological motivations that made him such a perceptive and early critic of Western policy in Asia. Unlike Aron, and successive casts of Washington officials, Lippmann identified the geopolitical tensions that would necessarily arise between Moscow and Beijing, the tendency of national interests to subordinate ideology—and the opportunities these developments opened for Western

¹¹² Raymond Aron, “Walter Lippmann A Moscou,” 21 Novembre 1958, *Les Articles Du Figaro: Tome II, La Coexistence, 1955-1965* 467 -470.

policymakers. Similarly, in reading events in Vietnam as evolving within the context of a civil conflict—directed by nationalists in Hanoi and Saigon—Lippmann delivered compelling commentary on the poor prospects of U.S. intervention in that country earlier, more consistently, and with greater effect than any other American commentator.

¹¹³ See, John Lewis Gaddis's discussion in *We Now Know*: 289-291. See also Shuguang Zhang, *Mao's Military Romanticism: China and the Korean war, 1950-1953* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1995): on Mao's "romanticism," see especially, 12-30; for a critique of it see, 247-261.

Chapter 5:

“An Unending Series of Insoluble Dilemmas”: Walter Lippmann and Containment in Asia, 1947-1955

I.

From April 1945 to May 1967, Lippmann critiqued the foreign policies of the first American Cold War presidents, Harry S. Truman, Dwight D. Eisenhower, John F. Kennedy, and Lyndon B. Johnson. He wrote more than 2,200 *Today and Tomorrow* columns during that period, the majority of them dealing with Cold War developments in Europe and Asia. Yet, there has been no sustained analysis of Lippmann’s writings, particularly regarding containment strategies toward China and in Korea which helped to frame his position on American intervention in the Indochinese civil war. The standard literature addresses this facet of Lippmann’s career in broad strokes, framed largely in terms of his response to George F. Kennan’s original articulation of containment in the X-Article.¹ Washington’s China policy highlighted the pitfalls of supporting a reactionary authoritarian regime in the form of Chiang Kai-shek’s Kuomintang and refusing diplomatic recognition to the People’s Republic of China (PRC). Conflict on the Korean peninsula from 1950 to

¹ Ronald Steel, *Walter Lippmann and the American Century* (Boston: Little Brown, 1980): especially 465-467 (China White Paper); 470-473, 475-476 (Korea); 486-490 (on Lippmann’s approach to containment generally).

1953 inflicted huge human and material costs and ended in an indecisive military stalemate. Both China policy and the Korean War confirmed Lippmann's doubts about the geo-strategic wisdom of global containment. For more than two decades after World War II he warned American leaders that diplomacy rather than military intervention was the best means to exercise U.S. power and to preserve its influence in Asia. His analyses—expressed in books, columns, public speeches, interviews, correspondence, and private conversations—were framed by the principles of strategic internationalism discussed in Chapter Two.

This chapter examines Lippmann's commentary on U.S. policy toward China from 1945 to 1958, and in Korea after the Pyongyang's invasion in June 1950. In the decade after World War II, Lippmann consistently and rigorously engaged the problems of American foreign relations in Asia. His criticisms of policy there tended to be straightforward attacks on Wilsonianism, which he detected in the dictates of the Truman Doctrine of March 1947. Lippmann's anchored his commentary in the precepts of his strategic internationalism which included: the belief that the U.S. had no vital interests on Asian mainland; that Washington officials would badly damage their influence by acting unilaterally there; and that the U.S. should not send under any circumstances ground troops to fight in Asian wars which they could not win in any conventional sense. These three aspects of Lippmann's strategic internationalism were lent additional urgency with the outbreak of the Korean War in 1950. Lippmann believed that the global containment policy adopted by U.S. officials in NSC-68 would drain U.S. resources, dangerously destabilizing the delicate balance of power between Washington and Moscow.

II.

Lippmann's philosophic roots, travels, cultural preferences, and social and political connections oriented him toward an European outlook.² From the late-1940s onward, however, Walter Lippmann closely monitored developments in American Asian policy because of their potential for dangerously globalizing an already burdensome containment policy. He devoted hundreds of columns to U.S. policy in Asia, in addition to the many installments of *Today and Tomorrow* that focused on the Vietnam War in the 1960s. Lippmann did not recommend that the U.S. abandon its interests in Asia or ignore its prior commitments there. Quite the contrary: He saw America as a vital participant in postwar affairs in the Pacific region. At the time, congressional, administration, and public opinion leaders who criticized Lippmann did so primarily because his message of moderation and collaboration in Asia conflicted with their own interventionist aspirations and unilateral actions. Critics often distorted Lippmann's record by choosing a crisis-specific approach and by consulting in a highly selective fashion his thousands of Cold War columns. The

² Steel, *Walter Lippmann and the American Century*: 464-465; 570. Steel suggests that Lippmann ignored American policy in Asia, came late to it, and that his commentary was impaired by a Western European bias. He therefore implies that Lippmann's break with Johnson over Vietnam marked a belated realization of the problems of containment in Asia, problems which his realism had failed to elucidate because it did not make moral considerations or fully understand American economic motives. That interpretation staggers under the weight of its own ideological assumptions. Aside from the fact that Lippmann had been clearly critical of unilateral interventions in such places as post-World War I Russia and post-World War II China he also firmly opposed intervention anywhere in Asia proper: Korea, Formosa, French Indochina, and, later, Laos and Vietnam. For a more balanced perspective on Lippmann's cultural cosmopolitanism, see D. Stephen Blum, *Walter Lippmann: Cosmopolitanism in the Century of Total War* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1984): especially, 23-39.

standard literature, which views crisis episodes without examining the sweep of his commentary, also misses Lippmann's cumulative consistencies.³

Lippmann never discounted Asian concerns, priorities, and culture during the Cold War. His outlook, however, was more Western European (at times more so than American), and, while his views on race were a good deal more cosmopolitan than many of his contemporaries, they still reflected his time—which is to say, by presentist standards, they were not always fully evolved.⁴ Given these assumptions, however, there is no sustainable argument that Lippmann's lack of detailed knowledge about Asian culture or his perceived insensitivities appreciably inhibited him from being a perceptive critic of *U.S. policy*. And, as we shall see, he usually framed his assumptions for proper policies based on the essential need for Asian autonomy and self-rule, as well as respect for various nations' unique strategic interests and concerns. Those, like Walt W. Rostow, who charge Lippmann and other Vietnam War critics with a perverse kind of racism—that they would not sanction sending “white boys” to fight for Asians (a charge galling for its own blindness to the racial and class composition of U.S. forces)—are unconvincing.⁵ In retrospect, Lippmann's vision for post-colonial Asia emerged as an infinitely more humane and civilized outcome than the denouement of American policy in Southeast Asia in the 1960s and 1970s.

³ Steel, *Walter Lippmann and the American Century*: for example, 471-472. Steel takes Lippmann to task for his initial reaction to the Korean War. Caught off-guard by the North Korean invasion on 25 June 1950, the columnist offered cautious support in two columns approving of U.S. air and naval support for the Republic of Korea. But on the Korean issue—as with every other Asian crisis that Lippmann evaluated—upon longer reflection he chose a moderate approach that emphasized American withdrawal and diplomatic negotiations rather than military confrontation.

⁴ Steel, *Walter Lippmann and the American Century*: 551-554; 570.

⁵ Walt W. Rostow, interview with author, 26 March 1998, Austin, TX. I discuss Rostow's criticisms of Lippmann's approach to Vietnam in greater detail in Chapter Nine.

Lippmann believed that Beijing's expansionism—like Moscow's—had to be checked but he differed with policymakers over the means they employed. Contain China with diplomacy not a prolonged military siege, Lippmann advised, to each administration from Truman to Johnson. This was not mere intellectual finessing or equivocation. Here, the means were inextricably linked with the ends. And the means Lippmann supported were hallmarks of his unique kind of realism. American policy in Asia could not be unilateral but instead multi-lateral and in cooperation with other "natural powers": China, India, Pakistan, and Indonesia.⁶ Accordingly, the U.S. could not support a reassertion of European colonialism, he argued. Time and again, Lippmann advised against confronting China with American military power on the Asian continent. U.S. air and naval forces should be arrayed in a line far away from mainland Asia—stretching from the Aleutians to Hawaii to the Philippines.⁷ Nor would it do much good to bolster reactionary regimes such as Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalist government in Taiwan—a needlessly provocative and strategically unsound endeavor, he maintained. Instead, the containment of China would be a matter of diplomatic maneuvering and would likely require the tacit, if not overt, cooperation of the Soviet Union. Lippmann's was the voice continually reminding U.S. officials that embracing such internationalism in favor of parochial interests and unilateralist desires would demand more than a modicum of political courage in Washington. Against the wishes of a small but vocal right-wing clique of anti-Communist senators, the Truman administration would have to recognize the Beijing

⁶ See, for example, Lippmann, T&T, "The China Fact," 8 January 1951.

⁷ See, for example, Lippmann, T&T, "After Japan What?" 13 June 1950. Lippmann believed up until the Korean invasion that the U.S. should withdraw from Japan and Okinawa once a peace treaty was ratified. He thought the islands were strategically vulnerable.

government as the *de facto* government of all China and, eventually, establish relations with it. As Lippmann wrote in April 1949, the president and his advisors should disregard the “frivolous fringe” who believe that “another billion dollars or thereabouts given to Chiang Kai-shek” would solidify the Nationalist government on the mainland of China.⁸

Over time, as the PRC consolidated its rule on the mainland and as America rebuilt Japan into a strategic stronghold, Lippmann’s frame of reference shifted from core to peripheral countries. Here, too, he believed American influence was minimal and that it must align itself with the liberal and nationalist elements in the emerging nations of Southeast Asia. America’s goal, he wrote repeatedly, should be to detach these countries from the U.S.-Sino-Soviet struggle, to neutralize them, to demilitarize them wherever possible, and to engage them in cultural and economic exchange. Washington’s best interests would be served by promoting their independence from the PRC and the USSR rather than by herding them into an anti-Communist alliance.

III.

In 1943, when Walter Lippmann first articulated his sphere-of-influence approach, the postwar world Asia was—even more than Europe—unstable and fluid.⁹ The war had shattered Japanese and Chinese power and, added to that, the rapid decline of the European empires portended tremendous instability in a host of colonial capitals.

⁸ Lippmann, T&T, “China and U.S. Policy,” 26 April 1949.

⁹ Walter Lippmann, *U.S. Foreign Policy: Shield of the Republic* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1943).

And, yet, Lippmann believed, American power could not rush in to fill the vacuum in Asia as it seemed prepared to do in Europe. U.S. (and Western) influence, he wrote, was limited there. Indeed this view conformed to the idea, held by many officials in the Franklin D. Roosevelt administration, that China should play *the* central role in the reconstruction, rehabilitation, and policing of Asia.¹⁰ To understand the origins of Lippmann's position on Vietnam one must consider his perspective on the larger questions of America's role in Asia, China's place as a great power, and developments on the Korean peninsula that pitted Washington against Beijing in a "hot" war. For Lippmann, no settlement in Southeast Asia could be constructed without addressing these three inter-related areas. American policy, he believed, would have to recognize and allow for constructive Chinese participation in postwar Asia. Without that kind of foundation, Washington's objectives were consigned to failure.

In *U.S. Foreign Policy: Shield of the Republic* Lippmann devoted relatively few pages (six out of 177) to a discussion of American relations with China. Still he carved out a prominent—if vague—role for China in postwar politics as one of the four great powers. World War II, he argued, fundamentally altered the policy Washington had followed there since 1899 which, in fits and starts, had been aimed at preserving Chinese territorial integrity first from European and then Japanese imperialism. One consequence of World War II, he explained, would be the emergence of Chinese regional influence once Japanese power was broken. "How can we calculate the course of a great power which has never existed but is about to

¹⁰ Robert Dallek, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and American Foreign Policy 1932-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979): 389-391.

appear?” Lippmann wrote. “All that we know is that with independence unity and the industrialization of their country the vast numbers of the Chinese nation should in the course of time organize themselves as a great power.”¹¹ Lippmann, nevertheless, believed that China would have to be brought into a great “nuclear alliance” with America, Great Britain, and Russia which would provided the basis for postwar international cooperation around which a “wider association of many nations can constitute itself.”¹² Lippmann defended this system on numerous occasions in *Today and Tomorrow* columns in the fall and winter of 1943. His justifications revealed a Hobbesian view of the world at least in the sense that he believed the basic state of relations between nations to be conflictual. Peace, Lippmann argued, was not the normal condition that prevailed in international politics; it had to be structured, ordered, and brought into being. When explaining his rationale for how to organize postwar peace he was blunt. “Is this ‘power politics’? It is,” Lippmann told *Today and Tomorrow* readers. “In the last analysis all international politics are now and will be unless the separate nations disappear, a function of their actual and potential power. The problem of peace is not how to abolish power, or to pretend to ignore it, but how to organize power, regulate it, bring it under law, and in general to civilize the exercise of it.”¹³

In *U.S. War Aims* (1944) Lippmann elaborated on his original notion of a “nuclear alliance.” Also echoing the earlier book and his columns from the 1943-

¹¹ Lippmann *U.S. Foreign Policy*: 156.

¹² Lippmann began using this term “nuclear alliance” in 1943 in part of his analysis in *U.S. Foreign Policy*; citation, p. 168; for a general discussion on the nuclear alliance, see pp. 161-177. His geopolitical argument was influenced by the work of Yale strategic theorist Nicholas J. Spykman who, just a year earlier had published *America’s Strategy in World Politics: The United States and the Balance of Power* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Company, 1942). My reading of Spykman does not, however, turn up the term “nuclear alliance,” and it may be that Lippmann coined the phrase.

1944 period, he forecast that the fundamental problem of international politics in the postwar period would be organizational. “World order,” he wrote in words that resonated from *The Stakes of Diplomacy*, could not be reconstituted among a loose coalition of 60 nations and many more post-colonial states. Instead, Lippmann looked to develop four regional systems within which would reside a major power as an anchor state. Into such systems nations could find their place in “orbit” around the great power and, thus, be better organized: an Atlantic alliance, a Russian nucleus, a Chinese-Southeast Asian sphere, and a Hindu- or Moslem-centered region. Such “regional constellations of states,” Lippmann explained, “are the homelands not of one nation alone, but of the historic civilized communities. This is the shape of things to come.”¹⁴ This plan for world order, sketched 14 months before the end of World War II, had many similarities to the “civilizational” model that the political scientist Samuel Huntington described more than 50 years later—a system wherein nations with common cultural, ethnic, and religious values would coalesce around a dominant state.¹⁵

Lippmann’s vision for the basis of postwar peace closely resembled President Franklin Roosevelt’s own plan for the foundations of international order after the war. This idea was most clearly expressed in the Four-Power Declaration in September 1943—which committed the U.S., Britain, Russia, and China to united action for postwar peace, though it avoided a specific commitment to a permanent peace-keeping establishment by promising to create such an organization at the soonest

¹³ Lippmann T&T, “On ‘Power Politics’” 18 December 1943.

¹⁴ Walter Lippmann, *U.S. War Aims* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1944): 87.

¹⁵ Samuel Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996): especially, 40-55; 301-321.

opportune moment.¹⁶ FDR envisioned a large role for China even though the British—particularly Prime Minister Winston Churchill and Foreign Minister Anthony Eden—were distinctly unenthusiastic about allotting Chiang (or whatever Chinese government might emerge from the conflict) such a role in postwar affairs. But the president had several reasons—some geo-strategic, some domestic—for overriding his allies’ reservations and including China as one of the world’s four “policemen.” For one thing, China played an important part of FDR’s plans for defeating the Japanese since war strategy called for establishing supply routes and air bases there from which to attack the Japanese homeland. By giving the Chiang government an expansive—albeit futuristic role—as a major world player, he believed he could provide some measure of stability to prevent the regime’s collapse.¹⁷ Second, U.S. domestic opinion supported a vigorous defense of China as well as the designation of a major part for the nation in the postwar world. Sensing this, FDR perceived that by playing to those popular emotions he could lead the American public to accepting even greater postwar responsibilities. Finally, as Roosevelt told British foreign minister Anthony Eden, “China might become a very useful power in the Far East to help police Japan” and “in any serious conflict with Russia, [China] would undoubtedly line up on our side.”¹⁸

Like the President Lippmann prodded British leaders to accept an expanded role for China after the war even though he believed that “in the practical work which lies ahead that [China] has no direct interest in the policing of Europe, Africa, and the

¹⁶ Dallek, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and American Foreign Policy, 1932-1945*: 419-422.

¹⁷ For Roosevelt’s views on relations with China, see Dallek, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and American Foreign Policy, 1932-1945*: 389-391.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 390-391.

Atlantic Ocean”—as did the Americans, British, and Russians. When Churchill declared in a broadcast that “the United Nations, headed by the three great victorious powers,” would begin to confer about the postwar peace, Lippmann observed that the statement was inadequate. “We look upon the friendship of China as the only possible guaranty that the Asiatic war will not degenerate now or will explode later, into an endless conflict between the Western and Eastern peoples,” Lippmann wrote in T&T. “That is why we wish the British and the Russians to walk with us hand in hand with the Chinese.”¹⁹ On the topic of postwar political power arrangements, Lippmann, indeed, was most closely in agreement with President Roosevelt. He had arrived at the same geopolitical conclusions in *U.S. Foreign Policy*, just a few months prior to the announcement of the Four-Power Declaration in the fall of 1943, and elaborated on them in the critical election year of 1944 in *U.S. War Aims*.

Lippmann’s *U.S. War Aims* reinforced the ideas expressed both in his earlier volume and by the FDR administration. In 1944, the outcome of the Chinese civil war was far from settled but Lippmann believed that whatever government eventually ruled the country—Communist, Nationalist, or a coalition—that China’s size, strategic location, and manpower predestined its role as a major world power. It would have, in any case, no rival in Asia. “It will in time encompass not only Chinese dependencies in the north but also the whole or greater part of the mainland of Southeast Asia,” Lippmann wrote. “China will be a great power capable of organizing her own regional security among the smaller states of Indo-China, Burma, Thailand, and Malaysia.”²⁰ Accordingly, he believed America’s postwar role in Asia

¹⁹ Lippmann, T&T, “Mr. Churchill on China and Europe,” 27 March 1943.

²⁰ Lippmann, *U.S. War Aims*: 93.

could only be circumscribed, deferring to China within its orbit of power. Lippmann thought the Chinese sphere of influence should even encompass Japan, where he feared that a prolonged American occupation would alienate Beijing and other Asian states which would draw dark inferences from the spectacle of yet another Western, white power “persecuting” Asians. “The reform and reconstruction of Japan are beyond our ken,” Lippmann told readers, “and we shall be wise to solidify our relations with China by being in these matters her second.”²¹ He applied this principle to Asia in general where, he wrote, “the tutelage of the Western empires . . . is coming to its predestined end.” The new politics in Asia no longer could be commanded from the capital of an imperial power, but would be based on “consultation and agreement” between the receding Western powers and the rising post-colonial governments.²² In this respect, too, Lippmann shared President Roosevelt’s disposition to short circuit European colonial rule in Asia—particularly, French ambitions to reassert control in Indochina.²³

Chinese Communist leaders took notice of Lippmann’s recommendations in *U.S. War Aims* and integrated them into their analyses which probed American intentions in postwar Asia and offered suggestions for how Mao Zedong’s forces should work with Allied governments in the final phase of the Japanese war.²⁴ One policy document quoted Lippmann’s contention that the U.S. “should make it the primary aim of the Far East settlement that Japan shall not hold the balance of power in the Far East among China, the Soviet Union, and the United States.” Communist

²¹ Ibid., 105.

²² Ibid., 94-95.

²³ Dallek, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and American Foreign Policy, 1932-1945*: 389; 501-502.

officials apparently placed Lippmann in a category with others, like Vice President Henry A. Wallace, who seemed less inclined toward Chiang's Kuomintang and its anti-Soviet position. Like Wallace, CCP officials explained, Lippmann was "favorable to the development of China's resistance and democratic forces."²⁵ If that analysis seemed tentative, it was because Lippmann's position on the composition of a postwar Chinese government was still unsettled even as the Japanese surrendered. The columnist had earlier made this point to Joseph W. Jones, an editor at Henry R. Luce's *Fortune* magazine and later a State Department speechwriter, who complained that Lippmann had been obtuse on China's role in *U.S. Foreign Policy*. "I am vague about China, not because I do not believe the inclusion of China is necessary and desirable, but because I am frankly not sure what the future of China is to be," Lippmann replied. "I felt my particular job was to be vague if in fact the future is uncertain, but I would certainly proceed on the assumption that China will be an effective great power."²⁶

Lippmann's suspicions about the Chiang-Nationalist forces multiplied while his conception about China's status as a "big four" power was mitigated by what he saw as the intractability of its civil war. Lippmann shared Roosevelt's goals in China and, months after the president's death in April 1945, adhered to FDR's policy of trying to mediate a cease-fire between the Communists and Nationalists and to develop provisions for a coalition government. In December 1945, the columnist

²⁴ Report, CCP Southern Bureau, "Opinions on Diplomatic Affairs and Suggestions to the Central Committee," 16 August 1944, translated by Zhang Shu Guang and Chen Jian, Cold War International History Project, Virtual Archive, <http://wwics.si.edu>.

²⁵ Ibid. Lippmann's quote from *U.S. War Aims*: 159.

²⁶ Lippmann to Joseph W. Jones, 2 October 1943, reprinted in Lippmann, *Public Philosopher: Selected Letters of Walter Lippmann*, edited by John Morton Blum (New York: Ticknor and Fields, 1985): 446-447.

opposed calls to send the roughly 60,000 U.S. Marines, stationed in Chinese port cities such as Shanghai, into the Communist-controlled northern provinces where a large Japanese army was still awaiting surrender to Nationalist forces. By clearing the way for a large Kuomintang army to establish a beachhead in the north, the U.S. would be making an “outright intervention in the Chinese Civil War, and once committed to it our troops could not withdraw.”²⁷ Lippmann told readers that the alternative—to evacuate completely and leave China “hopelessly divided and dangerously weak”—amounted to a “horrid dilemma.” Though Roosevelt’s envoy, General Patrick J Hurley, earlier had failed to secure a coalition government (largely because he favored Chiang), Lippmann believed in 1946 that the only hope was for former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General George Marshall, President Harry S. Truman’s personal envoy, to pursue the same policy. The solution, Lippmann wrote, “is to use our power and influence in China to induce and compel the Chinese factions to reach a working agreement upon a government which will be national, not only in theory, but in fact.”²⁸

Marshall’s failure to procure substantive concessions from either side forced Lippmann to recalculate American interests in China. By 1947, Lippmann was prepared to concede that American policy in China since the Open Door Notes—the preservation of an unified China—had become obsolete. In a memorandum for his working files, Lippmann observed that the U.S. had three vital interests that provided the basis for its foreign policy: “namely that Europe, the Middle East and China shall

²⁷ Lippmann, T&T, “The Dilemma in China,” 4 December 1945. For a discussion of Hurley’s and Marshall’s diplomacy, see, Warren Cohen, *America’s Response to China: A History of Sino-American Relations*, 3rd ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990). Hurley mission, see especially pp. 143-150; 147-175. Marshall mission, see especially pp. 152-157; 175-176.

not be absorbed into the Russian military empire. But the obverse of this does not follow, that Europe, China and the Middle East can be organized into an anti-Soviet coalition. This is a critical error.”²⁹ How then could the U.S. prevent Soviet domination, specifically in China? Here, Lippmann relied not on grooming indigenous armies but rather on American strategic advantages. “In the Far East our capacity to hold the Russians in check depends not on the organization of the armies of Chiang Kai-shek, but on our ability to strike at eastern Siberia” from air and naval bases on Japan, Okinawa and the Philippines. Under the old concept of U.S. China policy, the “Luce-Bullitt-Wedemeyer view [which] is really a heritage from prewar days,” Japanese naval power and imperial ambitions on the Asian mainland had menaced U.S. interests in the Pacific by “threatening to organize China as [Tokyo’s] hinterland” from which it could draw raw materials and manpower. The American victory in the Pacific theater of the war had completely altered that schema, removing the Japanese from the equation and leaving the U.S. with forward-deployed forces in a powerful configuration along the Pacific island chain. “Therefore in strict terms of power politics it is no longer of vital interest to the U.S. that China should be unified,” Lippmann reasoned on 18 December 1947.³⁰ Several months later, on 5 April 1948, he developed these ideas in greater detail to Admiral Forrest P. Sherman, commander of U.S. naval forces in the Mediterranean:

Our Far Eastern position should now be based not on China, but upon Japan, and our main base for action in eastern Asia should be the Japanese islands. We should build up there the power to

²⁸ Lippmann, T&T, “The Dilemma in China,” 4 December 1945.

²⁹ Lippmann, Memorandum (untitled), 18 December 1947, WLC, reprinted in Blum, *Public Philosopher*: 502-503.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

dominate Soviet Siberia, and should make Japan a subordinate ally of the United States.

If this is done the unity of China is no longer a vital interest of the United States. From the point of view of our own national interests, *the prevention of the unity of China is advantageous* in view of the fact that China can be unified only as an ally of the Soviet Union or unified as an independent power which might very well itself become aggressive in southeastern Asia, the Philippines, and perhaps even in India.

Recognition that the unity of China is no longer an American vital interest is a novel thing in our history, but I am pretty nearly completely persuaded that it is now fundamentally necessary.”³¹

Events would soon outstrip Lippmann’s reconfigurations. Mao Zedong’s CCP forces waged a successful offensive in the spring of 1949 that dislodged Nationalist forces from their postwar capital in Nanjing and sent them fleeing southward for Guangzhou in the Canton province. In 1949, the Nationalist forces were expelled from the mainland and found sanctuary on the island of Taiwan off the coast of south China. American aid, however, continued to flow to Chiang Kai-shek and the Kuomintang from 1947 to 1949—a result, Lippmann believed, of the careless language of the Truman Doctrine. “Our clients are becoming our masters,” he warned in a memorable column. “General Chiang Kai-shek [has] been given such unqualified support so publicly that the Truman administration is constrained to follow . . . and cannot lead.”³² He concluded that these conservative Asian regimes—particularly Chiang’s government in Taiwan and Syngman Rhee’s in Seoul—had played classic roles in manipulating American aid to their own ends. “We must

³¹ Lippmann to Forrest P. Sherman, 5 April 1948, reprinted in Blum, *Public Philosopher*: 507-508. My italics. This note was written in the heat of the war scare in Western Europe and the direct language regarding Japan reflects some of Lippmann’s momentarily heightened fears. On 25 February the Soviets had fomented the Czech Coup and on 1 April had begun random interference with traffic along the Berlin corridor.

³² Lippmann, T&T, “The Costs of Containment,” 10 February 1948.

support our clients no matter what they do because we have slammed and bolted the door,” he told readers. “They know that we cannot withdraw our support without eating our words, and suffering humiliation and a spectacular loss of prestige.”³³

Other American clients in Asia would quickly inculcate that lesson.

IV.

During the Truman administration, Walter Lippmann actively engaged and dissected America’s Asia policies—moving from the large problem of adjusting to China’s new status and influence to the more detailed matter of how this would affect a constellation of states on its periphery, including Indochina.

At the time he wrote *The Cold War* in 1947, Lippmann’s concern centered on Europe—but his two keys assertions, nevertheless, were relevant to American policy toward Asia. In fact, these fundamentals would become the bedrock of Lippmann’s analysis as he turned sustained attention to Asia in 1950. The first theme was that policymakers were dangerously militarizing their containment policy to the detriment of diplomacy; and, second, that containment itself should be limited to the heart of Europe—to force a military stalemate and negotiated settlement in Germany. Containment in places such as the Middle East, Central Asia, and the Far East he believed to be wasteful and indecisive. Thus, Lippmann advised constantly to avoid waging containment on the “periphery” of the Soviet Union—later, he would write the same for the PRC.

³³ Ibid.

There were three inherent strategic weaknesses of constructing a policy of military containment in Asia, Walter Lippmann believed. The first was a problem of organization—that to contain Communism in Asia would require the U.S. to recruit, subsidize, and support a patchwork coalition of regimes ranging from Iran and Afghanistan to India, Korea, and Malaysia. To construct and preserve such an unstable alliance for a “prolonged diplomatic siege,” much less militarized containment, would prove “impossibly difficult.”³⁴ The very attempt to do so, Lippmann warned, would amount to a policy of “continual and complicated intervention.” Second, this kind of policy would concede diplomatic and strategic advantage to the Soviets and Chinese. Moscow and Beijing would expend far less treasure and resources to test American resolve and to challenge its credibility than the U.S. would pay to prove itself up to the challenge. (One need only recall Khrushchev’s earthy analogy of Berlin or Mao’s kindred description of Quemoy and Matsu to understand this point.)³⁵ These disproportions also applied to the Communists’ inexpensive efforts to topple or disrupt already disorganized countries relative to the costs the U.S. would incur to organize, pacify, and placate them. Third, and perhaps most significantly, such a containment policy invested too much power in regimes which supposedly were to become obedient satellites in the Cold War. American security, Lippmann said, would come to be linked inextricably to the actions taken by foreign leaders—often fulfilling their own nationalist agendas—in

³⁴ Lippmann, *The Cold War*: 21-22.

³⁵ See, for example, references in John Lewis Gaddis’s *We Now Know: Rethinking Cold War History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997): 140, 251. Mao perceived Quemoy and Matsu to be places where he could apply and relax pressure at will against Washington. “The noose was made by America itself,” Mao once remarked, “and [yet] it throws the other end . . . to mainland China, letting

Seoul, Taipei, and Saigon. Herein, Lippmann rationalized, existed the greatest potential for superpower confrontation—in which a proxy war might escalate into a regional or world conflict or a debilitating military commitment in a strategically insignificant locale that might dangerously alter the balance of power between Moscow and Washington in places of vital importance—namely, Germany and Western Europe. American client states in Asia, Lippmann predicted, “will act for their own reasons, and on their own judgments, presenting us with accomplished facts that we did not intend, and with crises for which we are unready.” Rather than the “unassailable barriers” George F. Kennan envisioned, such a coalition would present “an unending series of insoluble dilemmas.” Lippmann concluded, “We shall have either to disown our puppets, which would be tantamount to appeasement and defeat and the loss of face, or must support them at an incalculable cost on an unintended, unforeseen and perhaps undesirable issue.”³⁶ In time, those words epitomized the tragedy of America’s Asia policy, particularly as it developed in Indochina.

For Lippmann, however, Asia remained something of an abstraction for the first few years of the Cold War. He wrote more often about American cold war policy in Europe, where he gave qualified assent to an American military presence. His analyses in *The Cold War* forecast with unnerving accuracy the possible dangers of intervention in Asia, but Washington strategists rejected his solutions for providing a framework to organize the post-colonial parts of the world—such as those presented in *U.S. War Aims*. Not until the events of 1949, with the triumph of Mao’s

us grasp it.” Khrushchev described Berlin in a similar, if earthier, analogy. “Berlin is the testicles of the West,” he explained. “Every time I want to make the West scream, I squeeze on Berlin.”

³⁶ Lippmann, *The Cold War*: 22-23.

Communist forces in China, did Lippmann begin to write regularly on Asian events—with a firmer sense of American options.

Shortly after taking office in January 1949, Dean G. Acheson set his staff to producing a study on American policy in postwar China. The final product was the so-called “China White Paper,”—a dispassionate, if lengthy, explanation of why the U.S. failed to prevent the success of Mao Zedong’s Communist forces. Acheson’s letter of transmittal accompanying the report, however, stirred the most controversy for it portrayed Chinese Communists as being subservient to Moscow. It also implied that pro-Nationalist U.S. policies were implemented though American diplomats had already foreseen the fatal weaknesses and imminent decline of Chiang Kai-shek’s government. By overstating the thrust of the paper, Acheson made it much more difficult for himself to deflect his congressional critics and to pursue a policy of recognition for the PRC and detachment from Chiang.³⁷

The White Paper pleased neither the Republican China Lobby—which labeled it a “1,054-page whitewash of a wishful do-nothing policy”—nor Walter Lippmann who took to the offensive in a series of expository columns. Lippmann deeply regretted Acheson’s assumption that the Chinese were puppets controlled by Russian masters. But he reserved his harshest judgment for Acheson’s (and, indeed, the entire White Paper’s) tone of resigned inevitability regarding U.S. policies. “The unfortunate but inescapable fact is that the ominous result of the civil war in China was beyond the control of the government of the United States,” Acheson had explained. “Nothing that this country did or could have done within reasonable limits

³⁷ James A. Chace, *Acheson: The Secretary of State Who Created the American World* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1998): 220-221.

of its capabilities could have changed the result; nothing that was left undone by this country has contributed to it.”³⁸ Lippmann conceded that Acheson was entitled to argue the final outcome was beyond American control. He objected, however, that the secretary of state tried to contend that “our own actions and commitments in relation to that civil war were also inevitable and beyond our control.”³⁹ Washington must learn from this “diplomatic disaster,” he wrote, some lessons applicable to future Southeast Asian policy. Of course, the points Lippmann raised were the same ones Acheson hoped to skirt for domestic political reasons, primarily for fear of arousing Congressional Republicans.

The crucial question, Lippmann asked, was why had U.S. policy lost all bargaining power with the very government (Chiang) it was trying to save? He drew three conclusions about America’s China policy. First, he believed—as he would maintain throughout the 1950s—Washington had “so irrevocably and so exclusively” embraced Chiang and the Kuomintang that it could no longer bargain for or exact concessions that might reform the inefficient and corrupt Nationalist regime. Further, in making that policy, U.S. officials refused to consult key allies, principally Great Britain, which had greater experience and more immediate economic interests at stake in China. Washington never seemed to have considered, Lippmann observed, “that the responsibility for Chiang’s future might prudently have been shared and the risks spread out.” Finally, he took aim at the manner of Acheson’s presentation, writing that the White Paper seemed more the product of a lawyer seeking a “verdict for his

³⁸ For Acheson’s letter of transmittal, see U.S. Department of State, *United States Relations with China* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1949): iii-xvii. Quote taken from Lippmann, T&T, “The White Paper: I,” 6 September 1949.

³⁹ Lippmann, T&T, “The White Paper: I,” 6 September 1949.

client” than that of a diplomat forming policy. A more candid examination would not undo the disaster, Lippmann added, but “it might teach us something worth keeping very much in mind in, say, Western Germany and Japan, and in the weak and disorderly countries where, it is being said, we must hurry to intervene.”⁴⁰

Lippmann despaired that Washington would not alter the fundamentals of its China policy, either to adjust for past mistakes or to accommodate new realities. The greatest fault in the policy, Lippmann told his friend, U.S. Navy Admiral Forrest P. Sherman, was to support Chiang when U.S. diplomats clearly recognized that the Generalissimo no longer was viable. In hindsight, Lippmann lamented, the U.S. should either have supported a far more liberal regime or been strictly neutral. “Now we are almost hopelessly committed to the support of those elements in Asia that cannot possibly hope to recover the leadership of Asia. All we have in the Far East now are a few beachheads occupied by discredited or puppet regimes,” Lippmann told Sherman on 16 February 1950. Of American policy in Asia generally, India particularly, he believed Washington acted “without sufficient understanding, without diplomatic ingenuity and resourcefulness.”⁴¹ Indeed, the pattern that the U.S. established in China—as well as South Korea—of supporting authoritarian, reactionary governments, left a lasting imprint on future U.S. relations with newly-merging Southeast Asian nations; one which Washington would replicate time and again.

In the spring of 1950, when Senator Joseph McCarthy’s attacks on Acheson and the State Department reached a crescendo, Lippmann suggested in *Today and*

⁴⁰ Lippmann, T&T, “The White Paper: III,” 12 September 1949.

⁴¹ Lippmann to Forrest P. Sherman, 16 February 1950, in Blum, *Public Philosopher*: 548.

Tomorrow that the secretary should resign as a “way to restore a measure of confidence and some national unity in the conduct of foreign affairs.”⁴² Partly, Lippmann blamed Truman for abdicating a leadership role in the making of foreign policy. With a weak president, no political clout of his own, and lukewarm support from Democrats in Congress, Acheson would continue to flounder, Lippmann feared. Foreign policy would suffer. “No human being can think clearly and effectively under such virulent and persistent personal attack,” he wrote. “And no Secretary of State can hope to deal successfully with our allies, and with the Soviet opposition, if his standing at home is so deeply challenged.”⁴³

Attacks on Acheson had the unpleasant appearance of lending aid to right wing Republicans in Congress—and for this, Lippmann jeopardized his standing among the Washington elite. It was, his biographer notes, a “bold, and even brave” position to stake out in political culture where “personal loyalty took precedence over public responsibility.” Lippmann felt compelled to answer critics, writing Judge Learned Hand that “throughout this whole wretched business all my personal inclinations were and still are in [Acheson’s] favor.”⁴⁴

But when empathy for Acheson’s hardships ran up against his own firm beliefs that Truman and his secretary of state were set on a course that dangerously

⁴² Lippmann, T&T, 21 March 1950, “Acheson or His Successor.” See also, T&T, 28 February 1950, “Acheson’s Political Vulnerability.” During the onset of the Korean War, Lippmann’s attacks became even more pointed. “It is impossible . . . for Mr. Acheson to repair his fundamental mistake which was his refusal to coincide in the people—his refusal to debate the issue, and if his real views could not command popular support in Congress, his failure to resign. The position he has been in since last winter has been terrifying to contemplate—that of the principal adviser to the President who has little knowledge of his own in these matters, and himself so vulnerable that the problem of dealing with his domestic critics must dominate his judgment of the problems abroad. The mere possibility which can never be wholly excluded from the minds of people who know what’s what here and abroad, that the gravest decisions might be dictated in part by the need to placate his critics, are shattering to the nerves of an ever increasing number.” See Lippmann, T&T, 14 December 1950, “Mr. Acheson’s Troubles.”

globalized containment, the latter mattered more to him. This conflict with Acheson presaged Lippmann's behavior in the Johnson years: he would fight for his core convictions and risk alienating himself from officials and friends. Part of Acheson's problems, he told readers in 1950, derived from the fact that he'd been a prime developer of a foreign policy that placed too few limits on American power and influence. "We have become so over-extended, we have promised so much more than we can fulfill, we have demanded so much more than we can enforce, we have used words that are so much bigger than our deeds," Lippmann wrote. "Now we are in the backwash and reaction, which is always painful and embarrassing, of being forced to live internationally within our means."⁴⁵ Lippmann amplified these criticisms after the outbreak of the Korean War.⁴⁶ The columnist expected American statesmen to be communicators and educators about internationalism, combatants of parochialism not its perpetrators. Those public officials whom he knew shared many of his core assumptions, but who violated them in office, quickly became his targets. Dean Acheson's failure to educate public opinion about U.S. China policy—his tendency to adopt anti-Communist rhetoric—enraged the columnist. It explains, in part, his disillusionment with the secretary of state and his willingness to speak out so forcefully against U.S. policy in Asia when Acheson faced criticism from the political right.

Lippmann administered criticisms in bipartisan fashion and certainly was not lending succor to Acheson's congressional opponents. A week after his September

⁴³ Lippmann, T&T, 21 March 1950, "Acheson or His Successor."

⁴⁴ Steel, *Walter Lippmann and the American Century*: 475.

⁴⁵ Lippmann, T&T, 21 March 1950, "Acheson or His Successor."

1949 series on the China White Paper, the columnist attacked a plan advocated by Congressional Republicans to reinforce and supply by air as many as eight Nationalist armies on mainland China. Aside from the insuperable logistical problems of the scheme, Lippmann compared such an intervention in the Chinese civil war to the Allied incursion in the Soviet Union after World War I—an action that ruined diplomatic relations for more than a decade and irrevocably “militarized” the Soviet state. The columnist feared a similar outcome in China. “For nothing is so likely to forge a powerful and fanatical military instrument as a prolonged struggle, which [the Communists] would probably win, against Chinese reactionaries and foreign interventionists,” Lippmann told readers. “That would provide them with just the incentive, the stimulus, the pretext, the pressure, the discipline, and the necessity for making the Chinese Communist state a powerful military state in close alliance with the Soviet Union.”⁴⁷

William F. Knowland, the influential California senator and China Lobby stalwart, wrote Lippmann in mid-September 1949 to complain about his analysis. The columnist brushed aside these criticisms and replied firmly with a five-point plan for a new Asian policy. Central among Lippmann’s suggestions was the need to “reject completely all nonsense about alliances among straw men, among feeble states such as southern Korea, what is left of Chiang, and the Philippines. That is nothing but mischievous meddling in which [Congressional supporters will] get their fingers burnt.” He recommended “full-scale” economic aid to India and Pakistan, with

⁴⁶ See, for example, Lippmann’s T&T columns of 14 December 1950, “Mr. Acheson’s Troubles,” and 24 April 1951, “Agreement and Disclosure.”

provisions for ending the Kashmir dispute. Should the Chinese Communists consolidate their power, he added, the U.S. should extend *de facto* recognition.⁴⁸

Lippmann also believed that the U.S. should reaffirm its commitment to U.N. Charter Article 51 (which guaranteed frontiers against military incursions) and to the idea that the U.S. would react with force even if it had to by-pass a Security Council veto.

Finally, there was the increasingly important matter of Indochina. “I would do what high French officials have told me privately they hope we will do, though they cannot say so publicly,” Lippmann told Knowland, “insist that the French government grant complete independence to Indochina subject only to the continual presence of the French army for a period of three to five years.” This offer, Lippmann added, could be made with the provision that an independent Indochinese government have no military or political alliances without the approval of an overseer’s council of Asian states that might include India, Pakistan, Australia, and the Philippines.⁴⁹

Lippmann’s exchange with Knowland came days before he embarked on his first trip to the Middle East and South Asia, including India. He told Knowland that he hoped his travels would “clarify in my own mind what our Asiatic policy should be.”⁵⁰

⁴⁷ Lippmann, T&T, “Intervention in China,” 19 September 1949. For Lippmann’s objections thirty years earlier to intervention in post-World War I Russia, see Steel, *Walter Lippmann and the American Century*: 163-164.

⁴⁸ Lippmann held this position until the end of his life. In the fall of 1971, at age 82, Lippmann described Richard Nixon’s overture to China as a “great historical event” and as the “acknowledgement of a colossal error” in American Cold War policy whereby Washington usually extended diplomatic recognition only to those regimes and governments that “we liked.” Lippmann added: “My view is that it’s better to have made the mistake and to correct it than to persist in it. It’s a mistake that can be corrected by a strong power, without humiliation necessarily, and with a certain amount of good faith. The willingness to admit the mistake and adjust to it, to make decisions quietly, to reverse the policy slowly, with due consultation is what diplomacy is all about.” See Chalmers Roberts, “Walter Lippmann: Journalist, Philosopher,” 15 December 1974, *Washington Post*: A8.

⁴⁹ Lippmann to William F. Knowland, 21 September 1949, in Blum *Public Philosopher*: 544-545.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

Lippmann spent about three months abroad, from his customary Western Europe stops working his way eastward through the Mediterranean and on to Pakistan and India. His appointment diaries from the trip attest to Lippmann's ability to have access to foreign leaders and the international intelligentsia.⁵¹ Arriving in Paris on 1 October 1949, he spent the next ten days meeting with Charles de Gaulle, Jean Monnet (twice), minister of defense Rene Pleven, diplomat Herve Alphand, and Alexandre Parodi, secretary general of the foreign office, with whom he discussed the situation in Indochina. U.S. Ambassador to France David K.E. Bruce also hosted a dinner for the Lippmanns and met privately with the columnist. On it went, two private meetings on 10 October with Konrad Adenauer in Bonn and, on 29 October in Athens, an audience with Paul I, King of Greece, Field Marshall Alexander Papagos (commander-in-chief of the army and future prime minister), and Prime Minister Alexander Diomedes. The king later sent Lippmann a private note apologizing that his schedule had not permitted a long private talk and sending along his telephone numbers in the hope that Lippmann would pay another visit (he didn't because it didn't suit his schedule). Politicians and statesmen were not the only interests for Lippmann: he had a long talk with the sociologist Gunnar Myrdal in Geneva, stayed with his friend the art critic Bernard Berenson at I Tatti outside Florence, and met the novelist Ignatio Silone in Rome.⁵²

The month-long November 1949 journey to India marked the first of two trips Lippmann and his wife, Helen, would make to the nation which had gained

⁵¹ The discussion of Lippmann's trip in the fall of 1949 is drawn entirely from the Lippmann Appointment Diaries, Box 238, folder 13, Series VII, Walter Lippmann Collection, Sterling Memorial Library, Yale University, New Haven, CT (hereinafter referred to as "WLC").

independence from British colonial rule just two years earlier. He visited with top officials and traversed a wide swath of territory—accompanied part of the way by three U.S. Senators on a separate congressional fact-finding mission: Democrat Allen Ellender of Louisiana, Republican William Jenner of Indiana, and Theodore Green, a Rhode Island Democrat who would eventually chair the Foreign Relations Committee in the 85th and 86th Congresses (1957-1961). Lippmann arrived first in Karachi, Pakistan, for a three-day stay commencing on 8 November. While there he had private meetings with Prime Minister Liqat Ali Khan and Mohammed Ali, secretary general of the government. On 11 November, he traveled to Dehli where, the following day, he dined with much of the Indian cabinet: foreign secretary Krishna P.S. Menon, defense secretary H.M. Patel, and home secretary H.V.R. Ienga. Newly-appointed Prime Minister of the Republic of India Jawarhal Nehru, who had just completed a trip to the U.S., met privately with Lippmann and hosted the small entourage of American politicians for dinner on 16 November. After the senators departed, Nehru, his nieces, and the Lippmanns sat down for a long talk with the Indian leader, speaking in detail about the history of partition.

Over the next three weeks, Lippmann visited Benares, Calcutta, Madras, Bombay, and Hyderabad, meeting with a host of Indian officials. Three meetings with Indian diplomats would take on added significance in light of events in Korea in 1950. In Dehli, Lippmann met twice with Kavalam (K.M.) Pannikar, the influential Indian ambassador to China. In the late-summer and early-fall of 1950, Pannikar would be a key mediator between China and the West—trying to resolve the Korean

⁵² See Lippmann's notations for October 1949, Appointment Diaries, Box 238, folder 13, Series VII, WLC.

conflict and warning off Washington from crossing north of the 38th Parallel.⁵³ Lippmann would write several columns explaining to his American readers why they should support Pannikar's efforts. In Bombay, Sir Benegal Rama Rau, India's chief U.N. delegate, hosted Lippmann for three days, meeting him at the airport, entertaining at his home, and driving the Lippmanns around Bombay's tourist sights, including the Parsee Tower of Silence. Rau, in August 1950, would introduce a proposal—citing as his inspiration a Walter Lippmann column—for a special U.N. panel of non-Security Council members to mediate a truce on the Korean peninsula. Also during his stay in India, Lippmann met on several occasions with Shri Girja Shankar Bajpai, a senior official in the foreign office who, by the summer of 1950, would be its minister. The men discussed Bajpai's desire to partition Kashmir, the need for American economic aid to India, and the question of extending recognition to the PRC. When Lippmann left Dehli on 9 December to return home, he flew part of the way with Bajpai who was bound for a U.N. meeting in New York.⁵⁴

The experience confirmed for Lippmann his earlier analysis for Knowland. Ideology, economics, and geopolitics were all secondary considerations when measured against the civilizational hurdles between the West and the newly-emancipated nations in these regions. “For what we are struggling for in Asia, I now realize, is not democracy and not free enterprise, and not new allies in the cold war against the Soviet Union, but to maintain some contact between Asia and the West,”

⁵³ For Pannikar's role as a mediator between China and the West, see William Stueck, *The Korean War: An International History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995): 51, 140, 278-280. For his warnings to Washington about the prospects of Chinese intervention, see William Stueck, *Rethinking the Korean War: A New Diplomatic and Strategic History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003): 100-101; 105-106; as well, Stueck, *The Korean War*: 90-91.

⁵⁴ See Lippmann's notations for November 1949, Appointment Diaries, Box 238, folder 13, Series VII, WLC.

Lippmann wrote his friend, the New York City financier Russell Leffingwell. “We have only a little power in Asia, and we must not think ourselves as the lords of creation who can fix the terms of the bargain on which relations are to be continued. We have to make connections, we have to seek out avenues of contact and influence, or we shall gradually find ourselves shut out.”⁵⁵ The experience also convinced Lippmann that Nehru was a neutralist with whom the U.S. could work and that India, with its potential for military power, economic development, a large population, geographical size, and political system steeped in centuries of British tradition, made it a logical regional anchor.

By this time Lippmann’s attitude toward Mao Zedong’s newly-installed Communist government in Beijing was at wide variance with that of official Washington which assumed that China would be subservient to Moscow and would have to be militarily contained. Into 1950, the columnist did not believe Beijing was predestined to take orders from Moscow or that it would even form a close alliance with the Soviets—a view that aligned closely to that held by Nehru’s government and British diplomats. Instead, Lippmann wrote, historic tensions would arise between the two countries in Manchuria and at other places along the Chinese-Russian frontier and set the two Communist giants at odds. Here, American diplomacy toward these borderland states was critical to influencing Sino-Soviet relations. “The assumption that [China] is necessarily a satellite and that therefore the problem [is] to contain it, is false and defeatist,” Lippmann wrote in a memorandum for his files in early-January 1950. “The problem for us in China is not containment, but division between

⁵⁵ Lippmann to Russell B. Leffingwell, 29 December 1949, reprinted in Blum, *Public Philosopher*: 545.

Mao Tse-tung and Stalin.”⁵⁶ The American attitude toward China would either open or foreclose a whole range of possibilities for dealing with the smaller but more numerous, and potentially more thorny, problems of the emerging states of Southeast Asia. Lippmann’s critique of U.S.-China policy in the late-1940s also subtly implied that American policymakers had squandered earlier opportunities to reach an accommodation with Mao’s Communist regime. In retrospect, that assessment strikes one as overly confident in its assumption that the U.S. could resolve vital Chinese security interests which conflicted with American aims in the region. Archival materials released in the 1990s, however, largely disproved what became known in the 1960s and 1970s as this “lost chance” thesis later refined by scholars. America, Chen Jian has convincingly demonstrated, made the perfect foil for Mao who believed he needed an external enemy to consolidate his domestic power.⁵⁷

Fomenting divisions between Moscow and Beijing seemed a formidable challenge at the time, especially since U.S. officials still were modifying their own strategic roadmap in Asia. Lippmann attended Secretary of State Acheson’s 12 January 1950 address at the National Press Club, in which the Truman administration seemed to give a clear indication that it was reconsidering its containment policy and, perhaps, had settled on a basis for pursuing a wedge strategy between the two Communist powers. The secretary of state told listeners “not to become obsessed with military considerations” in Asia, particularly in regard to Communist China. Working largely from notes he’d prepared personally, Acheson warned Chiang Kai-shek’s lobbyists in Congress against the “folly of ill-conceived adventures on our

⁵⁶ Lippmann, Memorandum for files, 7 January 1950, reprinted in Blum, *Public Philosopher*: 546-547.

part” that might “deflect from the Russians to ourselves the righteous anger, and the wrath, and the hatred of the Chinese, which must develop.” Further, the secretary outlined a “defensive perimeter” in the Pacific—a line that stretched (much as Lippmann’s own strategic boundary) from Alaska to the Philippines. Beyond that line, Acheson intimated, American strategic interests were secondary. This geographical divide excluded Formosa, Indochina, and the Korean peninsula. Though America had a responsibility to defend South Korean interests, Acheson added, the U.S. would rely primarily on indigenous forces and the U.N. Charter to protect the Western client government in Seoul.⁵⁸

Walter Lippmann hailed the National Press Club speech as a momentous clarification of U.S. policy. It marked, he wrote a few days later, “an action of great moment throughout Asia,” reflecting “great sagacity and deep penetration.” Acheson’s suggestion closely mirrored what the columnist had been writing for months: that rather than grab and hold strategically indefensible locations on the Asian mainland or nearby islands, Washington should patiently exploit Soviet-PRC strategic conflicts.⁵⁹ “Mr. Acheson’s recognition of the conflict, his insistence that the crucial area is not in Formosa or in Hainan but in the long-disputed Chinese-Russian borderland, *is a China policy.*”⁶⁰ As Lippmann sometimes did on critical

⁵⁷ See, “China Roundtable,” *Diplomatic History*, 21 (Winter 1997), esp. Chen Jian, “The Myth of America’s ‘Lost Chance’ in China: 77-86.

⁵⁸ See Walter H. Waggoner, “Four Areas Listed: Secretary Says ‘Adventures’ Would Divert Hatred of Orient to Americans,” 13 January 1950, *New York Times*: 1; Ferdinand Kuhn, “Russia Now Carving Up China But Will Face Wrath of People, Acheson Says in Policy Outline,” 13 January 1950, *Washington Post*: 1. See also Chace’s description of the National Press Club Speech in *Acheson*: 222-223.

⁵⁹ For more on the development of the “wedge strategy,” see John Lewis Gaddis, *The Long Peace: Inquiries Into the History of the Cold War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987): especially, pp. 164-173. For revelations from new Chinese archival materials indicating the challenges in implementing a wedge strategy, see Gaddis, *We Now Know*: 62-66.

⁶⁰ Lippmann, T&T, “The Dust Has Settled,” 16 January 1950. Lippmann’s italics.

issues, he read far into the statement to glean the best possible interpretation.

Lippmann and many other observers found in the Acheson's address explicit confirmation that the administration would not insert American ground forces in Asia, even in the event of a Communist incursion into the southern part of the Korean peninsula. In this assumption Lippmann shortly would be proven wrong.

Nevertheless, Lippmann sought to advertise this new approach and to tie it to historical precedent, as well. In April 1950, in an *Atlantic Monthly* article titled "Breakup of the Two-Power World," he argued that China policy should be grounded in the "traditional" American role (going back to the days of Secretary of State John Hay) of lending "support" to China to protect it "against dismemberment and imperialist aggression."⁶¹ Lippmann elaborated, that Chinese leaders "should be made to feel that they have an alternative to submitting to the demands of Moscow, that they can turn to Washington and London, that they are not imprisoned in the Soviet system, that they are not limited to the economic help which can be drawn from it, the doors will not be slammed in their face and they will not be driven back into the arms of the Russians."⁶² American officials, he explained, had embraced a "monstrous heresy and fallacy" that mirrored the ideology of Marxists: that Soviet-American rivalry required that all nations to choose one or the other side—an assumption he rejected. Lippmann's approach to a revamped China policy fit his larger framework for detaching countries from the Cold War conflict and, where possible, to undermine Soviet power with diplomacy that promoted neutralism. "That would mean that we put our influence and power behind the general tendency

⁶¹ Walter Lippmann, "Breakup of the Two-Power World," April 1950, *Atlantic Monthly* 185 (No. 4): 25-30.

towards national independence, towards military neutrality, and towards diplomatic disentanglement—a tendency which is manifest in almost all of Asia, and in much at least of Central and Eastern Europe,” Lippmann concluded. “Since we cannot encircle the Soviet Union by a military coalition, we should cultivate and exploit all the national forces, all the human impulses to escape from the havoc of war, in order to prevent the Soviet Union from forming its coalition and in order to disintegrate its military alliances in Eastern Europe and those which it hopes to achieve in Asia.”⁶³

IV.

Throughout the spring of 1950, as Washington officials backed and filled on Acheson’s January outline of strategic disengagement in East Asia, Lippmann kept hammering home the need for a strategic pullback from the Asian mainland. On the eve of the Korean War, he was even advocating complete U.S. withdrawal from Japan once a peace treaty was ratified—a view he had modified since the momentous Soviet achievement of the atomic bomb. He told readers, that Washington should remove its military forces from the Japanese islands which he now believed vulnerable to an aerial attack with nuclear weapons. American forces should remain in the Philippines but no closer to mainland Asia, he wrote. “This would be a corollary to a Japanese peace treaty and an American withdrawal from Japan,” Lippmann explained. “It is also a more effective and a less embarrassing and dangerous way of accomplishing the main purposes which are supposed to be served by America staying entangled with Chiang in Formosa, by meddling and muddling a

⁶² Ibid., “Breakup of the Two-Power World,” 30.

little with Bao Dai in Indo-China.”⁶⁴ While consolidating their strength behind this Pacific line—and staying clear of “entanglements” on the Asian mainland—Lippmann hoped American officials would fix their attention on Europe and focus on their primary objective: creating a powerful enough deterrent to discourage potential *Soviet* provocations. The Japanese peace process, American relations with the PRC, and U.S. aid to Southeast Asia, however, would be fundamentally altered by the North Korean invasion of the South on June 25, 1950.⁶⁵

The North Korean attack caught Lippmann off balance. Washington officials were surprised, too. We now know that until the eve of the invasion, even Kim Il Sung’s handlers in Beijing and Moscow remained intentionally uninformed about much of the operational planning—although Stalin and Mao both approved the invasion plans.⁶⁶ In first addressing the attack, Lippmann endorsed the American defense of the Seoul government though it soon became evident as the military situation deteriorated that Lippmann intended the defensive action to cover a retreat off the peninsula. On 27 June, President Truman dispatched the 7th Fleet to the Taiwan Straits and authorized air and naval action. Two days later, Lippmann wrote that Truman’s quick decision demonstrated that the president “met his great responsibility . . . without flinching and without fumbling.” The administration had to act, he noted, because “to accept this aggression passively would have been fatal to the [United Nation’s] authority and its influence.”⁶⁷

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Lippmann, T&T, 13 June 1950, “After Japan What Then?”

⁶⁵ See, for example, Stueck’s analysis in *The Korean War*: 348-370. See also, Michael Schaller’s discussion in, *The American Occupation of Japan: The Origins of the Cold War in Asia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985): see especially, pp. 278-289.

⁶⁶ Gaddis, *We Now Know*: 71-75.

⁶⁷ Lippmann, T&T, “The President’s Decision,” 29 June 1950.

Ronald Steel's biography suggests that Lippmann's quick reverse on the use of forces in Asia demonstrated his tendency to support containment in practice while criticizing it as an intellectual abstraction.⁶⁸ That interpretation is misleading. There were major caveats to Lippmann's support. In his 29 June 1950 column, he urged officials to rethink their priorities. America had few allies to support a major operation in Asia and the Western Alliance, moreover, was forced to commit its forces to the front-line battles in Asia while the Russians enjoyed the advantage of using indigenous troops. Lippmann's support, he made clear, was temporary—i.e. until the situation on the ground in Korea stabilized. He warned against landing a large American army and launching a sustained counter-offensive to the 38th Parallel. He also perceived of the military disaster as a way to liquidate a burdensome commitment; a return to the *status quo ante*—that is, a divided peninsula with Allied troops stationed in the south—he wrote, would not be a desirable outcome. “Unless our present position in the Asiatic Far East can be held in large measure by the will and the native forces of the Asiatic peoples,” he concluded, “ever larger bodies of American troops will become frozen there.”⁶⁹

The administration almost immediately violated Lippmann's cardinal rule of engagement. On 30 June, Truman authorized General Douglas MacArthur to use ground combat forces stationed in Japan to intervene in Korea. Lippmann responded in T&T by advocating that U.S. “localize” the conflict by severely limiting its military objectives. It should support a coalition of Asian states—led by India and Pakistan—which would orchestrate and administer a cease-fire in Korea. The United

⁶⁸ Steel, *Walter Lippmann and the American Century*: 488-489.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

Nations might then oversee elections for the whole of Korea. The goal, he wrote, should be “abolish the partition” and “to achieve a united and independent Korea.”⁷⁰ He did not specify what kind of government would be acceptable. It would not be ideal at all for the North Koreans to conquer the South, Lippmann wrote. But an even grimmer prospect, he told readers, would be a decision by Washington to garrison troops in South Korea. “It will not be a decent settlement if at the end of the Korean fighting the American Army finds itself at the thirty-eighth parallel,” he wrote, “and is invested for the indefinite future with the task of defending South Korea and therefore of occupying it, policing it against guerillas, and in fact providing it with a government.”⁷¹ There also was a second motive for encouraging Korean reunification through regional diplomacy: it might mend some of the damage inflicted on U.S. relations with India in commensurate proportion to Washington’s increasing support for French forces in Vietnam. “It is no secret that our intervention in Indo-China has won us no friends in India or in any of the other uncommitted nations of Asia,” Lippmann told readers on 11 July 1950. American “association with Bao Dai”—like its support of Chiang in Taiwan—“could have cost us the support of Nehru had the North Korean invasion not been such a naked and obvious violation of the [U.N.] charter.”⁷²

⁷⁰ See for example, T&T, “To Localize the Fighting,” 11 July 1950, and “Toward a Korean Settlement,” 20 July 1950.

⁷¹ Lippmann, T&T, “Toward a Korean Settlement,” 20 July 1950

⁷² Lippmann, T&T, “To Localize the Fighting,” 11 July 1950. Lippmann encouraged Indian and Pakistani leadership on the Vietnam issue as well. He believed that through such a diplomatic cooperation, the two countries could work out their differences. An Indian-Pakistani alliance, he believed, was the cornerstone to stability in Asia. As he explained in early 1950, “If Pakistan and India can be brought together, all of south Asia can be held, and we shall have a great Asiatic force on our side. If Pakistan and India blow up in communal rioting and civil war, we’ll have no position at all left in Asia. The effects of the disaster will spread both to southeast Asia and to the Middle East.” Lippmann to Forrest P. Sherman, 16 February 1950, WLC. Cited in Blum, *Public Philosopher*: 548.

A few days later Lippmann penned a column which castigated the Truman administration for its “snap judgments and its improvisations” in Korea.⁷³ Pointing out that Korea—because of its proximity to the large American military presence in Japan—was the lone place on the “Asiatic border of the Soviet Union” where the U.S. could have immediately intervened (and, hence, could not be construed as a workable model for U.S. capabilities elsewhere in Asia), Lippmann argued that the purpose of mobile American forces was not “to fight wars inside Asia, not to become involved in ground fighting with land armies and with guerillas.” The Western Alliance could not “allow ourselves to be diverted” from “the free world’s supreme and vital military interest”: to maintain enough uncommitted military power to deter Soviet political and military aggression elsewhere. Korea, so far as Lippmann believed, was part of a “deficit diplomacy”—codified in the March 1947 Truman Doctrine—that had vastly expanded American commitments just as the power to fulfill them had declined. “In Korea we are suffering painful reverses: they are local and limited samples of what can happen when, to make it specific, Mr. Acheson has commitments that Mr. [Louis] Johnson [the Secretary of Defense] is not prepared to carry out,” Lippmann wrote.⁷⁴

Washington officials were drawing the exact opposite conclusions: they were preparing to dig in to defend their Asian commitments. In an emergency meeting on 26 June 1950 at Blair House, for instance, Acheson had argued for a “strong military mission” for Indochina. One participant at the meeting later noted that Acheson’s presentation convinced Truman to increase aid to Indochina.⁷⁵ On 27 June 1950, the

⁷³ Lippmann, T&T, 13 July 1950, “Deficit Diplomacy,” 13 July 1950.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ See Ronald L. McGlothen, *Controlling the Waves: Dean Acheson and U.S. Foreign Policy in Asia* (New York: Norton, 1993): 197; and Philip Jessup, “Memorandum of Conversation (Large Meeting),

administration authorized an additional disbursement of \$5 million in aid to French forces in Indochina; a week later, Acheson requested that the president make another immediate emergency allocation of \$16 million—the balance of the planned aid budget approved in May 1950.⁷⁶ By early August 1950, 35 U.S. military officers, the advance members of the Military Advisory Group for Indochina (MAGIC), were in Vietnam. Less than a year after the North Korean invasion, the U.S. had spent roughly \$50 million in aid to Southeast Asia—\$22.5 million of it earmarked for Indochina.⁷⁷

Privately and publicly, Lippmann expressed grave doubts about American intervention in Korea. When John Foster Dulles, then special adviser to the State Department for the Japanese Peace Treaty, read Lippmann's 13 July *Today and Tomorrow* installment, titled "Deficit Diplomacy," he sent the columnist a letter expressing his own initial doubts about using ground troops in Korea. Prior to the North's attack Dulles believed, and had stated in a June 19 speech to the Korean National Assembly in Seoul, that if Pyongyang invaded the South the U.S. "would do something about it. Just what that 'something' would be, I did not attempt to define," he told Lippmann. "I had doubts as to the wisdom of engaging our land forces on the Continent of Asia as against an enemy army that could be nourished from the vast reservoirs of the U.S.S.R."⁷⁸ Dulles expressed those doubts to the Pentagon, warning military planners that he believed "a land venture was dangerous from the standpoint

26 June 1950, Papers of Dean Acheson, Box 65, June 1950 Conversations File, Harry S. Truman Library, Independence, MO (hereinafter referred to as "HSTL").

⁷⁶ Acheson to Truman, 3 July 1950, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1950 6: 835-836 (hereinafter referred to as "*FRUS*").

⁷⁷ Figures from McGlothen, *Controlling the Waves*: 197.

⁷⁸ John Foster Dulles to Lippmann, 13 July 1950, WLC, Box 68, folder 667. Underlining is original.

of U.S. safety, I thought that the political arm of the government could get along with something less than that.” He assured Lippmann that the decision to land an army on the Korean peninsula was made “by the Defense Establishment itself and it was not, in this respect, under the compulsion of any prior political commitment.”⁷⁹

Dulles’s explanation, however, did little to allay the columnist’s concerns that politics drove the Korean intervention as much as any tactical considerations. Lippmann confided to Dulles that the decision “to commit a land army was a far deeper and a far more momentous and a much more irrevocable commitment” than the decision to dispatch air and naval forces. He also expressed shock that Dulles had never clarified what the U.S. response would be, prior to the outbreak of war. “We have given hostages to fortune which we would have been much stronger without,” Lippmann warned, noting that a war to restore South Korean control up to the 38th Parallel could provoke Chinese intervention and, at best, would mean an interminable U.S. military occupation. He added that only with British and Indian mediation, or perhaps through a UN-sponsored proposal, could Washington pull back from its commitment and get “a better aim than merely fighting our way back to the 38th parallel.” His pessimism increased in July as he watched events from his summer home in Maine. “I have been very deeply depressed by the Korean affair,” Lippmann told the columnist Joe Alsop. Truman and Acheson were at fault, Lippmann wrote, “not having clarified the question of our obligation in Korea and insisted on knowing whether we were prepared to support it. They knew and accepted the theory that

⁷⁹ Ibid.

Korea had been written off and, therefore, that we were not going to be prepared to fight there.”⁸⁰

The same day Lippmann expressed his concerns to Alsop, Truman spoke before a Joint Session of Congress to report on the conflict calling it a “naked, deliberate, unprovoked aggression, without a shadow of justification.” The president also linked opposition to engaging Communist forces in Korea with the specter of Munich and appeasement. Truman told the assembled Representatives and Senators that the “free world,” however, “had learned the lessons of history” and stood up against the “lawless aggression” in Korea (the president described this “as a milestone toward the establishment of the rule of law among nations”).⁸¹ Addressing Americans on television and radio that evening, Truman echoed much of his Capitol Hill speech, once again conjuring the image of Munich. “The free nations have learned the fateful lessons of the 1930s. . . . Appeasement leads only to further aggression and ultimately war.” He then broadly laid out his program for a dramatic \$10 billion defense budget expansion—following the guidelines that the administration drew up and approved as the top-secret NSC-68 in September 1950.⁸²

NSC-68 dramatically boosted not only the defense budget but it fundamentally altered the policy of containment conceived by George F. Kennan—

⁸⁰ Lippmann to John Foster Dulles, 18 July 1950, WLC, Box 68, Folder 667; Lippmann to Joe Alsop, 19 July 1950, WLC, Series III, Box 50, Folder 38. Alsop largely agreed and replied that Acheson and Alexis Johnson, the Secretary of Defense, should be replaced.

⁸¹ Harry S. Truman, “Special Message to Congress,” 19 July 1950, *Public Papers of the Presidents: Harry S. Truman, 1950*, 6, Doc. No. 793: 531-537 (hereinafter referred to as “PPP/HST”).

⁸² Harry S. Truman, “Radio and Television Address to the American People on the Situation in Korea,” 19 July 1950, PPP/HST, 6, Doc. No. 194: 537-542. Truman’s complete public papers, as well as those of every president through Ford (and partially for succeeding presidents), also are available on a very useful web site run by the political science department at UC-Santa Barbara: <http://americanpresidency.ucsb.edu>.

sending it far down the track Lippmann had publicly attacked in 1947.⁸³ There is no documentary evidence that suggests Lippmann saw a draft of NSC-68, either during the months in which it was circulated for markup prior to Truman's final approval, or in its final form. It is, however, likely—even probable—that Lippmann discussed with George Kennan or other concerned government officials the broad outlines of the debate within administration circles about circumscribed containment versus a global policy based upon full military and economic mobilization.⁸⁴ Truman had authorized a review of U.S. military policy as early as the winter of 1949-1950—rumblings of which Lippmann and other Washington columnists such as Joe Alsop had heard for months. On 3 April 1950, four days before NSC-68 was submitted to

⁸³ Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment*: see especially, 60-106. The document is reprinted and dissected by scholars and policymakers in Ernest R. May, ed., *American Cold War Strategy: Interpreting NSC-68* (Boston: Bedford-St. Martin's Press 1994). NSC 68 was originally reproduced in *Foreign Relations of the United States* (hereinafter referred to as "*FRUS*"). See, NSC 68, "United States Objectives and Programs for National Security," 14 April 1950, *FRUS* 1950, Volume 1, "National Security Affairs; Foreign Economic Policy" (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1977): 234-292. Kennan had argued that the U.S. should pursue a policy in which Russian moves were to be "contained by the adroit and vigilant application of counter-force." Proceeding from the assumption that America had limited resources with which to wage such a policy, Kennan followed on that argument by prioritizing areas of vital U.S. interests—placing Western Europe, Germany, and Japan at the top of the list and arguing that outside these select points the U.S. should not over-commit itself. Kennan later maintained that he had intended to use economic and political means as primary instruments; military force would be kept in reserve.

While purposefully vague about its costs, NSC-68's authors insisted that full wartime economic mobilization was necessary to deter a Soviet offensive in Western Europe which, they believed could occur as early as 1954. NSC-68 subordinated diplomacy to military imperatives, largely because the authors assumed that negotiations were futile. Paul Nitze, Kennan's successor as director of the PPS and the document's primary author, described the Soviet-American struggle as an apocalyptic conflict between a "slave society" and a "free society" upon which hinged the fate of Western civilization. "No other value system is so wholly irreconcilable with ours," NSC-68 continued, "so implacable in its purposes to destroy ours, so capable of turning to its own uses the most dangerous and divisive trends in our own society, no other so skillfully and powerfully evokes the elements of irrationality in human nature everywhere, and no other has the support of a great and growing center of military power." Whereas Kennan argued that the U.S. must meet Soviet power at strategic points, NSC-68 viewed Russian advances anywhere in the world as threats to vital U.S. interests; that American credibility and prestige could be destroyed by any Communist "success." NSC-68 spiked defense spending immediately. The 1950 budget had allocated \$13 billion for military spending—equal to one-third of the national budget and 5 percent of the gross national product (GNP). The 1951 budget, the first after NSC-68 had gone into effect, earmarked \$60 billion for defense, accounting for about two-thirds of the national budget and more than 18 percent of a rising GNP.

President Truman, Lippmann wrote a column on proposed changes to strategic air power, counseling that officials adopt a “policy of maintaining what is in fact a defensive, deterrent, but not provocative military establishment.”⁸⁵

By August 1950 with U.S. forces embroiled in the Korean War, Lippmann penned some of his most dire warnings of the Cold War—including a 22 August piece entitled “Cassandra Speaking,” a rubric he reserved for crisis situations. The logic behind this column, however, clearly ran counter to the policy upon which Truman administration officials were soon to settle. They believed the American economy could be ratcheted up to a perpetual wartime footing that would allow the military to wage global containment. Lippmann, who in July 1950 described the Korean War as a diversionary tactic incited by Kremlin leaders to “neutralize us in Europe,” believed that the U.S. would have to be selective about its primary interests; he believed these lay in the defense of Western Europe and Germany. American officials would have to prioritize their geopolitical goals rather than to inflate their defense establishment to achieve an open-ended agenda. “The deficit in our diplomacy—the disparity between our commitments and our moves—is being enlarged and is not being reduced,” Lippmann warned readers. “Our obligations have become greatly inflated because we have allowed ourselves to be drawn into a war on the ground of the Asiatic mainland and into direct conflict with China . . . But what is

⁸⁴ Kennan was not involved in the drafting of NSC-68, but he was aware of the debate going on about military expansion—a study which Truman had authorized in the winter of 1949-1950. See, Kennan’s *Memoirs, 1925-1950* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1967): 473-476.

⁸⁵ Lippmann, T&T, “The National Security,” 3 April 1950; see also, Lippmann, T&T, “The New Weapons,” 22 June 1950.

most serious is that we are in a diplomatic jam where our adversaries in Asia can keep us endlessly entangled in fact isolated and forever outnumbered.”⁸⁶

It is a virtual certainty that had Lippmann been privy to the full debate, or had officials chosen to publicize NSC-68 as they had Kennan’s original containment theory, that the columnist would have attacked it with even more vigor than he had the “X-Article.” For NSC-68 had the effect of stimulating precisely the application of containment that Lippmann had warned of in 1947 and would come to denounce in column after column for the next two decades. It irrevocably militarized U.S. national security policy. If Kennan had doubted the use of diplomatic dialogue NSC-68 disqualified it entirely as an option. It exaggerated the Soviet threat in some of the most sweeping language possible. Moreover it conflated vital U.S. interests with peripheral ones. As a Cold War historian has written, NSC-68 “paid obeisance to the balance of power, diversity, and freedom, but nowhere did it set out the minimal requirements necessary to secure those interests. Instead it found in the simple presence of a Soviet threat sufficient cause to deem the interest threatened vital.”⁸⁷ In this respect NSC-68 was heir to the expansive Truman Doctrine, which Lippmann bluntly had attacked as a “strategic monstrosity.” Finally, NSC-68 set in motion the creation and feeding of a vast military-industrial complex in which major U.S. corporations—particularly those in the aerospace industry—were literally subsidized

⁸⁶ Lippmann, T&T “Probably the Showdown,” 18 July 1950; Lippmann, T&T, “Cassandra Speaking,” 22 August 1950.

⁸⁷ Gaddis *Strategies of Containment*: 98. Gaddis also explains on page 95, “For the authors of NSC-68, American interests could not be defined apart from the threat the Soviet Union posed to them: ‘frustrating the Kremlin design,’ as the document frequently put it, became an end in itself not a means to a larger end.”

by Pentagon expenditures.⁸⁸ The political influence of this conglomeration raised fears that it might subvert the basic processes of democratic government. The prevailing domestic climate, in which Truman administration officials used excessive rhetoric to raise fears of Soviet aggression, soon countenanced soaring defense budgets that leached money from long-delayed domestic reforms, welfare, urban renewal and infrastructure, and environmental rehabilitation. By the late 1950s, Lippmann and other perceptive critics such as Kennan, wrote that in preparing to meet external threats national security policies pursued after 1950 had the unintended effect of creating domestic dissonance and internal weakness.⁸⁹

Years later, Walter Lippmann identified the Korean War as Truman's greatest foreign policy blunder, telling a CBS television interviewer that the president was placating Congress and his military chiefs and, in his attempt to accommodate them, simply lost control of his Korean policy. While conceding that Truman was right to intervene immediately, Lippmann said, "I've never been satisfied that it was right to resist except by air and sea, which is what [General Douglas] MacArthur and [General Dwight] Eisenhower originally wanted to do. Even if you assume that that was all right—to fight a land war in Korea with American troops—he made a fatal mistake when, having won that war and driven the North Koreans across the Thirty-Eighth Parallel, he didn't stop there and instead went up to the Chinese border, which brought the Chinese into the war, and created a war between China and the United States which we have never been able to solve." Was that the President's fault or the

⁸⁸ Gregory Hooks, *Forging the Military-Industrial Complex* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1991); and Ann Markusen et. al., *The Rise of the Gunbelt: The Military Remapping of Industrial America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991).

general's fault? the interviewer probed. "I blame the President and his Secretary of State [Acheson]," Lippmann replied, "and generals don't make policy of that kind, in any well-ordered government. . . . My impression is that the President and his Secretary of State were just as eager to do it."⁹⁰

John Foster Dulles' firsthand account of MacArthur's initial reaction to the outbreak of Korean hostilities resonated with the columnist and it was an encounter that he would recall time and again for the public and in private meetings with officials during the Vietnam years. Dulles had been in the Japanese countryside when North Korea commenced its invasion, and quickly flew back to MacArthur's Tokyo headquarters. He found the supreme commander so insulated from negative news by his staff that he was largely unaware of the scope of the invasion more than 24 hours after it began. MacArthur was not sanguine about the prospects of fighting a war on the Korean peninsula. Despite going on at great length about his admiration for Chiang Kai-shek, his contempt for the PRC, and his own willingness to engage Soviet forces, the general expressed grave reservations about Korea. "Anyone who wants to commit U.S. troops to fight in Korea should have his head examined," he told Dulles, while seeing him out of the office.⁹¹

Lippmann did not budge from his central convictions about the strategic blunder of fighting a war in Korea. Into the fall of 1950, he continued to advocate for Indian mediation as a diplomatic channel "uncontaminated by the suspicion of imperialism and power politics." In July, New Delhi's ambassador to China, K.M.

⁸⁹ See, for example, the following Lippmann T&T columns on the arms race and its impact on American society: "The Portent of the Moon," 10 October 1957; "Arms and the Mind," 7 January 1958; "Explorer and Sputnik," 4 February 1958; "The Thaw," 2 January 1964.

Panikkar, proposed that China be admitted to the U.N. Security Council which would then (Soviets included) vote for an immediate cease-fire and withdrawal to the 38th Parallel. On 17 August 1950, Lippmann described the offer as a “most opportune” chance to end “what might be a long, expensive and destructive stalemate.”⁹² If the U.S. salvaged Korean sovereignty while “destroying” the country, Lippmann wrote, the victory would be “pyrrhic.”⁹³ Part of this critique derived from his certainty that the U.S. no longer could treat Communism as a monolithic entity. Like George Kennan he closely noted that Moscow and Beijing had responded very differently to Panikkar’s offer—the Soviets skeptical and the Chinese cautiously approving. U.S. diplomats, Lippmann believed, needed to exploit Soviet and Chinese Communists’ shared tensions—in short, “to refuse to regard China as a Russian satellite.” At a time when Washington was diplomatically isolating Mao’s government, American actions in Korea, Indochina, and Taiwan threatened Beijing’s interests directly and pushed it toward an alliance with Moscow, Lippmann warned.⁹⁴

Meanwhile Lippmann used his column to float mediation plans and to generate diplomatic momentum for third-party brokering. India’s delegate to the United Nations, Sir Benegal Rau, cited Lippmann’s 17 August T&T column when he proposed to Security Council members that the U.N. should create a committee of non-permanent Security Council members to investigate and deliver findings on

⁹⁰ Lippmann interview with Howard K. Smith, 11 August 1960, Lippmann, *Conversations with Walter Lippmann* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1965): 20.

⁹¹ Memorandum of conversation with Foster Dulles, September 1950, WLC, Box 68, folder 667.

⁹² Lippmann, T&T, “The Light of Asia,” 17 August 1950. For background on this aspect of Korean War, see Burton I. Kaufman’s *The Korean War: Challenges in Crisis, Credibility, and Command* (New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1986): esp., pp. 52-56. See also, Stueck, *The Korean War*: 51.

⁹³ Ibid.

proposals for Korea's future. Reporting back to New Dehli, Rau claimed that his plan had been endorsed by the "influential columnist Lippmann." Indeed, Lippmann's proposal—which the Canadians and Australians also supported—sought to draw New Dehli closer to the West by giving it a leadership role in bringing about a Korean truce. Rau's proposal raised red flags in Washington, especially when he suggested that the committee be empowered to "hear any person they please" (an apparent reference to consulting non-members like the PRC). Judging from the Indian foreign minister's cool response, Rau was free-wheeling when he made the offer. Gija S. Bajpai, secretary general of the Indian Ministry of External Affairs, told the concerned American Ambassador, Loy W. Henderson, that he had specifically asked Rau not to make any such proposal. After New Dehli learned of Rau's initiative, Nehru and Bajpai cabled the UN delegate that any "advisory committee" would have to include great powers but that perhaps non-Security Council members or even countries outside the UN might be invited to participate. Bajpai assured Henderson that Rau had been instructed that "if [the] attitude [of the] great powers should not be receptive [the] plan should not be pushed since their cooperation [is] necessary." Facing the threat of a Soviet veto, an unenthusiastic response from the American delegate, and reproving instructions from New Dehli, Rau gave up the plan by the time the UN convened its General Assembly meeting in mid-September 1950.⁹⁵

Virtually from the start of the conflict Lippmann placed Korea low on a crowded list of U.S. priorities—for which there were limited resources. He penned

⁹⁴ Lippmann, T&T, "David and Goliath," 15 August 1950; "As Between Moscow and Peiping," 7 September 1950. See also Warren Cohen's, *America in the Age of Soviet Power, 1945-1991* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995): 69.

two dire, August 1950 columns that warned U.S. military commitments were spread too thin to fight a war in Asia and to protect Western Europe. With the American army in South Korea, he feared that the Soviets would take the diplomatic and military offensive in Germany and Western Europe. Like many others at the time, Lippmann allowed that Stalin instigated the North Korean invasion for just those purposes. “If this diagnosis is correct, then it is an overriding American interest to keep the war in Korea localized,” Lippmann wrote, “and to have it ended without committing to the Far East not only most of our forces in being but the better part of the forces we shall mobilize in the next critical year or two.”⁹⁶ He savaged President Truman and Secretary of State Acheson for losing control of their foreign policy by trying to appease their domestic critics in Congress. “They are carrying out, unhappily and ineffectively, a policy imposed on them by their political opponents,” Lippmann wrote. “[They] have neither the power to make it work nor the responsibility if it does not work but leads to some kind of global Korea.”⁹⁷ As military planners considered taking the war into North Korea after General Douglas MacArthur’s dramatic and successful Inchon landing in September, Lippmann cautioned that U.S. forces should halt at the 38th Parallel.⁹⁸

⁹⁵ Henderson to Acheson, 18 August 1950, Dispatch 419, 330/S-1850, *FRUS*, 1950, 7: 607-608; see also Henderson to Acheson, 18 August 1950, Dispatch 415, 330/S-1850, *FRUS*, 1950, 7: 603-604. For an account of Rau’s proposal see, Stueck, *The Korean War*: 63-64.

⁹⁶ Lippmann, T&T, “Probably the Showdown,” 22 August 1950.

⁹⁷ Lippmann, T&T, “Cassandra Speaking,” 18 August 1950. Two days earlier Paul Nitze’s Policy Planning Staff at the State Department recommended a cautious approach in Indochina—emphasizing for the time being political rather than military goals. “We would be deceiving the French government were we to offer encouragement of decisive military support. Furthermore, we would be undertaking a responsibility for the course of military events in Indochina which could be flung back in our face with recriminations should military aid fail. The conclusion, therefore, is that if the French—and we—are to be spared a humiliating debacle in Indochina, some means other than reliance on military force must be found.” See PPS, “United States Policy Toward Indochina in the Light of Recent Developments,” 16 August 1950, *FRUS*, 1950 6: 857-858.

⁹⁸ Lippmann, T&T, “The 38th Parallel,” 26 September 1950.

Chinese intervention sharpened Lippmann's criticisms. In December, with MacArthur's forces driven back down the peninsula, Lippmann called for a strategic retreat to Japan. American naval and air power, he wrote, should hold a line in Japan and the Philippines but no more ground forces should be committed to mainland Asia. A prolonged war in Korea would have far-ranging diplomatic repercussions, he feared, leading to the "disruption" of U.S. alliances and the "disintegration" of the Atlantic Community. "The defeat in Korea is a warning which, if we heed it, may yet prove to be our salvation," Lippmann explained in T&T, "that the course which we took with the Truman Doctrine is based on a fatally wrong estimate of our adversaries, and of our friends, and of ourselves."⁹⁹ Moreover, the events of late-1950 confirmed, Lippmann wrote, that China was a great power within its "natural" and historic sphere of influence: Korea, Taiwan, Indochina, and the rest of Southeast Asia. Washington officials might debate the merit of diplomatic recognition of Beijing and whether to permit China a U.N. seat. "But what is not debatable is the fact that Red China is a strong power capable of exerting its influence effectively within its own region," Lippmann wrote, "and much too strong to be dealt with forcefully by anything less than a very great war."¹⁰⁰

When the military situation stabilized near the 38th Parallel in early 1951, Lippmann suggested that the UN could end hostilities quickly—with India acting as the chief mediator—by arranging for an international "stewardship" of Korea. He envisioned that a Korean armistice and reunification must be part of a larger regional settlement, including other crisis points in Asia such as French Indochina—a

⁹⁹ Lippmann, T&T, "Examination and Withdrawal," 11 December 1950.

¹⁰⁰ Lippmann, T&T, "The Chinese Fact," 8 January 1951.

settlement that recognized the new postwar balance of power in the region and the immediate problem of Chinese influence and expansionism. On 11 January 1951, Lippmann proposed a simple horse-trade with Beijing: if the U.S. recognized Communist China's right to repatriate Taiwan, China could be induced to guarantee Korean and Vietnamese autonomy. Whether or not that solution could have been applied, Lippmann was convinced the Korean problem was not divisible from Taiwan or Indochina. Any plan for ending the Korean conflict would have to be accompanied by "satisfactory assurances that China will not invade Indo-China, and that she will not obstruct a peaceable settlement, let us say in the U.N., of the Indo-Chinese civil war and the problem of Indo-Chinese independence."¹⁰¹

The war dragged on for more than two years, with Lippmann repeatedly placing the problem in this larger frame of reference. An armistice that simply left Korea divided was inadequate to the imperative of a regional peace plan. Accordingly, he continued to press Washington to negotiate with Beijing with the general features of a settlement being: recognition of the PRC pending ratification of a peace treaty; Korean reunification; a seat for China on the U.N. Security Council; neutralization of Taiwan, Chiang's removal from power, and international administration of the island; and a great power conference to end the Indochinese war.¹⁰²

¹⁰¹ See, for example, Lippmann, T&T, "The Lines of a Policy," 11 January 1951; "Korean Prospects," 15 February 1951; "Armistice for Indo-China?" 8 January 1952.

¹⁰² Lippmann, T&T, "Clarification in the Far East," 4 February 1952; "Moscow and Korea," 2 April 1952; "The Spreading Far Eastern War," 1 December 1952.

V.

