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John Foster Dulles: The Certainty/Uncertainty Principle

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Preface

From February 17 - 19, 1989, the German speaking Historians of American History, a section of the German Association for American Studies (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Amerikastudien) gathered at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Zurich for their annual convention to discuss the topic of "The United States since 1945: World Power without Intention?". Prof. Richard D. Challener (Princeton University) spoke on "John Foster Dulles: The Certainty/Uncertainty Principle". It was one of the outstanding contributions to this conference.

Prof. Challener's essay is an admirable piece of scholarship based on new research in the collection of the Dulles Papers at the Mudd Library, Princeton University. It reconsiders in the most penetrating and imaginative way the old topics of Dulles' "brinkmanship" and ideological inclinations, thereby offering a much more complex and a much more precise interpretation of this influential statesman's thinking.

We appreciate the privilege to be able to publish Professor Challener's original essay in an issue of the "Zürcher Beiträge zur Sicherheitspolitik und Konfliktforschung". It is of more than just historical importance. It provides new insights into early attempts to deal with the dilemmas of nuclear strategy and the vicissitudes of superpower relations that didn't communicate. Professor Challener's essay can help us to understand more profoundly some of the most difficult aspects of contemporary superpower relations.

Zürich, July 28, 1989 Prof. Dr. Kurt R. Spillmann

JOHN FOSTER DULLES: THE CERTAINTY/UNCERTAINTY PRINCIPLE

Throughout his career as secretary of state from 1953 until his death in 1959 and for nearly two decades afterwards John Foster Dulles was regarded as the chief architect of American foreign policy. His president, Dwight David Eisenhower, so ran the conventional wisdom, was the man of garbled syntax who delegated responsibility for American diplomacy to his subordinate and who cared less about burning issues than sinking his putts at the Burning Tree golf course.

But in the last decade that interpretation has changed - and changed dramatically. With the opening of the Eisenhower Papers and the publication of new volumes in the *Foreign Relations* series, historians have come to recognize - some, to be sure, grudgingly and with little enthusiasm - that Dwight Eisenhower was fully involved in every aspect of his administration and in every major policy decision. Foreign policy decisions were not just handed over to Foster Dulles; rather they were shared decisions to which both men contributed equally. Some American political scientists, most notably my Princeton colleague, Fred Greenstein, have praised Eisenhower's so-called "hidden hand" leadership as a particularly effective model for a 20th century presidency. An increasing number of political economists - whether they are concerned that America is a "declining hegemon" or simply appalled by present-day budget deficits and trade imbalances - show more than a little sympathy for Eisenhower's conviction that excessive military expenditures threatened the economic health of the United States. John Gaddis, in sharp criticism of presidents Johnson and Kennedy, has recently argued that their departure from the Eisenhower tradition in American foreign policy produced a devastating gap between intentions and results. "The Kennedy and Johnson administrations," in the words of Professor Gaddis, "would have done better to stress (...) those aspects of their strategy that reflected the Eisenhower legacy and steer clear of those that did not."[1] Clearly, Eisenhower revisionism has moved from being a cottage to a big industry.

Also, let me add, the admirers of Ronald Reagan are tying into the "new" Eisenhower - arguing, among other things, that it was the firmness of Reagan, like Ike, in dealing with the Soviets - in insisting on things like intermediate-range missiles in Europe, on giving aid to the Afghan rebels, in pushing Star

1 John Lewis Gaddis, "The Eisenhower Legacy and American Grand Strategy, 1960-1968," Preliminary paper prepared for the U.S. Military Academy Symposium on "The Theory and Practice of American National Security, 1960-68," West Point, New York, 15-18 April, 1988.

Wars and a large military budget that have forced the Soviets to re-examine their foreign policy and, as they like to believe, coerced Gorbachev into realizing that the Soviet Union can't continue to compete in the cold war.

Similarly, no contemporary American historian would continue to portray John Foster Dulles as simply a Presbyterian moralist who thundered about atheistic communism, preached the doctrine of massive retaliation, and regarded the Sino-Soviet bloc as an unbreakable monolith. In his pathbreaking study, *The Long Peace*, John Gaddis stresses that Dulles's ideas about the actual use of atomic weapons were measured, balanced and judicious and that he was among the first to practice "self deterrence" with regard to the use of nuclear weapons - all the more remarkable since, at the time, the Russians possessed no effective or credible nuclear deterrent. Additionally Gaddis contends that the secretary of state anticipated many of the ideas that the Kennedy administration would call "flexible response" and that he developed a sophisticated strategy of pressure to separate Beijing from Moscow.[2] And a similar view of the Eisenhower-Dulles sophistication on atomic matters is put forth by McGeorge Bundy in his newly published history of American atomic policy, *Danger and Survival.* Last February, at a conference held at Princeton to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the birth of John Foster Dulles, several speakers insisted that Dulles did not regard all forms of neutralism as immoral and was far more open than anyone previously imagined to the possibility of significant negotiations with the Soviet Union.[3] Clearly, it is no longer the pairing, as Townsend Hoopes once wrote, of the Devil and John Foster Dulles.

Though Eisenhower's stock is up in the current historical market, it is still appropriate to consider Dulles as both theorist and practitioner. After all, in the fifties, both the press and the public did regard him, however incorrectly, as the man responsible for American foreign policy. And it was Dulles who, on a day by day basis, did most frequently articulate the Eisenhower administration's position on Cold War issues. In both the cabinet and the National Security Council, he was - with the possible exception of secretary of the treasury, George Humphrey - the most influential member. Moreover, the Eisenhower style of leadership was to put men like Dulles in the highly visible forefront and let them take the criticism and the flack. It was a tactic he employed to keep his own options open. And it was the way that Ike had conducted World War II when

2 John Lewis Gaddis, The Long Peace: Inquiries into the History of the Cold War (New York, 1987), pp. 123-46, 174-94.

3 John Foster Dulles Centennial Conference: "The Challenge of Leadership in Foreign Affairs," held at the Woodrow Wilson School of Public ond International Affairs, Princeton University, 25-27 February 1988. The papers are currently being edited for publication.

General Bedell Smith served as the point man in the controversies with such military prima donnas as Patton and Montgomery, thereby enabling Eisenhower to remain above the immediate battle. But one of the most compelling reasons for continuing to study Dulles is that he himself consciously sought the limelight. Like his later, and unlamented, successor, Al Haig, John Foster Dulles wanted to give the impression that he was in charge. "I think that Foster," his former Secretary Christian Herter once wryly commented, "always liked it being a Dulles policy."[4]

There are three keys to understanding Dulles. First, his long career as one of the most successful corporate lawyers on Wall Street in the 1920s and 1930s, a man deeply involved in the legal side of American private investment in Europe - most notably in Weimar Germany. The second key is his role in the late thirties and throughout World War II as a man who believed that the churches could play a crucial, moderating role in world affairs and who became a prominent lay leader of American protestantism in its crusade to give the United States a "second chance" to fulfill the internationalist vision of Woodrow Wilson by creating the United Nations. The third is his own - and his family's - direct involvement in the making of American foreign policy. His maternal grandfather, John Foster, had been Benjamin Harrison's secretary of state, while his uncle, Robert Lansing, had served Woodrow Wilson in the same capacity. Foster Dulles himself played a not insignificant role in the development of reparations policy at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919; by 1940 he had emerged as governor and Republican presidential hopeful, Thomas E. Dewey's foremost adviser in foreign policy; and he was an adviser at the San Francisco conference that established UN and later served on American delegations to the General Assembly. He, along with Senator Arthur Vandenberg, was one of the prime architects of postwar bipartisan foreign policy and served as Republican adviser and consultant to the Truman administration, most notably in negotiating the Japanese peace treaty.[5]

This background helps to explain many of his decisions and much of his behavior after he became secretary of state in 1953. His legal background, for example, often led him to produce documents that to his critics, such as Anthony Eden, seemed to be legal briefs designed to defend and protect his client, the

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4 Interview with Christian Herter, Dulles Oral History Project, Mudd Library, Princeton University (Hereafter cited as DOH).

