

University of Kent at Canterbury

American Studies

MA Research

**The Imperial Imperative
John F Kennedy and US Foreign Relations**

An exploration of how John F Kennedy was influenced by matters of imperialism and decolonisation and how these came to bear upon his thinking on issues of foreign affairs, with particular reference to Vietnam.

Christopher John Hurley

2016 / 2018

The Body Text of this Document Comprises 40,590 words

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author is indebted to Dr Andrew Wroe and Dr George Conyne of the University of Kent for their wisdom, constructive criticism and support in producing this thesis.

Thanks must also go to my wife Avril for her forbearance in the face of my frequent absences from home and her general encouragement; to my daughter Victoria and her partner Jai for accommodating me, feeding me and entertaining me and my son Julian and daughter Jennifer for showing an interest in my work and keeping my enthusiasm at a high pitch.

Mention must be made of the Kennedy Library in Boston and the most helpful members of staff who did so much to assist me in my research. Special thanks go to Katie Rice, Laurie Austin and Jessica Nelsen.

Finally, very special thanks must go to Elena (“Olga”) Akroyd, a brilliant fellow student whose friendship, encouragement and support has been immense.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	2
List of Abbreviations	4
Preface	6
Chapter One	
Events and Experiences that Shaped Kennedy	23
Chapter Two	
Kennedy’s Approach to Foreign Affairs as Congressman	35
Chapter Three	
Kennedy and Foreign Affairs 1952 – 1960	51
Chapter Four	
Foreign Affairs Decision-Making in the White House	68
Chapter Five	
Writers on Kennedy, Foreign Affairs, Decolonisation and Imperialism	95
Chapter Six	
Kennedy and Books and Kennedy and Ireland	113
Chapter Seven	
Conclusions	126
Appendix	140
Bibliography	147
Notes To Chapters	153

Notes to Chapters

Preface	153
Chapter One	158
Chapter Two	161
Chapter Three	165
Chapter Four	172
Chapter Five	183
Chapter Six	187
Chapter Seven	190
Appendix	191

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

In general terms the full title / name is given in the first instance with the chosen abbreviation following in parentheses. Thereafter the abbreviation features although, for clarity and consistency of style, the full title / name is used on occasions. John F. Kennedy is ordinarily referred to as “Kennedy” in abbreviated format, but some references and quotations use “JFK” and this has been retained in such instances. The United States of America may be abbreviated as either US or USA.

American Friends of Vietnam	AFV
Army of the Republic of Vietnam	ARVN
Assassination Records Review Board	ARRB
Associated Press	AP
Balsillie School of International Affairs	BSIA
Central Intelligence Agency	CIA
Centre for International Governance Innovation	CIGI
First World War	WWI
Government of North Vietnam	GNV
Government of South Vietnam	GSV
Hukbalahap Rebellion	Huk
John F Kennedy	Kennedy / JFK
John F Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum	Kennedy Library
Joseph P Kennedy	JPK
US Military Assistance Command for Vietnam	MACV

Military Assistance Advisory Group	MAAG
New York Journal American	Journal American
Non-Aligned Movement	NAM
North Atlantic Treaty Organisation	NATO
Policy Brief No. 5	PBN5
People's Republic of China	PRC
Second World War	WWII
South East Asia Treaty Organisation	SEATO
United Nations	UN
United States of America	US / USA
Union of Soviet Socialist Republics	Soviet Union / USSR

PREFACE

“Our nations are the product of a common struggle, the revolt from colonial rule. And our people share a common heritage, the quest for the dignity and the freedom of man.”¹

“To me, John Kennedy was the first American President who really understood the nationalist revolution and the revolution of modernization in the under-developed areas and the necessity of both adjusting to it and feeding it in order to guide it in directions that served our interests.”²

In the course of the twentieth century the position of the United States of America (US / USA) as a world power shifted. From the time of the Declaration of Independence the US had managed to keep more or less detached from European affairs, but entrance into the First World War (WWI) in 1917 brought home the problems of the nations that many of its population had left behind. It was the political and economic realities of the modern age that had made participation in the war inevitable and it was President Woodrow Wilson who not only recognised this, but also came to the view that counter actions under US leadership would be required if the future of mankind was not to be blighted by further, more devastating conflicts. To deflect this possibility he revived the age old concept of World Peace.

It does not pay this study to examine the origins and development of World Peace, but there is value in asserting that its philosophical fundamentals had, by the 20th century, been supplemented by an urgency and compulsion created through the discovery and application of weaponry which carried sufficient destructive force to threaten the existence of civilisation as it had become known. Wilson strived to address the issue of World Peace by

promoting the League of Nations, but witnessed his ambitions subside as the United States Senate held out against the sacrifice of sovereignty that was at the heart of his proposals.³ Events then took place much as he had foreseen with the coming of the Second World War (WWII) that was more destructive and costly in human terms than even WWI. Wilsonian thinking, which was sustained by the predisposition that the United States was a nation created from out of the will of the people, thereafter gained currency and the League of Nations was reborn in the shape of the United Nations. It was at this time that John F. Kennedy (Kennedy) was considering entering public life and the question of World Peace occupied much of his thinking until the time of his death in November 1963. Indeed, it was in June 1963 that he made what might be considered his last great speech – the commencement address at American University, in which he put forward his ideas for World Peace and how he would seek to govern should he be re-elected to the Presidency in 1964.⁴

That the concept of World Peace in the 20th century should be so strongly associated with the United States of America is not at all surprising. At the time of Wilson's endeavours the USA, as a democratic nation, had entered the consciousness of other peoples in ways that were unprecedented; modern communications (such as the development of cinema) had given the nations of the world a clear picture of how the US conducted its affairs, how it had expanded and become wealthy and what this meant for the everyday lives of its citizens. This transparency, together with Wilson's attempts to place the USA at the forefront of world affairs, also conveyed a more oblique reference: the United States had once been a subject nation, a colony. It had broken the shackles of imperial domination through revolution (violent revolution it may be said, though a violence that sought peaceful

independence) and it had grown to become rich, peaceful, authoritative and influential; the most powerful nation on earth.