Lippmann's basic aversion to U.S. intervention near mainland Asia was expressed clearly again in 1955 during the crisis over the Tachen islands, known as the first Taiwan Strait Crisis. During that episode, and the subsequent 1958 confrontation precipitated by Communist China's bombardment of the Nationalist outpost islands of Quemoy and Matsu, Lippmann pressed President Dwight Eisenhower and Secretary of State John Foster Dulles to resolve the Taiwan problem—a flash point for nuclear war—through a general settlement that could have codified the existence of two Chinas.¹⁰³

Mao Zedong's decision to bombard Quemoy and Matsu in 1955 was, in part, a reprisal for Eisenhower's support in 1953 of Nationalist air strikes against the Chinese mainland, the administration's central role in the creation of Southeast Asian Treaty Organization (SEATO), and an outgrowth of Beijing's fears that the U.S. and Taipei would sign a binding military alliance. Chinese leaders feared a policy of U.S. "encirclement"—which they perceived Washington as waging on three fronts in Korea, Indochina, and the Taiwan Straits.¹⁰⁴ In January of 1955, Chinese Communist troops based in Fujian Province on the mainland began shelling the Tachen Islands including the harbor islands of Quemoy and Matsu—on each Chiang had garrisoned a division of his troops. Eisenhower quickly evacuated most of the Nationalists forces off the Tachens but decided to defend Quemoy and Matsu, insisting in a variation of

¹⁰³ For more on the Taiwan Straights crises, see Shuguang Zhang, *Deterrence and Strategic Culture: Chinese-American Confrontations, 1949-1958* (Ithica, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992): 189-224, especially pp. 190-199. Chinese leaders were especially fearful of the U.S. using Taiwan as a launching pad for a possible intervention "to expand the military conflict onto the mainland from the Taiwan Strait, 'either to take revenge or start a new war.'" Quote on p. 190.

¹⁰⁴ Zhang, *Deterrence and Strategic Culture*: 190-199.

his domino theory that if the islands fell so would Taiwan, inflicting irreparable harm to U.S. prestige in Asia. President Eisenhower, therefore, went before Congress on 24 January 1955 and asked for the authority to use U.S. armed forces to protect Taiwan, Quemoy, and Matsu in the event of a Chinese attack.¹⁰⁵ It was one of those rare instances (in fact, the last such instance) in the latter half of the twentieth century when an American president went to Congress to *ask* permission for military force, rather than to *dictate* reasons why the use of force ought to be employed. In an unprecedented show of support, both houses of Congress—with only three dissenting votes in each chamber—gave Eisenhower the blank check that he sought. Lippmann called it an “extreme delegation of authority,” noting that the resolution set no “clear and definite juridical, strategic or political standard” for the president to use force.¹⁰⁶ A major war scare ensued with the U.S. threatening nuclear war and seriously considering a preventive strike against mainland China. Dulles put the odds for war at even, and advocated using tactical nuclear weapons—noting that with care and precision in choosing targets, worldwide “revulsion might not be long-lived.”¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁵ “Special Message to the Congress Regarding United States Policy for the Defense of Formosa,” 24 January 1955, *Public Papers of the Presidents: Dwight David Eisenhower* (1955), Doc. no. 21, available on-line at <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/site/docs/pppus.php?admin=034&year=1955&id=21> . Eisenhower told Congress, “the situation has become sufficiently critical to impel me, without awaiting action by the United Nations, to ask Congress to participate now, by specific resolution, in measures designed to improve the prospects for peace. These measures would contemplate the use of the armed forces of the United States if necessary to assure the security of Formosa and the Pescadores . . . a suitable Congressional resolution would clearly and publicly establish the authority of the President as Commander-in-Chief to employ the armed forces of this nation promptly and effectively for the purposes indicated if in his judgment it became necessary.”

¹⁰⁶ Lippmann, T&T, “The Offshore Entanglement,” 12 April 1955. Contrast this response with his far milder reaction to the 1964 Tonkin Gulf Resolution: Lippmann, T&T, “In the Gulf of Tonkin,” 6 August 1964.

¹⁰⁷ See for example, Cohen, *America in the Age of Soviet Power, 1945-1991*: 97-99; and Ambrose, *Rise to Globalism*: 147-149.

Lippmann rebuked Eisenhower and Dulles for threatening war over two strategically negligible islands. Instead, he recommended that the administration remove Nationalist troops to Taiwan, liquidate its commitment to defend the offshore islands, and draw its strategic line in the Taiwan Straits behind the power of the Seventh Fleet. Quemoy and Matsu, he wrote, were strategic liabilities as long as the U.S. defended them—because they were Chiang’s final hope of drawing the U.S. into a major war with Beijing to restore his government to power on the mainland.¹⁰⁸ Lippmann, moreover, believed it a positive diplomatic program that would compensate for the administration’s tendency to create military stalemates, where American commitments were backed by the threat of massive retaliation.

Even after tensions subsided (mainly because the Soviets pressured Mao to relent), Lippmann insisted that the U.S. recognize formally the situation as it existed: i.e., the reality of two Chinas. It could no longer afford to make the legal case that Chiang’s government was the legitimate government of mainland China. Even if American officials did not extend diplomatic recognition to the PRC, they had to face the political reality, Lippmann argued. During the 1950s, Lippmann believed that American recognition of the PRC would have to precede Chinese entry into the United Nations. Besides, he explained to John Cowles, editor of the *Des Moines Register*, “The U.N. matter is not entirely within our control. Recognition is entirely within our own control.” It was a necessary first step to giving China a place on the Security Council which, Lippmann believed, befitted its place as a major world

¹⁰⁸ Lippmann, T&T, “The Definition of Formosa,” 25 January 1955; “The Offshore Entanglement,” 12 April 1955.

power.¹⁰⁹ Thus, he called for a three-point settlement between the Nationalists and the PRC: 1) whereby Chiang renounced the use of force to invade the mainland and re-establish a Nationalist government; 2) Taiwan would be placed under U.N. guardianship as an “autonomous, demilitarized and neutralized Chinese territory” with its own seat in the General Assembly; and, 3) with Beijing declaring that it had no further intentions to reunite the two Chinas through an invasion of Taiwan. “All that would be given up would be the legal fictions,” Lippmann told readers, “that Chiang’s government is the true government of China, that Mao’s government, which is indisputably the government of the mainland, has no legal existence.”¹¹⁰

When Mao rekindled the international crisis by bombing the islands in 1958¹¹¹, Lippmann again recommended abandoning them and placing Taiwan under international supervision. This time, he added, the bulk of the mainland Chinese who had fled to Taiwan should be repatriated and Chiang and his lieutenants should be removed and given asylum. Under U.N. control and protected by the American Seventh Fleet, Taiwan would be “invulnerable.” American interests could best be served by severing its ties to the Nationalists, whose political future Lippmann judged to be short. These measures would ensure that the Taiwanese had a viable government after Chiang was gone, while also denying Communist China use of the island as an advance staging base for possible strikes against American interests in

¹⁰⁹ Lippmann to John Cowles, 13 May 1954, reprinted in Blum, p. 577.

¹¹⁰ Lippmann, T&T, “A New China Policy,” 6 June 1957; “Dulles Rides Again,” 17 January 1956.

¹¹¹ Zhang, *Deterrence and Strategic Culture*: 225-267. Mao believed that “an active defense policy would improve China’s strategic position.” Beijing leaders were fearful of the deterioration of their position in the Taiwan Strait, particularly the U.S. decision to deploy tactical nuclear weapons to Taiwan in 1957. See Zhang, especially pp. 226-229.

the Philippines or Indonesia.¹¹² Lippmann also flatly rejected Joe Alsop's argument that linked the defense of Quemoy and Matsu with that of America's core allies. "Quemoy is not like Berlin anymore than it is like London, Paris, or Washington," Lippmann countered. "Evacuating Quemoy is not like the appeasement at Munich." The island had no "political significance" and was "strategically . . . negligible." Lippmann concluded, "It is merely a minor nuisance."¹¹³

VI.

Prominent commentators disagreed not only with Lippmann's analysis of the Korean War, but the larger implications about containment that he drew from it. Richard H. Rovere and Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., in *The General and the President* (1951) wondered whether Lippmann's argument over-stated the globalization of containment itself. "Certainly, if the containment policy is to be construed in a doctrinaire way, Mr. Lippmann's argument is unanswerable," the authors conceded. "But, in practice, the problems have tended to answer themselves. No one, for example, advocated the American defense of Tibet against Chinese invasion The number of danger spots in between [the superpowers] may be unlimited geographically, but they are limited practically. No one (except MacArthur) argues for global containment; selective containment, at least the kind practiced from 1947 to 1951, seems well within the

¹¹² Lippmann, T&T, "The Dulles Formula," 11 September 1958; "Mr. Dulles on Tuesday," 2 October 1958; "The Latest Gambit," 7 October 1958; and "The Position of Strength," 14 October 1958.

¹¹³ Lippmann, T&T, "The Latest Gambit," 7 October 1958. See the exchange of correspondence: Alsop to Lippmann, 9 October 1958; Lippmann to Alsop, 10 October 1958; Alsop to Lippmann 29 October 1958; all letters located in Series III, Box 50, Folder 38, WLC.

limits of our capabilities.”¹¹⁴ The problem, as Lippmann singled it out for review during the Eisenhower years, was that U.S. policymakers most often sought to implement a seamless application of global containment. According to the imperatives of NSC-68, the threat to U.S. national security that inhered in a potential Chinese attack on Taiwan or in Soviet provocations in the Middle or Far East, mattered as much as a move against West Berlin or the Japanese islands. Without fundamental diplomatic settlements to resolve some of the multiplying crisis points, containment would, in fact, by its own logic become a burdensome worldwide apparatus.

The Korean War particularly confirmed Washington’s resolve in French Indochina and other Southeast Asia countries. At several critical junctures, as Lippmann admonished U.S. officials to chose a diplomatic solution, Washington recommitted itself to the military defense of the region. As early as the fall of 1950, defense department planners were considering a dramatic expansion of NSC-64 which had been approved earlier that spring.¹¹⁵ The Joint Strategic Survey Committee determined that while the “French bear primary responsibility” for

¹¹⁴ Richard H. Rovere and Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *The General and the President* (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Young, 1951): 247. Rovere had met Lippmann shortly before the book was published—while writing a profile on him for a popular magazine. They became relatively close friends during the last quarter-century of Lippmann’s life and, for a while, Rovere initiated research on an authorized biography of Lippmann—a project he eventually turned over to Ronald Steel when his health began to fail in the early 1970s. Rovere’s appraisal of Lippmann in his memoirs was far different than it had been in 1951: “He saw the fatal weaknesses of our post-1945 foreign policies sooner than any of his contemporaries. His reason for opposing our participation in the war in Korea in 1950 was, essentially, that it would lead precisely to the kind of disaster we were later to meet in Vietnam. Though always an internationalist, he never believed in a global conception of our national interest.” See Rovere’s *Arrivals and Departures: A Journalist’s Memoirs* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1976): 143. In another collection of essays and anecdotes published after Rovere’s death in 1979, he would write that *The General and the President* was a book “based on the very fallacies that led to Vietnam—conceiving communism to be monolithic and using military means to achieve political ends.” See Rovere’s *Final Reports: Personal Reflections on Politics and History in Our Time* (New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1984): 224.

fighting the Viet Minh that the U.S. should proceed with a “military assistance program to be based on an overall military plan developed for Indochina by the French, concurred in by the Associated States of Indochina, and acceptable to the United States.”¹¹⁶ The Joint Chiefs of Staff informed newly-installed defense secretary General George Marshall that “United States security interests demand that this government, by all means short of actual employment of United States military forces, seek to prevent the further spread of communism in Southeast Asia generally and, in particular, in French Indochina.”¹¹⁷ A CIA national warned that Chinese intervention in French Indochina “may occur at any time,” and, if it did, it would shortly render the French position in North Vietnam “untenable.” The report concluded that if the Vietminh, either alone or with direct Chinese assistance, expelled the French from Indochina, that development “would eventually entail Communist control of all mainland Southeast Asia in the absence of effective Western assistance to other countries of the area.”¹¹⁸

By early 1952, NSC-64—which had provided the initial framework for U.S. aid to Indochina—had been superseded by NSC-124, a sweeping statement of American policy in Southeast Asia.¹¹⁹ Not only would a communist victory in Indochina set off a chain reaction, it “would render the U.S. position in the Pacific off-shore island chain precarious and would seriously jeopardize fundamental U.S.

¹¹⁵ Analysis Prepared for the Joint Chiefs of Staff by the Joint Strategic Survey Committee, 17 November 1950, *FRUS 1950* 6: 949-954.

¹¹⁶ Joint Strategic Survey Committee, 17 November 1950: 949-954.

¹¹⁷ Memorandum by the JCS to General Marshall, “Possible Future Action in Indochina,” 28 November 1950, *FRUS*, 1950, 6: 945-948.

¹¹⁸ National Intelligence Estimate, “Indochina’s Current Situation and Probable Developments,” 29 December 1950, *FRUS*, 1950, 6: 950-963.

¹¹⁹ NSC 124, “United States Objectives and Courses of Action with Respect to Communist Aggression in Southeast Asia,” 13 February 1952, *FRUS, 1952-1954*, 7: 45-51; quote on page 46.

security interests in the Far East,” particularly American military and economic interests in Japan.¹²⁰ NSC-124 laid out a detailed agenda for securing Indochina that provided the blueprints for policies that the Eisenhower and Kennedy administrations would follow to “intensify support of constructive political, economic, and social measures.” The paper set out three goals: 1) to continue providing aid to French Union forces including military equipment; 2) to stabilize internal security; 3) and to “assist developing indigenous armed forces which will eventually be capable of maintaining internal security without the assistance of French units.”¹²¹

The Korean War compelled U.S. officials to globalize containment, even as it yielded more evidence for Walter Lippmann that the American commitment in Asia must be circumscribed.¹²² Indeed, the lessons that Lippmann absorbed while evaluating U.S. China policy in the latter 1940s and while critiquing U.S. action in the Korean War from 1950 to 1953 were quite the opposite of ideas that imbued the thinking of American officials. The columnist, in public and private, stressed two distinct themes: 1) the necessity of recognizing the Communist government in Beijing and applying lessons of U.S. diplomatic missteps in postwar China to improve future U.S. influence in post-colonial Asia; and, 2) the imperative of drawing a strategic line along an arch of Pacific islands stretching from the Aleutians to Guam—beyond

¹²⁰ Ibid., 47.

¹²¹ Ibid., 48. Among the notable revisions and additions to the final document that the council approved was the expressed intention “to assure the French that the U.S. regards the French effort in Indochina as one of great strategic importance in the general international interest rather than in the purely French interest, and as essential to the security of the free world not only in the Far East but in the Middle East and Europe as well.” See also, See, “Memorandum for the President of Discussion at the 120th Meeting of the National Security Council Held on Wednesday, June 25, 1952, *FRUS, 1952-1954*, 7: 123-126; and, NSC-124/2, “Statement of Policy by the National Security Council on United States Objectives and Courses of Action with Respect to Southeast Asia,” 25 June 1952, *FRUS, 1952-1954*, 7: 127-134.

¹²² For more on the Korean War’s globalizing effects on American containment policy see, Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment*: 109-126; Stueck, *The Korean War*: 348-370.

which the U.S. would sparingly commit its military power and, above all else, avoid putting troops onto mainland Asia. Both assertions contrasted with Washington officials' universal conception of America's interests and the sublime self-assurance in their ability to project power. Lippmann would not countenance unilateral American intervention in Asia. As the French war against the Vietminh intensified, and pressure mounted in the U.S. for more decisive support of Chiang's regime in Taipei, Lippmann believed the only way to preserve Asian stability was through a general settlement in which "key" regional countries could participate. These ideas starkly clashed with unilateralist assumptions of the Acheson State Department. Dean Rusk, Acheson's assistant secretary of state for Far Eastern affairs, a China hard-liner, and later a principal decision-maker who supported Americanization of the Vietnam War in 1965, recalled that in the postwar years American officials assumed they should and could "control every wave in the Pacific Ocean."¹²³ Lippmann shared no such illusions.

That Walter Lippmann came to oppose so fervently American intervention in Southeast Asia should have surprised no one—not officials at the time, not historians looking backward. His dissent over American policy in Indochina would mark no break from his past. Rather, Lippmann's writing on Vietnam may best be understood as the culmination of his mounting concern about the unchecked globalism of postwar U.S. foreign policy in Asia.

Lippmann became a trenchant, consistent, and prescient critic when U.S. officials chose militarization and unilateralism in favor of diplomatic engagement. And, here was a man for whom diplomacy meant a great deal, not just on an abstract

¹²³ Quoted in McGlothen, *Controlling the Waves*: 205.

intellectual level but as a matter of personal habit. Elizabeth Farmer Midgley, who worked as Lippmann's sole research assistant from 1961 to 1967 claimed that two-thirds of the columnist's contacts (both professional and social) were with foreign diplomats.¹²⁴ The old columnist surrounded himself with a constellation of foreign perspectives on U.S. Cold War policy—Nehru's from India, De Gaulle's from Paris, the British Foreign Office, and even Khrushchev's from inside the Kremlin. At home in Washington, as his appointment diaries demonstrate, a minority of his meetings were with U.S. officials.¹²⁵ He knew the embassy circuit in the capital unlike any other journalist and cultivated it as did few professional diplomats. Lippmann's unusual list of contacts did not escape the notice of the watchful if irascible Joe Alsop. "The story of Walter's sources is a very odd one," Alsop told one researcher. "Walter was a very hard-working reporter in his way but his sources have never been American, or at least American officials. In his New York period . . . his domestic sources were Morgan partners, and after that they were in the British embassy; then, in other foreign embassies . . . His own government he always regarded with suspicion and even contempt."¹²⁶ Alsop, who most often haunted the corridors of the Pentagon for sources, meant to insult his journalistic adversary. But Lippmann would have considered his catholicity of sources—and his independence from the official U.S. perspective—as a matter in which to take pride. One got the sense, recalled

¹²⁴ Elizabeth (Farmer) Midgley, interview with author, 28 February 2001, Washington, DC.

¹²⁵ Lippmann's Appointment Diaries, which cover the entire postwar span of his career (1945 to 1967), faithfully record his daily contacts with foreign diplomats, journalists, and American government officials: Lippmann Appointment Diaries, Series VII, WLC.

¹²⁶ Joseph Alsop, interview, papers of Montague Kern and Ralph and Patricia Levering, Box 1, no date, John F. Kennedy Library, Boston, MA.

Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., that cultivating American officials meant a lot less to Lippmann than it did to his peers—he'd seen too many come and go.¹²⁷

There also was a strategic component to Lippmann's analysis of U.S. policy in Asia. He warned that it was an exceedingly poor place to wage a militarized form of containment. The Korean War especially confirmed these assumptions for him. Four recurring themes factored into his analysis: (1) The U.S. could not win a land war in Asia, which was a view shaped largely by the estimates of prominent U.S. military officers and European officials; (2) that with few local allies, America lacked the necessary logistical, military, and political support to intervene successfully in a conventional conflict with the Russians or Chinese or in a civil insurgency; (3) that Washington's influence, such as it was, derived from its ability to offer an alternative to the history of European colonialism—a past that would burden U.S. officials if they dispatched troops into Asian countries; and, (4) America's tendency to fight the Cold War by unilateral military action jeopardized its relations with the few key and viable governments in the region that might act as counterweights to Beijing and Moscow—namely India, Pakistan, Indonesia, and Japan. The tendency of U.S. policymakers to conceive their containment strategy in Southeast Asia as primarily a military effort, coupled with their eventual decision to intervene with U.S. troops in the 1960s, guaranteed that Lippmann would oppose them.

¹²⁷ Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., *A Life in the Twentieth Century: Innocent Beginnings, 1917-1950* (New York: Houghton-Mifflin, 2001): 383.

Chapter 6:

“Long . . . A Pessimist About Vietnam”: Walter Lippmann and U.S. Policy in Indochina, 1949-1963

I.

Walter Lippmann was a consistent critic of U.S. intervention in the Indochinese-Vietnamese civil war through two decades in which four successive U.S. presidential administrations edged closer to a costly military commitment there. Lippmann’s commentary on events in Indochina paralleled his observations about American policy in Korea: first, that it would be a strategic folly to send U.S. soldiers to fight anywhere in Asia—particularly in guerilla-style combat in the jungles of Laos or Vietnam; and, even more decisively, that the U.S. had no vital primary interests to fight for there. A diplomatic strategy that detached Vietnam from the Cold War struggle, Lippmann eventually argued, even if the country eventually was run by Communists in Hanoi, would be a victory for American interests. These assertions made Lippmann the most formidable critic of U.S. policy. The evidence demonstrates—indeed, key policymakers later attested to it—that Lippmann’s critique of American Vietnam policy began early, remained fundamentally unaltered,

and provided firm footings for his famous dissent when U.S. officials opted for direct American military intervention in 1965.¹

This chapter examines Lippmann's commentary during four phases of Washington's incremental intervention in Indochina. First, was the initial American decision to aid French efforts to secure Indochina after World War II—a development which Lippmann opposed because he believed it underwrote imperialism and aligned the U.S. with reactionary governments in Asia that had little popular backing. The second phase encompassed the Eisenhower administration's decision not to intervene to relieve French forces at Dienbienphu in 1954—and the concomitant choice to commit U.S. resources and political support on behalf of the Ngo Dinh Diem regime. Lippmann, who had backed the general in 1952 as a presidential candidate who could end the Korean War, supported Eisenhower's refusal to send troops into Vietnam. But he was highly critical of Washington's cultivation of the Saigon government in late-1954. The third, step involved American policy toward creating a stable, pro-Western government in Laos, particularly during the first year and a half of the Kennedy administration. Lippmann not only opposed military intervention—personally counseling President Kennedy against it on several occasions—but he

¹ Ronald Steel's *Walter Lippmann and the American Century* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1980), devotes cursory treatment to Lippmann's pre-1964 writings about Southeast Asia. His treatment, moreover, is uneven. While recognizing that Lippmann was accurate in his geopolitical reservations about the war, Steel nevertheless discounts the value of these long-standing positions when he discusses the culmination of Lippmann's Vietnam critique in 1964-1965. See especially, 503; 541-542. Fredrik Logevall offers a partial correction to Steel's interpretation, arguing that Lippmann's realist critiques were pivotal to his interpretation of events in Vietnam. See Logevall's *Choosing War: The Lost Chance for Peace and the Escalation of War in Vietnam* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1999): 141-143; 340-341; and Logevall's article, "First Among Critics: Walter Lippmann and the Vietnam War," *Journal of American-East Asian Relations* 4, no. 4 (winter 1995): 351-375. While stressing the "realist" consistencies of Lippmann's commentary, Logevall does make a sustained analysis of its origins or its applications in Asia. Indeed, U.S. policymakers' observations about Lippmann, both in private and in official documents, demonstrate the consistency of his criticisms about U.S. Cold War policy (the subject of Chapter IX).

believed the coalition government that emerged, provided an ideal model for the “neutralization” plan that he later recommended for Vietnam. In the final phase—as Washington officials increased the American military “advisory” presence in South Vietnam from 1961 to 1963 and moved closer to deposing the Diem regime in the fall of 1963—Lippmann opposed them on both counts. He argued that no military commitment could stabilize the Saigon government at any acceptable cost. Moreover, he believed that any dramatic regime change would produce a more unstable situation that could further draw Washington into the civil conflict. No matter whether he acted as a Washington “outsider” (as with the Eisenhower administration) or “insider” (as, within limits, he did during the Kennedy administration)—Lippmann’s vigorous critique of U.S. policy in Vietnam was unaltered.

II.

At the close of the Second World War French leaders determined to recoup their former Indochinese colony.² As the war against the Japanese ended, the lines were being drawn in Indochina—with French troops liberating Saigon on 12 August 1945, and Ho Chi Minh’s forces entering Hanoi just eight days later. Paris officials pledged to find a diplomatic solution as small-scale skirmishes broke out between Viet Minh fighters and French troops in the fall of 1945 and into 1946. But a rift shortly emerged among French policymakers. On 6 March 1946, Jean Sainteny, commissioner for the Tonkin region of Indochina (northern Vietnam), signed accords

with Ho recognizing his Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) “as a free state and as a member of the Indochinese Federation and the French Union.”³ Almost simultaneously, however, the High Commissioner for Indochina, Admiral Thierry d’Argenlieu, proposed a plan that Paris officials soon adopted to divide Indochina into five separate states: Laos, Tonkin, Cambodia, Cochinchina, and Annam—all of which would fall under the “French Union” umbrella. The proposal was intended to secure French power in Cochinchina (the southern colony which held Saigon and France’s largest stake of economic interests) and to isolate the DRV in the northern Annam and Tonkin regions. In November a French naval cruiser shelled Haiphong killing an estimated 6,000 civilians. On 19 December, the Vietminh launched a surprise attack on French installations throughout Vietnam. These two incidents in late-1946 plunged the region into a full-scale war which—with varying degrees of intensity—would last for three decades.⁴

Undersecretary of State Dean G. Acheson and other U.S. officials were not eager to underwrite a French return to colonial rule in Indochina.⁵ Washington officials preferred a negotiated settlement between the French and the nationalist *Viet Nam Doc Lap Dong Minh* (Vietnamese Independence League), or “Vietminh” for short. During this period Washington’s policies were reactive and keyed to keeping Paris contented enough to support America’s containment strategy or reconstruction

² A true international history of the Vietnam War from 1945 to 1975 remains to be written. The closest example of such a work is R.B. Smith’s three-volume study which picks up in 1955: *An International History of the Vietnam War* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1983-1991).

³ For a concise account on the intersection of U.S. and French policy in Vietnam in the late 1940s, see Ronald L. McGlothen, *Controlling the Waves: Dean Acheson and U.S. Foreign Policy in Asia* (New York: Norton, 1993): quote on p. 168.

⁴ George C. Herring, *America’s Longest War: The United States and Vietnam, 1950-1975* (New York: McGraw-Hill Inc., 1986): 6-8. For the early postwar years and French efforts to reassert its power in

and militarization in Western Europe. Negotiations between Paris and the DRV collapsed in May 1947 and, later that year, the French began to cultivate Bao Dai, the former emperor of Annam, to lead a plain, anti-Communist government. On 8 March 1949, the French gave Bao Dai limited powers of governance. With Acheson now installed as Secretary, the State Department refused to seek greater concessions from the government of Vincent Auriol, even though high-ranking U.S. diplomats warned that nationalist aspirations would drive most Vietnamese to support Ho Chi Minh's republic.⁶ In June 1949, Bao Dai became Chief of State of Vietnam, and Washington cabled its congratulations.

In the short-term, the Truman administration refused to extend *direct* military aid to French forces in Indochina. That policy evolved over time, with Washington committing more resources to keep the French engaged in Indochina. Years later, Acheson complained that Paris officials "blackmailed" the Truman administration by threatening to pull out and leave the U.S. to pick up the pieces. Indochina policy during his tenure, he admitted in his memoirs, was a "muddled hodgepodge."⁷ Reluctant or not, Acheson helped to administer an American program which provided \$1.9 billion in unrestricted economic aid to France between the fall of 1945 and July 1948. While the U.S. refused throughout 1949 and early 1950 to equip French forces suppressing Ho Chi Minh's independence movement, it was clear that the scale of American economic aid to France enabled Paris to mount major military operations in

Indochina, see Ellen Hammer, *The Struggle for Indochina, 1940-1955* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1966): especially, p. 148-202.

⁵ McGlothen, *Controlling the Waves*: 163-201; especially pp. 169-170 and 180-182.

⁶ James Chace, *Acheson: The Secretary of State Who Created the American World* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1998): 262-269.

⁷ Dean G. Acheson, *Present at the Creation* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1969): 671-678, on Indochina policy from 1949-1954; quote on p. 673. See also, Chace, *Acheson*: 267.

Indochina. By choosing to support Paris's Indochina policy up until the Korean War "on French terms, [Acheson] put the United States directly in line to inherit a French war."⁸

Lippmann did not support U.S. aid to help the French reassert colonial control in Indochina. On 9 January 1949, he told *Today and Tomorrow* readers that support for Asian nationalism was not just "promising" but the "most truly American way." Washington must disavow the imperialism of the Western European countries, he wrote. "Our most precious asset in Asia is our ability to persuade the people of Asia that there is a nation in the Western world, more powerful than the Soviet Union, which sympathizes with their struggle for independence, and has no wish to exploit it," Lippmann concluded.⁹ In blunt terms, Walter Lippmann warned University of Chicago Professor of International Law Quincy A. Wright that there was a "danger that we are underwriting the imperialism of the western powers in Asia." Lippmann wanted Washington to take an independent posture in Asia by establishing relations with governments in Indonesia, Indochina, Malaysia, and by "openly associating" with Nehru's India. He also believed U.S. officials should challenge the French and Dutch governments on the issue of why large portions of Marshall Plan aid were "siphoned off" to wage the Indochinese and Indonesian wars. He concluded, "we must deal directly with the problem of not associating ourselves with the western colonial powers in their reactionary policies in Asia."¹⁰

⁸ McGlothen, *Controlling the Waves*: 201.

⁹ Lippmann, T&T, "America in Asia," 10 January 1949.

¹⁰ Lippmann to Quincy A. Wright, 14 February 1949, Box 111, Folder 2280, Series III, Walter Lippmann Collection, Sterling Memorial Library, Yale University, New Haven, CT (hereinafter referred to as "WLC"); see also, Wright to Lippmann, 11 February 1949. Wright went so far as to argue that by joining NATO, the U.S. reinforced European imperialism in Asia. "The North Atlantic arrangement might not only make us a tail to the imperialist dog, but it might convince Asia that we

A number of imperatives inhered in Washington officials' decision to initiate a gradual assumption of financing the war on behalf of the French. In large measure, Washington's monetary support—like the military aid that followed—was meant to relieve economic pressures on Paris and to ensure its participation in the NATO alliance. Until after the Korean War, U.S. officials viewed Indochina as a secondary concern, a drain on military assets better deployed to deter a Soviet invasion of Europe. But they feared that if the French pulled up stakes and left Indochina only U.S. military forces could fill the power vacuum. Increasingly, U.S. officials—unlike Lippmann—placed a high premium on the psychological and political fallout from the “loss” of Vietnam.¹¹ American prestige, they argued in a mirror-opposite argument from Lippmann, was staked on empowering Southeast Asian regimes to withstand Communist insurgencies through military and economic aid and, when needed, U.S. intervention.

Mao Zedong's consolidation of Communist power on mainland China (and the specter of Beijing-directed insurgency movements), reinforced an American policy of support for French military pacification of Indochina. Mao's victory also accelerated the process of Vietnamese autonomy. On 30 December 1949, Paris transferred all constitutional power to Bao Dai—in effect, creating a sovereign government and fulfilling Washington's wishes. A month later the French National Assembly voted to extend recognition to Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia as

had abandoned interest in their security, and it might transfer the major political discussions of high politics to the North Atlantic Council and thus by-pass the United Nations so far as security problems are concerned.” Lippmann rejected that assessment, arguing that the U.S. could maintain separate policies toward Asia.

¹¹ See, for instance, the language in NSC-124, “Statement of Policy by the National Security Council: Review of U.S. Foreign Policy in the Far East,” 20 August 1954, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1952-1954*, 12: 771-774 (hereinafter cited as *FRUS*).

independent states within the French Union. On 7 February 1950, Washington and London extended *de jure* recognition to the Bao Dai regime and U.S. policymakers were swiftly determining what proportions of military and economic aid would follow. By March 1950, Acheson determined that Washington “predicated its course of action in Indochina . . . on the assumption that fundamental objectives of [the] US and France in Indochina are in substantial coincidence.”¹²

Soviet recognition of Ho Chi Minh’s government in late-January 1950, however, became the catalyst for a major U.S. commitment to *directly* aid French Union forces in Indochina.¹³ On 27 February 1950, the National Security Council produced NSC-64 a sweeping policy document that fixed an American policy of underwriting French military efforts with an influx of money and arms. American security interests required “that all practical measures be taken to prevent further communist expansion in Southeast Asia. Indochina is a key area of Southeast Asia and is under immediate threat,” the authors concluded.¹⁴

¹² Acheson to David K.E. Bruce, 29 March 1950, *FRUS*, 1950, 6 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office): 768-771. Acheson’s overall pattern in dealing with Cold War threats was to move from a more moderate approach to a hard line stance. For more on this aspect of his career, see Robert L. Beisner, “Patterns of Peril: Dean Acheson Joins the Cold Warriors,” *Diplomatic History* 20 (no. 3, summer 1996): 321-355. Acheson’s lament about adjacent Southeast Asian governments’ seeming lack of concern about the Viet Minh movement, reflected the prevailing view in Washington. “Ho Chi Minh is not [a] patriotic nationalist but Commie Party member with all the sinister implications involved in the relationship,” Acheson cabled American Ambassador to Thailand Edwin F. Stanton. When Stanton replied that Thai ambivalence had more to do with “detestation” of the French-sanctioned Bao Dai government—and “that it completely outweighs [the] danger [of] Ho Chi Minh”—Acheson was unmoved. See Acheson to Stanton, 17 January 1950 and Stanton’s 19 January reply, *FRUS*, 1950 6: 697.

¹³ “Memorandum by the Director of the Office of Eastern European Affairs to the Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs,” *FRUS*, 1950 6: 710-711; “Military Aid for Indochina,” 1 February 1950, *FRUS*, 1950 6: 711-715.

¹⁴ NSC-64/1, “The Position of the United States with Respect Toward Indochina,” 27 February 1950, *FRUS*, 1950 6: 744-747. Not surprisingly, the Joint Chiefs of Staff concurred with this analysis, citing the strategic threats if Indochina was lost: loss of vital raw materials, disruption to lines of communication, threat to Japan, India, and Australia, the likely collapse of all Southeast Asia, the direct threat to American interests in Japan because of its economic and military isolation, and the probability that control of Southeast Asia would alleviate China’s food problems and provide the

During the spring of 1950, Lippmann clarified his position on America's role in Indochina. Like Acheson he feared that Paris might pull out and leave the U.S. to fight an unwinnable guerilla war. But his answer was not to open the military hardware spigot to the French. As Congress debated a bill to aid French Union forces, Lippmann penned two important columns that advised U.S. officials to avoid extending military support to France. Aid under the Mutual Defense Assistance Act would be an ineffective, quick fix, Lippmann explained on 21 February 1950. He questioned the American "tendency to reduce our foreign policy to the question of how much money and how many weapons Congress can be induced to vote in order to strengthen the weak situations. This is an attempt to conduct foreign policy without resorting to diplomacy."¹⁵ Lippmann, moreover, saw instability in Indochina within a larger frame of reference—the question of China's place as a great power. American recognition of Mao Zedong's government, as well as its inclusion in the United Nations, was the key to creating stability in the region, he wrote. Lippmann believed the Indochinese states that emerged from French rule would find their places in China's "orbit": "the key to Indo-China is Mao as the key to the Greek situation was Tito." Diplomatic contact with Beijing, which might induce it to adopt a foreign policy independent of Moscow's, was a far more effective and less costly policy, Lippmann believed. U.S. policymakers should "try to defend Indo-China by diplomacy in Peiping as well as by material aid, and not solely by subsidizing resistance to a guerilla war in Indo-China," he concluded.¹⁶

Soviets with key strategic materials. See Louis Johnson to Acheson, 14 April 1950, *FRUS*, 1950 6: 780-785.

¹⁵ Lippmann, T&T, "Frozen Policies in the Cold War," 21 February 1950.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

In April 1950, as Congress crafted legislation to provide direct military assistance to French forces, Lippmann re-affirmed his position—this time adding that the situation was so bleak that not even massive American military assistance would likely preserve French control in Indochina. “Put bluntly but truthfully, the French army can be counted on to go on defending Southeast Asia only if the Congress of the United States will pledge itself to subsidize heavily—in terms of several hundred million dollars a year and for many years to come—a French colonial war to subdue not only the Communists but the nationalists as well,” Lippmann wrote.¹⁷ Again, the message was clear: diplomacy not military aid was required to end an intractable civil war. He proposed that a U.N. commission, led by India and Pakistan, mediate a settlement and guarantee the protection of the Indochinese states. He mocked the administration’s piece-meal strategy. “The French colonial army, Bao Dai, a little American money and some arms, a little bit of Point 4, a few visiting warships, and a lot of ringing declarations are not enough to make a policy that has any prospect of success,” Lippmann warned. “We shall have to rise above the notion that it can be dealt with by giving some help to the French, and we shall have to put the problem in a different and larger frame of negotiation.”¹⁸

U.S. officials chose a military option—albeit one in which a war against Communist expansion would be fought by proxy. On 1 May 1950, less than a month after Lippmann’s columns appeared, the Truman administration authorized \$10 million in aid, the first installment of direct military support for French forces in Indochina. Later that year, the U.S. committed an additional \$133 million to Paris,

¹⁷ Lippmann, T&T, “Total Diplomacy in Southeast Asia,” 4 April 1950.

¹⁸ Ibid.

including immediate authorization for the delivery of arms, ammunition, naval vessels, aircraft, and military vehicles. The French Union governments received another \$50 million in direct economic and technical support from Washington in 1950.¹⁹ The Korean War accelerated this established process of American funding of the French war effort, as it indeed globalized the American containment policy. But in Indochina, American policymakers had already firmly committed themselves to the decision to aid the Bao Dai government directly—to make the French effort more effective and efficient. Washington's first disbursements were authorized nearly two months before the North Korean invasion. Walter Lippmann repeatedly advised against these decisions.

III.

Lippmann backed Dwight D. Eisenhower's presidential candidacy in 1952 primarily because he believed the hero-general would be more moderate in his exercise of power.²⁰ Lippmann approved the framework of the New Look foreign policy the president developed, particularly the administration's promise to retrench conventional military commitments overseas. But the columnist soon homed in on the moralist rhetoric of Secretary of State John Foster Dulles—attacking it as a

¹⁹ Truman to Acheson, 1 May 1950, *FRUS*, 1950 6: 791; see also, Herring, *America's Longest War*: 18-22.

²⁰ The theme of restraint and the responsible use of power is conveyed in a number of books on Eisenhower. See for example, John Lewis Gaddis—*Strategies of Containment: A Critical Appraisal of Postwar American National Security Policy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982): see especially, pp. 129-136; and Gaddis, *The Long Peace: Inquiries Into the History of the Cold War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987): see especially on the use of nuclear weapons, pp. 140-146. See also, Robert A. Divine, *Eisenhower and the Cold War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981): 3-30. A major biography that agrees with these assessments is Stephen Ambrose's *Eisenhower: Soldier and President* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1991). Robert Kaiser challenges the assumption that Eisenhower was cautious and dubious about the chances for American success in Southeast Asia; see

Wilsonian throwback and thus abruptly ending his long association with Dulles. Lippmann particularly regretted Eisenhower's willingness to transfer U.S. resources out of Korea to an enlarged commitment in Vietnam. Reluctant to send troops to Southeast Asia, the Eisenhower administration nevertheless set the political framework for later intervention.

Eisenhower's humble origins, decades of experience in a small, budget-strapped army, and his political acumen in snuffing out intra-alliance rivalries during World War II, shaped his leadership style. From 1946 to 1948, Lippmann met the general for interviews and on social occasions, striking up a mildly effusive correspondence.²¹ As tensions rose between the Soviet Union and the United States in early 1946, Eisenhower advised against provocative military preparations. On 2 June 1946, as Chief of Staff of the Army, Eisenhower delivered a speech to the Reserve Officers Association Convention which highlighted his moderation. "Occasionally we hear predictions as to how and where and why the next war will be fought," Eisenhower told the audience. "Such talk is more than foolish: it is vicious."²² Lippmann wrote Eisenhower that he was "very much moved" by that passage. He added, "I almost feel that the soldiers are going to have to save the peace which the diplomats and politicians will, if they don't look out, most surely wreck."²³ In 1948, when Eisenhower left the Pentagon to serve as president of Columbia

Kaiser, *American Tragedy: Kennedy, Johnson, and the Origins of the Vietnam War* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University, 2000): 10-35.

²¹ There are perhaps 15 letters exchanged between Eisenhower and Lippmann (c. 1945-1951) which can be found in their manuscript collections.

²² *The Papers of Dwight David Eisenhower: The Chief of Staff*, Volume 7, Louis Galambos et. al., editors (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978): 1104. Eisenhower's reply to Lippmann is printed.

²³ Lippmann to Dwight D. Eisenhower, 4 June 1946, Pre-Presidential Name Files, Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library, Abilene, KS (hereinafter referred to as "DDEL").

University, the columnist wrote this serendipitous note: “Don’t go too far away. We shall need you again soon.”²⁴ He welcomed Eisenhower’s appointment as supreme NATO commander in 1950. As Lippmann’s frustrations with Truman mounted, he gravitated toward the idea of a popular, moderate Republican in the White House.²⁵

Lippmann never thought Eisenhower to be a visionary leader but he nevertheless supported Ike’s 1952 campaign early believing that a centrist president might bring the Republican Party to the center and make it less dependent on its right wing. For decades, Democratic control of the White House had made the Republicans fatuous and mischievous out of power, Lippmann told readers that January.²⁶ Joseph McCarthy’s antics in the Senate were a direct result of the party’s marginalization in American politics, he believed. Ike he equated with responsibility. He worried, however, that Eisenhower would squander his considerable popularity in an ineffective campaign. He explained to Massachusetts Senator Leverett Saltonstall, a leading Eisenhower proponent, his concern that the presumptive candidate keep off the campaign trail until the summer: “All his inexperience will, I think, be exposed to

²⁴ Lippmann to Eisenhower, 6 February 1948, Pre-Presidential Name Files, DDEL.

²⁵ By 1952 it seemed as if Lippmann’s aspiration for an Eisenhower candidacy reflected the popular sentimentality that he earlier disparaged. In 1948, he had written the British diplomat Robert Brand that the public speculation that both parties might nominate the war hero produced an “almost irrational demand for Eisenhower.” He explained, “This demand is not based on a judgment of his capacities as a President; it is a kind of romantic projection upon him of all the wishes of the people. They would like to think that this most engaging man possesses all the qualities they wish the President of the United States would have.” Eisenhower lacked the “intellectual equipment” and “experience” Lippmann told Lewis W. Douglas as the Republican convention approached that summer. “He is not a real figure in our public life but a kind of dream boy embodying all the unsatisfied wishes of the people who are discontented with things as they are.” Lippmann to Robert Brand, 5 April 1948, reprinted in *Public Philosopher: Selected Letters of Walter Lippmann*, edited by John Morton Blum (New York: Ticknor and Fields, 1985): 509-510; Lippmann to Lewis W. Douglas, 9 July 1948, reprinted in Blum, *Public Philosopher*: 514.

²⁶ See, for instance, Lippmann, T&T, “Eisenhower,” 10 January 1952, *Washington Post*: 11. “In my view the problem of the transfer of power from one party to the other is of overriding importance,” Lippmann wrote. “A change of party has become most necessary after 20 years.” See also, Steel, *Walter Lippmann and the American Century*: 480-483.

the country, and the American people, we must not forget, can turn quickly against their heroes.” Consequently, he advised Saltonstall that Eisenhower should run a “very aloof campaign . . . one which keeps him in the position of being above the party struggle.”²⁷

Lippmann recommended much the same strategy to Herbert Bayard Swope, an Eisenhower enthusiast and political advisor. Lippmann assured the famous publicist that he agreed “entirely about Ike” and his desirability as a centrist, internationalist Republican. “The thing that I have been worrying about in connection with him,” Lippmann confided to Swope, “is his tendency to talk too much on too many subjects. Now, of course, he does this privately, but once he takes off his uniform, I am afraid he won’t easily restrain himself.” Lippmann continued that Eisenhower’s “great strength and his great value to the country” was his ability to unify the public by embracing “the big things for which there are really no violent issues”; in particular, Lippmann meant finding an end to the Korean War. He warned, however, that Eisenhower “must find some formula for not getting entangled in the little issues that are quite hot and full of politics,” obliquely alluding to Taiwan and the China Lobby. Without elaborating, Lippmann insisted that as a candidate Eisenhower “must take refuge in the formula that these issues are blown up politically and that he doesn’t propose to deliver curbstone opinions about them, that his habit is to make careful inquiries, and to make up his mind after he has heard all the experts and that while he knows what he thinks on the great issues of principle and policy both at home and abroad, he isn’t prepared to pass on every detail about every issue

²⁷ Lippmann to Leverett Saltonstall, 11 January 1952, reprinted in Blum, *Public Philosopher*: 566.

that has been debated in Congress for the last 10 years.”²⁸ Swope summarized this information for Eisenhower, explaining that he had contacted Lippmann initially “to smoke him out—to align him on the side of God. I think this has been done.” Swope added, “I wanted to give you the view of a serious-minded man (God knows he is serious enough!) for what it is worth. In my book you will do!” On 15 April 1952, during his annual spring visit to Europe, Lippmann met with Eisenhower at the Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE) command in Brussels to discuss major policy issues and the campaigning topics Lippmann covered in his letter to Swope. The NATO commander wrote Swope, “the ‘serious-minded’ gentleman . . . and I spent a most enjoyable time together. . . I feel that we both have a better understanding now of each other’s thinking.”²⁹ Lippmann did not repudiate his support despite disappointment with Eisenhower’s uninspiring campaign and, more significantly, a much closer ideological affinity to his friend, Democratic candidate Adlai Stevenson.³⁰

²⁸ Lippmann to Herbert Bayard Swope, 27 March 1952, WLC; see also Swope’s initial letter to Lippmann, 26 March 1952. Portions reprinted in Galambos et. al., *The Papers of Dwight David Eisenhower: NATO and the Campaign of 1952*, Volume XIII: 1189-90.

²⁹ Eisenhower to Herbert Bayard Swope, 24 April 1952, *ibid.*; portions of Swope’s letter of 9 April 1952 to Eisenhower also are reprinted in Volume XIII.

³⁰ When the Illinois governor had consulted Lippmann about accepting the Democratic nomination if it were offered to him in 1952, Lippmann advised against it. As the columnist recalled it, he told Stevenson not to run “because I would have such a miserable year resisting him, if he did.” Lippmann recognized that his one-time Woodley Road neighbor would not have the domestic political clout to make critical foreign policy decisions in Asia without severe criticism from Congressional Republicans. Fearing a Stevenson administration would be little more than a reprise of the late-Truman years, Lippmann supported Eisenhower principally for his twin concerns about liquidating the American commitment in Korea and restoring an out-of-balance political system at home, rather than from any enthusiasm for the Republican’s policy ideas. Lippmann to Wilmarth Lewis, 13 October 1952, reprinted in Blum, *Public Philosopher*: 567.

One story is particularly revealing. Weeks after the election, the columnist visited a conference at the Massachusetts Institute Technology Center for International Studies. Afterward, returning to the airport to catch a plane back to Washington, Lippmann struck up a conversation about the election with his driver, Francis Bator, a graduate student who would later serve as an NSC staff member and European affairs advisor in the Kennedy and Johnson administrations. Whom had Bator supported? Lippmann asked. To which the young man replied, Stevenson. “Well, Francis, if I was your age that is exactly where I would sit,” Lippmann remarked. “It’s for an old man like to worry

Yet, during the Eisenhower years, for personal and institutional reasons, Lippmann was *persona non grata* in the White House. Unlike Wilson, Franklin Roosevelt, Truman, and, later, Kennedy and Johnson, Eisenhower never once sought Lippmann's advice on foreign policy issues.³¹ Eisenhower, who took few reporters into his confidence, had stopped reading *Today and Tomorrow* after assuming the NATO command in 1950.³² Lippmann, he believed, wrote without sufficient knowledge of the issues and held a particularly naïve view about the prospects of a military withdrawal from Europe and the creation of a decentralized federation of historic German states. As president, however, he knew of Lippmann's criticisms even if he refused to read them. During the Suez crisis in the fall of 1956—when Lippmann lashed out at the administration for allowing Anglo-American relations to fall into disrepair and eventually rupture because of a joint British-French effort to seize the Suez Canal—Eisenhower dismissed him. “From what I am told, Walter Lippmann and the Alsops have lots of idea, but they are far from good,” the president explained to a friend, “—about what you'd expect from your youngest grandchild.”³³ When John Hay “Jock” Whitney, who served as Eisenhower's ambassador to Great Britain for two years, bought the New York *Herald Tribune* (Lippmann's employer)

about maintaining the balance and worrying about the Republicans not being in office since 1932. The nuances and subtleties are fine for an old man like me, but if I were your age, Stevenson is exactly who I would vote for.” Francis Bator, interview with author, 25 January 2001, Cambridge, MA.

³¹ John Tebbel and Sarah Miles Watts make this claim in *The Press and the Presidency: From George Washington to Ronald Reagan* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985): 475. The authors cite no evidence for this claim, though Lippmann's appointment diaries indicate that Lippmann was never summoned to the White House during Eisenhower's two terms.

³² Craig Allen, *Eisenhower and the Mass Media: Peace, Prosperity, and Prime-Time TV* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1993): Eisenhower evaluation of Lippmann, p. 49; on columnists generally, see p. 49-54. For a summary of the few journalists whom Eisenhower respected—Arthur Krock, Roscoe Drummond, and David Lawrence—see Eisenhower to Lucille Dawson Eisenhower, 6 May 1960, *The Papers of Dwight David Eisenhower: The Presidency—Keeping the Peace*, Volume XX: 1936-1937.

in 1958 the president wrote him with the hope that the paper might drop its noted columnist, for whom Eisenhower had “no respect, no admiration and no liking.”³⁴ Jock Whitney did not drop Lippmann, but he offered little financial enticement to keep the columnist on staff (in 1963, Phil Graham lured Lippmann away to the *Washington Post* with a lucrative deal). Until the last years of his life Eisenhower complained of the columnist’s “fuzzy thinking.” In 1968, when Lippmann wrote a *Newsweek* column that argued Eisenhower’s support for the Vietnam War prevented the Republican Party from campaigning on behalf of a negotiated settlement, the former president dismissed the idea as Lippmann’s old “habit of setting up a straw man that he can enthusiastically destroy.”³⁵ Lippmann’s analysis, like that of many other Washington pundits, led Eisenhower to get his news “from the news columns and not the ‘columnists.’”³⁶

Institutional developments also acted as a barrier between the president and columnist. Though Eisenhower held an astounding 193 press conferences, he rarely

³³ See Eisenhower to Edward Everett Hazlitt, Jr., 2 November 1956, *The Papers of Dwight David Eisenhower: The Presidency—The Middle Way*, Volume XVII: 235-237

³⁴ Eisenhower to John Hay Whitney, 5 May 1958, *The Papers of Dwight David Eisenhower: The Presidency—Keeping the Peace*, Volume XIX: 866-867. The president may have been referring to Alsop, too; however, this was during a period when Lippmann was particularly critical of Eisenhower’s policy in Quemoy, Matsu, Taiwan and Berlin. Eisenhower explained to Whitney that he believed newspapers’ reliance on columnists to be “an abdication of responsibility.” He complained about *New York Times* reporters’ “high degree of latitude in expressing their personal ‘opinions.’” He told Whitney: “The news columns belong to the public; the editorial pages to the paper itself.” Jokingly, he added that “despite such people as Lippmann [and] Alsop . . . I remain loyal to the paper.” See *The Papers of Dwight David Eisenhower: The Presidency—Keeping the Peace*, Volume XXI: 2168-2169.

³⁵ Herbert Hoover Oral History Collection, Dwight D. Eisenhower Interview (1967): 105, Hoover Library, Stanford, CA; Eisenhower to Milton Eisenhower, 15 January 1968, Box 1, Milton Eisenhower Papers, DDEL. See also, Lippmann, “The Hard Choice,” 7 October 1968, *Newsweek*: 27.

³⁶ Unlike JFK and LBJ, Eisenhower had no confidants among the Washington press—no Alsop, no White, no Reston, certainly not Lippmann. As James Hagerty recalled, that was a conscious and purposeful strategy. See Hagerty’s Oral History, OH-91, (April 1968), DDEL. In his post-presidential years, Eisenhower explained his reservations this way: “I do not mean that all [columnists] are consciously engaged in misleading the public. However, many of them are not only prejudiced and one-sided in their viewpoints, but on top of that are badly informed as to fact and careless in their

met with reporters on an informal basis. Press Secretary James Hagerty carefully choreographed Eisenhower's relationship with the national media.³⁷ The scripted news conferences aimed at the newest form of media—television. In part, this strategy enabled Eisenhower to address Americans directly, by-passing the established Washington print press corps. Through such innovations Hagerty proved to be a formidable public relations manager, especially after Eisenhower's 1955 heart attack. The chain-smoking press secretary regularly flanked the president, ensuring that the news was "managed constantly and continuously," Lippmann recalled years later. "[Hagerty] is really the biggest expert there is at it."³⁸

Finally, Lippmann—as he did with virtually all the men whom he entrusted with his political hopes and ideals—grew frustrated with Eisenhower in office. Though cognizant of the domestic constraints working on the new administration, he shortly expressed impatience with Eisenhower's meager efforts to silence the Republican Party's right wing. By the time of McCarthy's Army hearings in the spring of 1954, Lippmann's disillusionment was nearly piqued at the President's seeming inability to discipline Capitol Hill Republicans. Describing the McCarthy purges as "mob rule" and a clear usurpation of executive power, Lippmann assailed the Eisenhower administration for failing to reign in the Wisconsin senator and his supporters.³⁹ As late as 1955, however, Lippmann recognized the powerful

allegations." Eisenhower to Wilbur V. Dunn, 26 August 1964, DDE Principal File (1964), Post-Presidential Papers, Box 33, DDEL.

³⁷ Allen, *Eisenhower and the Mass Media*: especially, 52-63.

³⁸ Lippmann, *Conversations with Walter Lippmann*: 147. See Craig Allen's able and lucid discussion of the Eisenhower Administration's media strategies in *Eisenhower and the Mass Media*: esp. pp. 47-63.

³⁹ See, for example, Lippmann, T&T, "The McCarthy-Stevens Affair, 1 March 1954. For his part, Eisenhower never forgave the treatment he received from the media for that episode. See Allen's *Eisenhower and the Mass Media*: 50-54. As early as the spring of 1950, Lippmann had criticized

conservative forces working against a policy of disengagement in the cold war. He was willing to give Eisenhower the benefit of the doubt as the president readied himself for his first summit meeting with Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev. Politics at home, Lippmann told readers, fundamentally shaped a good cop-bad cop routine employed by the president and his secretary of state, John Foster Dulles. “For this point-counterpoint of Eisenhower hopefulness and Dulles wet blanket there have been a number of explanations: for example, that Eisenhower never reads the fine print whereas Dulles is an expert on the fine print—or that Eisenhower believes in the natural goodness of man and that Dulles believes in original sin,” Lippmann wrote. This was a political maneuver, Lippmann conjectured, a “harmony of two parts” with the President spinning optimism for public consumption and Dulles assuaging the fears of hard-line Republican senators that the administration was preparing to negotiate with Communists. The President’s end goal, Lippmann still hoped, was to neutralize his party’s right wing and proceed with “disengagement and conciliation” with Moscow and Beijing.⁴⁰ Already, however, Eisenhower’s policies in Asia were

McCarthy. He encouraged Senator Margaret Chase Smith of Maine to speak out against her red-baiting colleague. On 23 May 1950, Smith visited Lippmann’s home, seeking advice on whether to challenge McCarthy directly with a floor speech. “Lippmann,” Smith recalled, “expressed strong approval, but he did not suggest any theme or wording for my potential speech. A little more than a week later, Smith delivered her “Declaration of Conscience” speech—becoming the first Senator to challenge McCarthy. See Patricia L. Schmidt, *Margaret Chase Smith: Beyond Convention* (Orono, ME: University of Maine Press, 1996): 213.

⁴⁰ Lippmann, T&T, “The Eisenhower-Dulles Duet,” 12 July 1955. Lippmann initially had few strategic disagreements with Eisenhower’s foreign policy. He embraced the prospect of a sharply curbed containment policy, endorsing the expansion of the nuclear program in exchange for reductions in conventional forces, overseas commitments, and military interventions in post-colonial regions. All things considered, Lippmann found what John Gaddis later dubbed as Eisenhower’s “asymmetrical” containment far preferable to Truman’s “symmetrical” version; the former had the merit of focusing U.S. forces and the latter the problem of dispersing them, Lippmann thought. The notion of a “containing military ring of anti-Communist states . . . is out of date,” he wrote in 1955, for it was undermined by the Soviets’ achievement of nuclear weapons. Lippmann, T&T, “Mr. Dulles and the Basic Decision,” 18 January 1954. If mutual nuclear deterrence raised the ultimate stakes, he thought, it also diminished the likelihood that either side would undertake provocative or unilateral adventures. Discussing the New Look in early 1954 after Dulles debuted the idea before the Council on Foreign

leading Lippmann to doubt that the administration would progress toward his ideal of a *modus vivendi* with the Russians or the PRC.

It was in his capacity as secretary of the Inquiry that Lippmann first met John Foster Dulles at the 1919 Paris Peace Conference. Both men were deeply chastened by the failure of the conference, the recalcitrance of the European democracies in regard to crafting a just peace, Wilson's inability to win support in the Senate and public, and his insistence on basing high moral principle on shaky domestic political foundations.⁴¹ For decades afterward, when they retreated to private life and became fixtures in New York society, Lippmann and Dulles carried on a friendly correspondence. They shared many internationalist assumptions, but increasingly, Dulles' tendency to analyze foreign affairs in moral, pseudo-religious terms was an entering wedge that eventually split them apart.⁴²

Relations, Lippmann told readers, "What we are giving up is our reliance on military means as the main instrument of our leadership in the Cold War . . . by its very specialization, our military policy will prevent us from contemplating any changes by military means." Over time, however, Lippmann lost enthusiasm for this approach—even though it meant in practice that the Eisenhower administration was less likely to commit American ground forces in every place where Communist insurgents posed a threat.

⁴¹ On Dulles especially, see Townshend Hoopes, *The Devil and John Foster Dulles* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1973): 28-32. A standard biography is Richard Immerman, *John Foster Dulles: Piety, Pragmatism, and Power in U.S. Foreign Policy* (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources Inc., 1999).

⁴² Lippmann and Dulles's difference began to emerge in 1944 when Dulles served as the chief foreign policy adviser to New York Governor and GOP presidential candidate Thomas Dewey. Lippmann devoted a column to attack a Dewey speech on the Polish issue which had implied that Franklin Roosevelt had abandoned the principle of Polish autonomy. Such campaign rhetoric, Lippmann wrote on 21 October 1944, served only to complicate negotiations and make the Polish government's position "irreconcilable." Lippmann, T&T, "Governor Dewey in Foreign Affairs," 21 October 1944, *Washington Post*: 7. He also disputed Dewey's interpretation of the provisions of the Romanian armistice—which were disproportionately disadvantageous to the Soviets. Dulles countered privately: "The basic difference between you and the Governor is that you do not believe that the United States should have any policies at all except in relation to areas we can make those policies good through material force. . . . I believe, and I think the Governor believes, that moral force is a potent reality and that the American people should continue to stand for principles of human liberty and freedom as of universal application, and so irrespective of whether or not they are willing or able to achieve them by fighting." JFD to WL, 22 October 1944, WLC, Box, 68 see Lippmann's reply of 25 October 1944, WLC, box 68, folder 667.

Ultimately, Dulles's public moralism, though mitigated by his private diplomacy, alienated Lippmann.⁴³ Even before he became secretary of state, Dulles had authored a polemical book, *War and Peace* (1950), and, shortly after the invasion of South Korea, publicly declared that the U.S. should "find the ways to paralyze the slimy, octopus-like tentacles that reach out from Moscow to suck our blood."⁴⁴ Dulles' diplomatic maneuvering at the 1954 Geneva Conference and his increasingly bellicose rhetoric, as during the first Taiwan Straights crisis in 1955, concerned Lippmann. Dulles's negotiating tactics, his treatment of George F. Kennan, after the diplomat's recall from Moscow, and particularly his refusal to countenance neutralism among less powerful nations caught in the superpower standoff henceforth made him a favorite target of derision in *Today and Tomorrow*.

Assigning blame for the origins of the Cold War became sport between the two men. In 1948 both Lippmann and Dulles chose Dewey as their candidate against Truman. Dulles again served as Dewey's foreign policy expert and, had the governor been elected, would almost certainly have become his nominee for secretary of state. Though supportive, Lippmann repeatedly cautioned Dulles about using the failure of the Yalta agreements and the disposition of Poland as a campaign issue against the Democrats. "It really isn't fair to imply that the United States had the power to compel the Russians to act differently in the area which was under complete domination of the Red Army," Lippmann wrote. Dewey—and by extension Dulles—gambled by calling attention to his prewar position, Lippmann observed. "It will be easy to point out that if Roosevelt and Churchill made greater concessions to Stalin at Tehran and Yalta than we wish they had, the compelling reason was the relative military weakness of Great Britain and the United States and their dependence on the Red Army. From that it is an easy step to the argument that our military preparedness in 1941 was a determining cause of our diplomatic weakness later and, of course, the Republican Party bears a heavy responsibility for our un-preparedness in the early stages of the war." Lippmann to Dulles, 13 February 1948, Box 68, folder 667, WLC.

⁴³ Immerman, *John Foster Dulles: 196-197*. Immerman points to Dulles's "contradictory legacy," noting that Dulles "demonstrated sophistication and enlightened understanding of the problems inherent in an international system that did not accommodate nationalist aspirations." Yet, "by overestimating the reach of communism, Dulles underestimated the power of nationalism. He thereby aligned the United States with the status quo, producing the very alienation, unrest, and instability that he predicted would result from opposing dynamic elements" in the developing countries. "Dulles thought strategically," Immerman concludes, "but too often he behaved tactically." See also, Ronald W. Pruessen's *John Foster Dulles: The Road to Power* (New York: Free Press, 1982): especially, 499-509. In a study that traces Dulles's approach to foreign affairs up until 1952, Pruessen—in contrast to Immerman—convincingly argues that Dulles's streak of moralism was present at a formative stage and fundamentally shaped his approach to international relations.

While Dwight Eisenhower fulfilled his campaign pledge to conclude a Korean War armistice on 27 July 1953, Washington strategists already were shifting their focus to Vietnam for. On 5 August 1953, the National Security Council advised that the “loss of Indo-China would be critical to the security of the U.S.” Fearing that the French position was so weak that Paris would compromise with the Viet Minh, the NSC added, “any negotiated settlement would mean the eventual loss to Communism not only of Indo-China but the whole of Southeast Asia.”⁴⁵ The authors concluded, “If the French actually decided to withdraw,” the paper concluded, “the U.S. would have to consider seriously whether to take over in this area.”⁴⁶ Following the NSC recommendations, the Eisenhower administration chose to help the French consolidate their forces and initiate a new offensive against Ho Chi Minh’s Communist guerillas, disbursing \$385 million in military aid. From 1950 to 1954, the U.S. contributed more than \$2.6 billion in military aid to the French army in Indochina.⁴⁷ American political influence was commensurate with the quantity of aid flowing to the French effort.⁴⁸ During this period, the U.S. role steadily changed from that of junior partner in the defense of Indochina to protector of the Saigon regime that it helped to install in the partitioned South.

While Eisenhower and Dulles perceived Indochina as a strategic keystone vital to stemming Beijing-directed Communist expansion, they were reluctant to commit U.S. forces to mainland Asia. Intervention, however, became a distinct

⁴⁴ Immerman, *John Foster Dulles*: 17-20; quote comes from Immerman’s entry for Dulles in *American National Biography* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

⁴⁵ Policy Planning Staff to NSC, 5 August 1953, “Further United States Support for France and the Associated States of Indochina,” *FRUS 1952-1954*, 7: 713-719.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ Herring, *America’s Longest War*: 20, 27, 42.

⁴⁸ PPS to NSC, 5 August 1953, *FRUS 1952-1954* Volume 7: 713 -719.

possibility in early 1954 as the French position deteriorated. At a NSC meeting on 8 January 1954, Eisenhower declared that putting American ground forces into Southeast Asia “was simply beyond his contemplation.”⁴⁹ Alternatives short of inserting ground troops were, apparently, still in play. When two participants objected to U.S. air strikes, Eisenhower revealed a much more ambivalent attitude about intervention. Turning to Treasury Secretary George Humphrey and Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, Robert Cutler, Eisenhower lectured them that Indochina was a “leaky dike,” holding back Communist expansion. “And with leaky dikes,” the president continued, “it’s sometimes better to put a finger in than to let the whole structure be washed away.”⁵⁰ The President was inclined to arm and equip anti-Communist forces, short of actual intervention, to preserve stability in Southeast Asia.

Failed French strategy precipitated a major crisis by the springtime of 1954. General Henri Navarre concentrated French forces to engage the Communists in large-scale actions in which Western firepower could be brought to bear against Asian manpower. The prospects for American intervention rose sharply when an elite French garrison of 12,000 soldiers came under siege in a remote northern locale named Dienbienphu.⁵¹ Eisenhower resisted a U.S. troop commitment, but Paris now insistently asked for one. In late March, French Chief of Staff General Paul Ely came

⁴⁹ Record of NSC Meeting, 8 January 1954, *FRUS, 1952-1954*, Vol. XIII: 949-952. According to a memorandum of the conversation, Eisenhower declared, “Indeed, the key to winning this war was to get the Vietnamese to fight. There was just no sense in even talking about United States forces replacing the French in Indochina. If we did so, the Vietnamese could be expected to transfer their hatred of the French to us. I can not tell you, said the President with vehemence, how bitterly opposed I am to such a course of action. The war in Indochina would absorb our troops by divisions!”

⁵⁰ Record of NSC Meeting, 8 January 1954, *FRUS, 1952-1954*, Vol. XIII: 949-952.

⁵¹ For an account of the Dienbienphu episode see Divine, *Eisenhower and the Cold War*: 39-55, and Herring, *America’s Longest War*: 21-36.

to Washington to request the transfer of additional U.S. aircraft for use by the French to strike at Viet Minh positions in the hills around Dienbienphu. Ely also asked Dulles what the American response would be if the Chinese intervened. Dulles dissembled but Commander of the Pacific Fleet Admiral Arthur Radford—with the Secretary of State’s tacit assent—detailed his plan for a massive air strike to save French forces. Dubbed “Operation Vulture,” Radford’s proposal involved 60 B-29 bombers, more than 150 carrier-based aircraft, and the use of tactical nuclear weapons to blast Giap’s forces. Eisenhower rejected Operation Vulture, though Ely returned to Paris with the impression that, as a last resort, the French could call in the American cavalry.⁵²

While Lippmann supported U.S. efforts to extricate the French from their seven-year colonial war in Indochina, he did not believe America should replace them. Though unwilling to let Vietnam “be washed away” under Beijing’s influence, Lippmann’s solution was not to erect the garrison state that U.S. officials soon established in South Vietnam. First, he thought U.S. military resources were not sufficient to win a decisive victory against the Viet Minh. “They are designed to maintain the balance of power among the great military powers,” Lippmann wrote on 29 March 1954, “and not for a civil war fought by guerilla tactics in a primitive country.” To insert American troops in Indochina would constitute a “grandiose folly,” and the assumption by many in the Eisenhower administration that the U.S. might instead train an indigenous army to defeat Ho Chi Minh was “wishful thinking.” Lippmann down-played the significance of a French loss at Dienbienphu. The vital question was not military, but political, Lippmann told his readers: to create

⁵² Herring, *America’s Longest War*: 30-32.

a stable Vietnamese government and negotiate a settlement that led to French withdrawal and Vietnamese autonomy.⁵³ Direct military aid to the French compounded problems. “On the general line that there is no asking for something that can’t possibly be obtained,” Lippmann wrote a prominent newspaper executive, “I would say that as long as we give help to the French we will not persuade the other side to stop helping the Viet Minh.”⁵⁴ For the time being, he was not willing to support a coalition government which, he knew, would be dominated by the Viet Minh—largely because he realized it would be a political non-starter in Washington. During a pointed conversation on 13 April 1954, Lippmann told the Polish ambassador, V. Josef Winiewicz, that any plan “which amounted to turning the country over to Ho Chi Minh would be rejected without negotiation.” This view accounted for the political reality of the intransigent right-wing Republicans in Congress. Within that context, Lippmann added, the “communists must not expect to get by negotiation at Geneva anything more than they now have, and that what they now hold is the maximum they can expect to get.”⁵⁵

Lippmann’s solution was to withdraw French forces from the countryside to coastal cities and Saigon and—from these “genuine positions of strength”—to negotiate with the Viet Minh. American military support for France should only be circumscribed, he wrote on 13 April 1954, having the goal of helping to secure and supply the major cities along the coast. This “limited objective” would recognize the “political reality” that the Viet Minh controlled the countryside and the allegiance of

⁵³ Lippmann, T&T, “A New Look in Indo-China?” 29 March 1954; “Indo-China and Geneva,” 8 April 1954.

⁵⁴ Lippmann to John Cowles, 13 May 1954, cited in Blum: 576.

a majority of the Vietnamese people. Lippmann described such an arrangement as an “honorable” settlement that would not “surrender” Vietnamese or Western vital interests. It also would permit the French to build toward a settlement that could satisfy the “specific interests of Red China” in Indochina—namely guarantees against the buildup of Western military power there and approval for an economic outlet via a railroad to Haiphong.⁵⁶ This strategic stronghold solution resonated with Lippmann, for it was the exact policy he endorsed for American forces in 1965—then under the name “enclave strategy.” Surveying the situation in 1954, Lippmann determined that American air and naval power could blockade mainland Asia, protect trading routes, and assist the French in holding their coastal defenses. “But it cannot occupy, it cannot pacify, it cannot control the mainland, even in the coastal areas much less the hinterland,” he added. “Any American who commits American power in violation of this principle is taking an uncalculated and incalculable risk.”⁵⁷ That assessment did not change in the intervening decade.

On 19 April 1954, Lippmann again warned U.S. officials about “any notion that the French could ‘go out’ and that we could ‘go in’” to fight in Vietnam. That, he wrote, was an “hallucination.” The column caught the attention of American officials and foreign ministries for its suggestion that the U.S. should collaborate with India and Pakistan to arrange a viable system within which Burma, Laos, Thailand, Cambodia, and Vietnam could retain their autonomy. Lippmann envisioned an internationally-guaranteed framework in “which the old imperial authority could be

⁵⁵ Lippmann recounted that conversation in a memorandum to CIA chief Allen Dulles. Lippmann to Allen Dulles, 13 April 1954, Lippmann Collection, Yale University, reprinted in Blum, *Public Philosopher*: 573-575.

⁵⁶ Lippmann, T&T, “Is an Armistice Conceivable?” 13 April 1954.

withdrawn without creating a vacuum into which the new imperialism of China would flow.”⁵⁸

Secretary of State John Foster Dulles called Lippmann that evening to say that the column “got the spirit of what he is trying to do better than anything he has read.” Dulles told Lippmann that he had indicated such a course in several off-the-record news briefings, “but no one got the point although the point may not have been sufficiently sensational to write about.” The two men discussed Dulles’s departure the next day for Paris and London, where he would seek allied support in preparation for an intervention of Western coalition countries. Lippmann told Dulles that, in his absence, he would use *Today and Tomorrow* to keep administration interventionists and Congressional Republicans “from making too much trouble at home.” “If they keep quiet,” Lippmann told the secretary, “it would be better.”⁵⁹ He was alluding, apparently, to a piece he had prepared that day for publication the next morning in which he rebuked Vice President Richard Nixon for a recent speech he delivered to the American Society of Newspaper Editors. Nixon—whose sympathies with leading Republican senators brought him closer toward a pro-intervention stand than any other principal administration figure—had intimated that the U.S. would not negotiate with Communists at Geneva and that it might assume the French military role in Vietnam. In a crisp column, Lippmann reiterated the argument that the U.S. could only fulfill an advisory role to the French. Though, at the time, he considered “partition and coalition are not acceptable solutions,” the columnist believed it foolish

⁵⁷ Lippmann, T&T, “A New Look in Indo-China?” 29 March 1954; “Mr. Dulles and Mr. Knowland,” 6 May 1954.

⁵⁸ Lippmann, T&T, “The Dulles Trip and Indo-China,” 19 April 1954.

to suggest in advance that the U.S. would not conduct diplomacy at a conference which it called and at which it had promised to negotiate.⁶⁰

The next morning the Indian ambassador, Gaganvihari L. Mehta, invited Lippmann to the embassy to discuss his latest columns. Over tea, Mehta told Lippmann the New Dehli government had developed a plan similar to the one the columnist had put forward, in which India and Pakistan would take leading roles in an international coalition with oversight in Indochina. Diplomat and columnist discussed the proposal at length, as Lippmann recounted later that evening for Central Intelligence Agency chief Allen W. Dulles:

I put it to him this way: that while the Indochinese states are entitled to independence, they are and will be incapable of exercising full independence for a considerable time to come. They are, and [Mehta] agreed, unready for self-government. Therefore, independence as such must create a political vacuum which would promptly be filled by the communist dictatorship. That being the situation, the problem is to create a political protectorate of some sort within which the newly emancipated states could learn to use their independence. Such a protectorate, once the French withdraw, cannot be created by any Western power alone, and therefore unless the independent nations of Asia take the lead in creating that protectorate, Indochina will either fall within the communist orbit or become a battleground of a great war.⁶¹

Ambassador Mehta told Lippmann that during an upcoming meeting of the prime ministers of India, Pakistan, Burma, Ceylon, and Indonesia, that this proposal would be discussed. He expected the participants to ratify something along its lines.

⁵⁹ John Foster Dulles-Walter Lippmann, telephone conversation, 19 April 1954, Telephone Conversation Series (Subseries: General), Box 2, March 1954-April 30, 1954 (1), John Foster Dulles Papers, 1951-1959, DDEL.

⁶⁰ Lippmann, T&T, "Mr. Nixon's Remarks," 20 April 1954.

⁶¹ Walter Lippmann to Allen Dulles, 20 April 1954, Lippmann Collection, Yale University, reprinted in Blum's *Public Philosopher*: 575-576. Allen Dulles was a friend of Lippmann's and, for a brief time, his only high-ranking contact within the Eisenhower administration. Once Lippmann began to criticize Allen's brother, Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, in 1955 the relationship cooled. See John Foster

Lippmann concluded that at Geneva “we shall see discussed three Asian pacts: one from the communists modeled on Molotov’s pact for Europe, our own proposed pact, and a third Asian pact.”⁶² Clearly, the third approach was one for which Lippmann held out the most hope. But his optimistic expectations that the adoption of such a plan might draw India further toward the Western Alliance went unfulfilled.

Ever since his trip to the region and meeting with Jawarhal Nehru in 1949, Lippmann had been convinced that India could be a powerful, keystone ally.⁶³ As with Korea, he again pinned some of his hopes for regional stability on New Dehli’s ability to assert itself as a power. Less than a month after his discussion with the Indian ambassador, Lippmann pressed his idea with Paul J. Sturm, a member of the State Department’s Office of Philippine and Southeast Asian Affairs. Nehru’s India, the columnist told Sturm, was following a policy of neutrality between the great powers that closely mirrored the foreign policy of the early American republic. “If these Indian policies were expressed, as they might well be, in the language of *The Federalist* they would be more readily understood here and would find a responsive echo,” Sturm recorded Lippmann as telling him. When Sturm proposed the idea to Senator Mike Mansfield, the Montanan immediately envisioned a “Nehru Doctrine” which the American Navy—as the British did for Monroe’s Doctrine—might “underwrite . . . directed against expansion of Communist ‘colonialism.’”⁶⁴

Dulles-Allen Dulles, telephone conversation, 23 May 1955, Telephone Conversation Series, Subseries: General, May 2, 1955-August 31, 1955 (7), Box 4, John Foster Dulles Papers, DDEL,

⁶² Ibid. No pacts were discussed at Geneva; nor was the United States an active participant. Rather, John Foster Dulles refitted the Asian pact proposal turning it into a loose military confederation (guaranteed and led by the U.S.) that was ratified at the Southeast Asian Treaty Organization (SEATO) in September 1954. More on that later.

⁶³ Lippmann Appointment Diaries, November 1949, Series VII, Box 38, Folder 213, WLC.

⁶⁴ Paul J. Sturm, “Situation in Indochina and Possible Defense Arrangements in Southeast Asia,” 12 May 1954, *FRUS 1952-1954*: 1538 -1540.

Meanwhile the Eisenhower administration scrambled to create “United Action”—a coalition of British, French, U.S., and Associated States forces that might be inserted to restore stability in the region. It also turned up the public rhetoric. At a 7 April 1954, press conference in the Old Executive Building, President Eisenhower affirmed the American interest in Vietnam, laying the framework for possible U.S. intervention. With the region’s vital raw materials at stake and the danger of Chinese expansionism, Eisenhower said, the U.S. could not afford more “losses” in Southeast Asia. If Indochina should fall, all Southeast Asia would “go over very quickly,” he warned in a now-famous analogy, “like a row of dominoes,” cutting off American access to Asian markets and threatening the U.S. strategic position in the Far East by bringing Japan into the Chinese orbit. “So,” Eisenhower concluded, “the possible consequences of the loss are just incalculable to the free world.”⁶⁵ To underscore U.S. resolve, the President sent the director of the U.S. aid program, Harold Stassen, before a congressional committee to submit a \$3.5 billion foreign aid package—of which the administration had earmarked more than one-third (\$1.33 billion) for Indochina.⁶⁶

London firmly declined joint intervention, however, and Eisenhower knew British reluctance would deprive him of a congressional resolution for action. He gave up on the idea, telling the public that it would be a “tragic error to go in alone as a partner of France,” and that the U.S. could participate only with a “grouping of

⁶⁵ “The President’s News Conference,” 7 April 1954, item 73, *Public Papers on the Presidents: Dwight D. Eisenhower* (hereinafter referred to as “PPP/DDE”). Online at <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu>.

⁶⁶ See Marvin Kalb and Elie Abel, *Roots of Involvement: The U.S. in Asia, 1784-1971* (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1971): 74-75. The breakdown was as follows: \$500 million in direct aid to anti-Communist forces; \$300 million in military equipment; more than \$210 million in technical assistance; and \$21 million in economic aid.

interested nations.”⁶⁷ That decision sealed the fate of the French garrison at Dienbienphu, which surrendered to the forces of Vietminh General Vo Nguyen Giap on 7 May 1954—a day before negotiations were set to commence at Geneva.

Lippmann clearly perceived that neither a dashing military victory nor any arbitrary line of demarcation could solve what was essentially a Vietnamese civil conflict. “The crucial difficulty,” he wrote at the start of the Geneva Conference, “is that the real threat to security [in Indochina] is from internal revolution, and not, as our other security pacts envisage, from external armed attack.”⁶⁸ France had failed to subdue the Viet Minh uprising, losing the contest to rally and unite the people behind the Bao Dai government as much as it had on the battlefield. The disastrous defeat at Dienbienphu obscured the central problem of the conflict: the battle for Indochina was principally political not military, certainly not in any conventional sense, Lippmann wrote. Any settlement, he explained, “will have to be done on terms and for objectives that command popular support among the newly emancipated nations on the Asian mainland. That kind of support cannot be bought. It cannot be compelled. It cannot be had by brandishing atomic bombs. It cannot be had by emphasizing military measures to the exclusion of all others,” he continued. “It can only be had only by winning [Indochinese] confidence that we understand and respect and support their vital interests—not merely our own.”⁶⁹

Rather than playing a constructive role at Geneva, as Lippmann had hoped, the U.S. participated only in an observer’s capacity, principally so that Dulles and

⁶⁷ “The President’s News Conference,” 5 May 1954, item 101, *PPP/DDE*. Online at <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu>. See also, Herring, *America’s Longest War*: 37.

⁶⁸ Lippmann, T&T, “The Crucial Problem in Southeast Asia,” 13 May 1954.

Eisenhower could disassociate themselves from any compromise with the Communist powers.⁷⁰ The Geneva Accords, approved on 21 July 1954 brought into existence the two entities of North Vietnam and South Vietnam. The accords stipulated French withdrawal, divided the country along the 17th Parallel, deemed that the division was temporary (not to be “interpreted as constituting a political or territorial boundary”), and set national elections for 1956, supervised by an international commission, that would lead to reunification. Though the American delegation, led by Walter Bedell Smith, refused to ratify the agreements, the Eisenhower administration did not find the Geneva Accords entirely unpalatable. The partition allowed American officials to consolidate military forces, building South Vietnam as a bulwark against further Communist aggression in Southeast Asia. The French also were removed from the equation, freeing Eisenhower and Dulles to allocate and direct U.S. resources without interference from Paris.

Nevertheless, policymakers viewed the overall situation with apprehension. The expansion of America’s role was ratified in the 20 August 1954 NSC-5429/2 policy paper. In South Vietnam particularly, officials believed, “the U.S. must protect its position and restore its prestige in the Far East by a new initiative . . . the situation must be stabilized as soon as possible to prevent further loss to Communism through (1) creeping expansion and subversion, or (2) overt aggression.”⁷¹

Policymakers sought to provide military aid to Saigon to train and equip an indigenous army; to extend economic aid directly to the administration’s hand-picked

⁶⁹ Lippmann, T&T, “Reappraisal in Southeast Asia,” 11 May 1954; “The Crucial Problem in Southeast Asia,” 13 May 1954.

⁷⁰ Herring, *America’s Longest War*: 38-41.

client government of Ngo Dinh Diem—further reducing French influence; and to support Diem politically while enticing him to reform his government along democratic lines.⁷²

Dulles, who studiously avoided most of the negotiations at Geneva—he left shortly after the convocation—and was wrangled by the drift of the meeting, arranged for a Far Eastern security pact. On 8 September 1954, at a conference in Manila, the U.S., Britain, France, Australia, New Zealand, the Philippines, Thailand, and Pakistan signed the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) agreements. The pact was a collective defense engagement which called for consultation and united action by all the signatories. Though it excluded from its consideration such potential hot spots as Hong Kong and Taiwan, a special addendum to the treaty guaranteed protection to Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam under the condition of invitation or consent.⁷³ Now America was tied to the Saigon regime—diplomatically, as well as militarily and economically—fully displacing France as its primary guardian.

While siding with Eisenhower’s decision not to commit U.S. ground forces in Vietnam, Lippmann nevertheless held deep doubts about the political commitments Washington accepted in supporting the Diem regime and arranging the SEATO regional security pact. Toward the end of 1954, he wrote several reflective columns in which he questioned the major premises underlying U.S. policy in partitioned Vietnam. Though Lippmann had approved of the administration’s decision not to intervene unilaterally at Dienbienphu, he understood that developments over the

⁷¹ “Statement of Policy by the National Security Council: Review of U.S. Foreign Policy in the Far East,” 20 August 1954, *FRUS 1952-1954* 12: 771-774.

⁷² *Ibid.* See also Divine, *Eisenhower and the Cold War*: 52-53; Herring, *America’s Longest War*: 40-41.

summer had nevertheless exponentially increased the American commitment in Southeast Asia. Lippmann rejected the premise underlying Eisenhower's "domino theory"—insisting instead that the U.S. should put its resources only into viable countries such as India, Japan, and the Philippines. He called this the "key country approach":

It stands in contrast with what might be called the policy of plugging the holes in the dam of containment. The policy of the key country approach is to build strength upon strength, to make more prosperous, more powerful and more influential the key countries which are already on the way to power and to influence.

This is in the realm of high policy a sound conception: not to think of ourselves as engaged primarily in building, plugging, and holding a dam of small states around the periphery of the Communist world—but to think of ourselves as one among several centers of free power and influence in all the vast regions of Europe, Asia, Africa, and South America, that are not in the Communist world.⁷⁴

Further, Lippmann held out little hope that Western-backed authoritarians could ever create a stable government in Saigon. Central to this conviction was his understanding that the conflict in Indochina was a civil war in which Saigon's control was "infiltrated and subverted from village to village by native Indo-Chinese revolutionists."⁷⁵ He resolved himself to the probability that Ho Chi Minh's Hanoi regime would supplant Diem and reunite the country either at the ballot box or by renewed subversion. However, he did not consider such a development a "loss" for Western interests in Southeast Asia. As early as 22 April 1954, Lippmann told readers that "we could ask for nothing more and hope for nothing better than that the

⁷³ Herring, *America's Longest War*: 39-42; Robert Ferrell, *American Diplomacy: The Twentieth Century* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1988): 344-352.

⁷⁴ Lippmann, T&T, "Key Countries," 13 December 1954.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

people of Indo-China should be . . . liberated from the old colonialism and independent of the new satellitism.”⁷⁶ By December 1954, Lippmann was even more amenable to the idea that a Vietnam, reunited and governed by Hanoi, could chart a neutral course in the Cold War. “We are much too ready to see the issue in terms of black and white: either the country will become a [Chinese or Soviet] satellite or it must be, like South Korea under Dr. Rhee and Formosa under Chiang, irreconcilable and militant,” he wrote. “A large portion of humanity is neither black nor white but gray, unwilling and unable to let the issue be drawn too sharply . . . The non Communist world would be doing very well indeed, better than it has had much reason to believe it would do, if the outcome in Indo-China is a government which manages not to become a satellite of Peking.”⁷⁷

Since the primary threat in Indochina was from internal subversion rather than external attack, Lippmann criticized Dulles’s construction of the SEATO pact. Unlike NATO or the U.N. Charter, SEATO marked a “new venture.” The agreement did not organize collective power to meet Communist aggression, but committed the U.S. to shoulder the burden of intervention. It improperly conceived of that aggression in conventional terms that were not applicable to guerilla warfare. “In the Manila treaty we have acquired an undefined right and an implied obligation to intervene under certain conditions in Southeast Asia,” Lippmann warned. “What we have to fear in these weak countries is, as in Viet-Nam, the outbreak of a civil war in which the great powers participate at second hand. We must avoid being caught in

⁷⁶ Lippmann, T&T, “Negotiation and Surrender,” 22 April 1954.

⁷⁷ Lippmann, T&T, “Containment and Revolution,” 21 December 1954.

such an entangling affair without at least strong moral support both from Western Europe and from free Asia.”⁷⁸

On 3 May 1955 Lippmann hammered the State Department, arguing that Dulles and his lieutenants had failed to adjust their diplomacy to the “inexorable logic” that the development of Soviet nuclear capabilities had pushed non-atomic powers into increasingly neutralist foreign policies. “Our policy, which is to expect every anti-Communist or non-Communist nation to line up with us in a posture of defiance, is incompatible with the realities of nuclear weapons,” Lippmann wrote. “It has become a diplomacy of Colonel Blimp and it is in trouble all around the great circle from Japan to Germany.”⁷⁹ This column, in combination with a string of others in 1955, prompted John Foster Dulles to despair to his brother, CIA chief Allen Dulles, about his rough treatment at Lippmann’s hands. Why, the Secretary asked, had Lippmann been “so extremely antagonistic”? Allen Dulles, who was Lippmann’s primary contact in the Eisenhower administration until the attacks on Foster eventually cooled their relationship, consoled the secretary of state. Lippmann’s criticisms weren’t important, he told his brother, and besides “people don’t follow” his columns anyway.⁸⁰ That didn’t stop them from coming, however.⁸¹

⁷⁸ Lippmann, T&T, “The Manila Treaty,” 14 September 1954.

⁷⁹ Lippmann, T&T, 3 May 1955, “The Diplomacy of Col. Blimp.”

⁸⁰ See John Foster Dulles-Allen Dulles, telephone conversation, 23 May 1955, Telephone Conversation Series, Subseries: General, May 2, 1955-August 31, 1955 (7), Box 4, John Foster Dulles Papers, DDEL.