5 For more detailed information about Dulles's career before 1953, see Ronald W. Preussen, John Foster Dulles: The Road to Power (New York, 1982), especially pp. 276-87 and Mark Toulouse, The Transformation of John Foster Dulles: From Prophet of Realism to Priest of Nationalism (Macon Ga., 1985).

government of the United States.[6] Even his strongest advocate, Dwight Eisenhower, once suggested that his secretary of state sometimes came across too much like an international prosecuting attorney and asked him to tone down a speech that sounded too much like an indictment of the Soviet Union.[7] His religious upbringing and his close associations with the church made him particularly effective in using the traditional language of American Protestantism to sustain the great American crusade against Communism, while the bitter family memory of how Robert Lansing had been excluded from the policy making process at the time of Wilson's illness in 1919 informed the advice he gave Richard Nixon and Sherman Adams to hold cabinet meetings at the time of Eisenhower's heart attack in 1955.

More importantly, Foster Dulles was - and would have regarded himself as - a theorist of international affairs. By the time he became secretary of state he had published two books, one in the late thirties, the other in 1950, both sweeping and highly generalized analyses of the problems of war and peace. Neither, to be sure, had gained great recognition; nor did either possess the intellectual force or the compelling logic of the writings of George Kennan or Henry Kissinger. But he had been writing about world affairs for three decades. As early as 1921-22, for example, he had contributed articles to *The New Republic*, and to *Britannica*, while his expertise on the reparations question, then at the very heart of American foreign policy, led the editors of *Foreign Affairs* to invite him to contribute an article to the very first issue of that important journal. And he could be original. In 1925, well before professional historians like Elie Halevy had begun to theorize about the domestic, internal causes of war, Dulles gave a speech in which he argued that international conflicts most frequently occur when governing elites felt that their domestic interests were threatened. On that basis he maintained that Austria-Hungary and Imperial Russia were the powers most responsible for the outbreak of war in 1914.[8]

In the 1930s Dulles developed a sophisticated and complicated argument to support his deep conviction that the United States should remain isolationist in

6 For Eden's reaction to the User's Association, see Full Circle: The Memoirs of Anthony Eden, (Boston, 1960), pp. 529-64.

7 Eisenhower to Dulles, 8 September 1953, Memorandum for the Secretary of State. Papers of John Foster Dulles, Mudd Library, Princeton University (hereafter cited as DP). See also John Lewis Gaddis, "The Unexpected John Foster Dulles: Nuclear Weapons, Communism and the Russians," unpublished paper read at the Dulles Centennial Conference, Princeton University, 26 February 1988.

8 See my forthcoming article, "John Foster Dulles: Theorist/Practitioner," in L. Carl Brown, ed., Centerstage: American Diplomacy since World War II (Holmes and Meier, 1989). For the speech on the causes of World War I, see "On Economic Influences and How They Lead to War," DP, Speeches and Articles File, 1925.

the face of the growing threat of another European conflict. A frustrated Wilsonian, Dulles always believed that Woodrow Wilson had stood for the right principles and pursued the right policies at the Paris Peace Conference. The fault, he charged, lay not with the text of the Versailles Treaty but with the statesmen who had failed to live up to its provisions. Wilsonianism, he told a Princeton audience in 1936, had not failed; it had never been tried.[9]

A new European war now loomed on the horizon, Dulles argued, because the status quo powers - England and France, and, it should be added, the United States - had refused to pay attention to Article 19 of the Treaty, the article that called for the peaceful revision of treaties once the objective conditions of world affairs had changed. Instead, they were jealously holding on to what they had gained and steadfastly refusing to recognize the needs of the "dynamic" powers - Germany, Italy and Japan - which were threatening to burst out of the "envelopes" in which they were constrained. He became a passionate advocate of "peaceful change." According to Dulles, the only way to avoid another war was for the status quo powers to break down the artificial barriers - particularly the economic barriers - between nations and promote peaceful change by allowing for the freer exchange of peoples, goods and capital. Moreover, once he cast his lot with the peace movement of the churches in 1937, Dulles became increasingly critical of the principle of national sovereignty. The concept that every nation should think only of pursuing its own rigidly defined national interest, Dulles argued, was one of the root causes of international conflict. And, as war came ever closer, Dulles consistently demanded that America should not become involved. If the western allies won, they would only reimpose the same kind of conservative status quo that had existed after 1919, thereby guaranteeing yet another cycle of repression, reaction and eventual conflict.[10]

During World War II Dulles had worked long and arduously for the cause of the United Nations. The principal publication of the Commission on a Just and Durable Peace - a blue ribbon commission of the Federal Council of Churches that Dulles had chaired - was its 1943 document, the "Six Pillars of Peace." This widely circulated pamphlet was a clarion call for the creation of a new international organization to fulfill the Wilsonian dream. It contained many

9 "Peaceful Change within the Society of Nations," Stafford Little Lecture, 19 March 1936, DP, Speeches and Articles File.

10 In addition to the "Peaceful Change" speech, see his article, "The Road to Peace," Atlantic Monthly (October, 1935); "The Church's Contribution toward a Warless World," Religion and Life (Winter, 1939), and such speeches as "America's Foreign Policy," 18 March 1939 before the Foreign Policy Association and "America's Role in World Affairs," 28 October 1939 before the YMCA of Detroit, all in DP, Speeches and Articles File.

concepts with which Dulles himself had long been associated - for example, the idea that the next peace must be flexible and not repressive, creative and curative, not vindictive. Proposition III was the concept of "peaceful change" arrayed in new clothing. "The peace must make provision for an organization to adapt the treaty structure of the world to changing underlying conditions."[11] Moreover, the Dulles of the war years had seriously believed in the prospect of accomodation with the Soviet Union. Somewhat ironically, he had been one of the first Americans to raise moral and ethical questions about the use of the atomic bomb at Hiroshima. As late as the early months of 1946, he was still more worried about American attitudes toward the UN than about Soviet behavior at the first meeting of the General Assembly. As he wrote Senator H. Allen Smith in March of that year, "It was inevitable that the first session of the UN would reflect past discords and old habits and cannot yet reflect the new program of common effort for common good. However, I am far from satisfied with the spiritual and intellectual contribution being made by the United States."[12] Indeed, when his alma mater, Princeton, granted him an honorary degree in that year, he took the occasion to dwell upon the loss of moral and spiritual values in the country and to complain that his country had lost the dynamic faith that had once made it great.[13]

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The Dulles who became secretary of state in 1953 had long since changed his mind, had become someone whose interpretation of Soviet behavior rested upon an ideological base. That change undoubtedly resulted from a combination of many factors: his first-hand experiences in dealing with the Soviets after 1945; his own growing political ambitions as he became ever closer to the leading Republican presidential aspirant, Tom Dewey; and, perhaps most important of all, his conviction, growing out of his system of religious beliefs, that the Soviet denial of individual liberty violated one of the fundamental moral laws of God. As he told the assembly of the World Council of Churches in Amsterdam in 1948, "Marxian communism is atheistic and materialistic. Its leaders reject the concept of moral law. There is, says Stalin, no such thing as 'eternal justice'; laws are merely the means whereby those in power carry out their will, and human beings