As Wilson's dread scenario of ever more destructive wars evolved and the peoples of the world became ever more aware of their relative well-being, then movements for independence and self-determination became more potent and assertive. Decolonisation spread with rapidity following the creation of the United Nations in 1945 and the latter half of the 20th century is marked by the number of new nations that came into being and were tested as independent, self-functioning entities.

Yet this remarkable transformation, a restructuring of the geopolitical map of the world, receives relatively little attention in historical treatments of the second half of the twentieth century, where the dominant force of change is ordinarily considered to be the Cold War. There is an irony in this: the United States, a former colony, made fighting the Cold War and halting the spread of communism its foreign policy priorities. In the intensity of its endeavours, it took a detached, even indifferent, attitude towards the hundreds of millions of peoples whose first concerns were not the ideological entanglements of communism and capitalism, but the simple objective of free determination. So concentrated was this approach that much of US foreign policy management became formulated, encased by legislation and assumed axioms, leaving little room for debate and contrary views that are often considered to be necessary for a thriving democracy.

There was, for example, the strategy of Containment,⁵ a structured and accepted requirement for the continued security of the nation. Further, there was the Domino

Theory - an extension of Containment that drew the hand of the United States at any point where the reach or influence of the Soviets (and their ideological associates) was seen to be overbearing.⁶ Because these impusions of foreign affairs management operated ahead of policies relating to decolonisation the United States would frequently disavow its traditional maxims regarding democracy and the conduct of nations. But for John Kennedy this was an erroneous approach:

“Strangely enough, the home of the Declaration of Independence has not understood this movement...[the revolt against colonialism]. Tied too blindly and too closely to the policies of England, France and other colonial powers, we have permitted the Soviets to falsely pose as the world’s anti-colonialism leader, and we have appeared in the eyes of millions of key uncommitted people to have abandoned our proud traditions of self-determination and independence. Thus arrogant extremists and communists now seek to exploit the most powerful new force to shape the world since World War II - not an atomic weapon, not a military pact, but - more powerful than these - the force of a surging African-Asian nationalism. In my opinion, the tragic failure of both Republican and Democratic administrations since World War II to comprehend the nature of this revolution, and its potentialities for good and evil, has reaped a bitter harvest today - and it is by rights and by necessity a major foreign policy campaign issue that has nothing to do with anti-communism.”⁷

To suggest that Kennedy adopted a nationalist stance in relation to US foreign policy management presents a thesis that stands in contrast to the views of many authoritative observers who have, over the years, portrayed him as a Cold War protagonist. Michael O’Brien noted a limited support for nationalism when Kennedy made a keynote speech regarding Vietnam in 1956:

“Kennedy’s address summed up the rationale for the American policy in Vietnam, shared by almost all U.S. policymakers of the time. In it he showed the limitations of his support for nationalism. Staunch commitment to containing communism had priority in his thinking.”⁸

Kennedy’s Secretary of State Dean Rusk, when interviewed for the Oral History Program created by the John F. Kennedy Museum and Library, makes a similar, though more

extensive statement along these lines when discussing the Laotian crisis that flared in the early days of the new administration. When asked by interviewer Dennis J. O'Brien whether the failure of the Bay of Pigs operation had the effect of installing caution in regard to Laos, Rusk responded:

“If I had to make a guess, I would guess that the principal effect of the Bay of Pigs was on the thinking of President Kennedy and that he was more resolved after the Bay of Pigs than he was before about stemming the movement of communism in Southeast Asia. But I think the historian, again, will want to look very carefully at the public record - for example, in the Public Papers of President Kennedy and look at the actual statements that he made and the actual decisions he took to get the reflection of this deep concern about Southeast Asia, the sense of our commitment to Southeast Asia, and an indication that we were not going to let Southeast Asia be overrun, because those were themes that ran all through President Kennedy's statements during the period when he was President. And he took the initial major decision to increase our forces in South Vietnam beyond the levels that were more or less permitted by the Geneva agreements of 1954 when he started moving in fifteen to twenty thousand advisors to give the South Vietnamese direct assistance on the battlefield.”⁹

Though a cautious statement, Rusk clearly emphasises how important was “stemming the movement of communism” to Kennedy. To analyse all Rusk's commentary on aspects of US foreign relations while Kennedy was President is beyond the scope of this study (eight interviews of considerable extent are lodged with the Kennedy Library), but some observation is instructive. Three aspects stand out:

- For Rusk, Kennedy was chiefly concerned about spreading communism;
- Rusk indicates that Kennedy sustained the US military commitment to South Vietnam, maintaining an advisory position prior to one of active engagement;¹⁰
- Rusk remained in post after Johnson became President and served until 1969. By agreeing to be interviewed for the Kennedy Library he was, in effect, appraising his own performance over two administrations during which time the role of the USA in

Vietnam changed dramatically. These factors must be weighed for a reasonable assessment of Rusk's words.