⁸¹ In 1957, for example, Lippmann inveighed against Dulles’ hard-line diplomacy on the international stage against the backdrop of events in Little Rock, Arkansas. “Mr. Dulles is in action a tough and realistic operator in the realm of expediency,” Lippmann observed. “But in speech he is a moralizer, the invariable and confident exponent of all that is righteous. His great handicap, which might be removed by a searching of the soul, is that he lays down the moral law without humor or humility, as one of the righteous speaking down to the unrighteous. This lack of the grace of humility does not make for affection or understanding, or even for charity, as when in Little Rock we, like other nations, fall far short of our professed ideals.” Lippmann, T&T, 24 September 1957, “The Grace of Humility.”

Lippmann's reservations, in the final analysis, flowed from his perception that the Eisenhower-Dulles policy of massive retaliation produced military stalemates but not diplomatic solutions to a growing series of armed standoffs at crisis points around the globe. The policies of containment and liberation (rollback) broke down, Lippmann reminded readers, "when they were militarized, when the attempt was made to translate [them] into military projects, when they ceased to be backed by a flexible and resourceful diplomacy."⁸² The administration's handling of Indochina revealed the logic of massive retaliation which, in the final analysis, portended no great change from the diplomatic intransigence of the Truman administration. The tenets were clear: 1) hold the line against Communist advances; 2) avoid direct military intervention while supplying, arming and training native armies to carry the bulk of the ground fighting; and, 3) use the threat of nuclear war to intimidate and dissuade Beijing from expanding the war in Indochina.⁸³

In May 1955, Ngo Dinh Diem—backed to the hilt by Washington—won a power struggle with the French-backed Prince Bau Loa consolidating his power in the South. On 23 October, Diem deposed Bao Dai and, three days later, announced the formation of the Republic of Vietnam, proclaiming himself its first president. As Americans filled the power vacuum by strengthening the South Vietnamese government with military and economic aid, there was a sense that Washington was embarking on an enterprise, the end of which it could not see. "There is more bewilderment than anything else here in Washington about the developments in Vietnam," Lippmann wrote Henri Bonnet, who had just resigned as French

⁸² Lippmann, T&T, "Time of Reappraisal," 31 August 1954.

ambassador to the U.S. “Our two governments do not seem to see eye to eye, perhaps because neither of them really sees clearly what can be done. But then I have long been a pessimist about Vietnam.”⁸⁴

IV.

The themes about U.S. policy in Asia that Lippmann employed in Eisenhower’s final years carried over into the Kennedy administration. As the columnist viewed it, the Eisenhower administration had over-extended American commitments in Asia by assembling a regional alliance of client states along the periphery of China. In early 1961, at two meetings with President John F. Kennedy, Lippmann argued that the U.S. was over-committed in Southeast Asia and that the new U.S. leader must perform the unpopular but necessary task of retrenching those commitments. Both the president and columnist—contrary to the position of senior officials at the State Department, Pentagon, and White House, as well as other prominent voices—favored the creation of a coalition government in Laos, administered by an International Control Commission (ICC), similar to the one created under the 1954 Geneva Accords for Indochina. Lippmann, however, wanted to go a step further by using the eventual Laotian agreement in the summer of 1962 as a model for all of Southeast Asia, specifically South Vietnam. Instead, Kennedy and his advisors chose to move down the military track in support of their Saigon clients. This difference was amplified by the deteriorating situation in South Vietnam and also by the relative

⁸³ See Divine’s summary of the use of massive retaliation in Indochina in *Eisenhower and the Cold War*: 51.

⁸⁴ Walter Lippmann to Henri Bonnet, 2 May 1955, Box 57, Folder 254, Series III, WLC.

abatement of Cold War tensions elsewhere. With the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, Kennedy and Khrushchev seemed to have found a new spirit of superpower cooperation. As the successive layers of Soviet-American conflicts were peeled away—Congo, Berlin, then Cuba—Vietnam emerged as the administration’s top foreign affairs priority. The earlier crises obscured just how wide a gap existed between Lippmann and the administration on policy in South Vietnam. The divide rapidly became evident. By the late-summer of 1963, Lippmann sided with French leader Charles de Gaulle’s plan for “neutralization” of the region—a position that eventually drove him further from the administration.⁸⁵

While he supported the policy of containing Chinese expansion he believed it could not be accomplished by placing U.S. military power against China’s borders. Rather, Lippmann believed that policymakers should focus on cooperating with key countries such as India, Pakistan, the Soviet Union, and Japan. As the Sino-Soviet split widened he wrote that the U.S. could counterbalance Chinese influence in Southeast Asia by cooperating with Moscow. Lippmann called for a neutralization of both Laos and Vietnam, citing coinciding Soviet-American interests in detaching Indo-China from the Cold War conflict and checking Chinese expansion. In advising the Kennedy administration to eschew Eisenhower’s summitry, Lippmann exhorted U.S. officials instead to pursue “quiet diplomacy and to stay away from spectacular actions,” utilizing a network of diplomats in the alliance, the U.N., and the unaligned

⁸⁵ For recent literature on Kennedy and Laos, see Kaiser, *American Tragedy*: 36-57; 127-149; Logevall, *Choosing War*: 23-25; 214-216; Robert Dallek, *An Unfinished Life: John F. Kennedy, 1917-1963* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 2003): 350-353. Laos remains a largely unexplored area in the new international diplomatic history field. Older interpretations include: Timothy Castle, *At War in the Shadow of Vietnam: U.S. Military Aid to the Royal Lao Government, 1955-1975* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993); Arthur Dommen, *Conflict in Laos: The Politics of Neutralization* (New York: Praeger, 1971).

world to probe Moscow and Beijing for areas of potential compromise. Such statesmanship was crucial to keeping “the critical questions—Laos, the Congo, Algeria, Cuba—from reaching the point of irreparable decision.” Lippmann also held a special expectation that Kennedy would be the public educator that his predecessor was not. “In a democratic society,” he told readers, “quiet diplomacy is possible and can be fruitful only if at the same time there is an increase of communication between the Chief Executive and the public.”⁸⁶

Laos was the most significant crisis that the Eisenhower administration passed on to the Kennedy administration. Since the late-1950s, a string of U.S.-backed anti-Communist regimes controlled by right-wing general Phoumi Nosavan, had fought an unsuccessful civil war against the Pathet Lao communists. Laos was inhospitable to American military power—landlocked and largely inaccessible. But by the logic of the Cold War Washington determined this tiny country of two million persons to be a vital strategic outpost. In addition to its long eastern border with North and South Vietnam, Laos shared a substantial northern frontier with China. American officials deemed Laotian independence from Beijing’s influence to be high on their list of priorities—for they believed that a free, neutral government in the capital city of Vientiane was vital to preserving the South Vietnamese regime of Ngo Dinh Diem.

⁸⁶ See Lippmann, T&T, “Quiet Diplomacy,” 10 January 1961; “Rusk on Quiet Diplomacy,” 26 January 1961; and, Lippmann, T&T, “The President’s Adventure,” 7 August 1959. Lippmann believed that the problems created by Dulles’s sharply ideological diplomacy were compounded by Eisenhower’s leadership style. Whether or not, in fact, Eisenhower was disengaged from policymaking, or if he dominated the creation and implementation of policy, the idea Lippmann and others believed, and conveyed to the public, was that of a “hands-off” executive. Eisenhower’s 1955 heart attack, and his subsequent poor health, contributed to the image of a president no longer commanding the levers and controls of his government. Thus, Lippmann observed late in the general’s presidency, that “Eisenhower has been quiescent, as it were submerged . . . throttled down by diffidence, by a lack of confidence in his own political know-how, by his illnesses with their aftermath in a kind of self-regulated invalidism, and by the authority of his advisers.”

More than Soviet or Chinese aid—and perhaps even Phoumi’s battlefield mistakes—Hanoi’s support spurred a string of Pathet Lao victories.⁸⁷

An August 1960 coup produced a tenuous power-sharing arrangement between Centrist Prince Souvanna Phouma and the military strongman, Phoumi. But the general reneged and threw Souvanna out of power in September, establishing a new regime and martial law with Prince Boun Oum. Pro-neutralist forces in the Royal Laotian Army (RLA) took up arms with the Pathet Lao—a military reversal that threatened Phoumi’s remaining forces anew.⁸⁸ During briefings on foreign policy in January 1961, Eisenhower warned Kennedy that if Phoumi’s government appealed to SEATO for military assistance (ostensibly to fight an externally-backed insurgency), that the U.S. would have to send in troops—even if this meant a unilateral intervention without Western Alliance sanction.⁸⁹ In the first months of the new administration, the situation in Laos neared crisis proportions. The Pathet Lao and North Vietnamese troops secured a vital route for Hanoi to funnel supplies into South Vietnam. By April 1961, under a buildup that began with Eisenhower, more than 300 U.S. military advisors were in Laos and the Boun Oum regime was receiving air support, military supplies, and \$32 million in economic assistance. With Moscow matching American aid in early 1961, the Pathet Lao swept clear the Plain

⁸⁷ On developments in Laos during the late 1950s, see Smith, *An International History of the Vietnam War, Volume 1: Revolution Versus Containment, 1955-61*: 72-82; 254-56. Smith also discusses in these pages the growing tensions between Beijing and Moscow as they vied for influence in Laos.

⁸⁸ Lawrence Freedman, *Kennedy’s Wars: Berlin, Cuba, Laos, and Vietnam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000): 296.

⁸⁹ Lawrence Bassett and Stephen Pelz, “The Failed Search for Victory: Vietnam and the Politics of War,” in Thomas Paterson, ed., *Kennedy’s Quest for Victory: American Foreign Policy, 1961-1963* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989): 228-231; Kaiser, *American Tragedy*: 31-33.

of Jarres in the eastern half of the country by the time of the Kennedy-Khrushchev meeting at Vienna in June.⁹⁰

Laos became Lippmann's prime example of a place where the superpowers could find it mutually beneficial to reach a diplomatic compromise. As early as August 1959—on the eve of Soviet premier Nikita Khrushchev's visit to the U.S.—Lippmann wrote that Moscow was the “passenger” rather than the “driver” in Laos; that, in effect, Beijing and Hanoi, were primarily responsible for instigating and supplying the Pathet Lao. The columnist believed that the Soviets and Americans could find common ground in preserving the former French Indochinese colony from Chinese domination. While Lippmann did not expect a pact or joint declaration between the superpower leaders, he did believe they could tacitly recognize their “common interest in containing the expansionist aggression of revolutionary China.”⁹¹ Eisenhower and Khrushchev never reached such an unspoken accord, especially after the U-2 spy plane incident poisoned relations in 1960—canceling Eisenhower's reciprocal visit to Moscow.

During the U.S. presidential transition period late in the year, Lippmann worried that Laos could quickly become a flash point for superpower confrontation. He urged the out-going Eisenhower administration to “freeze” its Laotian policies. He simultaneously asked for the recall of the International Control Commission (represented by Canada, India, and Poland) to mediate an end to the civil war and to carry out the prescriptions of the 1954 Geneva Accords by forming a neutralist

⁹⁰ Walter LaFeber, *America, Russia, and the Cold War, 1945-1990* (New York: McGraw-Hill Inc., 1991): 220-221, 231-232; James S. Olson and Randy Roberts, *Where the Domino Fell: America and Vietnam, 1945 to 1990* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991): 68-70.

⁹¹ Lippmann, T&T, “From Cuba to Laos,” 18 August 1959; “High Politics,” 1 September 1959.

government. American planners, he added, should consult the British and French, both of whom had more experience in Southeast Asia. Most importantly, Laos did not constitute a “primary interest” for Washington, Lippmann wrote. “For we are not the arbiters of human destiny in every corner of the globe.”⁹² On 10 January 1961—echoing some of the apprehension that Secretary of State Christian Herter expressed in meetings with Kennedy—Lippmann concluded that the Laotian crisis was “insoluble” if U.S. planners pursued a military intervention. “There is no conceivable way in which Laos, which has two Communist states on its frontiers, which is a country of trackless jungles, can be made finally secure against infiltration and guerilla fighting,” Lippmann wrote. “We cannot seal off Laos from the Communist states which it touches.”⁹³

Domestic politics merged with international events in directing Kennedy’s ambiguous middle-course policies in Southeast Asia. His thin margin of victory in the 1960 election made the administration vulnerable to critics who might brand it with “losing” Indochina, in much the same manner that Congressional Republicans tarred the Truman administration with “losing” China. Kennedy was keenly aware that the conservative press would castigate him for any sign of acquiescence to Communist power in Southeast Asia—and, at one point, he feared that Eisenhower would publicly challenge his handling of the Laotian negotiations.⁹⁴ Washington

⁹² Lippmann, T&T, “Stop, Look and Listen,” 29 December 1960.

⁹³ Lippmann, T&T, “Quiet Diplomacy,” 10 January 1961.

⁹⁴ Kaiser, *American Tragedy*: 136; Eisenhower did not publicly comment on Kennedy’s policy. The anti-Communist milieu persisted throughout Kennedy’s presidency—within both major political parties—and is perhaps best distilled in Arizona Senator Barry Goldwater’s *Why Not Victory? A Fresh Look at American Foreign Policy* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1962). In this book Goldwater, the eventual 1964 Republican presidential candidate, rejected as useless any effort to make a diplomatic accommodation with the Soviet Union. While Goldwater did not explicitly advocate it, the argument raised the specter of a preventive nuclear war against Moscow.

officials also viewed Laos within a complex and volatile international scene, and within the context of Nikita Khrushchev's promise that Moscow would support "wars of national liberation."⁹⁵ The Soviet premier warned Kennedy at Vienna that American meddling in these conflicts increased the chances of the "terrible prospect of mutual destruction."⁹⁶

Lippmann recognized the complex pressures for American intervention in Southeast Asia and, as well, Kennedy's ambivalence. In his column he assigned much of the problem to Eisenhower's policies. The crises in Laos and South Vietnam, Lippmann wrote on 29 December 1960, were caused by the breakdown of the "semi-circle of American military clients" the Eisenhower administration supported on the Russian and Chinese periphery. But Dulles's framework was a "dying policy."⁹⁷ In theory it worked when America held a strategic nuclear monopoly in the early 1950s and, with impunity, could threaten both Moscow and Beijing with "massive retaliation" as retribution for any Communist-backed insurgency against an independent country. When the Soviets punctured the myth of American invulnerability with *Sputnik* in 1957, the Dulles doctrine lost much of its

⁹⁵ Laos was but one of several "brushfire wars" (in the New Frontier parlance) during 1961—the others being in the Congo and South Vietnam. For a sense of how the Kennedy administration approached these multiple conflicts see Freedman, *Kennedy's Wars*: 92-111. For how Laos fit into the scene and how President Kennedy approached it, see pp. 293-305; 340-356.

⁹⁶ Quoted in Bassett and Pelz, "The Failed Search for Victory," 231. All these concerns raised the stakes for victory in Southeast Asia. "It was a hell of a note," Kennedy told Arthur Krock of *The New York Times* late that year, that he had "to handle the Berlin situation with the Communists encouraging foreign aggressors all over the place . . . in Vietnam, Laos, etc." Co-mingled with such frustrations, however, was an expression of caution, with Kennedy noting that he did not believe "United States troops should be involved on the Asian mainland." He also told *The New York Times* columnist that the domino theory was not credible in Southeast Asia, since China (once it became a nuclear power) would dominate the region. He added, moreover, that the U.S. "can't interfere in civil disturbances created by guerillas, and it was hard to prove this wasn't largely the situation in Vietnam." Arthur Krock, 11 October 1961, Memorandum of Conversation, Box 1, Krock Papers, Mudd Library, Princeton, NJ. Kaiser reprints the memo at length in his account; see *American Tragedy*: 100-101. A much more abbreviated treatment is in Bassett and Pelz, "The Failed Search for Victory," 229.

⁹⁷ Lippmann, T&T, "Stop, Look and Listen," 29 December 1960.

clout, Lippmann explained. Moscow had achieved, if not numerical parity in nuclear warheads, then at least the technology (or perceived capability) to inflict horrible destruction on American cities. It was not clear that Eisenhower or his successors would absorb the loss of New York or Chicago to defend Berlin, Taiwan, South Korea, or South Vietnam. Aside from the gamble of threatening nuclear war to prevent leftist revolutions in developing countries, Lippmann wrote, Dulles's policy also aligned America with "corrupt" and "intolerably reactionary" governments—those authoritarian regimes that were most fervently anti-Communist. Here, the columnist fixed his gaze on Asia from Chiang Kai-Shek in Taipei to Pak in Seoul, to Phoumi in Vientiane, to Diem in Saigon.⁹⁸

Kennedy's antennae were attuned to this kind of advice because of its source but also because it confirmed his private estimates about Laos.⁹⁹ He knew Lippmann could be a valuable ally in bringing public opinion around to a negotiated settlement in Laos. Shortly before Lippmann left for a trip to Europe that would include a meeting with Nikita Khrushchev, the president asked Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., to invite the columnist for a talk.¹⁰⁰ On 20 March 1961, Lippmann, Schlesinger, and the president discussed Laos and Berlin during lunch at the White House. The historian and presidential advisor recalled years later that meeting opened with Lippmann making "a great argument that we were over-committed in Southeast Asia, an argument with which Kennedy agreed."¹⁰¹

⁹⁸ Lippmann, T&T, "The Facts of Life," 28 March 1961.

⁹⁹ See, for instance, Kaiser, *American Tragedy*: 38-39; 46.

¹⁰⁰ This was the first of two meetings Lippmann had with Kennedy that spring. Mac Bundy would bring Lippmann back to the White House to debrief him on his meeting with Khrushchev in mid-April.

¹⁰¹ Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., interview with author, 12 March 2002, New York City.

The ensuing conversation dwelt on Laos—with Kennedy doing most of the talking. Kennedy’s military advisors had laid out options that ranged from a force build-up in neighboring Thailand to a U.S.-led intervention with paratroopers seizing the Plain of Jarres. Hours before Kennedy’s lunch with Lippmann, the president had received a blunt reply from the Pentagon to a White House proposal to scale-back planning for the use of force. Lyman Lemintzer, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, briefed the president on the Pentagon’s minimum prerequisites for unilateral U.S. intervention in Laos: 60,000 troops, air cover, and, as a last resort, authorization to use nuclear weapons on Hanoi and Beijing in the event of Chinese intervention.¹⁰² As Schlesinger recalled the lunch meeting, Kennedy seemed to formulate on the spot a policy “between intervention and retreat.”¹⁰³

It is just as probable, however, that the President already knew that a middle-course position was his only option in Laos and, moreover, that he was probing

¹⁰² Kaiser, *American Tragedy*: 43; Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., *A Thousand Days: John F. Kennedy in the White House* (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin Co., 1965): 332-333; Edwin O. Guthman and Jeffrey Schulman, eds., *Robert Kennedy: In His Own Words* (New York: 1988): 246-248. Much of Kaiser’s narrative convincingly depicts Kennedy as taking a diplomatic line, often conflicting with his military and top civilian advisers. As regards Laos, Kaiser writes, “Kennedy continued to redefine American policy along diplomatic, pro-neutralist lines, in the face of a stream of hard-line proposals from State, Defense, the Joint Chiefs” and the NSC (p. 46). For a more critical appraisal of Kennedy’s conduct of Laotian policy see Noam Kochavi, “Limited Accommodation, Perpetuated Conflict: Laos, China, and the Laos Conflict, 1961-1963,” *Diplomatic History* 26 (No. 1/Winter 2002): 95-135. In synthesizing much of the recent literature on the Laos crisis—supported by a boon of documentary releases in the 1990s—Kochavi insists that while Kennedy’s record in Laos shows his restraint it also demonstrates his unswerving perception of the Chinese threat. His policy of holding firm in South Vietnam, even while negotiating in Laos, was meant to demonstrate American resolve to Beijing. In the final analysis this factor made him reluctant to seriously explore a full-scale settlement with the PRC in Southeast Asia. “Kennedy personified a decision maker so wedded to a zero-sum perspective and so obsessed with the objective of deterrence as to overlook the ‘security dilemma,’” Kochavi explains. “Namely, he failed to appreciate the degree to which his deterrence policies may have acquired the nature of a self-fulfilling mechanism, stoking apprehensions and hostilities on the Chinese side and thus contributing to an escalating spiral” (130-131).

¹⁰³ Schlesinger, *A Thousand Days*: 331-332. Kennedy’s quotes in the foregoing discussion are taken from Schlesinger’s text. Despite his strong sympathy with Kennedy, Schlesinger’s account is probably accurate in terms of his perceptions of Kennedy’s intentions in Vietnam. The book was written and published by early 1965, before the U.S. had even committed to a ground war in South Vietnam.

Lippmann for his approval rather than making policy *ad hoc*. Though the U.S. was “over-committed” in Southeast Asia, Kennedy told Lippmann, it must prevent “an immediate Communist takeover” in Laos. To do that it had to work, in some measure, with Phoumi to preserve Vientiane’s independence in order to negotiate. “We cannot and will not have any visible humiliation over Laos,” the president said. There were, however, limits to what he would countenance—and the unilateral intervention that Eisenhower and the Joint Chiefs advocated did not seem feasible. Kennedy remarked about the poor geography and the uncommitted Laotian people. Schlesinger and Lippmann listened, offering “little help,” as the President continued. “I don’t see why we have to be more royalist than the king,” Kennedy complained. “India is more directly threatened than we are; and, if they are not wildly excited, why should we be?” Laos, he ventured, might be a place where the Soviets would accept neutralization since the strength of indigenous Communist forces favored them anyhow. Exasperated—and with a touch of resentment perhaps directed at his predecessor—Kennedy concluded, “If I decide to do nothing, I could be an exceedingly popular president.”¹⁰⁴

Whether or not Kennedy’s ruminations were spontaneous, as Schlesinger assumed, or were contrived to explore Lippmann’s position, the effect was immediate. A few days later, Lippmann presented the context of his private presidential meeting in *Today and Tomorrow*, telling readers that neutralization was the only viable solution to the Laotian problem. As he did on a score of occasions for

¹⁰⁴ Schlesinger’s account is the only detailed version of this meeting that is available. Lippmann’s appointment diaries record only a brief mention of the meeting. Schlesinger, *A Thousand Days*: 331-332. In fact, the do-nothing approach worked admirably to Kennedy’s advantage—as he constantly deferred on policy choices presented by his more hawkish advisers.

Kennedy and, later, Lyndon Johnson, Lippmann tried to put breathing space between the Democratic president and conservative Republican critics who were looking to make political capital out of controversial Asia policies. Eisenhower's "false and imprudent" commitment in Laos, Lippmann wrote, had now "boomeranged." The Kennedy administration had to steer "between a diplomatic defeat and a meaningless war . . . and [Kennedy] is entitled to try without too much advice from the backseat drivers."¹⁰⁵ Lippmann counseled that Kennedy should begin the process of retrenching American military commitments in Southeast Asia. "Laos is a classic example of a great power being overextended," he wrote on 28 March 1961, "and the commitment in Laos goes back to the days when we were strong enough, or thought we were strong enough, to bring that remote and land-locked country into the sphere of American influence." Laos was a place that the Soviets and Americans could make an accommodation, Lippmann believed, because none of their vital interests were at stake. More importantly, they would have "to bow to the facts of life"—that neither could gain a clear-cut victory in Laos and that the only alternative was a "passive and neutralized" government led by Prince Souvanna Phouma. "Because we cannot subdue the guerillas in the jungle, and because [Khrushchev] cannot drive us out of that part of the world," he forecast, "the future is not going to be decided by arms in the jungles, the swamps, and the mountains of Laos."¹⁰⁶

While weighing diplomatic and military options, Kennedy conveyed in public the resolute message that the U.S. would not settle for a pro-Communist tilt in Vientiane. Three days after his meeting with Lippmann, the president held a press

¹⁰⁵ Lippmann, T&T, "The Congo and Laos," 23 March 1961.

¹⁰⁶ Lippmann, T&T, "The Facts of Life," 28 March 1961.

conference in which he asserted that the outcome of the Soviet-American confrontation in Laos would indicate “what kind of future our world is going to have.”¹⁰⁷ He implied a parallel in South Vietnam by interpreting the threat in Laos as being “posed by the military operations of internal dissident elements directed from outside the country.” He added, alluding the Laos’s eastern neighbor, “This is what must end if peace is to be achieved in Southeast Asia.” The next morning the *Washington Post* ran a banner headline that declared, “Kennedy Keys World Future to Laos, Vows U.S. Will Honor Its Obligations.”¹⁰⁸

In yet another meeting, Kennedy and Bundy prepped Lippmann on administration policy, particularly in Berlin and on nuclear disarmament, in advance of his visit with Soviet premier Nikita Khrushchev on 10 April 1961. But when Lippmann spent a day with Khrushchev at his Crimean retreat neither the Soviet leader nor columnist devoted much of their discussion to the issue of Laos or even Southeast Asia in general.¹⁰⁹ On the trip to the Soviet Union, Lippmann made stopovers in Paris and Rome, wiring brief reports to Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. In a memo to Kennedy, Schlesinger apprised the president on progress of “our European agent.”¹¹⁰ In Paris, the columnist met with officials in the French foreign ministry to talk specifically about Laos and South Vietnam. On 5 April he spent an evening with Foreign Minister Maurice Couve de Murville talking about Khrushchev, Berlin, and Laos. When the conversation turned to Southeast Asia, Couve complained that the

¹⁰⁷ *Washington Post*, A1, A12, 24 March 1961.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.* The *Post* reprinted the entire text of Kennedy’s press conference.

¹⁰⁹ Laos was hardly mentioned in Lippmann’s published account of the interview. See Walter Lippmann, *The Coming Tests with Russia* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1961).

¹¹⁰ Schlesinger to JFK, 3 April 1961, President’s Office Files, Staff Memoranda (A. Schlesinger), Box 65, John F. Kennedy Library, Boston, MA (hereinafter referred to as “JFKL”).

policies Dulles and Eisenhower developed—and that were embodied in the SEATO charter—“had never realized that if we entered a country, the Russians (communists) would, too.”¹¹¹ Soon after meeting with Lippmann, Khrushchev told U.S. Ambassador Llewellyn Thompson that he found Lippmann to be “a wise and intelligent man” whose columns he read “regularly.” The Soviet premier had authorized the publication of several *Today and Tomorrow* installments in the Soviet press, in part, “to show not all Americans held [the] same opinions.”¹¹² Interestingly, it was during this meeting that Khrushchev informed Lippmann of his intention to meet with Kennedy later in the year; White House officials apparently had not made the possibility of a meeting known to Lippmann prior to his visit with the Soviet premier.¹¹³

The failed Bay of Pigs invasion, which occurred while Lippmann still was abroad, momentarily overshadowed Laos and Southeast Asia. After returning from Europe—worried that Kennedy had chosen a strategy of confronting the Soviets in crises areas—Lippmann pressed even harder for negotiations over Laos. In the weeks leading up to the Vienna Conference, Lippmann encouraged Kennedy to seek a joint resolution with Khrushchev on a “neutralization” plan for all of Southeast Asia. In concept this was much like the idea put forward State Department official Chester Bowles in the fall of 1961 and, two years after that, by French leader Charles de

¹¹¹ Lippmann Diaries, 5 April 1961, Box 239, Folder 30, Series VII, WLC.

¹¹² Thompson to State Department, 24 May 1961, President’s Office Files (Countries: USSR-Vienna Meeting), Box 126, JFKL.

¹¹³ Memorandum of Conversation, President Kennedy-Soviet Ambassador Mikhail Menshikov, 16 May 1961, *FRUS, 1961-1963, Volume 5*: 136. See also the U.S. embassy’s summary of Lippmann’s conversation with Khrushchev: Telegram 2472, Moscow to Washington, 11 April 1961, Dept. of State, Central Files, RG 59, #961.6122/4-1161, National Archives and Records Administration II, College Park, MD (hereinafter referred to as “NARA II”).

Gaulle.¹¹⁴ Specifically, he wanted to formalize the participation of the Pathet Lao in a coalition government. Lippmann hoped the administration might parlay Laotian neutralization into a region-wide system encompassing all post-colonial Indo-China, including South Vietnam. American prospects of defeating Communist insurgents in Laos and Vietnam were “bleak,” he declared. The Ngo Dinh Diem regime in Saigon was “in great peril,” for though it held the major cities “it has all but lost control of the countryside to the Communist guerillas . . . our man is extremely unpopular, his government being reactionary and corrupt.” Lippmann conceded that perhaps the Diem regime, like the Buon Oum government in Vientiane, could be strengthened through reforms. But the emphasis here was on political change not military reinforcement. Neither government could be “salvaged by dropping in our paratroopers and expecting them to win a guerilla war,” the columnist wrote.¹¹⁵ In negotiating with the Soviet premier at Vienna and through diplomatic back-channels with Beijing, the President “must try to induce the Soviet Union and Red China to settle for a ‘neutralization,’ that is to say an agreement by the great powers not to fight the cold war by proxy inside Laos.” Cooperation in Laos might be the catalyst for a “regional system of independence and security and neutrality for the old colonial lands of South Asia.”¹¹⁶

In these columns during the spring of 1961, Lippmann advised this broad policy of neutralism to detach developing countries from the Cold War conflict. He reminded policymakers that the end goal of American foreign policy in Asia should

¹¹⁴ On Bowles, see Kaiser, *American Tragedy*: 95-96; on De Gaulle, see Logevall, *Choosing War*: 103-105; 112-113.

¹¹⁵ Lippmann, T&T, “The Reappraisal,” 4 May 1961.

¹¹⁶ Lippmann, T&T, “Fragments of an Empire,” 16 May 1961.

not be to create governments with internal politics that mirrored their own. Rather, it should be to encourage popularly-supported Southeast Asian governments to pursue foreign policies compatible with American interests in Southeast Asia—which meant, generally, that they did not align themselves too closely with Beijing or Moscow. Though he agreed that the U.S. should contain Chinese expansion, he wrote repeatedly that it could do so only in cooperation with the other Asian great powers that shared this objective: India, Pakistan, and the Soviet Union. He articulated a primitive policy of Southeast Asia triangularization—much as he had in 1949 and 1950—that balanced off Soviet, American, and Chinese influence.

Joe Alsop's pro-intervention columns placed pressure on Kennedy to militarize the American commitment in Laos. In March 1961, Alsop wrote several columns darkly forecasting "the increasing possibility that traditional diplomacy will not produce the desired minimum result in Laos."¹¹⁷ For Alsop the minimal acceptable outcome appeared to be a pro-West government in Vientiane that would transform the country into a bastion of American power. Anything short of that would, in his words, be "a disguised but decisive surrender in Laos."¹¹⁸ Alsop visited Indochina in late-March sensing that a showdown loomed. He explained to readers in a familiar Alsopian rendition of the "domino theory," that a "disastrous chain reaction" was certain to follow a Communist takeover in Laos. "If Laos falls under effective Communist control, South Viet-Nam will be automatically doomed," he wrote in a column filed from Bangkok. "Cambodia's capricious but genuine neutrality will turn into something very different. Thailand's present Western

¹¹⁷ Joseph Alsop, "Behind the Public Face," *Matter of Fact*, 22 March 1961, *Washington Post*: A15.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

orientation will be all but impossible to maintain. And if these things happen, the process will not end in the countries that border Laos.”¹¹⁹

When President Kennedy maneuvered American naval forces into the region, and deployed a small contingent of troops in Thailand, Alsop enthused that it was “as a textbook illustration of the rule that guts are needed for successful dealings with the Kremlin.”¹²⁰ Yet, by late-May, when the Laotian Communists continued to attack the RLA forces and it seemed that Khrushchev had been slow to implement earlier cease-fire agreements, Alsop lambasted the Kennedy administration. From the Geneva conference he filed a column critical of the U.S. decision to support the creation of another International Control Commission (ICC) to police Laos. The original ICC for Indochina, created under the 1954 Geneva Accords, had in Alsop’s estimate been grossly ineffective. Composed of Indian, Canadian, and Polish observers, the commission he wrote, “produced no result anytime except by its occasional spasms of pro-Communist bias.”¹²¹ Western policy suffered from its Alice-in-Wonderland quality. In seeking a diplomatic settlement over a policy of “real firmness,” Alsop told readers, American and French negotiators had adopted the “method of the White Queen, who boasted that she had trained herself to believe as many as ‘six impossible things before breakfast.’”¹²² President Kennedy, after reading several of Alsop’s dispatches, privately told Schlesinger and Mac Bundy, “I agree much more with Walter than I do with Joe on this.” With characteristic caution—worrying that this

¹¹⁹ Joseph Alsop, “No Summer Lightning,” *Matter of Fact*, 29 March 1961, *Washington Post*: A15.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

¹²¹ Joseph Alsop, “The Hollow Conference,” *Matter of Fact*, 22 May 1961, *Washington Post*: A17.

¹²² *Ibid.*

comment would be repeated to Alsop in a social setting—the president added, “But don’t let Joe know that!”¹²³

Though Kennedy considered military options, eventually authorizing increased naval operations off the coast of Vietnam and putting a small force of U.S. troops into Thailand, he settled on the middle-course policy which he had outlined for Lippmann in March 1961. The neutralist option had articulate—if not especially powerful—advocates in the U.S. government: Ambassador-at-Large W. Averell Harriman, Senator Mike Mansfield, and the U.S. Ambassador to Laos, Winthrop Brown.¹²⁴ More significantly, Kennedy came to believe that American and Soviet interests coincided in Laos. Neutralization would prevent the U.S. and U.S.S.R. from engaging in an expensive, dangerous proxy war. As Washington was only beginning to belatedly realize, Moscow was eager to neutralize Chinese influence.¹²⁵ Most importantly, Kennedy seemed inclined toward a diplomatic solution in Laos from the beginning.¹²⁶

¹²³ Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., interview with author, 12 March 2002, New York City. Schlesinger pulled this quote and his recollections of the meeting from his unpublished personal diaries.

¹²⁴ This is based on Kaiser’s interpretation in *American Tragedy*. See, for example, 40-41 (Brown); 86-90 (on Harriman); 177-180 (on Mansfield).

¹²⁵ Kochavi, “Limited Accommodation, Perpetuated Conflict”: 95-135.

¹²⁶ “The President’s News Conference of 25 January 1961,” *Public Papers of the Presidents: John F. Kennedy, 1961* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1962): 16 (hereinafter referred to as *PPP/JFK*). Though he never ruled out the military option, he repeatedly stated his desire throughout the first half of 1961 to reach a negotiated settlement. Days after his Inaugural, in his first news conference as president, Kennedy defined the American goal in Laos as creating “an independent country not dominated by either side but concerned with the life of the people within the country . . . [an] independent country, peaceful country, uncommitted country.” Twice in March 1961, as the military situation deteriorated the president made similar statements. Even when he held out the possibility of American military intervention, he coupled the suggestion with strong overtures for diplomacy. On 23 March 1961, days after his private meeting with Lippmann, Kennedy opened a press conference with a lengthy statement outlining the origins of the struggle in Laos. He expressed determination but also a desire to negotiate: My fellow Americans, Laos is far away from America, but the world is small . . . The security of all Southeast Asia will be endangered if Laos loses its neutral independence. Its own safety runs with the safety of us all—in real neutrality observed by all. I want to make it clear to the American people and to all of the world that all we want in Laos is peace, not war; a truly neutral government, not a cold war pawn; a

On 24 May 1961, National Security Adviser McGeorge Bundy met Lippmann to discuss the upcoming Vienna Conference and, two days later, Kennedy and Bundy brought Lippmann into the White House for still another briefing.¹²⁷ Apparently, however, the meeting was not solely designed to get Lippmann's advice on negotiating with Khrushchev. The president also wanted to insure that Lippmann would continue to be a public ally in advance of a Laotian settlement with the Soviet premier. The conversation touched on Berlin and negotiations in Laos, with Kennedy repeating to Lippmann his desire to install a coalition government in Vientiane. Afterward Bundy met alone with Lippmann to cover the details on what would be offered at Vienna. He later wrote to Kennedy, "You made a strong point with Lippmann that a neutral administration [in Laos] can in fact be helpful to both sides when their vital interests are not involved and what is needed for both is an objective reassurance on the real situation—both Laos and the test ban meet this standard, in our view."¹²⁸ Kennedy alluded publicly to Laos as a test case for superpower cooperation on other issues such as the nuclear test ban treaty and Berlin in a 2 June 1961 press conference in Paris. The President stressed that he would try to reach a common understanding with Khrushchev on what a "neutral and independent" Laos meant and that the U.S. would not withdraw from the Geneva negotiations. "I cannot believe that anyone would imperil the peace by failing to recognize the importance of reaching an agreement in this country," Kennedy added, "by breaking up a

settlement concluded at the conference table and not on the battlefield. "The President's News Conference of 23 March 1961," *PPP/JFK (1961)*: 213-220. See also Kennedy's news conference of 8 March 1961, p. 154.

¹²⁷ See Lippmann's appointment diaries, 24-26 May 1961, Box 239, Folder 30, Series VII, WLC.

¹²⁸ "Talking Points: President's Trip, Europe 5/61-6/61, Khrushchev Briefing Book Vol. 1, Box 234, Trips and Conferences, National Security Files, JFKL.

conference and refusing to agree to a cease-fire and a government and a people which can maintain their neutrality against outside intervention from whatever the source.”¹²⁹

At the Vienna Summit in June 1961, Laos offered the only common ground Kennedy and Khrushchev shared. A tersely worded communiqué explained that the President and Chairman “reaffirmed their support of a neutral and independent Laos under a government chosen by the Laotians themselves, and of international agreements for insuring that neutrality and independence, and in this connection they have recognized the importance of an effective cease-fire.”¹³⁰ The two leaders agreed to have Britain, the U.S., and Russia reconvene members the 1954 Geneva Agreements. Even on this point, however, Kennedy expressed dissatisfaction with Khrushchev’s ambiguous pledge of cooperation. A month later in a meeting with Pakistani President Khan Ayub the president remarked, “On Laos, Khrushchev had said the right words about neutrality” but Kennedy “had come away unclear as to what meaning he attached to them.”¹³¹

Lippmann continued to work on behalf of administration policy in Laos by presenting the coalition government arrangement as the only available option. For months, he had written about it in his column, but on 15 June 1961 he made the argument before a national television audience. During an hour-long, prime time CBS interview, Lippmann discounted the “domino theory” as it applied in Laos and

¹²⁹ “Remarks and Question and Answer Period at the Press Luncheon in Paris,” 2 June 1961, *PPP/JFK (1961)*: 433-434.

¹³⁰ “Joint Statement Following Discussions with Premier Khrushchev in Vienna,” 4 June 1961, *PPP/JFK (1961)*: 438.

¹³¹ Memorandum of Conversation, President Kennedy-Pakistani President Ayub, 11 July 1961, Washington, DC, *FRUS*, 23 (South Asia): 66-67.

the rest of Southeast Asia. “I don’t consider Laos ‘gone,’” Lippmann told interviewer Howard K. Smith. He expected cooperation on the Laotian crisis between Moscow and Washington because Southeast Asia did not represent a “primary interest” for either superpower—echoing his late-May meeting with Kennedy. “Laos is not going to be what we rather foolishly, I think, two or three years ago tried to make it—an American satellite,” he concluded. “I mean, putting in a government that suited us and—that is not possible.”¹³²

Other matters, principally the developing crisis in Berlin, soon reoriented the administration’s attention away from Laos for the duration of 1961 and into the spring of 1962. During that time, however, American diplomats worked to encourage Phoumi and Boun Oum to accept Souvanna as the prime minister of a coalition government. Under intense pressure from Averell Harriman and the U.S. embassy, Phoumi relented in March 1962, agreeing to support Souvanna “in principle.” He refused, however, to support the make-up of the neutralist cabinet.¹³³

Phoumi’s most ardent American supporter, the columnist Joseph Alsop, criticized American policy, which, he believed, served French interests in Southeast Asia. Averell Harriman had an “acrimonious” talk with the columnist about Laos in February 1962. Alsop wanted the administration to pursue a hard line by supporting Phoumi. He was wary that the neutralist forces in Vientiane were aligned with French diplomats. Harriman later recalled, “I tried to din into his mind that there was no choice except to attempt to negotiate a peaceful settlement in which Souvanna Phouma would be the dominant factor of the coalition government, or to put in

¹³² Lippmann, *Conversations with Walter Lippmann* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Co., 1965): 68-69.

¹³³ Kaiser, *American Tragedy*: 129-130.

American troops with or without SEATO, that if he criticized the administration's policies, he should come out for American intervention." Alsop's prejudices, however, got the better of his judgment. For years he had viewed the French initiatives in Indochina to be disruptive and self-serving. He once wrote that French diplomacy was "gravely influenced by the emotion of the dog in the manger, who cannot bear for others to wield the influence he no longer possesses himself." De Gaulle and his lieutenants planned "to use Laos as a lever" to promote the General's idea of a French-American "directorate"—presumably in which Paris would help administer Indochina with the guarantee of American military force.¹³⁴ "[Alsop] loves Phoumi and hates the French, from [Foreign Minister] Couve [de Murville] on down," Harriman wrote in 1962. "He sees no reason why we can't make an American political and military bastion of Laos. He doesn't admit that a Lao could be anti-Communist and neutral, and still against his conception of US domination of Laos."¹³⁵

Lippmann chose to place the Laotian problem into a larger perspective than Alsop. Soviet-American cooperation developed, in part, because of a common interest to block Chinese expansion. As the Pathet Lao continued to pile up victories, Beijing took the initiative to build roads to the northern Laotian border for use by its own military.¹³⁶ Moscow increased the tempo of its aid to Ho Chi Minh and the Pathet Lao in order to off-set Beijing. Gradually, the deterioration of Sino-Soviet relations during this period also became more visible to American policymakers and

¹³⁴ Joseph Alsop, "Leadership Regained," *Matter of Fact*, 31 March 1961, *Washington Post*: A15.

¹³⁵ Memorandum of Conversation with Joseph Alsop, 15 February 1962, Box 586, Harriman Papers, LC.

¹³⁶ LaFeber, *America, Russia, and the Cold War, 1945-1991*: 220.

observers like Lippmann. In the spring of 1962, Lippmann suggested that the Soviets had aided the North Vietnamese to keep Hanoi out of Chinese hands and “not so much as to precipitate a conflict with the United States in Laos and South Viet-Nam.” He was less sanguine about prospects for negotiating with Beijing: “it is useless to woo Peiping or to threaten it . . . The right policy is to contain Red China to prevent it from expanding and to avoid provoking it.”

Lippmann pointed out that there already existed an alignment of Asian powers favorable to achieving that goal—and capable of exerting enough pressure so that the U.S. would not have to intervene unilaterally. According to Lippmann’s logic, Moscow was exerting pressure on Mao Zedong to ensure that he did not precipitate a war in Indochina and, also, preserving its own interests. “[The Soviets] seem to be using such influence as they have, which is not omnipotent, to further the neutralization of Laos, and eventually all the southern borderlands facing Red China,” Lippmann wrote. “So it may not be going too far to say that under the pressure of Chinese expansionary actions—in the north against the Soviet Union, against India to the south, and against Southeast Asia—there is coming into being a *de facto* coalition to contain the expansion.”¹³⁷

The fragile situation in Laos again threatened to erupt into full-scale conflict when the Pathet Lao overwhelmed Phoumi’s northern outpost at Nam Tha on 6 May 1962. Administration officials contemplated plans to send 40,000 troops to occupy the Mekong Delta along the southeastern Laotian border.¹³⁸ President Kennedy, however, remained inclined to resolving the crisis at the negotiating table. During a

¹³⁷ Lippmann, T&T, “Peiping and Moscow,” 10 April 1962; “Change to the East,” 29 May 1962.

¹³⁸ *FRUS, 1961-1963, XXIV*: 377-379; 381-384.

17 May press conference he said, “The great hazard is of a shooting war in Asia—in the jungles of Asia—and it is our object to bring about a diplomatic solution which will make the chances of such a war far less likely.”¹³⁹ Kennedy dispatched several thousand U.S. troops to Thailand and sent the Seventh Fleet into the Gulf of Siam—Lippmann called it the equivalent of gunboat diplomacy.¹⁴⁰ He meant this as a positive assessment of a policy reminiscent of the constructive show of force his political hero Theodore Roosevelt once employed to encourage U.S. rivals to negotiate.

Administration officials, including President Kennedy, blamed Phoumi for intentionally precipitating a military crisis at Nam Tha to draw in American forces against the Pathet Lao.¹⁴¹ When Phoumi again refused to cede power, Kennedy cut off economic aid and the regime collapsed. Shortly thereafter, on 12 June, the Vientiane factions agreed to reinstate Prince Souvanna Phouma to head the neutral government and to retain control over the make-up of his cabinet, which included a large Communist representation. Geneva Conference participants developed a provisional plan to withdraw foreign troops from Laos and to guarantee the coalition government in Vientiane. On 23 July 1962, Secretary of State Dean Rusk signed the Declaration and Protocol on the Neutrality of Laos.¹⁴²

Pondering political developments and the likely pro-Communist tilt of the new coalition government, Lippmann told readers late that spring: “We are now ready to settle for a neutral Laos, which does not mean a Laos with a government that is

¹³⁹ Tad Szulc, “US Asserts Aim in Laos Is Accord to Halt Fighting,” 18 May 1962, *New York Times*: 1.

¹⁴⁰ See *Conversations with Walter Lippmann*: 111.

¹⁴¹ See Kaiser, *American Tragedy*: 122-149.

¹⁴² Castle, *At War in the Shadow of Vietnam*: 46-50; Dommen, *Conflict in Laos*: 213.

mathematically equidistant between Senator [Barry] Goldwater and Mao Tse-tung. It means rather a Laos which tries to avoid entangling alliances and to live a quiet life.”¹⁴³ Several weeks later, Lippmann again told a national television audience that, despite Laos’s proximity to China and North Vietnam, “Russia is the country that is acting” primarily there. The Soviets were there for “preventive reasons,” he said, “to prevent the Chinese, who are reckless and inexperienced, from doing something that would produce a war . . . just as we had one in Korea.” Chinese and Soviet archival materials released in the 1990s confirmed the developing rivalry between Moscow and Beijing in Southeast Asia.¹⁴⁴ But Lippmann, like many Washington observers at the time, failed to account for the deterioration of Moscow’s influence in the region—and just how consequential this development was to his hopes for a future great-power configuration to solve the problem of South Vietnam.¹⁴⁵

Laos failed to provide the precedents Lippmann hoped Washington would apply in the rest of Indochina. Particularly in the case of Vietnam, there was little cross-over. Neutralization proceeded in Laos along the coalition track while in Vietnam partition seemed the only outcome between Hanoi and Saigon. For one thing, Vietnam lacked a viable neutralist leader (like Souvanna) around whom to

¹⁴³ Lippmann, T&T, “Change to the East,” 29 May 1962.

¹⁴⁴ For a recent summary of the literature and new primary sources see, Yang Kuisong, “Working Paper #34: Changes in Mao Zedong’s Attitude Toward the Indochina War, 1949-1973,” *Cold War International History Project Virtual Archive*,

http://wwwics.si.edu/index.cfm?fuseaction=library.document&topic_id=1409&id=952. For the literature on Chinese involvement in Indochina, see Qiang Zhai, *China and the Vietnam Wars, 1950-1975* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000).

¹⁴⁵ Moscow’s influence in Laos and in North Vietnam decreased as Hanoi and Beijing cooperated in increasing aid to the Laotian insurgency. U.S. officials, Kennedy included, still continued to hold the Kremlin responsible for Pathet Lao actions as the coalition government began to unravel in Vientiane. The decline in Soviet influence accelerated when it withdrew military hardware under the provisions of the 1962 Geneva agreements. “Laos, Vietnam, all Southeast Asia. You and the Chinese can fight over it,” Khrushchev told Harriman in 1962. “I give up. We give up. We don’t want any of it.” Quoted in, Freedman, *Kennedy’s Wars*: 355.

construct a coalition. (In the American-backed South, Diem's regime lacked popular and credible politicians altogether.) In Washington, too, considerable bureaucratic inertia had moved along the military track in Vietnam for a decade. The soft Laotian policy and the hard approach to Vietnam, at least in the minds of some of Kennedy's closest advisers, were self-reinforcing ideas. When ambassador-at-large Chester Bowles urged a general policy of neutralization, including the dissolution of SEATO, in the spring of 1962, administration officials quickly turned it aside. An American policy of military strength in South Vietnam, one NSC officer believed, offered an important "counter-balance in the public mind to a more flexible policy in Laos and it also avoids misleading the Chinese and the Viet Minh into thinking that we might be preparing to disengage from the area."¹⁴⁶ President Kennedy seemed to share this viewpoint. In a late-1961 meeting with Indian Prime Minister Jawaharal Nehru and U.S. Ambassador to New Delhi John Kenneth Galbraith, the President said that while America was committed to a coalition government in Laos, continuing attacks on South Vietnam, some of them via Laos, were of special concern to Washington. "If these should succeed, it would look as if by our own willingness to negotiate on Laos we had lost both Laos and Vietnam," Kennedy told Nehru. "That would discredit our efforts and make it impossible for us to negotiate on other issues, including Berlin." Galbraith interjected that "if in Laos or in any other country neutralism becomes merely a stage which precedes a communist takeover then the whole concept of neutralism will become a stench in the nostrils." Kennedy expressed resolve to get

¹⁴⁶ Mike Forrestal to McGeorge Bundy, 10 April 1962, *FRUS, 1961-1963*, Vol. 23: 59-61. In a thoughtful overview of the recent literature on Laos, Noam Kochavi suggests that pursuit of a regional neutralization plan was undermined by the pervading fear that a moderate approach toward the Chinese

the Laotian princes to reach an agreement that month. But, he reiterated, “we don’t want our efforts in Laos to end in a collapse in South Vietnam.”¹⁴⁷

V.

While willing to negotiate in Laos, Washington officials were determined to persevere in South Vietnam. During the same time that Kennedy negotiated in Laos, he rapidly expanded the American military commitment to the war in South Vietnam. Following the broad recommendations of the Taylor-Rostow report in October 1961, the president enlarged the American military presence from 500 to 10,000 advisors by the end of 1962, authorized these advisors to participate in combat missions, and pledged U.S. support to the Diem regime.¹⁴⁸ Kennedy’s concessions in Laos, moreover, considerably raised the political stakes and seemed to wed administration policy to a deterrence strategy in South Vietnam that would intimidate Beijing and pre-empt domestic criticism.¹⁴⁹ Kennedy may not have relished a large American military commitment in Vietnam. He may, as one recent account of escalation have argued, even have worked cautiously to bring his advisors around to a diplomatic

would threaten administration strength at home and credibility abroad. See Kochavi, “Limited Accommodation, Perpetuated Conflict”: especially, 119-122.

¹⁴⁷ Memorandum of Conversation, President Kennedy-Indian Prime Minister Nehru, 7 November 1961, Washington, DC, *FRUS* 23 (South Asia): 129-130.

¹⁴⁸ Herring, *America’s Longest War*: 80-83.

¹⁴⁹ Kochavi, “Limited Accommodation, Perpetuated Conflict: Kennedy, China, and the Laos Crisis, 1961-1963,” 119-122; see also, Kaiser, *American Tragedy*: 117-121.

exit.¹⁵⁰ But intervention was precisely the course for which his middling policies—in another administration’s hands—prepared the way.¹⁵¹

U.S. military and political fortunes in South Vietnam steadily declined during Kennedy’s brief term. Starting in 1961, the Vietcong (VC) stepped up attacks in the provinces, using larger forces which Hanoi helped recruit and supply. The American-backed strategic hamlet program, initiated in February 1962, meant to counter Vietcong successes in the countryside. Instead it further eroded support for the Diem government. Poorly implemented and conceptually flawed, the program alienated rural peasants who were forced from ancestral land and made to work for less than

¹⁵⁰ Kaiser, *American Tragedy*: 485-493. For discussions of Kennedy’s options see: Basset and Pelz, “The Failed Search for Victory,” 228-231; Walter LaFeber, *American, Russia, and the Cold War, 1945-1991*: 231-232.

¹⁵¹ The historiographical debate Kennedy’s Vietnam policies has shifted from early portrayals of JFK as a confirmed cold warrior committed to “flexible response” to more recent appraisals which stress the president’s ambivalence about committing ground forces in the region. As the documentary records of the Kennedy and Johnson administrations opened in the 1980s and 1990s, Kennedy’s Vietnam legacy improved even as LBJ’s declined further. See, for example, Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment*: 201-205; Bassett and Stephen, “The Failed Search for Victory: Vietnam and the Politics of War”: 223-252. Some scholars even evaluated Kennedy as more aggressive or hawkish than his military advisors. See for example, Robert Buzzanco, *Masters of War: Military Dissent and Politics in the Vietnam Era* (New York: Cambridge University Press), especially 81-113. Among the studies at the end of the 1990s a new consensus was taking shape—one that minimized Kennedy’s Wilsonian rhetoric while more closely examining his actions in Laos as well as his repeated refusals to deploy U.S. troops in the region. These accounts emphasize Kennedy’s moderation, his openness to negotiation in Southeast Asia, his receptivity to European consultation, and, generally, a sense of diplomatic acumen that neither his predecessor nor his successor shared. Two major works in particular have gone so far as to construct elaborate counterfactual hypotheses that suggest that had Kennedy lived to win a second term the U.S. likely would not have Americanized the Vietnamese war. See Logevall, *Choosing War*: 395-400; and Kaiser, *American Tragedy*: 485-493. Yet, neither study completely convinces. See Kochavi, “Limited Accommodation, Perpetuated Conflict,” 95-135, which particularly examines Kennedy’s diplomacy in Laos. Kennedy’s problems in South Vietnam were compounded by his assumption—widely held in his administration—that until the military situation stabilized in South Vietnam there would be no political settlement acceptable to U.S. interests. “Let us never negotiate out of fear,” Kennedy said at his Inaugural, “but let us never fear to negotiate.” Those words haunt Kennedy’s Vietnam legacy, capturing the tragedy of his (as well as Johnson’s) policies: there never was a moment when the president or his advisors believed they’d satisfied the military-political balance necessary to initiate a diplomatic resolution.

their previous subsistence level of living. Strategic hamlet ultimately created more VC recruits.¹⁵²

Military reversals compounded political problems. During 1962, when the South Vietnamese army began employing American battle plans and weaponry, the Vietcong—a force defined by their adaptability—changed tactics by conducting more ambushes and political assassinations, further destabilizing the key Bin Dinh province and most of the Mekong Delta south of Saigon. When ARVN and Vietcong forces finally did meet in a large conventional battle at Ap Bac on 2 January 1963, the results were disastrous for the American-trained and supplied South Vietnamese.¹⁵³ American and world opinion further eroded when, in the late-spring of 1963, the Diem regime cracked down on Buddhist protests against government domestic policies. A series of Buddhist self-immolations, captured on film and widely published in the U.S. and Europe, horrified the American public and Washington officials. By August, the administration was debating whether or not to replace Diem in a military coup.

On 29 August 1963, French leader Charles de Gaulle volunteered his own solution to the problem in South Vietnam—a communication that hardened Washington's position rather than make it rethink its commitment to a military victory. The General employed calculated ambiguity in order to permit Washington, Moscow, Hanoi, and Beijing enough political wiggle-room to find their way to the conference table. He put forward a five-part proposal: end Saigon's war against the

¹⁵² On strategic hamlet: Kaiser, *American Tragedy*: 170-180; Herring, *America's Longest War*: 85-90.

¹⁵³ For the best account of the Battle of Ap Bac and its impact on American policy, see Neil Sheehan *A Bright Shining Lie: John Paul Vann and America in Vietnam* (New York: Random House, 1988): 212-

National Liberation Front (NLF); normalize diplomatic contact with Hanoi; establish a coalition government in Saigon with the participation of the Vietcong; withdraw U.S. military advisors and hardware; and create a North-South federation of Vietnam which could provide the basis for eventual reunification.¹⁵⁴ There was little daylight between the neutralization Lippmann had advocated piecemeal since 1961 and the plan De Gaulle concisely laid out for Washington in the late-summer of 1963. China's designs would be checked without another American intervention on the Asian mainland—a replay of the Korean War.¹⁵⁵ With relatively minimal effort, and no use of military force, France could restore a large measure of its political influence in Southeast Asia and curry favor with the non-aligned nations in Africa and Asia. De Gaulle, too, would have satisfied one of his passionate desires—to distance his country from American power and create an independent role for France within the Western Alliance.¹⁵⁶

De Gaulle's proposal angered and concerned U.S. officials, including President Kennedy—making him less inclined to use Lippmann to explore the General's position. Kennedy made an unusually brusque public reply on 2 September during a CBS interview. He implied that the French were meddling in an *American* problem. "I guess [De Gaulle's statement] was an expression of his general view but he doesn't have any forces there or any program of economic assistance," Kennedy told interviewer Walter Cronkite. "So, that while these expressions are welcome the burden is being carried—as it usually is—by the U.S. and the people there. What, of

265; 269-283. For an account that places Ap Bac into the larger context of US-ARVN military operations in 1962-1963, see Kaiser, *American Tragedy*: 150-185.

¹⁵⁴ For a summary of De Gaulle's overture see, Logevall *Choosing War*: 13-15; 103-105.

¹⁵⁵ For one description of De Gaulle's geopolitical aims see Herring's *America's Longest War*: 101.

course, makes Americans somewhat impatient is that after carrying this load for 18 years we are glad to get counsel, but we would like a little more assistance—real assistance. . . . It doesn't do us any good to say, 'Well, why don't we just go home and leave the world to those who are our enemies.'"¹⁵⁷ During a meeting of Vietnam policymakers the next day Kennedy remarked that the French were not likely to challenge his cool statement about neutralization. He mused that they would not make an official protest because he "doubted [French] Ambassador [Herve] Alphand had enough guts to protest."¹⁵⁸ Instead, Alphand complained to Lippmann who, in turn, applied pressure to Kennedy in his columns.¹⁵⁹ Nevertheless, the Kennedy and Johnson administrations steadfastly rejected the neutralization proposal proffered by De Gaulle and seconded by Lippmann in more than a dozen columns from September 1963 to May 1964.

Lippmann grasped De Gaulle's offering with an urgency that matched the deteriorating situation in Saigon. In doing so, he emerged as the chief advocate of De Gaulle's neutralization plan in the United States. Though vague, neutralization carried a measure of influence with the Vietnamese people, he wrote on 3 September 1963. The General's plan had "little material force . . . no military power and little

¹⁵⁶ Logevall, *Choosing War*: 103-105.

¹⁵⁷ Official transcript of select quotations from the Kennedy-Cronkite interview of 2 September 1963, Box 519, W. Averell Harriman Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, DC (hereinafter referred to as "LC"). A week later, on the *Huntley-Brinkley Report*, Kennedy was less circumspect about his immediate plans in Vietnam: "We must be patient, we must persist . . . What I am concerned about is that Americans will get impatient and say that because they don't like events in Southeast Asia or they don't like the government in Vietnam, that we should withdraw. . . . I think we should stay." PPP: *JFK, 1963*: pp. 652, 659, 576. Available on-line at:

www.presidency.ucsb.edu/site/docs/pppus.php?year=1963&id=349 .

¹⁵⁸ "Memorandum of Conference with President," 3 September 1963, *FRUS, 1961-1963*, Vol. IV: 100-101.

¹⁵⁹ Lippmann and Alphand, along with their wives Helen and Nicole, were close acquaintances—they socialized together in Washington and once flew to Paris together when the Lippmanns took one of

economic power,” Lippmann conceded, in a column aimed squarely at the administration’s concerns about De Gaulle’s plan. But it had “moral force.”¹⁶⁰ He implored the administration to “welcome” French assistance and expertise. “However annoying, General de Gaulle may be right that the ultimate objective policy, though enormously difficult to attain, is a reunited, independent, and neutral Viet-Nam,” Lippmann explained. “If there is no such settlement . . . then a protracted and indecisive war of attrition is all that is left.”¹⁶¹ Kennedy read the column that morning and made the inference that Lippmann was arguing that Vietnam could be neutralized in much the same way as Laos. Though Lippmann had, in fact, suggested Laos as a successful model to the administration in columns in 1961 and 1962, he did not directly make that link in this column. Kennedy, nevertheless, rejected the comparison. In a Vietnam meeting late that afternoon, the President—who thought the policy in Laos “was not working”—expressed frustration to a roomful of advisors that Lippmann kept suggesting the “Laotian case provided an illustration of what should be done in Vietnam.”¹⁶²

The three columns Lippmann wrote in quick succession in September 1963 framed the argument for neutralization in Vietnam which he employed in newsprint and in private meetings with U.S. officials for the next 18 months. He warned the Kennedy administration against expanding the war, explaining to readers that the “price of a military victory in the Vietnamese war is higher than American vital

their annual trips to Europe. Lippmann’s appointment diaries show that they met regularly—as they did in the late-summer and fall of 1963—until Alphant left his post in 1965.

¹⁶⁰ Lippmann, T&T, “The Nettle of Viet-Nam,” 3 September 1963.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² “Memorandum of Conference with the President,” 3 September 1963, *FRUS, 1961-1963*, Volume IV: 100-101.

interests can justify.”¹⁶³ Lippmann also wrote that Diem showed no inclination—nor did the ARVN forces display ability on the battlefield—to win the war, which would require cutting off Communist guerillas in the South by interdicting their supplies from North Vietnam. “Only the United States could do that,” he wrote, “and then only if we were willing to pay a price.” The cost, he warned, would likely be Chinese intervention along Vietnam’s borders. With all the attendant possibilities for escalation, the columnist believed a unilateral American military operation to be an unacceptable risk.¹⁶⁴

Like Kennedy and his advisers, Lippmann struggled to find a middle way in Vietnam. But whereas Washington’s approach tilted toward military options the columnist steadily appealed for a diplomatic resolution. Though he feared an American pullout from Saigon would precipitate chaos in Southeast Asia and damage U.S. influence in any future regional settlement, he seemed increasingly prepared to accept those consequences. Lippmann took care to applaud the president’s signal in the Cronkite interview that he might be prepared to reconsider the nature of the American commitment to the Diem government. The Vietnamese people “are the ones who have to win [the war] or lose it,” Kennedy said. “We can give them equipment. We can send our men there as advisors but they have to win it—the people of Vietnam against the Communists.” Asked if Diem’s government could regain the support of the people, Kennedy replied that “with changes in policy and perhaps with personnel I think it can.” He described the war as a “very essential struggle.” Lippmann, who at various times in his career chose to put the best possible

¹⁶³ Lippmann, T&T, “Mr. Kennedy on Vietnam,” 5 September 1963.

¹⁶⁴ Lippmann, T&T, “Mr. Kennedy on Vietnam,” 5 September 1963.

face on an important public statement, may have read a little too far into Kennedy's intentions. He believed the president meant to leave the door open for a diplomatic exit from Vietnam. "In terms of power politics," Lippmann told readers, "this amounts to saying that South Viet-Nam is an important secondary interest but that it is not a primary vital interest of the United States."¹⁶⁵ In retrospect, however, it is clear that Kennedy, who supported the 1 November 1963 coup to overthrow Diem, thought the war at least could be prosecuted more vigorously with a more proactive regime.¹⁶⁶

Lippmann proved far less enthusiastic about the alternative to reforming Diem's government: replacing it. After the Buddhist crisis in the summer of 1963, Washington planners were convinced that Diem must go if the war was to be won. Over a late-August weekend, with Kennedy vacationing in Hyannisport and many of the principal decision-makers away from Washington, several State Department officials performed what the President's Special Assistant for Military Affairs, General Maxwell Taylor, later called an "egregious end run."¹⁶⁷ Undersecretary for Political Affairs W. Averell Harriman, Michael Forrestal, George Ball, and Roger Hilsman, drew up instructions authorizing the new U.S. Ambassador to Saigon, Henry Cabot Lodge, to encourage a group of ARVN generals to overthrow the unpopular regime. They then obtained approval from Kennedy and Dean Rusk on the condition that a number of other key officials had signed-off on it—many of whom claimed later that they were not consulted.¹⁶⁸ The hastily-arranged, ill-conceived plan

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ Logevall, *Choosing War*: 68-74; Dallek, *An Unfinished Life*: 80-84.

¹⁶⁷ Abramson, *Spanning the Century*: 622.

¹⁶⁸ See for example, Abramson, *Spanning the Century*: 619-224; Kaiser, *American Tragedy*: 229-240.

had major consequences for it set in motion the 1 November coup—an event that would embroil Americans to a far greater degree in the management of their Vietnamese clients.

When Lippmann heard coup rumblings in personal conversations with Harriman, Ball, and the French Ambassador Herve Alphanand, he used his column to counsel Kennedy to move cautiously and to neither expand the war nor abandon Diem.¹⁶⁹ “While I have always thought it a mistake to become engaged in Southeast Asia,” Lippmann told readers in a mid-September *Today and Tomorrow* installment, “we must hold on and wait . . . holding not only President Diem’s hand but also that of Madame Nhu. While this may not be a very attractive or satisfying thing to be doing we must leave it to the historians to decide how we got there, and whether the trip was necessary.” He warned explicitly against an American-backed coup against Diem. As bad as circumstances were with the unpopular ruling family, the prospect of a junta of generals in Saigon mustering popular support seemed even more remote. Moreover, it is likely that Alphanand made clear to Lippmann that Diem and Nhu were moving closer to making a political settlement with Hanoi—a move that would have ensured Lippmann’s foremost desire for an American military withdrawal.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁹ Lippmann Appointment Diaries, September 1963, Series VII, Box 240, Folder 34, WLC.

¹⁷⁰ Lippmann, T&T, “Whither Viet-Nam?” 17 September 1963. Just before Lippmann wrote his 17 September column he visited Alphanand and Harriman to discuss the situation in Saigon. The Alphanand-Lippmann correspondence is not extensive (most often they spoke in person) but it gives a sense of the strong personal connection between the two men and their wives. When Alphanand retired as French Ambassador to the U.S. in 1965, the Lippmanns inscribed a gift: “In admiration of their high example of the diplomatic art, their demonstration that it is best to navigate not by the winds and cross-currents, but by the fixed stars of the enduring interests of the French and the American nations.” Walter and Helen Lippmann to Nicole and Herve Alphanand, 16 October 1965, Series III, Box, 50, Folder 36, WLC. See also the Lippmann Diaries of 13 September 1963, Series VII, Box 240, Folder 34, WLC, for Lippmann’s meetings with officials during this period.

In some respects, Lippmann's analysis reflected the media's general posture on Vietnam, which was somewhat ambivalent about developments in Saigon. The State Department's 19 September 1963 summary of press opinion on Vietnam policy, which passed across the desk of National Security Adviser McGeorge Bundy, noted that Lippmann led the general news disposition that the best present course was "to increase pressure on the Diem family while continuing to subsidize it." Surveying support for De Gaulle's neutralization plan, however, it found Lippmann to be in a small minority that included *The New Republic* and *The Nation*.¹⁷¹

Lippmann and the columnist Joe Alsop were working different sides of the neutralization track. Alsop filed several columns from Saigon in September 1963, seeking to discredit De Gaulle's plan and his top diplomat to South Vietnam. In his 18 September column, Alsop echoed the fears of many top administration officials: that the Saigon regime might be ready to strike a deal with Hanoi in which U.S. forces would be asked to withdrawal. He detailed French Ambassador Roger LaLouette's numerous visits to Gia Long Palace in an attempt to establish communications between Hanoi and Diem's brother Ngo Dinh Nhu. LaLouette and a Polish diplomat brought personal messages from North Vietnamese leader Ho Chi Minh and Foreign Minister Pham Van Dong to Nhu to bypass the more hard line President Diem, Alsop wrote. He accused the French of propagating rumors that the U.S. would withdraw its support from Diem. Such diplomatic efforts, Alsop told readers, were the "hitherto invisible . . . really ugly" side of De Gaulle's offer of neutralization. It was, he explained, "French intrigue" designed "to defeat American

¹⁷¹ Benjamin H. Read to McGeorge Bundy, 19 September 1963, "American Press Comment on the Viet-Nam Situation," American Opinion Survey, Department of State, Harriman Papers, Box 519, LC.

policy here by playing upon the exacerbated vanity and manic suspicion of U.S. purposes which now prevail” in the Diem regime.¹⁷² Walt Rostow’s Policy Planning Council determined that Alsop’s information was “essentially correct” though it considered “highly unlikely” the chances that “such explorations seriously concern imminent reunification.” Nhu’s willingness to speak to Alsop about these overtures did mark a departure since he’d previously denied contacts with Hanoi. The Saigon regime “has dropped transparent hints that the GVN would not necessarily refuse to consider overtures from Hanoi,” the PPC memorandum noted. It concluded that “circumstances are more propitious than before” for Nhu to pursue this course.¹⁷³

Several days later, Kennedy dispatched to Saigon his two leading military advisors, Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Maxwell Taylor. The McNamara-Taylor mission was to evaluate the Diem regime. On 23 September Kennedy brought McNamara, Taylor, Ball and Mac Bundy into the Oval Office to discuss the upcoming trip. One issue Kennedy raised was Diem’s concern about criticism from the American press, particularly a young group of reporters in Saigon that included *New York Times* correspondent David Halberstam and Neil Sheenan of United Press International.¹⁷⁴ Kennedy instructed McNamara to be sympathetic to Diem’s complaints, to note that the press “is not always right.” Kennedy mentioned Alsop’s latest column, which he’d read that

¹⁷² Joseph Alsop, *Matter of Fact*, “Very Ugly Stuff,” 18 September 1963, *Washington Post*.

¹⁷³ “Possible Rapprochement Between North and South Vietnam,” Policy Planning Council, 26 September 1963, Box 519, Harriman Papers, LC.

¹⁷⁴ McGeorge Bundy, Memorandum for the Record: Meeting on McNamara/Taylor Mission to South Vietnam, 23 September 1963, Box 519, Harriman Papers, LC. William Prochnau admirably recounts the story of the young reporters who questioned U.S. programs in Vietnam and their often-strained relations with the Kennedy administration in *Once Upon a Distant War: David Halberstam, Neil Sheehan, Peter Arnett—Young War Correspondents and Their Early Vietnam Battles* (New York: Vintage Books, 1996).

morning, in which the pundit attacked an influential group of young U.S. reporters in Saigon for criticizing U.S. programs and the prosecution of the war in South Vietnam.¹⁷⁵ “There was a great deal of truth in Alsop’s column,” Kennedy told his subordinates. “But the only way to deal with such press criticism [is] to get on with the job.” The president concluded, “The way to confound the press is to win the war.”¹⁷⁶

Walter Lippmann wrote nothing about the mission on Vietnam from October through December 1963. He left for his annual fall trip to Europe, taking temporary leave from T&T and writing no columns for *Newsweek* in December. The next time he turned sustained attention to Southeast Asia, in early 1964, he would be advising and gently critiquing a new president—Lyndon B. Johnson.

VI.

Neutralization fit not only Lippmann’s momentary objectives, it also comported with his longer perspective on the Cold War. By championing the French plan, Lippmann provided—as he had often before—an internationalist context to the struggle between nationalist Communism and liberal capitalism. He was keenly aware of the perspective of smaller, less powerful countries that tried to navigate a course between the foreign policies of the superpowers. Since Tito’s break with Moscow in 1948—

¹⁷⁵ Joseph Alsop, “The Crusaders,” 23 September 1963, *Washington Post*: A17. Alsop wrote, about the American journalists who criticized the Diem regime, though he did not name David Halberstam and others by name. “The crusaders have contributed to the Diem government’s misguidedness . . . the constant pressure of the reportorial crusade against the government has also helped mightily to transform Diem from a courageous, quite viable national leader, into a man afflicted with galloping persecution mania, seeing plots around every corner, and therefore misjudging everything.”

and in theory, since he'd written about a "buffer belt" of neutral states in Eastern Europe in 1944—Lippmann had sympathized with the trend toward neutralism in the Cold War.¹⁷⁷ It was, he believed, the inevitable outcome of great power rivalries—smaller powers stood clear and cared more about self-preservation than committing to one side or the other. Lippmann applauded Yugoslavia's independent course in the late-1940s, and he subsequently wrote many columns about how non-alignment was a desirable outcome in Central Europe, the Middle East, Africa, and Asia. As an advocate for neutralism, Lippmann also opened for his readers an international context to the war in Vietnam and the larger conflict between American democracy and Sino-Soviet Communism. The struggle in Saigon, he wrote, was not just an object of discussion, debate, and action for policymakers in Washington. Nor could it be solved by their unilateral actions. Though he accepted the premise that Chinese expansion should be checked, Lippmann thought such a policy would succeed only if it were developed and implemented in concert with other concerned powers in the region: India, the Soviet Union, Britain, and France. These powers had to cooperate "discreetly" to promote in Hanoi some kind of "trigger which would release Titoist nationalism in North Viet-Nam."¹⁷⁸ This was the crux of Lippmann's argument for neutralism in Southeast Asia. He knew that the "trigger" for Vietnamese nationalism would be the creation of a unified government that Hanoi likely would control. While Lippmann—much like De Gaulle—offered an elaborate critique of the military pitfalls in Vietnam, he was purposefully imprecise as to how negotiations should

¹⁷⁶ Bundy Memorandum, "Meeting on McNamara/Taylor Mission to South Vietnam."

¹⁷⁷ Indeed, the promotion of neutralism long had been a theme in Lippmann's columns. See, for example, Lippmann, T&T, "The Buffer Belt," 15 February 1949; "To Defend the Balkan Peace," 22 September 1949; and "That Black Cat," 17 July 1956.

proceed—perhaps because he knew just inhospitable the political climate in Washington would be to arranging them.

Though a workable solution seemed elusive into late-1963, Lippmann possessed clear, long-held convictions against American military intervention in the Vietnamese civil war. As early as the 1940s he believed that U.S. power, great as it was, was limited in Asia to the deterrent presence of its overwhelming naval and air forces. He encouraged Truman administration officials not to establish a military foothold on the Asian continent but, rather, to draw their strategic line along the arc of islands running from Japan and Okinawa to the Philippines. Washington officials instead chose to underwrite the French colonial war in Indochina while simultaneously pursuing a policy of “rolling back” Communism by placing the American Army up against the Chinese border in a brutal, costly war on the Korean peninsula. By the 1950s, during the Eisenhower administration, Lippmann rejected calls to insert U.S. ground troops in Indo-China, fearing it would become a strategic morass and that it would provoke another war with Beijing. Intractable political problems, he wrote at the time, were at the root of the war. He also doubted that a loose, patchwork coalition of anti-Communist governments, such as John Foster Dulles assembled in SEATO, could successfully contain Beijing’s advances. While Eisenhower overrode his subordinates and refused to put American ground forces in Southeast Asia, the diplomacy of his secretary of state laid the political foundations for later American involvement in Vietnam. Moreover, Eisenhower’s commitment to partition in 1954, and to Diem in particular with economic and military aid, solidified America’s role as the chief benefactor of South Vietnam. During John Kennedy’s

¹⁷⁸ Lippmann, T&T, “Wither in Vietnam,” 17 September 1963.

expansion of advisory and material aid—while most observers confined their doubts to military *tactics* in Vietnam rather than political *objectives*—Lippmann believed only diplomatic measures would stabilize Southeast Asia. In the final months of Kennedy’s presidency, confirmed in the belief that South Vietnam could not be saved militarily, Lippmann supported neutralization in the hope that a unified Vietnam, even if the Hanoi Politburo controlled it, would remain independent of Beijing.

In this instance, Lippmann did not communicate Kennedy administration policy but, rather, the French position on intervention in Vietnam. What Lippmann communicated to President Kennedy and the public in his columns in 1963, he recommended even more forcefully to LBJ personally—disengagement from South Vietnam was far preferable to a military quagmire. Washington officials, however, were—if anything—even less inclined to explore a diplomatic option than they had been under Kennedy. Worsening circumstances in Saigon, the continuity of principal advisers and their ideas from administration to administration, the growing investment of their personal reputations, and LBJ’s visceral determination not to lose South Vietnam, contributed to a strengthening of the American commitment in early 1964. The conclusion was obvious for Johnson administration officials who feared a public debate over their Vietnam policies: Lippmann would have to be converted to their cause.

Months after Kennedy’s death, Lippmann tried with new urgency to convince Johnson administration officials to choose a negotiated peace rather than military escalation. He recalled the difficulty faced by Johnson’s predecessors in finding an opportune moment to liquidate the Vietnam commitment. “There never has been any

other way out of the dead-end street in Southeast Asia except to make a political agreement, to construct international machinery, and to exert what influence we can by underwriting them,” Lippmann told readers. “President Kennedy made a fragmentary attempt to do this. He tried it in Laos, but he allowed himself to remain entangled in South Viet-Nam, and he was drawn into an ever enlarging, continually unsuccessful, military struggle which has no visible end.”¹⁷⁹ While admitting that the “original mistake” of building a military stronghold in South Vietnam would not be easy to repair, Lippmann recommended reconvening the Geneva Conference to reach a negotiated settlement or appealing to the United Nations to create and administer a coalition government resembling that in Laos. “We must look for a solution, not by expanding the war [into North Vietnam] but by taking it to the conference table,” Lippmann concluded. “We cannot make war on North Viet-Nam by executive order.”¹⁸⁰ Waging war by executive order, however, was precisely what President Johnson and John Kennedy’s principal advisors were preparing to do.

¹⁷⁹ Lippmann, T&T, “Our Commitment in Viet-Nam,” 28 May 1964.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

Chapter 7:

Personal Persuasion and Calculations of Co-Optation: Walter Lippmann, McGeorge Bundy, Lyndon Johnson, and Vietnam, December 1963 to February 1965

I.

Lyndon Baines Johnson and his advisors so feared Walter Lippmann's power to provoke debate about Vietnam that for more than a year they conspired to cultivate his support. Presidential blandishments ultimately failed to prevent Lippmann's dissent but they had the salutary effect of postponing his mutiny. Throughout 1964, into the crucial spring of 1965, the columnist hedged his public criticisms of the administration believing he could privately convince Johnson to opt for a diplomatic solution—even after events no longer warranted such restraint. Chalmers Roberts, the *Washington Post's* diplomatic correspondent from 1953-76 and a first-hand observer of this unusual courtship, watched it unfold with disapproval and empathy. “Here is a distinguished American who laid down sort of the basic rule for the press and that is ‘Don’t get too close to public officials. Don’t become captives,’” Roberts said. “[Lippmann] violated his own rule in my view, and Johnson got him into it. I suppose it was inescapable.”¹ Roberts got part of the story right.

A confluence of Johnson's political calculation and Lippmann's infatuation with advising the powerful drew them closer in the early days of LBJ's presidency.

The public perception that Lippmann participated in high-level policy debates lent the new administration credibility and authority, and imparted a measure of authenticity to the non-establishment figure at its head. Because foreign affairs were Johnson's area of weakness, he relied initially on Kennedy's appointees—National Security Adviser McGeorge Bundy, Secretary of State Dean Rusk, and Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara. This added to the president's considerable insecurities.²

Lippmann, in contrast, was a capital fixture who predated the New Frontiersmen. He also had retained a measure of independence from the Kennedyites which appealed to Johnson as he tried to shape an identity distinct from that of the martyred president. Though outside of Lippmann's presence he disparaged the idea that the U.S. should seek a negotiated settlement in Vietnam, the president nevertheless sided up to the columnist because of his status as a foreign policy expert. LBJ prized Lippmann as *his* adviser, intellectual, and public advocate—showing Lippmann top secret papers, bringing him into the Oval Office for meetings with principal advisers, and discussing with him possible running mates in the November presidential election. Indeed, during the halcyon days of 1964, the columnist and president shared a symbiotic relationship.

II.

LBJ showered Lippmann with his peculiar blend of flattery and political largesse that Washington columnists Rowland Evans and Robert Novak called the “Johnson

¹ Chalmers Roberts, Oral History Interview 23 April 1969: 32. Lyndon Baines Johnson Library, Austin, TX. Hereinafter cited as “LBJL.”

² See Robert Dallek *Flawed Giant: Lyndon Johnson and His Times, 1961-1973* (New York: Oxford University Press): 84-90.

treatment.”³ He enticed, overwhelmed, and captivated opinion-makers; and with Lippmann, the most influential of them all, Johnson got an early start. As Senate Majority Leader he sent effusive letters expressing his “unbounded” admiration for Lippmann’s support of the 1957 civil rights bill; on more than one occasion he read *Today and Tomorrow* into the *Congressional Record*.⁴ In 1962, then-Vice President Johnson hosted the columnist at his ranch in Texas hill-country. In one improbable afternoon Johnson shuttled Lippmann to the far corners of his spread, steering his Lincoln Continental at high speeds down gravel roads and through pastures—pausing occasionally to toot the horn at cattle and throw back a few whiskey and sodas. This whirlwind infusion of Texas culture carried on into the evening with cowhand demonstrations, dinner with Governor Daniel Price, and the next day, a poolside party serenaded by a mariachi band. Lippmann reveled in it.⁵ Weeks after Kennedy’s assassination, Johnson dropped by Lippmann’s Woodley Road home in northwest Washington, D.C., humbly seeking counsel over a round of evening cocktails. Thereafter, LBJ and Lady Bird regularly hosted the columnist at private White House dinners.⁶

³ Dallek, *Flawed Giant*: 4-5. Bill Bundy used an even more descriptive term: “the Johnson trowel treatment.” See Kai Bird, *The Color of Truth: McGeorge Bundy and William Bundy, Brothers in Arms* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1998): 268. Carroll Kilpatrick of the *Washington Post* remembered one of LBJ’s early overtures to the press pool on Air Force One. On the flight from the LBJ Ranch to Washington, Johnson sauntered to the back of the plane to enlist reporters’ cooperation in giving favorable coverage to his new Administration. “You play ball with me and I’ll make big men of you,” Johnson said to the stunned reporters. Carroll Kilpatrick, Oral History Interview I, 5 May 1979: 9, LBJL.

⁴ Lyndon B. Johnson to Walter Lippmann, 4 September 1957, Folder 1161, Box 80, Series III, Walter Lippmann Collection, Sterling Library, Yale University, New Haven, Conn. Hereinafter cited as “WLC.”

⁵ Ronald Steel, *Walter Lippmann and the American Century* (Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1980): 545-546.

⁶ See Beschloss, *Taking Charge: The Johnson White House Tapes, 1963-1964* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1997): 80; Steel, *Walter Lippmann and the American Century*: 544.

Lippmann's sense of place and importance as an adviser to Johnson far exceeded the titular role he had played in deliberations at the Kennedy White House. In the Kennedy years Lippmann gave plenty of advice, most of which the president ignored. JFK granted him access; but with Johnson Lippmann seemed to have real influence. If Johnson were unavailable, his latest mood on the issue *de jure* passed easily to the president through two of Lippmann's friends, Mac Bundy and Undersecretary of State George Ball. Above all else, LBJ's ambitious plans for far-reaching welfare legislation and progressive domestic programs appealed to Lippmann's closely-held belief that the nation had for too long neglected internal problems by fixating on the specter of Communism. Johnson's reform impulse and legislative skills made Lippmann optimistic that, with improving U.S.-Soviet relations, crises abroad might be subordinated to those at home.

Buoyed by these hopes and an instinctual desire to be near the center of power, Lippmann moved toward an association with the administration that some observers felt violated the principles he expounded about good journalism. Scholars often credit Lippmann's objectivity and professionalism with revolutionizing twentieth-century journalism; after all, in 1914 he had co-founded *The New Republic* and, in the 1920s, he had established himself as an authority with two path-breaking studies on the media,⁷ and had served as executive editor of the *New York World*. But in the eyes of contemporaries, his position as a confidant to LBJ compromised the rules of conduct he had defined between policymakers and reporters. Richard

⁷ Eric Alterman, *Sound and Fury: The Washington Punditocracy and the Collapse of American Politics* (New York: Harper-Collins Publishers, 1992): 304-309. See discussion in introductory chapter. For specific examples in Lippmann's writings see the opening chapter of *Public Opinion*

Rovere of the *New Yorker* later told an interviewer that in the first year of the administration, Lippmann, his friend, was “very high on Johnson and had been closer to him than he would now like to admit.”⁸

Yet, fundamental differences between Lippmann and Johnson on the problem of Vietnam ensured that their alliance, however spectacular, would be brief. For if Lippmann heaped praise on LBJ and his Great Society triumphs, he wrote with discrimination and pessimism about America’s goals and prospects in Southeast Asia. From the start of the Johnson administration he lobbied hard for a diplomatic solution in Vietnam—a neutralization scheme conceived by French leader Charles de Gaulle. U.S. officials listened politely, but ignored his counsel.

If access to policymakers did not translate into influence then neither did it equate to accord with the president’s aims in Southeast Asia. Lippmann repeatedly used his access to push for negotiations. Twice in 1964 he debated, as a group, the key architects of the Americanization of the war. The realist convictions that informed his assessment of the war—conveyed in these White House meetings and set in print—put Lippmann on a collision course with LBJ.

The administration’s pursuit of Lippmann would devolve into a rear-guard action to delay his inevitable criticisms. McGeorge Bundy played an indispensable part in stringing Lippmann along. He shared LBJ’s concerns about how Lippmann’s growing doubts about the war might affect opinion at home, among key allies, in Saigon, in Moscow, and even with Chinese and North Vietnamese leaders. He also

(New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1922), "The World Outside and the Pictures in Our Heads," as well as his sequel book, *The Phantom Public* (New York: The Macmillan Company: 1925).

⁸ Richard Rovere, Oral History Interview I, 6 May 1969: 21, LBJL. Steel’s analysis in *Walter Lippmann and the American Century* reflects this same judgment.

knew—perhaps better than the president—that if the war became an American war the administration would lose Lippmann. Consequently, during the 18 months from January 1964 to mid-1965, Bundy, LBJ, and other officials misled the columnist about their Vietnam policies with sophisticated calculation.

A number of factors made it unlikely that Johnson—or indeed any president—would have pulled out of Vietnam in the immediate months after Kennedy’s death.⁹ The deterioration of the Saigon government after Diem’s assassination, concerns about Chinese ambitions in Southeast Asia, domestic political considerations, Johnson’s strong anti Communism, and his fear of “losing” Vietnam contributed to his decision to continue the policies of his predecessor. There was continuity but also a subtle change from Kennedy that showed up in Johnson’s leadership style: his insistence on preventing defeat in South Vietnam. He accepted the advice of Kennedy’s advisors that the U.S. must stand firm but he also set the tone. “I am not going to lose Vietnam. I am not going to be the President who saw Southeast Asia go the way China went,” LBJ told Ambassador to Vietnam Henry Cabot Lodge at a meeting on 24 November 1963. He admonished advisors, “Don’t go to bed at night until you have asked yourself, ‘Have I done everything I could to further the American effort to assist South Vietnam?’”¹⁰ Two days later, Johnson authorized NSAM 273 that reaffirmed America would help the South Vietnamese “win their contest against the externally directed and supported Communist conspiracy.”