11 "A Just and Durable Peace: Discussion of Political Propositions," pamphlet published in 1941 by the Commission to Study the Bases of a Just and Durable Peace by the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America. DP, Speeches and Articles File.
12 Dulles to Senator H. Alexander Smith, 4 March 1946, DP, Correspondence File.
13 See my article, "John Foster Dulles: The Princeton Connection," Princeton University Library Chronicle, Vol. L, No. 1 (Autumn, 1988), pp. 7-29.

have no rights that are God-given and therefore not subject to be taken away by man."[14] Since 1947 he had been warning that Americans, who had once dismissed Hitler's *Mein Kampf* as propaganda, should not repeat that mistake but regard Stalin's *Problems of Leninism* as clear evidence of intent.[15]

By 1952 Dulles had become not only the very model of the modern cold warrior but also an acerbic critic of the containment policy of George Kennan and the Truman administration. His views were most stridently proclaimed in an article that appeared in *Life* magazine in the late spring of 1952. That article roundly condemned containment as a negative, sterile doctrine that compelled the United States to remain on the defensive and provided no alternative except a defensive response to Soviet aggressions. Dulles called for a new American policy of boldness that would regain the initiative for the United States.[16] He had also become a critic of the Truman administration's Far Eastern policy, fully subscribing to the belief that support for Chiang and his exiled regime on Taiwan was vital to the interests of the United States. Small wonder that in the course of the Eisenhower presidential campaign he would be associated with the concepts of "rollback" and the "liberation" of Soviet satellites in Eastern Europe and with the fatuous "unleashing" of Chiang Kai-shek. Small wonder, also, that when the new administration came into office in January 1953, Dulles could find no role for George Kennan.

Much of this, to be sure, was campaign rhetoric, part of the normal electoral process whereby challengers feel compelled to stake out new positions from those of the incumbents. But with Dulles it was more than rhetoric or politics. Aboard the cruiser "Helena," when Eisenhower was returning from his post-election trip to Korea, and also in the early weeks of the new administration, he sketched out his theory for an American response to Soviet aggression. His basic premise was that Russian strategy was to exhaust the United States internally by mounting a series of actions around the globe, at times and places of their own choosing, and especially at locations like Korea and Indochina where any American response would come at high cost. To date, Dulles complained, America had been a country that fought by the rules of the Marquis of Queensbury, even when the opponent struck below the belt. This must end. America must be prepared to match the

14 Address, Assembly of the World Council of Churches, Amsterdam, Holland, 24 August 1948. DP, Speeches and Articles Files.

15 The change in his views is most marked in 1947. Indeed, an article Dulles published in the late spring of 1946 in Life (later reprinted in the Reader's Digest in August) provoked letters from already confirmed anti-Communists that he was still too willing to give the Soviets the benefit of the doubt on some issues. A speech he gave in the fall of 1946 appeared to suggest that America's "far-flung military bases" were provocative to the Soviets.

16 "A Policy of Boldness," Life, Vol. 32, No. 20 (May 19, 1952)

Soviets at their own game, use the same tactics, foment unrest and discord, and, above all, assume the initiative in areas where America was strong. He suggested, for example, that to protect the weak American flanks in Korea and Indochina, some "deterrent power" might be created in the center, against the mainland of China. Moreover, Dulles argued, the Russians expected a conservative Republican administration to be tougher than the more liberal Democrats. If it wasn't, then the Soviets would undoubtedly expand the limits of what they thought they could get away with. Moreover, if the new administration failed to act positively, America's allies "will feel that their worst fears have been realized and something akin to panic and complete disorder (...) may ensue." Dulles anticipated Russian responses to any new American initiatives, acknowledged possible dangers, but concluded that the risks were less than perpetuating those of the present situation "which means certain disaster."

A year and a half later, in the late spring of 1954, the secretary of state produced another paper which summarized his ideas on the "counter policies" required to meet "the aggressive strategy and techniques of Soviet communism." First, the well-known policy of deterring "open and armed aggression by the capacity and willingness to retaliate at places and by means of our own choosing so that the aggressor would be hurt more than he could gain" - what became, in shorthand, the policy of "massive retaliation." Second, the restoration of western strength by "closing the Franco-German breach which has for a century caused the West to war with itself and expend its vigor in internecine strife." Third, and no less important, "the distraction of the Soviet Communist rulers from indirect aggression by our compounding their internal difficulties." Here the goal should be to find resourceful ways to exploit internal difficulties within the Communist parties and try to promote the spirit of nationalism in Eastern Europe. Fourth, and finally, "vitalizing liberty and freedom within the free world so that it becomes a dynamic force countering the revolutionary spirit with which Communism imbues its followers."[17]

These two documents, and especially the 1954 memorandum, provide a concise overview of the way that Dulles conceptualized the Soviet problem and the appropriate grand strategy to meet it. They are light years removed from his former nostrums of peaceful change and there is certainly no trace of the Dulles

17 For his views in 1952 and early 1953, see "Helena" Notes, 11 December 1952 and also Conversation with Selwyn Lloyd, 26 December 1952, both in DP, Subject Series, Alphabetical Subseries, Pre-Inauguration Materials. For his views a year into the new administration, see memorandum entitled "United States Foreign Policy," 16 May 1954, DP, White House Memoranda Series, General Foreign Policy Matters.

who, in his enthusiasm for the UN, once saw the opportunity to cooperate with the Russians.

However, and I want to stress the point, many of the ideas in the two documents are constants of his thought - some, indeed, had roots in ideas to which he had adhered long before he became secretary of state. His concern with Franco-German enmity was long standing and went back to the thirties when he interpreted the rivalries between the European powers as one of the core reasons why the United States should stand aloof from their dissensions. He had long believed that the American federal union was a model that should be put before the nations. Before World War II he had flirted with Clarence Streits's "Union Now," and no Dulles speech was complete without a reference to the Federalist papers about how individual states standing alone could accomplish little but united in a federal union, they could produce peace and prosperity. In the immediate postwar period, Dulles was particularly proud of a speech he had given in support of the Marshall Plan at the American Club in Paris in which he had called upon the Europeans to move closer to the American federal system. It was his solution to the age-old problem of Franco-German enmity, the problem which he truly believed was at the root of Europe's historic conflicts.

Similarly, a constant of his belief system was the idea that some nations are more dynamic, have a stronger sense of purpose than others. It was a concept, some have speculated, which went back to his year of postgraduate study at the Sorbonne where he first became acquainted with the ideas of the French political philosopher, Henri Bergson. In the thirties, to be sure, dynamism was associated with the Fascist states, but by the late forties it was the Soviet Union - propelled "by the revolutionary spirit with which Communism imbues its followers" - that had become the dynamic power. The remedy in the thirties had been "peaceful change", but in the postwar years the essential task was to restore the faith and moral vigor of the West. Thus, whether writing about the problems of war and peace before 1939, or in behalf of the United Nations during the war, or producing speeches for Eisenhower, Dulles would always proclaim not only that the dynamic is superior to the static but also that, in human affairs, the spiritual element is more important than the material and that there is a moral law not made by man which determines right and wrong.