These three points illustrate a more general aspect of assessments regarding John Kennedy and how he is viewed in different ways. Rusk was the most senior spokesperson on foreign affairs during the time of the New Frontier and his words must be considered carefully. The extract quoted in endnote 10 above suggests that he sees Kennedy as little different from those who came before him and those who followed him in the White House, dealing with the great foreign affairs issues of the day within the demands of Containment, the Domino Theory etc. – what might be described as a “Cold Warrior Approach”. This assessment must, equally, be set against the knowledge that Rusk was speaking after having served as Secretary of State during the most catastrophic military failure in US history. It certainly would not have paid his reputation in history for Rusk to have suggested that Kennedy's ambitions for South East Asia could have avoided the American disaster in which he had been a major figure.¹¹

Challenging this interpretation, this study seeks to examine the point of view that, unlike Truman, Eisenhower and Johnson, for whom the Cold War was the central and dominant driver of foreign affairs management, John Kennedy stood out as a President of the United States who conducted foreign affairs management in a manner and style that, alongside the imperatives of Containment and its associated policies, was conditioned to a discernible extent by an awareness and understanding of the importance of the processes of decolonisation – what may be described as a “nationalist approach”. It also looks into the proposition that Kennedy's own exertions for World Peace were intrinsically linked to his

ideas about how the United States should conduct relations with the newly created nations and the necessity for it to avoid becoming a neo-colonial power – a position that would imperil World Peace at a time when nuclear weaponry had made total destruction of civilisation a reality.

The above reference (see page 9) is not an isolated quotation by Kennedy; it is a theme that is repeatedly found in his communications, whether through speeches, broadcasts or writings. In order to understand the extent to which Kennedy came to adopt an alternative point of view it is necessary to examine his background and upbringing. Aspects of his experiences as a young man before entering public life give clear indications as to the reasons why his thinking may have set him apart from his contemporaries; they also shed light on the building blocks that collected his thoughts into a consistency that might accurately be described as a philosophy or, at least, a set approach, in how he came to view US foreign affairs, both as a commentator (while in the Senate) and as chief executive.

Kennedy had, as a student in London at the outbreak of WWII, become close to senior figures in the British government and learnt much about how imperial power was administered. As a newspaper reporter in 1945, he had been present at the inception of the United Nations (UN) when the declaration regarding the self-determination of all peoples was affirmed. As a sitting member of the House of Representatives he travelled, in 1951, to Israel, India and Vietnam (among other places) where he witnessed the birth pains of new nations and was able to evaluate at first hand the efforts of the French in preserving their empire. Following this enlightening experience Kennedy's public comments - in speeches, interviews, broadcasts and written works - repeatedly emphasised the shortcomings of the

Eisenhower administration's positioning in foreign affairs management, particularly its failure to recognise the significance of how the world was changing as a result of decolonisation.

In the course of his time as an elected official Kennedy acquired a reputation for speaking out, repeatedly challenging the Truman and Eisenhower administrations on foreign policy management. An understanding of Kennedy's views as they evolved through the 1940s and 1950s is central to comprehending how he came to deal with foreign affairs matters in the White House, particularly in regard to Vietnam, and the more so in the light of how events transpired following his death.

Kennedy's concerns regarding US foreign affairs management under Eisenhower were tempered by the view that policy had been created on the basis of fears about spreading Communism and there is no suggestion that Kennedy did not share those fears. But the response of the United States and its allies to this situation was shaped in part by the events that had preceded WWII, namely the discredited approach of Britain, France and other nations in meeting the threat presented by Nazi Germany. Appeasement during the time of the Cold War was (and for many still is) a disreputable word¹² and the United States, in its new role as an active world power, was conscious both of the failings of Appeasement and the extent to which it had become disgraced in the eyes of ordinary people. This made negotiating ways out of international problems more challenging, yet John F Kennedy, in the course of his Presidential inaugural address spoke the words:

"Let us never negotiate out of fear. But let us never fear to negotiate..."¹³

How much this statement can be said to have raised the spectre of Appeasement is debatable. Kennedy spoke of negotiation, not Appeasement as such, and he was careful to include other parts in his speech that emphasised the importance of the USA maintaining its power and strength while not fearing to negotiate. Nevertheless, his words are remarkable for the fact of the time and circumstances of their enunciation. While there were many influential individuals in the United States at that time who would have understood and supported such a notion, it was extraordinary for an incoming President at the height of the Cold War even to have suggested that it might be advantageous to negotiate with the Soviet Union or other communist powers.

Notwithstanding this indirect reference to a modern form of Appeasement, there is a further question as to why the new President should have chosen to use these words, for they did not sit well with the bellicose and uncompromising approach that Kennedy had taken in debating foreign affairs and the Cold War in the course of defeating Richard Nixon. At this time he had argued the case as an unreconstructed Cold Warrior, berating the Eisenhower administration (and, by implication, his opponent), for failing in Vietnam, for allowing the Soviets to gain advantages in space and military technologies and, most famously, highlighting the precarious state of homeland security due to the non-existent “missile gap”. Having set the tone for a more aggressive, military-based response, as might a confirmed “Cold Warrior”, he now spoke of the importance of negotiation.