⁹ “National Security Action Memorandum No. 273,” 26 November 1963, *Foreign Relations of the United States* (hereinafter cited to as *FRUS*), 1961-1963, Volume IV (Washington: Government Printing Office): 637-640. See also Dallek’s analysis in *Flawed Giant*: 97-101; Fredrik Logevall’s in *Choosing War: The Lost Chance for Peace and the Escalation of War in Vietnam* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1999): 77-80.

¹⁰ Dallek, *Flawed Giant*: 100.

Presidential determination meant there would be no fundamental reappraisal of the rationale for the commitment.¹¹

Neither Johnson, nor his key advisors, were predisposed to pursue a neutralization plan in Southeast Asia, such as Lippmann endorsed in September 1963. As neutralization became a topic for editorialists in December, U.S. officials firmly tamped down talk of neutralizing South Vietnam. They reassured the new government of General Duong Van Minh of their resolve to get a military decision. Dean Rusk sent Lodge a telegram that re-stated the American position in no uncertain terms. “You may categorically, and in a manner most likely to convince them, say to the generals that [the U.S.] in no way favors a neutral solution for South Vietnam,” Rusk instructed Lodge. “As you know, powerful voices such as the *New York Times* and Lippmann have been advocating some sort of neutral solution but this in no wise reflects US Government policy which has consistently been a win the war policy. As you know from recent messages, this is US policy from the top down.”¹² Rusk told Lodge to stress that Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara’s trip to Saigon, set for 19-20 December, was a sign of that commitment. During McNamara’s visit an aide to Roger Hilsman, undersecretary of state for political affairs, met with the South Vietnamese prime minister, foreign minister and several members of the ruling Military Revolutionary Council. These leaders were “uniformly worried,” the aide reported to Hilsman, about a Lippmann column that urged neutralism and American

¹¹ See Dallek, *Flawed Giant*: 97-101; for an extended discussion of LBJ’s determination not to “lose” Vietnam, see Logevall, *Choosing War*: 77-107; and George C. Herring, *America’s Longest War: The United States in Vietnam, 1945-1975* (New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1986): 111-118.

¹² Dean Rusk to Henry Cabot Lodge, 10 December 1963, *FRUS, 1961-1963* Vol. IV: 695 -696. George Ball, Roger Hilsman, and Michael Forrestal cleared the text of the telegram.

withdrawal from the South.¹³ The McNamara trip produced a new sense of urgency about developments in Saigon. McNamara reported to Johnson that the situation was “very disturbing.” If the rate of deterioration of the Minh government continued, he forecast, South Vietnam might be lost within months. Little more than a month later, on 29 January 1964, a group of younger officers, led by General Nguyen Khanh, overthrew Minh. The coup reinforced Washington’s doubts about its clients in Saigon—especially Khanh whose checkered past included support for the Vietminh and, at one point, opposition to Diem. The Khanh government, it was feared, might cut a deal with Hanoi.¹⁴

Looking to the wider situation in Southeast Asia administration officials perceived developments to be equally grim. The Laos agreements of 1962 were under attack from both wings of the coalition government; Cambodia’s Prince Sihanouk was agitating for a major international conference to secure his country’s neutrality; and Indonesia’s Sukarno made overtures to Beijing while waging open hostilities against the pro-Western government in Malaysia. China, above all else, concerned U.S. planners. Unsure of the extent of the Sino-Soviet rift, Washington feared that U.S. intervention in any of these places might unite the two great Communist powers against a common enemy. China, moreover, faced massive food shortages because of its agricultural reforms and, U.S. officials thought, might “overrun” Southeast Asia to secure these staples. At the very least, Washington assumed that Beijing would incite instability in the nations along its periphery.¹⁵

¹³ Charles Sullivan to Roger Hilsman, “Memorandum: Report of McNamara’s Visit to Saigon,” 21 December 1963, *FRUS, 1961-1963*, Vol IV: 728 -731.

¹⁴ Herring, *America’s Longest War*: 111-118.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

Considering the internal weakness of the Saigon regime and the magnitude of the perceived external threat, LBJ signed NSAM 288 on 17 March 1964.

Reconfirming the goal of preserving an independent, non-Communist government in Saigon, the policy directive provided for a national mobilization in South Vietnam, placing it on a war footing. In addition, Johnson appointed General William Westmoreland to replace U.S. military commander General Paul Harkins, authorized an adviser buildup (that by year's end brought the total from 16,700 to 23,000), and granted \$50 million in economic aid.¹⁶

In making these decisions, Johnson hoped to keep South Vietnam a low-intensity conflict during the election year of 1964. He regarded the war, and foreign affairs generally, as an irritant and “intrusion” that diverted his attention from plans for sweeping social reforms at home. Moreover, as a leading biographer pointed out, in foreign affairs Johnson was “much less sure of himself and frustrated . . . it was an area in which he had only limited control or capacity to dictate the course of events.”¹⁷ Unfit by temperament to rethink the assumptions for involvement, Johnson stayed the course. There was, to be sure, on Johnson's part a consideration of responsibility for the November coup that he had opposed; that, since the U.S. intervened so directly in Saigon's internal affairs, it now had a greater moral stake in ensuring the welfare of the Vietnamese people. LBJ also thought Vietnam to be an important personal test of his foreign policy mettle with the fall presidential election

¹⁶ Larry Berman, *Planning a Tragedy: The Americanization of the War in Vietnam*. New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1982: 32; Logevall, *Choosing War*: 128-129; also *The Pentagon Papers*, Senator Gravel edition, Volume III (Washington, DC: GPO): 50.

¹⁷ Dallek, *Flawed Giant*: 97; Herring, *America's Longest War*: 111-112.

approaching. Underlying it all, Johnson and his advisors saw Vietnam as a challenge to American steadfastness abroad.¹⁸

Despite the drift of Vietnam policy, Lippmann lined himself up as one of the administration's most out-spoken admirers. Several factors contributed to this affinity. Much of his enthusiasm derived from the lofty expectations he had for the scope and pace of domestic reforms under the new administration. A corollary to this was his belief that Johnson would exploit the relaxation of tensions between the U.S. and U.S.S.R., to focus on programs at home. LBJ also benefited from his relentless cultivation of Lippmann. The columnist did not yet associate Vietnam with Johnson's policies or, as he would several years later, the man himself.

Lippmann also welcomed the contrast between John Kennedy's maverick style of leadership and the consensus-building skills Johnson perfected in the Senate. He portrayed the earthy Texan as a politician with whom average Americans could connect. In a March 1964 interview, Lippmann told the popular German magazine *Der Spiegel* that LBJ had a moderating effect on American politics. "Kennedy divided the country," Lippmann said. "Johnson, on the other hand, is like an old shoe—very comfortable." With LBJ, the country was "much quieter and more at ease." Lippmann also addressed the "distorted view" of the Kennedy record. "He was the idol of the left," Lippmann remarked disdainfully, "and Kennedy was not a man of the left at all—he was a very conservative man."¹⁹ In the weeks leading up to

¹⁸ Dallek, *Flawed Giant*: 100.

¹⁹ Lippmann interview with *Der Spiegel*, 7 March 1964; from a copy found in Acheson Papers, Box 101, Folder: St. Dept. and White House Advisor, 1964, Harry S. Truman Library.

the 1964 election he used his column to anoint Lyndon Baines Johnson as a suitable successor, a “born compromiser and healer.”²⁰

Systemic changes in the Cold War also contributed to Lippmann’s sense that Johnson could capitalize on an opportune “thaw” in superpower relations. In this respect, his outlook on international developments contrasted strikingly with that of U.S. officials. By early 1964, Lippmann believed that the Soviet-American rivalry had moved beyond its crisis phase: Western Europe had stabilized and recovered, and a rough nuclear parity existed between the superpowers.²¹ These developments, he believed, made room for a period of peaceful co-existence. The U.S. and Soviet Union “are no longer on a collision course as they were before the Cuban missile confrontation,” he told readers in his first column of the new year. “It cannot be said that the two powers are now on the same course or even that they are on parallel courses. But for some considerable distance ahead there is room for both of them.”²² Thus, there was a tacit consensus between the two superpowers to curb the spiraling weapons competition—codified in the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty of 1963. “The race of armaments, which has been both an expression and a stimulus of the Cold War, has reached a point where, if there were war, military victory would have no meaning for either side,” he wrote on 2 January 1964. Lippmann also was far more optimistic

²⁰ Walter Lippmann, “The Republican Moderates,” 12 October 1964, *Newsweek*: 29.

²¹ Modern scholars suggest that it was the parity of nuclear deterrence (if not in actual numbers of weapons) itself which prolonged the Cold War, ultimately accounting for the fact that the conflict did not end in the early 1960s in the wake of the Cuban Missile Crisis. John Lewis Gaddis has observed that by the 1970s, the Cold War had moved into a “robust, sustainable, and at least at the superpower level, *peaceful* international system” even while Soviet power was in decline. Nuclear weapons, Gaddis argues, “and the fear they generated may well have stretched out the process of decay inside the USSR—in effect slowing down time—although they could not reverse it. Not the least of the Cold War’s oddities is that its outcome was largely determined before two-thirds of it had even been fought.” See Gaddis, *We Now Know: Rethinking Cold War History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997): 280.

about using the Sino-Soviet split to triangulate and to contain Chinese expansion in Southeast Asia. While he believed small states on the border of China could not pursue overtly pro-Western policies that antagonized Beijing, they could nevertheless remain autonomous in their internal politics and neutral—in a Titoist sense—in their foreign affairs. China was a great expanding power that the U.S. could not let go unchecked, Lippmann conceded. But so long as it did not threaten Japan or the Philippines or American naval supremacy in the Pacific, it was a minimal threat.²³

The corollary Lippmann drew from this prognosis was that the enormous expenditures for the arms race and global containment could safely and wisely be diverted back into domestic programs for “human progress . . . the advancement of education or an attack on poverty.”²⁴ Weeks after this column appeared, the president’s chief speechwriters found inspiration in the title of Lippmann’s 1937 book, *The Good Society*, for the phrase LBJ used to popularize his vision of post-affluent America—“The Great Society.”²⁵ During the fall election season, Lippmann projected LBJ as the leader who, by vision, temperament, and divine “Providence,” could best carry out a reform program. He used this theme into 1965, perhaps, at that late juncture, sensing it was the only appeal that might convince Johnson to forego Americanization of the war.

²² Lippmann, T&T, "The Thaw," 2 January 1964.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Eric Goldman, *The Tragedy of Lyndon Johnson* (New York: Knopf, 1969): 165. Goldman suggested to Richard Goodwin "that in terms of a popular slogan, the goal of 'post-affluent' America was probably best caught by the title of Walter Lippmann's book of some years back, *The Good Society*. Goodwin quite went along with me. But he obviously preferred 'great society' to 'good society.'" Goodwin began peppering LBJ's speeches with this term in March 1964 and, at a May commencement address at the University of Michigan, the President spelled out his vision for the Great Society. Lippmann's mentor Graham Wallas, the Fabian socialist and professor at the London School of Economics, used the term as the title of a 1914 book.

Lippmann's early assessments of Johnson bordered on a kind of enthusiasm for powerful and charismatic leaders that, some observers claim, dotted the columnist's long career.²⁶ This contradicted Lippmann's reputation as a stoic who evaluated policymakers and their programs from a cool, detached, and placidly analytical perspective. How could an intellectually-dispassionate analyst, a major proponent of postwar realism no less, be a cheerleader for great men?

Ronald Steel's biography exploded the myth—widely accepted during Lippmann's working career—that he did not associate with powerful politicians and others who acted as his sources.²⁷ In doing so, however, Steel may have gone too far in suggesting the distorting effects of Lippmann's enthusiasm for *some* of the twentieth century's most imposing political figures: Winston Churchill, Charles de Gaulle, Woodrow Wilson, and John Kennedy. He admired Churchill and De Gaulle as historic figures who rose up to lead their countries in times of great crisis. He also appreciated their deep sense of history and, as well, something that can only be described as their "long view." Churchill articulated it in the early days of the war when his nation stood, virtually alone, as the defender of Western society. De Gaulle—another wartime leader whom Lippmann admired—anticipated, better than anyone else, the changes in postwar European power alignments.

Lippmann was no hero-worshipper, however, blinded to the faults and poor judgments of his subjects.²⁸ He harshly criticized De Gaulle's nuclear policy even

²⁶ To be discussed at length in the concluding chapter.

²⁷ Much of the book's engrossing quality derives from the stream of famous people who pass through its pages as part of Lippmann's life.

²⁸ The historian Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., who knew Lippmann well, recalled that Lippmann was "a skeptic. He was very skeptical, even with De Gaulle, whom he admired as a sort of historical figure. He was not a hero-worshipper at all. He was sort of a skeptic and from time to time he admired people who had done thins, with hose policies he agreed. But he was not a hero-worshipper . . . I mean the

while embracing the General's warnings about intervention in Southeast Asia. With Woodrow Wilson, whom he supported as editor of *The New Republic*, Lippmann believed the president had "lost the peace" by seeking to impose democratic principles at Versailles rather than constructing a lasting balance of power. He devoted much of his subsequent career to challenging the Wilsonian legacy in U.S. foreign affairs. Decades later, he endorsed presidential candidate John Kennedy as a "natural leader of men."²⁹ The columnist, however, distanced himself from President Kennedy, whom he considered charismatic and able but somewhat impulsive and not always a careful judge of foreign policy issues.

With LBJ, in the beginning, there were ideological and personal forces that pulled Lippmann nearer the administration. Part of it was generational—Lippmann felt much more comfortable with Johnson, 10 years older than Kennedy, who shared some of the characteristic's of Lippmann's contemporaries. Born in 1907, Johnson was part of an intra-generational group somewhere between the "Lost" and "GI" generations—able to draw on memories of America before its rise to global power

greatest president that he wrote about was FDR. But he was never worshipful of FDR." Interview with author, New York City, 12 March 2002.

Though he supported Roosevelt's initial New Deal legislation, he later became a critic when he believed the approach had shifted from an emphasis on the "compensated economy" toward a "directed economy." Over time, however, he came to admire FDR as a leader who could articulate his visions to the public and for his skill as a war president. Days before the president's death in April 1945, Lippmann wrote a column that embodied a decade of such analysis. Roosevelt proved a "remarkable strategist," he wrote. "The President has his failings as an organizer and administrator of his policies and he has made mistakes of judgment, and has listened to poor advisors, and has indulged his temperament. But taken in all, and measured by the results achieved, since the summer of 1940 his estimate of the vital interests of the United States has been accurate and far-sighted. He has served those interests with audacity and patience, shrewdly and with calculation, and he has led his country out of the greatest peril in which it has ever been to the highest point of security, influence, and respect which it has ever attained." For Lippmann's criticisms of the New Deal, see, Walter Lippmann, *The Method of Freedom* (New York, 1934). For Lippmann's praise of Roosevelt's wartime leadership, see, Lippmann, T&T, "The President as Strategist," 7 April 1945.

²⁹ Lippmann, T&T, "The Two Men," 18 October 1960; see also T&T, "The TV Debate," 30 September 1960; T&T, "The Second Debate," 11 October 1960.

and tempered by the disillusionment on the inter-war years.³⁰ LBJ's roots in the New Deal years also oriented him toward a domestic agenda of social welfare, urban renewal, and civil rights reforms—all of which appealed to Lippmann. For a decade, Lippmann had urged Americans to address crucial socio-economic problems at home while worrying a little less about the Soviet menace. Coupled with these influences was Lippmann's friendship with key Johnson advisors. The columnist's connection to Mac Bundy and George Ball proved decisive when the president's Vietnam policies began to concern Lippmann.

Lippmann's unbridled admiration of LBJ raised troubling questions for some observers about his celebrated objectivity and detachment. Their concerns were justified. On a nationally-televised program the columnist rhapsodized about the president as being a "healing man" and a "genius in politics." On 8 April 1964, in the upstairs Oval Room of the White House, Johnson, advisor Jack Valenti, and presidential secretary Vicky McCammon gathered around a television to watch the annual installment of the network series, *CBS Report: Conversation with Walter Lippmann*.³¹ They listened as Lippmann explained that LBJ had supplanted Kennedy's dashing but divisive politics of crisis with a calmer, domestic consensus. Seated comfortably on a studio couch set in front of book-filled shelves, Lippmann told interviewer Eric Sevaried, that under Johnson's leadership "the country is far more united and at peace with itself, except over the issue of Negro rights, than it has

³⁰ Robert Kaiser makes a generational argument in his *American Tragedy: Kennedy, Johnson, and the Origins of the Vietnam War* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University, 2000): 8-9. He bases his analysis on the work of William Strauss and Neil Howe, *Generations: The History of America's Future, 1584 to 2069* (New York, 1991).

³¹ Lippmann was an innovator even in the medium that eventually helped super-pundits and talking heads supplant the Washington columnist. The *CBS Reports* series taped seven one-hour interviews

been for a long time . . . I attribute that to the accession of this new President.” Reflecting on LBJ’s domestic legislation, particularly the pending civil rights bill, Lippmann added, “And he’s done, I think, what President Kennedy could not have done had he lived.”³² Watching a television at the foot of her bed in the presidential living quarters, Lady Bird Johnson thought Lippmann’s oration “couldn’t have been better.” It seemed to her that the columnist thought “it didn’t make any difference about whom Lyndon asked to be his Vice-President [in that fall’s presidential race], because he didn’t need the help.”³³ Nothing Lippmann could have said would have pleased Johnson more. “Did you hear Walter Lippmann last night?” LBJ crowed to Georgia Senator Richard Russell the next day. “I thought he was wonderful.” To which Russell, Johnson’s old mentor, laughed in reply, “I just wondered what it cost you. God, I know Old A.W. Moursund³⁴ is signing up the deed to [your] damned television station. It’s a Lippmann station now!”³⁵ Lyndon Johnson, momentarily, had found his prized publicist.

Lippmann’s enthusiasm for the newest occupant of the White House was not lost on journalistic colleagues. Eric Sevaried obliquely raised the point when he opened the interview. How did Lippmann, he asked, for 50 years a confidant of presidents, retain his ability to be critical of them? Lippmann answered that journalists had to observe certain “rules of hygiene.” He continued, “Newspapermen cannot be the cronies of great men . . . I think it is advantageous for the President to

with Lippmann between 1960 and 1965. Interviewers include some of TV journalism’s luminaries: Howard K. Smith, Eric Sevaried, and Walter Cronkite.

³² Walter Lippmann, *Conversations with Walter Lippmann* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1965): 179-180; Michael Beschloss, *Taking Charge*: 313, fn.

³³ Lady Bird Johnson, *A White House Diary* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1970): 104.

³⁴ An ex-judge from Texas Hill-country, a Johnson crony, and one of LBJ’s closest business partners.

³⁵ Beschloss, *Taking Charge*: 313.

be able to talk to somebody who won't exploit him, or betray him, or talk his mind; and it's certainly a great advantage to the correspondent to know what's really going on so he won't make a fool of himself. But there always has to be a certain distance between high public officials and newspapermen. I wouldn't say a wall or a fence, but an air space, that's very necessary."³⁶ It was not so clear that Lippmann heeded his own advice.

In retrospect, some colleagues insisted that Lippmann maintained his distance and independence during those critical months. "His influence came not from rubbing shoulders with celebrities," recalled Joseph Kraft, the *Los Angeles Times* columnist. "It flowed from his independence of thought and the penetration of his analyses."³⁷ *Washington Post* reporter Carroll Kilpatrick, another recipient of the Johnson treatment, thought Lippmann's convictions, not complicity with Johnson, shaped his columns. The Johnson treatment worked in the beginning, Kilpatrick admitted. "Some well-known people were completely . . . enamored of him because of his openness and willingness to see them," Kilpatrick said. "For example the President thought—I'm sure—that Walter Lippmann was almost in his vest pocket. He called Lippmann to ask him what to do about this and that. Lippmann was an independent minded man and [eventually] he said, 'No, you shouldn't do this.' And then he would go out and write in public that the President made a mistake when he announced this policy yesterday. That antagonized Johnson."³⁸

³⁶ Lippmann, *Conversations with Walter Lippmann*, 161-163.

³⁷ Joseph Kraft, "Lippmann: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow," *The Washington Post*, September 11, 1980: A19. Kraft wrote this editorial when Steel's biography, analyzing Lippmann's relationship with LBJ, was published.

³⁸ Kilpatrick, OH-I: 10. Speaking to his press secretary, George Reedy, LBJ succinctly described his theory of press relations—a philosophy that later landed him in so much trouble. "This crowd here,"

Other observers were far more critical of Lippmann's close proximity to the president and his habit of ingratiating himself to those in power. E. Ernest Goldstein, a special assistant to LBJ from 1967-69 and one of his Austin associates, recalled that during Lippmann's 1962 visit to the ranch it was Johnson who was the recipient of the "Lippmann treatment." The columnist "was showing tremendous adulation for the [Vice] President, which is the mildest word I can think of," Goldstein recalled. "Mr. Lippmann has always tried to manage to be very close to the seat of power in this country for as long as he could. It seems to me he was doing what comes naturally as far as he was concerned."³⁹ While Lippmann's research assistant, Elizabeth Farmer, believed his enthusiasm for Johnson to be "spontaneous and real," she nevertheless indicated to her boss that it seemed "excessive."⁴⁰ Undeniably, Lippmann craved to be among the "men of action," as he liked to call them. He coveted his insider status. After all, access was part of his stock-in-trade.

Lippmann practiced his craft in that gray area which exists between decision-makers and those who interpret their actions for the public. He seems constantly to have struggled with the implications of occupying such an undefined space and with his own conception of the role he played in the process of being the intermediary between officials and his readership. A tension existed within him as to which his allegiance belonged. This ambivalence carried over into the realm of policies and ideas, too. What his biographer understood to be Lippmann's unique "intellectual

Johnson said of the press corps in 1964, "you got to understand that they are not the masters of the White House. They're just the servants and we give them what we want to give them." Beschloss, *Taking Charge*: 308.

³⁹ E. Ernest Goldstein, Oral History Interview, 9 December 1968: 12. LBJL.

⁴⁰ Interview with Elizabeth Midgley (Farmer), 28 February 2001, Washington, DC.

flexibility”⁴¹ (his ability to jettison old notions for new ones) could just as accurately be described as a kind of emotive fickleness. Given far-ranging access to the most powerful persons in American public life, Lippmann often chose to stand apart from prevailing official views—sometimes without provocation or clear impetus, and not entirely for reasons of professional detachment. Lippmann’s rival, the columnist Joe Alsop, once jested that the only way Lippmann managed to keep his columns fresh for four decades was to flip-flop his “views roughly once every eight months”—about the time in between Lippmann’s visits to Paris and London. There was, as a prominent historian once noted, a contra-cyclical quality to his writing.⁴²

Competing with his strong need to be an insider, there existed in this complex man a deeper contrarian impulse from which he derived energy, pleasure, and a kind of intellectual replenishment. The novelist of the New York intelligentsia, Louis Auchincloss (who was Lippmann’s lawyer and closest associate late in life), captured this enigmatic side of the columnist’s personality in a thinly-veiled fictional novel, *The House of the Prophet* (1980). “He was incapable of conforming to any pattern, noble or ignoble,” Auchincloss wrote about Felix Leitner, the book’s central character, patterned after Lippmann. “Sooner or later he was bound to separate himself from the team, whatever team it might be, and redefine himself in relation to it in less than complimentary terms. The reason that he was so dangerous was that the pleasure he derived in separating himself from the team was greater than any material or even moral advantage that he might possibly derive from staying with

⁴¹ For example, see Steel, *Walter Lippmann and the American Century*: 77.

⁴² Alsop, *I’ve Seen the Best of It*: 472-473. See Arthur Schlesinger, Jr.’s essay, “Walter Lippmann: The Intellectual v. Politics,” in *Walter Lippmann and His Times*, Marquis Childs and James Reston, eds., (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1959): 189-225.

it.”⁴³ Years later, Auchincloss recalled that he chose Lippmann as a model of “a man who is independent, totally and completely independent, of every creed, philosophy, and human being, because he is a mind operating alone.” The book’s story, like much of Lippmann’s life, revolved around the difficulties and contradictions arising from this pursuit of intellectual independence.⁴⁴

Jim Rowe, a former aide to Franklin D. Roosevelt and a long-time friend of LBJ, had watched that process of disassociation happen when Lippmann turned against the New Deal reforms and endorsed Alf Landon in the 1936 presidential race. Rowe, in the spring of 1964, compared the Washington press corps to a docile flock following the “bellwether [sic] sheep.” He told President Johnson, “The only two newspapermen practically all of them admire are Walter Lippmann and Scotty Reston. As long as those two are for Lyndon Johnson he will, on the whole, get a good press from the rest of them. You certainly have Lippmann and Reston in your pocket now. I hope you do not lose them.”⁴⁵ That outcome depended far more on events in Saigon than on Johnson’s entreaties, Lippmann’s vagaries, or, ultimately, his need to be an insider.

⁴³ Louis Auchincloss, *The House of the Prophet* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1980): 142. Auchincloss is both more critical of Lippmann’s personal shortcomings than biographer Ronald Steel, and more appreciative of the beauty of Lippmann’s prose, indeed the journalistic feat of writing a column for so long.

⁴⁴ Louis Auchincloss, interview with author, 12 March 2002, New York City.

⁴⁵ James Rowe to LBJ, 22 April 1964, White House Central File (Ex Fg 1), LBJL. Information on Rowe’s background can be found in Dallek’s *Flawed Giant*. Years later, Johnson recalled Rowe’s advice almost verbatim (though with great bitterness) to his biographer Doris Kearns when recounting the loss of media support for the war. “The Washington press are like a pack of wolves when it comes to attacking public officials, but they’re like a bunch of sheep in their own profession and they will always follow the bellwether sheep, the leaders of their profession, Lippmann and Reston. As long as those two stayed with me, I was okay. But once they left me in pursuit of their fancy prizes, everyone else left me as well. But the more they screamed and squawked, the more determined I was to stick it

III.

During the spring of 1964, in contrast to his applause for the administration's legislative triumphs and LBJ's domestic prospects, Lippmann filled his analyses of Vietnam with foreboding. He wrote about it more than any other subject, producing nearly a dozen columns in the first half of 1964 alone.⁴⁶ Though he would wait more than a year before quitting the kid-glove treatment with Johnson, U.S. policymakers and the general public who paid attention in 1964 knew that Lippmann would not support an Americanized war in Vietnam. He continued his support for De Gaulle's plan for neutralization, developing several themes that later widened his schism with LBJ: the administration needed to debate openly, rather than obfuscate, the American role in the war; a bombing campaign against North Vietnam would not win what was essentially a civil war in the South, though it could trigger Chinese intervention; and the U.S. military presence in Vietnam should be temporary and used only to preserve American bargaining power.⁴⁷ Critics believed he did not have the requisite knowledge of Asia to make these judgments. But Lippmann, like the French leaders and intellectuals who informed his perspective, seemed singularly focused on creating a great-power framework to guarantee neutralism in Southeast Asia. The only plausible strategy in Vietnam, he told readers, was a diplomatic settlement devised by the Western Alliance not an enlarged American military commitment.

At times during 1964 and 1965, Lippmann acted like an informal ambassador between Johnson and De Gaulle when relations broke down between the official U.S.

out." Doris Kearns, *Lyndon Johnson and the American Dream* (New York: Harper & Row, 1976): 313-314.

⁴⁶ Culminating that May in a three-part series of French and American interests in Asia .

envoy, Charles Bohlen, and his French hosts. Lippmann listened to French officials' estimates of the war because of their own direct experience in the country. Too, Lippmann was an unrequited Francophile. He moved easily among French diplomats, and was close to the French Ambassador Herve Alphand and his successor, Charles Lucet. Columnist Joe Alsop and Mac Bundy, thought poorly of it, insisting that Lippmann was on the receiving end of a propaganda pipeline. Alsop especially thought Lippmann's special relationship with the French sources impugned his independent status. Lippmann once met the historian Bernard Fall, whom Alsop considered a "French agent." Forever after Alsop complained that "mushy heads" like Lippmann used "[Fall] as a guide whenever the French Embassy is unavailable."⁴⁸ When he met with French officials in Washington or visits with De Gaulle at the Quai d'Orsay—U.S. officials brought him in, partly to soothe his concerns but also to probe for European opinion about the war. These White House meetings became rites of spring and late fall, coinciding with Lippmann's twice-yearly trips to the Continent. After one visit to Paris, Lippmann decided that Bohlen harbored such antipathy for the General that he recommended LBJ replace the ambassador because his prejudices kept him from being an effective diplomat.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ See especially, Lippmann, "Concerning Vietnam," T&T, 5 March 1964; "Foreign Policy Debate," T&T, 21 April 1964.

⁴⁸ Joe Alsop to P.J. Honey, 10 March 1964, Box 69, Joseph W. Alsop Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, DC (hereinafter referred to as "LC"). According to Elizabeth Midgley, Lippmann's research assistant, Lippmann met with Bernard Fall only once—purposefully in her presence. Knowing Fall's reputation, Lippmann was careful to protect himself from the very charges Alsop leveled at him in private. Interview with Elizabeth Midgley (Farmer), 28 February 2001, Washington, DC.

⁴⁹ Steel, *Walter Lippmann and the American Century*, 555. Years later Lippmann, who never showed much interest in government service, admitted that had it been offered he would have accepted the position as Ambassador to France.

Lippmann's use of French officials and dissenting journalists exacerbated critic's claims that he wrote with little direct knowledge of political and social realities in Southeast Asia. This argument had merit. On Western European subjects ranging from geopolitics and to economics, Lippmann was at his strongest. He wrote lucidly about the intricacies of the problematic Multi-Lateral Force proposal or the effects of Gaullist nationalism on NATO. But when he ventured into detail about Southeast Asia, he was less sure. Like so many eastern Establishment figures of his era, Lippmann was an Atlanticist. Asia fell outside that part of the world where he deemed the U.S. to have primary interests. Later, defending himself against charges that he was a "neo-isolationist" because he opposed intervention in Vietnam, he would explain that "while we have important interests on the Asian and African continents, they are not vital interests which would justify a unilateral American commitment of our military forces. In these areas, which are beyond the limits of our vital strategic interests," it was better to rely on collective defense.⁵⁰ Asia, moreover, fell outside the scope of Lippmann's intellectual and cultural curiosity. Though he twice toured India, meeting with Jawarhal Nehru, he never ventured to China, Japan, Korea, or Southeast Asia.⁵¹

The dichotomy between Lippmann's grasp of the details in Vietnam and his power to influence public opinion on the subject befuddled policymakers and Asia hands. Bill Moyers, Johnson's press secretary and chief of staff, recalled that this contradiction contributed to the president's preoccupation with Lippmann. "LBJ took Lippmann seriously as the one philosopher-columnist who was read regularly by the

⁵⁰ Lippmann, T&T, "The Neo-Isolationists," 2 March 1965.

⁵¹ Steel, *Walter Lippmann and the American Century*, 463-464; 515-516.

elites of the establishment,” Moyers said. “He was constantly frustrated because he believed Lippmann’s influence was out of all proportion to his knowledge of Asia, in particular, and that’s why he would spend so much of his time and effort to have various members of the administration try either to coddle or challenge Lippmann.”⁵²

Foreign correspondents expressed similar frustrations. Most rejected Lippmann’s central assessments of the war in the early 1960s: the futility of prevailing militarily in South Vietnam; that no vital interests were at stake; and that a satisfactory settlement could be reached at the peace table. Informed observers, such as *Newsweek’s* Southeast Asia reporter Bob Elegant, dismissed Lippmann’s plans for the neutralization of Laos and the rest of Indo-China in 1961. Elegant wrote privately that Lippmann “seems almost as detached from reality as Mao Tse-tung in his construction of vast and airy fantasies without any basis in things as they are. I have in mind his thesis about Southeast Asia [neutralization], which proceeds from a complete misunderstanding of the present situation . . . The view from Washington certainly comprehends some strange vistas.”⁵³

Nor did those who criticized American tactics share Lippmann’s fundamental reservations. *New York Times* reporter David Halberstam and United Press International writer Neil Sheehan, among a small band of Saigon correspondents, first revealed to the American public in 1962 and 1963 the poor progress in fighting the Vietcong, as well as the Diem regime’s unpopularity and ruthless acts of suppression. Halberstam and Sheehan earned the enmity of the Kennedy administration for exposing the warts of the U.S. counter-insurgency program. In hindsight, however,

⁵² Bill Moyers letter to author, 23 November 1998.

⁵³ Robert Elegant to Joe Alsop, 22 June 1961, Box 17, Joseph W. Alsop Papers, LC.

these observers, who were in the position to know how badly the war was going in the South, were not ready to embrace a negotiated settlement that they clearly felt to be a defeatist option. By their own admission, while Halberstam and Sheehan opposed military strategy in 1963, they failed to question either the military character of intervention or American objectives.⁵⁴

Longtime veterans, like Keyes Beech of the *Chicago Daily News*, insisted that Lippmann inflicted grave damage on U.S. policy with his Olympian musings. Far from the dinner parties and insider's world of official Washington, in his Tokyo bureau office, Beech read Lippmann's support for neutralization in 1964 with mounting incredulity. A seasoned war reporter and anti-Communist, he had cut his teeth covering the Korean War and spent much of the intervening time writing about Vietnam under the Diem regime. His prescription for Saigon's problems did not include compromise with Hanoi: "It's well to keep in mind Uncle Mao's advice that there is no third road." De Gaulle's plan for neutralization "is fooling a lot of people," he wrote. Beech thought that Lippmann, out of ignorance, abetted the General's plan to restore French influence by so eagerly adopting his plan. "Congress ought to enact a law forbidding Walter Lippmann to write about Southeast Asia," he told Joe Alsop after reading a column in which Lippmann confused the geography of Hanoi with Haiphong. "If that can't be arranged, perhaps someone will be good enough to tell him that Hanoi isn't a seaport."⁵⁵

⁵⁴ William Prochnau, *Once Upon a Distant War: David Halberstam, Neil Sheehan, Peter Arnett—Young War Correspondents and Their Early Vietnam Battles* (New York: Vintage Books, 1996).

⁵⁵ Keyes Beech to Joe Alsop, 23 March 1964, Box 69, Joseph W. Alsop Collection, LC. Beech shared Alsop's long-held skepticism about Lippmann's analysis in Southeast Asia. Early in the Kennedy Administration he'd told Alsop: "Fourteen years ago I stated that the Japanese should not be allowed to use oil paint. It's not their medium. Nothing has happened since to change my mind. By the same token, Walter Lippmann should not be allowed to write about Asia, especially Southeast Asia. I

No colleague so openly ridiculed Lippmann's ability to engage the issues in Vietnam as the tempestuous Joe Alsop.⁵⁶ Few correspondents possessed his broad experience and deep appreciation for Asian culture. Fewer still had involved themselves as such partisans in events there during the 1940s and 1950s.⁵⁷ As an American Air Force captain in Kuming, China, during World War II, Alsop was a confidant of T.V. Soong the Nationalist government's foreign minister. He claimed, years later, to have helped Soong and Generalissimo Chiang Kai-Shek draft the telegram that prompted FDR to recall U.S. commander General Joe Stilwell to Washington.⁵⁸ Immediately after the war he returned to the New York *Herald*

recently collected all of Mr. Lippmann's columns on Asia for the past six months and sat down to read them. The more I read, the more appalled I was. By the time I finished I was so enraged I wrote a 2,000-word rebuttal which pleased me if nobody else. Isn't there something you can do about this old man?" Beech to Alsop, 2 August 1961, Box 17, Joseph W. Alsop Papers, LC. For more on Beech during this period see William Prochnau's *Once Upon A Distant War*.

⁵⁶ The *Newsweek* front page of 18 December 1961 heralded the golden age of the syndicated columnist. The cover art featured a sketch of the East Front of the U.S. Capitol, with the columnists' by-lines emblazoned on conspicuous parts of the building. As analogies go, the drawing conveyed much about their style and the relative station each inhabited. Reston's "Washington" filled the pediment overhanging the center stairs—taking a middle position between the chambers and the legislators who occupied them. Alsop's "Matter of Fact" spread across the Senate wing, wherein resided many of his sources who were part of Congress's statelier and traditionally more conservative body. Lippmann's *Today and Tomorrow* rose above the others, perched atop the dome the building's most recognizable feature. Weeks before, *Newsweek* editor Ben Bradlee had pitched the project to Alsop, explaining that the story would "escape the banalities of how a columnist works and lives into the subtleties of what he thinks, how he influences and whom he convinces." The most interesting aspect of the *Newsweek* piece was its study in contrasts between Lippmann and Alsop. Both, *Newsweek* maintained, offered the president "something of value." Lippmann's "air of gentility, kindness and courtliness" provided "reason" and "interpretation." Alsop—"elegant, precise, arrogant"—gave long-range warning on key issues. The later was a "hard-boiled egghead, [who] blends into his writings deep convictions, hard-won facts, and, pervading all, an air of imminent cataclysm." The *Newsweek* editors chose not to dwell on how much the pair disagreed about the Cold War. They also grossly exaggerated the influence that the columnists' access—and Kennedy's apparent interest—seemed to afford them. See, "The Columnists JFK Reads Every Morning," *Newsweek*, 18 December 1961: 65-70; Ben Bradlee to Joseph Alsop, 2 November 1961, Joseph Alsop Papers, LC, Washington, DC; For more on the press during the Kennedy years, see Montague Kern, Patricia W. Levering, and Ralph B. Levering, *The Kennedy Crisis: The Press, the Presidency, and Foreign Policy* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1981); John Tebbel and Sarah M. Watts, *The Press and the Presidency: From George Washington to Ronald Reagan* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985:476-489).

⁵⁷ Robert W. Merry, *Taking on the World: Joseph and Stewart Alsop—Guardians of the American Century* (New York: Viking, 1996). Alsop's memoirs, *I've Seen the Best of It*—also are highly readable and, true to character—frank. He mentions Lippmann sparingly.

⁵⁸ Alsop, *I've Seen the Best of It*: 228-256.

Tribune to write a column with his brother, Stewart. “Matter of Fact” would run for nearly 30 years, with Joe writing it solo after the brothers parted company in 1957. Joe Alsop had a great deal invested in Asian events. He also had served during World War II as a political aide to Colonel Clair L. Chennault in China; landed at Inchon with General Douglas MacArthur; and, first reported from Saigon in 1953, where, during the next two decades, he spent a total of two years reporting in-country. He was a tireless supporter of the Nationalist Chinese exiled to Formosa and a frequent advocate of military adventures against the Communist regime in Beijing—which he blamed for inciting the Hanoi-backed insurgency in South Vietnam. A confirmed anti-Communist, Alsop used his *Matter of Fact* column to call for direct U.S. military intervention at Dien Bien Phu, as well as during the Quemoy and Matsu crises during the 1950s. He took a hard-line approach to fighting the Vietcong insurgency, and never relinquished it. Mac Bundy, a close family friend of Alsop, once confided to LBJ after reading one of the columnist’s Saigon dispatches: “I think [Joe] really wants to have a little old war out there.”⁵⁹ Bundy rejected Lippmann’s argument that Vietnam fell outside America’s vital geo-strategic interests, yet he was never fully at ease with Alsop’s full-throated enthusiasm for prosecuting the war against Hanoi.⁶⁰

Lippmann and Alsop courted factions within the elite D.C. society crowd, though their dinner gatherings evoked far different moods. Evenings at the Lippmann’s were meditative, cerebral, choreographed, blending philosophy with politics. If tempers flared, Lippmann or his wife, Helen, changed topics to avoid a

⁵⁹ LBJ telephone conversation with Bundy, WH 6403.01, PNO 9, #2309, 2 March 1964; also quoted in Bechloss, *Taking Charge*: 262-263.

full-blown conflagration. A disproportionate number of their guests were foreign diplomats, who co-mingled with U.S. senators, academics, and journalists—a staff of servants attending them all. Alsop’s Sunday night potluck dinners included many established capital socialites—the Kennedys, Harrimans, and Achesons. But they also drew a younger crowd of promising State Department and Pentagon officials. Invariably they featured gossip and heated arguments about the government policy *de jure*. Alsop steered these unruly debates becoming more voluble as the booze flowed. After one especially lubricious evening of cocktails and verbal sparring (in which Lippmann participated), Alsop conceded in a letter of apology, “In my family, no argument really was an argument unless everyone left the room at least twice, and this was bad training for the future.”⁶¹

Alsop prided himself on being a good reporter rather than a columnist. He worked officials. He hunted down stories. He relished “scooping” his colleagues with hard news. Joe was a master of dark hyperbole—and the style he developed in *Matter of Fact* often obscured those reportorial skills. He was pugnacious, confrontational, and unshakably pessimistic—a combination he accentuated over the years until it became his public persona. Alsop’s favorite method for taking a bearing on an issue, or turning up new leads, was to float a column based almost entirely on his theorizing, sit back, and wait for administration officials to react to it. For all his bluster and theatrics, he was a keen observer. Perhaps, because he was more firmly ensconced as a reporter than Lippmann, he had a better sense than his rival of the limits of a journalist’s ability to shape an issue. He believed the “personal

⁶⁰ Bird, *The Color of Truth*: 274-275; 328-329.

journalism” columnists practiced had negligible influence on either public opinion or presidential decision-making. “I have never known any reporter who enjoyed this kind of influence, over any appreciable number of readers,” Alsop observed late in his career. “And, I have certainly never known any reporter who had this kind of influence over a President. From time to time, a reporter can have an effect by ventilating a scandal, for example, or by dragging a very grave problem out from under the rug, or in some other way focusing the political community’s attention on significant, previously ignore[d] facts.” Interpretation and analysis, however, weren’t the fundamental work at hand. “A reporter’s role is simply to draw attention to the facts,” Alsop concluded.⁶²

Beyond their contrasting personalities and their conflicting purposes in crafting political columns, Lippmann and Alsop were point-counterpoint debaters on American Cold War policies. Geography, method, and, quite often, goals divided them. Lippmann, by experience, and, at times focus, seemed most connected with western Europe. He believed the center of the power struggle between the U.S. and the Soviet Union lay in Germany. Alsop, who had long experience in the Asian theater in World War II, believed that the struggle with Communism (and he made little distinction between Soviet, Chinese, North Korean or North Vietnamese) would be won on the periphery, in post-colonial regions and developing nations. For Lippmann, Moscow, Beijing, Pyongyang, and, later, Hanoi were motivated by nationalist objectives not Marxist orthodoxy. Alsop, conversely, believed that

⁶¹ Merry, *Taking on the World*: 155-156; 400-401. Joseph Alsop to Walter Lippmann, imprecise date, c. February 1950, Box 50, Folder 38, Series III, WLC.

Communist ideology was infectious and decisively shaped a worldwide movement directed from the Kremlin. In crisis situations, Lippmann urged negotiations and diplomatic discourse; Alsop wanted to send in the Marines. Restraint and internationalism were Lippmann's watchwords. Alsop was an unreconstructed nationalist who cheered rather than challenged Washington's expansionist tendencies.

Alsop's low estimates of Lippmann's forays into policy debates about Southeast Asia, like his views on Vietnam, solidified in the 1950s. Their views on Indo-China were diametrically opposed.⁶³ Alsop popularized the term "domino theory," accepting the idea that if a Communist government came to power in any of the former Indo-Chinese states, American prestige would suffer and its security would be threatened. The root of their disagreements lay in the fact that Lippmann saw developments in Asia on a geopolitical basis: China was an expanding great power. Alsop viewed Chinese moves through the prism of ideology: China was an expanding *Communist* power. Amid a second major crisis in the Formosan Straits in 1958, Alsop rebuffed Lippmann's argument that Formosa could be turned into an "autonomous, neutralized and demilitarized" state. Lippmann doubted the Nationalists would outlive the Chiang regime and that sooner or later the island would be reunited with the mainland. "I am considerably shocked by the wide divergence between your presentation of the facts of the situation-on-the-spot," Alsop replied in private correspondence, "and the same facts as I have observed them first

⁶² Joseph Alsop to Lewis R. Franck, 5 January 1967, Box 76, Joseph Alsop Papers, LC. This is essentially the same argument Alsop expressed in a book he co-wrote with his brother, Stewart: *The Reporter's Trade* (New York: Reynal, 1958).

⁶³ See, for example, the following Alsop "Matter of Fact" columns published in the New York *Herald Tribune*: "Indo-China: The Multiple Crisis," 28 April 1964; "End at Dienbienphu?" 30 April 1954; "They Fight for Us!" 5 May 1954; "Add Up the Tab," 7 May 1954; "Bombs All But Fell," 10 May 1954; and "The Dissolving Partnership," 21 May 1954.

hand. Knowing you, I am very sure that you don't wish to misrepresent the facts."⁶⁴

To his two-page, single-spaced letter, Alsop attached a *New Republic* article he deemed suitably informed. One anecdote that Alsop told the *Washington Post's* Saigon correspondent, Ward Just, summarized years of his frustrations. Alsop once sent some books to Woodley Road in an effort to bring Lippmann up to speed on Chinese history. A few months later the loaned copies were returned, unopened, with a note from Lippmann "lamenting that 'somehow I can't read about China.'" Alsop snapped, "It all but gave me a double hernia, straining not to reply: 'But if you cannot read about China, why in God's name write about it?'"⁶⁵

Ultimately, however, as the Vietnam debate became one about U.S. grand strategy and China's role as a great power in the region, Lippmann proved a thorny problem for the Johnson administration and war enthusiasts like Alsop. On the firmer ground of geopolitics, he was a formidable opponent. They might quibble with his appreciation for the intricacies of nation-building in Southeast Asia, or even his serene faith in creating a neutral Vietnam. But American officials and critics could not readily dismiss Lippmann's twin assertions that sending the U.S. military to fight a guerilla war on the Asian mainland would be a strategic folly; and that Vietnam lay outside America's core interests.

⁶⁴ This marked one of the few significant exchanges of correspondence between the two rivals. See, Joe Alsop to Walter Lippmann, 9 October 1958, Box 50, Folder 38, Series III, WLC. Lippmann disagreed with Alsop's contention that the shelling of the island of Quemoy by Chinese Communists was the opening phase of a military attack on Formosa. See also, Lippmann to Alsop, 10 October 1958, Box 50, Folder 38, Series III, WLC; and Alsop to Lippmann, 29 October 1958, Box 50, Folder 38, Series III, WLC. For Lippmann's opinions expressed in T&T see: "The Dulles Formula," 11 September 1958; "Mr. Dulles on Tuesday," 2 October 1958; "The Latest Gambit," 7 October 1958; "The Position of Strength," 14 October 1958.

⁶⁵ Joe Alsop to Ward Just, 24 October 1967, Box 76, Joseph W. Alsop Papers, LC.

Lippmann believed U.S. strategists should work with France to promote a neutral government in Vietnam. In a series of columns in early 1964 Lippmann renewed his efforts to get the administration to give De Gaulle's neutralization plan a hearing. It was not an easy sell because many U.S. officials were infuriated by the General's impromptu announcement in January 1964 that France planned to extend full diplomatic recognition to China. America's isolation in the Far East—and by this Lippmann meant its lonely stand against recognition of the People's Republic of China—created a “neurotic jingoism about any country that differs with us and does not keep in step.” He counseled Washington officials to accept De Gaulle's decision. The administration could ill afford to “nurse a grievance”; De Gaulle, he wrote, simply was recognizing a situation of fact, not condoning the form of government in Beijing. On Vietnam, he continued, “we should welcome General de Gaulle's advice, his help, his influence which is greater than many of us realize . . . without his help there is no prospect that we shall be able to extricate ourselves honorably from the entanglement in Southeast Asia.”⁶⁶

De Gaulle was offering a way out of the morass, “rendering us a signal service,” Lippmann wrote.⁶⁷ He went on to explain that French and Americans were not at cross purposes; both, ultimately, hoped to contain Chinese expansion. Rather, they conflicted over the reality of the problem in Vietnam. While the U.S. sought to create an advantageous military position prior to pursuing a negotiated settlement, De Gaulle believed that “there cannot be a military solution of the Vietnamese civil

⁶⁶ Lippmann, T&T, 21 January 1964, “Red China and the General.”

⁶⁷ Lippmann, T&T, 4 February 1964, “The French-American Argument.”

war.”⁶⁸ Lippmann wholeheartedly shared De Gaulle’s pessimism about the military prospects. “General de Gaulle’s argument is unanswerable unless we are able to persuade ourselves that the civil war can be won,” he wrote. “The official American view is that we have to say unreservedly that the war will be won and refuse to think about what we shall do if it cannot be won.” The administration, by refusing a diplomatic solution, had “bolted the doors” and denied itself the key part of any sound strategy, a “fall-back position.”⁶⁹ He reminded skeptics that “we should not confuse ourselves with the notion that General de Gaulle has offered a plan for the neutralization of Southeast Asia which we must accept or reject.” De Gaulle’s vagueness allowed for wiggle-room: “He has proposed a line of policy and a mode of thinking which we cannot afford to dismiss lightly.”⁷⁰

A week later, with an even bleaker description of prospects in Saigon, Lippmann identified that “mode of thinking” with the kind of neutralism that the U.S. had learned to accept in Europe. The war was “going badly for our side,” he informed readers, “more badly than the American public has been allowed to know . . . [it] is being told what officially we hope will happen. It is not being told what in fact is happening.”⁷¹ The U.S. could remain in Vietnam long enough only to reach a tolerable political settlement. And, he wrote, the administration should seize on De Gaulle’s “middle road approach” of neutralization while it still had the bargaining power to do so.⁷² “It would be a very big mistake for the Administration to continue to limit itself, as it is now doing, to a choice between what is almost certainly an

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Lippmann, T&T, 4 February 1964, “The French-American Argument.”

⁷¹ Lippmann, T&T, 11 February 1964, “Finland and Southeast Asia.”

unattainable victory and an unacceptable catastrophe,” he concluded. De Gaulle’s plan proposed just that kind of diplomatic escape hatch, a line of policy that would permit a neutralization of Vietnam and held out some hope for its own autonomy and latitude in dealing with China. For those who argued that North Vietnam—or even a united Vietnam under Hanoi—could never be pried loose from Chinese influence, Lippmann held out the examples of Yugoslavia and Finland. Geographically both were situated near the Soviet Union and its obedient satellites, yet both enjoyed relatively autonomous domestic affairs. The point, Lippmann explained, is that “a country on the border of a big Communist state need not inevitably lose its national independence.”⁷³

Though unflinching in his support for De Gaulle’s neutralization plan and the General’s recognition of China, Lippmann held no unrealistic hopes about drawing the administration to his position—at least publicly. He told a former Belgian official, Camille A. Gutt, “If it is a matter of talking out loud about de Gaulle and his policy in the Far East, I suppose I am just about completely isolated in this country.” At the time, Secretary of State Dean Rusk was pressuring the Chiang government in Taipei to consider breaking relations with Paris in protest of France’s decision to extend normal diplomatic relations to Beijing. During a meeting with Rusk, Taiwanese Ambassador to the U.S. Tingfu F. Tsiang complained that his government found it difficult “to distinguish official from unofficial views and comments in Washington. So many people wanted to speak their minds on the problem, including, for example, Mr. Lippmann.” Rusk dismissed the columnist’s support for recognition

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Lippmann, T&T, 11 February 1964, “Finland and Southeast Asia.”

of the PRC: “Lippmann’s held the same position for 15 years.”⁷⁴ Lippmann’s frequent meetings with other U.S. officials, however, led him to believe that, in private, the president and many of his advisors did not share Rusk’s extreme position. “There is much more sympathy with [De Gaulle] in higher quarters than anyone feels it politically expedient to express,” he told Camille Gutt. Though he complained Johnson had a “very short attention span” on discussions about neutralization, Lippmann observed that LBJ “showed no sign of wanting a big war” in Southeast Asia.⁷⁵

Partly for this reason, Lippmann was loathe to assign too much blame to U.S. officials. He vacillated. He might use one T&T column to prod the White House to pursue neutralization, while, in the following installment, express sympathy with the predicament LBJ faced. His *CBS Reports* appearance in April 1964 conveyed this ambivalence. “I believe in the old-fashioned American strategic doctrine which was in force before Korea—never to get engaged in a land war on the mainland of Asia,” he told Eric Sevaried. “Sea power, air power, yes, but never land . . . That’s the prejudice with which I approach this thing, and I would never have gotten in as deeply as we did get into Vietnam, but we’re in, and you can’t cry over spilled milk.” He then went on to say that “it may be too late” to make De Gaulle’s neutralization plan succeed. Were the General able to initiate some kind of settlement, American power would guarantee it. Though Lippmann doubted that American “bombers and advisers flying around in helicopters” could turn the tide in the war, he did not object

⁷⁴ Memorandum of Conversation between Rusk and Tsiang, 24 January 1964, *FRUS, 1964-1968*, Vol. 30 [China]. Located on-line at the State Department Historical Office, *FRUS* Series, http://state.gov/www/about_state/history/vol_xxx/zg.html.

to the 1964-level of U.S. military commitments in South Vietnam. “That’s a necessary thing,” he said. “We have to try and stabilize a government before we can do anything else.”⁷⁶ In reply to a reader’s letter, Lippmann said that the American goal in South Vietnam should be to create a military and political “stalemate”—to strengthen the Saigon government “so that it does not run out on us” and increase the U.S. naval and air presence in the Pacific. Operating from a position of strength, the U.S. could then negotiate a way out of Vietnam. He had little enthusiasm for more than this kind of exit strategy: “as for defeating guerilla warfare, frankly, I don’t believe it’s possible for the United States to do that kind of thing on the mainland of Asia.”⁷⁷ But by leaving the door open to a continued American military presence in South Vietnam, Lippmann unwittingly played into the administration’s hands.

IV.

Mac Bundy had a talent—and an increasingly important role—for garnering good press. Johnson designated his national security adviser, already so well acquainted with Lippmann, Joe Alsop, and James Reston as mentor to administration spokesmen George Reedy, Bill Moyers, and Jack Valenti. “They need some leadership in this deal, just like you did your faculty,” LBJ told Bundy, referencing his time as Harvard dean. “I’d take ‘em and I’d try to have coffee with ‘em once every two or three days and say, ‘Now here’s the kind of image we ought to mold’ . . . I think Moyers has got the capacity and Jack Valenti can learn anything, if you’d just direct him. You just

⁷⁵ Lippmann to Camille A. Gutt, 29 January 1964, cited in Blum’s *Public Philosopher*: 610. See also Elizabeth (Framer) Midgley’s diary entry for March 5, 1964.

⁷⁶ *Conversations with Walter Lippmann*: 168-17.

take them like they're teachers of freshman government and you're dean of faculty and you tell 'em what you think they ought to do."⁷⁸ The others were fast studies. But so far as LBJ was concerned, the national security adviser always took the point on Lippmann.

Thirty years Lippmann's junior, Bundy shared an intense, almost filial, relationship with the columnist. At precociously young ages, each was deemed the brightest mind of his respective generation. Like the older men with whom Bundy surrounded himself—Henry Stimson, Felix Frankfurter, and Archibald MacLeish—Lippmann was immediately taken with Bundy when they met in the late-1940s. Bundy had just co-written Stimson's memoirs, *On Active Service in Peace and War*, a popular and, at the time, an authoritative account of the decision to drop the atomic bombs on Japan. Bundy became much more than Stimson's scribe; the old man's Wilsonian conception of foreign affairs, that stressed the rightness of intervention to protect and instill democracy abroad, had a profound influence on his protégé.⁷⁹ That wasn't so clear in 1948 when Lippmann enlisted Bundy to revise *The Good Society*, a book he'd written in the 1930s. The project never developed, with Bundy telling Lippmann after a year that though he'd taken apart the original arguments of the book he could not reconstruct the pieces.⁸⁰ That episode did not end of their collaboration. When Harvard searched for a new president in the 1950s, Lippmann recommended Bundy. Later, when John Kennedy asked Lippmann whom he should name to head

⁷⁷ Lippmann to John Mecklen, 10 April 1964, cited in John Morton Blum, *Public Philosopher: Selected Letters of Walter Lippmann* (New York: Ticknor and Fields, 1985): 611.

⁷⁸ LBJ-Bundy phone conversation, 14 April 1964, tape #WH6409.09, citation #3027, PNO #10, LBJL.

⁷⁹ Kai Bird, *The Color of Truth: McGeorge Bundy and William Bundy, Brothers in Arms* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1998): 88-98.

⁸⁰ Bird, *The Color of Truth*: 101-105.

the State Department, the columnist suggested the 41-year-old, then Dean of Faculty at Harvard.

Partly at LBJ's bidding, Bundy was encouraged to expand the scope of his purview. Much, however, came from Bundy's own initiative—from his desire to control, his tendency to do first and ask questions later, indeed, his relentless drive to assert his own influence in the power vacuums and gray areas that existed in the bureaucracy. Mac Bundy—as David Halberstam memorably observed—did not shrink from power.⁸¹ And his power certainly expanded in the first year of the LBJ administration, as he tutored the president on foreign affairs, press relations, even domestic politics—all of these fell under his broad watch. It worried some who felt he over-reached and that, though he was a first-rate operative, he was a little too un-philosophical.⁸² Bundy's memos were indicative of his approach: lucid, concise, exacting, and filled with his sharp cynicism. They were legend among government circles; almost a new kind of literary genre. LBJ biographer Robert Dallek observed that Bundy's memos were no mere policy summaries from subordinate to superior. Instead, they read like guidelines from professor to pupil. Most remarkable was the “didactic” tone Bundy adopted, Dallek explained, “never disrespectful or patronizing, but like a teacher's instructions to an eager student, they advised Johnson on what to say and how to orchestrate every detail of foreign policy.”⁸³ He embraced LBJ's admonition to be professorial, even when communicating with the president himself.

⁸¹ David Halberstam's essay on Bundy and his aspirations to power is still the classic biographical treatment; see, *The Best and the Brightest* (New York: Random House, 1972): 41-60.

⁸² A month into LBJ's term, Undersecretary of State Averill Harriman and U.N. Ambassador Adlai Stevenson warned Johnson that he should not give Bundy too long a leash in international affairs. They thought it vital that the President “make it clear that Bundy speaks as your Assistant and not as the President.” See Dallek, *Flawed Giant*: 89-91.

⁸³ Dallek, *Flawed Giant*: 90.

But Bundy also had a useful instinct to sense what others wanted, to know what they were thinking, to anticipate their positions, and to realign himself to suit them. If this was a sycophantic side of his personality, it nevertheless served him well in his relations with presidents and columnists.⁸⁴

One of Bundy's early press assignments was to enlist Lippmann to defend LBJ from Republican accusations that he was not vigorously prosecuting the war. Richard Nixon, upon returning from a fact-finding trip to Saigon in April 1964, charged the administration with preventing the Khanh government from taking the war into Laos and North Vietnam. On the afternoon of 14 April 1964, LBJ phoned Bundy at his West Wing office to complain about Nixon's statements. He read from a UPI wire story: "The United States should take a tougher line toward Communism in Asia and should unleash South Vietnamese troops to extend the country's civil war to [in Nixon's words] 'the sources of trouble, whether in North Vietnam or Laos.'" Johnson fumed, "Now I guess he's unleashing 'em like Eisenhower unleashed Chiang Kai-Shek. But they're done unleashed. What we're trying to do is get 'em to protect themselves. They haven't got much capacity to advance . . . You ought to tell Lippmann to knock the tail off [Nixon] because he's trying to start another war in China."⁸⁵ Who better to make a potent political retort to the Republican right than a respected realist? The episode showed LBJ's keen appreciation for Lippmann's underlying concern about the American buildup: Chinese intervention. And, Johnson

⁸⁴ Halberstam observed this part of Bundy's personality; see *The Best and the Brightest*: 59. Logevall uses the term "sycophant" to describe Bundy during this period. See also Kai Bird's discussion in his conclusion where he writes that despite his deep doubts about the war—Bundy still essentially advised LBJ what he wanted to hear, especially pp. 396-409.

⁸⁵ LBJ-Bundy phone conversation, 14 April 1964, tape #WH6404.09, citation #3027, PNO #10, LBJL.

had a dual purpose, too. The request to fend off Nixon, coming as it did from the White House, would reinforce Lippmann's perception that the president was dovish.

Lippmann eagerly obliged when Mac Bundy approached him, offering his speech-writing services as well as column space. When Bundy sent a draft of one of the president's foreign policy addresses on Southeast Asia, Lippmann excised the word "victory" from the list of objectives. Nevertheless, he approved the line in which LBJ promised "'to keep our forces at whatever level continued independence requires.'"⁸⁶ Lippmann also dedicated an installment of T&T to blunting Nixon's attack, adopting LBJ's line about hollow Republican promises in the 1950s to "unleash" Chiang Kai-shek against China. "Mr. Nixon ought to know better, perhaps he does know better, than to say that the reason South Viet-Nam does not win the war in North Viet-Nam is that the United States won't let it," Lippmann replied on behalf of the administration. "The indubitable fact is that South Viet-Nam is quite incapable of carrying the war successfully into North Viet-Nam."⁸⁷ LBJ's policy, though not "glorious," he argued, was "at least concerned with the reality of the situation": to prevent the collapse of the weak Saigon regime before a negotiated settlement could be reached. "Any other plan for 'winning the war' in Southeast Asia must be, if the speaker is being candid and not tricky," Lippmann told readers, "a plan for the intervention of the United States with large forces prepared to overwhelm the whole of Indochina and to confront Mainland China itself."⁸⁸ Such was the policy at which Nixon hinted. But by flushing out the war hawks on the Republican right, Lippmann simplified the administration's task of casting Johnson as a moderate versus the

⁸⁶ Elizabeth (Farmer) Midgley Diaries, 20 April 1964.

⁸⁷ Lippmann, T&T, "Foreign Policy Debate," 21 April 1964.

Goldwaterites on the Vietnam issue. In making this distinction, Lippmann added to the impression that LBJ walked far closer to the negotiation side of the street than he actually did.

In private, Lippmann doggedly pursued the case for neutralization despite the obstinate position of key administration officials. On 19 May 1964, shortly after returning from a trip to Paris, he visited Bundy at the White House. Lippmann expected to be debriefed about his talks with Georges Pompidou and Edgar Faure, among others. The national security adviser greeted him tersely: “Well, what’s the French plan?” Bundy snapped. “I can’t seem to find out, and you presumably know what it is, so tell me.” The columnist refused to be pressed. The two men briefly discussed other matters before Bundy came back around to the subject of neutralization. He called it a disguised plan for Communist takeover. “Mac, please don’t talk in such cliches,” Lippmann replied. “We both know better than that.” A Titoist regime—unified and run by Hanoi—was the best hope for Western interests, he added. The episode convinced Lippmann that Mac Bundy might not present the neutralization option to the president in an objective manner.⁸⁹

With his column he went over the advisers’ heads, making a rare public appeal to LBJ. The day after his meeting with Bundy, Lippmann reiterated to readers that French and U.S. interests in Southeast Asia were “complimentary,” not “competitive.” Both sought to contain Chinese power; but whereas America’s plan was unilateral, De Gaulle’s, he explained, wisely sought to incorporate the major

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Steel, *Walter Lippmann and the American Century*, 544. Lippmann left that meeting so disturbed that he reversed his hopes that LBJ would replace Secretary of State Dean Rusk with Bundy if Johnson

powers in a comprehensive conference for all of Southeast Asia. Diplomacy was the “only conceivable solution of what is certainly an otherwise interminable military conflict.” With unusually blunt language he offered a grim prognosis for the war effort: American military aid was no more “than a shot in the arm” for the faltering Saigon government. “We are supporting and promoting a cruel and nasty war that has no visible end,” Lippmann wrote. “There is no light at the end of the tunnel; I have heard it said by people in Washington that we might fight in South Viet-Nam for 10 or 20 years. That may sound stout-hearted in Washington but it is a dismal prospect for the villagers of Viet-Nam. What we are offering the Vietnamese people is altogether demoralizing.”⁹⁰

His strategy worked, to a degree. Within a week he got a White House hearing—an animated two and a half hour discussion in which Lippmann made it clear that he believed Vietnam fell inside the Chinese sphere of influence, not the American. At Johnson’s request McGeorge Bundy arranged the 27 May 1964 meeting between Lippmann and the principal planners of Vietnam policy. That morning Johnson reviewed the latest Gallup polls that indicated 65 percent of Americans knew little or nothing about the faraway Asian nation; a majority of those who did, believed the administration was mishandling policy. “It’s damned easy to get into a war,” LBJ lamented to Bundy, “but it’s gonna be awfully hard to ever extricate yourself if you get in . . . What does Lippmann think [we] ought to do?”:

was elected to a full term. Bundy’s stint as national security adviser had, Lippmann thought, “coarsened” him.

⁹⁰ Lippmann, “France and America in Asia,” T&T, 21 May 1964. It was the third and final installment in a series.

BUNDY: What he really thinks is that you should provide a diplomatic structure within which the thing can go under the control of Hanoi and walk away from it. . . .

LBJ: You mean he thinks that Hanoi ought to take South Vietnam?

BUNDY: Yes, sir—diplomatically.

LBJ: Um-hmm.

BUNDY: Maybe by calling it a neutralization and removing American force and letting it slip away the way Laos did—[corrects himself] would, if we didn't do anything, and will if we don't do anything. And we would guarantee the neutrality in some sort of a treaty. . . . I'm sorry. I'm not sure I'm the best person to describe Lippmann's views because I don't agree with them.

LBJ: Who has he been talking to besides you? Has he talked to Rusk any on this? Has he talked to McNamara?

BUNDY: He's talked to George Ball. . . .

LBJ: Wouldn't it be good for he and McNamara to sit down? . . . I'd try to get his ideas a little more concrete. . . . I'd like to hear Walter and McNamara debate this thing.⁹¹

In a memorandum to LBJ later that day, Bundy suggested that the Lippmann-McNamara debate take place late that afternoon following a Vietnam briefing with key advisors. Bundy thought the discussion should include only the president, the secretary of defense, and himself—excluding two participants from the earlier briefing, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Maxwell Taylor and CIA Director John McCone. He added that LBJ might ask Undersecretary of State George Ball, “an old friend of Walter’s,” to attend.⁹²

⁹¹ LBJ-Bundy phone conversation, 27 May 1964, WH6404.09, citation # 3025, program #8, LBJL. Also reproduced in Beschloss, *Taking Charge*, 372-373. Bundy's slip-up on neutralization in Laos was revealing; he seemed to conflate the withdrawal of U.S. power with Communist victory.

⁹² Bundy to LBJ, NSFM (3) 27 May 1964, NSF Bundy Memos 5/1-27/64. LBJL.

Ball, who joined the meeting, fast became a key conduit between the columnist and the administration on Vietnam matters. He and Lippmann had become friends two decades earlier living on the same tree-shaded street at the foot of the National Cathedral. They shared the same Atlanticist sympathies and a vision for an internationalist foreign policy. Though they were both critics of escalation in Vietnam, they were uncertain allies. From early 1964 onward, Ball worked inside the administration to change its *methods* for winning the war; he particularly objected to the bombing offensive in 1965. Lippmann—at a more fundamental level—came to doubt the wisdom of American *objectives*. Where Ball saw American altruism, Lippmann later found all the trappings of imperialism and global overreach. Eventually, the war cast its long shadows across their friendship.⁹³

Business occupied much of their acquaintance. Ball and Lippmann met regularly for dinner, lunch at the Metropolitan Club, or late afternoon cocktails at one another's homes to talk about politics and policies. "It was more than a mere neighborly friendship," Ball recalled years later. "I sought out Walter to clarify my own muddled thinking, while he used me as a kind of practice dartboard against which he could throw ideas for his column."⁹⁴ When Ball entered service in the State Department, he became an invaluable source for Lippmann. With the exception of Mac Bundy—perhaps even more than Bundy as the debate over Vietnam became acrimonious—Lippmann relied on Ball for information about administration thinking. It was no secret that they were confidants. It became more apparent when both

⁹³ See Ball's memoirs, *The Past Has Another Pattern* (New York: 1982); 90-91; 430-431. Still one of the most insightful (if uncritical) brief sketches of Ball can be found in Halberstam's *The Best and the Brightest*: 173-175; 491-499. For his role as an "in-house critic," see Berman's *Planning a Tragedy*: 85-89.

men—Ball in internal memos and Lippmann in his columns—forecast poor prospects for bombing in the spring of 1965. Bundy and LBJ utilized the Ball-Lippmann relationship to their advantage, probing Ball about how best to address Lippmann’s concerns or blunt his criticisms. He obliged them with frank advice. And there were tense moments. Once, after listening to Ball argue against bombing North Vietnam, Johnson teased him, “Are you telling Lippmann what to write or is he telling you what to say?”⁹⁵ Until the decision to send troops in the summer of 1965 the answer was not that clear.

Whether or not Bundy intended to have Ball level the playing field by siding with Lippmann in the 27 May 1964 debate, the undersecretary of state plainly wanted the columnist to clarify his case for neutralization. At 4:30 p.m. Bundy ushered Lippmann into the small lounge adjoining the Oval Office. A few hours before, Lippmann had completed a column to appear the next morning that argued the only way out of the “dead-end street in Southeast Asia” was to make a political settlement. By Ball’s account of the meeting, Lippmann reiterated much of that analysis to LBJ and his principal advisers: his “usual” pitch, Ball noted, in support of the French plan. “It is not easy for any country to repair its mistakes, especially those in which it has invested lives, money, and moral judgments,” Lippmann explained in his column. “But the original mistake in Southeast Asia has to be repaired. The way to do this is to go to a conference.” In a phrase that could only have caused the president and

⁹⁴ Ball, *The Past Has Another Pattern*: 100.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 430.

McNamara to shudder at its public utterance, the columnist told readers “the military outlook in South Viet-Nam is dismal beyond words.”⁹⁶

During the meeting Lippmann also restated his assessment, included in the column, that Vietnam was “bound to lie within the Chinese sphere of influence,” but that U.S. withdrawal from the South did not necessarily mean overt occupation by North Vietnamese or Chinese troops. A great power structure, guaranteed by the U.S., U.S.S.R., France, Great Britain, and China, could prevent such an occupation and perhaps help a unified Vietnam “to go Titoist.” He concluded, “what will do most for our real interests in Southeast Asia is not to bomb Hanoi but to create a visible guarantee which makes it safe for Hanoi not to be, as it has always striven not to be, a Chinese satellite.”⁹⁷

By putting such analyses in print at such an early date, Lippmann distinguished himself from later war critics who, while advocating negotiations, did not wish to discuss the likely outcome in public in 1964.⁹⁸ During the meeting, Ball pressed him on that point: What were the implications of neutralization for the region? Lippmann conceded that neutralization assumed that “all of Southeast Asia was destined inevitably to become a zone of Chinese Communist control.” The U.S. could do little to prevent it. On this final point he was blunt: “our best hope [is] to seek by political means to slow that expansion down and to make it less brutal.”⁹⁹

⁹⁶ Lippmann, T&T, 28 May 1964, "Our Commitment in Viet-Nam."

⁹⁷ Ibid; George Ball to Dean Rusk, 31 May 1964, Memorandum, Folder: Top Secret Documents, Box 23, Records of Undersecretary George W. Ball, 1961-1966, Lot 74D272, National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) II, College Park, MD.

⁹⁸ For example, Senators J. William Fulbright and Mike Mansfield.

⁹⁹ Ball to Rusk, 31 May 1964, Memorandum.

Johnson wasn't convinced, though he waited until Lippmann departed before rendering his judgment. Ball told Dean Rusk—the only principal absent from the meeting—that the president hadn't “bought Lippmann's ultimate thesis.” LBJ expressed concern, however, about Lippmann's “contention that the United States was presenting itself in a bad light to the world by refusing to negotiate and entertaining the possibility of enlarged military action.”¹⁰⁰ Several days later, based on Lippmann's description to DeGaulle's neutralization plan, the president dispatched George Ball to Paris to speak with the French leader.¹⁰¹ The 27 May meeting also prompted McGeorge Bundy to start gathering material to use against Lippmann—should the need arise. He assigned a member of his NSC staff to sift through hundreds of Lippmann's columns on a variety of Cold War crises. Gordon Chase, Bundy's aide, filled four folders with excerpts which—as Chase explained to his boss—“bear on the charge that Lippmann's frequent inclination, when the going gets rough for the U.S., is to ‘cut and run.’”¹⁰² Unaware how much the meeting unsettled Johnson and his advisors, Lippmann left believing with more faith than reason that the president would opt for a diplomatic solution to the Vietnam problem.¹⁰³

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ See, for instance, Logevall, *Choosing War*: 175-177.

¹⁰² Gordon Chase to McGeorge Bundy, 7 June 1964, “Walter Lippmann, [1 of 4],” Box 7, Files of Gordon Chase, NSF, LBJL.

¹⁰³ Steel, *Walter Lippmann and the American Century*: 550. More than three months earlier, Johnson and Bundy had effectively ruled out the neutralization option. See their phone conversation of 7 February 1964 in Beschloss, *Taking Charge*, 226-227:

LBJ: “What do we say about neutralization of Vietnam? We have probed and we know that there is no possibility of neutralizing North Vietnam. If they would leave their neighbors alone . . . But they won't do it. And to say that you're going to neutralize South Vietnam and let them take North Vietnam is silly.

BUNDY: . . . If the U.S. forces were withdrawn, that thing would collapse like a pack of cards. Maybe when we have a stronger position, maybe when we've pressed through with this and maybe if they can get a government that'll move . . . there'll come a time when there'll be a balanced force in South Vietnam that can survive. But anyone who thinks that exists now is crazy and anybody who says it exists is undermining the essential first effort. And that is the hazard of what de Gaulle is doing and

The 27 May exchange marked the beginning of a roughly 18-month period of administration efforts to keep the influential columnist—if not completely on board—at least mollified. For a long while it worked. Several weeks later Lippmann told readers that though there existed a strong faction of advocates for bombing in the U.S. government, they did “not, not yet at least, speak for the Administration.” Lippmann would come to believe that among the Vietnam principles, McNamara and Rusk were far more pro-war than Bundy or Johnson. While it was “not our intention to withdraw and wash our hands,” officials were building military strength in Saigon solely to allow the U.S. to negotiate from a position of strength. “Unless I have been grossly and continuously misled,” he reassured readers, “our objective is to create a balance of forces which favors and supports a negotiated settlement in Southeast Asia.”¹⁰⁴ The president, Mac Bundy, and Ball reiterated that message in virtually every subsequent meeting with the journalist, even after the decision to send in ground troops was taken in July 1965.

V.

The presidential election displaced Vietnam from Lippmann’s agenda soon after the late-May meeting at the White House. With the exception of one T&T column on the Tonkin Gulf crisis, he did not devote any sustained attention to problems in Southeast Asia during the summer and through late-November 1964. Partly, Lippmann did not want to provide Republican presidential candidate Barry Goldwater with foreign

it’s the hazard in what some other people are suggesting. I wouldn’t mention them, but you can look ‘em right in the eye.

policy issues to bludgeon Johnson. Vietnam policy, he believed, could not be made on the campaign stump. The administration welcomed Lippmann's unqualified support, as well as his relative silence on Vietnam. His value in deflecting domestic criticism from the Republican right temporarily offset administration concerns with his open advocacy of neutralism. Indeed, officials sought his advice and, more significantly, considered ways in which they might more visibly associate candidate Johnson with Lippmann's status as the doyen of American commentators.

Punctually, Walter and Helen Lippmann left Washington in mid-June for their annual summer retreat to a vacation house in Southwest Harbor, Maine. Cloistered from his capital sources for nearly three months on the New England coast, Lippmann nonetheless followed campaign developments with growing interest.

Arizona Senator Barry Goldwater became an easy target for Lippmann in these months. Less than a week before the Republican Party Convention convened in San Francisco, Lippmann wrote a column deriding "Goldwaterism." He described the presumptive Republican nominee as an "ardent anti-Federalist, who would like to reduce sharply and deeply the national power" to marshal the economy, resources, transportation system, and industry. Such decentralization, he warned, would provoke "social disorder" and throw the modern nation-state into a "loose 19th century social order."¹⁰⁴ Applied abroad, "Goldwaterism" portended even greater problems; specifically, the senator's enthusiasm for facing down Russia and China without fully contemplating the risk of war. Goldwater was so "obsessed by the

¹⁰⁴ Lippmann, T&T, "The Shake-Up in Saigon," 25 June 1964. See also Steel, *Walter Lippmann and the American Century*, 550. It is entirely possible that Lippmann knew the Administration would not dare expand the war less than six months before the presidential election.

¹⁰⁵ Lippmann, T&T, "Goldwaterism at Home and Abroad," 9 July 1964.

delusion of American omnipotence that he sees no contradiction between a foreign policy which would risk great wars and a domestic policy which would dismantle the national power,” Lippmann wrote. “For in the realm of delusion, nothing is impossible.”¹⁰⁶

The North Vietnamese “attack” on the American destroyers *Maddox* and *C. Turner Joy* in the Gulf of Tonkin on 4 August 1964 caught Lippmann off guard. Three days before the *Maddox* had engaged North Vietnamese torpedo boats in, or near, North Vietnamese territorial waters. On the stormy night of the 4th, accompanied by the *C. Turner Joy*, the *Maddox* made a provocative foray off the North Vietnamese coast—and, according to conflicting and ultimately unverified reports, the ships came under fire from North Vietnamese vessels. President Johnson retaliated, authorizing an air strike that decimated 25 torpedo boats at a North Vietnamese port and an oil storage dump at Vinh.¹⁰⁷ Four days later, in a brief column, Lippmann described the episode as confirmation of the fact that American naval power was supreme in the Pacific Ocean. The importance of American sea-power was a favorite theme of Lippmann’s and one which he believed U.S. officials minimized. Earlier that summer he’d complained to Elizabeth Farmer that he “could find almost no one who thought about sea power” and its relation to the problems in Asia. He added, “I’m very interested in this because I was raised on Mahan, you know.”¹⁰⁸ Lippmann interpreted the Tonkin incident as a “demonstration that the United States can remain in Southeast Asia without being on the ground,” he ventured. American naval power, as his now familiar argument went, would ensure a

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Herring, *America’s Longest War*: 120-121.

major part for the U.S. in any future settlement. “The more firmly the fact is established that our presence in Southeast Asia is primarily a sea-and-air power, the safer it will be to enter the negotiations which is the only alternative to an endless and indecisive war in the jungle,” he concluded.¹⁰⁹

What Lippmann did not address turned out to be far more troubling. A day after that column appeared, Congress passed the sweeping Tonkin Gulf Resolution with unanimous approval in the House of Representatives and just two dissenting votes in the Senate. It gave Johnson a blank check, authorizing him to “repel any armed attack” against U.S. forces. Legislators further stipulated that the president could “prevent further aggression” and take “all necessary steps” to protect any signatory of the SEATO Treaty, an umbrella defense pact which included South Vietnam. LBJ later bragged that the resolution was “like grandma’s nightshirt—it covered everything.”¹¹⁰ If Lippmann had objections to the far-reaching powers Congress forfeited to Johnson, he did not raise them at the time.¹¹¹

Several weeks after the attack, on the eve of the Democratic Convention in Atlantic City, NJ, Lippmann seemed eager to believe that having demonstrated its strength, the administration would move toward negotiations. Two events in late-August convinced him a change might be at hand. On 21 August 1964, Lippmann phoned McGeorge Bundy from Maine. He had heard that Henry Cabot Lodge, who had recently been replaced as Ambassador to Vietnam, had been quoted as saying that

¹⁰⁸ Elizabeth (Farmer) Midgley Diaries, 1 June 1964.

¹⁰⁹ Lippmann, T&T, “In the Gulf of Tonkin,” 6 August 1964.

¹¹⁰ See Walter LaFeber, *America, Russia, and the Cold War, 1945-1990* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1991): 240-241; and Dallek, *Flawed Giant*: 143-156.

¹¹¹ He strongly criticized a similar resolution, granted by Congress to Eisenhower, during the first Quemoy and Matsu crisis in 1955. See Lippmann’s T&T, “The Off-Shore Entanglement,” 12 April 1955.

the solution in Vietnam would be political not military. Lippmann inquired if this statement amounted to a change in policy. "I told him no—that we had always believed that in the end this was a political problem," Bundy reported to Johnson in a memo. "He seemed content."¹¹²

That same day the *Chicago Tribune* informed officials that it planned to run a story based on a copy of a secret CIA analysis (received through an anonymous source) that urged consideration be given to a negotiated settlement in Vietnam, based on neutralization. Trying to defuse the impact, officials released the CIA memorandum to reporters. When the *Tribune* published excerpts from the document several days later, Lippmann phone George Ball at the State Department to ask if neutralization was indeed a serious object of discussion. Ball told him, "it was just one of these think pieces that are done all the time in Government by various individuals. It did not reflect anything more than that. It was a single individual's idea."¹¹³ It was not, he added for emphasis, a "trial balloon." What was most interesting about this exchange was that Ball at no point indicated any sympathy with the content of the memorandum, which outlined a course that he had privately defended to Dean Rusk in the spring. Several days later, Ball had a similar phone conversation with *New York Times* bureau chief James Reston (another neighbor and friend). When Reston asked if there was any discussion of getting out of Vietnam, Ball replied, "There is no talk of that kind."¹¹⁴

¹¹² Bundy to LBJ, 21 August 1964, NSFM, McGeorge Bundy 7/1-9/30/64, LBJL.

¹¹³ Lippmann-Ball, Telcon, 25 August 1964, "Vietnam I (12/9/63-12/15/64), LBJL.

¹¹⁴ Logevall, *Choosing War*, 229. For a discussion of the leaked memo on neutralization, written by the CIA's Willard Mathias, see pp. 165-166; 228.

So much as Lippmann's hopes were raised for a diplomatic exit in Vietnam, he remained focused on the campaign. He quickly shifted roles to that of political adviser, recommending a vice presidential candidates to Johnson. "He himself believes that the basic quality of the man you choose is what counts," Bundy reported back to LBJ, "and he asked me to say that on this score he thought most thoughtful observers would be most impressed by a choice of Hubert Humphrey."¹¹⁵ Though the polls showed that Americans had no strong opinion about any of Johnson's possible choices, Lippmann told Bundy that the voters would focus on the vice presidential nominee as the moment of the election drew near. The Republican's choice of William E. Miller, an obscure, upstate New York Congressman and a fierce right-wing ideologue, made them "extraordinarily vulnerable" Lippmann told Bundy. Humphrey, he added, "has and deserves a reputation among informed men as a man of outstanding ability, experience, and quality to serve as your running mate."¹¹⁶ He ticked off the problems with other contenders. Senate Majority Leader Mike Mansfield simply was not the stuff of presidential timber, he remarked. And, while he thought highly of senator Eugene McCarthy of Minnesota, Lippmann knew it would not be wise or well-received if LBJ passed up the senior senator from Minnesota, Humphrey.

Lippmann supplemented his political counsel with ever more pointed public attacks on Goldwater's ability to conduct foreign policy. Though he stopped short of calling the senator a "warmonger," Lippmann still felt that the Arizona senator's

¹¹⁵ Two weeks earlier, Lippmann had phoned LBJ from his summer home in Southwest Harbor, Maine, to discuss Johnson's vice-presidential choices. See, Lippmann-Johnson, 30 July 1964, Telephone Conversation, #WH6407.20, PNO #21, LBJL.

¹¹⁶ Bundy to LBJ, 21 August 1964, NSFM, McGeorge Bundy 7/1-9/30/64, LBJL.

“admiration of brinkmanship” could inadvertently bring the U.S. into a military confrontation with the Soviets or Chinese. Lippmann explained on 24 September 1964, “he is the kind of man who would be much more likely than President Johnson to get us into a big war . . . It is not that Barry Goldwater wants to have a war; it is that he denounces every alternative to war as surrender, appeasement, or cowardice . . . This is the specific danger of Goldwaterism in foreign affairs: an instinctive and impulsive preference for the ultimatum rather than for negotiation.”¹¹⁷ To Lippmann it was apparent: the far preferable candidate, Johnson, had spent nearly a year mastering the intricacies of conducting international relations. Goldwater, by contrast, seemed to believe “the foreigners who live beyond the seas are not men with whom we must live on this planet but abstractions who will vanish if the President barks at them.”¹¹⁸

Coming into the crucial home stretch, the administration advertised its links to Lippmann with some high visibility events. At a White House ceremony in September 1964, Johnson awarded the columnist a Presidential Medal of Freedom for a distinguished career of public service that spanned six decades. The list of recipients was a Who’s Who of 20th century America: Dean Acheson, Aaron Copland, Walt Disney, T.S. Eliot, Helen Keller, William de Koonig, John L. Lewis, Samuel Eliot Morrison, Edward R. Murrow, Reinhold Niebuhr, A. Philip Randolph, Carl Sandburg, and John Steinbeck. The dominant feature on the medal LBJ handed Lippmann was a white star, which a White House press release described, was a “symbol of our selfless determination to maintain the freedom and democracy of

¹¹⁷ Lippmann, T&T, "On Warmongering," 24 September 1964.

mankind.” The event itself symbolized Lippmann’s importance to this particular president. Shortly thereafter, to reinforce the point, Johnson and Lady Bird dropped by Woodley Road to celebrate Lippmann’s 75th birthday. Johnson presented him with a new guest book, which he christened with his own signature. NBC newsman David Brinkley gave Lippmann a blue button that the columnist merrily pinned on for the party. It read: “Sensation Seeking Press.”¹¹⁹

One episode particularly revealed the value administration officials placed on associating themselves with Lippmann. In early October, Johnson—seeking to answer the Goldwater campaign’s charges that he was a weak foreign policy president—asked Mac Bundy to draft a foreign policy speech in which he would outline his ideas about international relations in broad strokes. Bundy did not believe this was the right format and urged caution. He explained to LBJ that in a brief speech, “One can be eloquent, but one cannot be very solid. And it is solidity, not fancy phrases, that people are looking for.” He added, “The fact is that in 800 [to] 1,200 words, no man can be an international statesman unless he has a fancy proposal—and we don’t and shouldn’t before Nov. 3.”¹²⁰

Bundy then suggested another forum for showcasing LBJ’s foreign policy acumen: a prime time television “conversation” with Walter Lippmann. He believed a half-hour, question-and-answer format of paid political time, aired about ten days before the election, would draw a large audience. “Lippmann himself is extremely good at

¹¹⁸ Ibid. A statement replete with irony. He would use the same invectives against Johnson in less than a year.

¹¹⁹ White House Press Release, 4 July 1964, POL 6-3 US, Files of Dean Rusk, RG 59, NARA II. *Newsweek*, 5 October 1964: 87.