But there was another constant in his theories of international relations: namely, the conviction that war is most likely to occur not as a result of premeditation or intent but from miscalculation. It is highly doubtful if the secretary of state ever really believed that the Soviet Union intended to make

war on the United States as a deliberate act. "War," he told the National Security Council two months into the new administration, "is not inevitable. The greatest danger of war," he continued, "comes from miscalculation by our potential enemies as to our intentions if they aggress further."[18] He was fond of arguing, for example, that there would have been no war in 1914 if Lord Grey had made it clear that Britain would fight in defense of Belgium; no war in 1939 if the United States had made Hitler understand that America would provide material assistance to the Allies (which, to be sure, was *not* what Dulles had argued in the late thirties); and, above all, no war in Korea if Dean Acheson had not gone before the National Press Club in 1950 and indicated that South Korea lay outside the American defense perimeter.

In consequence, what emerged during his years as secretary of state was what can best be termed the "certainty/uncertainty" principle - certainty that the United States would respond, uncertainty as to the means that would be employed, the time to be chosen, or the place to be selected. Or as a transcript from the first Quemoy-Matsu crisis in 1955 reads: "Secretary Dulles outlined his theory of X and 2X - that any time the enemy wished to attain X, we would exact a cost of 2X from them."[19] In the aftermath of the Geneva Conference of 1954, Ambassador John Allison wrote from Tokio seeking clarification of American policy. In response, Dulles, beginning at the theoretical level, referred to "our thesis that potential aggressor must know that he cannot always prescribe battle conditions that suit him, The way to deter aggression is to be willing and able to respond at places and by means of our own choosing." Turning to specifics, he then emphasized that, although the United States did not intend to employ major military forces in Indochina and planned to redeploy some troops from Korea, certain American actions (he cited recent authorization permitting the Navy to patrol the offshore islands of Quemoy and Matsu and to send patrol planes over the China coast) clearly demonstrated to the Chinese that the United States had both the power to retaliate and the will to do so. We have set out, he informed Allison, to impress Communist China, "the source of the past and future aggressions in Korea and Indochina that we are 'willing and able' to make the aggressor suffer at times and places of our own choosing, i.e. where our sea and air power are predominant." Thus the Chinese will "suffer damage" outweighing any possible gains from aggression. Moreover, he continued, "the prevention of miscalculation by what is going on off the China coast will, I feel, give the best

18 Transcript of meeting of the National Security Council, 31 March 1953, DP, White House Memoranda Series.
19 Memorandum of Meeting Held in the Secretary's Office, 28 March 1955, DP, White House Memoranda Series.

chance of deterring further aggression in Korea and Indochina (...) those in Moscow and Peiping who see the picture as a whole and who read our policy speeches carefully, do not suffer from confusion." As a result, Dulles concluded, "I do not believe that the Chinese are in fact now prepared to challenge us in any major or sustained way and provoke further our sea and air power along their coast."[20] Clearly, for Dulles, international relations was a zero-sum game, and the Communists were assumed to be rational actors who would not miscalculate.

The essence of his strategy of deterrence was an attempt to articulate certain positions and to establish certain lines that, if the communists overstepped them, would trigger an American response - lines and positions that would be made clear to the Soviets and the Chinese. In discussion with State Department advisers during the Dien Bien Phu crisis in 1954, Dulles declared that there was much value in drawing a line and saying, no further. Such an approach, he argued, gave an opponent an opportunity to back off, to stay his hand. Conversely, it maximized the opportunity to rally allies to your own position. (Though not every one in his audience, it must be admitted, was intellectually convinced. The next line in the transcript reads: "Admiral Radford did not give the impression of being impressed by this line of thought."[21]) This same logic informed his two famous and successful attempts - the Congressional resolutions on the offshore islands of Quemoy and Matsu and on the Middle East - to bind Congress in advance to support whatever policies the administration might choose to follow in the future if there was further communist aggression. Both resolutions were intended to make it clear, without shadow of doubt, that any Communist advance beyond the positions laid out in the resolutions would result in an American reaction. War by miscalculation would thereby be avoided.

John Foster Dulles is best remembered for the many public speeches and several major articles in which he outlined the national security policy of the Eisenhower administration which came to be known by the phrase "massive retaliation." (Though Dulles himself, it should be emphasized, never used the term, preferring the phrase "massive retaliatory power.") But massive retaliation did not spring full grown from Dulles's brain, though it was he who most frequently articulated the policy to the American people. Moreover, in the beginning, when he first put his ideas to then-candidate Eisenhower, the future president had reservations, particularly as to its relevance in cases of "indirect

20 Dulles to Ambassador John Allison, 20 August 1954, DP, Chronological Series, Box 9.
21 Memorandum of Conversation on Indochina at the Secretary's Residence, 9 May 1954, DP, Subject Series, Box 9.

aggression" such as had occurred in Czechoslovakia.[22] It was also much more than simply the theory of deterrence that accompanied and gave meaning to the "New Look" military posture adopted by the administration in its first year in office - a military posture that involved significant reductions in the size of American ground forces and increasing reliance upon the bombers of the Strategic Air Command and the nuclear deterrent. Massive retaliation was, indeed, meant to accomplish many goals. First, by presumably reducing military costs, it would help the administration to achieve the holiest of its holy grails - the balanced budget. It perfectly matched Eisenhower's conviction (which Dulles shared) that excessive military spending carried with it a threat to basic American institutions, might even create the pre-conditions for his much feared "garrison state." It also appeared to offer a technological solution to the problem of avoiding another war of attrition, like Korea. America could rely on its clear superiority in both nuclear weapons and delivery systems and not have to confront either the Russians or the Chinese in land warfare where demography alone gave them tremendous advantages in manpower. No longer need there be the fear of being "nibbled to death" in another Korea. But, above all, as a strategic concept, massive retaliation - at places and by means of our own choosing - would achieve the goals of the "certainty/uncertainty" principle. It would restore the initiative to the United States and at the same time solve the problem of war by miscalculation. An off-balance enemy would be convinced that the United States could and would retaliate in ways that would maximize his pain and suffering.

Furthermore, it was intended to minimize both costs and risks (though, to be sure, later critics would question whether the policy, by reducing conventional forces, did not maximize the latter.) But as Dulles's response to Ambassador Allison indicated, in his mind, the risk of war was minimized because the United States would be relying on those instruments of force, air and seapower, in which it was clearly superior and because the Communists fully understood the firmness of American purpose.[23]

To create certainty in the minds of the communist world, the secretary always felt that he had to build maximum political support, especially in the Congress. Two particular items from his own immediate diplomatic and political experience

22 For a discussion of Eisenhower's reactions, see McGeorge Bundy, Danger and Survival: Choices about the Bomb in the First Fifty Years (New York, 1988), p. 237.
23 For a more detailed discussion of massive retaliation, see my chapter, "The National Security Policy from Truman to Eisenhower. Did the 'Hidden Hand' Leadership Make Any Difference?" in Norman Graebner, ed., The National Security: Its Theory and Practice, 1945-1960 (New York, 1986), pp. 37-75.

were of special relevance. First, Dulles had first-hand knowledge of the way in which his predecessor, Dean Acheson, had become the prisoner of his critics - most notably his Republican critics in Congress - in the bitter, divisive and highly partisan debates that had followed the "loss" of China, the furor over domestic subversives, and the frustrations of a stalemated war in Korea. Thus, from the start he made a conscious, deliberate attempt to build a domestic base for support in the United States Senate, especially with those Republicans who were not only zealous supporters of Chiang Kai-shek but who also believed that most of America's diplomatic problems arose from the presence of alleged subversives in the Department of State. Foster Dulles, moreover, in his former capacity as Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Carnegie Endowment, had been the employer of Alger Hiss and had gone to unusual lengths to try to dissociate himself from Hiss both before and during his famous perjury case. Consequently, the secretary of state, determined that there would be "no Alger Hisses" aboard during his watch and equally determined to win the support of the Republican right brought the objectives, if not the tactics, of McCarthyism into the Department of State.[24] An early speech to the department staff demanded "positive loyalty," while the secretary himself personally examined every case of suspected loyalty brought before the review boards - and, not surprisingly, decided on the separation of any one against whom even the smallest shadow of doubt could be cast. And as part of the same tactic of winning support, he stoutly defended the cause of Chiang in every instance. The result was that the Republican Right was, over time, co-opted and defused - had, in fact, disappeared as a significant political force well before the end of the administration's first term in office.