It seems that Kennedy used the hard line stance for the immediate purposes of winning the race to the White House. His statements on foreign policy before the campaign (and throughout his career in Congress) had looked to engendering a different approach that

would secure the position of the United States in a world that was changing, not solely because of the Cold War, but also because new nations were rapidly emerging as a consequence of the disappearing European empires. During the Eisenhower years Kennedy made repeated pronouncements on how important it was for the US to establish good relations with the developing world and, once he had defeated Nixon, he reverted to a style that was consistent with this approach by seeking conciliation as the first means for addressing difficulties. He met frequently with leaders of the new nations and also held out on using the military might of the United States, other than as a symbol of his resolve should his negotiating position be viewed as a weakness by the Soviets and others who might seek to spread their own influence. There is, of course, a famous exception to this thesis – the matter of The Bay of Pigs in April 1961, and what came to be seen as a great failing of Kennedy's Presidency. Yet even this incident can be explained within the consistency of Kennedy's pronouncements on freedom and the unfettered determination of peoples: it appears that he viewed the army of Cuban exiles who participated in the invasion as a liberating force - the representatives of a Cuba that would be freed from dictatorial domination, opening the way to government created from out of the will of the people.¹⁴ Though this may have been a fanciful notion, when set in the context of actual events, (particularly his insistence that US military forces should not be engaged in the operation), it conforms to the ideas that Kennedy had repeatedly expressed in terms of the role the United States should take to assist indigenous peoples in securing independence and free determination for their homelands.¹⁵

As well as The Bay of Pigs Kennedy encountered several other situations during his time in the White House, some of which were full crises, which tested his resilience in balancing the

demands of containment and liberation against his avowed willingness to negotiate. Most prominent were the events in Laos in early 1961, Berlin later that year, Cuba again in 1962 and, on and off throughout the time of his Presidency, Vietnam. Less well observed, but important to the President, were developments in the Middle East, India, Indonesia and Africa. Robert Komer was a senior staff member of the National Security Council from 1961 until 1965 and recalled:

“It strikes me that the most interesting contribution I might make for the oral history is on the subject of Kennedy and the neutralists. This is, to me, one of the most interesting but certainly least known aspects of the President's foreign policy, largely because it didn't get a great deal of press attention, which is a story in itself and a blessing in disguise to some of us at any rate. But to me it was an extremely significant and highly successful aspect of the shift in American policy which took place under the New Frontier. What I mean by Kennedy's policy toward the neutralists is, at least as far as I was involved in it, his policy toward the major neutralists personalities--largely the Nassers, the Nehrus, the Sukarnos, the Ben Bellas of this world. An additional personality that comes into play is [Kwame] Nkrumah...”¹⁶

It is notable that on each occasion a crisis arose the President came under pressure to engage military forces for resolving matters and that, on each occasion, he considered the military options but ultimately resisted the urging of his advisers¹⁷ and sought to manage situations through other means.¹⁸ It is recognised that Kennedy's approach, in part at least, was fashioned by the need to avoid the ultimate conflict of nuclear war and the devastating consequences such would bring about. This is most clearly illustrated in the manoeuvres that the President adopted for settling the Cuban Missile Crisis in October 1962, his avoidance of confrontation, the efforts he made to maintain communications with his Soviet counterpart and the means employed for resolving the (immediate) situation itself. But behind Kennedy's defiance of the military, and away from his difficulties with advisers who

tried to press for actions he did not wish to take, was the consistent thread of his thinking that had been shaped by his experiences. In essence this meant:

- keeping the United States out of military situations where the consequences, counter actions and reverberations could not be calculated with certainty;
- taking care in all forms of intervention (economic, social, political as well as military) to avoid the error of turning the United States into a dominant, neo-colonial power, an approach which would endanger peace in the modern world;
- engaging with new and emerging nations, maintaining a genuine concern for their welfare and developing ties that would serve mutual interests, delivering prosperity for both parties.¹⁹

These few points encapsulate the “nationalist” manner of thinking that evidently played a major part in shaping Kennedy’s ideas about how US foreign affairs management should be conducted. They sit in contrast to the type of “Cold War thinking” that dominated the conduct of US foreign affairs under Truman, Eisenhower and, later, Johnson. For these Presidents the predominant driver of US operations was the need to stem or turn back the spread of Communism. Kennedy’s thinking was not new or original; the ideological basis of it was that free nations functioned best and that the United States of America provided demonstrable evidence of this; more precisely, the USA was living proof that prosperity and stability can be won once the chains of domination are broken. In this regard Kennedy made little distinction between the imperialist domination of the dying European Empires and the modern hegemony of Communism.²⁰

It is upon this premise - that Kennedy set his decisions on the basis of his own experiences and understanding, that encapsulates the terms and framework of reference through which this study will be conducted:

To explore how John F Kennedy was influenced by matters of imperialism and decolonisation and how these came to bear upon his thinking on issues of foreign affairs, with particular reference to Vietnam.

In attempting to give a meaningful analysis of this subject this study will explore avenues that are not commonly reported in Kennedy appraisals. For example, Kennedy is often described as a “pragmatist”²¹ – an elected official for whom the strictures of Party were not always compelling and there is ample evidence to support this thesis, not least the fact that several Republicans were appointed to prominent positions as the New Frontier took hold. Notwithstanding, this does not exclude the possibility that his thinking may have had an ideological base; it should be noted that there is something of a revival of interest in the idea that pragmatism may be juxtaposed with ideology as political forces that shape the modern world.²² This text does not seek to counter or contradict this point of view - it is not aimed at proving or expounding a theory; it is primarily set to *examine* the proposition that colonialism and de-colonisation were key considerations that conditioned Kennedy’s approach to foreign affairs management to the point that he took policy decisions according to a preconceived manner of thinking that constituted the basis of an ideology. There is no question, within this analysis, that Kennedy regarded the Cold War as the central plank of US foreign affairs concerns throughout his life as a public representative. There is no question either that he viewed the “Communist threat” any less seriously than did his

political colleagues and opponents or that he was less than pragmatic in meeting its challenges. What is different about this study is that it seeks to uncover a line of consistency in Kennedy's approach to waging the Cold War, the great issue of his times, in ways which contrast strongly with how many of the written assessments of his actions portray him and the ways in which his political contemporaries looked at Cold War issues.