¹²⁰ Bundy to LBJ, “How to be a Statesman in the last month,” 4 October 1964, NSF, McGeorge Bundy 10/1-12/31/64, LBJL.

this sort of thing,” Bundy wrote, no doubt, with *the CBS Reports* series in mind, “and so are you.” With some scripting, Bundy continued, the pair could cover “4 or 5 great issues”: peace, relations with Communism, the Atlantic Alliance, the situation in the Western Hemisphere, and the role of the president in making foreign policy. “It is true that Lippmann is regarded by some as a soft-liner,” Bundy conceded. “But to most people he is simply the wisest publicist in the country. You could easily set yourself off a little bit from him on Vietnam or on national defense, and anyway the risk of contamination is low.”¹²¹

The reward, Bundy pointed out, was great especially since it could dispel not only persistent doubts about Johnson’s grasp of foreign affairs, but Goldwater’s most potent attacks on Johnson’s character. “There is a deeper advantage here,” Bundy explained. “The one place where Goldwater may have scored a little is on the Bobby Baker tack.” Baker, Johnson’s protégé and secretary during his years as Senate Majority Leader, had been the subject of a FBI investigation for his business practices. The Goldwater campaign circulated rumors that Johnson was somehow implicated in the scandal.¹²² Bundy felt that close association with the respected columnist would mitigate these charges. “The readiness of a man of Lippmann’s standing to talk respectfully and freely with you in a campaign broadcast,” Bundy added, “would work directly against this kind of propaganda.”¹²³

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Privately LBJ believed that Bobby Kennedy had stoked rumors about the Baker case to knock him off the ticket in 1964. Apparently, the Attorney General and JFK had watched the developments of the probe with great interest in 1963. Some speculated they were looking to use the scandal to remove LBJ from the ticket for JFK’s re-election bid. See Dallek, *Flawed Giant*: 40-44.

¹²³ Bundy to LBJ, “How to be a Statesman in the last month,” 4 October 1964, NSF, McGeorge Bundy 10/1-12/31/64, LBJL.

The television interview never came to fruition, but Lippmann's endorsement of Johnson in T&T was no poor consolation prize. Long before election day, as his readers plainly understood, the columnist had cast his lot with LBJ. As voters went to the polls on 3 November 1964, Lippmann's column that morning assured them that Johnson "is by instinct, temperament, conviction and experience a man for this season. He is a man of the center with the very special gift of finding a wide consensus."¹²⁴ Faced with Goldwater, moderate Republicans defected to Johnson in droves, giving him one of the most lop-sided victories in modern presidential elections. Two days later, Lippmann placed a call to the president at his Texas ranch, offering congratulations and best wishes for the four years ahead.¹²⁵

VI.

With Johnson elected, Lippmann re-examined the subject of Vietnam. From this point forward he turned sustained attention to the issue, reaching a crescendo in his columns in 1965 and 1966. Making his customary European rounds in November 1964, Lippmann again met for private talks with top officials in Paris: De Gaulle, Edgar Faure, and Foreign Minister Maurice Couve de Murville. The Johnson administration was eager to hear about these conversations. When he returned home in mid-December Bundy and Ball invited him to their offices to talk. "Lippmann is full of his European trip and will be just as glad to talk as to listen," Bundy reported to Johnson, preparing the president for an Oval Office chat with Lippmann. "The

¹²⁴ Lippmann, T&T, "A Man for this Season," 3 November 1964. Bundy phoned LBJ that afternoon to tell the President of Lippmann's views on the elections. See, Bundy to Johnson phone conversation, 3 November 1964, WH6411.01, citation #6108, program #8, LBJL

thing he admires most is the way you have defused the [Multi-Lateral Force] crisis, at least from the point of view of the U.S. . . . He will be delighted to hear anything you want to tell him along the lines of your recent backgrounders.”¹²⁶ For the president’s signature, Bundy attached a copy of a National Security Action Memorandum [NSAM] that outlined a policy to shelve MLF. He suggested LBJ could show it to the columnist: “He is the one truly discreet reporter I know.”¹²⁷ This was part of Bundy’s concerted effort in late-1964 and early-1965 to bring Lippmann further into the administration’s confidences.

On December 19, Lippmann came to the White House for a long meeting attended by LBJ, Mac Bundy, McNamara, and deputy secretary of defense, Cyrus Vance.¹²⁸ Notably, George Ball—a strong advocate of MLF—was not present. Lippmann talked briefly about European concerns with MLF. Johnson showed him the NSAM decreeing the change in policy, essentially defusing the MLF problem. But the bulk of the conversation dwelt on Vietnam. On this subject the president was “entirely pessimistic,” Lippmann told his research assistant Elizabeth Farmer. LBJ recalled an encounter with Joe Alsop, in which “General Alsop” (as LBJ and Ambassador to Vietnam Maxwell Taylor dubbed him) wagged his finger in the president’s face as he told him “he would go down in disgrace if he didn’t fight in North Vietnam.” Johnson wanted to know more about De Gaulle’s plan, asking for “every word” the French leader had said during Lippmann’s meeting. “This is a

¹²⁵ Lippmann-Johnson phone conversation, 5 November 1964, WH6411.09, citation #6242, program #5, LBJL.

¹²⁶ Bundy to LBJ, “Your talk with Walter Lippmann,” 19 December 1964, NSFM, McGeorge Bundy, 10/1-12/31/64, LBJL. In fact two days earlier, Lippmann praised LBJ for handling the MLF crisis so skillfully. See Lippmann, “Crisis that Didn’t Happen,” T&T, 17 December 1964.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

commitment I inherited,” LBJ lamented after a few minutes. “I don’t like it, but how can we pull out?” Lippmann repeated what De Gaulle had told him: not with a million troops could the U.S. ever pacify South Vietnam. “What is needed,” Lippmann went on to tell the president and his advisors, “is a man with the imagination of [Woodrow] Wilson—or the men who worked for Wilson—so that the problem can be set in a larger frame.” Lippmann volunteered a kind of Fourteen Points for Southeast Asia—a plan outlining a post-World War II settlement that the U.S. had yet to achieve with Beijing, security assurances for smaller Asian nations, a unified Vietnam with a coalition government, and an economic stimulus package for newly emerging countries. But none of the participants took up on that line. When Elizabeth Farmer later suggested that perhaps Bundy could orchestrate “such an enterprise,” Lippmann disagreed. “No, he hasn’t the imagination,” Lippmann opined, “his is an analytical mind.”¹²⁹

The net result was similar to the May encounter: LBJ and his advisors were unmoved by Lippmann’s arguments for disengagement. The president’s tone and the direction of the questions made Lippmann wary. Unlike the meeting six months earlier, he came away more concerned than ever that plans were afoot to Americanize the war. He told readers several days later that some in the administration sought to make the war “our war” by vastly expanding the military commitment and by unleashing a bombing campaign against the North.¹³⁰ It would be a “grievous mistake” since in South Vietnam there were “at stake no primary and vital” U.S.

¹²⁸ Elizabeth (Farmer) Midgley Diaries, 21 December 1964. See also Steel’s account based on Lippmann’s recollections, *Walter Lippmann and the American Century*: 555-556.

¹²⁹ Elizabeth (Farmer) Midgley Diaries, 21 December 1964.

¹³⁰ Lippmann, T&T, 22 December 1964, “On Vietnam.”

interests. Further, the fiction that an air war—without significant infantry commitments—could bring Hanoi to the bargaining table revealed the “pretension that there is a cheap way to win.” An American air campaign could spark an outright invasion of the South, he warned; and it most certainly would have its costs. “There is no use fooling the American people into thinking that a war for villages in the jungles and the swamps can be a clean war in the open skies.”¹³¹

A week later Lippmann sounded the realist claxon in his customary, end-of-the-year think piece. In the quarter century since the start of World War II, the United States had involved itself in the “soft regions” of the world where colonialism had lapsed into chaos, conflict, and civil war, he wrote. America had lent its prestige, resources, and military strength in Africa and Asia, from the Congo to South Vietnam without fully examining why. “We have done so with the highest motives,” he concluded, “by allowing the ideology of the cold war to take precedence in our minds over our own national interests.”¹³² Now was the time for reappraisal. He also answered a growing chorus of critics who suggested that advocates of retrenchment in Southeast Asia were but a new manifestation of the old isolationists. “It is isolationism,” Lippmann wrote with sarcasm, “if the study of our own vital interests and a realization of the limits of our power is isolationism” or “as compared with the globalism which has become fashionable” during the cold war. “What of it?” he sniped. “In the outer zones of our postwar entanglements it is time to tell ourselves

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Lippmann, T&T 29 December 1964, “Globalism and Anti-Americanism.”

that there is much at stake and that we must be guided not by the hot ideologies but by a cool examination and calculation of the national interest.”¹³³

These rumblings of discontent worried Mac Bundy. He perceived, more clearly than even the president, that Johnson’s powers of suasion might not convince Lippmann to abandon his geopolitical principles. Eventually he would stand and fight for them. Despite the relative accord of 1964 between Lippmann and the administration, Bundy feared Lippmann’s public disapproval as officials moved closer to unleashing an air war in early 1965. Slowing the process of Lippmann’s dissent would require intensive work: frequent meetings, more secret reports and figures, assurances that the negotiation track still was open, and the intimation that despite the war hawks who surrounded him, LBJ desired a peaceful way out of the war. Bundy pressed Johnson to take the columnist further into his confidences. “Lippmann is trying hard to stay on board,” Bundy told LBJ shortly before the secret “Rolling Thunder” operation commenced in February 1965, “we ought to help him out, within limits. The course we are now going on is one that will need missionary work with him, and that in turn involves trusting him. He is the one man in Washington who does not betray confidences.”¹³⁴

¹³³ Ibid.

VII.

The press at the time—and historians looking back on the episode—depicted what was to come as a classic capital city tale of “seduction and betrayal”¹³⁵: a pundit enamored with powerful men, conned by a charismatic, skillful politician. It was, as new archival evidence suggests, more than that. Mac Bundy orchestrated, and the president encouraged, a running program to keep Lippmann from publicly criticizing Vietnam policy until after the final decision to commit troops had been taken. Johnson had calculated long before that Lippmann was the keystone to good press relations, and he entrusted Mac Bundy to manage the columnist. The national security adviser’s personal relationship with Lippmann—and in no small measure his links to the liberal Establishment, family pedigree, and intellect—uniquely fitted him to be Lyndon Johnson’s intermediary with the nation’s premier pundit. If Bundy had personal doubts or pangs of conscience about this arrangement, he never verbalized them.¹³⁶ He put service to president ahead of loyalty to his friend.

All the while, U.S. officials valued the public relations prestige Lippmann conferred upon their deliberations while simultaneously rejecting the geopolitical

¹³⁴ Bundy to LBJ, “Two Press Queries,” 15 February 1965, NSFM, Box 2, LBJL.

¹³⁵ The title of Steel’s penultimate chapter, *Walter Lippmann and the American Century*: 557.

¹³⁶ Much later, years after Lippmann’s death, Bundy told the historian Melvyn Small that his efforts to obscure the drift of U.S. Vietnam policy, cost him Lippmann’s friendship. See Small, *Johnson, Nixon, and the Doves* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1988): 41. Francis Bator, a close friend of both Lippmann and Bundy and an advisor to LBJ, recalled Bundy’s predicament with sympathy. “There was a tension between Bundy and the president starting in ’65. Bundy was pushing Johnson to go to the people and explain what he was doing—try and rally the country. Whereas Johnson’s absolute top priority was not to do anything, say anything that would start a great debate that would destroy voting rights, Medicare. . . Bundy was in an impossible position. What Johnson wanted him to do was to bring Lippmann aboard—somehow, in Johnson’s mind, he really hoped there was a way of preserving the independence of South Vietnam and preventing Hanoi from taking over, in a way that was compatible with the restraint that Lippmann was advocating. And that was a non-existent proposition. Bundy was put in the middle, in a very difficult position between the two.” Interview with author, 25 January 2001, Cambridge, MA.

philosophy upon which he based his advice to them. They tried mightily to minimize that distinction for as long as they could. To that end, Bundy repeatedly advised Johnson to ask for Lippmann's advice on how to reach a negotiated settlement. He never advised him to act on it. Rather than earnest appeals for a plausible solution, these were attempts to bait Lippmann into believing the administration might moderate its policy. Consulting the powerful columnist now had little to do with hearing out the diplomatic alternatives to escalation, and everything to do with keeping him in line.

Lippmann's infatuation with LBJ and his Great Society also played to the administration's advantage. Despite his powerful insights about the nature of the problem in Vietnam and the receding chances for a military outcome favorable to U.S. policymakers, his columns were filled with conflicting messages. Lippmann knew that he was moving closer to a confrontation with the administration. Before a December lunch with Bundy, Lippmann confided to Elizabeth Farmer that he expected a fight with the national security adviser over French policy and Vietnam. "I'm not one of [Mac's] worshippers but I like him pretty well," Lippmann said. "But one of his faults is arrogance. And you have to hit back at an arrogant man. That's why I may have to fight with him."¹³⁷ Disturbed by Bundy's brashness and flashes of impatience with diplomatic efforts in South Vietnam, Lippmann nevertheless seemed willing to give his friend the benefit of the doubt. Though willing to debate the war privately with Bundy, and even to write publicly that the best outcome was a neutral Vietnam, he did not press too hard for a military withdrawal in 1964 and for much of 1965. Lippmann see-sawed. One column

insisted that the Vietnam problem required more diplomats and fewer military advisers, while the next sympathized with the commitments LBJ inherited in Saigon. The election distracted him even further. Lippmann's incongruous ideas about the war's illegitimacy and, yet, the veracity of the men who were managing it, persisted into early 1965.

Mac Bundy nurtured that ambivalence. He doubted Lippmann could be intellectually converted but sensed intuitively that the columnist might be neutralized through association with the administration's inner circle. If Lippmann could be made to check-off on incremental gradations of escalation, he would be presented with a kind of *de facto* Americanization of the war—one which he had no choice but to support. Draw Lippmann inside the team, Bundy advised LBJ. Lead him a little further down the road.

¹³⁷ Elizabeth (Farmer) Midgley Diaries, 14 December 1964.

Chapter 8:

“Give Him More of the Same”: The Johnson Administration’s Efforts to Slow Walter Lippmann’s Dissent, February to July 1965

I.

Throughout the first months of 1965 the schism between Lyndon Baines Johnson and Walter Lippmann widened with each step toward escalation. But the administration’s deception and manipulation—fortified by Lippmann’s own will to believe Johnson’s best intentions—delayed a complete break until the early fall of 1965. Though the president’s advisors did not accept Lippmann’s solution for a negotiated settlement, they were not eager to break with him because they feared he might provoke debate about their policies. Thus, Bundy and Johnson met regularly with the columnist, brought him into the White House, showed him secret cables and statistics about how favorably the war was going. At two critical junctures in 1965 the administration failed to convert Lippmann to its cause, but prevented his open dissent. As they initiated an air war against the North in the late-winter, Johnson and Bundy assured Lippmann that they would negotiate a settlement with Hanoi when the military situation stabilized in the South. Lippmann accepted this explanation at face value, conveying it to the public.

The eight-weeks from early-February to mid-April 1965 rank among the most decisive foreign affairs periods Lippmann analyzed in his long career, for during that time U.S. officials chose to Americanize the war in Vietnam.¹ In February and March many of Johnson's far-reaching policy decisions for U.S. intervention were made and implemented. After the early spring of 1965, a diplomatic settlement no longer was feasible. On 13 February Johnson approved the Joint Chiefs' of Staff plan for a sustained offensive air war against targets in the North, named Operation "Rolling Thunder." On the 19th the U.S. struck Vietcong positions in Binh Dinh province—a mission against South Vietnamese targets manned, for the first time, by only U.S. fliers. A week later, U.S. officials approved General William Westmoreland's request for two Marine battalions to protect the U.S. air base at Danang. "Rolling Thunder" commenced on 2 March. Six days later, the Marines Westmoreland wanted, the first American ground combat units, arrived in Vietnam. Lippmann again mischaracterized the administration's intentions in July when the president authorized troop increases and a fundamental change in mission status—from defense to offense. At the time, George Ball helped persuade Lippmann that the administration had opted only for a "limited war," sending more men to reinforce strategic strongholds.

Awash in these contingencies and the rapid movement of events, Lippmann's geopolitical arguments against the war seemed less and less potent. Taking a long

¹ Among the more recent interpretations that the decision to Americanize the Vietnam War took place before the July deliberations, is Fredrik Logevall's *Choosing War: The Lost Chance for Peace and the Escalation of the War in Vietnam* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1999): see especially, pp. 333-374. Logevall's analysis largely agrees with Larry Berman's assertion that the July debates were primarily for public relations purposes, though he places the timing for deciding to go to war in a period he calls "the long 1964" running from December 1963 to February 1965. For Berman's

view of events in Southeast Asia—one year, five years, a decade—Lippmann proved most formidable. Now that the real shooting was about to begin he seemed less proactive and more re-active. His analysis in early 1965 never quite measured up to the moment. For months, he had tried to dissuade officials from resorting to a bombing offensive, insisting it would strengthen Hanoi's resolve and do little to improve the stability of the Saigon government. When officials implemented that strategy, as reprisal for the Viet Cong attack on Pleiku, Lippmann supported in practice the air war that he had opposed in theory. He waited months before publicly declaring its bankruptcy. He punctuated this critical lapse in judgment with a network television appearance in which he badly misrepresented the nature of the bombing campaign by parroting McGeorge Bundy's description of it. Though reluctant to condemn the bombings, he did lobby hard for a "diplomatic offensive" to match the military pressure. As weeks rolled into months, his columns had an uneven edge—on the one hand, he wrote with insight about the perils of escalation while, on the other hand, insisting that the man authorizing it all, Lyndon Baines Johnson, was a man of peace flanked by war advocates.

II.

Once, when asked to describe Charles de Gaulle, Walter Lippmann compared the French leader to a far-sighted man who, gazing across a large room, could pick out with precision details on the horizon but still stumble into the furniture right in front

account see, *Planning a Tragedy: The Americanization of the War in Vietnam* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1982): especially, pp. 31-78.

of him.² Lippmann meant to convey De Gaulle's deep sense of history and insights into the structure of post-postwar Europe, but also the General's indelicate political touch in intra-Alliance relations. The metaphor also could be applied to Lippmann's writings about the Vietnam War. More than a decade before he'd tried to steer the Eisenhower administration toward a diplomatic settlement at Geneva by pointing out the intractable political nature of the war between Hanoi and Saigon and the strategic liabilities of U.S. intervention. With Kennedy and Johnson he advised much the same. But as the moment of decision arrived in early 1965 his realist analyses—which, as American options narrowed, offered only a stark choice between withdrawal and escalation—brought him into open conflict with U.S. policymakers.

In early 1965 the idea of “neutralization,” that De Gaulle had proposed and Lippmann had advocated, all but disappeared from his vocabulary. Nevertheless, he still believed the problem in Vietnam could not be solved apart from a regional diplomatic settlement for Southeast Asia. In his first column of the year, Lippmann urged American policymakers to look beyond the “small cockpit” of Vietnamese politics toward an act of “bold imaginative statesmanship”: convening a “congress” for peace in Asia. Participants would include the great powers: Communist China, the Soviet Union, India, Japan, France, and Britain. The congress would address the unresolved issues in the aftermath of the Second World War: to make peace, to help

² Walter Lippmann, *Conversations with Walter Lippmann* (Boston: Atlantic, Little, Brown and Company), 1965: 213-214. See also, Transcript of interview with *Der Spiegel*, “St. Dept. & White House Advisor, 1964 (Jan.-June)” folder, Box 101, Acheson Papers, Harry S. Truman Library. Lippmann once told an interviewer: “What I remember about De Gaulle . . . is that he was the man who, in the long view, was more right than anybody else I ever talked to. He wasn't very good at the short view. The immediate subject didn't interest him; he didn't study the details. But as to the long view, he was a genius.” A frequent example that Lippmann offered of this “long view” was De Gaulle's belief in the necessity for Franco-German rapprochement and alliance long before most of his

in the orderly transition from colonialism, “to deal with the consequences of the Chinese revolution, and to create an international framework in which the Chinese borderlands can be pacified.” American policymakers had to identify their program “with some grander conception of the future than the squalid politics of Saigon, the bombing of trails and depots, and the prospect of the whole enterprise crumbling while we hold it in our hands.”³

This idea contained all the familiar Lippmann emphases on structure, order, and systems. His vaunted realism remained a powerful tool for demonstrating the strategic imperatives for *not* Americanizing the war; but it offered few clues about *how* to resolve the difficult matter of disengagement, fewer still about the moral dilemmas of liquidating a position that had, for more than a decade, deeply involved the U.S. in a foreign civil war. White House and State Department officials believed he never satisfactorily came to terms with what they perceived to be a very real commitment to a set of South Vietnamese who had staked all on the American promise to help them remain independent of Hanoi. This was the crux of Lippmann’s disagreement with U.S. officials. From April 1964 onward, in dozens of private meetings and an equal number of columns, Lippmann argued that the price of staying far exceeded that of getting out. For U.S. officials, the conclusion was nearly the opposite. The damage to American prestige incurred by abandoning their South Vietnamese clients, they believed, might be insuperable. “In that sense, there was an element of harsh realism in Lippmann—that he was prepared to write that [commitment] off,” recalled Francis Bator, a friend of the columnist and a foreign

countrymen. See Henry Brandon, “A Talk with Walter Lippmann, at 80, About this ‘Minor Dark Age,’” 14 September 1969, *New York Times Magazine*: SM 25.

policy advisor to Johnson. “Whereas, it had played a role—and partly because American reliability and credibility did, in fact, matter in the world.”⁴ Robert Estabrook, editorial page editor of the *Washington Post*, was a journalistic colleague who also questioned Lippmann’s call for a negotiated withdrawal. “I think Walter was a great deal more realistic than I gave him credit for at the time of Vietnam,” Estabrook recalled. “But I don’t think Walter had any empathy for the people involved and what this meant . . . who’s going to [be] sold out on this thing.”⁵

For eight months, from May 1964 to January 1965, Lippmann’s pleas for disengagement had been politely received by the Johnson administration but ignored. In early 1965, he changed emphases. If geopolitical arguments failed to impress the president, perhaps Johnson would be more sensitive to the domestic political stakes of waging war in Southeast Asia. Lippmann took a January hiatus from T&T and, while on vacation in Arizona, pondered Johnson’s Inaugural Address and budget proposals. When he resumed the column on 2 February 1965 he had a new strategy: strong doses of positive reinforcement mixed with reminders that a war president could not have “guns and butter.” Knowing full well the pressures that existed for bombing North Vietnam, he nevertheless wrote in a highly optimistic tone that Johnson ultimately

³ Lippmann, “A Congress for Asia,” 4 January 1965, *Newsweek*: 9.

⁴ Interview with author, 25 January 2001, Cambridge, Mass. Nowhere in my research was this idea more concisely and dramatically stated than in a report from US Ambassador to India Loy Henderson in 1950 with officials in New Dehli regarding the Indochina problem: “I told Bajpai that in spite of the difficulties involved we could not, it seemed to me, cold bloodedly abandon peoples like those of IC to Communist tyranny. They had struggled long for freedom and were just as much entitled to working out their own destinies as peoples of larger or stronger countries. Disastrous consequences could flow from [the] creation [of an] impression that democratic powers were not prepared to assist, defend integrity and independence [of] small, weak nations in dangerous geographical positions. Such impression would give new confidence to aggressors and [a] profound sense [of] discouragement to their potential victims.” Henderson to Acheson, 12 April 1950, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1950, 6: 779 (hereinafter referred to as “FRUS”).

⁵ Robert Estabrook interview, 30 June 1978, Kern-Levering Papers, Box 1, John F. Kennedy Library, Boston, MA.

would choose to grapple with the problems at home. “For the first time in 25 years since the start of the Second World War, the main attention of the President is not fixed upon the dangers abroad but on the problems and prospects at home,” Lippmann told readers. There existed a “conjuncture of events abroad which makes it safe and prudent for the country to abate its anxiety and to pay attention to its own affairs. For these affairs have been sacrificed and grievously neglected for a quarter of a century.”⁶

Now the roles were reversed, with Johnson receiving the “Lippmann treatment.” For a brief time T&T became a dialogue of two: pundit and president. Rather than inform public debate about the war at this critical juncture, Lippmann produced several columns intended to boost Johnson’s confidence against detractors who wanted him to expand the scope of military operations. These were not meant even to influence the advisers on the inner-circle. These were direct appeals to the chief occupant of the White House, to his sense of place and self in history. Years later, Bill Moyers, Johnson’s press secretary and chief of staff, described his boss’s ego as an “unfillable hole.”⁷ Lippmann knew its dimensions. Like an angler coaxing a prize trout to the surface, the columnist cast feathery superlatives across the op-ed page.

Not since his days as an editor of *The New Republic*, when he applauded Woodrow Wilson’s New Freedom legislation, had Lippmann been so effusive about a president’s domestic agenda. He brandished Johnson’s credentials as a reformer, placing him squarely in the political lineage of Franklin Roosevelt, Johnson’s idol.

⁶ Lippmann, T&T, “The Johnson Beginning,” 2 February 1965.

⁷ Robert Dallek, “Three New Revelations About LBJ,” *Atlantic Monthly*, April 1998: 42-49.

He described Johnson as a “bold innovator,” a president uniquely prepared to carry the reform mantle, to bring the New Deal reforms to fruition. “We have rarely, if ever, seen at the beginning of a new administration such a coherent program, such insight and resourcefulness,” Lippmann exuded. “The President has grasped the nettle of race relations, of the church and state controversy, of business confidence and the welfare state, with a sure and skillful hand.”⁸

Lippmann followed this tribute to Johnson’s domestic focus by applauding what he described as the president’s adjustment to the post-postwar realities in Europe. LBJ’s deft defusing of the contentious Multi-Lateral Force issue, he wrote, signaled a fundamental change in America’s dealings with the Western European allies: a shift from leader and policeman to that of co-equal and collaborator. This receding of over-extended American power pleased him. In the immediate postwar years, the Truman Administration had fostered an unrealistic view of the U.S. as “the protector, the preserver, the guide and leader of Europe” in order to win public support for the Marshall Plan and NATO. Johnson, Lippmann explained, correctly measured the new realities and the need for shared decision-making. He was prepared to scale back: “I count it an event of high policy to have recognized that this extravagant concern with European affairs will not work any longer, and does in fact act as a boomerang.” The administration’s disengagement in Europe, he wrote, also flowed from a farsighted recognition that the Cold War rivalry with the Soviets was ebbing. He’d said much the same in early 1964. A foreign policy driven less by

⁸ Ibid.

exigencies abroad would allow LBJ to pursue civil rights and economic reforms at home.⁹

Columnist Joe Alsop worried such adulation might swell Johnson's considerable ego to an unacceptable level, even as he labored to deflate it. "I am mildly annoyed with Walter Lippmann for slathering the President with quite undeserved grease," Alsop wrote to Jackie Kennedy after reading those columns. "Nothing is worse for a politician than undeserved grease."¹⁰ For years on alternating weekdays, Alsop and Lippmann took turns on the *Washington Post* op-ed page interpreting a range of Cold War issues. They rarely agreed. But their positions on the Vietnamese war, and on Lyndon Johnson's conduct of it, were strikingly different. In the first months of 1965, on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, Alsop challenged LBJ's manhood for not waging full-scale war in Southeast Asia. Each Tuesday and Thursday, Lippmann served notice to Johnson of the costs of escalation, placing him in the pantheon of reform presidents whose ambitious plans were curtailed by war.

While Lippmann pushed the negotiation track in 1964, Alsop had been—in Bundy's words—"breathing absolute fire and sulfur about the need for war in South Vietnam." Months before the presidential election, Alsop told LBJ during a late-night White House discussion, "if you don't commit troops you're going to preside over the first real defeat of the United States in history. There's no other honorable

⁹ Lippmann, T&T, "Johnson and Foreign Policy," 4 February 1965. As discussed in the next chapter, former Secretary of State Dean G. Acheson responded publicly to this column. Later that spring, with a unilateral intervention in the Dominican Republic and a widening bombing campaign in Vietnam, Lippmann would repudiate that judgment. See, for example, T&T, "As Others See Us," 10 June 1965. For Lippmann's reference to the idea of disengagement in 1964 see, T&T, "The Thaw," 2 January 1964.

way out of Southeast Asia.”¹¹ Bundy spent much of his time trying to keep both of his old friends “on the reservation.”¹² He often found himself, like LBJ, hemmed up in the middle between two powerful opinion-makers advocating vastly different solutions to the problem in South Vietnam.

On New Year’s Day 1965 Alsop raised the ante with a frontal assault on Johnson himself. In a piece titled “Back to Waikiki,” the columnist invoked the “domino theory” he had popularized in the early 1950s. Failure to stand firm in South Vietnam, he wrote, would begin a chain reaction toppling successive governments throughout Southeast Asia and forcing America back to a defensive perimeter in Hawaii. Though a familiar Alsopian theme, the tone was more strident than usual. Alsop went further, predicting 1965 would mark the apogee of the American Century: “when the proud, ever-rising curve of American power and greatness at length turned sharply downwards . . . if President Johnson ducks the challenge in South Vietnam, as he seems to be getting ready to do.”¹³ He also lashed out at Lippmann and others who urged Johnson to “forget about the Vietnamese war and negotiate larger diplomatic arrangements which will guarantee a bearable future for Asia.” Alsop charged that “it is ludicrous to talk about negotiating, when you are on the naked verge of total, final defeat.” Against the prospect of failure in Vietnam

¹⁰ Joseph W. Alsop to Jacqueline Kennedy, 4 February 1965, Box 72, Joseph W. Alsop Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, DC (hereinafter referred to as “LC”).

¹¹ Lady Bird Johnson, entry of 15 June 1964, *A White House Diary* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1970): 168.

¹² Michael Beschloss, *Taking Charge: The Johnson White House Tapes, 1963-1964* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1997): 357; telephone conversation between Bundy and Johnson, 15 May 1964.

¹³ Alsop, *Matter of Fact*, “Back to Waikiki,” *Washington Post*, 1 January 1965: A13. See also, “The Old Order Passeth,” *Washington Post*, 20 January 1965: A17, where Alsop used Winston Churchill’s death and Johnson’s inauguration to contrast the legendary British leader’s steadfastness against Nazi tyranny with what he perceived to be LBJ’s lack of resolve in facing down the Communists in

and what he perceived as the lack of presidential resolve, Alsop held up (as an example of bold leadership) John Kennedy's determination to prevent the placement of Soviet nuclear missiles in Cuba. "One must pray [Johnson] does not fail where his predecessor succeeded" in facing down Communist advances.¹⁴

Alsop turned the screws tighter in the following weeks. On no fewer than four occasions he emphasized JFK's courage and statesmanship during the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962. Considering Johnson's insecurities and his disdain for the Kennedys, it was a potent attack. It explains, in part, Lippmann's willingness to make linkages in his column between LBJ and Wilson and FDR. Alsop's most bald attempt to shame Johnson and challenge his manhood by using the Kennedy example, came on 8 February 1965, the day after the first air strike in retaliation for the Pleiku raid. The columnist questioned "whether this is another fruitless, one-shot stunt or whether the President now means business at last."¹⁵ For Alsop, a clear line of logic ran through American interventions to preserve stability in Asia: the Korean War had been fought to halt Communist aggression abetted by the Soviets; before that, the great Pacific campaigns—Iwo Jima, Guadalcanal, and Saipan—halted Japanese expansion. Now, he argued, the U.S. must uphold the falling domino in Saigon and contain Communist Chinese designs. "Where then is our common-sense, that we shrink and fall back, and shrink and fall back, until the lives of millions must again be risked?" Alsop demanded. "We have waited overlong."¹⁶

Vietnam: "For, in a very special way, the new American President is the heir and (if he has the wisdom and the courage) the continuator of the old British Prime Minister."

¹⁴ Alsop, *Matter of Fact*, "Back to Waikiki," *Washington Post*, 1 January 1965: A13.

¹⁵ Alsop, *Matter of fact*, "'We Can' versus 'We Can't,'" *Washington Post*, 8 February 1965: A17.

¹⁶ *Ibid.* Later that spring, Alsop turned his sights on Hans J. Morgenthau a prominent political scientist at the University of Chicago. Morgenthau, whose classic *Politics Among Nations* established him as a leading "realist" observer of foreign policy, had sharply criticized the administration's escalation of the

Lippmann considered *Today and Tomorrow* to be, in part, a kind of counter-balance to Alsop's pressure for militarization. "I meant to needle the president a bit," he told his assistant, Elizabeth Farmer, while editing a column that referenced LBJ's political heroes, Wilson and FDR. "If Joe Alsop can needle the President, so can I."¹⁷ What Alsop tried to achieve noisily from the outside the administration, Lippmann tried to scuttle quietly as an insider. Later that spring, as their tones grew more

war in lectures and in print. Like Lippmann, he believed a ground war would provoke Chinese intervention. But he showed less reticence at attacking Johnson and his advisors, remarking on one occasion that Bundy and McNamara "were devoid of sound judgment and understanding of foreign policy." Laurence Stern, "Highbrow-to-Highbrow Debate Set on Viet-Nam," *Washington Post*, 15 May 1965: A1.

Twice, in May and June, Morgenthau took part in highly publicized debates between administration officials and academic dissenters. On 21 June 1965, he debated Mac Bundy in an event moderated by Eric Sevaried and televised by CBS. Morgenthau believed that Beijing had little interest in invading Vietnam but would intervene if provoked by massive U.S. ground forces. He did not make an argument for complete withdrawal, however, confining himself to the much weaker debating point that U.S. policy had failed to turn the tide of the war and that the U.S. should initiate "face-saving" negotiations. Bundy shredded these arguments, laying out the administration's case with precision, and producing the political effect that the administration had a strong case. See Kai Bird's account in *The Color of Truth: McGeorge Bundy and William Bundy—Brothers in Arms* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1998): 321.

Alsop, meanwhile, used *Matter of Fact* to castigate Morgenthau for his "pompous ignorance" of Chinese history and motivations. He wrote that the political scientist's argument echoed the "benign-to-Hitler group in England before 1939." Morgenthau defended his position in a pointed letter to the editors of the *Washington Post*. Describing Alsop's column as expressing "anger" rather than an intellectual view point, Morgenthau wrote, "that Mao Tse-tung is not Hitler, that the position of China in Asia is not like that of Nazi Germany in Europe, that Viet-Nam is not Czechoslovakia, that my opposition to our involvement in Viet-Nam is not identical with that of the appeasers of 1938. Anyone who believes that these disparate situations and issues are identical is beyond the reach of rational argument." Hate mail and threats soon inundated Morgenthau. "The effect of the Alsop column has been striking and distressing," Morgenthau wrote Lippmann a few weeks later. "Before its publication, my mail was overwhelmingly favorable and even the dissenting voices were respectful and polite. Now the gates of the political underworld seem to have opened. I receive every day letters with xenophobic, red-baiting, and anti-semitic attacks, not to speak of anonymous telephone calls at all hours of the day and night." It demonstrated, he concluded, "how thin the veneer of political civilization is. One man dares to overstep the bounds of what is permissible, and gets away with it, the underworld shakes off its restraint and joins in the hunt." See, Alsop, "Pompous Ignorance," *Matter of Fact*, *Washington Post*, 25 April 1965: A25. Hans J. Morgenthau to the *Washington Post*, "A Communication," 30 April 1965. The Alsop-Morgenthau feud boiled over again in 1966. In a letter to Gilbert A. Harrison, editor of the anti-war magazine *The New Republic* (which had published some of Morgenthau's articles), Alsop complained of the political scientist's "pseudo-authoritative opinions, which are treated more seriously than they deserve by people who like to hear what pleases them." See, for example, Hans Morgenthau to Walter Lippmann, 6 May 1965, Hans J. Morgenthau Papers, LC, Washington, DC.; Alsop to Gilbert A. Harrison, 11 April 1966, Box 82, Joseph Alsop Papers, LC. A Morgenthau article had been published in the 3 April 1965 edition of *The New Republic*.

strident, one observer suggested that Lippmann and Alsop “provide the country with the nearest thing to a parliamentary debate” on the war. Alsop, interestingly, dismissed the notion. “I don’t believe that Walter and I are nearly as important debaters as you make us out,” he wrote Karl Meyer of the *Washington Post*. “In truth, I don’t think we are at all important, except perhaps when we make government officials nervous by persistently writing about subjects they wish to shove under the rug.”¹⁸ Herein lay a rationale far different from that which animated Lippmann’s work, for Alsop at bottom was more the investigative reporter than an interpreter of macro events.

There are counter-factual propositions that may be asked in reply to Alsop’s notion that the Washington columnists were, by-and-large, irrelevant to the decision-making process. If Lippmann chose to break with LBJ publicly at the outset of sustained bombing, would other journalists have followed his lead? Could he have provoked a wider debate? Or, could he have galvanized the pro-diplomacy support that already existed in many op-ed pages nationwide? Officials acted as if they believed these scenarios were distinct possibilities, none of which they wanted to occur. Just a few months before Bundy had told LBJ that Lippmann was simply the most respected publicist in the country. Accordingly, they acted to insure that, for as long as possible, the man who, in David Halberstam’s words, “more than any other man, determined Washington’s critical taste buds,” was distracted from their true

¹⁷ Elizabeth (Farmer) Midgley Diaries, 2 February 1965. See also Ronald Steel, *Walter Lippmann and the American Century* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1980): 558.

¹⁸ Joseph Alsop to Karl E. Meyer, 28 April 1965, Box 72, Joseph W. Alsop Papers, Library of Congress. Though e agreed that the "American national debate in fact goes on in the press," Alsop confessed to Meyer that the process "mystifies me. I suspect the best model is the quantum theory--countless little packets of more or less correct information, each following an individually

intentions.¹⁹ They had some help from him. Lippmann, who had the advantage of access to Johnson that Alsop did not, seemed temporarily to care about his efforts at personal persuasion more than a carefully crafted public debate. He was acting less the publicist than the private diplomat.

Battling Alsop was one matter but openly debating administration policy, as late as February 1965, was still something entirely different. For one thing, Lippmann was still optimistic about a diplomatic solution. Though he feared that administration officials were moving closer to Americanizing the war, Lippmann believed that other international players might bring Washington and Hanoi to the negotiating table. He eagerly anticipated Soviet Premier Alexi N. Kosygin's visit to Hanoi in early February. The Soviets, Lippmann knew, had mixed motives in Southeast Asia. On the one hand, Moscow must have welcomed the American entanglement in Saigon because it drained American money and military resources away from other avenues of competition with the Soviet Union. Moreover, American intervention in Vietnam sharply reduced its influence and prestige in other Asian and African countries where Moscow and Washington bid for indigenous allegiance. But if an American entanglement in Vietnam redounded to Moscow's advantage, an Americanized war (hence a wider war) did not. Here, again, two factors were at work. The Soviets were fearful that American action against Hanoi would draw them into direct conflict with U.S. forces. Hanoi already received considerable military

unpredictable course, but all forming a relatively predictable and standard pattern because of the law of probabilities." See also, Karl E. Meyer, "Farewell to Washington," 9 April 1965, *New Statesman*: 564.

¹⁹ David Halberstam, *The Best and the Brightest* (New York: Random House, 1972): 36; Bundy to LBJ, "How to be a Statesman in the last month," 4 October 1964, NSFM, McGeorge Bundy 10/1-12/31/64, LBJ Library. See also Halberstam's *The Powers That Be* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2000, reprint).

assistance from Moscow and, in January 1965, signed a trade agreement which drew them even closer. If Hanoi asked for help, Moscow must either reciprocate or risk losing face. Worse still, U.S. action against North Vietnam might provoke Chinese intervention which, in turn, might necessitate that the Soviets fulfill the 1950 Sino-Soviet mutual defense treaty. In either case, Beijing would extend its influence even further into Southeast Asia—an outcome that Kosygin and co-leader Leonid Brezhnev found unpalatable. Lippmann understood Moscow's complex motives and reasoned that while Kosygin would probably use his visit to denounce U.S. actions in South Vietnam, he also would try to curb Hanoi's ambitions. "The Russians have every interest in keeping the war from escalating—they may be coming in like Paul Revere to the rescue," he told Elizabeth Farmer on the eve of Kosygin's visit. "Of course, it will take forms that the simple-minded people here will find disturbing—they'll put in rockets and missiles and I don't know what. But that will make them able to say [to the North Vietnamese], 'Now you're safe and now you negotiate.'"²⁰

This was precisely the line that Kosygin took. On February 4, the Soviet premier and the North Vietnamese leadership issued a joint statement condemning U.S. "aggression" in Vietnam. Kosygin went further, linking Moscow's support for Vietnam's "national liberation" with other such efforts around the globe. He also pledged increased economic and military aid to Hanoi—including air defense equipment and surface-to-air missiles (SAMs) far superior to anything that Beijing could offer. But, having proven Moscow's steadfastness, Kosygin sought to reign in his hosts. He cautioned members of the Hanoi Politburo against provoking direct

²⁰ Elizabeth (Farmer) Midgley Diaries, 1 February 1965. For background on the Kosygin visit and

American military intervention. He also probed them as to what their terms were for an acceptable negotiated settlement.²¹ Lippmann who closely read American newspapers accounts of Kosygin's Hanoi visit, interpreted events as proof that the Russians were interested in convening a great-power conference in which the U.S. could extricate itself through diplomatic disengagement and Hanoi would be permitted the best chance to unify Vietnam.²² Such an effort would be quite similar to the arrangement the Russians helped broker in Laos just three years earlier—an arrangement Lippmann not only accepted but hoped to emulate. U.S. officials, however, showed no interest in de-accelerating their plans for direct intervention. Rather, they were waiting for a reason to do so.

Military and political developments in South Vietnam soon moved Lippmann closer to the administration line than he may have found comfortable. First, on 7 February 1965 the Vietcong launched an attack on a U.S. helicopter base at Pleiku in the central highlands of Vietnam. The raid, part of a coordinated attack on more than a dozen sites in the South, killed eight Americans, wounded more than 100, and destroyed 10 aircraft. Three days later, another Vietcong attack on the U.S. barracks at Qui Nhon killed 23 U.S. personnel.²³

Russian relations with Hanoi see Logevall's *Choosing War*: 322-323.

²¹ Logevall, *Choosing War*: 322-323;

²² Lippmann, T&T, "The Vietnamese Affair," 9 February 1965. For press coverage of the Kosygin trip see, "Kosygin Hailed in Hanoi; He Praises the Vietcong," 7 February 1965, *New York Times*: 1; "Speech at Dinner Scores U.S.," 7 February 1965, *New York Times*: 6; "Kosygin Vows Aid in Hanoi Defense," 10 February 1965, *New York Times*: 1; Don Kirk, "Hanoi Strategy Linked to Bid for Soviet Aid," 11 February 1965, *Christian Science Monitor*: 5; Donald Kirk, "Visit Echoes in Hanoi," 15 February 1965, *Christian Science Monitor*: 6; and, "After the Kosygin Mission," 15 February 1965, *New York Times*: 26.

²³ For an overview see George Herring's *America's Longest War: The United States and Vietnam, 1950-1975* (New York: Knopf., 1986): 128-129.

Lippmann offered uncritical support for retaliatory American air strikes, describing the Vietcong attack as a “test of American will.” On 9 February 1965, he echoed administration officials, explaining that “had the United States refrained from retaliating, the Chinese and their supporters in Asia and elsewhere would have called it a demonstration that the United States is a paper tiger.”²⁴ Lippmann also warned that while LBJ “profoundly desires to avoid war,” that he could not be counted on to restrain U.S. power faced with “continual and cumulative” provocations. “There should be no mistake about this anywhere,” he concluded.²⁵ Lippmann assumed that these air strikes were part of a tit-for-tat game—like the Tonkin Gulf response—intended principally to show U.S. resolve. Washington, however, deemed the Saigon government so unstable that much more was required to preserve it than surgical reprisal attacks against its enemy. Rather, Pleiku served as a pretext for a new policy, advocated for months by key advisers and Pentagon officials. It marked a major turning point in the war: an offensive bombing campaign against North Vietnamese targets chosen from a gradually expanding list.²⁶

Lippmann never thought the military track anything more than a means to preserve a government in Saigon long enough to ensure a settlement. Thus, he was careful not to endorse a solely military policy. Without making direct criticisms of Johnson, he nevertheless worried that the administration’s policy of postponing a decision in Vietnam was running short on time. In moving toward negotiations, the administration, he explained, had to navigate domestic criticism from the Republicans and the real threat that in seeking a compromise it might altogether demoralize South

²⁴ Lippmann, T&T, “The Vietnamese Affair,” 9 February 1965.

²⁵ Ibid.

Vietnamese fighting morale. Yet without articulating a policy designed to achieve a negotiated peace, it had allowed itself to drift into a position where it had to risk all-out war or accept a humiliating withdrawal. “The military policy of holding on in South Viet-Nam supplemented with retaliatory strikes, needs to be accompanied by a peace offensive,” he told readers on 11 February 1965. “The choice which has to be decided is between a full-scale war and a negotiated truce. I say full-scale war because if the choice is to seek a military solution, the country must be prepared for the worst.”²⁷ Washington officials, however, did not share Lippmann’s concern about Chinese intervention—a residual fear based on the lessons of the Korean conflict. He concluded with another appeal to LBJ’s sense of posterity. “The President’s great predecessors like Woodrow Wilson and Franklin Roosevelt,” he explained, “never thought that they could have a military solution without at the same time a diplomatic offensive.”²⁸

Administration officials were eager to conceal the extent to which they were committed to militarizing the war. Lippmann, unwittingly, provided them a smokescreen. On Monday, 15 February 1965, just two days after Johnson had approved the plans to commence the secret “Rolling Thunder” Operation, the columnist phoned Bundy to tell him that he would be taping his annual CBS roundup interview in a few days. Lippmann wanted assurances from Bundy and the president that there would be no major operational developments in Vietnam during the interval

²⁶ Herring, *America’s Longest War*: 129.

²⁷ T&T, “The Impending Decision,” 11 February 1965.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

before the program aired the following Monday. Bundy suggested to LBJ that the day before the taping, Lippmann be brought in for an update; Johnson agreed.²⁹

Among their roughly dozen meetings in the first half of 1965, the 17 February 1965 discussion between the national security adviser and at the White House ranks first in importance.³⁰ Bundy convinced his friend that the retaliatory air strikes were temporary, limited, and intended ultimately to compel negotiations with the North.³¹ He surprised Bundy by admitting that he expected U.S. air strikes to continue against North Vietnamese targets; he seemed to have no immediate objections. Lippmann asked whether the administration planned a dramatic shift in the tempo of the bombing over the weekend. “I told him that I could not predict events precisely, but I asked him what he meant by anything spectacular,” Bundy reported to LBJ, “and it very shortly emerged that he would not be startled by a continuation of air action across the 17th Parallel, even if it did not result from some new spectacular attack on Americans in the South.” Without so much as a hint of the massive air campaign set to begin on 2 March, Bundy reassured the columnist that there were no immediate plans to expand the offensive or to bomb Hanoi.³²

Bundy then lectured Lippmann that the present was not the time for a conference—a theme the columnist pursued in his previous private meetings and in a

²⁹ Bundy to LBJ, “Two Press Queries,” 15 February 1965, NSFM, Box 2, LBJ Library, Austin, TX (hereinafter referred to as “LBJL”). Johnson’s schedule kept him from sitting in on the meeting.

³⁰ Lippmann had come from a lunch meeting with George Ball at the State Department where the two men talked about divisions of opinion in the administration about Vietnam. See the Lippmann Appointment Diaries, 17 February 1965, Box 240, Folder 39, Series VII, Walter Lippmann Collection, Sterling Library, Yale University, New Haven, CT. Hereinafter cited as “WLC.”

³¹ Bundy to LBJ, “A Conversation with Walter Lippmann,” 17 February 1965, NSFM, 1/1-2/28/65, Box 2, LBJL.

³² *Ibid.*

recent *Newsweek* column.³³ Lippmann back-pedaled. He did not press Bundy on the need for a conference or congress on the crisis in Southeast Asia. He obliquely suggested that U.S. officials should be using diplomatic back-channels—either the Soviets or French—to bring Hanoi and Beijing to the peace table. “He said that all he meant was that we must use the tools of diplomacy,” Bundy reported back to the president. “I said that I fully agreed, as long as it was understood that one of the major tools of diplomacy was the Seventh Fleet. He said he not only agreed but had repeatedly made this point.” For two decades Lippmann had insisted that the U.S. naval and air presence in the Pacific Ocean—and the ability to project that power rapidly into Southeast Asia—made it a *de facto* power in that region. Mobility and firepower were far greater assets than a cumbersome army of occupation bogged down in a guerilla war. Thus, he had been generally supportive whenever the Seventh Fleet was dispatched to demonstrate American interests at Asian crisis points, including Taiwan. Bundy, of course, was quite familiar with Lippmann’s predisposition. By intimating that the raids were just this kind of political muscle-flexing, he shifted the discussion to one about a precise/limited use of force to compel negotiations. Lippmann had no sense of the scale of the bombing for which the administration was preparing—that such a massive sustained air war required bases in South Vietnam, and that ground troops were logistically necessary to provision and protect those bases. Bundy again strongly warned Lippmann off any talk of formal conferences since “one of the difficulties was that the very word ‘conference’ sounded suspiciously like surrender in Southeast Asia right now.” Lippmann assured Bundy he was not calling for a conference.

³³ See Lippmann’s “Toward Peace in Asia,” 15 February 1965, *Newsweek*: 19.

Bundy also deployed a theme he would return to during the coming months: the president was far more optimistic of a diplomatic solution than the advisors who surrounded him. In a rare moment of candor, he included himself among the doubters. While LBJ was “not the man to miss any real chance for a decent settlement,” Bundy recounted telling Lippmann, “I myself did not believe there was a piece of paper that had any chance of being signed by both us and the Communists.” Lippmann agreed any negotiations would start quite far apart. Bundy gauged that his old friend was “not really happy about our present posture, but just the same he is doing his best to support it.” He seemed certain that Lippmann’s faith in the president was intact and that that impression would be conveyed on the CBS program. “I think he went away feeling that my judgment needs watching, but that you are just the right man to watch it,” Bundy quipped. “He may even be right.”³⁴ Until Bundy left government to head the Ford Foundation in early 1966, Lippmann continued to debate the war with him but did not perceive until much later the extent of Bundy’s deception.

LBJ proved a beguiling performer but when it came to handling the columnist Mac Bundy scripted, choreographed, and directed the president. It is difficult to overstate Bundy’s influence on Lippmann’s commentary in the spring of 1965, not to mention the national security adviser’s ability to determine the timing and substance of the columnist’s meetings with Johnson. To be sure, LBJ delivered his lines with skill: first as the fawning politician, then as an earnest man of peace, and, in the final act, as the confused statesman seeking counsel from the wise man. But Bundy coached him, set the scene, evaluated from backstage. He arranged every meeting

³⁴ Ibid.

Lippmann had with LBJ, prepped Johnson on the right questions to ask, and conducted post-mortems by phone or in brisk memos. Rarely did his own discussions with Lippmann go unreported to the president. Bundy might be combative—or, if required, conciliatory—during their frequent talks in his office in the White House basement or over lunch at the Metropolitan Club across Lafayette Square. But he knew where Lippmann stood before his columns were set in print during the first half of 1965. He anticipated, with unfailing accuracy, the columnist's successive points of attack and explained to the president how best to blunt them. Without Bundy, it is hard to imagine how Johnson could have kept Lippmann “aboard” for as long as he did.

If there were limits to Lippmann's dissent, there also were clear limits to his support. The primary question for the columnist was not whether the U.S. should get out, but *if* it could still extricate itself. The column that he penned just before his meeting with Bundy argued that a sustained bombing campaign would fail to get a political resolution. “Apart from the question of the morality and the gigantic risks of escalating the war, there is no sufficient reason to think that the Northern communists can be bombed into submission,” he explained. The alternative, a land war, would be a “supreme folly. While the war hawks would rejoice when it began, the people would weep before it ended. There is no tolerable alternative except a negotiated truce, and the real problem is not whether we *should* negotiate but whether we *can* negotiate.” The administration should make a brokered settlement its “avowed

objective, an objective pursued with all our many and very considerable diplomatic resources.”³⁵

Lippmann’s confidence that he still might maneuver LBJ toward a diplomatic exit was matched by Johnson’s certitude that the columnist would eventually support militarization. The president believed that by appealing to Lippmann’s patriotic lights he could be brought around to supporting sustained bombing strikes and, presumably, other incremental steps of escalation. Bundy no longer shared that level of optimism. His assessment of the 18 February column was succinct: “He’s as far aboard as he’ll come—which isn’t very far,” Bundy told a concerned LBJ on the phone that evening:

LBJ: I don’t believe that a fellow like Lippmann—if he understands that they came across the line and aggressed from the other side and fired on our compound—that he would want us to say, ‘Thank you.’ I think he’s bound to believe we ought to chase them off.

BUNDY: No. He hates wars. I had quite a fight with him on just that point . . . He said, ‘You’ve got to remember this is not Korea; these people have not come across the line.’ And I said, ‘But they have. That’s just the problem; that they have come across the line.’

LBJ: I’d show him the staging area, show him the camp. Just say they hit the barracks.

BUNDY: He admits that happened. But he thinks the South has no support and the government has no strength. It’s all the stuff that’s in his column this morning, which he’d already written [on the morning of the 17th prior to meeting Bundy late that afternoon]. But I don’t think his broadcast will be bad.³⁶

³⁵ Lippmann, “The Viet-Nam Debate,” T&T, 18 February 1965. Lippmann’s emphasis. It should be noted that Lippmann wrote this column on the morning of 17 February, hours prior to his meeting with Bundy.

³⁶ Bundy-LBJ, phone conversation, 18 February 1965, tape #WH6502.04, LBJL.

Far from being “bad,” the CBS program amounted to a public relations triumph for the administration. Lippmann’s assurances in front of the television cameras belied the doubts he raised in his columns. During the program, broadcast to a national TV audience on 22 February, he offered only muted criticism of Johnson’s Vietnam policy. More significantly, he voiced qualified support for the bombing campaign. Newsman Eric Sevareid opened the interview by asking Lippmann if there were advocates of escalation in the upper echelons of the administration. As Bundy had predicted, the columnist suggested that among the advisors there were, but not the president himself. “Well, I think as a matter of fact, they would be found in the military area [McNamara], and to some degree in the diplomatic area [Rusk],” Lippmann said. “But they are not found in the interior and at the top of the White House. That I feel sure of . . . I mean the President is not a war hawk.”³⁷ On the subject of the bombing reprisals, Lippmann largely echoed Bundy’s points from his private briefing. “They really are public relations jobs, much more than they are military jobs,” Lippmann told viewers. “They’re political bombings, and they don’t kill many people. I don’t think they kill anybody. There’s no evidence that they do because what we bomb is wooden sheds.”³⁸

It was a performance that could only have delighted the president and Bundy.³⁹ Not only did Lippmann support the bombing reprisals, but he essentially followed the administration line on negotiations. The U.S. would have to stick it out

³⁷ Lippmann, *Conversations with Walter Lippmann*, 202. Emphasis added.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 202-203. Interestingly this was the last time Lippmann would appear in a televised forum; CBS canceled the series. It is not clear if government pressure may have been brought to bear on the network to end the series. Lippmann seems to have become disenchanted with the format.

³⁹ Perhaps sensing the magnitude of this gaffe, Lippmann never taped another installment of this annual program that had run since 1961 on CBS. Al Friendly and Bill Paley, president of CBS, made repeated overtures to Lippmann.

in Vietnam, gain a cease-fire (ostensibly through reprisal strikes), and then negotiate. “You’d have to do the diplomatic exploration which I’ve been talking about, *which is not a conference*, you’ll have to do that before there’s a cease-fire,” Lippmann said. “Now, one of the terms I would think indispensable to a negotiation, or any kind of talk, back and forth, would be that we would not withdraw while the thing was going on. You see, we are faced with an ultimatum—have been from Hanoi and Peking—that we must get out, and then talk. Now, that we can’t do, because that means abandoning all our friends and all our interests and that would be scuttling the ship.”⁴⁰ Lippmann had not yet clambered overboard.

And yet Lippmann would not cede the realist convictions that had so shaped his view of events in South Vietnam. These core values increasingly distinguished him from fellow journalists who supported militarization. In some instances, his articulations of realism made him their primary target.

Several important pundits shared Alsop’s views, among them the syndicated columnist and Johnson crony William S. White and Washington *Evening Star* columnist Richard Wilson. White, a Texan, stood firmly in the president’s corner. He applauded the hawkish Republican minority in Congress, led by Senator Everett Dirksen, as the “loyal opposition” which, by supporting air strikes, was performing an “absolutely irreplaceable . . . service.”⁴¹ While White cheered on the “loyal opposition,” Richard Wilson attacked the pro-diplomacy clique as responsible for stirring *au currant* talk of isolationism the capital. He singled out Lippmann and prominent Senate Democrats as especially egregious isolationists. “It is a kind of

⁴⁰ Lippmann, *Conversations with Walter Lippmann*, 200-201. Emphasis added.

‘America First’ doctrine now dressed up in academically acceptable language and fit for discussion in the brainiest circles,” Wilson explained. These new isolationists had once led the attack against the old isolationists—Ohio senator Robert A. Taft and former President Herbert Hoover both of whom opposed postwar American internationalism. “But now in the Senate, and from the lips of great journalists,” Wilson wrote days after Lippmann’s CBS interview, “the message has been coming . . . that we no longer can expect to have the world run our way, that we must adjust to historical change, that what we once thought challenged our vital interests no longer does so.”⁴² This kind of talk “lacks reality,” Wilson complained, because it abdicated American responsibility. Withdrawal, disengagement, or accommodation would “lay aside the responsibilities of leadership” and “hasten, rather than delay, ultimate Communist Chinese domination of Southeast Asia.”⁴³

This accusation would increasingly be leveled at Lippmann. A major popularizer of postwar internationalism, he now assertively defined himself against American globalists. He dedicated a column (a luxury he rarely allowed himself) to Wilson’s criticism. Lippmann countered that to compare restrained internationalism with isolationism was “like saying that a man who has cut back from being an advanced alcoholic to being a moderate drinker is a tee-totaler.”⁴⁴ His choice of analogy constituted a subtle admission: Vietnam was causing him to rethink the premises of American internationalism in the postwar period.⁴⁵ In two important

⁴¹ William S. White, “Loyal Opposition: GOP Magnificent in Crisis,” *Washington Post*, 22 February 1965: A21.

⁴² Richard Wilson, “Old Concepts Gain New Currency,” *Washington Evening Star*, 26 February 1965: A13.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ Lippmann, T&T, “The Neo-Isolationists,” 2 March 1965.

⁴⁵ A topic to be discussed at length in the following chapter.

regards, he distinguished the “neo-isolationists”—among whom he counted himself—from their predecessors in the 1930s. Though they did not share the open-ended goals of American globalists, Lippmann explained, the neo-isolationists were not in principle opposed to intervention. Outside of Europe and select places in the Western Hemisphere Lippmann placed the threshold for intervention much higher. “The opposing conservative view today is that while we have important interests in the Asian and African continents, they are not vital interests which would justify a *unilateral* American commitment of our military forces,” Lippmann wrote. In such places, he added, these restrained internationalists preferred to work through extra-national institutions, “the United Nations and other collective organizations.” Moreover, while they sought to limit the use of American military power they supported generous U.S. economic and technological aid. Here, then, was the distinction between those who subscribed to Lippmann’s view and the old isolationists: “this argument is entirely and solely about military intervention,” he assured readers. “It is not about economic assistance, technical assistance, the Peace Corps, cultural exchanges,” all of which he advocated. “It is about where and when, where and where not, American fighting men should be sent to intervene *unilaterally*.”⁴⁶ Years later he explained to an interviewer, “Well, neo-isolationism is the direct product of foolish globalism. If you think you can run the world and then find out you can’t, you withdraw to what you can run, and they call that neo-isolationism.” Asked if he would flinch from that term the old columnist replied,

⁴⁶ Lippmann, T&T, “The Neo-Isolationists,” 2 March 1965. Both emphases are Lippmann’s.

“Compared to the people who thought they could run the universe, or at least the globe, I am a neo-isolationist and proud of it.”⁴⁷

Lippmann refused to take a narrow view of the commitment in Vietnam, even when looking back across decades at its roots in the American containment policy. In Southeast Asia, American officials had applied the Truman Doctrine, a policy Lippmann believed committed the U.S. to a “global ideological struggle against revolutionary Communism.” For those who equated the “defense of Saigon [with] the defense of Hawaii . . . there is no stopping point between globalism and a retreat into our former isolationism.” And yet, on numerous occasions U.S. officials had found those stopping points; they had acted as pragmatists rather than ideologues, refusing to intervene in the Berlin Uprising of 1953, the Hungarian Uprising of 1956, or the Chinese invasion of Tibet. “These examples show that put to the test, our officials have acted more wisely than they have talked,” Lippmann wrote, “that put to the test, they have been statesmen and not ideological crusaders.”⁴⁸ Lyndon Johnson, he still hoped, would reveal himself as one of the latter. He gave explicit warning that while the U.S. could not withdraw from Saigon prior to a diplomatic settlement the administration should not seek to improve its position by waging a wider air war. He came close—whether by intent or coincidence it is not clear—to using the code name officials had dubbed the secret air war set to begin in days. “For the President to announce that he intends to devastate North Viet-Nam by a *rolling bomber offensive* would almost surely precipitate China, and probably also the Soviet Union, onto the side of North Viet-Nam,” Lippmann told readers. “It would be a black day

⁴⁷ Chalmers Roberts, “Walter Lippmann: Journalist, Philosopher,” 15 December 1974, *Washington Post*: A8.

in American history if the President adopted this line.”⁴⁹ Five days later, on 2 March 1965, “Rolling Thunder” commenced.

III.

In the six weeks that followed his televised interview, Lippmann waged a one-man campaign to get the administration to articulate the rationale behind the air war. He prodded Johnson to entice the North Vietnamese to negotiate: namely, through U.S. recognition of the Vietcong as a legitimate political entity. Without any kind of diplomatic plan in place and largely unwilling to make concessions, the administration, he wrote, was practicing a policy that was “all stick, no carrot.” His program to bring the administration around to the negotiation track through numerous behind-the-scenes meetings with LBJ and Bundy, however, suffered from the opposite problem: not enough “stick.” What he told officials in private, he hesitated to say in public. When LBJ scheduled a mid-March meeting with Lippmann to discuss war developments, Mac Bundy readied him for the encounter. Reflecting on Lippmann’s support to date, Bundy admitted, “You have handled Walter so well in the past that all I really have to suggest is that you give him ‘more of the same.’”⁵⁰

Other journalists, of course, concerned U.S. officials. But Lippmann’s pre-eminent status made him first on their list of the Washington intelligentsia. Bundy’s calendar during those weeks was filled with press appointments. *The New York Times* and its Washington bureau chief James Reston—as well as the syndicated

⁴⁸ Lippmann, T&T, “Globalism and Isolationism,” 23 February 1965.

⁴⁹ Lippmann, T&T, “Official Discretion,” 25 February 1965. Emphasis added.

columnist Joseph Kraft—supported negotiations. In another vein entirely, Joe Alsop, who had inveighed throughout February about the administration’s lack of resolve to fight a land war in Vietnam, now complained about its secretiveness. He protested to Bundy about CIA Director John McCone’s efforts to shut off Alsop’s background contacts at the spy agency. When Bundy brought the matter to the president’s attention, Johnson scribbled a reply: “Mac, I think all of you give entirely too much attention to Joe when the world is on fire.”⁵¹

With the world afire in those crucial weeks, LBJ, however, chose to monitor closely Walter Lippmann’s temperature on developments in Vietnam. Lippmann’s pre-eminent status put him at the head of LBJ’s list of Washington intelligentsia. Johnson and Bundy communicated about or with Lippmann several times each week from the start of the bombing campaign through Johnson’s Baltimore address in early April. They crafted diplomatic initiatives in March and April, in part, to answer Lippmann’s concerns that the U.S. wasn’t doing enough diplomatically.

During this period of press scrutiny, the president also maximized the benefits of his still cordial relations with the columnist. LBJ used Lippmann’s willingness to associate with him to augment his image as a moderate willing to hear out the doves. Johnson also used his special relationship with Lippmann to trump critics who complained of the administration’s lack of candor about its policies. When columnist James Wechsler wrote about Johnson’s close ties to the pro-intervention columnist William S. White, LBJ placed an angry phone call to him. “I’ve spent 10 hours with

⁵⁰ Bundy to LBJ, "Walter Lippmann and Foreign Policy," 15 March 1965, NSFM, McGeorge Bundy to the President, March-4/15/65, LBJL.

⁵¹ Bundy to LBJ, "Press Contacts, Week of March 15," 20 March 1965, NSFM, McGeorge Bundy, Memos to the President, March-4/15/65, LBJL.

Lippmann for every 10 minutes I've spent with White," Johnson growled, opening a long presidential monologue.⁵² He was particularly annoyed at Wechsler's claim that White was writing Vietnam columns with LBJ's encouragement—"tacit assent in high places," as Wechsler wrote. LBJ bellowed at him, "There's not a human being in town that really gives a Tinker's damn about what I think of his column. If I ever told you the truth in my life, that's true." Johnson, of course, was claiming a level of detachment that did not exist—neither from Washington columnists' perspectives nor, certainly, his own. He rattled off the names of a half-dozen prominent pundits: Lippmann, Alsop, Doris Fleeson, Max Friedman, David Lawrence, and Rowland Evans. "Now I have spent more time on Vietnam—than all of them put together—with Walter Lippmann," he added. "He's been to my house more. He's been to my office more . . . I've been to his home three times since I've been President to talk to him. That's pretty unusual for a President." The point, of course, was that Lippmann, widely-known among the Washington press as a Vietnam dove, still had access to the president. In LBJ's White House, the lines of communication were open. "And, I believe, if you saw his broadcast the other day . . . his attitude that he just wished we didn't have to drop bombs. God knows I do, too," LBJ gushed onward. "He told Mac Bundy last night that he was still aboard—that he didn't know what else I could do."⁵³

Bundy knew that support was tenuous. The columnist accepted the air strikes only because he'd been led to believe the president would negotiate as soon as possible. But Lippmann held out no hope for preventing Hanoi's eventual takeover

⁵² LBJ-James "Jimmy" Wechsler, telephone conversation, 4 March 1965, WH6503.02, citation #s 7017-7018, PNO #s 1-2, LBJL.

of South Vietnam, Bundy told Johnson, preparing him for another encounter with Lippmann. Presciently—for Lippmann would take precisely this tack over the next few months—Bundy observed, “He probably fears that you are in danger of being taken in by McNamara and me; I think he likes us both, but I think he remembers our connection to the Bay of Pigs.”⁵⁴ For a while longer, he hoped, the president could cloak his intentions from Lippmann under the guise that he was seeking a diplomatic settlement but getting bad advice from his advisors. To do that, Johnson would have to perform the perfunctory task of soliciting Lippmann’s ideas on an overall settlement for Southeast Asia: “I doubt if he will be very concrete or persuasive on the subject,” Bundy wrote, “any more than his French friends.” Bundy also believed the president should probe Lippmann on how the administration could improve its image abroad while engaged in Vietnam, promoting “peace and good works” elsewhere in the world.

Lippmann sensed deep insecurity on the part of key U.S. officials’ about the cumulative decisions that were Americanizing the war. At a British embassy dinner for Vice President Hubert Humphrey on 3 March, Lippmann listened as British General Sir Michael West debated Bundy and Walt Rostow about the results of the air war. It “will accomplish nothing,” West said bluntly. Bundy and Rostow defended the policy without yielding. When Lippmann related the encounter to his assistant, she replied that she thought Bundy “saw the situation clearly enough, and that he was taking the course best for him”—meaning that, despite his doubts, Bundy

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Bundy to LBJ, “Press Contacts,” 20 March 1965.

had cast his lot with the hawks. Lippmann agreed, replying only, “He’s a courtier.”⁵⁵

A week later, when the national security adviser spoke before a meeting of the Overseas Writers group, Lippmann grew even more troubled about the administration’s ambiguity. Bundy “made the impression of a very unsure man—very ill-at-ease—and unattractive,” Lippmann told Farmer. “I have the feeling [Johnson and his advisors] are not sure of their course, they’re feeling their way, and under pressure.” Even writers with more sympathy for a military solution, like the columnist Richard Wilson, were overheard to say that when Bundy explained policy “the fog index was high.”⁵⁶

Mac Bundy still was one step ahead of the columnist. Trouble with Lippmann, Bundy told Johnson, might come first from quarters other than the bombing. Lippmann’s earliest and most pointed criticisms, in fact, came against the president’s refusal to make his case for intervention to the American public. Bundy explained this to LBJ, noting that this critique derived from “what he thinks is your effort to smother debate in a general consensus.” He attached Lippmann’s latest *Newsweek* column titled, “Can the Question of War Be Debated?”⁵⁷

Lippmann’s misgivings about the administration’s efforts to squelch any publicity about its war aims did not arise simply from a notion that the president and his advisors were violating journalistic decorum. Like his geopolitical warnings, this critique also was rooted in a peculiarly realist concept of the responsible use of power. For Lippmann, the exercise of responsible power required a combination of

⁵⁵ Elizabeth (Farmer) Midgley Diaries, 4 March 1965. See also Lippmann’s appointment diaries, 3 March 1965.

⁵⁶ Elizabeth (Farmer) Midgley Diaries, 11 March 1965.

statesmanship, pragmatism, consensus, and criticism.⁵⁸ An important dialectic took place between consensus and criticism—one that made consensus itself more meaningful. If this model was to work properly, American leaders had to be educators, too. It was through the process of fostering debate and informing public opinion that they ultimately could validate their policies; and for Lippmann, legitimacy was central to the exercise of responsible power. As Joel Rosenthal has explained, for postwar realists the consensus-criticism dialectic “made clear the specific values that were to be served by responsible power, and it suggested practical steps and useful structures to encourage the achievement of such power.” The process emphasized values that Lippmann believed essential and that recur in his writings: “prudence, humility, the good-faith effort to balance ideals and self-interests, and the preservation of freedom as expressed in the idea of democracy.”⁵⁹ Indeed, the preservation of this dialectic can be seen as one of the central aspects of Lippmann’s realism. Thus, administration officials’ charges that war critics like Lippmann—and, later, George Kennan and Hans J. Morgenthau—were obtuse or vague about solutions for getting out of Vietnam were patently disingenuous, especially when the president chose to subvert this consensus-criticism dialectic. Lippmann’s solutions were imprecise (and, ultimately, unpalatable to U.S. officials), but it is conceivable that had there been an open debate in 1964-65 it may have would have provided a basis for action or a point around which public opposition to intervention could have coalesced.

⁵⁷ Bundy to LBJ, "Walter Lippmann and Foreign Policy," NSFM, LBJL; Lippmann, "Can the Question of War Be Debated?" *Newsweek* 15 March 1965: 23.

⁵⁸ Joel Rosenthal, *Righteous Realists: Political Realism, Responsible Power, and American Culture in the Nuclear Age* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1991): 37-65; 121-150.

So it was significant that Lippmann first singled out LBJ for criticism not for the bombing reprisals but because there were early signs the president might try to tamp down a debate necessary to legitimate whatever course he took in Southeast Asia. In the *Newsweek* piece that Bundy brought to LBJ's attention, Lippmann cited an early-March meeting in which Johnson had indelicately suggested that those American politicians and commentators who were contesting his Vietnam policy had no right to disagree with him. Critics such as Senators Frank Church and J. William Fulbright were "folks who don't understand," LBJ complained. Further, the great wars of the twentieth century, Johnson believed, had been "brought about" by such people, that is, American non-interventionists in the 1930s who had led Japan and Germany to believe they could threaten Asian and European nations without fear of U.S. retribution. This line of argument, Lippmann told readers, had "disturbing" implications since it amounted to declaring that "debate on the vital issues of war and peace gives aid and comfort to the enemy." American military intervention, he objected, "cannot be left undebated, and it cannot be entrusted blindly to the President and Secretary Rusk and Secretary McNamara." With momentous choices yet to be decided, Lippmann argued, the President could hardly expect "conformity and silence at this stage."⁶⁰

⁵⁹ Rosenthal, *Righteous Realists*, 48-50.

⁶⁰ Walter Lippmann, "Can the Question of War Be Debated?" *Newsweek* 15 March 1965: 23. Here, Lippmann was responding, in part, to a rumor being circulated around Washington that LBJ was disparaging him behind closed doors. One published report noted that when Senator Frank Church, an Idaho Democrat and war opponent, quoted Lippmann in arguing against expanding military operations, Johnson growled back, "Frank, the next time you want a dam in Idaho, go ask Walter Lippmann for it!" Lippmann told Elizabeth Farmer that it was disturbing because Johnson "thinks you can trade dams against questions of war or peace. And it is war now—a new kind of war—the first time we've fought against Asians unilaterally. Korea was different—there was the fig leaf, if you like, of the U.N." Church later told Lippmann that the story was false and that Johnson had only offered respectful comments about Lippmann. But the columnist's response revealed deep concerns about

Lippmann then tutored LBJ on another basic tenet of realism. Though American public opinion could validate a certain policy, it would have no measurable effect on adversaries' foreign policies. The president's complaint rested on a "major fallacy," Lippmann explained, "that the issues of war and peace are determined by the state of American opinion at home rather than by the balance of forces abroad." He added, "I realize perfectly well that in Hanoi or Peking they may like to read Senator [Frank] Church's speeches or even the dissents of an occasional journalist . . . [But] what they do will be determined by the realities as they see them in Asia, not by how they read the Gallup poll in the United States."⁶¹

LBJ's advisors hoped to deflect this new angle of attack by suggesting that the president demonstrate to Lippmann that behind closed doors he had heard out his Congressional critics, but that open dissent threatened policy because of the weakness of the Saigon regime. Bill Moyers had alerted the president to the *Newsweek* piece almost a week before Bundy. "Well, he doesn't understand that I'm debating it every night—I've had two [meetings] a week with all of them [Congressional leadership]," LBJ lamented. Moyers suggested that Johnson show Lippmann transcripts of one of these closed-door sessions, "when you were very good—when you said things I know he believes. Just let him read it off the record, not for publication, and just show him what's going on."⁶² Bundy advised Johnson to meet the columnist's complaints head-on during a private, White House luncheon with Lippmann. Tell him, Bundy

Johnson's inability to handle criticisms and alternative viewpoints. See Elizabeth (Farmer) Midgley Diaries, 3 March 1965. At the time many other prominent American commentators were far more lenient in allowing LBJ secretive discretion about his war aims. The late-winter/early-spring 1965 columns of Joseph Kraft and even James Reston are instructive in this regard.

⁶¹ Lippmann, "Can the Question of War Be Debated?" *Newsweek* 15 March 1965: 23.

⁶² Moyers-LBJ phone conversation, 10 March 1965, WH6503.05, citation #7051, PNO #2, LBJL.

urged, that the administration had made its case as openly as possible to the public and lawmakers on Capitol Hill. “They are quite free to oppose you if they choose,” Bundy suggested, “but they are not free to make statements that you regard as damaging and pretend that they are speaking as your friends and supporters.”⁶³ LBJ favored this direct approach.

On the afternoon of 15 March 1965, Lippmann met LBJ at the White House. Columnist and president strolled on the South Lawn, then returned to the Mansion for a discussion. Senator Frank Church, a prominent Vietnam critic, sat in for part of the talk.⁶⁴ Then, Lippmann went to a private lunch with the president and Lady Bird. After the plates were cleared LBJ got down to business. He handed Lippmann sheaves of transcripts, top-secret reports, and cables from Saigon offering a positive assessment of the war and the punishment being inflicted on the North. “I don’t understand why those people in Hanoi won’t negotiate with me,” LBJ bemoaned. Lippmann interjected that the administration had yet to spell out its intentions, much less the basis for negotiations. “Your policy is all stick and no carrot,” he said. “You’re bombing them without offering any incentive for them to stop fighting; in effect you’re giving them a choice between destruction and withdrawal.” Holding back his anger—turning to Bundy’s advice to hear out Lippmann’s proposals—he asked for a detailed summary of the peace offensive the columnist had in mind. Lippmann developed the idea that a general peace conference must be called and that Hanoi be given a place at the conference. In a moment of sheer theatrics, Johnson phoned Bundy’s office. “Mac, I’ve got Walter Lippmann over here and he says we’re

⁶³ Bundy to LBJ, "Walter Lippmann and Foreign Policy," 15 March 1965, NSFM, LBJL.

not doing the right thing. Maybe he's right." This was a Johnsonian-sized deception. Just before he'd received Lippmann that afternoon, Johnson had summoned the Joint Chiefs of Staff to the Cabinet Room for a two-hour Vietnam update. "Kill more Vietcong," he instructed them.⁶⁵ LBJ knew his agenda and he wanted Lippmann to support it. Lippmann stayed on until the late afternoon explaining why, without a major proposal for a compromise settlement, the North Vietnamese would continue to absorb heavy U.S. bombing. Upon returning to Woodley Road he seemed buoyed with a new optimism. "I made quite an impression on him [with] the peace offensive idea," he told Elizabeth Farmer, "enough so that he called Mac Bundy in the middle of it and said, 'Maybe we're not doing the right thing.'" ⁶⁶

Lippmann was still aboard into late March 1965, but much to Johnson's dismay he was demanding a public accounting for the nearly six weeks of bombing. On 18 March, he wrote in *Today and Tomorrow* what he told Johnson privately: the bombing campaign was "only a half policy . . . it is all stick and no carrot." The administration needed to set out its conditions and objectives for a cease-fire and eventual settlement in Vietnam. "Our present policy lacks the essential element of a true policy when armed adversaries confront each other," Lippmann told readers. "The missing ingredient is a sketch of the settlement which our military effort is designed to bring about."⁶⁷ He came very close to advocating outright withdrawal—albeit with an interval of diplomacy between the end of the military phase and the

⁶⁴ President's Daily Diary, 15 March 1965, pages 2-3, LBJL; Elizabeth (Farmer) Midgley Diaries, 15-16 March 1965.

⁶⁵ This meeting appears on the same page of the President's Daily Diary, 15 March 1965, page 2, LBJL; "Kill more Vietcong" quote cited in Logevall, *Choosing War*: 370.

⁶⁶ Final quote is taken from Elizabeth (Farmer) Midgley Diaries, 15-16 March 1965. For LBJ's and Lippmann's quotes from this episode (based on Lippmann's recollections), see Steel, *Walter Lippmann and the American Century*: 560-561.

start of political concessions. “If we are honest and realistic, we must prepare ourselves for the contingency that the civil war will end in a Vietnamese deal with the Viet Cong, and that we shall be asked to withdraw our troops,” he wrote. “That would be a defeat in which we would lose considerable prestige, having unwisely engaged our prestige too lavishly.”⁶⁸

That column set in motion a frantic administration public relations program to manufacture a “carrot.” The White House wanted a plausible peace initiative, one which Hanoi was expected to reject but that would satisfy the domestic critics. It began with a hastily sketched plan for the economic development of Southeast Asia introduced in late-March press conferences. The effort culminated on 7 April 1965 in a presidential address delivered at Johns Hopkins University—a speech later known as the Baltimore Address. These statements were intended primarily to placate Lippmann and the editorial board of the *New York Times*, which also voiced mounting displeasure with administration policy.⁶⁹

On the afternoon of 19 March, Lippmann met with Bundy for a follow-up on his recent lunch date with the president. He pressed the national security adviser to consider a “Wilsonian Fourteen Points settlement” for all of Southeast Asia. Bundy demurred, telling Lippmann that perhaps something along those lines might be incorporated into a major upcoming presidential address on Vietnam—a speech Bundy likened to Kennedy’s American University Speech in June 1963.⁷⁰ “Since he envisions a single Titoist Vietnam as the best available outcome, he would like us to

⁶⁷ Lippmann, T&T, “Vietnamese Policy Re-examined,” 18 March 1965.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Other Washington columnists who followed Lippmann’s lead on the diplomacy issue were Arthur Krock, Joseph Kraft, and Drew Pearson.

come out in favor of the unification of Vietnam,” Bundy reported to LBJ. “This particular proposal seems foolish to me, certainly at this stage.” Bundy, however, incorporated some of Lippmann’s proposals into the opening remarks that the president gave at a 20 March press conference.⁷¹

Johnson’s ensuing statement, the first feeble attempt to define war aims, sounded a lot like a combination of the Tennessee Valley Authority program and a Marshall Plan for the states of Southeast Asia. As the *Washington Post* pointed out in a front-page story above the fold, Johnson spoke as much to his domestic critics as he did his North Vietnamese adversaries. He made vague illusions to the course “urged by many diplomatic observers to spell out more of [the] ‘carrot’ element, to accompany the military stick of the present policy.” The president hinted at economic aid to Saigon and Hanoi, noting that both sides “have the right to live side by side in peace and independence They have a right to build a new sense of community among themselves. They have a right to join, with help from others, in the full development of their own resources for their own benefit. . . .”⁷² Johnson assured Hanoi that the U.S. had no intention of unifying Vietnam under a non-Communist government.

Johnson would not, however, offer the kind of political package Lippmann wanted—his “Fourteen Points” for Southeast Asia—but he dangled more dollars. On 25 March, he pledged American support for peaceful “economic and social

⁷⁰ Elizabeth (Farmer) Midgley Diaries, 22 March 1965.

⁷¹ Bundy to LBJ, “Press Contacts,” Week of March 15,” 20 March 1965, NSFM, McGeorge Bundy, Memos to the President, March-4/15/65, LBJL.

⁷² Murrey Marder, “No Designs on Hanoi, LBJ Says: Policy Is Limited to Attaining Peace, President Declares,” *Washington Post*, 21 March 1966: A1, A14. Marder was an occasional dinner guest at Lippmann’s home.

cooperation” in “all Southeast Asia,” if Hanoi’s “aggression is stopped.” “Wider and bolder programs can be expected in the future from Asian leaders and Asian councils,” LBJ stated, “and in such programs we would want to help.” The U.S. wanted only a return to the “essentials” of the Geneva Agreements of 1954 for Vietnam, Johnson told reporters, “a reliable arrangement to guarantee the independence and security of all in Southeast Asia.”⁷³

Lippmann was non-plussed. The columnist told Mac Bundy that none of the administration’s statements indicated it was willing to live by the 1954 Geneva Accords and to make reunification an “essential” principle of negotiations—a concession Lippmann thought vital to any negotiations. Bundy retorted that was not an administration aim, that the administration interpreted the accords “a little differently from the other side.” Lippmann found his friend to be “evasive.”⁷⁴ Bundy sensed that he’d failed to satisfactorily rebut Lippmann’s criticisms. “I am quite sure he himself will press this notion in an early column,” Bundy told the president, adding that he already had alerted the State Department to this eventuality.⁷⁵

Bundy’s hunch proved correct. Two days later, Lippmann dismissed the late-March press conferences as insufficient. “The Administration needs to clarify its own position—in order to set in motion a movement for negotiation and, failing that, to put the onus of prolonging and widening the war unmistakably on our adversaries.”⁷⁶ In late March, when reports leaked that the Pentagon was pressing Johnson for a massive insertion of ground troops, Lippmann sharpened his attack, telling Elizabeth

⁷³ Murrey Marder, “Johnson Offers Economic Aid in a Peaceful Asia,” *Washington Post*, 26 March 1965: A1, A20.

⁷⁴ Elizabeth (Farmer) Midgley Diaries, 26 March 1965.

⁷⁵ Bundy to LBJ, “Press Contacts: March 21-27,” 29 March 1965, NSFM, LBJL.

Farmer that he was considering writing that the “president is losing control of the war.”⁷⁷ He stopped just short of that, choosing to attack the president’s advisors, particularly Secretary of State Dean Rusk and Robert McNamara at the Department of Defense. The bombing campaign could not compel negotiations, he informed readers, nor could Johnson’s vague allusions to New Deal-style economic reforms buy them. “If we had an American army of 350,000 men in South Viet-Nam, and extended the air war, we would have on our hands an interminable war without the prospect of a solution,” he wrote darkly. “To talk about freedom and national independence amidst such violence and chaos would be to talk nonsense.”⁷⁸ After composing the column, Lippmann beamed to his assistant, “I think I wrote something that will get under their skins—that’s what I want.”⁷⁹ The next day McNamara told the president, “Your friend Walter Lippmann sure stuck it in me this morning.” LBJ replied, “He’s going to do it with everyone [in the administration] . . . And he hasn’t got much policy, either.”⁸⁰

Most ominously, however, Lippmann used that column to begin chipping away at the administration’s legal justification for military intervention. Prodded by friends like the University of Chicago political scientist Quincy Wright, Lippmann challenged LBJ’s statement of 25 March which rested the American case on the assumption that South Vietnam was free and sovereign nation.⁸¹ Lippmann found it

⁷⁶ Lippmann, T&T, “The Basis for Negotiation,” 1 April 1965.

⁷⁷ Elizabeth (Farmer) Midgley Diaries, 25 March 1965.

⁷⁸ Lippmann, T&T, “On the Way to the Brink,” 30 March 1965.

⁷⁹ Elizabeth (Farmer) Midgley Diaries, 29 March 1965.

⁸⁰ McNamara-LBJ telephone conversation, 30 March 1965, reprinted in Michael Beschloss, *Reaching for Glory: Lyndon Johnson’s Secret White House Tapes, 1964-65* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2001): 258.

⁸¹ Quincy Wright to Walter Lippmann, 31 March 1965, Box 111, Folder 2280, Series III, WLC. Wright and Lippmann had a long correspondence dating back to the late-1920s. The political scientist

“puzzling” that the president made as his basis for ““honorable negotiations”” a return to the Geneva Agreements. U.S. policy, he wrote, contradicted the principles of that settlement. First, the Geneva Accords prohibited the ““introduction into Viet-Nam of foreign troops and military personnel as well as all kinds of arms and munitions.”” They also stipulated, Lippmann observed, that the ““military demarcation line [of 1954] is provisional and should not in any way be interpreted as constituting a political or territorial boundary.””⁸² How then had Hanoi violated the South’s sovereignty, as the administration claimed? Was this not essentially a civil war between two political factions of one nation?

On the morning of 6 April 1965, a day before he was set to deliver a major speech on Vietnam at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, LBJ opened the morning paper to find Lippmann’s latest piece on Vietnam—headlined “Is Uncertainty Necessary?” Lippmann charged that U.S. officials were failing to provide “any straightforward explanation of why the administration persists in keeping its war aims uncertain.” Would it continue to impose “identical conditions

was a steadfast Wilsonian and a defender of the United Nations. Lippmann, though unenthusiastic about Wilson’s legacy, shared Wright’s emphasis on the need for extra-national organizations in the promotion of international stability. On 31 March 1965 Wright submitted a letter to the *Washington Post* complaining that its house editorial on Vietnam supported the administration case which subverted the Geneva Agreements of 1954. “We profess to be fighting to preserve the freedom of a free people, but are actually fighting to prevent an election and to contain communism, a principle which its author, George Kennan, thinks is obsolete and should be succeeded by a policy of ‘disengagement.’ We fear that an election would unite Vietnam under the communist government of Ho and that then the dominoes would begin to fall until all of south Asia came under the control of communist China. . . I suggest that we abandon a policy which much of the world labels as “imperialism” and pursue the policy of peaceful self determination of peoples to which we are committed by the United Nations Charter.” Lippmann, who’d seen an earlier draft, wrote a thank you reply to Wright, “What an excellent comment of yours on Vietnam. I learned a lot from it, and I’m most grateful. Will you send a copy at once to Russell Wiggins [the pro-war editor of the *Post*]. He needs it.” Lippmann to Wright, 1 April 1965, Box 111, Folder 2280, Series III, WLC. The *Post* printed Wright’s letter on 10 April: Quincy Wright, “Self Determination,” 10 April 1965, *Washington Post*: A12. He’d made a similar argument in the *New York Times*: Wright, “No Right to Intervene,” 31 January 1965, *New York Times*: A14.