Dulles additionally consulted with legislative leaders. A striking difference between the Johnson and Eisenhower administrations was the extent to which the legislative branch was involved in the big decisions - most notably over the handling of Indochina. Legislative leaders, for example, were fully consulted about the intervention contemplated at the time of the Dien Bien Phu crisis in 1954 and, in fact, exercised a veto.[25] Dulles, though a partisan Republican, avoided (at least after 1952) bringing foreign policy issues into any speeches he made in political campaigns, liked to sing the praises of bipartisanship, and sometimes almost went out of his way to recognize the help his foreign policy received from Democrats in Congress. While in one sense this was a political

24 For an extended discussion of Dulles's role in the Hiss affair, see my article, "New Light on the Dulles-Hiss Affair," University, No. 73 (Spring, 1973), pp. 1-3, 28-33.
25 Memorandum for the Secretary, Conference with Congressional Leaders concerning the Crisis in Southeast Asia, 5 April 1954, DP, White House Memoranda Series.

necessity - after 1954, he did have to work with a Democratic controlled Congress - it was part of the larger strategy of demonstrating the "certainty" that Congress would support his policies. Indeed, in the case of the two Congressional resolutions previously mentioned, the objective, over and beyond the drawing of lines, was to demonstrate to the communist world that executive and legislative branches thought as one, that the United States transmitted a clear signal with a single voice. It was to be the opposite of the situation in the Truman years when discord between the executive and the legislative branches, most notably on Far Eastern issues, had suggested that the country spoke with an uncertain voice.

Equally important in influencing Soviet and Chinese behavior was making sure that the American people also gave their positive support. Throughout his career Dulles made dozens of public speeches - before labor audiences, veterans groups, religious organizations. Some, of course, were occasions at which he made major policy statements (His blunt warning to the Chinese Communists about Indochina in 1953, for example, was contained in an otherwise boilerplate speech to a veterans group)[26], but the majority were classics of American exceptionalism with their emphasis upon core American values and moral issues and their dire warnings against the dangers of communist aggression and of letting down in the struggle of the Free World to survive. There is no need to rehearse the familiar litany of a typical Dulles speech aimed at winning public approval. One example, from a speech on the 100th anniversary of his family church in Watertown, N.Y. will suffice:

"The terrible things that are happening in some of the world are due to the fact that political and social practices have been separated from spiritual content.

That separation is almost total in the Soviet Communist world. There the rulers hold to a materialistic creed which denies the existence of moral law. It denies that men are spiritual beings (...). As a result, the Soviet institutions treat human beings as primarily important from the standpoint of how much they can be made to produce for the glorification of the State (...).

Such conditions repel us. But it is important to understand what causes those conditions. It is irreligion. If ever the political forces of this country became irreligious, our institutions would change (...)."[27]

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26 "Korean Problems," Address by the Secretary of State to the Convention of the American Legion, St. Louis, Missouri, 2 September 1953, DP, Speeches and Articles File.

27 Address at the First Presbyterian Church of Watertown, N.Y., 11 Oktober 1953, DP, Speeches and Articles File.

It is not surprising that some of the more cynical members of the Washington press corps referred to Dulles as a "card-carrying Christian."

In his speeches and public statements, whenever Dulles talked about the nuclear deterrent, he always coupled it with the insistence that the crucial factor was the will and determination of America to act. To create in communist minds the feeling of the certainty of an American response, the factors of public will and determination were crucial. There could be no certainty without them. During a 1957 discussion about options for NATO military options, Dulles burst out, "the real deterrent is not the divisions in Korea but the fact that we would within minutes wipe out the industrial complex of Manchuria if Korea were attacked. We have the same kind of problem in many areas. The problem is not one of thinking through what it is we would do under various hypothetical situations. We can have all the NSC position papers in the world and they will persuade no one. What our allies want to know is the state of our will, of our resolution."[28] Conversely, he could express almost apocalyptic views - worst possible scenarios - of the international disasters that irresolution would create, especially when America's European allies did not stand firm. To name but a few of his dire prophecies: the possible loss of all of Africa and Asia at the time of Dien Bien Phu, the toppling of all the Asian dominoes during the second Quemoy-Matsu crisis, the loss of all the Arab countries to Nasser at the time of the Lebanese crisis.[29]

Moreover, even though Dulles was aware as early as 1954 of the dilemmas involved in actually using nuclear weapons, he always insisted that nothing must ever be permitted to weaken the American will and resolution to use them. And it was equally important to educate the public. In an early 1955 discussion between the president and himself, "We reviewed the importance of education with reference to the distinction between atomic missiles for tactical purposes and the big bomb with huge radio-active fallouts (...). We went over the draft of my proposed talk and we discussed whether or not to make in it reference to atomic missiles. The president thought it might usefully be done in an incidental way."[30] Three days later, in the National Security Council discussion of the offshore islands crisis, Dulles, according to the transcript, made the same point: "Determination must be made whether in such defense atomic weapons will be

28 Memorandum of Discussion at the State Department, 6 November 1957, DP, General Correspondence and Memoranda Series, Box 3.
29 For further discussion of this point, see my forthcoming article, "John Foster Dulles: Theorist/Practitioner."
30 Memorandum of Conversation with the President, 7 March 1955, DP, White House Memoranda Series.

tactically used (...). U.S. and world opinion must be prepared."[31] As McGeorge Bundy has noted, while he faced up to the dilemma of actual use, he never wanted the Communists to feel that Americans lacked the will to act - for this would clearly undermine the principle of certainty. "He had no irresponsible desire for their instant use, but he wanted nothing to inhibit the *threat* of such use."[32] His position was clearly set forth in a speech to the National War College in 1958, well after the Soviets had achieved their own deterrent capacity: "We must be able to deter that (Soviet military power) by retaliatory striking power, not merely the possession of that power but the will to use it. If there was a feeling on the part of the Communist rulers that even though we had the power we did not have the will to use it, or if our allies in other Free World countries felt that we had not the will to use it, then the mere possession of power would itself not operate as a deterrent (...). It is essential to have the two elements to have an effective deterrent".[33]

Both Dulles and Eisenhower believed that on three occasions the certainty/uncertainty principle had worked - that the North Koreans had agreed to a truce because of the veiled atomic threat that the war would be expanded into Manchuria by undisclosed means. At Bermuda Dulles was insistent on making the point to Churchill. Similarly they believed that threats had worked to prevent China from moving against Indochina in 1953 and again to deter the Chinese during the Quemoy-Matsu crisis. Sceptical historians have, to be sure, examined these claims with great scrutiny and have expressed doubt that the atomic threat, however veiled or explicit, was the catalyst, though they believe that the possibility exists that the threats may have had some influence. But McGeorge Bundy has recently made the argument that the deciding factor in the second Quemoy-Matsu crisis, was the skillful way in which Eisenhower manipulated conventional instruments of coercion in the re-supply operations.[34]