In its structural form this study is presented by way of an analysis of Kennedy's life as a representative politician, which part is broadly chronological. To begin there is an examination of Kennedy's life before his decision to run for public office. It is worthy of note that, from about the time he became a university student up to the point where he set upon gaining election to the House of Representatives, Kennedy benefited from a unique insight into world affairs as they were developing. This time in the life of Kennedy is marked by three distinct phases – his attachment to the United States Embassy in London from 1939, his experiences as an enlisted man during WWII and his short career as a journalist. It is evident that each of these phases of his life contributed to the ideas and beliefs that he took into public office and, in particular, shaped his thinking on matters of foreign affairs. Evidence for this conclusion is given in those parts of the text that record his pronouncements while in the House of Representatives and later as a Senator, as well his public statements and broadcasts. It is to be hoped that this part of the study, together with the corroborative statements of friends and associates, provides a clear demonstration of how important Kennedy's views on developing nations and the part they would play in the world was to his general thinking on foreign affairs and his ideas on how the US should manage the Cold War.

Apart from the narrative study, further research material is presented by way of a review of how writers have sought to explain John Kennedy and this aspect of his political career. Unusually, this part of the text is included as reflective content - following the historical account; the text has been structured in this way due to the fact that, had the review been included beforehand, cross-referencing and the necessary inclusion of an abundance of notes of explanation would have made it unreadable. It is apparent, from the extracts that are examined and the contexts in which they are set, that while Kennedy's affiliation to the developing world has been recognised and commented upon by many prominent scholars, there is not an extensive or definitive work that ties this aspect of his thinking to his foreign policy statements and decisions. Indeed, most references appear to convey Kennedy's reasoning as political manoeuvring for handling difficult domestic matters that he faced as a member of a political party that was divided on several issues.²³ Importantly, it is to be hoped that the reader is provided with sufficient understanding to weigh that evidence in balance with opinions and other indications that may give cause to believe that considerations of colonialism and imperialism did not have a great bearing on Kennedy's decision making in foreign affairs.

There is also a body of research material that refers to "other factors" that may have influenced Kennedy;²⁴ this is included to give as complete a picture as possible of how Kennedy's thinking and beliefs evolved. This sits alongside the chronology, rather than as a part of it, but there are good reasons for this. There are many aspects of Kennedy's life that might be considered as important influences and which helped shape his political outlook: his background, his family, his education, his associates, the times in which he grew up and the experiences that he went through as he matured. There is not sufficient scope in this

body of work to examine and analyse all of these factors and, consequently, there is an element of selection in the detail that is included to explain the conclusions. The chapter which deals with Books and Ireland is included as a selective piece for the following reasons:

It is extraordinary to note that Kennedy repeatedly used books as a medium for communication. He would often give books to individuals or groups as if to say: “read this, it will explain what I am thinking...” Historians have noted occasions when he gave books to others in this way, but there is no apparent record of how his repeated use of this type of action was a communicative statement on the part of Kennedy. The importance of this point is made emphatic by the nature and content of the books that he gave – all of which reflected his thinking as espoused in his statements and writings.

Ireland is examined as a special case because it has the quality of being the exception that proves the rule in consideration of Kennedy’s thinking about matters colonial. If Kennedy wanted to make a forceful statement about the evils of imperialism then Ireland presented a case study rich with content. He pointedly chose, however, to avoid commenting on Ireland’s past as a nation under imperial domination – a curiosity that warrants investigation in a limited study such as this because of its exceptionality.

As indicated below,²⁵ there is ample material for creating a variety of images of Kennedy, both the man and the public figure, and there are plentiful “facts” to support whatever profile a writer may choose to put forward. In the course of the last thirty years or so the “revisionist” histories that have gained such prominence²⁶ have tended to interpret Kennedy according to patterns of supposed behaviour and conduct rather than in relation to any

philosophical basis that he may have developed. What this means is that much of what we have come to know and learn about Kennedy has been contextualised as driving forces that inform his actions and decisions.²⁷ This study does not investigate the validity of these assertions, but it is to be hoped that the material presented here may give the reader cause for caution in accepting such interpretations of Kennedy for, by contrast, a theme of this analysis is to examine whether it was a developed ideology and set of beliefs and values that guided his decision making. In broad description this ideology encompassed the view that the domination of peoples led to war and poverty and that disenfranchisement acted as a brake on peace, prosperity and the pursuit of happiness. The additional study of Kennedy's relationships with books and Ireland is put forward as an examination of how strongly this philosophy was embedded in his personality.

Finally, it should be stated that some emphasis is placed in this work on the extent to which Vietnam (and more broadly, Indochina) featured in the considerations of Kennedy. There are two general reasons why this approach has been taken. Firstly, Vietnam was prominent in Kennedy's interests in foreign affairs throughout his public life. From the time that he visited the country in 1951 it remained a major concern of his and was an area about which he frequently ventured opinions. Secondly, after Kennedy's death Vietnam became a central concern of US foreign affairs and the most high profile expression of how overseas relations were conducted. Without speculating on what Kennedy might or might not have done in relation to Vietnam had he lived longer it is instructive for an understanding of the beliefs that guided him in dealing with foreign affairs to recognise how matters transpired after his death.