⁸² Lippmann, “On the Way to the Brink,” T&T, 30 March 1965.

which must be met before it will agree to a cease-fire and the beginning of negotiations for an armistice?" He also attacked Dean Rusk and Bundy for recent press appearances in which they offered the "stock formula" that Hanoi must "leave its neighbors alone"⁸³ before the U.S. would open a dialogue. Neither man had elaborated on specifics, and Lippmann was losing his patience.

So was Johnson. He immediately phoned George Ball at the State Department and asked him to review the draft of his upcoming speech. Based on Lippmann's latest salvo and a critical *New York Times* editorial, LBJ worried whether there was "enough substance" regarding diplomatic initiatives with Hanoi. "The President wants to strengthen the paragraphs about negotiation in a way that would silence those fellows [Lippmann and *The New York Times*]," Ball told Mac Bundy over the phone a few minutes later.⁸⁴

The events of 6 April revealed the degree to which the administration intended the Baltimore speech principally to placate Lippmann's criticisms about the lack of diplomatic initiative. After hanging up the phone with Ball, Bundy summarized for the president the imperative of answering the columnist's doubts with a bold public statement. In a memorandum, remarkable both for its suggestions and its didactic tone, Bundy urged LBJ to bring Lippmann to the White House that afternoon for a sneak preview of the speech. "A part of our purpose, after all, is to plug his guns, and he can tell us better than anyone to what degree we have done so," Bundy explained. Yet the speech content was still fluid and, Bundy feared, the language perhaps too diluted for Lippmann's liking. He warned LBJ that Lippmann must not be led to

⁸³ Lippmann, "Is Uncertainty Necessary," T&T, 6 April 1965.

believe that between the working draft and the address, the administration had firmed its stance against negotiations. “The only risk I see in this is that we want to be awfully careful that the language we finally use is not harder than what he sees,” Bundy wrote, “and for that reason it may be better to read to him from the speech and to slide gently past the words ‘unconditional discussions.’”⁸⁵

This was a tight-rope act for the president and Bundy, who hoped to allay Lippmann’s fears that the negotiation track was closed, without providing him more ammunition for what they expected to be the hard coming months of continued military track. LBJ, Bundy wrote, should take the offensive and press Lippmann to explain why he was writing so strongly for the idea of a single, Titoist Vietnam. After months of meetings Lippmann’s ambiguity about how to proceed irritated Bundy. “If this is his idea of a quiet way of giving it to the Communists, well and good,” Bundy wrote. “But if he really is talking about independence and security of the peoples of the area, he must be ready to look for ways and means of insuring the security of South Vietnam against a complete Communist takeover. This is what he never seems to face, and if he is going to advise negotiations, it seems to me he ought to be telling us what he expects to get from them.”⁸⁶ Bundy also asked the President to “make it clear to Lippmann that when we say we are ready to talk, we do not at all mean that we are ready for a cease-fire. The fact is that we expect our military action to continue unless we see a prospect of a better situation in the South than we have

⁸⁴ President to George Ball, 6 April 1965, Telcon, Vietnam I (1/5/65-5/24/65), LBJ Library; McGeorge Bundy to Ball, 6 April 1965, Telcon, Vietnam I (1/5/65-5/24/65), LBJL.

⁸⁵ Some of the quotations here are from Steel, *Walter Lippmann and the American Century*, 562. Additional quotes are supplemented from the original memo from Bundy to LBJ, President’s Appointment File [Diary Backup], 6 April 1965, Box, 15, LBJL.

now. Walter needs to understand this, and if he gets it straight from you, he is less likely to be objectionable about it.”⁸⁷ While Lippmann rejected the escalation track urged by the advisors he might—with some arm-twisting—defer to the president’s judgment. “Under pressure he will admit that the Secretary of Defense is excellent, but he will still think him wrong,” Bundy concluded. “He has a useful tendency to think the President himself is right.”

When Lippmann arrived at the White House on the evening of 6 April 1965, Bundy escorted him to an ante-room off the Oval Office. There, Treasury Secretary Joe Fowler and several other economic advisers were conferring with LBJ. The president sat on a raised pedestal posing for a sculptor who was molding his clay bust. Lippmann took a seat on a couch. “Walter, I’m going up to Baltimore tomorrow to give a speech, and I’m going to hold out that carrot that you keep talking about,” LBJ began. Bundy handed the columnist a copy of the address which Lippmann started to read. But before he got far, LBJ lit into an hour-long harangue. “I’m not going to just pull up my pants and run out on Vietnam,” he hollered at Lippmann from his perch. “Don’t you know the church is on fire over there and we’ve got to find a way out?” Bundy and Lippmann were then sent off to talk in another room. Lippmann combed the speech but could find no enticements. “This won’t do you any good anywhere,” Lippmann sternly told Bundy.⁸⁸ He added: “It’s just a disguised demand for capitulation. You’ve got to give the communists some incentive to negotiate

⁸⁶ Bundy’s frustrations clouded his argument. Lippmann, while imprecise about how to effect a diplomatic solution, was quite clear about what he thought would be the end game: U.S. withdrawal followed by a Titoist regime that would unite Vietnam under Hanoi.

⁸⁷ Steel, *Walter Lippmann and the American Century*, 562. Bundy to LBJ, President's Appointment File [Diary Backup], 6 April 1965, Box 15, LBJL.

⁸⁸ Elizabeth (Farmer) Midgley Diaries, 6-7 April 1965.

Like an unconditional cease-fire.” They argued for a half hour about the feasibility of such an offer. Bundy saw his friend off, telling him he’d see what could be done to change the text.⁸⁹ Driving home up Connecticut Avenue, Lippmann thought to himself that LBJ’s approach was “all horse sense and no human sense.” The next morning, still fuming over Johnson’s rude treatment, Lippmann told Elizabeth Farmer, “You know, the president is an ignoramus about foreign affairs—he knows nothing.”⁹⁰

IV.

The relationship between president and columnist never recovered from that episode—though it limped onward, conducted by proxy through Mac Bundy. Lippmann never again met LBJ in the White House, but he did not yet abandon the administration. Despite the mounting animosity toward Johnson, Lippmann persisted in believing that the president was “an ill-tempered dove, not a hawk.”⁹¹

On 7 April 1965, flanked by members of the Maryland congressional delegation, LBJ laid out his program for Vietnam. While it is not entirely clear how

⁸⁹ Steel, *Walter Lippmann and the American Century*: 563. Steel uses Lippmann’s reminiscences of the event. Steel’s account gives the impression that Bundy played a more subservient role than he actually did. See also, Lippmann’s Appointment Diaries for this period: Box 240, Folder 39, Series VII, WLC.

⁹⁰ Elizabeth (Farmer) Midgley Diaries, 6-7 April 1965.

⁹¹ Elizabeth (Farmer) Midgley Diaries, 28 April 1965. For his part, LBJ began disparaging the columnist in the presence of other members of the press. On one occasion he told reporters: “I thought my Baltimore speech would satisfy Lippmann. I went over it with him, but I find out now about Mr. Lippmann and Martin Luther King and some others—old slow me just catches up with them and then they are gone ahead of me.” Cited in Hugh Sidey, *A Very Personal Presidency: Lyndon Johnson in the White House* (New York: Atheneum, 1968): 85-86. Rowland Evans and Robert Novak imply that Lippmann changed his mind about the address, deciding to attack it, though he had approved the draft form as “a highly satisfying expression of U.S. policy.” See Evans and Novak, *Lyndon B. Johnson: The Exercise of Power* (New York: New American Library, 1966): 541. For a detailed analysis of the press input and reaction to the Baltimore speech see Kathleen J. Turner, “President-Press Interaction:

much Johnson revised the speech to appease Lippmann, the title, “Peace Without Conquest”—with its Wilsonian echo—certainly meant to appeal to the columnist who, on several occasions, urged the president and his advisors to adopt a Wilsonian Fourteen Points perspective on Vietnam.⁹² In the “Baltimore Speech,” Johnson maintained that peace was still possible in Vietnam: “in discussion or negotiations with the governments concerned; in large groups or in small ones; in the reaffirmation of old agreements or their strengthening with new ones. We have stated this position over and over again, fifty times and more, to friend and foe alike. And we remain ready, with this purpose, for unconditional discussions.”⁹³ Johnson then went on to outline an economic development package for the whole of Southeast Asia including a billion dollar investment in cooperation with Vietnam and allusions to a Mekong River Delta development program modeled after the New Deal’s Tennessee Valley Authority.

In the days after the Baltimore speech Bundy granted interviews to a score of Washington commentators including Drew Pearson, Hugh Sidey, Roscoe Drummond, and Joe Alsop. But, as he indicated in a 10 April 1965 memo to LBJ, Bundy was consumed by the Lippmann problem. The columnist had come to see Bundy on Friday, 9 April and seemed in a better mood about the speech though somewhat confused about its content. “He even asked me whether the speech you delivered was

Media Influence on the Johns Hopkins Address,” in *Lyndon Baines Johnson and the Uses of Power*, Bernard J. Firestone and Robert C. Vost, eds. (New York: Greenwood Press, 1988): 311-324.

⁹² In January 1917, President Woodrow Wilson addressed Congress with his “Peace Without Victory” speech that laid out Americans idealistic plans for the post-World War I era. Lippmann had celebrated this speech as editor of *The New Republic*; see, “America Speaks,” *The New Republic*, 25 January 1917, republished in Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., *Walter Lippmann: The Early Writings* (New York: Liveright, 1970): 63-68.

⁹³ *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Lyndon B. Johnson, 1965*, Volume I, entry 172 (Washington, DC: GPO, 1966): 394-399.

not very different from the draft he saw Tuesday,” Bundy wrote Johnson. Bundy obfuscated, telling Lippmann that the speech had been amended after their discussion, “although my own recollection is that ‘unconditional discussion’ was already in the draft he saw late Tuesday. It seemed to me useful to let him think that the speech had been greatly improved so that he could now be more enthusiastic about it.”⁹⁴ Indeed, Lippmann believed just that, phoning Elizabeth Farmer from New York City the day after the speech to tell her that the final form was different from the one he’d read in the White House. His talk with Bundy, Lippmann told Farmer, “had something to do with the introduction” of the phrase “unconditional discussions.” The following morning Joe Alsop praised the Baltimore Address as a “great speech . . . pursuing the noblest aims in the craftiest imaginable manner.”⁹⁵ For the first time in months, Alsop had something favorable to say about Johnson; Lippmann interpreted it as a victory in his program of defending the president from the hawkish columnist. As he put the *Washington Post* op-ed page aside, he remarked triumphantly, “If you can’t lick ‘em, join ‘em.”⁹⁶

Though he professed to Bundy that he believed the speech somewhat improved the U.S. position, Lippmann remained glum about the continuing bombing raids, arguing that they made a settlement impossible and carried the risk of bringing China into the war. Bundy told him that while the air raids were part of the present

⁹⁴ Bundy to LBJ, “Press Interviews, April 4-10,” NSF, Subject File, “Press Appointments,” Box 42, LBJL.

⁹⁵ Joseph Alsop, “A Great Speech,” 9 April 1965, *Washington Post*: A25.

⁹⁶ Elizabeth (Farmer) Midgley Diaries 8-9 April 1965. Lippmann felt he had tutored Bundy on a subject which he did not sufficiently understand: “Look at Mac Bundy, he’s an educated man . . . and yet he doesn’t understand it—peace policy. He didn’t understand how you have a peace policy while you fight until I explained it to him in that session” on April 6, 1965. Are you sure he understood it then? asked his research assistant. “Oh, yes—that was the ‘unconditional negotiations in the Baltimore speech,” Lippmann replied. See Midgley’s entry for 28 April 1965.

policy, the president was “in no hurry to ‘escalate’” and that he continued to emphasize the “importance of acting on every front in South Vietnam.”⁹⁷ Lippmann informed Bundy that he planned to write about the differences between the two sides on reaching the negotiating table and working out a settlement, particularly the administration’s refusal to recognize the Vietcong or Liberation Front. “I fear Walter will gradually line himself up on the pro-Communist side on this one, but we will keep working on him,” Bundy wrote. “It really would be very bad for our whole position to allow the Viet Cong to have a separate presence in any negotiations—at least at this stage of the game.”⁹⁸

It was this reluctance to use diplomacy that convinced Lippmann of the insincerity of the Johns Hopkins speech. While much of the press hailed the phrase “unconditional discussions” as a sign that LBJ’s statecraft and the negotiation track were intact, Lippmann soon saw it differently. Though written for, even previewed by, the administration’s chief antagonist, the speech failed to please him. Instead, Lippmann questioned even more deeply the legal, then the moral, implications of the war.

He waited almost a week before weighing in on the Baltimore address with two devastating columns. His syndicated *Today and Tomorrow* analysis made quick work of the speech, dismissing it as a transparent effort to “correct some of the defects of the [Administration’s] public relations.” It lacked conviction, Lippmann explained to readers on 13 April, for while Johnson “introduced a certain change in the tone of the official policy, it was quite evidently not intended to bring about any

⁹⁷ Bundy to LBJ, “Press Interviews, April 4-10,” NSF, Subject File, “Press Appointments,” Box 42, LBJL. Bundy’s emphasis.

marked change in the course of the war . . . and it was no less evident that the President's offer of 'unconditional discussions' was not meant to bring about a cease-fire." Altogether, he thought it too meager: "too little, perhaps because it is too late, to change the course of the war."⁹⁹ Johnson's parsing of terms could not distract from the central issue: Was the Saigon government viable? Two months of sustained bombing failed to bolster the regime or push the North closer to the peace table, yet the administration seemed more committed than ever to pursuing victory by military means. U.S. officials were Americanizing the Vietnamese civil conflict: "transforming the war from a South Vietnamese struggle to put down a rebellion, in which we assist the government, into an increasingly American war in the whole of Viet-Nam, both South and North." Pressure would mount in the coming weeks for a ground war, Lippmann told readers. And while the administration might openly choose that course, it remained "reluctant and unconvinced, which in practice means that it will escalate the war slowly, will do a little more bombing and will send in more and more American soldiers."¹⁰⁰

The tandem of that *Today and Tomorrow* column and a *Newsweek* piece that hit newsstands the prior morning, marked an inexorable point of departure. Lippmann, at last, unreservedly contested militarization. The public was being told a "grossly misleading" half-truth about the war. While U.S. officials correctly asserted that North Vietnam was sending reinforcements into the South, they were far less candid about the reality in Saigon: government resistance to the Viet Cong had all but collapsed. "The basic character of the war has changed," Lippmann wrote. "It used

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Lippmann, T&T, 12 April 1965, "The Baltimore Address and After."

to be a war of the South Vietnamese assisted by the Americans; it is now becoming an American war very inefficiently assisted by the South Vietnamese.”¹⁰¹ Johnson and his advisors were nearing the brink of major decision in Vietnam. “Having staked our prestige on the outcome of the civil war which is being lost in South Vietnam, we may find ourselves with a choice between the devil of defeat in South Vietnam and the deep blue sea of a much wider war in Eastern Asia,” he told readers. “That choice could perhaps be avoided if we remember in time that when there is no military solution to a conflict, there must be negotiation to end it. In such a situation, only fools will go to the brink and over it.”¹⁰²

In several columns that month—leading up to and following the Baltimore speech—Lippmann exploited a key weakness in the administration’s justification for its heavy commitment to the Saigon government. North and South Vietnam, he wrote, “are not two sovereign nations but two zones of one sovereign nation.”¹⁰³ As he developed this line, Lippmann reinvigorated his long-standing theme that escalation equated to intervention in a civil war. Bundy worried that Lippmann had now crossed a threshold whereby his criticism might stiffen resolve in communist capitals. On 20 April, he sent LBJ a memo based on his conversations with Ambassador-at-Large Llewellyn Thompson and Ray Cline of the CIA. Both men told him that leaders in Hanoi, Beijing, and Moscow “greatly exaggerate the power of dissenting opinion in this country” and “that people like Lippmann, Morgenthau,

¹⁰⁰ Lippmann, T&T, 12 April 1965, “The Baltimore Address and After.”

¹⁰¹ Lippmann, “Nearing the Brink in Vietnam,” 12 April 1965, *Newsweek*: 25.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

¹⁰³ Lippmann, “Is Uncertainty Necessary?” T&T, 6 April 1965.

Fulbright and marching students do great damage by creating false hopes in unfriendly breasts.”¹⁰⁴

Johnson had used the Baltimore Speech to bolster his assertion that Hanoi-sponsored infiltration of the South violated international law. The President said, “the first reality is that North Viet-Nam has attacked the independent nation of South Viet-Nam.” By questioning the legality of America’s involvement in Vietnam Lippmann threatened this most basic argument of U.S. officials. If the bombing campaign were meant to compel North Vietnam to negotiate, then the U.S. must have a program “which we are able to defend clearly and openly,” he wrote. Johnson had repeatedly stated that the U.S. sought “no more than a return to the essentials of the (Geneva) Agreements of 1954.” Lippmann pointed out, however, that the resolutions—never officially endorsed by the U.S.—did not divide Vietnam into “two separate nations but two temporary zones of the same nation.”¹⁰⁵ The elections that were to have followed in 1956 never were held and—with U.S. support—Diem consolidated his power in the South. U.S. officials now seemed to be suggesting that history had overtaken the Geneva Accords, that with the passage of ten years the U.S. now recognized North and South Vietnam as, *de facto*, two separate nations. That assumption, he pointed out, was not consistent with the U.S. position in Germany. Did the U.S. recognize two independent nations because Germany had been partitioned for two decades? The administration argument further was weakened by the fact that it had never raised the matter of Hanoi’s aggression with the United

¹⁰⁴ Bundy to LBJ, “The Demonologists look at the Noise from Hanoi, Peking and Moscow,” 20 April 1965, NSFM, Bundy 4/15-5/31/65, Box 3, LBJL.

¹⁰⁵ Lippmann, T&T, “Unbuttoned Diplomacy,” 20 April 1965.

Nations Security Council as a violation of Charter Articles 39 and 51 guaranteeing collective security and individual self-defense.¹⁰⁶

There also were greater considerations at stake—more than narrow calculations of national interest, more than following the letter of international law. Lippmann made an unusually sharp admonishment—one in which he used the language that would come to characterize so much of his writing in the next two years. It was a swipe at the policymakers who had embraced—perhaps too well—the calculus of national interest that Walter Lippmann himself popularized in the 1940’s. “I am well aware that to be concerned about our legal and moral position is regarded by the new school of *super-realists* as unworthy of a proud and tough nation,” he told readers. “But I think we have something very much to be concerned about when we look about us and see how we are drifting into isolation.”¹⁰⁷ He meant military, political, and *moral* isolation from the community of nations.

George Ball, a lawyer by training, moved independently to check Lippmann’s challenge to the legality of intervention; particularly the charge that the U.S. had supported free elections in Vietnam at the time of the 1954 Geneva Accords—though it had not signed them. On the morning of 20 April Ball phoned Leonard Meeker, the State Department’s chief legal advisor, requesting that by day’s end Meeker put together an outline for a “white paper on all aspects of the war in South Viet-Nam.”¹⁰⁸ That afternoon he asked the Historian’s Office to review Lippmann’s *Post* and *Herald Tribune* columns from 1950 to check his consistency in regard to the invasion of South Korea. Could any of his past arguments be used to rebut his analysis of

¹⁰⁶ A point which Mac Bundy and State Department officials would contest vigorously.

¹⁰⁷ Lippmann, T&T, “Unbuttoned Diplomacy,” 20 April 1965. Emphasis added.

Vietnam? Had Lippmann written anything about the legal situation of a divided Korea? Did he believe that the North Korean invasion “constituted aggression because of the demarcation line”?¹⁰⁹ It was one of several government-authorized studies into Lippmann’s past analyses.

On 20 April 1965, Meeker dashed off a seven-page defense of administration policy. He rejected Lippmann’s statement that about the Geneva Accords and provisions for the Vietnamese elections as “at best incomplete, and actually misleading.”¹¹⁰ The U.S. had supported free elections supervised by the U.N. but did not endorse the Geneva provision that called for elections in Vietnam to be supervised by the International Supervisory Commission. Still, Meeker cautioned that the president should tone down his rhetoric about the “independent” status of South Vietnam. Lippmann’s interpretation of the language of the Accords was correct—they did not officially sanction the creation of two sovereign nations. “Having in mind this history, and also the analogous situations of Germany, in particular, and Korea, the U.S. probably needs to be somewhat reserved in asserting that South Viet-Nam has become an independent sovereign state,” the counselor wrote. “Rather we should emphasize the principle of self-determination.”¹¹¹ Though the memo never was introduced publicly it nevertheless helped shape later public speeches by LBJ and Ball who followed Meeker’s advice on this point.

¹⁰⁸ Ball to Meeker, Telcon, 20 April 1965, Vietnam I (1/15/65-5/24/65), LBJL.

¹⁰⁹ Ball to Patterson, Telcon, 20 April 1965, Vietnam I (1/15/65-4/24/65), LBJL.

¹¹⁰ Leonard C. Meeker to George Ball, “Walter Lippmann’s April 20 Article on Viet-Nam: Information Memorandum,” 20 April 1965, “Viet-Nam (Misc. III),” Box 32, Records of George W. Ball, Lot 74D272, MLR #5175, RG 59, National Archives and Records Administration II, College Park, MD (hereinafter referred to as “NARA II”).

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

Most troubling for Mac Bundy was Lippmann's dig at the president's "super-realist" advisors in the 20 April "Unbuttoned Diplomacy" column. He wrote a hasty rebuttal that quibbled with secondary points but failed to answer, as he admitted a few days later, the "central propositions" of Lippmann's article. Instead, Bundy claimed that Lippmann had taken a quote from President Eisenhower's memoirs out of context. Eisenhower had remarked that during the French phase of the war, possibly 80 percent of the South would have voted for Ho Chi Minh; Lippmann had implied that Eisenhower was referring to the period between 1954 and 1956, when the U.S. opposed elections in the South because Ngo Dinh Diem did not have sufficient popular support. Bundy also took exception to Lippmann's reading of the Geneva Accords. "You say that if we now claim there are two separate and independent nations, we should explain why we ignore the Charter of the United Nations," Bundy wrote. "The implication is that if there are not two independent nations the Charter does not apply. But surely the Charter does apply" in the case of an attack across a state line or a line of demarcation.¹¹²

Lippmann replied privately on 23 April 1965 that Bundy had dodged the main thrust of the column: U.S. justifications were, at best, strained to the point of incredulity.¹¹³ In a blustery column published on 22 April, he also claimed that the U.S. was acting unilaterally in Vietnam because it had no real support from any Asian power. According to the "domino theory," Lippmann wrote, if the U.S. failed to uphold the Saigon regime it would lose credibility and influence in the region. But

¹¹² Bundy to Lippmann, 20 April 1965, White House Central File (WHCF), Name File, Box 225, LBJL.

the Americanization of the war seemed to be producing the same results—indeed, he claimed, it was galvanizing anti-U.S. sentiment in the region. “India and Pakistan, India and China, China and the Soviet Union are quarreling to the point of war with one another,” he observed. “But they are united in condemning out February war. The Administration should put this fact in its pipe and smoke it.”¹¹⁴ Bundy sent another letter to Woodley Road on 28 April 1965, claiming that South Vietnam had possessed the “essentials of an independent nation for many years.” He concluded, “I should say that I was really quite surprised at the tone of your next column, the one about the opinion of Asia and the things which the President’s advisers should stick in their pipes and smoke A very large number of Asians are glad to see firmness against Communist pressure even if they do not praise it in public.”¹¹⁵

By May Lippmann turned as dark and sullen as his columns, now almost exclusively focused on the war. He feared especially that the price of his criticisms would be exclusion from the inner sanctums of the administration. In the days before a pivotal trip to London and Paris, Lippmann met with Ball and Bundy.¹¹⁶ He’d heard rumors that the president was making off-colored remarks about him, including on one occasion, in the days after the Baltimore Speech, when LBJ complained to a group of reporters that Lippmann changed his mind more often than Martin Luther King, Jr. The civil rights leader who fought for political equality guaranteed in the landmark 1964 Civil Rights Bill, had begun agitating in northern cities for minority

¹¹³ The 23 April 1965 Lippmann to Bundy letter is cited in Blum, *Public Philosopher*: 613-614. Lippmann’s reply was pointed: “I am relieved to find that the points you raise do not go to the basic propositions of the article.”

¹¹⁴ Lippmann, T&T, “The Falling Dominoes,” 22 April 1965.

¹¹⁵ Bundy to Walter Lippmann, 28 April 1965, WHCF, Name File, Box 225, LBJL.

¹¹⁶ Lippmann/Ball, 17 May 1965, Telcon, General Folder: US & Europe 11/24/63-5/31/66, LBJL. See also Lippmann Appointment Diaries, May 1965, Box 240, Folders 39-40, Series VII, WLC.

economic parity. Lippmann, who worked so long to achieve a diplomatic settlement in Vietnam, now seemed to be calling for outright withdrawal. Just when he'd closed the distance with the two men, LBJ complained, they moved even further away from him.¹¹⁷ Such frustration contributed to Johnson's sense of being persecuted by a fickle press corps, and convinced him that he must exercise even greater caution. When the Baltimore *Sun* reported that LBJ would unveil nuclear non-proliferation initiatives at a speech commemorating the United Nation's 20th anniversary, the president vehemently denied it. "What I'm really afraid of [is] that Scotty [Reston] and maybe Walter Lippmann will come out with a column saying 'We are looking [at] Johnson [to] see what kind of leadership he gives us,'" the president complained to a *Sun* editor. "Then, when I just say, 'Happy Birthday,' they'll say, 'God, he was disappointing, wasn't he!'"¹¹⁸

As Lippmann's attacks became more strident, he feared that he might push Johnson to the point that the president would cut off all communications with him. A Machiavellian the equal of any in the capital, Mac Bundy quietly reassured Lippmann that the president's respect and friendship "were absolutely unaffected" by Lippmann's public broodings about the war. Bundy perfected this technique as the LBJ-Lippmann war of words took shape. Each time Johnson jabbed, Bundy consoled Lippmann over lunch at the Metropolitan Club. Bundy knew how much Lippmann craved access to the powerful. He played on that instinct. Arriving a few minutes late to one of their lunch meetings, Bundy explained the president delayed him by

¹¹⁷ Bundy to the President, "Lunch with Walter Lippmann," 10 May 1965, NSFM, Box 3, LBJL.

¹¹⁸ Johnson-Gerald Griffin telephone conversation; reprinted in Beschloss, *Reaching for Glory*: 371-372.

calling twice that morning to talk about Lippmann. Bundy relayed the president's concern upon learning that Lippmann was complaining that he'd fallen out of favor at the White House. Bundy reassured the downcast columnist this was not so. "He acted like a man who had just received a two-quart transfusion at a moment of desperate need," Bundy reported back to Johnson. "I have seldom seen anyone change his mood so fast. . . . I shall be enormously surprised if this does not lead to a better tone in his comments—in fact, my guess is that the next time he hits us, he will take the line that you are a very good and wise man who is getting bad advice—and this is of course what advisors are for."¹¹⁹

Despite the palpable tensions, Lippmann still wanted to offer advice to the administration. At that same meeting, Lippmann went on to discuss two areas of concern with the administration's handling of Vietnam in recent weeks. He told Bundy there had been "too much commotion and too much talk" coming from the White House during the first week of May (coinciding with the Dominican intervention). Johnson's appeals to the public, to the press, and to Congress had the effect of making it seem like the policy apparatus was in shambles. Bundy replied, "in all solemnity that I had never seen an important decision hastily or incautiously made in the White House, but he stuck to the view that appearances count almost as

¹¹⁹ Bundy to the President, "Lunch with Walter Lippmann," 10 May 1965, NSFM, Box 3, LBJL. Johnson remarked once, "Every time I pull my seat nearer that guy, he pulls his chair further away; Steel, *Walter Lippmann and the American Century*: 560. See also, Lippmann's Appointment Diaries, 10 May 1965, Box 240, Folder 39, Series VII, WLC. Even as Lippmann's criticisms grew more strident, the administration made key members available to Lippmann. On 15 May, Lippmann had a long talk with Robert McNamara about the military situation in Vietnam. Aside from Bundy's regular consultations, Vice President Hubert Humphrey and his wife, Muriel, ate dinner at the Lippmann's in late-April. The discussion focused on Vietnam. See Lippmann's Appointment Diaries for 15 May 1965 and 23 April 1965, Box 240, Folder 39, Series VII, WLC.

much as reality in this field.”¹²⁰ Lippmann also expressed concern that the views of dissenters were not made available to the president during critical discussions on Vietnam. Lippmann, Bundy reported, said that “at the decisive moments you got more forceful advice from the hardliners than from the peacemakers.” Bundy added, “I said I wished I could show him all the hawk-like things you had turned aside. I also tried to show him, in our discussions of Vietnam, that the political track and the negotiating stance were very much on our minds, and he listened with care, but I did not persuade him.” Lippmann also urged Bundy to find a way to pause the bombing campaign over the holidays marking Buddha’s birthday. Later that evening, the issue topped the agenda at the president’s meeting on Vietnam.¹²¹

The sense that his advice still flowed to LBJ through Bundy made Lippmann more optimistic than events warranted. And, for a short while, he took the course Bundy had envisioned (indeed shaped) attacking the men around Johnson but not the president himself. Bundy served as the sole source for a column that appeared on 13 May 1965 which noted that while key advisors such as Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara and Secretary of State Dean Rusk were “seized with a grim determination that military action shall continue,” there was “more agreement than one might suppose between the Administration and its critics.” The column was a nearly exact “resume” of a lunch conversation Lippmann had with Bundy just several days

¹²⁰ Bundy to the President, “Lunch with Walter Lippmann,” 10 May 1965, NSFM, Box 3, LBJL.

¹²¹ Ibid.

prior.¹²² A diplomatic exit strategy had not been rejected; negotiations, he wrote echoing McGeorge Bundy, would soon proceed with the National Liberation Front.¹²³

Lippmann's 20 May through 5 June 1965 trip to Europe—in which he hopped from Paris to London and back to Paris—plunged him again into pessimism about the prospects of avoiding full-scale war and the erosion of support within the Western Alliance. Six months earlier his visit to these capitals included wide-ranging discussions about Southeast Asia, MFL, British monetary problems, and Franco-American relations. Without exception, Lippmann's meetings on this journey focused on grave concerns about escalation in Vietnam and about American unilateralism. Lippmann had written for months about the strategic perils of fighting the war. But the stark possibility of diplomatic isolation seemed to affect him as nothing else that spring.

In London, Lippmann found only shallow support for the air war and deep concern about greater escalation. Prime Minister Harold Wilson had tried to turn Johnson away from bombing in mid-February but had been firmly rebuffed.¹²⁴ During a brief conversation at his office in the House of Commons on 26 May 1965, Wilson told Lippmann that Johnson's Baltimore Speech—with its vague allusions to negotiations—gave him enough latitude to support U.S. policy and still retain control of his new Labour government at home. He added, however, that if U.S. officials expanded the bombing campaign to Hanoi and Haiphong “Britain's support of

¹²² Lippmann, “One Man's Estimate,” T&T, 13 May 1965. See also the Elizabeth (Farmer) Midgley Diaries, 12 May 1965.

¹²³ Lippmann, “One Man's Estimate,” T&T, 13 May 1965.

America would be very difficult to continue.” The next day Lippmann met with Minister of Defense Denis Healy, who confirmed that there was an “undercurrent of unhappiness” in the public endorsement British officials had extended to Johnson’s Vietnam policies. This unease was exacerbated by a British government study that proposed to liquidate the U.K.’s commitments in one or two of three primary theaters: Europe, the Middle East, and Asia (Singapore, Malaysia, and Indonesia). Later that evening, Lord Plowden, formerly the head of the Atomic Energy Commission, reiterated the point. If Britain reduced its commitments abroad America would have to increase its involvement in these regions, Plowden told Lippmann. To do so, it “must not become stuck in a land war in Indo-China.”¹²⁵

Tepid support in London contrasted with outrage and grim prognostications in Paris. Lippmann met with key French officials, including the three highest-ranking members of government. They were deeply concerned with the widening air war in Vietnam. On 24 May 1965, Jean Monnet had a long talk with Lippmann at his office on the Avenue Foch. Monnet was highly agitated about the U.S. decision to send the Marines into Santo Domingo in the Dominican Republic. Coupled with the air war in Vietnam, Monnet told Lippmann, “it looked as if Johnson had lost control of the military forces.”¹²⁶ Prime Minister Georges Pompidou echoed that concern a week later. He opened a half-hour discussion with Lippmann by noting that Franco-American relations were “very much set back” because of events in South Vietnam

¹²⁴ For Wilson’s unsuccessful effort on 11 February 1965 to talk Johnson out of escalation, see Logevall, *Choosing War*: 339-340.

¹²⁵ Entries for 26-27 May 1965, Appointment Diaries, European Trip Spring (20 May-5 June 1965), Box 240, Folder 40, Series VII, WLC.

and the Dominican Republic.¹²⁷ Lippmann's longtime friend, Thomas K. Finletter, the U.S. ambassador to NATO also sharply criticized the administration. Finletter confided to Lippmann that "within the privacy of [the NATO] organization the [European] feeling against Johnson was very, very severe."¹²⁸ While French sources decimated Lippmann's optimism that a diplomatic settlement could be reached, they did not materially change his predications about escalation. Much of what they told Lippmann merely confirmed his own ideas about unilateral intervention in Southeast Asia—ideas he'd held and expressed for nearly two decades.

Prospects for avoiding a large war, French sources explained, were now non-existent. The French journalist Jacques Chaffard, a Vietnam expert who wrote for *Le Monde*, told Lippmann that to win the war the U.S. would have to insert several hundred thousands troops and fight for at least five years. At that, it would be only a "temporary victory because a political solution with the Viet Cong is the only conceivable way of making a settlement." During their talk in Lippmann's room at the Ritz Hotel in Paris, Chaffard explained that his articles for French newspapers—which drew highly pessimistic conclusions about the chances for American success—were being censored when they appeared in the U.S. He also recounted a story about the Bundy brothers that underlined the Johnson administration's schizophrenic conduct of the war. While visiting McGeorge Bundy at the White House, the national security adviser told Chaffard that the U.S. would be willing to use French diplomatic contacts to hold discussions with the Viet Cong. At the State Department, Bill Bundy

¹²⁶ Entry for 21 May 1965, Appointment Diaries, Box 240, Folder 40, Series VII, WLC.

¹²⁷ Entry for 29 May 1965, Appointment Diaries, Box 240, Folder 40, Series VII, WLC.

told Chaffard that under no circumstances would there be discussions with the VC “until there was a military victory.”¹²⁹

The chief architects of French foreign policy were equally blunt. During a wide-ranging talk with Couve de Murville at the Quay d’Orsay, the French foreign minister predicted that the U.S. commitment would soon include ground forces that would exceed 100,000 by year’s end. When French officials studied the situation, Couve told Lippmann, their greatest problem was “that it was too easy to predict what was going to happen and that so far all their predictions had come true.” The war would drag on for years, Couve speculated, and in the process the U.S. would wreck the industrial structure of North Vietnam. Much the same would happen in the South. “At the end of it,” Lippmann recorded in his diary, “when we do somehow or other get out of it ([Couve] couldn’t imagine just how we’d get out—we’d just get tired of it—we can’t be driven out), the country would be in such condition that it would fall right into the hands of China, and the ultimate objectives of the war would be lost anyway.” Couve knew the Chinese recognized this fact and because of it would be intransigent in any negotiations. While the U.S. busied itself by “reducing this part of the world to a pulp,” Couve told Lippmann, China would sit on the sidelines. Chinese diplomats, whom Couve contacted, told him they would not pressure Hanoi to negotiate with Washington until the Americans ““have dirtied their faces a good deal more.””¹³⁰

French President Charles de Gaulle warned Lippmann that America was on

¹²⁸ Entry for 2 June 1965, Appointment Diaries, Box 240, Folder 40, Series VII, WLC.

¹²⁹ Entry for 24 May 1965, Appointment Diaries, Box 240, Folder 40, Series VII, WLC.

the verge of becoming an imperial superpower. On 31 May 1965, during lunch at the Elysee Palace, the General—ruminating in characteristically broad strokes about history—believed that the greatest problem facing the world was not the German problem, not Soviet Communism, nor even Communist Chinese expansion. The crux of unrest in international affairs was the question of whether the United States would become an imperial power now that it had the strength to be one. “The chief underlying issue in America was between the old America, which was really anti-imperialist,” De Gaulle told Lippmann, and the policies of America as guided by the Johnson administration, “which was in fact imperialist whether anyone stood by [Washington] or not.”¹³¹

Morose French predications about a diplomatic settlement in Vietnam had a shattering effect on Lippmann’s morale. McGeorge Bundy anticipated it and tried again to pre-empt Lippmann. Bundy spoke with him shortly after his return in early June; he knew immediately that the visit to Paris had unnerved the columnist. Phoning Ball, Bundy reported that the columnist “was going to write an article and explain everybody [in the Alliance] has lost confidence” in the administration’s Vietnam policy. Bundy said the president wanted to refrain from denouncing Lippmann but asked what would Ball think about having Dean Acheson “talking to” Lippmann. Exactly what this would have produced is not clear. Bundy seemed to have in mind a private chat. Ball doubted that could be arranged but seemed certain that Acheson would relish the chance to rebuff his old nemesis. Ball wondered

¹³⁰ Entry for 29 May 1965, Appointment Diaries, Box 240, Folder 40, Series VII, WLC.

¹³¹ Entry of 31 May 1965, Appointment Diaries, Box 240, Folder 40, Series VII, WLC.

whether it was worth such attention, “dramatizing what Walter had in mind,” but he’d check into it. He added that Lippmann had come back “more depressed than before” about the situation in Europe. Ball’s wife, Ruth, had seen the columnist the previous day and he’d predicted that “nobody would speak to him” after he published his ideas. “We won’t like what he’ll be saying in the next few days,” Ball told Bundy. He agreed to speak to Dean Rusk before soliciting Acheson’s help.¹³² As it turned out, Acheson already was preparing to present Lippmann with his version of events—and in a way far more public than a lunch at the Metropolitan or a visit to Woodley Road.¹³³

On the morning of 9 June 1965, Lippmann retired to his study in the old rectory house to pen a column that he knew would escalate his widening conflict with the administration. Though he had made many pointed criticisms throughout the spring, most were directed at the men counseling the president. This time the columnist aimed squarely at LBJ. His meetings with European officials convinced him of a “swelling tide of dissent and doubt and anxiety about the wisdom and competence with which United States foreign policy is being conducted,” he explained in opening. The events of the spring of 1965, a sustained air war in Vietnam and intervention in the Dominican Republic, had shaken and “stupefied” European observers. In neither case had Johnson bothered to consult the allies, something Europeans considered as “ominous” because it portended an “unlimited globalism” and “rough unilateralism.” U.S. policy in South Vietnam was sheer

¹³² M. Bundy/Ball, 8 June 1965, Telcon, General Folder: US & Europe 11/24/63-5/31/66, LBJL.

¹³³ See Chapter Nine.

spectacle: by unleashing a massive air war, the victor of the 1964 campaign, “with the applause of the Goldwater Republicans,” had thoroughly adopted the strategy voters overwhelmingly had rejected. The president’s performance revealed a “pride of power which so often in the newly powerful becomes impregnated with the messianic illusion that single-handedly [American officials] can impose their kind of peace upon the rest of the world and expand their kind of freedom to all mankind.” In his more “cheerful” moments, Lippmann supposed, the spring of 1965 might be Lyndon Johnson’s “Bay of Pigs” from which he may learn “wisdom from his failures.”¹³⁴

Lippmann knew the course upon which he embarked likely would lead to his marginalization. “I’ve been pulling my punches,” he told Elizabeth Farmer, his research assistant in early June. “I’m just going to have to take out after Johnson’s foreign policy and show that it doesn’t work.” Farmer tried to offer consolation: “That won’t be hard,” she said. “No,” Lippmann replied, “but it won’t be pleasant either.”¹³⁵ So began the public feud that would, for the next two years, become the subject of dinner party conversations and a source of fascination for members of the Washington press corps.

V.

Even as they crossed the Rubicon during their well-publicized deliberations in July 1965, U.S. officials wondered how they might alleviate Walter Lippmann’s concerns, how they could deflect his public attacks. Mac Bundy’s hastily assembled agenda,

¹³⁴ Lippmann, T&T, 10 June 1965, “As Others See Us.”

¹³⁵ Quoted in Steel, *Walter Lippmann and the American Century*, 569.

drafted during the first afternoon of those talks, is instructive. Bundy outlined six principal questions officials would face if they decided to expand the war. Lippmann had asked most of them for months. How would the decision to insert large numbers of ground troops change the nature of the war and how were officials to explain it in political and military terms? How could the U.S. combine a peace offensive with stronger military actions? The hardest came last: “What are our war aims? What is the answer to Walter Lippmann’s questions on this point?”¹³⁶ As it turned out, Lippmann’s optimism, his desire to keep his insider status, and his lack of understanding about events on the ground inside South Vietnam once more played to the Johnson administration’s advantage. Even as the president and his advisors made the fateful decision to increase troop levels to 125,000 and (secretly) broaden their scope of operations, Lippmann still wanted to believe a way out could be had. Johnson’s 29 July press conference—like the behind-the-scenes phone calls and meetings—punched all the right buttons, contained the reassuring phrases for which Lippmann and other key media persons had been clamoring. For a second time the old columnist was fooled.

During this decisive month Lippmann temporized his criticisms, even avoiding a prominent television forum for debating Vietnam policy. When Alfred Friendly of CBS called in mid-July to ask Lippmann if he wanted to tape a half-hour network special on Vietnam with Eric Sevareid, he declined.¹³⁷ Lippmann, who lived by a strict schedule, probably did not welcome the prospect of leaving his summer camp at Southwest Harbor, Mt. Desert Island, just off the coast of Maine to tape a

¹³⁶ “Meeting Agenda: Possible Items for Discussion,” 22 July 1965, Bundy’s memorandum in *FRUS, 1964-1968*, Vol. III: 217-218.

show in Manhattan. But he seemed also to have made the purposeful decision to ease off the pressure on the administration, something that did not accord with dissecting Vietnam policy before a national TV audience. From his retreat house in July, with Bundy and Ball still consulting him on the progress of internal talks about the war, he seemed to reverse course. The desultory realist incantations were replaced by accolades for Johnson's statesmanship. He even described the debate about Vietnam, which he knew was nearing its climax, as being one of "unusual good temper and courtesy considering the fact that it is taking place in war time and that the stakes are high." He singled out LBJ for praise, predicting "high marks from historians for having preserved freedom of discussion in such a critical time." He continued, "It would have been easy as it must have been tempting for him to beat the tom-toms and silence his critics by saying that they were giving aid and comfort to the enemy . . . [but] Lyndon Johnson did not succumb."¹³⁸ Walter Lippmann hadn't yet been cut off from the inner circle—or so he thought—and for that he seemed ever grateful.

Convinced that the administration was on the verge of another key decision on the road to a major war, Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chief of Staff Carl Marcy urged Chairman J. William Fulbright to develop an alternative strategy with the columnist throughout the spring of 1965.¹³⁹ Lippmann and Fulbright had been social acquaintances since the 1940s when Fulbright was elected to the Senate. The senator and his wife, Betty, lived near the Lippmanns in Northwest Washington, D.C. and the couples opened their homes to one another. Fulbright was a regular at

¹³⁷ See Lippmann Appointment Diaries, July 1965, Box 240, Folder 39, Series VII, WLC.

¹³⁸ Lippmann, "The Acid Test," 5 July 1965, *Newsweek*.

¹³⁹ Randall Woods, *Fulbright: A Life* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995): 373-374.

Lippmann's cocktail parties and at their gala mint julep party each June. When Fulbright faced a critical re-election campaign, Lippmann warmly endorsed the SFRC chairman's "indispensable" part in leading the country out of isolationism in the 1940s. "There is no one else who is so powerful and also so wise," Lippmann wrote in 1962, "and if there were any question or removing him from public life, it would be a national calamity."¹⁴⁰ According to Lippmann's research assistant, their alliance was harmonious if not entirely compatible. "Fulbright he secretly patronized terribly," Elizabeth Midgley recalled. "He did not think very highly of Fulbright's brain. But he agreed with him [on Vietnam], and they were friends, and Mrs. Fulbright and Helen Lippmann were friends, which helped."¹⁴¹ Yet Lippmann and Fulbright's partnership failed to produce a more vocal core of dissent in the U.S. Senate.

Members of the small clique of Democratic senators with whom Lippmann socialized eventually broke with the administration but, in 1965, failed to effect a cohesive and sustained opposition to LBJ's Vietnam policies. Among this group were Ernest Greuning of Alaska, Wayne Morse of Oregon, and Frank Church of Idaho. In the spring of 1965, using a Lippmann column as his inspiration, Church delivered an address on the Senate floor denouncing the bombing campaign.

Afterward, Johnson was reported to have scolded him, "Well, Frank, next time you

¹⁴⁰ Lippmann, T&T, "Fulbright," 12 October 1961.

¹⁴¹ Elizabeth Midgley (Farmer), interview with author, 28 February 2001, Washington, D.C. See also, Midgley's diary account of 11 January 1965. When Midgley reported to Lippmann that her contacts were critical of Fulbright for not sufficiently moving to oppose escalation, the columnist replied, "Well, we all know Bill Fulbright is lazy."

want a dam in Idaho, go ask Walter Lippmann!”¹⁴² Greuning and Lippmann had known one another since the 1920s but had never been particularly close. Nevertheless, they found common ground on Vietnam. As early as May 1964, Greuning had read with approval Lippmann’s columns on neutralization. One in particular elicited his “heartiest congratulations.” The Alaska senator told Lippmann, “there may be some difficulties in achieving “negotiations, but they aren’t comparable to the incredible disasters that will befall us if we attempt to fight this war.”¹⁴³ Personal differences, however, caused Greuning to draw back from an alliance with Lippmann. For one thing, the senator still stung from a debate he and Lippmann had over disarmament in the 1920s. Greuning took the then-New York *World* editor’s private letters as personal attacks. Moreover, Greuning—an intensely moralistic man—harbored a strong distaste for Lippmann’s 1930s affair (and eventual marriage) with Helen Byrne Armstrong, then wife of Hamilton Fish Armstrong. As Greuning’s biographer put it, though the senator found Lippmann to be “very bright” and agreed with his criticisms of Vietnam policy, Greuning “shied away from embarking on a major foreign policy crusade with a man he ‘couldn’t stand.’”¹⁴⁴ Still, even as a lone critic Greuning laced many of his speeches on the Senate Floor with quotes from Lippmann columns, reading more than a half-dozen T&T installments into the *Congressional Record*.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴² See Elizabeth Midgley Diaries, 4-6 March 1965. Steel writes that this story turned out to be false.

¹⁴³ Ernest R. Greuning to Walter Lippmann, 28 May 1964, Box 74, Folder 481, WLC.

¹⁴⁴ Robert David Johnson, *Ernest Greuning and the American Dissenting Tradition* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998): 247-248.

¹⁴⁵ See Greuning’s letters to Lippmann, Box 74, Folder 937, Series III, WLC: Greuning to Lippmann 26 January 1966; *Ibid.*, 18 May 1966; *Ibid.*, 26 May 1966, *Ibid.*, 2 June 1966; *Ibid.*, 17 June 1966; *Ibid.*, 21 July 1966; *Ibid.*, 22 July 1966; *Ibid.*, 4 October 1967.

As SFRC chairman, Fulbright had more power than any of the others to thwart Johnson; accordingly, Lippmann worked most closely with him. They agreed to put forward a solution that they believed would protect major cities in the South and bring the North to negotiate without provoking a larger war. It was a plan that George F. Kennan and retired General James Gavin would resurrect in early 1966.¹⁴⁶ On 8 July, Lippmann recommended to T&T readers a “pull-back of our forces from the defense of villages and small towns” to strongholds in the cities along the coast. U.S. officials should then encourage Saigon to negotiate with the Vietcong and Hanoi. He’d advised much the same plan more than a decade before for the beleaguered French army fighting the Viet Minh. From these “enclaves” the U.S. could provide “sanctuary” for its Vietnamese clients and preserve enough diplomatic clout to arrange a settlement. “There will not be much glory in such a strategic retreat,” Lippmann admitted. “But it would not be a surrender It would extricate us from a war that cannot be won at any tolerable cost.”¹⁴⁷

Mission mattered more than strict numbers so Lippmann accepted temporary troop increases to facilitate a retreat to these “enclaves.” In mid-July he wrote that the “buildup of American ground forces in South Vietnam is probably the best thing the President can now do . . . a far better thing to do than would be an attempt to win by all-out bombing.”¹⁴⁸ Lippmann knew part of the compulsion to fight it out in Vietnam was due to U.S. expenditures mad to construct several massive military

¹⁴⁶ For more on Gavin, see Robert Buzzanco, *Masters of War: Military Dissent and Politics in the Vietnam Era* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996): 342-344.

¹⁴⁷ Lippmann, T&T, “The Ordeal of Decision,” 8 July 1965.

¹⁴⁸ Lippmann, “An American War,” T&T, 15 July 1965.

installations in South Vietnam. The enclave strategy would allow the U.S. to retain control of such facilities as the sprawling military complex at Cam Rhan Bay. While offering this kind of support Lippmann urged Johnson to articulate his war aims. If the president chose to move to the enclaves he still would have to mobilize, Lippmann thought, in order to buildup these strongholds. To do that LBJ would have to win public support. “There is a foreboding that we are launched on a course of which neither the President nor anyone else sees an end,” he wrote. “Things have gone too far for the President to dismiss this foreboding by repeating once more that our only object is to defeat aggression and that we will do whatever is necessary to halt it.”¹⁴⁹ Through a White House aide, Joe Alsop communicated to the president his displeasure about Lippmann’s plan. He felt “terror” that LBJ would “settle for Lippmann’s line of building a series of coastal defenses.” Alsop dismissed the idea as a “contraption rather than a firm policy decision.” As Douglas Cater told LBJ, such advice was relative: Alsop probably would consider any plan a “contraption” if it failed to prosecute the war far into North Vietnam.¹⁵⁰

Alsop’s anxiety was unnecessary. For the enclave strategy was, in practice, precisely the tactic that U.S. policymakers had used since April and now were supplanting with a much more vigorous plan. At the time that Fulbright and Lippmann were pushing the defensive enclave strategy, Johnson was preparing to authorize U.S. troops to conduct offensive search and destroy missions. As Fulbright’s biographer, Randall Woods, rightly observes, the fact that the SFRC

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

chairman and eminent columnist regarded their strategic stronghold plan as an “imaginative new initiative demonstrated just how isolated they were from the decision-making process and how out of touch they were with what was really transpiring in Vietnam.”¹⁵¹ In reality, not since the Eisenhower years—when he’d been relegated to being a back-bencher—had Walter Lippmann’s insider status slipped so low.

Lippmann knew the decision regarding the mission of a larger ground force was coming soon. The *Washington Post* tracked the White House meetings of 22-27 July with a series of page-one articles. It was justifiably wary of the high-profile debate, “evidently sought to demonstrate that [Johnson’s] impending plans are undergoing unusual deliberation.” By advertising these consultations, the president “was laying groundwork to gain wide national support for the decisions” of this Vietnam working group.¹⁵² Whether it would be a full or partial mobilization, the “crucial question nevertheless is what the President intends to ask this large American army to do,” Lippmann explained to op-ed page readers. “Will he give it a mission that can be accomplished? Or will he send it on a fool’s errand, as all our previous missions in South Viet-Nam have proved to be—the conquering and occupation of the villages and the countryside by American soldiers?”¹⁵³ Either the troops were to be sent to protect strategic strongholds in preparation for a political settlement or they were to be the “vanguard of a crusade to push communism back of the 17th Parallel,

¹⁵⁰ Douglas Cater to President Johnson, 26 July 1965, “Lunch with Joe Alsop,” Reference File, Vietnam Box 1, LBJL.

¹⁵¹ Woods, *Fulbright: A Life*: 373-374.

¹⁵² Murrey Marder, “President’s Viet Talks Broadened,” 23 July 1965: A1, A21.

to teach China a lesson, to prove that Americans always win their wars.” Even at this eleventh hour, Lippmann insisted, it was not too late for Americans to ask and to be told what kind of war this was to be. He urged Johnson to make a statement.

Otherwise, he wrote, “there is no assurance that the country will not be nudged and jostled—as it has been for a decade in Indochina—until it slithers and slides into total war.”¹⁵⁴

For hawks and doves alike there was something hopeful to take away from the president’s 28 July 1965 press conference—a purely Johnsonian offering. LBJ appeared at mid-day in the East Room of the White House before a throng of national media. Lippmann watched the live telecast from his summer home.¹⁵⁵ In announcing a troop increase to 125,000 and his decision to defer calling up the military reserves, the President stressed American resolve. “We did not choose to be the guardians at the gate, but there was no one else,” LBJ told his countrymen. “Nor would surrender in Viet-Nam bring peace, because we learned from Hitler at Munich that success only feeds the appetite of aggression.” And, yet, he also outlined a major diplomatic initiative, inviting U.N. help with a letter to Secretary General U. Thant and restating his government’s commitment to negotiate. “We do not want an expanding struggle with consequences that no one can perceive, nor will we bluster or bully or flaunt our power,” Johnson said. “We are ready to move now, as we have always been, to move from the battlefield to the conference table We are ready to discuss [Hanoi’s] proposals and our proposals and any proposals of any government whose people may

¹⁵³ Lippmann, T&T, “The Larger War,” 22 July 1965.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

be affected, for we fear the meeting room no more than we fear the battlefield.”

Significantly, he avoided the language Lippmann found so offensive in the Baltimore Speech, when LBJ had defined the principal U.S. objective as a “free and independent South Viet-Nam.” Rather, this time he placed emphasis on the right of the Vietnamese people “to shape their own destiny in free elections in the South, or throughout all Viet-Nam under international supervision.”¹⁵⁶ This is exactly the phraseology that the State Department lawyer Leonard Meeker had prescribed in response to Lippmann’s April attacks on U.S. legal justifications for intervention.

Most importantly for Lippmann, LBJ assured Americans that there was no change in mission for this expanded force. He noted that the U.S. would expect Saigon to bear more of the burden, “to substantially increase [South Vietnam’s] own effort, both on the battlefield and toward reform and progress in the villages.” During the lengthy question-and-answer period a reporter probed further. Did the troop increase signal “any change in the existing policy of relying mainly on the South Vietnamese to carry out offensive operations,” with American forces performing only an “emergency back-up role”? LBJ gave his most succinct answer of the afternoon. “It does not imply any change in policy whatever,” he replied. “It does not imply any change of objective.”¹⁵⁷

Lippmann held *Today and Tomorrow* over an extra day to prepare a response. On 30 July he interpreted LBJ’s announcement as a sign that the administration had

¹⁵⁵ Lippmann Appointment Diaries, 28 July 1965, Box 240, Folder 39, Series VII, WLC.

¹⁵⁶ Murrey Marder, “Peace Talks Invited by President,” 29 July 1965, *Washington Post*: A1, A12; see also the full text of LBJ’s remarks reprinted in the same issue of the *Post*: A8.

opted for a “limited and defensive strategy.” The policy would be a holding maneuver, he wrote, not a search-and-destroy operation. The 125,000 figure, he assured readers, was “absurdly inadequate if our objectives were the reconquest of South Vietnam.” That, he wrote, would take more than a million troops. The American position was “strengthened and improved” by signs LBJ had turned away from wider escalation: an “unlimited and illimitable war” and greatly expanded bombing offensive.¹⁵⁸

The evidence presented for public consumption was not the only thing leading him to such a conclusion. In addition to Johnson’s press conference, Lippmann received private assurances that the troop increases were for defensive purposes only, in order to preserve American bargaining power for a negotiated settlement. The administration—this time with George W. Ball as the point man—tried to convince him that it was moderating its policy, relying less on military solutions and more on diplomatic initiatives. The Undersecretary of State played a significant part in the rouse. During the deliberations a week earlier, when the topic of how to pitch a troop increase to the press came up, there was this enlightening exchange:

Moyers: I don’t think the press thinks we are going to change basic policy, but the requirements to meet that policy.

LBJ: That’s right and we ought to say it.

¹⁵⁷ Transcripts of Johnson’s remarks and question-and-answers, 29 July 1965, *Washington Post*: A8, A9.

¹⁵⁸ Lippmann, T&T, “Realism and Prudence,” 30 July 1965.

Ball: I hope we can avoid a debate on whether it is a change. We always lose on this. We are becoming co-defendants with South Vietnam.¹⁵⁹

Late on the morning of 30 July 1965, Ball checked with Mac Bundy how the “President wants to play” the decision to the press. Bundy told Ball “to say this is not [a] great change of policy,” but merely a “continuation of a policy with military developments . . . and military clarifications.”¹⁶⁰ Within the hour, Ball began placing a round of phone calls from his State Department Office to reassure key press figures that the new policy did not amount to a change in mission. Lippmann was first on his list.

An hour after receiving Bundy’s instructions, Ball had Lippmann on the line to confirm the columnist’s recent speculations that LBJ had opted for a limited war. Ball described LBJ’s announcement as a “breakthrough,” intimating that the president had kept the hawks in abeyance. During the fifteen-minute conversation, Lippmann’s neighbor and longtime friend made it sound as though Johnson had acquiesced to the logic of the columnist’s enclave strategy and had instructed the Pentagon to accept a limited mission—one which circumscribed a larger American incursion to securing defensible positions along the Vietnamese coast. LBJ clearly understood the implications of the decisions he was making, Ball said. “This does not mean that we don’t have some tough times ahead,” he confided to Lippmann, “but it does mean the President is still in control of the situation . . . things [are] not yet in the saddle.”¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁹ *FRUS, 1964-1968*, Volume III: 219.

¹⁶⁰ Bundy/Ball, 30 July 1965, Telcon, Vietnam II 5/26/65-10/30/65, LBJL.

¹⁶¹ Ball/Lippmann, 30 July 1965, Telcon, Vietnam II 5/26/65-10/30/65, LBJL.

Lippmann received the news enthusiastically. He agreed that the president had “made quite an advance” with his statement. In his column that morning he had praised the “realism and prudence” of LBJ’s appeal for U.N. involvement in Vietnam—perhaps even oversight of an all-Vietnam election. In doing so, he told readers, the president had “launched a strong diplomatic campaign for a negotiated peace.”¹⁶² Moreover, LBJ’s effort to distance himself from the rhetoric of an independent South Vietnam, showing his willingness to abide by the principles of the 1954 Geneva Accords, “opens the door wide in *principle* to a negotiated settlement.”¹⁶³ Ball confirmed that impression, telling Lippmann that Johnson was “determined not to leave any stone unturned” in reaching a negotiated settlement with Hanoi.

When Lippmann inquired whether the administration’s new plan meant that the U.S. would embark on an “elaborate offensive,” Ball replied, “No.” There was no change in mission. U.S. forces, he said, would be used to patrol and in “searching out attack zones. The Vietnamese will continue to fight the Viet Cong.” Ball again confirmed Lippmann’s assumptions, agreeing with the substance of that morning’s T&T, in which the columnist stated that “high U.S. government officials have let it be known that we do not intend to comb the countryside to eliminate the Viet Cong from the villages, but rather to confine ourselves to conventional military action.” Lippmann thought Ball’s news to be “very comforting.”¹⁶⁴

Unbeknownst to Ball, Richard Rovere, author and correspondent for *The New*

¹⁶² Lippmann, T&T, 30 July, 1965, “Realism and Prudence.”

¹⁶³ Ibid. Lippmann’s italics.

Yorker—Lippmann’s friend and house guest—listened silently on another phone receiver. Rovere was in Southwest Harbor discussing his ideas for a biography of Lippmann which he planned to write. He’d spent several futile days trying to get Lippmann to recollect his past—a task Lippmann was never fond of under the best of circumstances. The columnist had seemed especially distracted as reports swirled in the press that the LBJ Administration was about to make a commitment of anywhere from a quarter-million to one million troops. Lippmann had motioned his guest to listen in on another extension and, after hanging up, expressed relief at Ball’s news. Years later the substance of Ball’s words still stuck in Rovere’s mind: “Well, Walter, you’ve won. The troops are going, but they won’t be fanning out all over the place,” Rovere recalled Ball saying in a reassuring tone. “There’ll be no search-and-destroy. They’ll be there only to secure Saigon and a few other places that we know we can be defended without heavy casualties.” He added for emphasis: You’ll be pleased to know . . . they are going, but on this limited mission.”¹⁶⁵

Within days, as the magnitude of the commitment became apparent, Lippmann became “furious” with the Undersecretary. The episode suggested a level of naivete that did not accord with Ball’s reputation as one of the administration’s most perceptive players. Rovere told an interviewer in 1969, “I’ve never known whether Ball was duped somehow or whether the whole State Department might have been.” By July 1965, Walter Lippmann understood quite clearly that LBJ was quite capable of lying when it suited his purposes; he also knew that Johnson was liable to

¹⁶⁴ Ball-Lippmann, Telcon; T&T, “Realism and Prudence,” 30 July 1965.

tell the Defense Department one story and the State Department another entirely and even, perhaps, instruct the Defense chiefs to misinform the diplomats. But what was unforgivable was that Ball could be baited by such a lie and then, as Rovere recalled Lippmann complain, “get on the phone to circulate it.” For the rest of his life Lippmann referred to that episode as an encapsulation of how LBJ had corrupted once-honorable men and, ultimately, provided the kind of motivation that spurred the columnist to support Richard M. Nixon against Hubert H. Humphrey in 1968—on the basis that the “new Nixon” was a more honest candidate.¹⁶⁶

In retrospect, it seems that Ball was performing damage control at the administration’s bidding. With the die cast—with the arguments made—Ball, ever the team player, resolved himself to supporting the troops in the field. His role as the administration’s “in-house critic”—as the voice of dissent meant to assuage the fears of the intellectuals—was one he seemed content to accept.¹⁶⁷ He would press his case, but not too hard; always, as he put it, “within the four walls of the Administration.”¹⁶⁸ But as his phone call to Lippmann suggests, Ball became more directly complicit in the wake of the July decisions. For months the Undersecretary participated in meetings between LBJ, his principals, and Lippmann, and, without exception, noted afterward that the president remained utterly unconvinced by the

¹⁶⁵ See Rovere’s account in his posthumously published memoir, *Final Reports: Personal Reflections on Politics and History in Our Time* (New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1984): 208-210.

¹⁶⁶ Richard Rovere, Oral History Interview I, 6 May 1969: 21-22, LBJL; see also Rovere’s *Final Reports*: 209.

¹⁶⁷ In *Choosing War*, Fredrik Logevall suggests Ball was complicit in acting the role of an in-house critic, knowing full-well that his arguments carried no weight and that his dissent was merely an intellectual exercise that legitimated the staged July 1965 “decisions.” See especially, pp. 267; 394. For a less critical view of Ball, see Berman, *Planning a Tragedy*: 45-46; 85-89. contrast with Berman.

columnist's arguments for neutralization and disengagement. Now, somehow, Lippmann's cautionary pleas for *retreat* to strategic strongholds had triumphed? Deceived or not, and irrespective of his motivations, Ball was playing according to the administration's game plan, which gave high priority to the task of smoothing Lippmann's feathers and calming his fears. Ball and Lippmann continued to meet well into 1966 but, as he would report to LBJ (only lightly touching upon this period in his memoirs), their exchanges became more confrontational as Ball fell in line behind the policy decisions of July 1965 and Lippmann, with even greater vigor, questioned U.S. war aims.¹⁶⁹

VI.

Despite Lippmann's deep doubts about escalation, the first half of 1965 marked a period of continuity in his relationship with the Johnson administration. From start to finish, U.S. officials tried to convince Lippmann that despite the gradual Americanization of the war they sought to negotiate a peaceful settlement in Vietnam. From start to finish, too, Lippmann proved gullible. He foresaw the costs of escalation like few other critics. He also correctly gauged the difficulty of negotiation—especially after the bombing began. But he naively accepted official explanations that a diplomatic settlement was the end goal. The program to keep Lippmann in tow started in earnest during the White House meetings with Bundy, shortly before the start of Rolling Thunder. These frequent consultations continued

¹⁶⁸ George W. Ball, *The Past Has Another Pattern: Memoirs* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1982): 430.

through July and George Ball's reassurances after the decision to increase dramatically the numbers and mission of combat troops in-country. At these two critical junctures, using both deception and obtuse promises, officials got Lippmann to interpret their actions publicly in a favorable light. With surprising ease Johnson and his advisors were able to militarize the war exponentially between February and July 1965, while minimizing the debate. Walter Lippmann's uneven commentary aided their efforts.

Lippmann's excessive confidence in his ability to persuade Johnson, one-to-one, to avoid war had troubling implications. Undeniably, Lippmann's desire for access contributed to the piecemeal pace of his break with LBJ. That said, it must be pointed out that the lengths to which Bundy and the president went to obscure the direction of policy in Vietnam suggests that neither believed Lippmann's fealty could be bought with invitations to private White House dinners. More subtle (and even more pernicious) than his drive for access, was the double-standard Lippmann applied to debating administration policy. For, while he decried the president's refusal to make a public case for intervention, his own failure to face up to the administration publicly in early 1965 helped to ensure the absence of a thorough-going national dialogue during the critical decision-making period. He opted for a kind of personal journalism fraught with ethical pitfalls, circumscribed by self-imposed limits on his dissent. Lippmann believed that constructive criticism from the inside would have more weight than dissent from outside. And, in this sense, he closely resembled George Ball, though the difference was Lippmann eventually took his criticism

¹⁶⁹ Ball only hints at the confrontations that followed with Lippmann—a subject covered in the next chapter. See, Ball, *The Past Has Another Pattern*: 431.

outside the “four walls of the Administration.” But in early 1965, he seemed to believe it to be a more effective crisis strategy than the time-consuming and imprecise task of rousing public opinion. He was wrong. In these critical months, when Lippmann’s instinct for access and his serene faith in his skills as a private diplomat conflicted with his fundamental doubts about intervention and the true aims of policymakers, the former most often prevailed. Though less culpable than key Democratic senators and the quiescent British government of Harold Wilson—Lippmann contributed to the “permissive context” in which the Johnson administration escalated the war in Vietnam by stealth.¹⁷⁰

The administration’s program to placate Lippmann produced immediate success but it had a Faustian denouement. Mac Bundy and LBJ managed to stanch Lippmann’s immediate doubts about the bombing policy but they never fully converted him to their cause. By affording him early and intimate access they magnified his later sense of disillusionment, of having been lied to, indeed, misused. Upon realizing that he’d suffered this mistreatment the columnist never recovered his composure. The realist analyses of the war that made Lippmann such a formidable critic steadily yielded to turgid diatribes in late-1965. Hot emotion overcame cool reason. His focus shifted from the policies to their architects. Once careful to show

¹⁷⁰ I borrow the term “permissive context” from Logevall, who draws a similar conclusion in his study, *Choosing War*: 336. In going to war, he writes, “LBJ had help from his opponents, from those who had always been against an Americanized war. The permissive context of the earlier months was still there in the late winter and early spring [of 1965], and it mattered more now, because the shooting was about to start. Some critics of escalation spoke out against American policy, and the administration worried a great deal about how to respond to them . . . But the most important ones, the Senate Democratic leadership and the British government, time and again in those critical weeks showed themselves unwilling to state publicly what they believed privately, to challenge the administration’s interpretation of the stakes, of the risks, of the costs. In that way, these dissenters, helped carry out the deception, helped perpetuate the illusion of American consensus and Anglo-American unity on the

readers the weaknesses of the entire structure of the Vietnam enterprise, he now inveighed against the principal decision-makers. The attacks intensified first against the war advisors, then, with added bile, against Lyndon Johnson himself.

conflict and thereby helped bring about the tragedy that was the Second Indochina War.” See also, pp.402-403.

Chapter 9:

At War: Pundit Versus Policymakers and Pro-War Opinion Leaders, July 1965 and After

I.

Having failed to co-opt Walter Lippmann, Lyndon Johnson and his advisors then set out to silence him. White House aides and the State Department's Policy Planning Council combed decades of his work, searching for past inconsistencies to use against him. Frustrated by Lippmann's continuing criticism, President Johnson no longer harbored any hope of getting his support. In a December 1965 meeting he declared to advisers, "You have no idea how much I've talked to the Fulbrights and Lippmanns. They're not coming aboard."¹ After that LBJ rarely missed private or public opportunities to portray Lippmann as senile, traitorous, and cowardly.² For his part, Lippmann did not go quietly. But breaking with a President was not an easy thing to do, especially one so adept at bullying, browbeating, and cajoling. Lippmann, who'd known many chief executives, spent most of 1965 breaking with LBJ in piecemeal fashion. Only in the months after the July troop commitments, however, did his dissent solidify. He blamed Johnson's escalation of the war, in part, on his flawed

¹ "Notes of Meeting," 17 December 1965, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964-1968* Vol. 3: 644-645 (hereinafter referred to as "*FRUS*").

² See Ronald Steel's account in *Walter Lippmann and the American Century* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1980): 576-579.

character—LBJ’s “messianic megalomania,” as he described it in late-1966. He also wrote of Johnson’s “credibility gap,” telling readers that the President’s “compulsive passion for secretiveness” led him to choose a “deliberate policy of artificial manipulation of official news . . . to stifle debate about his aims and policies.”³

Ever since, this “war of words” between Lippmann and President Johnson has fascinated historians.⁴ This episode is worthwhile to recount and to expand upon—not the least because of its entertainment value. Rarely had an American President feuded so publicly with anyone, much less the most prominent journalist of the era. But having fixed on the personal recriminations between Johnson and Lippmann, scholars have missed the implications of their feud. With the use of new archival materials—this chapter examines some of the core inferences that may be drawn from this breakdown in the relationship between Lippmann and Washington officials. To start, it should now be clear to the reader that American intervention in the Vietnamese civil war *culminated* rather than *initiated* what had been a long, incremental process of Lippmann’s rejection of global containment. Not only is this demonstrated in the continuity of Lippmann’s writings during the Cold War but it is symbolized, too, by developments in his relations with key insiders. Two cases receive special scrutiny here: McGeorge Bundy, a longtime Lippmann friend and his

³ See, for example, Walter Lippmann’s T&T columns: “Manila Madness,” 17 November 1966; “Mr. Johnson’s Quagmire,” 8 December 1966; “The Credibility Gap I,” 28 March 1967; “Credibility Gap II,” 30 March 1967.

⁴ Steel’s penultimate chapters are about the Lippmann-Johnson feud and makes for interesting reading. Yet, while explaining the controversy in a lively manner, the account neglects an analysis of the long-standing reasons for the break between the pundit and President. The important roles played by lesser government officials also receive light treatment: George Ball, Walt Rostow, and Robert Kintner, among them. Steel depicts Bundy as being far less autonomous and assertive on the issue of handling Lippmann than the official record demonstrates. Others historians have been less inclined to adopt the “personal feud” approach. See, for example, Lloyd Gardner, *Pay Any Price: Lyndon Johnson and the Wars for Vietnam* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1995): 195-199. Kai Bird, *The Color of Truth: McGeorge*

single most important government contact; and George Ball, who shared the columnist's reservations about Vietnam, but nevertheless would not publicize his dissent. The war hastened Lippmann's break with the foreign policy establishment, but Vietnam alone did not make him stand apart from the prevailing view.

II.

The Johnson administration's war on Walter Lippmann began, like Americanization of the Vietnam War, by stealth. After a late-May 1964 White House meeting, in which Lippmann advised LBJ and his top advisors to seek a negotiated withdrawal from South Vietnam, McGeorge Bundy asked his NSC assistant Gordon Chase to review Lippmann's past columns. Chase focused on Lippmann's analyses at Cold War crises points: Berlin, Korea, the Taiwan Straights, French Indochina, Laos, and Cuba. Compared to all Lippmann had written, he reported to Bundy, the four thick folders of photostats he'd collected were a "drop in the bucket." Lippmann's themes were consistent and rigorous: U.S. power was limited and could not support global containment; neutralism was the proper course for most Asian countries; and American strength in these peripheral places was in the air and on the sea—ground commitments should be avoided. While the evidence supported the "charge that Lippmann's frequent inclination, when the going gets rough for the U.S., is to 'cut and run,'" Chase explained, the columnist's position on Vietnam in 1964 was in line with his earlier writings. "Lippmann's present posture on Southeast Asia seems quite consistent with his posture on similar issues in the past," Chase wrote, "i.e., the U.S.

Bundy and William Bundy, Brothers in Arms (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1998), offers more of a

should not get ‘entangled’; and when it does, it should ‘disentangle.’”⁵ Bundy quietly filed the information away—and seems never even to have raised these themes during his numerous meetings with the columnist. Indeed, until late-1965 the administration would not risk alienating the columnist by assaulting his past record. As late as June 1965, Johnson told Mac Bundy he did not want to attack Lippmann—at least not before the big decisions were made that summer.⁶ As indicated in the preceding chapter, that strategy worked—officials kept Lippmann off balance until after the crucial troop increase and change in mission.

Bundy’s was the first of several government studies into Lippmann’s past writings. Later efforts by the State Department and White House, it was hoped, would produce a public response to Lippmann by a prominent source outside the administration. By early 1965, State Department officials managed to enlist the ablest and most authoritative of Lippmann’s domestic critics to counter his assertions that the military phase of the Cold War was passing and that the U.S. should pare its overseas commitments. A brief note from Henry Owen, then Walt W. Rostow’s deputy director on the Policy Planning Council, interrupted an old diplomat’s annual winter holiday at the Mill Reef Club in Antigua. “If you should decide to write a letter about the lack of will in Europe, while safely isolated from harmful influences in Washington, here is the target to shoot at,” Owen wrote on 4 February 1965. He enclosed that morning’s *Today and Tomorrow* installment, “Johnson and Foreign Policy,” in which Lippmann argued that the U.S. ought to relinquish its “extravagant”

perspective on Bundy’s role in this process; see especially, pp. 309-310; 314-316.

⁵ Gordon Chase to McGeorge Bundy, 7 June 1964, “Walter Lippmann,” [Folder 1 of 4], Box 7, Files of Gordon Chase, National Security Files (NSF), Lyndon Baines Johnson Library, Austin, TX (hereinafter referred to as “LBJL”).

role as policeman and protector in Western European affairs.⁷ Dean G. Acheson—former secretary of state and a principal architect of the Marshall Plan and NATO—hardly needed such priming.

Lyndon Johnson, as had Kennedy, called on Acheson as his leading elder statesman. Acheson was deeply disturbed that Vietnam drew so much attention away from European problems. He regularly sent memos to LBJ about how to preserve the Atlantic Alliance, but he knew that by 1965 the issues most important to him received only passing attention from the President.⁸ At about that time, Lippmann began defending Johnson from those who accused the administration of a weak foreign policy in Europe. The “passivity” critics saw in Johnson’s foreign policy, he wrote, was part of the adjustment to the evolution of European affairs. The postwar period was ending and it was natural that Western European states should seek to reassert control over European affairs. Johnson’s cautious approach, highlighted by his deft scuttling of the contentious Multi-Lateral Force issue, signaled to Lippmann a fundamental change in America’s dealings with its European allies. In the immediate postwar years, the Truman administration had fostered an unrealistic view of America as “the protector, the preserver, the guide and leader of Europe” in order to win public support for the Marshall Plan and NATO. Johnson, Lippmann explained, correctly took stock of the new realities: “I count it an event of high policy to have recognized that this extravagant concern with European affairs will not work any longer, and

⁶ McGeorge Bundy/Ball, 8 June 1965, Telcon, General Folder: US & Europe 11/24/63-5/31/66, LBJL.

⁷ Henry Owen to Dean G. Acheson, 5 February 1965, Papers of Dean G. Acheson, “Europe Foreign Aid-NATO” folder, Box 101, Harry S. Truman Presidential Library, Independence MO; Lippmann, “Johnson and Foreign Policy,” T&T, 4 February 1965.

⁸ James A Chace, *Acheson: The Secretary of State Who Created the American World* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1998): 415-417.

does in fact act as a boomerang.”⁹

Even by Acheson’s standards, his rebuke to this particular Lippmann argument was blunt. His July 1965 *Saturday Evening Post* column appeared under the provocative title, “Isolationists Are Stupid.” Acheson singled out Lippmann as a “commentator whose judgments over the years have been unusually error-prone.”¹⁰ He argued that American interests were inextricably linked with the affairs of Europe. To bring the point home, he purposefully echoed Lippmann’s Atlantic Community—a concept he’d made popular prior to U.S. intervention in World War I. Geography (the Atlantic), trade, economy, politics, religion, and culture united them. Twice America had gone to war to preserve European order when it was threatened by hostile powers. Most importantly, Acheson argued, “the basic political truth of today is that equilibrium is not attainable within the area of the old geographical conception of Europe. Germany demonstrated this twice and, now, the Soviet Union has made it unmistakably clear . . . The truth is that within the politics of reality the United States is essential to political equilibrium and progress in Europe, and Europe is essential to the larger political entity to which both Europe and America are inescapably bound.”¹¹ No political idea is more firmly held in the U.S. or in most European capitals, Acheson wrote, “than the interdependence of our interests.” Acheson was responding to the threat that he perceived from De Gaulle (and, by extension, Lippmann who agreed with so many of the General’s policies), that the French leader would cajole and manipulate Adenauer and Germany into becoming a tool of his

⁹ “Johnson and Foreign Policy,” T&T, 4 February 1965.

¹⁰ Dean G. Acheson, “Isolationists Are Stupid,” *Saturday Evening Post* 238 (No. 15), 31 July 1965: 12, 15. Collected as a Lippmann clipping in the White House Confidential File, Oversize Attachments, 1966, Box 171, LBJL.

grand strategy to reduce U.S. power in Europe.¹² To yield to De Gaulle or reduce U.S. force structure in Europe would be to cede leadership and influence. Acheson would accept neither. He portrayed De Gaulle's provocations as a vain kind of grasping to restore France to its old glory; the doubts of commentators such as Lippmann he dismissed as mischievous lapses in responsibility. "The escapists, the new (though mostly old) isolationists are still with us," he concluded. "But let us recognize them for what they are—echoes from our colonial past."¹³

During the spring of 1965, Acheson had sent drafts of his *Saturday Evening Post* article to several confidants, including the his Georgetown neighbor and columnist Joe Alsop. Alsop judged it a "superb" rebuff to Lippmann's pitch for accommodation in Europe. "But I beg you to hire special guards for P Street before the piece appears," warned Alsop. "The error-prone old commentator is not a bomb-throwing type himself, but his wife is; and if you are unguarded, you will be bombed."¹⁴ Unlike Alsop, Acheson never publicly challenged Lippmann's criticisms of American policy in Southeast Asia. But at a crucial moment he encouraged LBJ to escalate the war.¹⁵ In July 1965, Acheson urged LBJ to choose a military solution, in spite of the persistent cries of war critics. He summarized his advice in a note to Erik Boheman, a former Swedish ambassador to America. "Whenever the spirits of my colleagues wilt, I encourage them by urging them to realize their blessings by contemplating the exchange of our allies, deplorable as they may be, for the bundle of

¹¹ Ibid., 15.

¹² See Chace, *Acheson*: 406-408. As Chace points out that Acheson exaggerated this threat. German leaders were not enthusiastic about a Bonn-Paris alliance.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Joe Alsop to Dean Acheson, 19 March 1965, Box 71, Joseph W. Alsop Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, DC (hereinafter referred to as "LC").

horrors the Russians are punished with,” he told the Swedish diplomat, “or swapping the obstacle of the democratic political system with Walter Lippmann and the Teach-Ins for the one which bit Mr. K in the seat of his pants.”¹⁶ LBJ, who sought only confirmation for a decision he’d already reached, welcomed the “wise mens’” logic. He soon adopted Acheson’s line on Lippmann, too, dismissing him as an isolationist and a “political commentator of yesteryear.”¹⁷

Acheson articulated and amplified the notion—widely shared in the Washington intelligentsia—that by the 1960s Walter Lippmann’s talk of American retrenchment was a kind of formula for a broad retreat back to the Western Hemisphere, a contraction of American responsibilities and power. Acheson was not alone in accusing Lippmann of being a “neo-isolationist.” Over the years, American officials came to distrust his analyses—depicting him as a nineteenth-century geopolitician out of touch with the realities of twentieth-century superpower relations. The establishment paragon John J. McCloy, having read Lippmann’s criticisms of Vietnam policy, dismissed him as having been “notoriously wrong on almost every important issue, beginning back in the days of Hitler.”¹⁸

¹⁵ See Chace’s account in *Acheson*: 419-420. Also Acheson’s letter to Harry Truman, 10 July 1965, Acheson-Truman Correspondence, HSTL. See also Bird’s *The Color of Truth*: 337-339

¹⁶ Acheson to Erik Boheman, 17 July 1965, in David S. McLellan and David C. Acheson, eds., *Among Friends: Personal Letters of Dean Acheson* (New York: Dodd, Mead, and Company, 1980): 270.

¹⁷ See, for example, Johnson quoted in the 5 June 1967 *Newsweek*: 64.

¹⁸ Kai Bird, *The Chairman: John J. McCloy and the Making of the American Establishment* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992): 587. McCloy had a long memory. In September 1941, Lippmann wrote, that by focusing a military buildup that played to America’s technological and economic strengths, the Roosevelt administration would send a clear signal of U.S. resolve to Germany and Japan. “All popular doubts, political confusions, all ambiguity should be removed by a clear decision to shrink the Army and concentrate our major effort upon the Navy and the air force, and lease-lend,” he concluded. See, Lippmann, T&T, “The Case for a Smaller Army,” 20 September 1941, *Washington Post*: 11. Seeking to scuttle such public calls for down-sizing troop levels, General George Marshall met with FDR in the White House and made the case for expanding the Army—which Roosevelt accepted. Marshall later recalled that it was a memo that Assistant Secretary of War John J. McCloy helped draft that made an impact on the President. “Abandonment of maximum effort in any form

So much as the effort to marginalize Lippmann in late-1965 to 1967 was White House-driven, it also afforded individuals inside and outside the administration a chance to vent frustration with Lippmann's dissent. These sometimes primal expressions drew sustenance not only from reactions to his well-publicized opposition to Vietnam policy but from the longer, contrarian cast of Lippmann's Cold War analyses. In the interwar years, he'd shared goals similar to those of Acheson, McCloy, and other liberal Establishment figures. But after 1947, many of the same people who had believed in Lippmann's utility as a popularizer of American internationalism savaged him for failing to embrace global containment. These criticisms took two forms, both aptly articulated by Walt W. Rostow, McGeorge Bundy's eventual successor as national security adviser. In a memo for Secretary of State Dean Rusk, Rostow described Lippmann as a nineteenth-century throwback who conformed to the strategic doctrine of his youth—"Alfred Mahan, Teddy Roosevelt, and the Great White Fleet" that emphasized sea power and spheres of influence. Lippmann's understanding of international affairs had neither anticipated

would be considered a step toward appeasement, for a negotiated peace is at the root of the Lippmann article—not a complete victory," McCloy wrote. See Forrest C. Pogue, *George C. Marshall: Ordeal and Hope, 1939-1942*, Volume 3 (New York: Viking Press, 1963-1967, 4 volumes). This citation was dredged up years later by Henry C. Owen, director of the Policy Planning Council at the State Department: "Wisdom Revisited," Walt Rostow to President Johnson, 2 February 1967, Box 323, WHCF PR-15-4, Folder 9/3/66-7/14/67, LBJL.

For more on McCloy's assessment of Lippmann see, Memorandum of Conversation—President Kennedy and Chancellor Adenauer, Washington, D.C, November 21, 1961, *FRUS, 1961-1963*, Vol. XIV, Berlin Crisis, November-December 1961: 614-616. Adenauer recollected these events in a meeting with John Kennedy. Kennedy had used the topic of a Lippmann column to open a delicate discussion about U.S. fears of a West German-Soviet rapprochement during the Berlin Crisis of 1961. In the column, Lippmann suggested that West Germany might move toward a policy of neutrality in the U.S.-Soviet dispute in order to extract reunification from the Soviets. He feared this would serve the Soviets' ultimate objective which was to alienate West Germany from the Western Alliance. JFK asked Adenauer for his opinion of "Lippmann's view." Adenauer recounted McCloy's advice. Do not "worry about Lippmann's prophecies," the High Commissioner told Adenauer, "because they always prove false." Though he once became "excited" by the content of Lippmann's columns, Adenauer told Kennedy that he now shared McCloy's evaluation. For emphasis, he added that "he would wager his head" that the columnist's latest prophecy was false."

nor adjusted to the intricacies of nation building or the revolutionary changes wrought by nuclear weapons, Rostow believed. Worse still, Rostow argued, Lippmann consistently chose to “appease” Communists by advising diplomatic retreat rather than military resolve in East-West confrontations. “An acceptance of the Lippmann Doctrine now—as in the cases of Greece, Berlin, Korea, and the Cuban missile crises,” Rostow warned Rusk, “would undermine the stability of the Free World everywhere and endanger our own safety by making the mainland of Europe and Asia safe hunting ground for the Communists.”¹⁹

III.

Even as the administration conscripted Dean Acheson to publicly debate the columnist, Mac Bundy’s role as chief tactician in the White House operation to limit Lippmann’s dissent became less relevant by the day. Though Bundy tried to keep open the lines of communication with Lippmann into early 1966, when he left government to head up the Ford Foundation, their relationship strained under the weight of Vietnam. Lippmann’s appointment diaries record no meetings with Bundy during the second half of 1965.²⁰

Lippmann perspective on the war shifted during these months—reaching a new level of stridency. By this time, he surmised the administration was doggedly

¹⁹ Walt W. Rostow to Dean Rusk, “A Reply to Lippmann,” 4 January 1966, “Chronological File, January-May 1966,” Box 319, Subject and Country Files, 1965-69, Papers of the Policy Planning Council (S/PC), Lot 72D139, RG 59, National Archives and Records Administration II, College Park, MD (hereinafter referred to as “NARA II”). Rostow was replying to a Lippmann column in which he argued that Vietnam lay squarely within the Chinese sphere of influence. See T&T, “The President in the Morass,” 4 January 1966.

determined to stay the course. He worried that the military commitment would become so vast that Chinese intervention would become inevitable. He wrote that Vietnam had “isolated” America from the world. “[The] American example,” Lippmann opined, “was once our greatest external asset in human affairs . . . [now] we are in danger of being bedazzled with the illusion that the ultimate solution of the intractable issues of the world is enough bombing to pulverize the opposition.” The dynamics of international politics preoccupied him less as he turned his sights on the war’s domestic costs and, increasingly, on the decision-makers themselves. He warily observed the protests on college campuses across the country, describing them as “self-defeating” and “misguided.” Dissenters and draft-card burners, however, “come from a nation which expects to understand what its government is doing; from a nation which is not habituated to obedience and the idea that it must listen to its superiors and not talk back.”²¹ Lippmann told his research assistant, Elizabeth Farmer, that Johnson had “outmaneuvered” realist critics of the war that spring—himself, Morgenthau, and Kennan—and now the Left held the floor in the anti-war movement. Since it appeared that “we’re going to trade American lives for Vietcong,” Lippmann predicted to Farmer, student dissent “will coalesce with what is—not pacifism in the pure-minded way—but the American feeling of hating the casualties.”²²

Lippmann was especially critical of the administration for not preparing the

²⁰ Lippmann Appointment Diaries, Series VII, Box 240, Folder 39, Walter Lippmann Collection, Sterling Library, Yale University, New Haven, CT (hereinafter referred to as “WLC”).