III

It should be emphasized, however, that Dulles never, in practice, carried through on the full implications of his policy of massive retaliation. What has emerged from all the newly released documentation is that both the president

31 Memorandum for the Record of National Security Council Meeting, 10 March 1955, DP, White House Memoranda Series, Formosa Straits.
32 Bundy, Danger and Survival, p. 256.
33 "Current United States National Strategy," lecture to the National War College, 23 November 1958. DP, Speeches and Article File.
34 Bundy, Danger and Survival, pp. 279-87.

and his secretary of state, almost from the beginning, understood many of the practical as well as moral dilemmas involved in the use of atomic weapons. The records of the Dien Bien Phu crisis - as well as those that deal with the two offshore island affairs - are filled with discussions of the dilemma. At one level there was the dearth of appropriate targets, at another the realization that European allies would not approve, and at yet another, that dropping an atomic bomb might create more problems of fallout for the Chinese nationalists than for their adversaries.[35] Both realized early on that nuclear weapons were inappropriate for many potential situations. "We cannot," Dulles once confessed, "splurge our limited supply of nuclear weapons, without serious danger to the balance of power" - which implied in effect that they were to be restricted only to cases of major aggression, to general war.[36] Both the president and secretary of state were sensitive to political repercussions - Dulles, for example, expressed the hope that nuclear weapons could not be used in the spring of 1954 because their use, given European sensitivities, might well prevent the passage of the much-desired European defense treaties.[37] And the moral issue of using a bomb in Asia after Hiroshima and Nagasaki was always an inhibiting factor - if America used an atom bomb again in Asia, it would clearly appear a racist act. And Dulles once noted that it would be politically counterproductive to the cause of Chiang Kai-shek if a Nationalist attempt to regain the mainland was preceded by an American use of an atomic weapon.[38]

Thus, as John Gaddis and others have properly maintained, it is much more accurate to describe massive retaliation as a "declaratory" policy than as the "actual" policy. Or, in Bundy's words, the Eisenhower administration drew the distinction "between threat and action."[39] Indeed, no matter how much Dulles wanted to give the impression that the United States had the will to act, it almost seems, in the times of crisis, as if both secretary and president were looking for reasons to avoid their use. This is not to say that there were not veiled atomic threats. There were. Or that both believed that, in the event of general war, atomic weapons would have to be employed. Yet even so, massive retaliation seems more "declaratory" than "actual."

35 For an extended discussion of this issue, see Gaddis, Long Peace, pp. 123-46.
36 Memorandum of Meeting Held in the Secretary's Office, 28 March 1955, DP, White House Memoranda Series 1955, Formosa Straits.
37 Memorandum for the Record, 11 March 1955, DP, White House Memoranda, 1955, Formosa Straits.
38 Memorandum of Meeting Held in the Secretary's Office, 28 March 1955, DP, White House Memoranda Series 1955, Formosa Straits.
39 Bundy, Danger and Survival, p. 245.

Moreover, it is clear that Dulles always believed that the United States must maintain sufficient conventional weapons to be able to maintain and implement his certainty/uncertainty principle. There were situations where the retaliatory power of the United States would be inappropriate. Lebanon, he noted, was the proof of the need for conventional power.[40] Indeed, as early as 1954 he raised with Ike the question of whether or not the JCS and the Defense Department "were in reality planning to deal adequately with the possible 'little wars' which might call for punishment related to the degree and the locality of the offense but which would not justify a massive retaliation against the Soviet Union."[41] In the aftermath of Sputnik, when there was much agitation to build more and better missiles, Dulles was insistent that such programs should not be at the expense of the conventional forces that he said were essential for his policies.[42] But, in general, he was satisfied that there was an appropriate mix of nuclear and non-nuclear power and resented the charges, brought after Sputnik by the Democrats, that the "New Look" had put the country in a military situation where the only possible option in any crisis was "to go nuclear." Moreover, the secretary generally deferred to what he regarded as the superior military knowledge of President Eisenhower. When for example, his assistant Robert Bowie, attempted to get him to play a more active role in discussions about actual force levels, Dulles usually deferred.[43]

More importantly, as early as 1954, Dulles realized that the era of America's near monopoly on atomic weapons would be short-lived and that, as the Soviets developed their own nuclear capacity and delivery systems, the nuclear threat would lose its credibility. By Ike's second term he believed that, in effect, there was a system of mutual deterrence and that general war was unlikely because both sides understood that the level of destruction would be unacceptable. "Modern weapons have such vast destructive power," he told the Associated Press, "that there could be no real 'victor' were general war to occur." "Their use in general war," he said on another occasion, "could threaten life anywhere on the globe."[44] With the development of Soviet missiles, he worried that the Europeans might come to believe that the United States would never come to their defense out of fear that American cities would be destroyed. And finally, during Eisenhower's second term, Dulles was in the forefront of those who felt that it

40 Transcript of Telephone Conversation with Secretary Robert Anderson, 3 December 1958, DP, Telephone Conversation series.
41 Memorandum of Conversation with the President, 22 December 1954, DP, White House Memoranda, Meetings with President.
42 DP, Telephone Conversation with Robert Anderson, 2 December 1958.
43 Interview with Robert Bowie, DOH, Mudd Library, Princeton University.
44 "Disarmament and Peace," Report to the Nation, 22 July 1957 and "Dynamic Peace," Address to the Associated Press Annual Luncheon, 22 April 1957, DP, Speeches and Articles File.

was essential, while there was still time, to conduct a thorough review of the entire national security concept which, as he said to Secretary Anderson in 1958, was "running into a dead end."[45]

IV

The Dulles theory of deterrence called for keeping potential enemies uncertain about the times, places and means of retaliation. But his policies also had the unfortunate effect of creating uncertainty at home. Indeed, there are many ways in which the "certainty/uncertainty" principle was, at best, problematic. Dulles's difficulties first surfaced with the famous "massive retaliation" speech which he delivered to the Council on Foreign Relations in January of 1954. His language raised fears that the administration meant to unleash the atom bomb at the slightest provocation and without consulting either allies or the Congress. The offending sentence (which, ironically, as McGeorge Bundy has noted, was written primarily by Eisenhower) read: "The basic decision was to depend primarily upon a great capacity to retaliate instantly, by means and at places of our own choosing. It was the words "instantly" and "primarily" which, of course, raised the questions - and created uncertainty in the public mind about the administration's intentions.[46] Dulles, to be sure, revised and revamped his speech for publication in the April issue of *Foreign Affairs* with the objective of tidying up some of the language about the concept of "massive retaliatory power."[47] This helped. Dulles, for example, carefully explained that thermonuclear power was not appropriate for all circumstances. But he re-emphasized that, as to the methods America would actually use, "That is a matter as to which the aggressor had best remain ignorant." Small wonder that McGeorge Bundy observes that Dulles was always a bit of a "nuclear swordsman."[48]

But the problem of public uncertainty was even more acute in the case of the 1955 Congressional resolution on the offshore islands of Quemoy and Matsu. At question here were the circumstances under which the administration would be prepared to fight in defense of the islands. The resolution had been deliberately phrased - "fuzzed up", to use their own phrase - to heighten Communist uncertainty about how and where the United States would respond to an attack and thus, hopefully, to enhance its deterrent force. The administration, to be