CHAPTER ONE

EVENTS AND EXPERIENCES THAT SHAPED KENNEDY

From an historical perspective it is a challenge to consider the post WWII world as anything other than a prismatic expression of the Cold War and its many facets: the development of atomic weapons, the endeavours employed either to convert or preserve comparable and contrasting political and economic systems, the enduring propaganda, the points of near confrontation, the proxy conflicts and so forth.

A further observation is that, although decolonisation has been widely studied and there are extensive and authoritative examinations of its impacts,¹ the attention it has received from historians and commentators as a force for political reconstruction in the world, apart from and alongside the Cold War, has been relatively minor. There are many reasons for this, but one that stands out is the fact that none of the nations that managed to cast off foreign domination in the years following WWII has yet attained a status of world supremacy. It is only in very recent times that the economic (and, to a degree, military) prowess of nations such as China and India have seriously challenged the dominance of the United States as the world's superpower.

It was the Cold War that was the dominant factor during Kennedy's career as an elected politician – how to fight it, the strategy for containing and rolling back the spread of Communist influences and, in particular, how the United States should react to the various challenges that the Cold War threw up as it evolved in the 1940s and 1950s. It is ironic to

note, therefore, that in the areas where the United States was directly involved, whether by military intervention, support for allies or political manoeuvring, in places such as Korea, Iraq, Guatemala, South East Asia, Algeria, Cuba and elsewhere, matters of self-determination and national identity were often the more pertinent issue for the indigenous populations than the machinations of the Cold War. Concern in the United States became less focused upon assisting such areas of the world to become independent, self supporting nations and more set upon ensuring they did not come under the influence of the Communist powers. John Kennedy, although not unique in his approach to US foreign affairs management during the 1950s, came to recognise the disparaging effects of the failures that arose on account of this unbalanced standpoint and sought throughout his time in the House of Representatives and the Senate to change the direction of US policy. In speaking out on the need for the United States to change its approach to the new nations he found himself at odds with both the Truman and Eisenhower administrations and sometimes isolated as a spokesperson.

This study seeks to examine how and why Kennedy took this alternative line in foreign affairs, an aspect of his life and career that has received relatively little attention from historians and commentators. To gain a fuller understanding of Kennedy's stance and how he arrived there it is necessary to reach back into the experiences and factors that influenced his thinking.

Kennedy's Background in Foreign Affairs

That John Kennedy enjoyed the benefits of a privileged upbringing is well known. His father, Joseph P Kennedy (JPK), was not merely wealthy, but applied his fortunate position and

used his wealth to gain prominence and exercise influence. It is not necessary to provide biographical details of JPK but it is instructive to observe the extent to which he harboured ambitions for his children, particularly his two eldest, Joseph Jr. and John. These aspirations tended to be geared towards creating the circumstances by which they might gain positions of power in their own right, especially political power.² It was this ambition, combined with an attitude that encouraged his children to expand their knowledge and understanding of the world that contributed to the opportunities provided for Kennedy to travel overseas and kindled his interest in foreign affairs generally.

Kennedy first visited Europe in autumn 1935, a journey postponed from a year earlier when he was supposed to accompany his father and brother on an excursion to meet European political leaders. When he did ultimately arrive in London Kennedy met with representatives of the London School of Economics with a view to taking up a place there after completing his school career. In the eventuality this did not materialise but Kennedy returned to Europe in July 1937 accompanied by school friend Kirk LeMoyne “Lem” Billings for an extended tour of the main European countries. Over the following two months he kept a diary of his experiences that demonstrates much about his developing ideas on the direction and future of the European powers. It should be noted that the contrast between the evolving dictatorships, the class structures of British society and the democratic nature of politics in the USA greatly impressed Kennedy.

In the autumn of 1938 Kennedy managed to persuade the Dean (Chester Harford) at Harvard to allow him to undertake a secondment to the US Embassy in London (where his father was now Ambassador) in lieu of part of his degree studies. This extraordinary

opportunity provided him with direct access to the diplomatic and foreign relations circles of London and other European capitals, an experience that gave him an insight not ordinarily available to any individual let alone an aspirant and future politician. Here he was able to learn, at first hand, how the British approached the affairs of Empire and managed their overseas policies. He also visited Moscow and other East European capitals, just at the time when WWII broke out, gaining an exceptional insight into how events were transpiring and the fears, ambitions and insecurities of the protagonists

It was his observations of a Europe heading towards war that led him to question the effectiveness of democracy in meeting the challenges of the world at that time, as demonstrated in his university dissertation, *Why England Slept*.³ Notwithstanding the central theme of the work, it also served to act as a warning to the United States and identified the shortcomings of democracy as a system of government that was slow and unresponsive to fast moving events, incapable of decisiveness and liable to leave its adherents ill-prepared for the most dangerous of situations.

So it was that the USA became drawn into the conflict and Kennedy found himself on the front line. In October 1943, as a Naval Lieutenant commanding a torpedo patrol boat, PT 109, Kennedy encountered the full impact of life as someone in the crucible of war when his small vessel was broken in two by a Japanese destroyer. In an incident that quickly became well known, subsequently became legendary and ultimately became controversial, Kennedy established a reputation as a war hero. Whatever the reasons or occurrences that led to the incident, and however heroic or incompetent Kennedy was in what took place and what followed, it was without doubt a life changing event that had a long-lasting impact on how

Kennedy viewed the military and how he dealt with military leaders during his time in the White House. It also had consequences for the US Navy, the tactical use of torpedo patrol boats and how they were deployed. When the rehabilitated lieutenant returned to active duty in October of that year his new command, PT59, had been re-equipped, was better armed and carried improved defence systems.