²¹ See for example the following: Lippmann, T&T, “The Declining Great Powers,” 14 October 1965; Lippmann, T&T, “On the Student Demonstrations,” 26 October 1965;

public for his Vietnam policies in an open debate. Johnson pre-empted discussion of his war aims, Lippmann wrote insightfully, by adopting the foreign policy of his Republican critics and then, “with his real opposition confined to the leaders of his own party, he silenced them in personal argument.” In early 1966, he warned that the Vietnam War would siphon off Great Society funds just as the nation was “bursting at the seams and falling apart.” He had seen the same happen to reforms under Woodrow Wilson, Franklin Roosevelt, and Harry Truman. The New York City power outage, water shortage, transit and newspaper strikes, the Watts riots in Los Angeles—all were convincing proof that America’s greatest task lay at home: “to rebuild and remake the environment of our increasingly urbanized society.” He added, “in so many places the pollution of water and air are reminders that we are confronted with something greater and essentially different than we were in the other wars.”²³

A few days after that column, on 20 January 1966, Bundy met Lippmann for a final lunch conversation. He was scheduled to depart the White House five weeks later and both men knew this was an ending of sorts. It was, by Bundy’s account, the most cordial and easy talk he’d had with Lippmann in a long time. He was slow to broach the topic of Vietnam, instead easing into the conversation by complimenting his old friend on several columns he’d written about regional development in Latin and South America. Bundy assured Lippmann that the President, upon reading them, had requested a study from the NSC staff. “Walter had a more sophisticated view of

²² Elizabeth (Farmer) Midgley Diaries, 19 November 1965.

²³ Lippmann, T&T, “The Guns-Versus-Butter Stereotype,” 18 January 1966.

this problem than I had expected,” Bundy reported back to LBJ, “and I am inclined to think that his columns were a kind of shorthand for some quite interesting and important ideas.”²⁴

Their “main business,” of course, was the war. They quickly rediscovered, in Bundy’s words, that they had “radically different views of the reality of the situation there.” Lippmann stuck to his consistent theme: the U.S. had intervened in what was a civil war instigated more by the Diem regime’s repressive policies than by the Hanoi government. Bundy countered that in a moment of candor the members of the North Vietnamese Politburo would tell him different. He accused Lippmann of “saying what the French intellectuals said,” while the evidence pointed the other way. Lippmann asked for proof, prompting Bundy to promise to assemble figures and statistics. Lippmann also defended his core proposition, that the U.S. could not and should not conduct a ground war in Asia. He quoted what MacArthur was reported to have said to John Foster Dulles: any President who sends the U.S. army to fight on the Asian mainland ought to have his head examined. “He thinks the best answer is to let the place go Communist as gracefully as possible,” Bundy reported to Johnson. “He seldom is quite so candid in public.” Still, Bundy pressed Lippmann to focus on the damage inflicted on the Vietcong, to stop “looking at our troubles and not the troubles of the enemy.” Give me hard evidence, Lippmann asked again. Bundy promised to see what he could do. “He does have deep emotional feelings about Vietnam, and I don’t think I changed them,” Bundy concluded, “but I think he went

²⁴ Bundy to LBJ, “Conversation with Walter Lippmann,” 20 January 1966, NSF, Bundy Memos to President (Jan. 19-Feb. 4, 1966), Box 6, LBJL.

away feeling somewhat better about the good sense of the Administration. We shall see.”²⁵

Several days later, the columnist disproved Bundy by answering him in print. No Saigon government would ever reunite the country, Lippmann wrote. He supported the Gavin strategy of pulling back to coastal cities, in practice a “holding operation pending the eventual negotiation” of an American withdrawal. Lippmann could not have made it clearer: “This is not a policy for a glorious victory . . . It is a formula for liquidating a mistake, for ending a war that cannot be won at any tolerable price, for cutting our losses before they escalate into bankruptcy, and for listening to common sense rather than to war whoops and tom-toms.”²⁶

While aware that his actions as Johnson’s national security adviser compromised his relationship with Lippmann, Bundy defended his position.²⁷ Just days before he left office he wrote a memorandum for his personal files that critiqued Lippmann’s two central arguments: the strategic futility of winning the Vietnamese War and its marginal importance to U.S. interests. The “Lippmann Thesis,” as Bundy called it, stated the U.S. should not wage a land war in Southeast Asia, principally because Chinese power would overwhelm it or force it to commit the majority of its military forces. Bundy countered, “The truth is that in Southeast Asia we are stronger than China.” The U.S., he argued, was not assuming a new role there; rather World War II had made America the “dominant power in the Western Pacific.” He quipped

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Lippmann, T&T, “Well, What Can He Do?” 25 January 1966.

that “Sukarno and Mao have never made Lippmann’s error” of underestimating American power in the region. Bundy also implied that Lippmann’s emphasis on the military problems of escalation neglected the political dimensions of the struggle in South Vietnam. “It is not the mass or momentum of China which creates our problem,” Bundy wrote. “It is a peculiarly vicious and skilful form of attack upon all order that is not Communist.” While escalation and direct confrontation posed a “grave danger,” Bundy believed the U.S. possessed an ultimate measure of strength: “immediate presence,” “moral justification,” and “staying power.” The war’s human and material losses were terrible, he conceded. But, “if the basic questions of interest, right, and power are answered, the casualties and costs are to be accepted.”²⁸

Ultimately, Bundy’s defense of Vietnam policy—and the crux of his dispute with Walter Lippmann—may be found in his Stimsonian roots. Hoover’s Secretary of State and FDR’s Secretary of War, Henry Stimson created and embodied the American Establishment, influencing men like John McCloy, Robert Lovett, Dean Acheson, and John Foster Dulles. Mac Bundy fit comfortably into this lineage. From an early age his father, Harvey Bundy, “Colonel” Stimson’s closest aide, raised his sons to see the world through “Stimsonian eyes.” As Bundy’s biographer, Kai Bird points out, those who shared this perspective held complex, often contradictory, aims. They fought interventionary wars to protect Wilsonian ideals of national sovereignty.

²⁷ Melvyn Small, *Johnson, Nixon, and the Doves* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1988): 41. Bundy late admitted to historian Melvyn Small that his less-than-candid behavior cost him Lippmann’s friendship.

²⁸ McGeorge Bundy, “Untitled Notes,” 15 February 1966, McGeorge Bundy Personal Papers, Box 2, LBJL. Also quoted in Bird, *The Color of Truth*: 346-347. Bundy wrote this memo on the same day that Lippmann excoriated Dean Rusk and William Bundy (then undersecretary of state for Asian

Self-righteous yet pragmatic, they resorted to legalistic tactics and international law while often wielding American power unilaterally or under exclusive American control. They hoped to dominate world markets but not to oversee a vast territorial empire. “More often than not they could convince themselves that if they sometimes behaved like imperialists,” Bird concluded, “they were nevertheless imperialists by invitation.”²⁹ All of which justified unilateral intervention in order to preserve order and stability in a dynamic world. Such a philosophy was the antithesis of Lippmann’s which presupposed that order and stability derived only from collaborative policies abroad and, in any case, could not be Washington-directed. Lippmann spent the entire Cold War challenging the Stimsonian-Wilsonian tradition in American policy. For all their personal commonalities, his and Bundy’s core beliefs about the America’s mission abroad were irreconcilable.

Though Bundy could not soften Lippmann’s line on the war, his departure evoked warm accolades from the old columnist. As dissembling as Mac Bundy had been, there also was a measure of civility and respect in his exchanges with Lippmann—an intense “father-son” relationship, as Lippmann’s research assistant later described it.³⁰ Lippmann wrote not one but two favorable columns when Bundy departed for the Ford Foundation late that winter. Bundy’s role in the Kennedy and Johnson administrations, Lippmann explained to readers, was like that of a “staff officer . . . who orders and orients the torrent of information the President must

affairs) for shaping policies that isolated the U.S. diplomatically and threatened war with China. See Lippmann’s T&T, “Confrontation with China,” 15 February 1966.

²⁹ See Bird’s discussion, *The Color of Truth*: 23-25.

³⁰ Elizabeth (Farmer) Midgley, interview with author, 28 February 2001, Washington, DC.

master in order to reach his decisions.” He counted as Bundy’s predecessors, Colonel Edward House and Harry Hopkins, confidants of Woodrow Wilson and Franklin Roosevelt, respectively. The implication was clear: Bundy had an enormous influence over the course of foreign policy during his tenure. And, yet, Lippmann avoided Vietnam in this tribute piece, focusing instead on Bundy’s administrative capabilities. “I have heard it from both of the Presidents whom Mr. Bundy has served that . . . he has shown an incomparable ability to reduce complex problems to the choices which the President must make in deciding the issue,” Lippmann concluded. “Someone will have to step into Mr. Bundy’s shoes and show whether he can fill them.” A couple of months later, Lippmann declared that since Bundy’s departure there had been a “virtual dissolution” of the President’s foreign policy staff. Johnson’s foreign policy—highlighted by a full-scale war in Vietnam and an “irreconcilable quarrel” with France over the makeup of NATO—no longer had the “essential balance” Bundy once provided.³¹

Time changed Lippmann’s perspective on Bundy and his part in American escalation of the Vietnam War. “I had assumed we were in agreement,” Lippmann later confided to his biographer, “but I discovered that we weren’t. It came as a great surprise to me to learn—and it slipped out only gradually—that he was much more pro-war than I knew . . . [Mac was] very cagey, a person who, I now feel, was not in

³¹ Lippmann, T&T, 1 March 1966, “Mr. Bundy’s Shoes”; 3 May 1966, “Presidential Foreign Policy.” Francis Bator, Johnson’s senior European affairs and economic advisor (and one of Bundy’s recruits to the NSC staff), objected to this characterization. Bator phoned Lippmann to tell him that his column “is inconsistent with the facts.” Lippmann replied, somewhat skeptically, “If I’m wrong, I’m delighted.” Bator to President Johnson, 3 May 1966, “Call to Walter Lippmann about President’s Foreign Policy Staff,” Box 358, WHCF, ExPr, Folder PR18 4/7/66-6/9/66, LBJL.

the open, not clear about where he stood.”³² Twice in 1965—at key turning points during escalation—Lippmann swung wildly between justifiable gloom about a large war and unrealistic hopes that the administration would withdraw U.S. forces. More than any other man in government, including the President and George Ball, Mac Bundy bore responsibility for raising Lippmann’s false optimism in the critical months of 1965. That said, by trying to read the best possible outcome from the February bombings and July troop increases—Lippmann conflated administration intentions with his own wishes. It is doubtful that Bundy could have misled Lippmann so completely if there did not exist—underneath Lippmann’s cool, rational critique of the war—a desperate faith that American leaders would choose a peaceful resolution to the crisis. Seduction, after all, is the art of eliciting submerged desires.

The war effectively ended their friendship. Though a final break never came, Bundy—usually so conscientious about visiting sick friends—never visited Lippmann during his extended convalescence in a home on New York City’s upper East side. Only after Lippmann’s death in December 1974, did he make a conciliatory gesture. Bundy, then President of the Ford Foundation, organized a service in the foundation’s theater where friends gathered to watch television clips of Lippmann’s old interviews. A sherry reception followed the showing. Louis Auchincloss, Lippmann’s lawyer and closest associate in his final years, recalled waiting outside the room as Mac Bundy greeted guests at the entrance. Phyllis Byrne Cox, Helen Lippmann’s sister, turned to him and asked, “Why are we standing in a line?” When Auchincloss explained it was a receiving line and Bundy, as host, was at the head of it, Cox declared, “Well, I’m certainly not going to shake *his* hand. McGeorge Bundy is a

³² Steel, *Walter Lippmann and the American Century*: 575.

murderer!” She stalked off, muttering that Bundy was a war criminal. When he made his way to the front of the line, Auchincloss told his friend, “You ought to kick Phyllis’s ass out of here because she just called you a murderer!” Mac Bundy replied, “Louis, if you threw everybody out who thinks that I’m a murderer we’d have the place to ourselves.”³³ While he kept a sense of humor about that period of his life, there was a bitterness to it. Bundy’s close associates remember that he would “clam up” about the war which had affected even his most personal relationships. His interventionist position, one friend recalled, even pitted him against his wife, Mary, and their children—all of whom opposed the war.³⁴

Years later, Bundy insisted that any study of Lippmann’s writing on the Vietnam War must differentiate between the validity of the outcome the columnist predicted and the weakness of the solutions he prescribed. “I used to have lunch with Walter all the time,” Bundy told an interviewer, “and the discussion always came

³³ Louis Auchincloss, Interview with author, 12 March 2002, New York City.

³⁴ Bird ably covers his period of Bundy’s life in *The Color of Truth*; see especially, pp. 350-409. The recollection about Bundy’s family comes from two sources. First, the Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., and Louis Auchincloss interview with author, 12 March 2002, New York City. Second, Auchincloss’s treatment of Bundy’s actions during the Vietnam era in the novel, *Honorable Men* (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin Company, 1985). The novel’s main character, Chip Benedict, a New England blue-blood who can trace his ancestry in America back 300 years, serves as special assistant to the Secretary of State and is a firm supporter of the war even after he leaves government. Auchincloss who, during our interview, discussed the impact of the war on Bundy’s professional career but also on his family life. In an argument with his son and daughter, the fictional Chip Benedict reveals the patrician basis for his support of U.S. intervention: “Had I been President, I should never have instituted so massive a military presence on the Asian mainland. It can hardly be justified on economic grounds, and probably not even on grounds of national security.” When one of his children interjects that the war is little more than “wickedness,” Benedict replies, “I do not believe that it is wicked. On the contrary, I believe it’s rather noble . . . To me there is something fine about coming to the rescue of the little guy who’s getting kicked around. Stepping in between the victim and the bully, even when the victim happens to be no great shakes. That to me is the perennial role of America.” And a little later, “All I am saying is that Hanoi is forcing red rule on a people that have neither asked nor voted for it. It strikes me that that is an evil thing to do. To oppose an evil thing, even by force, may be impracticable. But to me it cannot be wrong. If a thousand men die to prevent the murder of one, it may be foolish, but it is still fine!” See, *Honorable Men*: 242-243. Auchincloss based the novel on a character he first developed in his collection of short stories, *The Winthrop Covenant* (London: Weidenfield and Nicolson, 1976): especially, 211-246, “The Penultimate Puritan.”

apart on some kind of overreach in his argument, which allowed me off the hook of thinking about whether my own argument was any good.”³⁵ Bundy was constantly irritated by what he believed to be Lippmann’s reluctance to face the hard choice of backsliding on the commitment to Vietnam versus making a stand. Some of this tension was inherent. Officials in the stream of events face choices head-on while the commentator, who has the luxury of evaluating them at (relatively) some greater distance, also sees them from a different angle. Francis Bator, LBJ’s adviser on NATO and France and a friend of Bundy and Lippmann, largely shared Lippmann’s broad emphasis on a lower-key, collaborative, coalition-minded approach to U.S. foreign policy. But on a practical level, he described it as “overtones and mood music stuff.” Bator continued, “I don’t mean to put it down because it’s important but I think . . . given the slate of options available to the U.S. government week-by-week, month-by month, one-by one—at that level of concrete-ness—it’s not at all clear to me that Lippmann would have said, ‘No, you’re doing that wrong.’”³⁶

Bundy’s complaint about Lippmann’s lack of specificity had some merit. Like other critics of the war, such as Hans J. Morgenthau and George F. Kennan, Lippmann did not devote much column space to the mechanics of getting on the track toward a “political solution” in Vietnam. His realist critique of escalation, moreover, appeared callous to some U.S. officials who thought he minimized the human costs of withdrawal from the South. Nor did he give much weight to the idea that a pullout would irreparably harm U.S. prestige—a key consideration for many U.S. officials. Here, his realist calculation of the national interest was at its weakest for it was so

³⁵ See Fredrik Logevall’s discussion, “First Among Critics,” *The Journal of American-East Asian Relations* 4 (No. 4, Winter 1995): 374.

vague it offered little in the way of policy guidance. Lippmann never quite seemed to grasp that if U.S. officials substituted different integers—American prestige or domestic political considerations rather than sheer military capacity—into his power-commitments ratio, they might arrive at an aggregate that they believed to be a rational justification for war.

Granted Lippmann's imprecision, he was not optimistic about the prospects for a political solution. Bundy's observations at the time to Johnson, and his later reminiscences, subtly suggest the columnist was naïve in this respect. That implication is false. Lippmann did not—at any time from 1963 on up—have a sanguine view of America's ability to extricate itself from Southeast Asia without collateral damage to its influence in Asia. He simply did not agree with U.S. officials that the costs of disengagement would be insurmountable. Repeatedly, especially in the spring of 1965, he noted in print that while the military situation was unstable neither side had much of an incentive to come to the bargaining table. Nor did he believe, as he told Bundy and others in private conversations (and also put in print), that the U.S. and South Vietnam could pursue a diplomatic solution on equal terms with the Hanoi and China. No, Lippmann knew there would be a price to pay for the unwise decision to engage American money, troops, and prestige in the Vietnamese civil war. As early as May 1964 he told the principal architects of U.S. policy that the war was un-winnable and that withdrawal through a negotiated settlement, though unpalatable, was the only answer. "We can't expect to get out gloriously from a mistake," Lippmann warned a national television audience in February 1965. A few weeks later he wrote that a withdrawal "would be a defeat in which we would lose

³⁶ Francis Bator, interview with author, 25 January 2001, Cambridge, MA.

considerable prestige, having unwisely engaged our prestige too lavishly” but, that in the long run, it would be far more acceptable to a protracted war.³⁷ Lippmann’s meetings with French officials in Paris in May of 1965 *confirmed* these long-held ideas (not, as Bundy and Alsop both insisted, instigated them.) In the final analysis, the key difference between Lippmann and U.S. officials, including Mac Bundy, was that from the fall of 1963 forward the columnist was willing to accept the international and domestic political consequences of an American withdrawal.

IV.

The war debate’s corrosive effects also eroded Lippmann’s longtime friendship with George Ball, offering historians a window onto the degrees of dissent that existed within official Washington.

Like Lippmann, Ball was an ardent Atlanticist; as such, both men engaged in frequent discussions about American-Western European issues. One of their long-running disagreements was over the question of who was the greatest French statesman of the postwar years: Jean Monnet, Ball’s favorite and friend, or Charles De Gaulle, Lippmann’s idealized leader and confidant. Their good-natured jousting was animated. Ball believed Lippmann to be correct in arguing that De Gaulle had a superior sense of history and that he “could see farther than any man in our time.”

Ball countered, however, that the General turned his gaze toward the past.

“Overlying all his accomplishments has been a sense of nostalgia, a groping back

³⁷ George Ball to Dean Rusk, 31 May 1964, Memorandum, Folder: Top Secret Documents, Box 23, Records of Undersecretary George W. Ball, 1961-1966, Lot 74D272, NARA II. For Lippmann’s quotes, Walter Lippmann, *Conversations with Walter Lippmann* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Co., 1965): 205; and Lippmann, T&T, 18 March 1965, “Vietnamese Policy Re-examined.”

toward a past that can't be recovered or even imitated," Ball once told Lippmann. He described De Gaulle as a "twentieth-century Don Quixote, seeking to preserve old forms and restore old patterns," to retrieve France's glory.³⁸ By the end of the debate on Vietnam, after hundreds of thousands of American troops were deployed, Ball used similar logic to describe Lippmann's geopolitical objections to the war, urging his friend to put aside his intellectual arguments or risk prolonging the war.

Ball worked hard in his retirement to craft his image as a Vietnam dissenter. He was rewarded for his efforts. In a score of monographs and textbooks, scholars portray him as the lone, principled, official figure who rejected a military solution in Vietnam. Larry Berman's *Planning a Tragedy*, a landmark book on the Johnson administration's decision-making process for escalating the war, portrays Ball in a sympathetic light.³⁹ Berman's account is dismissive of the notion that Ball acted as an "institutionalized devil's advocate," an in-house gadfly whom LBJ encouraged to dissent to create the illusion of a full-debate. Ball, whom Berman quotes at length, claimed it was the other way around: LBJ invented and applied that label to Ball "to create the impression that there was no dissent in top circles." Academics, he wrote, had fostered "myths" that his "long-continued efforts to extricate us from Vietnam were merely a stylized exercise by an in-house 'devil's advocate' . . . Not one of my colleagues ever had the slightest doubt as to my intense personal convictions."

Perhaps Ball's convictions cannot be debated; how he acted upon them can be. Ball's objections to the war were always confined within the parameters set by

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 96.

³⁹ Larry Berman, *Planning a Tragedy: The Americanization of the War in Vietnam* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1982). Ball contributed extensive interviews and allowed Berman to quote from

the administration and, it appears, tempered by his own ambitions to become Secretary of State. Recently, scholars have again suggested that Ball understood his role in the debate process and that he was content to play that part. He failed to back up his insightful memoranda with sustained argumentation in key meetings with Johnson. Nor did he try to build a consensus among important State Department officials. All of which suggests that Ball, as Frederick Logevall observes, “was himself a conformist, willingly accepting the assignment” Johnson allotted him; and further, “always making clear that he would remain the loyal insider regardless of what policy decisions emerged.”⁴⁰ Ultimately, he “put loyalty to Johnson before principle; his hatred for the war was outweighed by his desire to stay on the team.”⁴¹

New archival materials tend to confirm the latter analysis. When judged by his response to Lippmann’s increasingly critical columns, for instance, Ball’s reputation as a legitimate dissenter is cast into ambiguity. From April 1965 to March 1966—even as Ball made his private case to limit expansion of the war—he sought to mitigate Lippmann’s criticisms, and to reconcile him to an increasingly militarized policy. He consulted with Bundy about how to best deflect Lippmann’s attacks. Eventually, he became the administration’s mouthpiece in attacking his old friend’s geopolitical objections to the war as relics of a bygone era. It was a theme that articulated many of the administration’s theretofore inchoate frustrations with its leading critic. Others in the bureaucracy soon latched onto it.

In late January 1966, George Ball cleared with McGeorge Bundy a speech he

the then-unpublished manuscript of his memoirs, *The Past Has Another Pattern: Memoirs* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1982).

⁴⁰ Fredrik Logevall, *Choosing War: The Lost Chance for Peace and the Escalation of War in Vietnam* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1999): 267, 394.

planned to deliver at his alma mater during a meeting of the Northwestern University Alumni Association. Bundy passed it along to LBJ for comments and suggestions late on a Friday night, noting that it articulated the administration's case for Vietnam in a way that few previous speeches had; Bundy also thought it would be well-received because of its source. "This is an unusually thoughtful and comprehensive speech," Bundy told LBJ. "We have needed something like this for a long time, and coming from [Ball] it is particularly helpful in light of recent gossip about his own current tactical views."⁴²

Ball's speech at Northwestern University on 30 January 1966, reviewed by Bundy and the President was most important because it addressed serious advocates of military disengagement, aiming squarely at the geopolitical arguments Lippmann had levied for more than two years against intervention in Vietnam. Ball's carefully-chosen words left little doubt about whom was the target. As such, he mailed Lippmann a copy the day before he delivered the address. The speech, he explained, was a "lawyer's effort to argue the administration's position on Vietnam. You may find the section dealing with this sphere of influence approach more advocacy than analysis—and perhaps not wholly fair but I want to sharpen the issues."⁴³ The speech was received widely as a long-overdue attempt to offer a coherent rationale for American involvement in the war. A story by *New York Times* correspondent Max Frankel, identifying the Undersecretary as the Administration's in-house critic of

⁴¹ Ibid., 402.

⁴² Bundy to LBJ, 28 January 1966, NSFM: Bundy Memos to the President, Jan. 19-Feb. 4, 1966, Box 6, LBJL.

Vietnam, ran with the headline, “Viet-Nam Repudiation Impossible, Ball Says.”⁴⁴

Their private debates had been acrimonious for months but this public rebuke—coming from the President’s most unlikely mouthpiece—stung Lippmann.⁴⁵

Ball told members of the Northwestern University Alumni Association that the U.S. could not back out of its commitment to fight in Vietnam, “without tearing and weakening the entire structure on which the world’s security depends.” He rejected arguments that the war was a civil war, since it had few of the attributes of an indigenous revolt.” “Rather,” Ball said, “it is a cynical and systematic aggression” by Hanoi, “one further chapter in the long and brutal chronicle of Communist efforts to extend the periphery of Communist power by force and terror.” He also rejected the notion that the U.S. should negotiate with the National Liberation Front, which he described as a “façade fabricated by the Hanoi regime to confuse the issue and elaborate the myth of an indigenous revolt.”⁴⁶

So it went—for each reservation Lippmann had raised over the last year, Ball made a rejoinder. Negotiations with the NLF were impossible because it did not represent the people of South Vietnam; the character of the conflict was one of overt aggression by the North, similar to the Korean War. Finally, Ball answered Lippmann’s geopolitical points. Certain “thoughtful critics” of the administration’s Vietnam policy insisted South Vietnam was not a vital “line of demarcation” like

⁴³ Ball to Lippmann, 29 January 1966, Box 2980, Pol. 27 (Military Operations, Viet-S), RG 59, NARA II.

⁴⁴ George W. Ball, “Northwestern University Speech,” Box 16, Ball Records, 1961-1966, Lot 74D272, RG 59, NARA II.

⁴⁵ Elizabeth (Farmer) Midgley, interview with author, 28 February 2001, Washington, DC. Ball’s own assessment in his memoirs indicates that there was a falling out between the two men; *The Past Has Another Pattern*: 430-431.

Berlin or the Korean peninsula; that it was irregular in that it failed to conform to geopolitical realities; that with the passing of colonialism the Western powers had “no business mixing in the affairs of the Asian mainland.” Ball added, these critics “imply that . . . we should not try to prevent Red China from establishing its hegemony” in Southeast Asia because of its relative power and long dominant cultural hegemony. “They claim, therefore, that Southeast Asia lies within the Chinese sphere of influence,” he told listeners, summarizing an argument he’d heard from Lippmann numerous times, “and that we should let the Chinese redraw the lines of demarcation to suit themselves without regard to the wishes of the Southeast Asian people.” This view exaggerated Chinese influence, and accorded China a “status it had never been able to achieve by its own efforts,” he concluded. To allow a “Bamboo Curtain” to descend over the peoples of Southeast Asia would amount to a disavowal of the fundamental tenets of Western policy in the postwar era: the rights of sovereignty and self-determination.⁴⁷ To argue that Chinese geographical propinquity determined the extent of its influence, Ball continued, was an old way of looking at a dynamic situation. “At a time when man can circle the earth in 90 minutes, there is little to support such a liberal commitment to 19th century geopolitics,” Ball said. “It is a dubious policy that would permit the accidents of geography to deprive peoples of their right to determine their own future free from external force. The logic of that policy has dark implications. It would rationalize the greed of great powers.” It was far out of tune with the “aspirations of 20th century

⁴⁶ Ball, “Northwestern University Speech.”

⁴⁷ Ibid.

man.”⁴⁸

On March 2, 1966, a little more than a month after Ball’s Northwestern University Speech, Lippmann asked him to lunch to talk about the Vietnam problem. He found that Ball had fully shifted from being a dubious devil’s advocate to a resigned supporter of military policy. According to Ball’s report to LBJ, the Undersecretary told Lippmann, “that the time had passed when any of us could afford to attack the policies now being pursued in South Viet-Nam.” LBJ, Ball argued, “had made his decisions with the full benefit of an adversary procedure.” Lippmann had presented his “geopolitical views as to spheres of influence” in private and in print; Ball had “seriously challenged some of the steps as they were taken.” Now, with troops in the field, it was time for Lippmann to get on the team.⁴⁹

Ball made his argument by showing Lippmann top secret reports on Viet Cong casualties, arguing that at those high rates the VC fighting forces would eventually disintegrate. The Administration was, Ball insisted, “presented with a situation and not a theory.” With more than 200,000 troops already in the country and several thousand casualties “we had no option but to carry on the war until we had achieved our political objectives.”⁵⁰

Lippmann listened, his discouragement and “sorrow” apparent, but without the impatience or angry outbursts that had punctuated past conversations. He pushed for the Kennan-Gavin strategy to hold strategic cities along the coast. Ball countered

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ball to the President, "Reports of Recent Conversations on South Viet-Nam," 3 March 1966, Vietnam (Ball's memoranda), Box 22, Ball Records, Lot 74D272, NARA II.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

that it would fail, suggesting that when Chiang Kai-Shek pursued such a strategy it “resulted in the loss of China.” The U.S. would end up like the Generalissimo: “without cleaning up the countryside he was nibbled to death and driven out.”⁵¹ That opinion marked an abrupt turn-around for Ball. Just seven months earlier, he had jubilantly informed Lippmann that the strategic stronghold strategy was precisely the tactic LBJ had settled upon when authorizing his summer 1965 troop increases.⁵²

Undeterred, the columnist took to the attack in the meeting. The so-called peace offensive had been a “fraud” because the administration refused to negotiate with the Viet Cong who, Lippmann said, “were the actual enemy in the civil war.” He snapped at Ball, revealing his frustration with administration charges that he was an uninformed observer of Vietnam. “You don’t know a thing more than I do about this in spite of your access to intelligence,” he charged. Ball hit back, “very hard, saying that for the first time in our long acquaintance I found [Lippmann] naïve.” The issue of negotiations with the VC was a “red herring,” Ball said; a mere obstacle that Hanoi set up to win a substantive concession: recognition of the insurgency. The President would negotiate, Ball told Lippmann, “when, and if, the other side was ready to negotiate.”⁵³

The Undersecretary then appealed to Lippmann’s strong desire to avoid enlarging the war by bringing in China or Russia. Ball warned that LBJ would be “under terrific pressure” from the hawks to expand the bombing campaign. He lectured Lippmann to “best serve the cause he believed in by counseling moderation

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² See discussion in previous chapter.

in the bombing offensive while at the same time giving no encouragement to Hanoi and the Viet Cong by continuing to argue against the war.” Lippmann’s refusal to tone down his commentary and lend his pen to support the cause “was not only futile but dangerous,” Ball explained. “Whatever he said was not going to lead the United States to discontinue its military efforts and none of us could afford the luxury of philosophical argument that had no practical effect except to prolong the fighting.” At the conclusion of lunch Ball again implored his friend, “not to try to sustain an intellectual position that had no chance of being carried out—at the risk of a longer war.” “That,” Ball told Lippmann, “is not your style as a responsible leader of opinion.”

Lippmann, in print, seemed only more confirmed in his convictions. Little more than a week later he wrote a blistering piece about Secretary of State Dean Rusk who, in a statement before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, elaborated on some of the ideas Ball touched on in his speech. Rusk seemed to deny the existence of spheres of influence in international politics, particularly China’s in Southeast Asia. Geopolitics, Lippmann told readers, was a basic and accepted fact of international affairs. Spheres of influence, by whatever name they were given (FDR’s for Latin America was the “Good Neighbor Policy”), were fundamental diplomatic facts, like gravity itself, or “just as the existence of two sexes is a fact.” But Rusk told the senators “with great moral fervor” that spheres of influence were “inadmissible” in weighing foreign policy options. Lippmann explained that the

⁵³ Ball to President Johnson, “Reports of Recent Conversations on South Vietnam.”

Secretary had bought into the Wilsonian notion that “all sovereign states . . . [were] alike in their right to exercise influence in the world.” It put Rusk in the indefensible position of denying the reality of the power of the world’s most populous nation and, as if that was not enough, that the U.S. frequently acted on its military and economic power in its own backyard. “We were too pure for such worldly things as spheres of influence,” Lippmann quipped. Exactly how the State Department justified America’s recent “meddling” in the internal affairs of Cuba, Guatemala, the Dominican Republic, and Panama, “Mr. Rusk was too dainty to say.”⁵⁴

Ball stayed on for another six months, despite Lippmann’s prodding that he should resign in protest. “I don’t understand you,” Lippmann complained. “Feeling as you do, you should resign and make your opposition public.”⁵⁵ Instead, Ball confined his doubts inside parameters Johnson deemed acceptable—always, he wrote later, “within the four walls of the administration.” Over the years, he developed a rather elaborate justification for not resigning. As Ball portrayed it in his memoirs, such a resignation would be an act of “self-indulgence.” So long as there was a chance to reverse, or even to slow, escalation, Ball recalled, he decided to stay the course. Ball answered Lippmann “by pointing out that, throughout his long year’s of writing, he had disparaged protests that did not help a cause.”⁵⁶ But the undersecretary of state stayed on long after he knew the crucial step had been taken in July 1965, more than a year after the point of debate, even by his own calculations, had been surpassed. It caused a “slight cloud,” as Ball described it long after

⁵⁴ Lippmann, T&T, 10 March 1966, “The Frustrations of Globalism.”

⁵⁵ Ball, *The Past Has Another Pattern*, 430-431.

Lippmann's death, to fall across their friendship. More significantly, Ball's efforts to keep Lippmann in line provide hard evidence of the limits of his own dissent. The façade of the dissenter's role that he later propagated obscured his own flawed record. For if the old columnist made the mistake of cozying up to LBJ in the beginning, Ball—despite his deep doubts and eloquent memos—refused to make a public break with the administration in the end. He left government quietly for the Wall Street firm Lehman Brothers in September 1966, taking him far away from LBJ's Washington and the familiar surroundings of his Woodley Road neighborhood.⁵⁷

V.

Symbolic of the turmoil the war stirred in official Washington, was the semi-public spectacle of capital's two leading pundits engaged in a finger-pointing squabble about whom was cozier with the White House. Alsop wrote a four-part series in late April 1967, based on a cache of captured North Vietnamese documents that purported that Hanoi had no intention of negotiating a settlement. The evidence showed conclusively, Alsop argued, that the North was intent on waging a long war of attrition, inflicting maximum casualties on U.S. forces. It already had deflected, moreover, Soviet entreaties in early 1966 to go to the peace table. Hanoi, Alsop added, was skillfully playing Beijing and Moscow to support its war effort. "Now we really know Hanoi's approach to the crucial problem of negotiations," he gloated. "It

⁵⁶ Ball, *The Past Has Another Pattern*: 431.

⁵⁷ Steel, *Walter Lippmann and the American Century*, 574. Steel interviewed Ball for the book, though he is hardly mentioned except in a passing reference to those administration officials who quietly left

is very different from the approach of the virtuous but uninformed Americans who have so often told us we could easily negotiate a settlement in Vietnam without accepting total defeat.”⁵⁸

A few days later, in one of his final *Today and Tomorrow* columns, Lippmann excoriated “correspondents very close to the White House” who were writing that the war “has become such that there is no way of negotiating a settlement to it.”

Lippmann thought it was a counsel of despair because “to accept the theory that a solution is not negotiable is to declare that political control of the war has been lost and there is nothing to do but let her rip.”⁵⁹ Alsop, by process of elimination, concluded the column to be a personal attack on him and dashed off a letter that morning. “To be blunt about it, the President got angry with me long before he got angry with you,” he scolded Lippmann, who was advising LBJ when Alsop became

the Johnson administration because of the war. Ball's memoirs, which offer a long defense of his decision not to resign in protest, seem directed at Steel's less-than-complimentary conclusions.

⁵⁸ Joe Alsop, *Matter of Fact*, “Now We Really Know—III, 28 April 1967, *Washington Post*: A25; “Now We Really Know It,” 26 April 1967, *Washington Post*: A23. See also, Alsop, “Now We Really Know—I,” 24 April 1967, *Washington Post*: A19; and Alsop, “Now We Really Know—IV,” 1 May 1967, *Washington Post*: A17. Alsop and Lippmann also were bitterly divided over the practicality of negotiations. In a letter replying to a Lippmann column in early January 1967, Alsop wrote, “The Americans who ‘stop the bombing to get talks’ . . . will not have blood on their hands because they have gone to the negotiating table. We should be ready to go to the negotiating table any time that Hanoi is willing to do so. They will have blood on their hands, rather, if the resulting respite is used by the North Vietnamese to reinforce their units in the South and to launch a new war, as I am sure it will be used. Advocates of a bombing pause will then “be responsible for making useless the past sacrifices of our soldiers,” Alsop concluded. Lippmann retorted with a one-line note, “It’s not clear to me how there can be a negotiating table with no respite in the war.” See Alsop to Lippmann, 11 January 1967, and Lippmann to Alsop, 14 January 1967, Series III, Box 50 Folder 38, WLC. The column Alsop appears to have been responding to was: Lippmann, T&T, 10 January 1967, “Harrison Salisbury in Hanoi.” “We are warned,” Lippmann wrote, that peace talks are “a trick to obtain a respite by an enemy who is on the verge of defeat. We are told that during the respite Hanoi will build up a still larger army, and that then the blood of our soldiers will be on the hands of the President or of anyone else who begins to negotiate.”

⁵⁹ T&T, “An Insoluble War?” 2 May 1967. According to Lippmann’s research assistant, Lippmann was singling out a *New York Times Magazine* article by Max Frankel, not Alsop. See Elizabeth Midgley Notebook, 4 May 1967. This is confirmed by a letter from Lippmann to Alsop on 4 May

persona non grata at the White House late in 1964. “And although I feel quite differently from you about the war in Vietnam, I have made no attempt whatever to resume an old friendship with the President, although semi-invitations to do so have been proffered through third parties.”⁶⁰ Alsop attached a lengthy memorandum summarizing the captured North Vietnamese documents indicating that Hanoi would not make a diplomatic settlement which Lippmann had been advocating since 1963. Rather than accuse him of “propagating” White House views, Alsop wrote, it would be “more appropriate to deal with the effect of such evidence on all the things that have been said and written about this rather important subject.”⁶¹

Alsop’s support for American prosecution of the Vietnam war never flagged. “Joe was an obsessive man by nature,” observed the co-author of his memoirs, “and [Vietnam] was an obsession that, in the end, got the better of him.” He believed American intervention to be justified as an antidote to Communism in the region. In his estimate, intervention preserved American power and prestige in Asia, an increasingly significant part of the world. In 1967, Alsop wrote, “The Pacific is soon (maybe within thirty years) due to become another great world lake quite on par with the Atlantic. And the U.S., a land bridge between the two world lakes, cannot really afford to opt out of history in the Pacific.”⁶² Even after the TET offensive in 1968,

1967. “I respect you too much to talk back to you so indirectly,” Lippmann assured Alsop. See WLC, Group 326, Series III, Box 50, Folder 38.

⁶⁰ Joe Alsop to Walter Lippmann, 2 May 1967, Box 1, Folder A (1967), Robert F. Kennedy Senate Correspondence, 1964-1968, John F. Kennedy Library, Boston, MA (hereinafter referred to as “JFKL”).

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² Joseph W. Alsop with Adam Platt, *I’ve Seen the Best of It: Memoirs* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1992): 473. See especially, the epilogue written by co-author Platt who edited the manuscript, published after Alsop’s death in 1989, pp. 471-480.

Alsop remained absurdly optimistic about the chance for military victory. At a dinner party, as W. Averell Harriman and Israeli Ambassador Yitzak Rabin were discussing concerns about Soviet influence in Yemen, Alsop interjected, “Everything will be all right in the Middle East as soon as we have won in Vietnam.” When Harriman objected that the two were not connected Alsop replied, “We cured Berlin by standing firm in Cuba.” Harriman exploded at the columnist, “You’re a damn fool . . . like a trotting horse with blinders [that can] only see one situation.”⁶³ Harriman warned Alsop that his columns encouraged the “isolationists to forget about the rest of the world; if [Alsop’s] advice was followed we would lose more than we would ever gain in Vietnam.” Disdained by many younger colleagues who opposed the war and resented Alsop’s four-star treatment by U.S. officials in Saigon, he also became an easy target for lampoons about war enthusiasts. By war’s end, Alsop’s reputation was irretrievably lost. John Kenneth Galbraith, Harvard economist, former ambassador to India and a critic of the war, observed that along with Johnson, Alsop was the “leading non-combatant casualty of Vietnam . . . From a much-feared columnist, warrior and prophet he has become a figure of fun. It was the war that did him in.”⁶⁴ In late-1974, just weeks after Lippmann’s death, Alsop retired his *Matter of Fact* column; four months later, Saigon fell.

Alsop remained militantly skeptical of Lippmann’s emphasis on diplomacy. Years afterward, an interviewer asked Alsop to recall the foreign policy advice Washington’s leading pundits gave to the Kennedy administration during its

⁶³ W. Averell Harriman, Memorandum for Personal Files, Conversation at Polly Wisner’s with Joe Alsop and Others, 6 March 1968, Box 586, W. Averell Harriman Papers, LC.

tumultuous first year. The conversation came around to the Berlin crisis. “I can tell you what Walter said,” he shot back. “He said, ‘We’ll go into a closet and think until it’s all blown over.’”⁶⁵ It was vintage Alsop—an abrasive, combative, and “passionately subjective” Vietnam supporter, whose debate with Lippmann about the war symbolized their polarized views on the greater issue of global containment.

VI.

Early in 1966, as McGeorge Bundy prepared to leave government, White House staff and the Policy Planning Council (PPC) members, began sifting through years of Lippmann’s writings to amass—as one official put it—“the continuities and character of the Lippmann opposition.” They focused primarily on the major cold war crises which, in almost every case, the columnist counseled negotiation and accommodation. The hundreds of pages of material that researchers dredged up that spring and summer purported that Lippmann was a fair-weather friend and a first-rate appeaser. What the administration had in mind—whether to use his failed predictions in officials statements to embarrass him or to turn them over to an outside source to use—is not readily apparent. It is equally unclear if Johnson authorized these studies himself. No Presidential directive survives in the documentary record. Still, LBJ knew his advisors were ferreting out these details at least as early as May 1966, when Walt Rostow dashed off a memo outlining Lippmann’s positions on ten postwar

⁶⁴ Joseph Alsop, *I've Seen the Best of It* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1989): 474.

⁶⁵ Interview with Joe Alsop (1979), Box 1, Kern-Levering Papers, JFKL.

foreign policy events.⁶⁶ Johnson did nothing to discourage these activities which the White House soon dubbed, the “Lippmann Project.”⁶⁷

Over at the State Department, the Policy Planning Council’s director (soon to be national security adviser), Walt W. Rostow, and his hand-picked successor, Henry Owen, busied themselves with how to publicly answer Lippmann. Most disconcerting for this group was Lippmann’s heightened emphasis on the danger of direct confrontation with China. In his first column of the new year, Lippmann pressed officials to de-link South Vietnam from their program of containing China. He hit Johnson hard. The President, Lippmann wrote, was “on the verge of making the kind of ruinous historical mistake which the Athenians made when they attacked Syracuse, which Napoleon and Hitler made when they attacked Russia. He is on the verge of engaging this country in a war which can grow into a great war lasting for many years and promising no rational solution.”⁶⁸ He also accused Dean Rusk and Robert McNamara of committing themselves to the “fallacy that South Vietnam is the Armageddon of the conflict with communism.” While it was “essential” that the PRC be contained until its “revolutionary ardors have cooled,” Lippmann wrote that American unilateralism in Southeast Asia threatened the foundations of a containment alliance. Instead of arousing resistance to Chinese expansion, U.S. policy was driving the “containing powers” of Asia (India, Japan, the USSR, and Pakistan) away from an

⁶⁶ Walt Rostow to LBJ, “Lippmann’s Positions Over the Past 20 Years,” 9 May 1966, PR18 (Publicity, 1966), Box 83, White House Confidential File, LBJL.

⁶⁷ The Lippmann Project materials, gathered by both the State Department Policy Planning Council staff and a team of White House researchers, are scattered through two boxes in the LBJL. See the Fred Panzer Files, Box 377, “Walter Lippmann”; and the White House Confidential File (Oversized Attachments), Box 171, “Walter Lippmann Project,” in three sections with appendices. See also, Robert Kintner to President Johnson, 12 August 1966, Box 358, WHCF, ExPr, Folder PR 7/24/66-9/26/66, LBJL.

⁶⁸ Lippmann, T&T, 4 January 1966, “The President in the Morass.”

alignment with the U.S.

Lippmann struck a raw nerve in the administration. Walt Rostow prepared a response that day. “Lippmann remains loyal to the concept which was revolutionary in his youth,” Rostow wrote Rusk, “namely, that the U.S. should assume from the British the responsibility of controlling the sea approaches to the United States. But he regards any extension of our responsibilities beyond the limits set by Admiral Mahan, Teddy Roosevelt, and the Great White Fleet as ‘unnatural.’”⁶⁹ Rusk asked Rostow to substantiate his claims. A member of Rostow’s Policy Planning Council staff began to research Lippmann’s columns from the late-1940s and during the Kennedy years, surmising that on “the basic question of containment vs. retreat” he preferred the latter. Over the next month, Rusk received updates from his special assistant, Ernest K. Lindley. An interim draft of a PPC paper, “Dissent by Public Opinion Leaders on Issues of Confrontation Since 1946,” was prepared for Rostow—including a discussion of Lippmann’s opposition to the 1947 bill to aid Greece and Turkey and the Truman Doctrine.⁷⁰ Several months later, in his new role as national security adviser, Rostow apprised LBJ of Lippmann’s positions on 10 major crises with Communist powers since the end of World War II. In most cases, Lippmann advised mediation and accommodation rather than a military confrontation. “[It] probably won’t tell you anything you don’t know,” Rostow wrote, “but I thought you

⁶⁹ Rostow to Rusk, “A Reply to Lippmann,” 4 January 1966, LBJL.

⁷⁰ See the following items, copies of which were found in Fred Panzer’s Office Files, Box 377, LBJL: Ernest K. Lindley to Dean Rusk, “Quotations from Walter Lippmann,” 10 January 1966; Ernest K. Lindley to Dean Rusk, “More Regarding Lippmann,” 28 January 1966; Alec France (PPC) to Ernest K. Lindley, “Review of Lippmann Position” (interim draft), 25 January 1966; Alec France to Ernest K. Lindley, “Review of Lippmann Positions” (sequel to memo of January 25, 1966), 14 February 1966; and Alec France to Walt W. Rostow, “Dissent by Public Opinion Leaders on Issues of Confrontation Since 1946 (interim draft),” no date.

might like to keep it handy.”⁷¹

Johnson’s performance at the Honolulu Conference with South Vietnamese prime minister Nguyen Cao Ky confirmed Lippmann’s worst fears. During the February 1966 meeting Johnson made a new American military and economic commitment to Ky in exchange for the South Vietnamese leader’s (reluctant) promise to reform the Saigon government economically, socially, and politically. The President told the press that he wanted no more “high-sounding words,” but must have “coonskins on the wall.” The final conference communiqué, the so-called “Declaration of Honolulu,” expressed solidarity between Washington and Saigon in the war’s ultimate aims: “defense against aggression, the work of social revolution, the goal of free self-government, the attack on hunger, ignorance, and disease, and the unending quest for peace.”⁷²

Lippmann read the Honolulu declaration as a commitment to unlimited war. This time Lippmann singled out Dean Rusk and the chief of the Asian affairs office, William Bundy, for special criticism. While he did not dispute the idea that containing China was “necessary to the peace of the world and a vital interest” of the U.S., he criticized the unilateral tactics of American officials. In responding to Stalinist Russia in the postwar years, American leaders had carefully constructed a strong alliance system in Western Europe, Lippmann explained. But in Asia, due to the “miscalculations and blundering” in Vietnam, the U.S. had “alienated and indeed neutralized all the great powers” around the Chinese periphery—India, Pakistan, and

⁷¹ Walt Rostow to Lyndon Johnson, “Lippmann’s Positions Over the Past 20 Years,” 9 May 1966, White House Confidential File, Box 83, PR 18 (Publicity, 1966), LBJL.

⁷² *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Lyndon Johnson, 1966, Volume I*: online at <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu> ; item 54, 8 February 1966, “Joint Statement Following Discussions in

Japan.⁷³ American policy in Southeast Asia, Lippmann concluded, was akin to setting out “to contain Stalinist Russia by ignoring the British, the French, the Italians and the Germans and . . . to make our stand against Communism by the defense of—let us say—Bucharest.” Alliances mattered; spheres of influence mattered more. Vietnam, Lippmann believed, lay inside China’s reach as a great power.⁷⁴

This time Assistant Secretary of State for Asian Affairs William Bundy, fired off a response—a three-page memo on the morning of 15 February 1966 for the President sent through his brother, McGeorge Bundy. William Bundy rejected the idea that the Honolulu conference had amounted to a pledge to fight an unlimited war that would vastly increase the chances of Chinese intervention. He also took exception to Lippmann’s argument that the U.S. had chosen to contain China unilaterally, citing the existence of the SEATO and ANZUS treaties. He described as a “gross exaggeration” Lippmann’s charge that the war had cost the support of important allies such as India, Pakistan, and Japan. None of these countries had been prepared to police their regions militarily before Vietnam, Bundy added. Vietnam had not prevented participation from Japan and India so much as it “stirred them to doubts about their previous lack of responsibility.” Although there had been some public opposition in these key countries, “underneath it all, both Japan and India, at all levels would be horrified if we had done what Mr. Lippmann advocates and allowed Vietnam to go under.” Bundy struck a recurrent theme, complaining of Lippmann’s “extra-ordinary ignorance of Asia. In the past he strongly opposed our

Honolulu with the Chief of State and the Prime Minister of Vietnam”; quote from item 55, 8 February 1966, “The Declaration of Honolulu”; see also Dallek’s discussion, *Flawed Giant*: 352-356.

⁷³ Lippmann, T&T, 15 February 1966, “Confrontation with China.”

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

resistance to Japanese ambitions in World War 2. His knowledge of attitudes in such key countries as Japan and India is entirely second-hand and based largely on the misleading noises that come from intellectual circles.”⁷⁵

Beyond contributing to the domestic dissonance, Lippmann’s columns had an unsettling effect on key Southeast Asian governments. During a post-Honolulu Conference good-will tour to Thailand, Laos, South Vietnam, and six other countries, Vice-President Hubert H. Humphrey and Ambassador-at-Large W. Averell Harriman were confronted by diplomats worried about what Lippmann was writing. Thai Foreign Minister Thanat Khomen, who had read Lippmann columns urging negotiations with Hanoi, raised his government’s “concern that [the U.S.] might be contemplating negotiations which would recognize the Viet Cong as a legitimate participant in its own right,” Humphrey cabled to LBJ. “It is startling to realize how much damage is done in this part of the world by the Lippmann columns,” Senator J. William Fulbright’s hearings, and campus protests. Humphrey and Harriman assured Thai leaders of LBJ’s resolve, describing Lippmann’s views as “the vocal complaints of a small minority.”⁷⁶ In Seoul, South Korea, President Chung Hee Pak complained that the dissent of influential U.S. commentators and key senators cast doubt on American intentions in South Vietnam. Harriman and the vice President heard similar complaints from Australian and New Zealand officials, as well as from the Ferdinand Marcos government in the Philippines.⁷⁷ Harriman summarized the

⁷⁵ William Bundy to LBJ, “Walter Lippmann’s Column of February 15,” 15 February 1966, National Security Country File, Vietnam, Volume 47, LBJL.

⁷⁶ *FRUS, 1964-1968, Vol. XXVII, Mainland Southeast Asia, Regional Affairs*, “Telegram from Humphrey to LBJ, Bangkok, 15 February 1966.

⁷⁷ See Harriman’s files pertaining to the trip in boxes 549-551 of the Harriman Papers at the LC. A number of declassified top secret cables are among these papers.

underlying doubts of government officials throughout the region in a White House debriefing with President Johnson and Congressional leaders on 24 February 1966: “Our allies want to be sure we’re going to stick. Lippmann and *The New York Times* have contributed to this feeling.”⁷⁸

Administration officials blamed Lippmann’s criticisms for emboldening the North Vietnamese to spurn negotiations. During this period the administration, with Harriman as its chief liason, tried to win editorial support for its Vietnam policies from the *Times* and the *Washington Post*. While LBJ met privately with *Times* Chairman Arthur Hayes Sulzberger, Harriman delivered a “blunt” message to the paper’s editors: “the more people oppose the President’s policies, the longer it [will] be before North Viet-Nam [will] come to the conference table.” He repeated a story that *Washington Post* editor Russ Wiggins conveyed of meeting a Viet Cong representative during a trip to Moscow. “He had a file full of Walter Lippmann and the *Times*’ critical articles, plus accounts of demonstrations, etc., which had convinced him the American people would compel the United States to withdraw from Viet-Nam.”⁷⁹ Recently-opened archival materials suggest U.S. officials’ concerns may have been justified. In late-1968, Chinese leader Mao Zedong discussed Lippmann’s dissent with North Vietnamese prime minister Pham Van Dong. Such criticisms, Mao assured Pham, indicated a deep split among the American elite. “[Lippmann] says that the United States has already fallen into a trap in Vietnam and that the current problem is how to find ways to climb out of that

⁷⁸ *FRUS, 1964-1968, Vol. IV, Vietnam (1966)*, Notes of Meeting, Washington, 24 February 1966: 258.

⁷⁹ Harriman to Jack Valenti, “Memorandum on Arthur Hayes Sulzberger, 20 August 1965, Box 519, Harriman Papers, LC. See also, Harriman to LBJ, “Memorandum for the President, 11 March 1966, Box 550, Harriman Papers, LC.

trap,” Mao explained. The PRC leader encouraged Pham Van Dong to apply military pressure on South Vietnam while pursuing negotiations. Deep political divisions within American society, its global responsibilities, and fears, like Lippmann’s, that it was too over-extended would work to Hanoi’s advantage at the conference table, Mao said. “[Lippmann] is afraid that the United States may fall into other traps,” Mao emphasized, encouraging the North Vietnamese to fight a little longer. “Therefore your cause is promising.”⁸⁰

Without Mac Bundy to act as an emissary, Lippmann ceased to communicate with the administration. Much of that was due to the fact that the man who took Bundy’s post held ideas about the war that were diametrically opposed to Lippmann’s. Walt Rostow’s congenial personality belied his irreducible, fervent, and combative core: “a fanatic in sheep’s clothing,” Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense Townshend Hoopes recalled. Rostow was an enthusiastic militarist. On an ascending scale of the use of military force, Lippmann may have been a three, Bundy a seven, Rostow was a ten—needle pegged in the red. “Systematic combativeness,” his friend Francis Bator described it.⁸¹

In 1966, what separated Rostow from most officials was that he was astonishingly upbeat about America’s chance for success in South Vietnam. During World War II, Rostow worked with George Ball on the Strategic Bombing Survey in London. Ball described him as “an articulate amateur tactician.” The experience convinced Rostow of the efficacy of air power and bombing. In the 1950s as a

⁸⁰ Cold War International History Project (CWIHP), Mao Zedong Conversation with Pham Van Dong, 17 November 1968, Virtual Archive, <http://wwics.si.edu>.

professor of economic history at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, he became fascinated by the notions of counter-insurgency and of nation-building. When, in 1956, he sent Lippmann the text for a speech he planned to deliver at the Naval War College the columnist balked at Rostow's advocacy of waging war in developing countries against non-conventional forces. "I am rather troubled by your admonition that we must be prepared for a war anywhere including guerilla war," Lippmann replied. "Do you really think that is a feasible military objective?"⁸² Rostow's book, *The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto* (1959) made him an academic celebrity and brought him to John Kennedy's attention. He joined JFK's administration as an assistant to McGeorge Bundy, specializing in Southeast Asia.

If there was one thing for which Rostow, the respected MIT economist, was known and in which he excelled (sometimes too well) it was this—parsing odds, massaging statistics, discerning patterns, delving into the bleak numbers flowing from Saigon and extracting from them a positive trend or up-tick.⁸³ During the Kennedy years, but especially during the Johnson administration, this was an asset but also his greatest liability. He had a reputation for thinking a little too well of his ideas, an unerring belief in their rectitude; some colleagues noted that he lacked the skepticism and intellectual flexibility essential for the high posts he held.⁸⁴ When Bundy left as national security adviser he recommended to LBJ that Bill Moyers replace him. He

⁸¹ Francis Bator, interview with author, 25 January 2001, Cambridge, MA. This was Bator's analogy and it roughly fit Rostow's own estimate of his position on the war vis-à-vis these two other men; Walt W. Rostow, interview with author, 26 March 1998, Austin, TX.

⁸² Lippmann to Rostow, 26 September 1956, WLC; reprinted in Blum, *Public Philosopher*: 587.

⁸³ David Halberstam, *The Best and the Brightest* (New York: Random House, 1972): 156.

⁸⁴ Halberstam, *The Best and the Brightest*: 156-160; Townshend Hoopes, *The Limits of Intervention* (New York, McKay, 1973): 61.

was “dumbfounded” when Johnson chose Rostow, a man whom Bundy believed had to decide an issue “before he thought about [it].”⁸⁵ Even Rostow’s sympathetic colleagues recoiled at his tendency to extrapolate, generalize, re-arrange facts to fit his macro theories. Rostow had a “very universalist conception of what containment entailed,” Bator recalled. “And really, he thought—and I don’t mean to impugn it—but the ‘Free World’? That really makes it a little too homogeneous running from South Vietnam to Indonesia to Malaysia and to Angola and wherever and London. There’s really a lot of room.”⁸⁶ Others were far less reserved in their judgments about the positive war reports Rostow brought to Johnson. George Ball recalled Rostow had a facility for “inventing abstractions that sounded deceptively global and profound.”⁸⁷ He’s “the American Rasputin,” Averell Harriman told Soviet Ambassador Anatoly Dobrynin. In the spring of 1966, while waiting with Harriman outside the Oval Office, the national security adviser merrily exclaimed: “The President is going to stick it out! The bombing will escalate. He will agree to take out the oil storage [near Hanoi].” Harriman, a principal Vietnam negotiator who was awaiting LBJ’s instructions for discussions with Soviet Foreign Minister Alexi Kosygin, was taken aback.

“What next?” he asked.

Rostow: “Haiphong harbor.”

Harriman: “What about the Soviets?”

Rostow: “Oh, they won’t do anything.”

Harriman protested that hitting such high profile targets might provoke a

⁸⁵ Bird, *The Color of Truth*: 348-349.

⁸⁶ Francis Bator, interview with author, 25 January 2001, Cambridge, MA.

major international incident. JFK looked down the “nuclear barrel” in Cuba, Harriman told Rostow, and, fortunately, Khrushchev backed off. It was not in American interests in Vietnam “to get to that point again.” Rostow replied calmly, “Oh, yes, we will probably have to get there because it is only in extreme crises that some settlement will come.”⁸⁸

In choosing Rostow as national security adviser LBJ wasn't looking for a logician to rethink the problems of intervention; he wanted an optimist to tell him what was going right. Rostow was his man—especially at a time when the old Kennedy hands were leaving the administration and criticizing the war at a safe distance from Cambridge. “[Rostow's] going to be *my* goddamn intellectual and I'm going to have him by the short hairs,” LBJ growled.⁸⁹ To the end, Rostow remained loyal long after LBJ and he had left office. He once equated LBJ in retirement as Lincoln after the Wilderness Campaign, or some other dark moment of the Civil War—a man determined to persevere in his struggle. More than 35 years later—when he was still teaching economics at the University of Texas at Austin—Rostow was the war's most zealous apostle, insisting that the American intervention in that tiny country gave the rest of Southeast Asia the security needed to develop democratic governments. In the early 1990s, he pointed to the booming “capitalist” economies of Southeast Asia as proof of his assertions. In making this argument, he was polite—neither contentious nor defensive.⁹⁰ He explained his position with such

⁸⁷ Ball, *The Past Has Another Pattern*: 458.

⁸⁸ Harriman, “Memorandum of Conversation with President,” 30 May 1966, Box 520, Harriman Papers, LC.

⁸⁹ LBJ on Rostow, quoted in Bird, *The Color of Truth*: 348.

⁹⁰ Walt W. Rostow, “The Case for the Vietnam War,” *Parameters*, Winter, 1996-1997: 39-50. Rostow maintained this position until his death in February 2003. See his obituary: Todd S. Purdom, “Walt Rostow, Adviser to Kennedy and Johnson, Dies at 86,” 15 February 2003, *New York Times*: A23.

certitude, however, the listener or reader could not be faulted for wondering if Rostow was describing a history that was part of a parallel universe.

In 1966, Rostow viewed Lippmann's emphases on accommodation and negotiation with Communist powers as weakness. He'd seen Lippmann advise diplomatic settlements with the Soviets; he was by no means eager to hear the same advise about the Chinese and other Asian Communists. Lippmann "backed away from confrontation systematically," Rostow recalled years later. "I thought he was dangerous in that sense." Rostow claimed that others, like President Kennedy, were hesitant to look to Lippmann for guidance in Vietnam after he chose diplomacy over military confrontation in Berlin, Cuba, and Laos. "Lippmann did not talk about these crises except to say, 'Give up,'" Rostow recalled. "He didn't understand Russian Communism at all. Either that or it was something in him that could not stand up to the school yard bully."⁹¹

As Rostow saw it, ethnocentricity and bigotry also colored the arguments of war dissenters and it was a weakness to exploit. He believed Lippmann—like Ball and Kennan—to be wedded to Atlanticism. The columnist belonged, as Rostow put it, to "that little Western European club of gentlemen." He identified Lippmann not merely as a Europeanist, but as an elitist who knew little and cared less about the developing world. In 1966, "the intellectuals were against us" in Vietnam, Rostow said. "And part of it was racial: 'Why are you out there with these people and care whether they are under Communism or a dictatorship of some sort? They're swinging from the trees . . . And you're wasting white men's blood for them.'

⁹¹ Walt W. Rostow, interview with author, 26 March 1998, Austin, TX.

[Lippmann] was always a racist.”⁹² At the time, Rostow had advised Johnson to adopt a kind of race strategy to deflect attention from the poor results in Vietnam and divide left-leaning intellectuals. He recommended that LBJ launch a “major political battle before the public” on civil rights legislation. He hoped to silence prominent war critics—principally Arkansas Senator J. William Fulbright and Lippmann—not only by temporarily robbing them of their cause but by marginalizing them for their less-than-progressive domestic reputations. By focusing public opinion on civil rights, and race relations at home, Rostow told LBJ, “We ought to be able to mobilize a considerable part of the liberal community and isolate Fulbright, [Senator Wayne] Morse and Lippmann.”⁹³

When Johnson began suggesting in public that anti war liberals and intellectuals did not prize freedom for Asians as much as they did for Americans and Europeans, Lippmann charged the administration practiced its own kind of Kipling-esque racism by becoming an imperial Asian power. Nor did he believe the strategy of explaining rising dissent on race prejudice worked—for the very people Johnson targeted had been leaders against racial discrimination in America and had been at the forefront of extending foreign aid to under-developed nations. These were far different undertakings than the project of nation-building in South Vietnam. “It is naïve and dangerously silly to think we can treat Vietnam as if it were another Appalachia,” Lippmann warned. “We must not fool ourselves into thinking we can shoulder what the old imperialists used to call the white man’s burden . . . though we do not regard ourselves as imperialists, we are playing an imperial role.” And, in

⁹² Interview with author, 26 March 1998, Austin, TX.

what was at dig at Rostow and his entourage, he added, “That is why the latter day disciples of Kipling and the apostles of the white man’s burden in Asia are poor advisers.”⁹⁴

In March 1966, Presidential assistant Fred Panzer revived the idea of assembling a team of White House aides to research Lippmann’s considerable body of work. He began from the premise that Lippmann had contradicted himself in print on numerous occasions. “Granted nobody is perfect, granted that consistency is the hob-goblin of little minds,” Panzer wrote Bill Moyers, “a review of Lippmann’s shifting statements puts one in the mind of Dryden’s ‘man so various that he seemed not to be one, but all mankind’s epitome.’”⁹⁵ Unlike Bundy’s 1964 investigation, Panzer planned to uncover Lippmann’s inconsistencies and use them to rebut him in public.

Henry Owen, the PPC’s new director, enthusiastically endorsed the “Lippmann Project,” suggesting that it should be expanded to include other prominent critics like Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman J. William Fulbright and George F. Kennan, the father of containment. “The main point to bring out,” Owen told LBJ, “is that this criticism reflects less distaste for this or that specific U.S. policy than a basic aversion, on the part of overly sensitive and fidgety journalists and intellectuals, to the two qualities most needed for an effective foreign policy: guts and

⁹³ See Rostow to LBJ, 25 May 1966, NSF, Memos to the President, Box 7, LBJL. Quoted in Randall Woods, *Fulbright: A Life* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995): 434.

⁹⁴ Lippmann, T&T, “The White Man’s Burden,” 28 April 1966.

⁹⁵ Fred Panzer to Bill Moyers, “Walter Lippmann,” 17 March 1966, White House Central File, EX-FG 1, Box 14, LBJL.

patience.”⁹⁶ In fact, the White House kept tabs on at least one other prominent intellectual who criticized the war: Hans J. Morgenthau.⁹⁷

The White House “Lippmann Project” developed along lines similar to those laid out by the research of the Policy Planning Council in January 1966.⁹⁸ The President’s special advisor for media relations, Robert Kintner, assigned two full-time researchers and one assistant to the task of culling through stacks of *Today and Tomorrow*. By mid-August 1966, Kintner had forwarded a draft to LBJ at his Texas ranch.⁹⁹ Many of the synopses in the final White House summaries—including the focus on ten cold war crises from the Bill to Aid Greece and Turkey to the Berlin Air Lift and the Cuban Missile Crisis—contain identical language. But almost as soon as it began, the Lippmann Project fizzled because of fears that by devoting so many resources to answering the columnist the administration might hurt its case by drawing attention to his criticisms. Moreover, by December 1966, the word was out that Lippmann was quitting his column in the spring of 1967.

The largely factual information drawn from Lippmann’s past columns, as well as some anecdotal asides, assembled by White House and State Department researchers made their way into some of Johnson’s speeches—most notably an

⁹⁶ Henry Owen to President Johnson, 11 June 1966, “The Anatomy of Criticism (and what to do about it),” Chronological File, June-August 1966, Box 320, Subject and Country Files, 1965-1969 (Vietnam), Papers of the Policy Planning Council, (S/PC), Lot 72D139, RG 59, NARA II.

⁹⁷ Greg Russell, *Hans J. Morgenthau and the Ethics of American Statecraft* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1990): 67. The Johnson administration began a “Project Morgenthau,” to discredit the scholar. Morgenthau later claimed that McGeorge Bundy and Zbigniew Brzezinski were the administration spokesmen whom LBJ sent out to rebut his arguments. Russell cites an administration-inspired article by published by Freedom House in 1967 that attempted to smear Morgenthau’s reputation by lumping some of his earlier positions with those of pacifists, communists, and traitors.

⁹⁸ Steel mentions the “Lippmann Project” is passing, but devotes only a sentence to explaining what it was.

official state dinner for the President of Turkey.¹⁰⁰ It also made grist for editorialists in several publications—including Howard K. Smith and Stanley Evans a columnist for the *Indianapolis News*.¹⁰¹ The most explicit attempt to link Lippmann to a past of appeasement was made in a column that administration officials planted in the *AFL-CIO Free Trade Union News*. The editors republished in its entirety a Lippmann column from 19 May 1933 in which he interpreted a major address by the new German Chancellor Adolf Hitler as proof that “[Hitler] does not wish to disturb the peace.” Reading the best possible interpretation of a speech that dealt strictly with foreign policy, Lippmann concluded that “we have heard once more, through the fog and the din, the hysteria and the animal passions of a great revolution, the authentic voice of a genuinely civilized people.” Despite the Nazi’s “ruthless injustice of the treatment meted out to the German Jews,” Lippmann warned that Germany could not be ignored or outcast from European politics without disastrous results. This was, of course, before the time of annexation, expansion, and ethnic cleansing. Many readers at the time, and especially in hindsight, found the column offensive. Upon reading it, Lippmann’s friend Felix Frankfurter didn’t speak with him for three years—and then only to complain bitterly about how Lippmann misread Hitler.¹⁰² The AFL-CIO editors concluded that Lippmann’s analyses of early Nazi foreign policy somehow disqualified him from sound judgment in Vietnam. “History has proved Lippmann utterly wrong on Nazi Germany,” the editors wrote—sounding much like members of

⁹⁹ Kintner to President Johnson, 12 August 1966, Box 358, WHCF, ExPr, Folder PR 7/24/66-9/26/66, LBJL.

¹⁰⁰ See Section VII of this chapter.

¹⁰¹ No author, “Lippmann and His Critics,” undated, White House Confidential File, “Walter Lippmann Project, Oversize Attachments (1966), Box 171, LBJL.

¹⁰² See Steel’s account of the reaction to the column in 1933: *Walter Lippmann and the American Century*: 330-333.

the White House staff. “Unfortunately, this lesson has not taught him greater insight into or caution regarding the nature, aims and methods of totalitarianism. Thirty years later he repeats his error in underestimating the destructive dynamism and aggressive designs of world Communism.”¹⁰³

The heckling and crude innuendo Johnson and other officials projected at the 76-year-old journalist soon boomeranged. The perception that the President was persecuting Lippmann damaged the administration’s image. When plans for Lippmann’s retirement and departure for New York City became public, many observers believed the President had run him off—not an entirely untrue estimate of the situation.¹⁰⁴ When Herblock of the *Washington Post* published a mirthful account of the administration’s program against the columnist, “The War on Lippmann,” several LBJ aides realized the time had come to repair the public relations damage.¹⁰⁵ Herblock marveled LBJ’s barbs and several other attacks made by his aides. “If Mr. Lippmann were a less modest man, the attention lavished on him by this Chief of State would be enough to turn his head,” Herblock wrote. “And if he and Mr. Johnson had lived in the days of Thomas More and Henry VIII, he would have lost his head completely.” The Pulitzer Prize-winning cartoonist accompanied the piece with a caricature of Lippmann sitting at his typewriter, seemingly unaffected, as an enraged LBJ hurled thunderbolts at him. “It would be hazardous to predict the future of The

¹⁰³ “Walter Lippmann—Wrong Then, Wrong Now,” May 1966, *AFL-CIO Free Trade Union News*, White House Confidential File, Oversize Attachments (1966), Box 171, LBJL.

¹⁰⁴ This view was held not just by the American press: see, Louis Heren, “Walter Lippmann Chooses Exile,” 9 May 1967, *London Times*: 10.

¹⁰⁵ Herblock, “The War on Lippmann,” 7 May 1967, *Washington Post*: C1, C5. Herblock’s piece was part of a special “Outlook” section dedicated to the problems of Vietnam policy. Other contributors included Richard N. Goodwin, former Presidential aide, who wrote an opinion piece on “The Necessity of Being a Dissenter.”

War on Walter Lippmann,” Herblock concluded. “But on past performance, we can guess that the President, undaunted by the possibility of a conflict widened to bring in other members of the press, will push on at all costs.”¹⁰⁶

LBJ’s press handlers took the warning from the capital’s flagship newspaper at face value. Weeks before Lippmann quit *Today and Tomorrow*, Robert Kintner, a former network television executive turned public relations adviser to LBJ, proposed a “decrease in the ‘President’s engagement’ or the ‘engagement by any of the Administration’s spokesmen’ with Walter Lippmann.” He cited the Herblock article and cartoon. In part, Kintner’s strategy was a bid to curry favorable coverage from the major papers including the *Washington Post* where editorial control had passed from the pro-war Russ Wiggins to Lippmann’s choice, Benjamin Bradlee. It was not yet clear which direction Bradlee and the *Post* editorial board would lean on the war. Kintner believed he had convinced Bradlee to publish a less-than-flattering series on war critics and student demonstrators. “If there is the feeling the Administration is carrying on a campaign against dissent, and incidentally against Lippmann,” Kintner explained, “this opportunity can either be lost or minimized.”¹⁰⁷ Johnson’s speechwriters agreed: “lay off Lippmann for a while . . . we are on the verge of making him a martyr.”¹⁰⁸ Kintner found little to commend the President’s method of public humiliation. As Lippmann receded into the mists of retirement, Kintner suggested to LBJ, the President should cultivate hawkish supporters in the press. Kintner, who’d started out as a columnist in the 1930s, recommended his former

¹⁰⁶ Herblock, “The War on Lippmann.”

¹⁰⁷ Robert Kintner to LBJ, 8 May 1967, White House Central File (EX FG 1), Box 14, LBJL.

¹⁰⁸ George Christian to John Roche, 12 May 1967, White House Central File (Name File), Box 225, LBJL.

writing partner, Joe Alsop. “With Walter Lippmann moving to New York and also living abroad, I am sure that Joe Alsop will more and more emerge as one of the most important forces in this particular column area,” Kintner wrote. “He is among [the] most ardent supporters of your Vietnam policy and ‘carries the torch’ not only in his column but by word of mouth.”¹⁰⁹

In hindsight, the administration’s obsession with Walter Lippmann magnified—even exaggerated—his importance. LBJ, as was his tendency, perceived the threat to be larger than life. The administration’s program against Lippmann distorted the reality—which was that the columnist’s influence on the debate was diminishing. For one thing, Lippmann’s stock had been in long free-fall with Washington policymakers, where he traditionally had exercised most of his influence. By counseling negotiation and accommodation with Communist powers at the height of the Cold War—while simultaneously advocating a retrenchment of “over-extended” American commitments—Lippmann gradually began to speak to a smaller and smaller audience. His views on containment diverged so greatly from those of Washington officials—a group as diverse as Acheson, McCloy, Bundy, and Rostow—that, by the 1960s, he was widely dismissed as a “neo-isolationist.”¹¹⁰ Like Asia specialists, reporters who wrote about Vietnam were not inclined to follow his lead because it was generally assumed his knowledge of Vietnam was shallow.

¹⁰⁹ Robert Kinter to LBJ, 12 January 1967, White House Central File (Name File), Box 225, LBJL.

¹¹⁰ Alec France to Ernest K. Lindley, “Review of Lippmann Positions” (sequel to memo of January 25, 1966), 14 February 1966; and Alec France to Walt W. Rostow, “Dissent by Public Opinion Leaders on Issues of Confrontation Since 1946 (interim draft),” no date, located in Fred Panzer’s Office Files, Box 377, LBJL. For Lippmann’s answer to charges of neo-isolationism, see Lippmann, T&T, “The Neo-Isolationists,” 2 March 1965; Chalmers Roberts, “Walter Lippmann: Journalist, Philosopher,” 15 December 1974, *Washington Post*: A8. See also, Lippmann’s interview with Henry Brandon: “A Talk with Walter Lippmann, at 80, About This ‘Minor Dark Age,’ 14 September 1969, *New York Times*: SM25.

Journalistic colleagues also held lingering concerns about Lippmann's early alliance with Johnson. Some suspected that Lippmann's wrathful prose—at its core—had as much to do with feelings of personal betrayal as it did with fundamental concerns about the objectives of U.S. policy in Southeast Asia. So far as public opinion was concerned, broadcast footage of the war made a far greater negative impact than the ratiocination of a Washington columnist—a lesson Johnson would learn only in the months after Lippmann retired. Lastly, Lippmann's tendency to mud wrestle with Johnson in 1966-1967—moving away from a strategic critique of the war—consummated the process of his decline. The analytical quality of his columns—as a totality—dissipated. He was no longer the man whom, as David Halberstam recalled, had for so long “shaped Washington's critical taste buds.”¹¹¹ Nevertheless, Johnson's war on Lippmann—much as Herblock had anticipated—became a metaphor for his relations with the press.

VII.

The criticisms Lippmann directed at Lyndon Johnson's policies in 1965 paled in comparison to the emotional, intensely personal attacks he authored against LBJ in 1966 and 1967. His influence with officials exhausted, his access cut-off, his contacts departed from government, his repetitive message on the war thudding dully onward, Lippmann's tone changed. “What is being tested is whether the generation now in command in Washington have the intelligence to use American power wisely and effectively, or whether they think they can kill mosquitoes with tanks and build a

¹¹¹ Halberstam, *The Best and the Brightest*: 26. See also, Halberstam's sketch of Lippmann in *The*

Great Society with B-52s,” Lippmann wrote in January 1967. “What is being tested is the competence and common sense of a handful of men who, acting furtively and by subterfuge, have pulled the levers and pressed the buttons in a war they denied they intended to engage in.”¹¹² Lippmann internalized the war; personalized it. Thus, when he wrote later that fall that Johnson’s dismal job approval ratings were but “a mere indication . . . [of] the quality and depth of the feeling of having been misled and having been had,” the lines between public opinion and Lippmann’s own seething resentment were indistinguishable.¹¹³ Even though Lippmann would never “come onboard” to support the war, Johnson (no doubt still fearing the power of Lippmann’s pen) waited until Lippmann had announced his retirement in the spring of 1967 before attacking him in public forums. Lippmann’s break with the President epitomized the bad turn in the administration’s relations with Washington journalists. Even before that, during the summer of 1966, *New York Times* Washington bureau chief James B. Reston thought that Presidential-press relations were at a nadir he had not experienced in his decades of work in the capital. “The White House gang talks incessantly of Lippmann’s being ‘senile’ and the ‘little Scotch bastard’ [a reference to Reston],” he explained in a mournful letter to his friend Chester Bowles. “There may be something in the latter charge, but if Lippmann is senile, senility may be what we need to get us out of some of our troubles.”¹¹⁴

The passions that fed Lippmann’s analyses of events in Vietnam confirmed many of his long-held assumptions that American globalism was a disruptive force in

Powers that Be (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000; first edition Knopf, 1975): 367-372.

¹¹² Lippmann, T&T, “War Shrouds U.S. Role in Asia,” 19 January 1967.

¹¹³ Lippmann, “The Tax Revolt,” 23 October 1967, *Newsweek*: 25.

international affairs. He vocalized these ideas freely, no longer trying to couch them in less displeasing terms to policymakers. As early as April 1966 he warned that the U.S. was “playing an imperial role” in Southeast Asia, filling the vacuum left by the receding British and French empires. “We must not fool ourselves into thinking that we can shoulder what the old imperialists used to call the white man’s burden,” of policing and ruling Asians. Good relations with Asian nations, Lippmann wrote, started with the complete liquidation of the “colonial system” once imposed by the “Western white man.”¹¹⁵ Later that fall, with more than 450,000 U.S. troops in Vietnam, he charged American officials with “invading the continent of Asia.”¹¹⁶ After Johnson’s 1967 State of the Union Address, Lippmann wrote that the President had set the nation on an “imperialist course” by attempting to conquer and occupy all of South Vietnam—then to “run the country until a new South Vietnamese society can be put together.” Lippmann feared U.S. diplomatic isolation and confrontation with China “if we advance towards a self-appointed imperial destiny in Asia.”¹¹⁷

So much as Lippmann’s strong convictions about the war led him to rethink American internationalism, they also contributed to a coarseness in his columns and, as well, an obsession with LBJ’s personal flaws that undermined the value of his message. His commentary suffered. His *Newsweek* columns offered numerous

¹¹⁴ James B. Reston to Chester Bowles, 31 July 1966, Box 32, Individual Correspondence File, James B. Reston Papers, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, IL.

¹¹⁵ Lippmann, T&T, “The White Man’s Burden,” 28 April 1966. He was responding to the charge that Rostow, particularly, leveled against war dissenters: racism was their prime motivation. Tom Wicker of *The New York Times*, had just written a story in which LBJ expressed the opinion that “one reason domestic criticism of the war is rising is because too many Americans, particularly liberals and intellectuals, do not prize freedom for Asians as highly as freedom for Americans and Europeans.” Lippmann found it a “curious way” to explain dissent by claiming that race prejudice motivated anti-war activists—many of whom were at the “forefront of the struggle against racial discrimination in this country and have been in the forefront of the struggle to extend foreign aid to the underdeveloped nations of the world.”

examples.¹¹⁸ While *Today and Tomorrow* aimed at an elite audience, the *Newsweek* pieces were written for a general readership. Often, they contained boiled down material from his syndicated columns. Shorter, sparer, given to broader themes, they became the format in which Lippmann took off the gloves in his street brawl of words with LBJ. Even as T&T wound down in the spring of 1967, the *Newsweek* column—usually set as the lead piece in the magazine—kept Lippmann in the public eye a while longer.

The war and Lyndon Baines Johnson were one and inseparable for Lippmann—a trend that only accelerated in early 1967. As Vietnam began to siphon off funds from the Great Society, causing further erosion of public support, Lippmann no longer described the crisis in terms of the geopolitical competition involving Washington, Beijing, Hanoi, and Moscow. Rather, he began to redefine the war within the context of LBJ's inner demons. "The crucial struggle of the war is now being fought in the breast of Lyndon Johnson," Lippmann told readers. He was "a complicated human being. There are at least two spirits wrestling within him. One is that of the peacemaker and reformer and herald of a better world. The other is that of the primitive frontiersman who wants to nail the coon-skin to the wall, who wants to be the biggest, the best, the first, a worshipper of what William James called the bitch goddess, success."¹¹⁹ Closely acquainted with LBJ's habits and traits, Lippmann knew the war was the defining event not only for the administration for the

¹¹⁶ Lippmann, T&T, 17 November 1966, "Manila Madness."

¹¹⁷ Lippmann, T&T, 17 January 1967, "Alternatives."

¹¹⁸ To get a sense of this progression from critiquing the policies to critiquing the persons, see Lippmann's following *Newsweek* pieces: "The President's Hard Decision," 17 January 1966; p. 13; "The Misconceived War," 6 June 1966, p. 19; "The Temptation of Lyndon Johnson," 27 February 1967, p. 21; "The American Promise," 9 October 1967, p. 21; "Defeat," 11 March 1968; "Negotiation in Paris," 3 June 1968, p. 21.

man in charge. He added, “It is the second spirit which is now tempting him, and on the outcome of the ordeal depends more than it is pleasant to contemplate.”¹²⁰

Several weeks later, Lippmann escalated the public feud with Johnson by writing a pair of columns on the “credibility gap.”¹²¹ This was the buzz-word the widely used by the press to describe the administration’s less-than-candid discussion of major policy decisions in Vietnam. In his years in Washington, Lippmann told readers, that the President-press relationship never had been in such a shambles. He accused Johnson of manufacturing consent from its early days, but especially after the February 1965 bombing campaign in Vietnam, “It is the result of a deliberate policy of artificial manipulation of the news,” he wrote. “The purpose of this manipulation is to create a consensus for the President, to stifle debate about his aims and policies, to thwart deep probing into what has already happened, what is actually happening, what is going to happen.”¹²² He quoted Bill Moyers who had told James Reston that the President was sometimes not forthcoming because he needs to preserve “latitude” in the decision-making process “to make . . . the best possible decision.” Lippmann found disturbing possibilities in a process that preserved the President’s “options” while depriving Congress and the public of the right to deliberate a course of action. “In exactly this way the Nation has been committed to a big war about which nothing was debated and explained,” Lippmann wrote, “while the President’s secretly chosen decision was handed down by fiat.” Such a process threatened the

¹¹⁹ Lippmann, “The Temptation of Lyndon Johnson,” 27 February 1967, *Newsweek*: 21.

¹²⁰ Ibid. Scholars have largely agreed with Lippmann’s assessment that the President had a personal obsession with winning the war in South Vietnam. See, for instance, Logevall’s account in *Choosing War*: especially, pp. 391-393. See also, Robert Dallek, *Flawed Giant: Lyndon Johnson and His Times, 1961-1973* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998): 281-284.

¹²¹ The term was coined by the *Washington Post*’s Murrey Marder, who had written extensively on the Vietnam War. Marder was frequent guest at Lippmann’s cocktail parties.

adversarial procedure, the right of the independent press, and the “fundamental American principle that true opinion arises from honest inquiry and open debate and that true opinion is necessary to free government.” All this was jeopardized, Lippmann added, by the “pathologically secretive” President who believed it was “his right to manipulate the news in his own political interest.”¹²³

LBJ fired back, using the forum on a state dinner at the White House honoring the visiting President of Turkey to mark the twentieth anniversary of the bill to aid Greece and Turkey—the genesis of the Truman Doctrine. Johnson referred deprecatingly to Lippmann’s position on the aid bill by quoting selectively from old T&T columns that he attributed to “a commentator who is still with us.”¹²⁴ The columnist, LBJ implied, shirked the Communist challenge in Turkey just as he was advocating the administration do in South Vietnam. Lippmann responded by reprinting the full text of his first column on the subject. Titled, “Policy or Crusade,” Lippmann’s 1947 column clearly differentiated between his support for a specific policy of aid to those two countries and his opposition to the globalism implied in President Harry Truman’s statement to Congress.¹²⁵ John Roche, a Johnson aide, wrote a letter to the editor to the *Washington Post* dismissing the idea that Johnson had targeted Lippmann—but, nonetheless, noted that a close examination of

¹²² Lippmann, T&T, “The Credibility Gap—I,” 28 March 1967.

¹²³ Lippmann, T&T, “The Credibility Gap—II, 30 March 1967.

¹²⁴ The dinner was held on 3 April 1967 at the White House. Story recounted in Herblock’s “The War on Lippmann.” See “Toasts of the President and President [Cevdet] Sunay of Turkey, 3 April 1967, in *The Public Papers of the Presidents: Lyndon B. Johnson, 1967 (Volume I)*: 418-419. Johnson’s extend remarks were: “Mr. Truman was accused of arrogance, of wanting to play ‘world policeman.’ In the words of one commentator, who is still with us, the Truman Doctrine was a disastrous entanglement in an anti-Communist crusade which could only lead to a much wider war. Some of us refused to believe this. Indeed, one of the proud moments of my life was on May 7, 1947, when I rose in the House to support President Truman and his supposedly ‘disastrous’ policy of containment.”