45 DP, Telephone Conversation with Robert Anderson, 30 April 1958, Telephone Conversation Series.
46 Bundy, Danger and Survival, pp. 255-57.
47 "Policy for Security and Peace," Foreign Affairs (April 1954), pp. 353-364.
48 Bundy, Danger and Survival, p. 269.

sure, felt itself in a box. No one believed that the islands were really defensible; there was genuine resentment that Chiang had put some of his best troops on the islands; and Eisenhower, in particular, complained about "the place where we are caught."[49] But both Dulles and Eisenhower believed that the loss of the islands might be fatal to Nationalist morale on Taiwan. They wanted to keep their options open - to be able to decide to respond only if an attack on Quemoy and Matsu clearly seemed a prelude to a Communist assault on Taiwan. But, in accordance with the certainty/uncertainty principle none of this could be communicated to the public. Eisenhower, in the midst of the crisis, wrote a five-page single space typed letter to his friend, General Alfred Gruenther, in which he tried to spell out both the dilemma and the problem of public communication.[50] But, in the circumstances, the administration's "fuzzing up" only transferred the problem of uncertainty to the minds of both the American and European publics. The result was confusion about what was intended or might happen - and nothing is clearer from the published record of those years than that the American public, while willing to accept the defense of Taiwan had grave doubts about the wisdom of fighting for Quemoy and Matsu.

Dulles, in short, always had difficulty communicating his ideas about deterrence - about how the certainty/uncertainty principle would work - to the public. There was often a gap between what he said and wrote in private and what he communicated to the American people. In private, and for cabinet and NSC meetings he could produce incisive memoranda with no moralizing, no sermonizing, no reliance upon Presbyterian rhetoric; he could utilize the value-free language of the social sciences. And the gap sometimes extended to his dealings with individual statesmen. Sir Anthony Eden complained to Eisenhower that he couldn't comprehend what the secretary was driving at and was left with the impression that Dulles thought he was "dumb." Just a few days before the Suez crisis blew up with the Franco-British-Israeli invasion, one of the secretary's closest friends, General Alfred Gruenther, wrote him a personal letter in which he stated, quite bluntly, that Dulles had failed to make the British and

49 Among the plethora of recently released documents on the Quemoy-Matsu episode in 1955, see, in particular, Memorandum for the Record, 11 March 1955, White House Memoranda Series, Formosa Straits; Memorandum for the Secretary, 1 April 1955, same series; Memorandum of Conversation with the President, 4 April 1956, Meetings with the President 1955; Eisenhower to Dulles, Memorandum for the Secretary, 5 April 1955, White House Memoranda Series; Memoranda of Conversation with the President, Augusta, Georgia, 18 and 27 April 1955, Meetings with President 1955. All in DP. The Eisenhower to Dulles memorandum of 5 April is a thorough exposition of the President's thoughts.

50 See a remarkable and highly detailed letter, Eisenhower to General Alfred Gruenther, 1 February 1955, in which the President attempts to explain the complexities of the situation and the difficulty of what could or could not be publicly said. Papers of Dwight Eisenhower, Whitman file, copy in DP, Princeton University.

French certain about what he really wanted to do about Nasser. "If I were one of your staff officers," Gruenther wrote, "I would probably say something like this to you. 'Mr. Secretary, I don't know what it is that causes your approach to misfire on occasion, but certainly it does. I strongly recommend that at the earliest possible moment we have a private meeting of the three foreign ministers, or, better yet, the three heads of government to resolve what I think is a deteriorating situation."[51]

One of the difficulties was that Dulles tended to believe that the average American couldn't fully comprehend complicated issues of foreign policy and that it was necessary to phrase ideas in dramatic phrases - often capsule phrases - that would make the headlines and capture the TV audiences. As a result, he often came across as the opposite of what he intended, appearing as a reductionist who oversimplified and overdramatized. Even today Dulles is more often remembered not for the complexity of his thinking but for such simplistic phrases as "agonizing reappraisal", "rollback", "liberation", "massive retaliation" and, above all, "brink of war."

The classic example was the famous "brinkmanship" article that appeared in *Life* magazine early in 1956 and which gave to the world the image, which has lasted till today, of a secretary of state who positively revelled in bringing the United States and the Soviet Union to the teetering edge of Armageddon. The article described how on three separate occasions the United States had gone to the brink of war with the Communist world and had preserved peace only by its willingness to go to the brink. It grew out of a free-wheeling interview that Dulles had with three journalists. What he was trying to transmit were his underlying assumptions about the essence of great power confrontations and his belief that, in an international crisis, the leaders of a nation cannot afford to indicate, in advance, that they will give in or surrender. To do so, Dulles maintained, would only tempt the aggressor to raise the ante, to press his advantage - and in the process to create an even more dangerous situation. The argument, of course, was part of the larger construct: that to be credible, to maintain the principle of certainty, a nation and its leaders must maintain their will and determination. And it was in this context, and this context only, that the secretary spoke of the possible need to go to the brink of war. But the more Dulles talked to the journalists, the more he resorted to dramatic phrases. At one point he graphically described how, when he made a particular point to Eisenhower during a crisis, the president, as he put it, "came up taut."[52] The

51 General Alfred Gruenther to JFD, 29 October 1956, DP, General Correspondence, Box 2.
52 James Shepley, "How Dulles Averted War," Life, (16 January, 1956).

editors of *Life* compounded the problem. They shortened and tightened the script; they added their own dramatic sub-heads; and they put a huge blurb on the cover: "Three Times to the Brink of War." Poor staff work kept anyone in Dulles's office from realizing what had been done until the issue was in print, the damage done. Henry Luce, to be sure, later apologized for his editors, but even Dulles recognized that the article had made him appear an intemperate man who dashed around the world drinking I.W. Harper whiskey and threatened nuclear destruction.[53]

After 1956, as I have already noted, Dulles did not make public nuclear threats; he early came to realize that nuclear weapons could not be used in many situations and were best regarded as deterrents rather than as instruments of coercion; he came to realize that the nuclear deterrent was running its course; and he saw the need for "balanced forces" to deal with the problem of indirect aggression, to solve the problem of "nibbling." But, even so, he never completely abandoned his earlier, established views. In 1958, for example, he told Eisenhower that there were "increasing possibilities of effective defense through tactical nuclear weapons and other means short of wholesale obliteration of the Soviet Union"[54]; he became interested in the idea of increasing the "sword" of NATO - that is, its long-range striking power - as against the "shield," ground forces in place; and in September of 1958 he specifically advised Harold Macmillan during the second Quemoy-Matsu affair that "there is also a question as to whether if we did intervene we could do so effectively without some use of atomic weapons; I hope no more than small air bursts without fallout. That is of course an unpleasant prospect but one, I think, we must face up to because our entire military establishment assumes more and more that the use of nuclear weapons will become normal in the event of hostilities."[55] And when Eisenhower, at the same time, opted for caution, Dulles interjected, somewhat plaintively, "but I thought we had acknowledged the risk of the political and psychological dangers of the use of these weapons when we included them in our arsenal."[56]

When he was on his deathbed in Walter Reed Hospital in the spring of 1959, he said, with reference to the then brewing Berlin crisis, "there is a total failure to grasp or accept the whole concept of our deterrent strategy. We can't rely on,