It has been widely suggested that the incident exacerbated damage to Kennedy's back⁴ and may have led to the several operations that he undertook in years to come. More pertinently, it has also been cited as a factor that deepened the young man's suspicion regarding the words and wisdom of "experts". James G. Blight and Janet M. Lang have written about this aspect of Kennedy's thinking in an article titled "Black Swans / White House: Why JFK Matters Half a Century After Dallas".⁵

This extended paper presents a synthesis of decision making in the Kennedy White House based upon the theory of the Black Swan, a concept that has deep historical roots and which was popularised in the 20th century by the philosopher Karl Popper. Black Swan events, in terms of the theory, have three elements: firstly, they occur without expectation or anticipation; secondly, they are characterised by extreme consequences and, thirdly, they are explained retrospectively (as if they could have been anticipated). According to Blight and Lang Kennedy showed aspects of Black Swan thinking, a manner of consideration that had been brought about by the PT 109 incident, together with the persistent illnesses and pain that Kennedy experienced and which had imbued him with a scepticism of those who purported to be experts. Shortcomings in his own life taught him that those with the answers seldom had the solutions:

“JFK was deeply skeptical of the claims of experts of all kinds. His doctors did not know how to treat his many illnesses. His surgeons exacerbated his debilitating back pain with botched surgeries. His military commanders sent him and his fellow sailors into battle in the Pacific during World War II without understanding the horrific implications of their orders. As President, he refused to act on the advice of his expert hawkish advisers.”⁶

Evidence for the truth of this deduction is demonstrated in the many foreign affairs decisions that Kennedy made during his time in the White House which upset and annoyed his advisors, particularly when he was pressed to consider taking military action to resolve a situation. This aspect of Kennedy’s disposition is illustrated further in Chapters Two, Three and Four, below.

After discharge from military service Kennedy embarked on a short career as a journalist. Writing for the Hearst paper the *New York Journal American (Journal American)*, he covered a number of matters pertinent to foreign affairs, most prominently the establishment of the United Nations in May 1945⁷ and the Potsdam Conference which took place soon after the end of hostilities in WWII.

This brief period of Kennedy’s life was not particularly distinguished and his output as a correspondent is not much remembered; there are, notwithstanding, one or two aspects that are noteworthy. Firstly, the by-line that was used for the articles that he wrote for the *Journal American* included (on each recorded occasion⁸), words that described Kennedy as a war hero, as the son of JPK and, interestingly, as writing *...from a serviceman’s viewpoint...*

In several articles Kennedy attempts to explain how matters are managed rather than the substance of the issues at hand. In one piece concerning the establishment of the UN and

dated 7th May, Kennedy takes *the serviceman's viewpoint* more literally and uses his platform to set out something of a political agenda that serves to signal his intentions regarding a future in government:

“No-one can set himself up as a spokesman for the men in service...

“I say this because I am going to try to tell you how a group of servicemen and veterans who are working at this conference as consultants and secretaries feel about it.

“In their concern, and as a result of their interest, and because they wish above all else to spare their children and their brothers from going through the same hard times, it is perhaps natural that they would be disappointed with what they have seen in San Francisco...

“...There is here, however, one ray of shining bright light. That is the realization, felt by all the delegates, that humanity cannot afford another war.”⁹

In a further article, dated two days later, Kennedy writes about Russian security concerns and comments that:

“...They [the Soviets] are therefore going to make their western defences secure. No countries hostile to Russia will be permitted in the countries along her borders.

“They feel they have earned this right to security. They mean to have it, come what may.”¹⁰

Writing on 16th May Kennedy makes reference to how the Russian delegation was able to exploit the dilemma that the United States faced in keeping with its allies and not being seen to advocate policies that would run counter to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, to which it subscribed:

“They [the Soviets] then further complicated the question of trusteeship by advocating independence for all dependent people be written into the charter.

“It put the British in an embarrassing position. The British have no intention of liquidating the Empire and we could not come out against a principle like “independence”.

“We juggled the ball and then came forward in favor of “self-government” for dependent people.”¹¹

On 18th May Kennedy writes of the possibility that the USA and the Soviet Union will be at war in “...the next 10 or 15 years...”¹²

It is apparent, from this piece, that Kennedy understood the contradiction that faced the United States as it sought to support its allies in Europe while not being openly complicit in their attempts to recover and hold on to colonial possessions. He also recognised that the path being taken by the Soviet Union could lead to conflict with the United States. This factor was made the more real to Kennedy when, in his capacity as a journalist, he attended the conference at Potsdam in October 1945. It was here, in close observation of the decision making that would shape the post war world, that Kennedy was able to discern how geopolitical considerations were forcing the hands of world leaders as they endeavoured to find common ground on the great issues of the day. President Truman’s principal concern at Potsdam was to settle matters relating to the future of Germany, such that it would not again become a threat to the peace of Europe and drag the US into further wars. Secretary Stalin was intent upon ensuring the security of European Russia by determining Soviet control of the lands that Nazi Germany had colonised in its expansion eastwards. And Winston Churchill, followed by Clement Atlee, was most concerned with re-stabilising the economy of the United Kingdom, whatever this might have meant in either prolonging the British Empire or cutting back on its commitments. For France, Potsdam presented an opportunity for establishing itself in a position as the pre-eminent power of continental Western Europe, capable of ensuring that its eastern borders would not again be breached.