Lippmann's record would bear out the validity of such an attack. If Walter Lippmann "runs out of thoughts on 'credibility,'" Roche quipped, "he might rerun some of his [columns] for us." Soon after, a White House official jested with reporters, "God is not dead; he is alive and appears in the *Washington Post* twice a week." Later, at a press dinner in which Johnson took a noticeably more light-hearted tone with his assembled antagonists, he departed from his script to speak coldly of a "political commentator of yesteryear." The passages were, Herblock observed, "words of lead that bore the unmistakable LBJ brand."¹²⁶

Part of this tension resulted from the fact that Lippmann and Johnson were such dissimilar individuals. Like most unlikely partnerships—among nations, in business or between spouses—once it started to come undone the bitter recriminations flew. Lippmann knew Johnson to be a shrewd politician, but never seemed to be able to put the earthy Texan's gregarious traits into perspective. According to Francis Bator, Lippmann focused on the showman aspect of the President's personality and badly under-estimated Johnson's analytical skills, his "first-rate" intellect. "In Act One mode anything went—LBJ could repeal the law of gravity. Literal truth was irrelevant," Bator explained. "Anybody who didn't understand that was a bit of a fool. And he'd use that to sort of cajole, bully, browbeat, influence people." Johnson decided policy, however, in "Act Two mode," Bator recalls, a side that Johnson did not put up for display. In this forum LBJ was "fact-minded, evidence-minded, highly consequential, very concerned about what the alternatives were, what the consequences were," Bator said. "Cautious, incremental,

¹²⁵ Lippmann, T&T, 6 April 1967, "Personal Privilege." The original T&T column on the Truman Doctrine, "Policy or Crusade?" was published on 15 March 1947.

and doing that with an absolutely first-class mind. Very smart—there wasn't anyone who was smarter." Lippmann was one of many "put off and bamboozled" by Act One. "And people who never saw him in Act Two mode would simply have no sense of what he was really like," Bator added.¹²⁷ Indeed, from the historical record there is little indication that Lippmann ever saw Johnson other than in the Act One mode. In the Johnson-Bundy combination with Lippmann, usually Johnson ranted and Bundy rationalized. The one time Lippmann observed Johnson in a reflective mood—recall the December 1964 White House meeting—the columnist came away with foreboding about the President's true intentions in Vietnam. The significance of their mismatched personalities and Johnson's resort to antics was that Lippmann was led to believe that he could be more effective in his role of advisor than he actually was; there was, he thought, clearly room for a Presidential mentor on foreign affairs topics. But McGeorge Bundy's and the President's mastery of Lippmann in 1964, and especially into the spring and summer of 1965, revealed the situation to be precisely opposite.

Lippmann's visceral dislike of Johnson diminished some of his most important insights. The Vietnam War challenged him to rethink the validity and morality of the goals to which American policymakers aspired. It opened his eyes to a special kind of American economic and cultural imperialism that slowly took shape in the postwar years. He mused at one of the war's central contradictions: the sheer ineffectiveness of American military might in Vietnam contrasted vividly with the

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Francis Bator, interview with author, 25 January 2001, Cambridge, MA. Historian Robert Dallek tangentially touches on the subject of Johnson's intellectual capacity, when he discusses Johnson's

pervasive globalization of the “American way of life.” “An irresistible tide of Americanization is flooding the world,” he wrote, “with our airplanes and computers and supermarkets, our household appliances, with ready-made clothing, with mechanical entertainment, carrying along with it what is convenient and pleasant in our lives and also much of our vulgarity.”¹²⁸ Yet, he chose to ascribe the international backlash against this trend to foreign—particularly Western European—misgivings about the occupant of the White House rather than the materialistic values of the liberal capitalist society that the American President merely embodied. Thus, in the same column, Lippmann wrote of the “dislike and distrust of *Johnson’s* America.”¹²⁹ He continued, “It stems in the last analysis, I believe, from a feeling of having been let down. There is a growing belief that *Johnson’s* America is no longer the historic America, that it is a bastard empire which relies on superior force to achieve its purposes, and is no longer providing an example of the wisdom and humanity of a free society. There is, to be sure, envy, fear, rivalry in the worldwide *anti-Johnsonism*. But the inner core of this sentiment is a feeling of betrayal and abandonment. It is a feeling that the American promise has been betrayed and abandoned.”¹³⁰

American missteps no longer derived from innocence or naivete about international affairs, Lippmann could admit. But he stopped short of a soul-searching review. Content to wage a verbal war with the nation’s leader, Lippmann did little to delve into the impetus and moral implications of America’s globe-bestrident policies.

personal insecurities, frequent emotional outbursts, and unusual displays of paranoia during the Vietnam period. See, for example, *Flawed Giant*: 281-284.

¹²⁸ Lippmann, “The American Promise,” 9 October 1967, *Newsweek*: 21.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.* Emphases added.

To the end, Johnson and Lippmann slugged it out. During his final press conference—delivered at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C.—Johnson outlined the schedule for his first day of retirement at the LBJ Ranch. “I am going to sit on the front porch in a rocking chair for about 10 minutes. And then I am going to read a little and write a little,” the President told reporters. “Then I am going to put on my hat and go out and find Walter Lippmann.”¹³¹

VIII.

Lippmann’s position on the war also differentiated him from other prominent “realist” observers of the conflict. American diplomat and scholar George F. Kennan and the French commentator Raymond Aron also challenged the wisdom of U.S. intervention in Vietnam. While they offered typically *realpolitik* objections to the war—that it was not in American interests to intervene, that it drained limited U.S. resources, that it upset Washington’s global policy—each of these three men arrived at those conclusions at different times and for different reasons. Aron and Kennan interpreted the Vietnam War primarily as a threat to the continuity of American protective policy in Western Europe—that it would siphon the military power and moral prestige necessary to maintain a leadership role in the Alliance. Lippmann agreed, although he also saw Vietnam as the outcome of an inherently flawed containment strategy—a notion that neither Kennan nor Aron fully shared.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ “President’s News Conference at the National Press Club,” 17 January 1969, Washington, DC, *Public Papers of the Presidents, Lyndon Baines Johnson (1968-1969)*, document #696, available online at http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/site/docs/index_pppus.php.

In the 1950s and 1960s, Kennan reached agreement with some of Lippmann's positions on U.S. foreign policy in the Pacific region, though here the diplomat was not diametrically opposed to militarized containment in "peripheral" countries. In 1960, when the Quemoy and Matsu problem became a campaign issue and was debated in the second of Nixon and Kennedy's televised debates, Kennan largely sided with Lippmann's earlier 1958 position on the islands' relative lack of strategic importance. He acknowledged Chiang Kai-shek's intent to embroil the U.S. in a general war with China by stationing his troops on them; a problem compounded by Eisenhower's lack of initiative to alleviate the problem. "To compare these insignificant islands, as some people now do, with Berlin—one of the world's great capitals, the residence of several million people, and a natural symbol of the fortunes of the cold war—is the greatest nonsense," Kennan observed, a plain reference to what Joe Alsop was arguing at the time. "It may be true that if pressed and put on the spot we would have to defend these islands. But is it unavoidable that we be thus pressed and always put on the spot? Is there nothing we could do to lessen the likelihood?" He suggested that the U.S. could not solve those problems in a moment of confrontation and crisis. "The answer lies in what we do in the in-between periods, when the problem is not agitated by others and when there is some possibility of initiative on our part without the loss of dignity. The Eisenhower administration has, so far as I can see, done precisely nothing; and I see nothing in Mr. Nixon's statements to give hope that he has any idea of doing any more."¹³² He

¹³² Kennan to Lippmann, 18 October 1960, WLC, Box 81, folder 1202. See also Kennan's attached letter to the *New York Times* of 12 October 1960, which he sent but which the editors rejected. The letter attacked Nixon for his unyielding position in the second debate with Kennedy on the U-2 incident and his refusal to express regret over it, as well as the administration's general posture toward

added, “the answer must be sought where many people least wish to seek it: in our political relations with the Chiang regime itself.”

Still, Kennan’s ideas about waging containment on the Asiatic periphery turned slowly. His position was close to that of Aron and British officials who worried that the war would drain American military resources from Western Europe and create a “grievous disbalance” in U.S. containment policy.¹³³ He did not perceive of Vietnam necessarily as an example of a larger containment policy gone awry. During the Americanization of the Vietnam War in 1965, Kennan kept mostly quiet in public though he did write Lippmann several brief notes acknowledging his agreement with this or that T&T column. When Kennan did speak out in late-1965 and 1966, he qualified his criticism. His solution was to advocate the “enclave” strategy that Lippmann had supported in 1954 for the French and resurrected in 1965 for the Americans.

Two problems plagued Kennan’s analysis, however. First, he tended to overestimate Chinese influence in Hanoi and, thus, viewed the war not as a conflict between rival nationalist regimes in North and South Vietnam but as principally a great power struggle. Second, Lippmann and Kennan readily agreed that the Vietnamese War was a wasteful and costly endeavor but, unlike Lippmann, Kennan could not bring himself—until much later in 1967-68—to support the call for a complete American withdrawal from the South. In late 1965, he still rejected the idea

Taiwan and the off-shore islands. “It is sad to have to point out that the true task of statesmanship,” Kennan wrote, “especially in the present precarious state of the world, is not to strike truculent attitudes, not to demonstrate how “tough” one can talk to the Russians or how close one can play to the edge of military complications, but rather to see, urgently, what can be done to halt and reverse a trend of world events which is leading rapidly in the direction of catastrophe of incalculable dimensions.” See Lippmann’s reply of 21 October 1960, WLC, Box 81, folder 1202.

of a troop withdrawal, observing that “no one can question the thesis that a precipitate withdrawal representing the total capitulation of our entire proposition in that region, would be one of the worst alternatives before us.”¹³⁴ Kennan warned against “a panicky and ignominious withdrawal that could only present our adversaries with a gratuitous bonanza.”¹³⁵

A year later, that view had softened somewhat, when he wrote a *Washington Post* article that noted Hanoi’s victory “would probably be something less than the automatic extension of Chinese power that many of us fear.” Nevertheless, Kennan doubted the usefulness of negotiations, which Lippmann had advocated for more than two years. “I wonder, however, whether negotiation—particularly early negotiation between Hanoi and ourselves—is the only, or even the most promising, way out of this situation,” Kennan wrote in the *New York Times* in late-1964. He proposed a series of reciprocal unilateral actions to create a “simmering down” period where U.S. troops would be pulled back to coastal cities and halt search-and-destroy missions in the countryside.¹³⁶

Lippmann approved of Kennan’s overview, no doubt siding with his concerns about the imbalance of power the war created in Europe and elsewhere. However, having recently given up on the enclave proposal himself (principally because the troop mission already had been expanded beyond recall), he doubted Kennan’s prescription would work: “I am very much afraid that the President has got beyond

¹³³ George F. Kennan, “An Authority on Communism Says We’re Letting This One Area Disbalance Whole Policy,” 12 December 1965, *Washington Post*: E1.

¹³⁴ Kennan, “An Authority on Communism Says We’re Letting This One Area Disbalance Whole Policy”: E1.

¹³⁵ George F. Kennan, “A Fresh Look at Our China Policy,” 22 November 1964, *New York Times Magazine*: 27, 140.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

the point of no return in the distortion of our foreign policy by this Vietnam war.”¹³⁷

Privately, Kennan confided to Lippmann his concerns about the “deficiencies of our present leadership,” zeroing in on Secretary of State Dean Rusk. The old diplomat despaired of the shortcomings of his former colleague: a lack of “understanding for world realities and their true relationship to one another; of smugness and total absence of humility; of a dreadful inability to relate military effort to political purpose; and of an obsession with the danger of appearing weak—an obsession which is itself the surest sign of inner weakness.”¹³⁸ On this point both men agreed.

In contrast to what Lippmann wrote about the war after July 1965, Aron’s perspective on Vietnam in the mid- to late-1960s was cool and detached—avoiding shrill attacks on American “imperialist” motives current among Europeans and revisionist scholars. Ultimately, Aron interpreted the war as the culmination of a series of poor judgments, miscalculations, and surfeits of arrogance. Aron’s commentary contained a persistent ambivalence about American intervention in

¹³⁷ Lippmann to Kennan, 16 December 1965, WLC, Box 81, folder, 1202.

¹³⁸ Kennan to Lippmann, 19 December 1965, WLC, Box 81, folder 1202. Like Kennan, Lippmann singled out American leaders for hubris, ignorance, and personal moral failings when assigning blame for Vietnam. He was especially hard on Lyndon Johnson, Dean Rusk, and Robert McNamara. In 1967, he described the Secretary of State as “a very sincere man whose education stopped in about 1944, and who has not learned any ideological or general principles of foreign policy since then . . . Everything that’s happened since then—the whole of China and the whole of Asia has gone through a revolution—hasn’t affected him at all; it’s still the same old thing applied to the original Second World War concepts . . . that you fight wars against aggression and thereby end war.” Of McNamara Lippmann said that he was “an enormously able man” who lacked “political judgment, which means that he has very little human sensibility—intuition . . . I think his greatest fault, though, is really that he is an organization man. He’s there, and he doesn’t really agree with the policy of escalation that we are pursuing, but he actively carries it out. And I’m sorry to say I don’t think he can bear the idea of not being Secretary of Defense.” On LBJ’s leadership on the Vietnam issue, Lippmann observed, “Our foreign policy has become a matter like putting a bill through the Senate, of placating this group and placating that group and bombing enough so that they won’t object and then they won’t object and they’re pleased and they’re—that’s the way the darned thin is run.” Johnson “is conducting the war exactly as he—well, from what he learned as leader of the Senate.” See, “Transcript of Walter Lippmann’s Radio Interview of 19 November 1967 on the Public Broadcast laboratory Sunday,” a copy is in the papers of George Ball, Box 25, Mudd Library, Princeton, NJ. See especially pp: 12-13; 17; 18-19.

Vietnam that lasted until long after the critical decisions had been taken and the war had been set on its course. He admitted years later that he wished he had focused more attention on the American involvement in Southeast Asia during the 1950s and 1960s.¹³⁹ When he did address Vietnam, he tended to write about containment as if it was animated by the same rationale, as it had been when Kennan put it to paper in 1946-1947. That view did not square with the post-1950 global conception of the policy which, in fact, had become normative—even if Aron saw it as an aberration. Unlike many European commentators, Aron refused to condemn the start of Operation Rolling Thunder—the opening stages of a long and devastating air war against North Vietnam.¹⁴⁰ In large measure Aron tempered his eventual frustrations with U.S. policy describing the U.S. descent into war as unwitting. He refused to contribute to the intellectual milieu around him that “exalted” Hanoi’s successes and decried U.S. “imperialism.”

Most of all, Aron feared a defeat in Vietnam would erode U.S. moral, political, and military authority in Western Europe and dangerously destabilize the superpower equilibrium. In early 1967, he made precisely that point to one of the war’s most fervent U.S. enthusiasts, the columnist Joe Alsop. Vietnam, the *Le Figaro* columnist explained, “is costing you enormously on the moral and political plane. You respond that this is a European reaction, that is to say essentially parochial.

¹³⁹ Raymond Aron, *Memoires* (Paris: Julliard, 1983): 593.

¹⁴⁰ Raymond Aron, “Bombardiers Contre Partisans,” 20 March 1965, *Le Figaro*. Aron argued that Hanoi could not claim the bombing violated international law because juridical cannon did not extend protections to “a country which organizes subversion or tolerates the organization of subversion in a neighboring country.”

Perhaps you are right, but despite everything Europe remains one of the fundamental stakes of the conflict between the two systems of thought and social organization.”¹⁴¹

Reviewing U.S. policy in Vietnam, Aron judged that intervention had occurred because U.S. policymakers has misapplied the containment policy, choosing to fight a war they could not win, in a place for which, ultimately, there was no need to fight. Importantly, while he argued that the Vietnam War reflected poorly on the decision-makers, he did not believe it served to repudiate the concept of containment itself. Escalation, Aron described as a series of ill-conceived “half-measures”; improvisations, rather than a grand scheme which, taken in their sum, committed the U.S. to fight a losing war. “In this respect the American style resembles that of the governments of the French Fourth Republic, despite their differences,” he wrote. “Perhaps it springs from the nature of democratic government in the absence of outstanding leaders.”¹⁴² In the final analysis, after culling *The Pentagon Papers*, Aron attributed American intervention to four factors: first, “hubris,” particularly the refusal to heed intelligence that had demonstrated the power of Hanoi’s nationalist appeal; second, a burdensome U.S. obsession with using counter-insurgency techniques against the Communists; third, a “conviction . . . that the United States would jeopardize its role throughout the world if it accepted defeat anywhere . . . a sort of self-fulfilling prophecy”; and, fourth, the “perhaps inevitable corruption” of U.S. Cold War leaders. “The extension of containment to Asia and its militarization owe less to the article by ‘X’ . . . than to historical circumstances, some of them like

¹⁴¹ Raymond Aron to Joseph Alsop, 25 January 1967, Archives Personnelle Raymond Aron, Cote, AP 88, *Centre de Recherches Politiques Raymond Aron, at L’Ecole Des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales*, Paris, France. See also Alsop’s letter of 18 January 1967. For more on the Aron papers, visit <http://www.ehess.fr/centres/crpra/pages/archives.html> .

the Korean campaign, semi-accidental, others determined by technology [the arms race], and yet others probably due to bureaucratic decisions, vested interests, and the results of unwise decisions,” Aron concluded.¹⁴³ Thus did the French commentator seek to counter both the revisionist, New Left criticism that U.S. imperialism animated the Vietnam commitment and, as well, the realists who emphasized the Wilsonian habits that drove American policy there.

Aron’s strength—and in true contrast to Lippmann’s late writings on Vietnam—was his ability to write dispassionately about Vietnam and the chief U.S. policymakers who directed actions there—some of whom (Rostow, Bundy, and Ball) he knew personally. Lippmann’s most perceptive writing on the war came *before* the immediate period of escalation; Aron’s came in terms of gauging the war’s aftermath. This was, in part, as much a function of Aron’s refusal to romanticize leaders as it was attributable to his being a disengaged “outsider.” Lippmann’s tendency to vest in “great” individuals great expectations not only prohibited a true measure of their ability to fulfill those hopes but also devalued systemic factors that contributed—sometimes decisively—to their shortcomings. Lippmann initially attacked U.S. intervention in Vietnam on two grounds: first, as a grotesque outgrowth of globalized containment; second, as a kind of bastardized imperialism. Toward the end of his brilliant de-constructions of official rationale for intervention in Vietnam, however, he made a significant shift that diminished his overall critique of containment. In bitterly attacking the policymakers, the columnist implied that it was the *decision-makers* who were to blame rather than the bankrupt policy itself—this, after writing

¹⁴² Raymond Aron, *The Imperial Republic: The United States and the World, 1945-1973*, translated by Frank Jellinek (Washington, DC: University Press of America, 1974): 105.

for two decades about the inherent flaws of containment. Aron never made the mistake of personalizing the war. But he also approached it with far less personal and political baggage than did Lippmann. Lippmann's actions as a facilitator and private diplomat during this period also reveal another difference between the men in terms of how they functioned as commentators. His analytical framework for judging U.S. decision-making in Vietnam did not limit his dissent. It proved powerful and insightful. His desire to maintain his access and, as well, his tendency to read the best into bad developments *did* act to brake his dissent. But, ultimately, neither prevented it.

IX.

By attacking President Johnson and principal policymakers in 1966 and 1967—shifting away from the strategic weaknesses of their policies—Lippmann also speeded his marginalization and diminished his effectiveness as a critic because he moved away from the strategic internationalist foundations of his critique. His emphasis on the limits of U.S. power, the strategic pitfalls of intervention, and the necessity of finding a diplomatic solution to the civil conflict in Vietnam, proved powerful and enduring. Government officials spent considerable time sifting through his long record in a vain attempt to produce evidence with which to rebut Lippmann's central claims that the war was neither winnable nor worth fighting. Though they rejected his premises, moreover, they found in his 20 years of Cold War columns a discernable pattern of preference for diplomatic engagement rather than military

¹⁴³ Aron, *The Imperial Republic*: 106-107; 302.

confrontation, generally, and a refusal to intervene in Asia, specifically. Vietnam marked no discernable break from his overall assessment of global containment. Lippmann's critique was not that of the New Left and offered no extended analysis of the roots of American imperialism. That said, in failing to ask pertinent questions about these issues, Lippmann—whether by design or inadvertence—mitigated his own part in creating a foreign policy culture which, in his lifetime, shed nascent isolationism and embraced unchecked globalism.

For years, U.S. officials understood that the columnist's criticisms would not diminish as America took a more active role in Vietnam. None knew this better than Lippmann's friend, national security adviser McGeorge Bundy—perceiving that Lippmann would argue first for a diplomatic settlement and accommodation with China through an international conference and, failing that, the withdrawal of the American military and political presence in South Vietnam. Bundy did his best to delay the inevitable. According to archival records, the columnist's opposition surprised no officials—they certainly did not view his dissent as an abrupt change from his past. It wasn't. It fell within the broad pattern of analysis that Bundy, John Kennedy, Lyndon Johnson, George Ball, Dean Acheson, Paul Nitze, Dean Rusk, John McCloy, and many others had come largely to mistrust.

The attempts to marginalize Lippmann in the mid 1960s can best be understood in the wider context of officials' long-simmering doubts about Lippmann's Cold War commentary. The backlash against him was not retribution exacted for *turning* against the Vietnamese programs implemented by the foreign policy elite so much as it was a reaction to his cumulative judgments on global

containment (of which Vietnam was but a single manifestation). Lippmann's ideas about the Cold War began from a different starting point, were informed by a stream of perspectives outside the Washington-centric worldview of U.S. officials, and by the time of American intervention in Vietnam, constituted grave challenges to the rationale of U.S. global strategies. American unilateralism violated his distinctive emphasis on collaborative diplomacy and spheres of influence. The price of his opposition was steep: complete foreclosure on his access to the powerful and the dissolution of long-standing friendships.

Chapter 10:

Walter Lippmann and the Cold War: Diplomacy, Public Dialogue, and Useful Patterns

I.

In the days after Lippmann passed away in New York City on December 14, 1974, eulogists were plentiful and unsparing in their praise. “A journalist without peer, Walter Lippmann was a political philosopher who has left an indelible print on his times and a legacy of wisdom for future generations,” the *New York Times* editors wrote.¹ “We have lost a great American,” President Gerald R. Ford said in a press statement. “As a newsman, political analyst, and author, Walter Lippmann played a major role for more than half a century in the development of public dialog and in shaping a new standard of journalism. Mr. Lippmann’s contributions to the good society which he envisioned for his country will be long remembered.”²

Americans, however, forgot with their customary rapidity. The process had begun even before Lippmann’s death. When the columns stopped coming in the late-1960s, he fast disappeared from the public consciousness. Lippmann died relatively obscure to the readers who once relied so much on his judgments. The publication of his authorized biography, just six years later, prompted one observer to lament that

¹ “The Ablest Mind . . .,” 15 December 1974, *New York Times*: 24.

² Gerald R. Ford, 14 December 1974, “Statement on the Death of Walter Lippmann,” *Public Papers of the Presidents: Gerald R. Ford (1974)*: 749.

the interval since his death might as well have been six decades.³ How did one describe Walter Lippmann to the “hot tub generation”? His official biographer, Ronald Steel, expressed fascination that Lippmann could so abruptly “cease to exist as a public figure.”⁴ In 1985, the U.S. Postal Service put Lippmann’s image on a six-cent stamp, thereby imparting a sense of finality to his rapid displacement from his locus as *the* manufacturer of opinion to the margins of public memory. Lippmann’s chiseled profile, captured in orange-vermilion, took its place in a series commemorating great Americans of yesteryear: Pearl Buck, Sequoyah, Henry Clay, and George Mason.

There was something self-induced about this national amnesia. By the time Lippmann retired, Americans were both weary and wary of him. He traveled among—even if he had not entirely belonged to—the postwar ruling elite, that patrician class of “wise men” against whom a generation of young Americans had rebelled in the 1960s. Though he did not share all of the elite’s ambitions, Lippmann undeniably helped them shape the nation’s image of itself as an actor beyond its borders. He’d crafted the dialogue about the course U.S. officials would follow after World War II and he popularized some of the organizations and programs that speeded American global hegemony. His social and intellectual ties to the Cold War elite, who led the nation into the tragedy of Vietnam, were not completely absolved by his opposition to that war.

Lippmann’s doubts about participatory democracy—principally the public’s ability to contribute to the foreign policy-making process—seemed less relevant,

³ Henry Allen, “Chronicling Walter Lippmann: Ronald Steel and the Guru of Yesterday’s News,” 11

indeed distant, to late twentieth-century Americans whose lives were transformed by the opening of their society. The civil rights movements of the 1960s and 1970s and a coinciding communications revolution affected profound change in attitudes toward wider public input on national issues. In the 1920s Lippmann's influential *Public Opinion* despaired that the public was little more than a willful despot, incapable of contributing to the foreign policy debate. His sequel, *The Phantom Public*, memorably analogized the public's understanding of national issues to a deaf man watching a game from the back row of stands at the ballpark. Lippmann's public spectated rather than participated in the great debates of the day.⁵ Furthermore, Lippmann's books engaged 1920s concerns about the purpose and structure of a largely unprofessional and unorganized press in a new mass society. But by the 1990s the organization and dissemination of information no longer seemed insuperable problems; in fact, precisely the opposite threat existed, as corporate mergers narrowed ownership control of media outlets. The professionalization of the press and rapid technological improvements led by television and the Internet, created information that, generally speaking, was more reliable and accessible than the system in place at the beginning of Walter Lippmann's career. The challenge in this increasingly egalitarian society was not one of *transmission* but, rather, *reception*—the ability to process and act upon an immense flow of data.⁶

September 1980, *Washington Post*: D1, D13.

⁴ Allen, "Chronicling Walter Lippmann," 11 September 1980, *Washington Post*: D1, D13.

⁵ Walter Lippmann, *Public Opinion* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1922): 29–32; 398–418. Lippmann, *The Phantom Public* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1925): 13. For a contemporary response to Lippmann, see John Dewey, *The Public and Its Problems: An Essay in Political Inquiry* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1927). For a modern appraisal, see James W. Carey, *Communication as Culture: Essays on Media and Society* (Boston: Unwin-Hyman, 1989).

⁶ Carey, *Communication as Culture*: especially, 79–80; Christopher Lasch, "Journalism, Publicity and the Lost Art of Argument," *Gannett Center Journal*, Spring 1990: 9. See also, Michael Schudson, *The*

As the Cold War consensus between the Democratic and Republican parties fell into disrepair in the post-Vietnam years some observers yearned for the days when the “wise men” forged foreign policy.⁷ But one astute critic pointed out that these mythical overseers exercised less influence upon postwar consensus than often was assumed. The pre-Vietnam consensus was systemic in nature, developing from a corporate process that merged the “interests, interactions and compromises of highly practical politicians,” wrote Samuel P. Huntington. A sound foreign policy did not materialize because of the “ratiocination of a Lippmann-like intellect.”⁸ In any event, no one quite filled Lippmann’s lofty role as moderator of the debate.

Nor did American leaders internalize what commonly is depicted as Lippmann’s defining foreign policy message. His “realist” view of U.S. vital interests—emphasizing the limits of American power—did not resound with U.S. officials precisely because it circumscribed the very moral and ideological considerations to which they were drawn again and again. Indeed, the two decades after Lippmann’s death offered a stark reminder that his geopolitics ran against the grain of deeply-held American beliefs and traditions traceable to the early republic:

Power of News (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995): 170-188. For problems that have beset the modern media, notably the rise of adversarial relations between press and government in the post-Vietnam era, see Schudson, *The Sociology of News* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2003): 90-114.

⁷ See for example the largely uncritical book by Evan Thomas and Walter Isaacson, *The Wise Men: Six Friends and the World They Made—Acheson, Bohlen, Harriman, Kennan, Lovett, McCloy* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1986).

⁸ Samuel P. Huntington, “Coping with the Lippmann Gap,” *Foreign Affairs*, 66 (No. 3), 1988: 453-477, quotation on 475. Huntington believes that Lippmann misstated the problem of American foreign policy in the twentieth century by arguing that “insolvency and inconstancy” represented unnatural aberrations in the history of U.S. diplomacy. The period between the Monroe Doctrine and the Spanish-American War, which Lippmann held up as the ideal, coincided with American isolation. The years of “solvency” from the mid-1940s to the late-1960s, over which Lippmann presided, also were not natural: they were an age of American dominance. “Neither isolation nor hegemony is natural or possible now,” Huntington writes, “and some gap between capabilities and commitments may be inevitable.” But, he adds, such “insolvency” has been a condition managed by consensus among American leaders.

manifest destiny, exceptionalism, humanitarianism, and, especially, the missionary impulse to bring democratic government to foreign peoples.⁹ In 1977, the Jimmy Carter administration made an abortive attempt to make human rights and morality the touchstone of American foreign policy.¹⁰ Carter's successor, Ronald Reagan, used bellicose rhetoric to re-energize the nation's sense of self and purpose by casting the Cold War competition in Wilsonian terms. In 1983, speaking before a group of evangelical ministers, Reagan described the Soviet Union as "the focus of evil in the modern world." America's efforts to topple Communist regimes, Reagan continued, were part of a righteous struggle "against the aggressive impulses of an evil empire"—a battle between "right and wrong and good and evil."¹¹ Lippmann would have assailed such language as cheap demagoguery, as he likely would have questioned Reagan's renewed militarization of the Cold War. But one prominent scholar of international relations later wrote that Reagan's military, economic, and rhetorical exertions caused the ensuing collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, and ushered in a worldwide "democratic revolution." Under this view, the fortieth president acted as a moralist and global populist who, like no president since Woodrow Wilson, made "American leadership of a world community of democratic nations following free-market practices" the core element of his foreign policy.¹²

⁹ Tony Smith, *America's Mission: The United States and the Worldwide Struggle for Democracy in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995); see also, Anders Stephanson, *Manifest Destiny: American Expansion and the Empire of Right* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1995): especially, 112-129.

¹⁰ See for example, Gaddis Smith, *Morality, Reason and Power: American Diplomacy in the Carter Years* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1986).

¹¹ Ronald Reagan, "Remarks at the Annual Convention and National Association of Evangelicals," 8 March 1983, Orlando, FL, *Public Papers of the Presidents: Ronald W. Reagan* (1983). Available online at: <http://www.reagan.utexas.edu/resource/speeches/1983/30883b.htm> .

¹² See Smith's discussion of Reagan's Wilsonianism in *America's Mission*: 266-307, quotations 268-9.

Lippmann's admonishments registered even less with a public under the spell of rhetoricians like Reagan. Instead, his warnings seemed to contradict many Americans' experiences of prosperity and strength in the post-World War II years. Beware the hubris and arrogance of newly-acquired power—he'd warned countrymen and women from the 1940s to the 1960s—but especially the temptation to remake the world in America's image. What followed in relatively short order after Lippmann's death were years of unimagined U.S. economic and military preponderance. The once implacable Soviet threat dissolved leaving behind petty thugs like Slobodan Milosevic and Saddam Hussein who, while capable of inflicting local suffering and instability, could not thwart American regional power. Opportunities abounded for overseas U.S. corporate expansion, even in the last great Communist power, the People's Republic of China. Commercialism and technology during the late-twentieth century carried out a globalization of American culture far more swiftly and completely than any army of occupation could ever have taken it. By the late-1990s, Lippmann's message of limits seemed only an echo from a quaint, fast receding time.

II.

Reflecting on the closing of the "American Century," writer and journalist Richard Reeves summed up the nation's perennial foreign policy problem this way: "We can't figure out where America ends and the world begins. So we are willing and usually able to take on the whole world—often for no particular reason or for reasons we will figure out and explain later, after the deed is done." Does America, Reeves asked,

control its power or does power control it?¹³ This question was classic Lippmann, and one with which the columnist struggled for 50 years, in thousands of columns.

Lippmann answered it by advancing a conceptual model to frame discourse about the Cold War in which he urged U.S. officials to channel American power into a course of restrained, responsible, strategic internationalism. That framework, examined in the preceding chapters, rested on **five key principles** that Lippmann stressed in his postwar writings: (1) the necessity of the permanent participation of the U.S. in international politics, commensurate with its relative power and influence; (2) an acute awareness of the limits of American power; (3) the conviction that Washington must craft Cold War policy within a collaborationist framework; (4) the rejection of anti-Communist ideology (and, as well, the subordination of ideology to geopolitics in explaining Soviet intentions); and, (5) an explicit emphasis on using diplomacy to resolve core conflicts between the Atlantic Alliance and its Communist rivals.

Strategic internationalism set Lippmann apart from most contemporaries and, indeed, many who have followed. He had a much more ambitious purpose than simply defining “national interests”—or, in his oft-repeated phrase, “balancing power with commitments.” His approach derived from unique cultural and moral *components* and it had specific cultural and moral *objectives*: the preservation of Western values and traditions, unity of national purpose, and the restraint of power. Lippmann sought to excise peculiarly American parochialisms, namely, exceptionalism, the democratic-missionary impulse, presumptive innocence, and, at

¹³ Richard Reeves, “It’s Hard to Tell Where America Ends and the World Begins,” 3 September 1999, *Universal Press Syndicate*.

times, omnipotence. He believed them to be domestic “habits” of thinking traceable to the republic’s founding, which were projected outward in the twentieth century. They provided the impetus for a slew of provincial attitudes and actions: manifest destiny; the self-righteous indignation at European great power politics; unilateralism; the notion that America must make the world safe for democracy; and manifestations of pacifism and isolationism such as the disarmament and “outlawry of war” movements. To be understood properly, Lippmann’s geopolitical orientation must be viewed within the context of his opposition to these parochialisms and his commitment to a restrained internationalism.¹⁴

There was a “cosmopolitan” component of this internationalism that made Lippmann’s rendition of realism less nationalist than many of his contemporaries. D. Steven Blum has suggested that a defining current that ran through Lippmann’s political philosophy was this cosmopolitanism: his sensitivity to foreign cultures, his catholicity of learning, his faith in science and modernity. As Blum explained, Walter Lippmann’s “views were unconstrained by the preoccupations and prejudices of his homeland; that he was receptive to diverse currents of opinion from abroad; that the values, ideas, and interests of many societies were interwoven with his methods and conclusions.”¹⁵ Lippmann also evinced a clear understanding of the

¹⁴ See for example, Greg Russell’s discussion in *Hans J. Morgenthau and the Ethics of American Statecraft* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1990): 228-230; 234. “To a considerable degree, Lippmann’s recourse to diplomatic strategies . . . represented the only realistic means by which to salvage his cosmopolitan sympathies. The balance of power and the stabilization of alliance systems functioned as self-activating restraints on the irrational resort to imperialism or belligerence by aggressive nations on either side of the Atlantic.” And, Russell adds, “At the height of the Cold War, and with the concept of massive retaliation in mind, Lippmann warned of the militarization of American diplomacy that would substitute a temporary monopolization of nuclear power for a more constructive diplomatic approach to resolving the territorial and political questions that lie at the center of Soviet-American strategic differences.”

¹⁵ D. Steven Blum, *Walter Lippmann: Cosmopolitan in a Century of Total War* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1983): 11. Biographer Ronald Steel describes this cultural palette of ideas and

influence of domestic culture and politics on international relations. In his earliest books, *Drift and Mastery* and *A Preface to Politics*, Lippmann derided Jeffersonian notions of small and self-sustaining communities and championed a Hamiltonian conception of the nation—one that appreciated the interconnectivity of modern American society. His critique of American foreign policy—rejecting centrism, unilateralism, and moralism—followed a parallel construction that stressed the nation’s inescapable links to the new international order.¹⁶ In rejecting native ideologies, Lippmann believed that American leaders would mature and bring the nation to its rightful, responsible position as a citadel of Western values¹⁷ in a century torn by fascism and totalitarian Marxism.

Evolving alongside Lippmann’s cosmopolitanism was a pragmatic and strategic sense of how to organize and exercise power. From his youth, Lippmann perceived the world based upon the grand strategy and geopolitical theory of Alfred Mahan and, later in life, on the ideas of military strategist Nicholas Spykman.¹⁸ *Realpolitik* and classical diplomacy held a powerful attraction for him—from his first description of a “pool” of Anglo-American sea power in 1919, to his post-World War II concept of the four principal powers, and beyond. In June 1964, frustrated with his unsuccessful attempts to get the Lyndon Johnson administration to seek a diplomatic

ascribes it to Lippmann’s tensile but pliant mind; that is, as a unique kind of “intellectual flexibility.” Steel’s interpretation, however, implies far less continuity in Lippmann’s core values and beliefs. He suggests (with admiration) that Lippmann’s ability to keep his writing fresh derived from his ability to “jettison” old ideas in favor of new ones. Such analysis leaves little room for understanding his subject’s enduring political habits. Steel, *Walter Lippmann and the American Century*: 79.

¹⁶ Blum, *Walter Lippmann: Cosmopolitan in a Century of Total War*: see especially pp. 11-16.

¹⁷ Among these he counted, civil liberties, individualism, human rights, and economic liberalism.

¹⁸ See, for instance, Alfred Thayer Mahan, *The Interests of America in Sea Power, Present and Future* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1898); Mahan, *The Influence of Sea Power Upon the French Revolution and Empire, 1793-1812* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1898); Nicholas Spykman, *America’s Strategy in World Politics: The United States and the Balance of Power* (New York:

solution in South Vietnam, Lippmann exclaimed to his research assistant that America was a sea power and had no business fighting a land war in Asia. “These are the things I’ve been trying to get people to realize,” he said, “I was raised on Mahan, you know!”¹⁹ The logic of great power politics shaped his writing during the years leading up to U.S. intervention in World War I, in *The Stakes of Diplomacy* afterward, and in scores of his *New Republic* editorials in between. It provided the foundation of his post-World War II plans for American internationalism.

Much of the framework for his analysis of postwar international politics was crafted in opposition to what he believed to be the excesses of Wilsonian diplomacy and on behalf of his fervent determination not to “lose the peace” as the nation had done after World War I. In doing so, Lippmann militated against what Wilsonians defined as a core American value: the notion that America could best preserve its interests by exporting its democratic values and institutions around the world. Ever since Lippmann attacked this assumption, historians and latter-day pundits have portrayed him as the high priest of political realism. They read in those famous lines from *U.S. Foreign Policy*, a cold, steely calculus of the “national interest” divorced from values, ideas, or moral considerations—that is, a guiding rationale that considers solely relationships of power. Even Lippmann’s contemporaries blushed at what they believed to be an over-simplified and naked linkage between power and policy that the columnist seemed to be advocating. Critics jibed at the simplicity of the

Harcourt, Brace, and Company, 1942); and Spykman, *The Geography of Peace*, edited by Helen R. Nicholl (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Company, 1944).

¹⁹ Elizabeth Midgley Diaries, I June 1964.

argument, noting that the *U.S. Foreign Policy* could be reduced to one line: Don't bite off more than what you can chew.²⁰

That kind of analysis, however, blurred the careful distinction he drew between means and goals. What Lippmann had in mind in *U.S. Foreign Policy*, *U.S. War Aims*, *The Cold War*, and thousands of columns thereafter was something more complex and supple. Lippmann knew the balance of power. He hoped to put this familiar concept into the employ of enlightened internationalism: ending colonialism, organizing international politics through extra-national institutions, increasing cultural exchange, and stressing the interconnectivity of domestic and international politics, trade, education, culture, and the flow of ideas. Lippmann's rendition of *realpolitik* struck an essential balance, merging internationalist aspirations with a hearty mistrust of American idealism and parochial habits—isolationism, exceptionalism, omnipotence, and xenophobia. Over time, Lippmann's implicit argument on behalf of these “regulators” of American policy became implicit. At bottom, strategic internationalism was a means of organizing and structuring great-power relations and the conduct of American diplomacy—to make the world system and U.S. participation in it efficient, orderly, and stable.²¹

But for all its emphasis on organization there also was a *moral* component to Lippmann's approach. It was this: that the application of American power abroad

²⁰ For negative reviews of Lippmann's book, see Albert L. Guerard, Review of *U.S. Foreign Policy*, 26 June 1943, *The Nation*; Raymond Moley, “Hoover-Gibson, and Lippmann,” 17 June 1943, *Los Angeles Times*: A4. Steel's assessment faintly echoed 1943 critics: “In essence [*U.S. Foreign Policy*] seemed to mean simply: don't bite off more than you can chew. Its corollary seemed equally simple: don't chew more than you can swallow.” Steel, *Walter Lippmann and the American Century*: 406.

²¹ Again, D. Stephen Blum notes, “As much as the balance of power codes were couched in a language of military strength, they also were de facto regulators of . . . adventurism, imperialism, or belligerence from this side of the Atlantic.” See Blum, *Walter Lippmann: Cosmopolitan in a Century of Total War*: 137.

(particularly military force) had to be made accountable and responsible to the citizenry from which that power derived. Lippmann was neither a man of the Left nor a voice for the people; in truth, he greatly mistrusted the distorting effect public opinion played in major policy decisions. Despite these misgivings, however, he also realized that only through a process of public dialogue and consensus could officials legitimate their policies. He was critical of President Kennedy, but especially Johnson, because of the failure of both presidents to educate the public about their war aims in Southeast Asia. To wit, Lippmann publicly criticized Johnson *first* in the spring of 1965—*not on the issue of sustained bombing of North Vietnam*—but because he sensed that the president and his advisers were preparing to subvert the dialogue-consensus process. Lippmann offered a construct within which U.S. officials could exercise power successfully but he demanded that their actions be responsible, ultimately accountable, to the public from which their authority derived.

To deny that Lippmann's analytical framework had such a dimension is to miss entirely its central aim: to help Americans—a people inexperienced in world leadership—to adjust to the nation's altogether abnormal postwar power. Lippmann's belief in the restrained, responsible use of power also made him sensitive to the conflicting interests and needs of the community of nations. The classic example of this was Lippmann's contention that American Cold War practices were best validated through state-to-state consultation and collaboration; conversely, they tended to be de-legitimated by American unilateralism. Washington's foreign policies, he believed, ought to be further constrained by a reasonable consensus among the community of nations—particularly America's Atlantic Alliance partners.

This implied, too, a policy was sound not merely if the United States had sufficient power to achieve its designs, but whether the policy met a certain standard of responsible leadership and had moral authority as expressed by international sanction and cooperation. American globalism, Lippmann explained in the spring of 1965, “is nothing but the old isolationism of our innocence in a new form. Then we thought we had to preserve our purity by withdrawal from the ugliness of great power politics. Now we sometimes talk as if we could preserve our purity only by policing the globe. But in the real world we shall have to learn to live as a great power which defends itself and makes its way among other great powers.”²²

Lippmann refused to countenance using his balance of power schema cynically to shroud unilateral American expansionism. His strategic internationalism had regulatory as well as actuary emphases. His was not—as Eric Alterman has glibly written—an ambivalent philosophy which provided Washington imperialists a means to implement global containment.²³ Quite the contrary is true. Lippmann’s strategic internationalism not only preserved American security, it also meant to contain American ambitions. By providing a system of regional alliances and a plan for postwar American defense, Lippmann offered policymakers grappling with vastly expanded responsibilities a formula to advance U.S. interests, a map with which to navigate the world, a channel in which to route safely their sometimes excessive energies. Lippmann knew, however, that the search for security and the grasping for empire—as he once lectured his friend Arthur Schlesinger, Jr.—were often two sides

²² Lippmann, T&T, “The Unfinished Debate,” 17 April 1965.

²³ Eric Alterman *Sound and Fury: The Washington Punditocracy and the Collapse of American Politics* (New York: Harper-Collins Publishers, 1992): especially, pp. 37-38.

of the same coin.²⁴ Therefore, he realized that his system must also restrain American advances. His response to containment, and to Vietnam specifically, reflected this sensibility. Venture forth into the world, Lippmann exhorted policymakers and the public, just don't try to remake it in your own image. Take responsibility for international development and reconstruction, but do it in a collaborative manner that fosters independent allies not subservient client states. Ensure American national security but not unilaterally. Having lived through two world wars Lippmann believed it prudent to enact policies to protect America in what he knew to be a dangerous world. He knew enough, however, also to insist that the world be protected from America's embrace and, ultimately, that the U.S. be shielded from its many temptations and own best intentions.²⁵

Lippmann's fidelity to this conceptual framework—particularly his emphases on *realpolitik* and classical diplomacy—provided the cornerstone of his Vietnam commentary. As the core chapters of this study demonstrate, Lippmann never believed the Vietnam problem President Lyndon Johnson inherited was insuperable—though he did not believe the disengagement that he counseled would be easy or cost-free. He tried to persuade President Johnson to get out of Vietnam, knowing full well the history of U.S. involvement, the amount of American treasure and lives expended

²⁴ Lippmann to Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., 25 September 1967, reprinted in Blum, *Public Philosopher*: 615-616. Lippmann was responding to Schlesinger's "Origins of the Cold War," published in the October 1967 issue of *Foreign Affairs*.

²⁵ See Blum's stimulating but brief discussion of this aspect of Lippmann's thought: *Walter Lippmann: Cosmopolitan in a Century of Total War*: 138-140. Ironically, it was Kennan among all the realists who seems to most thoroughly have inculcated this part of Lippmann's critique. Forty years after penning the X-Article he would write: "It could, in fact, be said that the first thing we Americans need to learn to contain is, in some ways, ourselves: our own environmental destructiveness, our tendency to live beyond our means and to borrow ourselves into disaster, our apparent inability to reduce a devastating budgetary deficit, our comparable inability to control the immigration into our midst of great masses of people of wholly different cultural and political traditions." See Kennan's essay "Containment Then and Now," *Foreign Affairs* 65 (No. 4, Spring 1987): 889.

there, the stakes of international prestige, and the domestic political price. His argument was that the cost of winning the war in any meaningful sense was too high to justify, and that a nimble diplomacy that united Vietnam (even if it were ruled from Hanoi) and detached it from the Cold War struggle would provide a tangible victory for Washington.

Lippmann's counsel in the critical years of 1964 and 1965 was no mere soliloquy. He had a track record on which to run—one of advising each administration, from Truman onward, against a series of pivotal decisions that deepened America's commitment in Southeast Asia. U.S. intervention and escalation of the war in Southeast Asia occurred in "phases" during a roughly 20-year period; Lippmann argued against each of the critical decisions that prolonged and intensified U.S. involvement.

- **Truman:** Permitted the French to reoccupy Indochina and attempt to reassert colonial control. Later, his administration assumed the financial cost of Paris's war to put down the Viet Minh. Officials also refused to extend diplomatic recognition to the People's Republic of China and, during the Korean War, pursued a policy of rollback and accelerated U.S. aid to Indochina. **Lippmann:** Rejected U.S. support for colonial powers and lobbied hard for the dissolution of the old European empires. He attacked the Truman administration's willingness to underwrite French colonial reassertion. He argued that interventions on the "periphery" of the Soviet Union and, later, the People's Republic of China could have disastrous

consequences. Further, Lippmann advised that the U.S. offer diplomatic recognition to China and pursue a “wedge” strategy to increase tensions between Moscow and Beijing. He vigorously criticized the administration’s prosecution of the Korean War above the 38th Parallel, raised concerns about provocations of Chinese security interests, and warned that the Korean conflict would spark a series of clashes with Beijing over other Southeast Asian countries.

- **Eisenhower:** Refused to intervene with ground forces in Indochina in 1954, but by ignoring the Geneva Accords of 1954 and helping to foster the Ngo Dinh Diem regime in South Vietnam the U.S. administration created the political pretext for later intervention. **Lippmann:** Lippmann praised Eisenhower’s decision not to commit ground forces to relieve French forces at Dienbienphu. But he disagreed with U.S. diplomatic strategy, arguing that a major-power settlement (creating a coalition government that included Vietnamese Communists) was the only avenue to resolve the Indochinese war. He rejected the creation of SEATO as a dangerous contraption for committing the U.S. to future military intervention in Southeast Asia. The best possible outcome, he wrote in 1954, was a united Vietnam—most likely a nationalist-communist state run from Hanoi but independent of Beijing. He viewed the conflict in Vietnam as a civil war and not as a communist insurgency of Soviet or Chinese aggrandizement.

- **Kennedy:** Pursued an enhanced (though limited) policy of trying to achieve a military victory, while refusing to allow the Diem government to negotiate with Hanoi. He authorized the coup against Diem. And, unlike his decision to support neutralization in Laos, he refused to pursue military disengagement from South Vietnam. **Lippmann:** Encouraged Kennedy to get a diplomatic settlement for the entire region as early as 1961—a neutralization plan later pushed by De Gaulle (and popularized by Lippmann) for Vietnam. He warned in September 1963 that the U.S. could not wage successfully a proxy war in Southeast Asia. He also counseled against abandoning or replacing Diem. The conflict in Vietnam, he wrote, was un-winnable in a military sense and victory, in any meaningful terms, would come at a price that U.S. officials could not afford to pay.

Time and again Lippmann lined himself up on the side opposite of intervention. Between the late-1940s and 1963, on at least half a dozen occasions in which major policy decisions further committed the U.S. to action in Vietnam, Lippmann advised disengagement. Time and again American leaders ignored his advice. At any one of these junctures the chance to liquidate the Vietnam commitment was attainable—though progressively the price became higher. This was the difference between LBJ's decision and all the rest. And Lippmann knew it. But he believed he held an advantage with Johnson that he did not possess with the previous three presidents: he had greater access and (he thought) influence with this president. He believed he could convince Johnson to use his massive 1964 electoral

victory as a mandate to seek accommodation in Asia, to develop a détente with the Soviets, and to focus resources on a lasting social reform at home. He was proved wrong. Lippmann's conceptual framework, insightful though it may have been in ferreting out the dangers of U.S. intervention, underestimated the persistence of Cold War anti-Communist ideological bonds on Johnson and his key advisers.²⁶

In retrospect, history showed Lippmann to be prescient in opposing American intervention in South Vietnam. There is no better illustration of this claim than to juxtapose his warnings against intervention in 1954, 1963, and 1965 with what President Kennedy's and President Johnson's Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara wrote decades later in his *mea culpa*. McNamara conceded two of the fundamental propositions Lippmann used to oppose the war: (1) Vietnam fell far outside America's vital interests; and (2) sending a large U.S. army into Southeast Asia was a strategic mistake of appalling proportions. "We both over-estimated the effect of South Vietnam's loss on the security of the West and failed to adhere to the fundamental principal that, in the final analysis, if the South Vietnamese were to be saved, they had to win the war themselves," McNamara wrote of the principal decision-makers. "Straying from this central truth, we built a progressively more massive effort on an inherently unstable foundation."²⁷ In public and in private,

²⁶ On the role of ideology generally in see, Michael Hunt, *Ideology and United States Foreign Policy* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1987). For a useful discussion of the ideological roots of the Cold War, see Melvyn P. Leffler, *The Specter of Communism: The United States and the Origins of the Cold War, 1917-1953* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1994). Fredrik Logevall argues that among a number of variables leading to escalation (one of which was an anti-communist mindset), the primary factor was Johnson's conflation of national interest with personal interest. See, *Choosing War: The Lost Chance for Peace and the Escalation of War in Vietnam*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1999: 389-395.

²⁷ Robert McNamara, *In Retrospect: The Tragedy and Lessons of Vietnam* (New York: Random House, 1995): 333. In his final chapter, McNamara lists eleven "lessons of Vietnam"—a good many of which Lippmann pointed out *before* full-scale intervention in 1965. These included: U.S. policymakers' misjudgments of the geopolitical aims of the North Vietnamese, Vietcong, China and the USSR; the

McNamara has insisted that the “domino theory” had a complete hold on the vision of Washington policymakers and the foreign policy intelligentsia in the postwar years. While McNamara may have been truthful in making that assertion, it nevertheless was a sweeping statement. Decades after the war ended, the former secretary of defense could admit he made mistakes though he steadfastly refused to recognize that some of his contemporaries who opposed the war made insightful, ultimately correct, counter-arguments *at the time*.²⁸ Lippmann was one such observer.

Standard accounts of Lippmann’s foreign policy analysis suggest this period was his “finest hour” because he set aside his *realpolitik* to argue with uncharacteristic emotion about how intervention violated American “values.”²⁹ This is an inaccurate portrayal of events. The true strength of Lippmann’s opposition to the Vietnam War derived from three constant beliefs: first, America had no vital interests at stake in Southeast Asia; second, it could not win a favorable military outcome in what amounted to an intractable civil war; and, third, by using diplomacy

weakness of conventional forces against unconventional tactics; failure to conduct an open debate about the purpose and risks of large-scale intervention; failure to keep the public and Congress apprised of developments in South Vietnam and about why the U.S. pursued the policies it did; failure to realize that the U.S. does not (in McNamara’s words) “have the God-given right to shape every nation in our own image or as we choose”; the failure to create an international coalition for intervention; and, lastly, the failure to accept the reality that there may have been no “acceptable” solution to the problem in South Vietnam. See McNamara’s list, *In Retrospect*: 319-335.

²⁸ Robert McNamara, phone conversation with author, 22 January 2002, Washington, DC. McNamara maintained that the domino analogy permeated official thinking. Allowing that his memory might be incorrect, McNamara also maintained that Lippmann never addressed the issue. “There are two lessons I talk about [in his books *In Retrospect* and *Argument without End*] that I’m not sure Lippmann ever addressed. The first was this notion—that none of us ever talked about enough at the time—of falling dominos . . . that we accepted this theory without ever examining it. I don’t remember Lippmann talking about that in print. Now my memory may be wrong. The second point I make is that we did not examine enough the question of whether we had the wherewithal to pursue and win a military victory in Vietnam. I don’t remember Lippmann addressing that at the time, either.” Lippmann receives only fleeting mention in *In Retrospect*.

²⁹ Steel refers to Lippmann’s opposition to Vietnam as “a strange capstone” to his career. His final years in Washington were marked by an “emotional revulsion to what he viewed as imperial ambitions. He wanted his country to pursue its own high ideals.” Steel, *Walter Lippmann and the American Century*: quoted on p. xvi; for more on Steel’s interpretation in this respect, see pp. 575;

to broker a settlement and foster a united, independent (even if communist) Vietnam, the U.S. could maintain, perhaps augment, its influence in the region. Lippmann was the earliest and most formidable critic of the war because of the profundity of these three assertions. American officials dared not dismiss him lightly. Revisionist historians who have written about this episode have the story backward. In fact, Lippmann's assertion that by embracing Wilsonian designs Washington, *not Moscow*, was the superpower that acted with a global ideology, anticipated a key argument of the revisionist historians who, nevertheless, decades later attacked his realism as an enabling mechanism for U.S. expansion!³⁰

Based on their long experience with Lippmann, U.S. officials—McGeorge Bundy chief among them—realized that the columnist could not be co-opted, so they decided on a program to delay his public dissent. By breaking with the administration because of escalation in Vietnam, Lippmann did what Bundy, McNamara and other key U.S. officials—despite their own nagging doubts—countenanced but did not do: Lippmann put his core beliefs ahead of concern for personal reputation. Though misled by the national security adviser and President Johnson, Lippmann stood against the administration's policies in Vietnam on the grounds of geopolitics, classical diplomacy, and his cosmopolitan sympathies. Some officials, like George Ball, who refused to split publicly with LBJ, argued that with troops in the field

579-580; 582. For Steel's comment about Lippmann arguing for American "values," see Henry Allen, "Chronicling Walter Lippmann," 11 September 1980, *Washington Post*: D13.

³⁰ The political scientist Stanley Hoffman makes just this point in passing in his review of Cold War literature, "On the Origins of the Cold War," published in, *Janus and Minerva: Essays in the Theory and Practice of International Politics* (Boulder and London: Westview Press, 1987): 207-223. "Whereas it was the Soviet Union that behaved according to a classical theory of power politics, it was the United States that behaved not at all like a classical great power playing a balance of power game but like an ideological power with a global vision. The United States behaved, then, in the way we thought the Soviets were behaving. In this respect, incidentally, the real father of revisionism, the one

critics like Lippmann had no choice but to rally around the flag and support the cause. Lippmann refused to join the team. He sacrificed his privileged status as an insider by refusing to abandon his core convictions that American intervention in Vietnam violated his concept of strategic internationalism, misconstrued the nation's primary interests, and broke the government's covenant with the people to use power responsibly.

III.

Lippmann's efforts to publicize these ideas and to shape policy, and how U.S. officials and foreign leaders reacted to the columnist, provide the context for another major aspect of this study: Lippmann's role-playing as a prominent Cold War public figure. New sources within the official record reveal with greater clarity the relationship between Lippmann's private consultations and his public writings; a truer measure of his influence on the small but powerful audience of foreign statesmen on both sides of the Cold War divide; how U.S. policymakers measured their plans against Lippmann's ideas; the degree to which they relied on Lippmann, not just for information, but to elevate the public status of their policies; and why, ultimately, they granted him access—even when they discounted his core analyses of Cold War containment strategies.

Having developed a conceptual framework for writing about the Cold War (an analytical role in and of itself), Lippmann proceeded to engage in five other functions that ultimately sought to shape both the discourse about the Cold War and Western

who first criticized the tendency of the United States to face the world with a set of principles of its own, was Walter Lippmann, in his writings about the Cold War in 1946 and 1947." Quoted on p. 212.

Alliance policies themselves. He achieved varying degrees of success in these role-playing endeavors.

- *Using his conceptual framework of strategic internationalism, Lippmann attempted to set an agenda about various Cold War topics of debate within the domestic and international discourses.*

In both apparent and subtle ways, Lippmann was fantastically successful at shaping the parameters of Cold War debate because he mastered both the language of discourse (often inventing it) and the means of disseminating the information. In *U.S. Foreign Policy*, he offered a definition of a sound international approach which balanced “commitments with available power”—an argument made in language with which diplomats were familiar and which also was accessible to a larger public. With the publication of *The Cold War*, he gave the nascent Soviet-American conflict a name that stuck.³¹ He devoted his column, *Today and Tomorrow*, almost exclusively in the postwar years to international problems. Between 1945 and 1967, Lippmann wrote more than 2,300 installments which, by about a 4-to-1 margin, addressed foreign policy issues. These were widely syndicated in both the U.S. and, because of such outlets as the *International Herald Tribune*, in many foreign capitals as well. Furthermore, the diplomats with whom Lippmann cultivated such a close relationship in Washington often included his observations in their dispatches back to their respective foreign offices. Added to Lippmann’s columns, were scores of magazine

³¹ He later claimed to have taken the name from the French phrase for the “phony war” in late-1939 and early-1940, “le froid guerre.” See Steel’s account, *Walter Lippmann and the American Century*: 445. Lippmann’s emphasis on a “cold war” rather than a “hot war” served to amplify his belief that it

articles, speeches, several books, and a number of television and radio interviews.

Lippmann embraced new media technologies and exploited them.

For Lippmann, the Soviet-American conflict was primarily a great power confrontation caused by clashing national security imperatives rather than opposing political ideologies—and it was this conception that he relentlessly promoted in his columns. It is no small irony that Lippmann’s disagreements with prominent realists helped to craft some of the fundamental paradigms used to debate containment policy by his contemporaries and later interpreters of the Cold War. In rebutting the containment thesis of the prominent American realist, George F. Kennan, Lippmann introduced the idea that the Cold War could principally be managed through astute diplomatic maneuvers rather than military mobilization. In a long-running trans-Atlantic dialogue with the French commentator Raymond Aron, again a prominent realist, Lippmann touched on another central question about the origins of that conflict: Was ideology a controlling determinant in the Soviet-American rivalry? Was conflict inevitable because liberal capitalism and Marxism were irreconcilable? On this question, Lippmann’s framework for debate was inconclusive. He clearly believed that a *modus vivendi*—a way of living together, if not in harmony, with the Soviets—was attainable, by addressing core national security concerns of both Moscow and Washington. He believed, too, that the Kremlin acted on historically-rooted interests rather than Marxist teachings. But his subordination of ideological influences to geopolitical imperatives in discerning the decision-making patterns of foreign leaders did not accord with his own long-running criticisms of the Wilsonian

was principally a great power conflict that could be steered by diplomatic maneuvering rather than military confrontation.

motivations of American officials. He never satisfactorily reconciled this discrepancy.

- ***Lippmann acted as an educator of both domestic and foreign public opinion about the Cold War.***

While many observers professed surprise, Lippmann's rapid passing from public consciousness was both logical and instructive. Average Americans were not his target audience. General public education was a secondary objective for Lippmann, who aimed primarily at an elite audience of U.S. policymakers, foreign diplomats and leaders, and a small, highly-educated, engaged public.

Lippmann was not like other journalists who used access to produce scoops or to manufacture news stories. This approach derived, in some measure, from the ideas he expressed in *Public Opinion* and *The Phantom Public*—that, in the modern world, it was the intellectual's role to supply policymakers with analyses of data and syntheses of information. In Lippmann's flow chart of discourse, the arrows pointed upward more often than they pointed to audiences below. Where the mythical general public or average citizen could be instructed, he believed, was in choosing wise leaders to make foreign policy decisions. Thus, though he had a wide readership in a syndication net that reached many millions of potential readers, part of Lippmann's approach to public education involved a kind of trickle-down process. On the one hand, he could appeal directly to his readers and instruct them on the policy alternatives available on any given issue. But by shaping official debate and, perhaps, by persuading decision-makers to adopt his ideas, he also might ultimately

shape public opinion by promoting reasoned official explanations of American policy.

Though Lippmann had an elitist view of government and harbored grave doubts about the process of participatory democracy, he never lost respect for the importance of this educational process. The public, he knew, needed to be kept engaged to promote an internationalist foreign policy and to avoid a backslide toward isolation. Most important of all, Lippmann believed that only by educating that public about American interests, could officials legitimate their exercise of power. It is in this respect that Lippmann's fidelity to democratic government is beyond reproach: foreign policy decisions were best made by the few, he believed, but the authority from which that decision-making drew its legitimacy was conferred by the informed consent of the many.

- *Lippmann sought access to U.S. and Western Alliance officials not just to be a court intellectual or a tutor serving up neutral facts, but to participate in and shape Cold War policy itself.*

In this aspect, Lippmann's record was far less spectacular and, by some measures, an abject failure and troubling precedent. Lippmann, in addition to his public writings, acted behind-the-scenes to interject his ideas in policy debates. When he could, he made these arguments in person; where he could not, he tried to cultivate surrogates in the decision-making process. Consequently, in working with U.S. officials, Lippmann sought out the choke points in the bureaucracy—those officials who acted as the gatekeepers regulating the flow of information. McGeorge

Bundy (like Colonel Edward House before him) exemplified the kind of contact whom Lippmann targeted. Over the years, Lippmann enjoyed far more access than he did influence. He can truthfully be said to have *shaped* only one major U.S. Cold War policy: the development of the Marshall Plan which he publicized in his column and worked for behind the scenes with key State Department officials, including George F. Kennan. His influence at another critical juncture—the Cuban Missile Crisis—was contingent and somewhat accidental. Far more often, U.S. officials simply rejected his advice on Cold War issues: German partition, West Berlin, and American intervention in Vietnam, among them.

Nor, aside from Kennan (who shared many of Lippmann’s approaches to international politics to begin with), is there convincing evidence to suggest that Lippmann converted or significantly moved any principal American policymaker toward his concept of strategic internationalism. Nevertheless, for personal political reasons and not because they fundamentally shared his approach to the Cold War, Washington officials kept an open dialogue with him. Lippmann retained a remarkable (though not perfect) record of independence from these officials; nevertheless, he routinely violated his own admonitions to fellow journalists to keep their distance from policymakers as a necessary prerequisite to preserving one’s objectivity.³² Occasionally, officials persuaded him to adopt their causes but he

³² Walter Lippmann, *Conversations with Walter Lippmann* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1965): 161-163. For more on Lippmann’s ideas about the role of the columnist, see his “Address to the National Press Club, Washington, DC,” 23 September 1959 (on the occasion of his 70th birthday). Several drafts of this speech are available in the Walter Lippmann Collection at Yale: Series VI, Box 231, Folder 491. See also, Lippmann’s speech to the American Society of Newspaper Editors, Washington, DC, 16 April 1948. Drafts of this speech are in Series VI, Box 227, Folder 367.

nevertheless retained his core convictions about the weaknesses of their global containment policy.

Here, the standard literature again offers an imperfect conclusion about Lippmann's behavior during the period of escalation in Vietnam, roughly from early 1964 to the summer of 1965. Contrary to the interpretation forwarded by Lippmann's principal biographer, I argue that Lippmann was not meaningfully "seduced" or co-opted by the Johnson administration. Rather, what the record shows is that Lippmann consciously and consistently engaged in a running behind-the-scenes debate with U.S. officials believing that he could influence key decision-makers (primarily President Johnson) to settle for a diplomatic strategy in Southeast Asia. Part of his tactic was to avoid direct confrontations in print, knowing full well that once provoked Johnson's defensiveness would override the president's capacity to make an full, open reappraisal.³³ Only after his efforts at private persuasion failed did Lippmann take the case fully public. Lippmann *was* guilty for possessing too sanguine an estimate of his ability to convert policymakers to a diplomatic course, for underestimating the power of anti-Communist ideology on Washington's decision-making, and, ultimately, for contributing to what one historian has described as a "permissive context" for escalation.³⁴

- *Lippmann consciously used his column to perform public relations tasks for U.S. leaders, who placed a premium on this facet of his work.*

³³ Logevall, *Choosing War*: 389-395 on the effects of Johnson's keen personalization of the war. Robert Dallek, *Flawed Giant: Lyndon Johnson and His Times, 1961-1973* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998): 277-278; 281-284.

³⁴ "Permissive context," see Logevall, *Choosing War*: 336.

As the Cold War evolved, Lippmann proved useful to Democratic presidents who, to deflect domestic criticism and to convey their foreign policy mettle, associated themselves with his cachet as an establishment figure and as an internationally-recognized foreign policy expert. This trend persisted even though Lippmann's critique of global containment became more pointed. Kennedy administration officials debated how best to use Lippmann's talents. Would he make a better diplomat than publicist? In one of his first actions as special assistant to the president, Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., suggested that President Kennedy name the columnist as his Ambassador to France. Lippmann was a shrewd choice for he knew France, its language, and its history, and he sympathized with French President Charles De Gaulle. Admired by Paris officials, Lippmann would have been an effective intermediary between Kennedy and De Gaulle during a period in which American and French foreign policies conflicted. But in mid-memorandum Schlesinger answered his own query. He assumed—incorrectly, it turned out—that Lippmann would decline. But he wondered if the proposal should be made anyway: “In which case (without being unduly Machiavellian about it) the offer would increase even more, if possible, his enthusiasm for the new dispensation” as an administration insider.³⁵ Schlesinger zeroed in on the paramount consideration: “that the Administration may need him more here—that he would help more as a columnist than as an Ambassador.”

³⁵ Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., to President Kennedy, 1 February 1961, “Walter Lippmann and Paris,” President's Office Files, Staff Memos (Arthur Schlesinger, Jr.), Box 65, John F. Kennedy Library, Boston, MA. Schlesinger keenly understood Lippmann's sense of exclusion from the Eisenhower administration and his great enthusiasm to return from his Eisenhower exile as a Kennedy insider. As it turned out Lippmann would have accepted the post if Kennedy had proffered it: Steel, *Walter Lippmann and the American Century*: 525.

Here, Schlesinger had it exactly right. Lippmann's value as a respected ally and powerful advocate in Washington far outweighed the benefits that might be conferred if Kennedy dispatched him to Paris as a government official. Besides, Lippmann's long-standing special relationship with De Gaulle and other European officials offered U.S. officials the benefits of Lippmann's public relations talent *and* his quasi-diplomacy skills. They could have their cake and eat it, too. President Kennedy and his advisors used Lippmann to probe Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev's intentions on Berlin and Laos in April 1961; they debriefed him after his meetings with De Gaulle to better understand the General's nuclear policies. Administration officials also relied on Lippmann to publicize neutralization in Laos; and they later persuaded the columnist to offer a public rationale for their decision not to share nuclear technology and divide weapons control among Western Alliance partners. President Johnson believed he needed Lippmann far more than Kennedy—to legitimate his administration's foreign policies and, during the 1964 campaign season, as a powerful ally against the Goldwater wing of the Republican Party. Officials consulted Lippmann on a range of issues from domestic politics to Gaullist policies in Europe to Vietnam. So concerned was President Johnson with Lippmann's favorable commentary that he assigned National Security Advisor McGeorge Bundy to track Lippmann's positions and keep him in line with administration policy.

Why U.S. officials valued Lippmann speaks volumes about the dynamics of politics at home during the Cold War. They courted the nation's foremost commentator—not for his insights on international relations, his solutions to crises,

nor even principally his special access as a private diplomat in foreign capitals—but most often for his ability to deflect the political criticisms of conservatives and to sell administration programs to a sometimes dubious domestic public. His column, moreover, was a convenient place to float policy trial balloons and, because Lippmann held no official status, if pressed, U.S. officials could disassociate themselves from him. Most significantly, policymakers respected his ability to steer public debate. Wary of crossing him, they expended considerable time and energies to co-opt him, even though *none* of the principals who occupied the White House, managed the Pentagon, or directed the State Department from 1947 to 1967 shared his fundamental analyses of the Cold War. The lengths to which U.S. officials went to keep Lippmann “on the team” opens a window on yet another arena of the Cold War they were determined to win—the contest to shape the domestic and international debate about containment policies.

- *Lippmann acted as an unofficial liaison, a private minister without portfolio to promote diplomatic discussion among Cold War allies, neutrals, and adversaries.*

At the time of Lippmann’s death, the *London Times* noted, “Above all else, [Lippmann] sought to improve the channels of communication, not only between the government and the press, and the press and the reader, but also in diplomacy. In a way he became an integral part of the political and diplomatic world, especially in the traffic of ideas.”³⁶ This facet of Lippmann’s role-playing distinguished him from all other American journalists. It provided him a thorough grounding in the international

context of U.S. Cold War policies. His cultivation of foreign sources began early in his career, but became important especially after his move to Washington, DC, in 1938. Lippmann's appointment diaries and his close associates confirm that his sources were principally foreign diplomats. Two special relationships have received treatment in this study: Lippmann's quasi diplomacy with French leader General Charles De Gaulle and a string of French officials from the foreign ministry, and Lippmann's contacts with Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev and Soviet embassy officers in Washington, DC.

Lippmann held De Gaulle in high regard because he shared with him a similar conception of power politics and history. The French leader greatly influenced Lippmann's interpretation of events in postwar Germany and in Vietnam as well. The columnist acted as a facilitator and popularizer of many of the General's ideas in Washington. When Paris and Washington conflicted over nuclear policy and NATO, Lippmann acted as a private ambassador who, at times, more accurately portrayed De Gaulle's designs and ambitions than official U.S. diplomats. Not only the General, but a series of French ambassadors, from Henri Bonnet in the late 1940s to Charles Lucet in the mid-1960s, were vital sources for Lippmann. Herve Alphand was an especially close confidante.

Lippmann met twice with Khrushchev during the height of tensions over Berlin during the 1958-1962 period. Khrushchev was impressed by Lippmann's independent views on West Berlin and Germany and, on several occasions, authorized republication of *Today and Tomorrow* columns in the Soviet press. The Soviet embassy kept close tabs on what the columnist wrote believing that

³⁶ "Mr. Lippmann," obituary, 16 December 1974, *London Times*: 15.

Lippmann's close ties to National Security Adviser Mac Bundy predisposed him to being a spokesman for administration policies.³⁷ Lippmann, used such political capital to his advantage during the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962, by publicly proposing a missile base barter to resolve the nuclear impasse. The Soviet side seized on the idea, thinking Lippmann was making a formal offer on behalf of the administration. Horrified that the columnist would publicize such a plan, Kennedy administration officials scolded him but, nevertheless, agreed to such an arrangement—though they hid the details from the public. In debriefing Soviet officials, Lippmann impressed upon them the domestic political sensitivity of the Turkey missile trade.

De Gaulle and Khrushchev were not isolated examples. Lippmann maintained key contacts in the British Foreign Office and, for more than 50 years, met with high-level London officials all the way up to Prime Ministers Winston Churchill, Harold Macmillan, and Harold Wilson. Lippmann's meetings with Indian leader Jawaharlal Nehru and other high-ranking Indian diplomats in New Delhi and Washington, DC, led the columnist to argue repeatedly that India should be cultivated as regional power and balance against Soviet and Chinese power. Officials in foreign capitals from continental Europe to Moscow to Beijing read his columns carefully for hints at the direction of U.S. policy. As the preceding chapters demonstrate, some foreign leaders expressed concerns that Lippmann's tendency to counsel negotiations

³⁷ It is instructive that the domestic political frameworks of both Kremlin leaders and Washington officials, shaped their reaction to Lippmann's 25 October 1962 column. The Soviets thought it altogether normal that a prominent journalist would be used as an official channel for government policy. U.S. officials, acculturated to much more adversarial role with the press, expressed surprise that the Soviets would interpret Lippmann's proposal as an official overture. Indeed, only Llewellyn "Tommy" Thompson, the U.S. Ambassador to Moscow, suggested this possibility during the ExComm

with Communist powers revealed a lack of resolve in Washington. From the viewpoint of U.S. officials, association with Lippmann also conferred a good measure of esteem in the European capitals where Lippmann was welcomed. In a subtle way, providing access to Lippmann signaled European leaders that moderate policies were given consideration within Washington's Cold War councils.

The practical effect of Lippmann's travels, sources, contacts was the cultivation of an intellectual mindset far broader than most contemporaries. Lippmann was American by birth but a citizen of the "Atlantic Community" (a term he coined) by virtue of the way he operated as a quasi-diplomat. Earlier than most, he understood the cultural affinities—social, political, and religious customs—as well as the trade and security interests that bound together the nations on the continents of Western Europe and North America and along the Atlantic rim. He believed that the Soviet-American rivalry was yet another phase of the millennium-old clash between Western Christian and Eastern Orthodox cultures, and that the Cold War itself was finite and small in the full scope of history. At a time when U.S. officials spoke of the division between the "Free World" and "slave society", Lippmann purposefully chose the terms "the West" (or "Western Alliance") and "the East." He avoided language that put the entire world into two ideological camps: democratic versus communist. He rejected the idea that anything so cohesive as the "Free World" ever existed between Tokyo, Saigon, Jakarta, New Delhi, Tel Aviv, Pretoria, Bonn, Paris, London, and Washington. Though the Cold War would end, he insisted, the Western Alliance that emerged to wage it would prove a lasting entity. While he opposed

discussions. No other participant seemed to give it serious consideration. Ned Lebow and Janet Stein, *We All Lost the Cold War* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994): 442, fn #158.

excessive, American-heavy military structures in Europe, he nevertheless supported economic, political, and social exchange and integration.

In the final analysis, Lippmann was American-Euro-centric, not because of his personal affinities for France and England (which were considerable), nor because he kept a personal diplomatic network there; but because he thought the future of Western civilization was bound to the collaborative efforts of America and the major European powers. He understood and identified Russia (Orthodox), China (Sinic), and India (Hindu/Muslim) as great powers, but also as alien civilizations—ultimately, irreconcilable to Western customs, values, and ideas.³⁸ To find a *modus vivendi* with these competing systems, the Atlantic Community partners would have to forge lasting cooperative bonds. Lippmann always maintained that America's primary mission—part and parcel of preserving its national security—was to promote that partnership. Inasmuch as Lippmann's career was weighted toward any one activity, it was as a diplomatist: facilitating public dialogue within the Atlantic Alliance and, then, among the alliance, neutral nations, and the Soviet bloc; and, as a private, unofficial diplomat, promoting pathways of communication for officials.

IV.

"I'm not a real believer in bringing people up to date," the author and Lippmann's lawyer Louis Auchincloss replied, when asked six months after the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks what Lippmann's perspective on the new world order might be.

³⁸ Lippmann first had broached this idea in *U.S. Foreign Policy: Shield of the Republic* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1943): 87-93. Samuel Huntington addressed this theme in his controversial book, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of the World Order* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995), see especially pp. 301-321.

Auchincloss's answer seemed proper for someone who, as a novelist, had studied Lippmann's life—developing a character who inhabited a finite, fictional story.³⁹ But history is prologue to the present and for the historian there exists an impulse (some might argue, a duty) to relate his subject to the present. Indeed, while I wrote and researched this study the September 11 terrorist strikes were carried out against the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. The attacks devastated Americans' sense of security. For perhaps the first time since their nation became a superpower, Americans came to know that though their immense power conferred many privileges invulnerability was not one of them.

The nature of the threat to U.S. security changed slowly over the course of the decade between 1991 and 2001—though most Americans had been largely unaware of it. A “superpower” rival had been replaced by shadowy terrorist “cells” supported by a network of finance and intelligence that wound through dozens of European, South Asian, and Middle Eastern countries. These terrorists waged war against the U.S., growing steadily more brazen: the 1993 World Trade Center bombings; the Kohbar Towers bombings in 1996; the 1998 bombings of the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania; the October 2000 attack on the U.S.S. *Cole*.⁴⁰ On the morning

³⁹ Auchincloss patterned his book, *The House of the Prophet*, after the columnist's life. Interestingly, the historian Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., who was present for the same three-hour interview was eager to bring Lippmann up to date and stressed his relevance in a complex world. Interview with author, New York City, 12 March 2002.

⁴⁰ Lippmann's 50-year-old admonitions about the responsible use of power—specifically the inherent dangers in aligning American power with corrupt, reactionary, unstable, or warring regimes for geopolitical advantage—resonated as post-Cold War threats pierced the triumphalism of the 1990s. The clients whom Washington underwrote to fight proxy wars and counter-balance Soviet influence, eventually used American power for their own ends. Two instances come to mind, particularly. First, in the 1980s, the U.S. funneled hundreds of millions in military hardware and technology to Saddam Hussein, a brutal dictator whose military employed chemical and biological weapons against Iranian troops and civilian ethnic minorities in Iraq. Only when Baghdad launched an invasion of neighboring Kuwait in 1990 (menacing half the world's oil supply in nearby Saudi Arabia) did the U.S. cut off aid, declare Hussein the “Hitler” of the region, and punish him with a ground and air war that killed some

of September 11, 2001, the post-Cold War era ended and, with it, so had the twin policies Washington had employed for more than a half century: deterrence and containment. A policy of preemptive war replaced them. How would Lippmann have reacted to this new development? What course would he chart in the post-9/11 world? Was his approach to foreign policy still relevant?

Lippmann likely would have rallied around the George W. Bush administration in the weeks after the terrorist strikes, though his support would have been reserved. It certainly is conceivable that he would have endorsed the reprisal that toppled the Taliban government in Afghanistan in November 2001—an action with wide international approval—as necessary to restoring American national security. It is equally plausible that Lippmann would have opposed the invasion of Iraq in March 2003—for lack of evidence, for want of a clear explanation to Americans and the international public, and, ultimately, for the Wilsonian tenor of the Bush administration’s public determination to impose democratic reforms in Baghdad. Lippmann is likely to have argued that in its effort to convert Iraq to democracy, the U.S. allowed its perceived interests to far exceed its capabilities.

200,000 troops and civilians, without deposing him. For a convincing case that Lippmann would have opposed the first Gulf War, see Philip Geyelin, “‘Today and Tomorrow’ in the Gulf,” 6 January 1991, *Washington Post*: C2.

The second example—American aid to *mujahdin* fighters in the Soviet-Afghan War—had even greater bearing on the roots of terrorism which emerged in the 1990s. The CIA trained and equipped thousands of “freedom fighters”—Muslims recruited from various Afghan tribes and foreign countries—to fight a guerilla war against the Soviets that Washington underwrote with billions of dollars worth of U.S. military hardware, intelligence, and expertise. The policy worked in the short term, bogging down the Soviet Army in a bloody, protracted, and ultimately, un-winnable war. But when the Soviets left Afghanistan after 12 years of fighting, many of these CIA-trained fighters joined the Islamic fundamentalist Taliban regime in Kabul. In the 1990s, the country was a haven for terrorists bent on exacting revenge on Washington for its prosecution of the Gulf War in 1991 and expanded presence in the region. One of these terrorists, a wealthy Saudi sheik named Osama bin Laden, who had been a CIA star during the Soviet-Afghan war, set up training camps for Islamic militants who carried out the above mentioned attacks on American interests. For a thoroughly readable account of one man’s battle to fund the Afghan rebels, see George Crile, *Charlie Wilson’s*

Indications that intelligence data had been manipulated to justify the war would likely have elicited an acid response from the columnist reminiscent of his attack on Lyndon Johnson's "credibility gap."

Lippmann would have scrutinized the idea of preemptive war—the so-called Bush Doctrine—unveiled by the administration in 2002. Speaking to graduating Army cadets at West Point Military Academy, President Bush declared on 1 June 2002, "If we wait for threats to fully materialize, we will have waited too long. We must take the battle to the enemy, disrupt his plans and confront the worst threats before they emerge . . . In the world we have entered, the only path to safety is the path of action. And this nation will act."⁴¹ The President then promised that the U.S. would maintain force levels sufficient to "dissuade potential enemies from pursuing a military buildup" to challenge American power. In mid-September 2002, the Bush administration refined these ideas in its "National Security Strategy of the United States of America" (NSS) statement. The document noted that "we will not hesitate to act alone, if necessary, to exercise our right of self-defense by acting preemptively."⁴² It also set out a three-part statement of goals: "We will defend the peace by fighting terrorists and tyrants. We will preserve the peace by building good relations among the great powers. We will extend the peace by encouraging free and open societies on every continent."⁴³ Lippmann would have seen the necessity of the

War: The Extraordinary Story of the Largest Covert Operation in History (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 2003).

⁴¹ Mike Allen and Karen DeYoung, "Bush: U.S. Will Strike First at Enemies," 2 June 2002, *Washington Post*: A1; Elisabeth Bumiller, "U.S. Must Act First to Battle Terror, Bush Tells Cadets," 2 June 2002, *New York Times*: A1.

⁴² David E. Sanger, "Threats and Responses: Security; Bush to Outline Doctrine of Striking Foes First," 20 September 2002, *New York Times*: A1.

⁴³ Bush had enunciated these goals first at West Point; see, Allen and DeYoung, "Bush: U.S. Will Strike First at Enemies," 2 June 2002, *Washington Post*: A1. This passage was lifted verbatim and used

first initiative, welcomed the second initiative, but gravely doubted the promotion of the third.

Trying to place the Bush Doctrine in historical perspective, the historian John Lewis Gaddis recently has argued that hegemony, unilateralism, and even preemption have a long history in American foreign policy.⁴⁴ We could reasonably expect that Lippmann (as he had in *U.S Foreign Policy* in 1943) also would have looked to the past and drawn lessons from the policies of the Founders. After all, America's greatest diplomat, John Quincy Adams, crafted a foreign policy to secure the continent that included the "pre-emptive" seizure of Spanish-controlled Florida; a precedent followed by Presidents James K. Polk, Theodore Roosevelt, William H. Taft, and Woodrow Wilson in places like the Mexico (and what is now the modern-American Southwest), the Caribbean, and Latin America.⁴⁵ But Lippmann, as he had in 1943, would draw a clear line between the imperative of securing the homeland from foreign attack and the far more extravagant goal of preempting security challenges by intervening in "failed" states and recreating them in America's image. What worked for Adams in the 19th Century—a hemispheric policy of preemption and unilateralism to *consolidate* power—did not automatically apply to the early 21st Century when, as the lone world power, Washington needed to *conserve* limited resources to meet multiplying global challenges. Lippmann might well have recalled the words of Adams himself, who clearly understood the dangers of a foreign policy that made no such distinctions. "Wherever the standard of freedom and independence

in the preface of the NSS statement in September 2002. Full NSS statement available on the White House web site: <http://whitehouse.gov>.

⁴⁴ John Lewis Gaddis, *Surprise, Security, and the American Experience* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004).

has been or shall be unfurled, there will her heart, her benedictions and her prayers be,” Adams told a 4 July 1821 audience. But America “goes not abroad, in search of monsters to destroy.” While the nation “might become the dictatress of the world: she would be no longer the ruler of her own spirit.”⁴⁶

Will Lippmann’s strategic internationalism enjoy a renaissance or be consigned to the past, a relic perhaps to be subsumed by the still deeper Wilsonian currents of the American Century?⁴⁷ Surveying the history of U.S. foreign relations in the twentieth century, the political scientist Tony Smith argued that the nation’s greatest diplomatic triumphs resulted from the promotion of “American liberal democratic internationalism” abroad—democratic principals, free trade, human rights, foreign aid, and extra-national organizations.⁴⁸ Smith hypothesized that Wilsonian diplomacy achieved the order and stability that “realist” critics (Lippmann among them) believed only inhered in a balance-of-power system.⁴⁹ Yet, Smith’s analysis lacked the smug triumphalism of other post Cold War retrospectives and,

⁴⁵ See Gaddis’s discussion in *Surprise, Security, and the American Experience*: especially, pp. 15-33.

⁴⁶ John Quincy Adams, *An Address Delivered at the Request of the Committee of Arrangements for Celebrating the Anniversary of Independence; Upon the Occasion of reading the Declaration of Independence*, 4 July 1821, Washington, DC (Cambridge, MA: Hilliard and Metcalf, 1821): 32.

⁴⁷ It is interesting to note that *Foreign Affairs*, which marked its 75th Anniversary in 1997, chose Lippmann’s *U.S. Foreign Policy: Shield of the Republic*, as one of the five “most significant” books on diplomacy published since the journal’s inception in 1922. The venerable publication practically canonized Lippmann as a founding father of modern realism—choosing as companions in its pantheon of “significant books”—George F. Kennan’s *American Diplomacy* and Henry Kissinger’s memoirs. The selections led one to the conclusion that no one had hatched a new foreign policy approach in more than a generation. See, David C. Hendrickson, “Significant Books of the Last 75 Years,” *Foreign Affairs* 76 (September/October 1997): 221-222.

⁴⁸ Tony Smith, *America’s Mission: The United States and the Worldwide Struggle for Democracy in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994): 344-345.

⁴⁹ Smith, *America’s Mission*: 103-106. Smith dismisses Lippmann’s criticisms of Wilsonian collective security, suggesting that Lippmann went too far in his argument that Wilson’s “reluctance to back commitments with force” undermined his postwar peace plan and contributed to the origins of World War II. Smith does not persuasively rebut the argument, however, that Wilson had failed to educate the American public about its vital national interests in European order and stability—a prerequisite for preparing the public for a commitment to either the League of Nations or stronger bi-lateral alliances. Moreover, Wilson’s collective security principle—even if America had joined the League—provided

too, the arrogance conveyed in the “war on terror” which implied that America’s national interests were coterminous with that of all the other nations.⁵⁰ While the expansion of democracy benefited American national security, there were obvious limits to what its promoters could achieve. Smith advocated a selective approach—one that merged support for democratic institutions where they might take root, with a *realpolitik* cognizance to know where they would not. “Washington’s first responsibility, then, is to keep its own house in order,” Smith concluded, “and maintain the links of solidarity among consolidated democratic states.”⁵¹

Lippmann would not at all have found objectionable the responsible exercise of American power (using its example as a “good society” to persuade others to emulate it) and the promotion of stronger ties within the Atlantic Alliance and with other democratic governments. As a Cold War diplomatist he would have known how to achieve these objectives. “Money and power are, of course, indispensable in the conduct of foreign policy,” Lippmann wrote a half century ago. “But without diplomacy to prepare the way and to soften the impact and to reduce the friction and allay the tension, money and power are double-edged instruments. Used without diplomacy they may, and they usually do, augment the difficulties they are employed to overcome. Then more power and money are needed.”⁵² In a complex world—where Washington still must carefully discern legitimate national security objectives and work closely with foreign governments to achieve them—American leaders would do well to heed that cautionary counsel.

no structure to enforce the peace. The League’s impotence in the face of Japanese militarism in Manchuria in the early 1930s, was but one example.

⁵⁰ For example, Francis Fukuyama’s *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Free Press, 1992).

⁵¹ Smith, *America's Mission*: 343.

⁵² Lippmann, T&T, "The Undiplomatic Department," 13 January 1954.

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