53 See Dulles Oral History Project interviews with James Shepley, Henry Luce and Charles J.V. Murphy, Mudd Library, Princeton. Also Memorandum of Telephone Conversation with Carl McArdle, 26 December 1955, DP, Telephone Conversation Series.
54 Memorandum of Conversation with the President, 1 April 1958, DP, White House Meetings.
55 JFD to Harold MacMillan, 4 September 1958, DP, White House, Meetings with the President.
56 Memorandum of Conversation with the President, 4 September 1958, DP, White House Memoranda Series, Meetings with the President.

whenever there is a threat, having to buy our way out by making concessions rather than standing firm and relying upon our nuclear power to keep the peace."[57]

V

A quick postscript. In this paper I have tried to focus upon Dulles, his ideas about deterrence and particularly the implications and problems of his "certainty/uncertainty" principle. There remains the larger question, some four decades after the Cold War began, of whether we should look back on the Eisenhower-Dulles era as a kind of "golden age," a bench mark against which to measure predecessors and successors, the period in which, to adopt John Gaddis's provocative terminology, the preconditions for "the long peace" were established. Dulles was more flexible and his views more balanced than we once realized. He could approve of neutralism - as in the case of Austria when it was not forced upon the country, when the nation was not disarmed, when it fitted his own larger policies. And he could recognize, as of the time of the Geneva summit, that, under Stalin's successors, there had been change in the Soviet Union - change produced by internal economic pressures and rising dissension in the satellite countries. As a result, he argued, the Soviet Union was less likely to practice the "virulent aggression" which had characterized the Stalin era.[58] And, as he wrote in a long and candid letter to Adenauer, there was some possibility of significant negotiation.[59] And even on nuclear issues he could on occasion break out of his customary ways of thinking. In December of 1955, for example, he told Eisenhower that he "had come to feel that atomic power was too vast a power to be left for military use by any one country, but that its use should be internationalized for security purposes." His idea was to call together a meeting of the more than 40 nations with which the United States had security treaties and put before them "proposals for the establishment of an international group which would make the decision as to when and how to use atomic weapons for defense." This, to be sure, arose out of a certain pessimism - that America's security posture was in danger and could collapse because of worldwide "moral repugnance" about the use of atomic weapons - but, at the minimum, it

57 Memorandum of Telephone Conversation with Christian Herter, 10 April 1959, DP, Telephone Conversation Series.
58 See, for example, various speeches in the spring of 1955, such as Dulles's talk at a meeting of State Governors in Washington on 2 May and his televised "An Historic Week - Report to the Nation" on 17 May. DP, Speeches and Articles File.
59 JFD to Chancellor Konrad Adenauer, 15 August 1955, DP. General Correspondence Files.

demonstrates that his thinking about atomic issues was never as rigid as was once imagined.[60]

Clearly, too, other policies adopted by the administration and approved by Dulles did contribute, though perhaps inadvertently, to creating the pre-conditions that have eventually led to the present-day stability in Soviet-American relations. The newly released documents on the Solarium project in 1953 demonstrate that, even at the beginning of the Eisenhower-Dulles era, that administration, in essence, accepted the main contours of the doctrine of containment that it had once spurned.[61]

And with Eden's massive help, the impasse over EDC was surmounted, West Germany was brought into NATO, and one of Foster Dulles's main goals - the ending of Franco-German rivalry - was achieved. And, in the last analysis Chiang Kai-shek was put back on the leash and probably enjoyed less freedom under Dulles than under Acheson. From the perspective of the late 1980s, all of these were precursors for stability.

But other matters remain far more problematic. Dulles and Eisenhower often - as most clearly evidenced by their discourse during the Indochina crisis - spoke eloquently of the need to understand the force of nationalism in the Third World and of the danger of tying the American cause to French colonialism. But, in the last analysis, they turned to the argument that Communists were using the tide of nationalism as a device to ride into power. And they would conclude that it was the communist threat that must be contained.

John Gaddis has advanced evidence that what he terms the "wedge theory" - putting pressure upon the Chinese Republic to make Mao more dependent on Moscow and thereby producing fissures within the "monolith" - was both a sophisticated and effective strategy. But it could also be contended that the strategy served to heighten Chinese fears of the United States. Also the secretary's hard-line speeches about the Red Peril in Asia (and after 1955 he *did* think that the Chinese Republic was much more likely to commit "virulent aggression" than the Soviet Union) may well have helped to freeze public attitudes in the United States and make it politically impossible to achieve any breakthroughs until the era of Richard Nixon. Moreover, the ideological nature of

60 Memorandum of Conversation with the President, 26 December 1955, DP, Meetings with the President 1955.

61 For a general discussion of the Solarium project, see Robert J. Watson, History of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Vol. 5, The Joint Chiefs of Staff and National Policy, 1953-54, (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1986), pp.11-14.

his public discourse - his public effort to create certainty, to maintain the public will and determination to resist communism - certainly helped to fasten Cold War values on the United States and to make the Cold War even more ideological than it had been in the days of Harry Truman.

Also running through the newly released documentation is Dulles's continuing scepticism about summit conferences, especially after the 1955 experience at Geneva. Even when he was agreeing to take the first tentative steps towards the suspension of nuclear tests, he went on to say that this was a "good thing" because it warded off pressure for a summit. At the very end of his life, when the Eisenhower-Khruschev summit was about to occur, he expressed his scepticism to Richard Nixon from his hospital bed at Walter Reed. He had, he said, spent the last year and half of his life trying to keep a summit from occurring. "Why go on at all?" he asked.[62] Dulles resisted summits on the grounds that they raised public expectations and especially because they might produce a let down in the will and determination of the American people. As always, it came down to avoiding anything that would undercut the American will and weaken the principle of certainty.

And a more complete analysis of the Dulles-Eisenhower years would, of course, have to pay attention to the way in which - in Iran and Guatemala - covert operations became a recognized instrument of national policy.

But perhaps the best way to evaluate John Foster Dulles is to observe that, along with Eisenhower, he turned out to have real skills as a crisis manager (even in, a cynic might suggest, crises that he himself helped to create). The name of Dulles will never be associated with a long-term strategy like that of George Kennan, nor did he produce a theory of international relations as sophisticated and complex as that of Henry Kissinger. But he was a crisis manager. The administration survived Dien Bien Phu and the offshore islands; it muddled through Suez and Lebanon without conflict; it ended the Korean War.

But there is always an ironic dimension. The "certainty/uncertainty" principle was meant to insure deterrence. It was intended also to reduce risks since, assuming the enemy to be a rational actor and that America possessed overwhelming superiority in air and naval weapons, the Soviets and Chinese would properly interpret the signals that came from Washington. But,

62 Memorandum of Telephone Conversation with Mr. Greene, 24 March 1959, DP, Telephone Conversation Series.

particularly after Sputnik, the administration's increasing number of critics could make the politically plausible argument that, on any costs/risks scale, the New Look had put the country at peril. Risks, critics claimed, had been maximized because the administration lacked the appropriate military instruments to carry out its policies. It could not, so the argument ran, respond adequately to less than nuclear challenges, could not meet the challenges of limited war or indirect aggression except by going nuclear. And the Eisenhower administration, particularly after the death of Dulles in 1959, was unable to convince either its critics or the public at large that its grand strategy had been effective and that, at both the conventional and nuclear levels, it had maintained an appropriate mix. John Kennedy was to ride into power to a considerable extent on the argument that massive retaliation had been a failure - that the Dulles/Eisenhower "certainty/uncertainty" principle had not worked - and that the only viable grand strategy was one that would be based upon "balanced forces" and the ability to act at any level on the scale of instruments of coercion.