The Potsdam Conference, the explosion of the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki¹³ and the end of the Second World War all took place within a matter of days and John Kennedy was extraordinarily privileged to have been a close witness as these events unfolded. In his subsequent life as a representative in public office Kennedy frequently referred to the need for the United States, and the world in general, to avoid war. His predominant interest was foreign affairs and he became recognised, particularly during his time as a Senator, for taking a counter-line in his recommendations for how the United States should conduct its foreign affairs in the post-war world.¹⁴ At the core of this alternative approach was his stated belief in the benefits to be gained for the United States, the former empire states and the new, emerging nations, by promoting the free determination of peoples in keeping with the declaration of the United Nations, the existence of which would contribute to the demise of old style imperialism. These assertions are explained more fully in the Chapters that deal with Kennedy's time as a member of the House of Representatives, as a Senator and as President. It is important, nevertheless, to position this view of Kennedy's developing ideas in the context of the world situation as it was evolving; the Appendix to this text (see p140) sets out the competing motivations of the main participants at the Potsdam Conference, giving some insight into the positions of the prominent powers in respect of the issue of decolonisation at the time.

It was with this background that John Kennedy developed his thinking on matters of politics and international affairs. Kennedy's experience as a journalist is informing both for the nature of his work and the fact that he was present at the birth of the United Nations and saw, first hand, the difficulties that were presented in establishing an effective organisation

based upon universal principles. He developed an understanding of the devastation that had resulted from world conflict, learned about Soviet concerns for border security, was conscious of the dangers of a future war with the Soviet Union and specifically identified the problems that self-determination posed for all delegations involved in the conference. For the Russians, self-determination conflicted with its objectives for border security, for the Europeans, self-determination ran counter to their wishes to retain their imperial possessions and, for the United States, self-determination created a dilemma that it could not easily resolve – to support the principle while, simultaneously, retaining the trust of its allies.

When Kennedy came to face these problems and contradictions as an elected representative he sought to drive US foreign affairs management in a way that would break the quandary – he pressed for independence and self-determination for colonial possessions while endeavouring to persuade the imperial powers that their interests need not be compromised. In pursuing this path, Kennedy also coloured Soviet domination of its border states as a form of modern imperialism. By following this path Kennedy's thinking was conditioned to the idea that imperialism was a moribund and unsustainable concept and the United States must position itself to be best placed to befriend the nations that would emerge from its denouement – regardless of the fact that non-alignment could mean some states might not wish to establish committed relations.

It should not be forgotten that Kennedy's political ideas were shaped from his experiences, as outlined above and that he had no doubts about the threat posed for the future of the United States by the Soviet Union and the widening influence of world Communism. His

views on the iniquities of colonialism were based upon his observations (in Indochina and elsewhere) and the extent to which the Truman and Eisenhower administrations paid little heed to the importance of winning over new nations as they broke free from imperial oversight. There was a certain simplicity to this way of thinking – if the United States was not willing to win over the developing world, then the path was open to the Soviet Union to fill the void, a situation that would weaken the position of the United States in the Cold War. As an elected representative Kennedy pronounced widely and frequently on the base desires of peoples for freedom, an interpretable concept but one which he often linked to the history of the United States, how it was created and what it meant for a nation that had emerged from out of an imperial past. Besides this simple understanding, Kennedy also gained from the experiences of his youth to derive a view of the world that had been changed, in many ways, by the Second World War and by the events that led to the Second World War, which he had observed at close quarters while his father was Ambassador in London.

Kennedy stated that his wartime experiences had left him sceptical about the quality of military leaders and their understanding of the implications of their decisions for ordinary serving personnel;¹⁵ he grew to the conviction that war should be avoided and, most importantly, the drift to war with the Soviet Union which was already underway was the most dangerous prospect for the United States. It is not insignificant that Kennedy was writing for the *Journal American* at just the moment when the Manhattan Project was realising its objectives, but the world was unaware of the development. Once the full implications of atomic power were apparent (particularly so after the successful detonation of thermo-nuclear weapons), the imperative of avoiding the nuclear option in settling

disputes was made all the more vital. Eisenhower resisted the deployment of atomic bombs in Vietnam in 1954 and Kennedy steered a careful course in avoiding their introduction during the Cuban crisis in 1962. In each case there was pressure from military advisors to authorise their use.

This, however, was in the future; Kennedy's immediate thoughts were focused upon gaining election to the House of Representatives.

CHAPTER TWO

KENNEDY'S APPROACH TO FOREIGN AFFAIRS AS CONGRESSMAN

Kennedy ran for the 11th Congressional District in Massachusetts, covering the wards of Boston, Somerville and Cambridge. He overcame ten opponents for the Democratic Party nomination and two (a Republican and a Prohibitionist) in the election.¹ This was a time when politics in general was particularly high in voters' minds as demobilisation and the disruption of the economy brought about by WWII had created difficulties for many families. Equally, memories of the Great Depression of the 'thirties were still fresh for many people and there was a widespread fear that the post-war economy might tip again into recession as war production shut down.²

As has been explained in the first section of this document, an argument may be made to assert that the processes of decolonisation resulting from the demise of the European empires ultimately had more far-reaching consequences for the shape of the 21st century world than did the material outcomes of the Cold War. This suggestion is put forward as a paradox in the face of the fact that most treatments of the history of the second half of the 20th century are framed within the context of the Cold War. As contributory factors that were shaping the changing world at the time that Kennedy entered into federal politics, four important developments stand out:

- firstly, decolonisation, in its most manifest forms, started to take place;
- at exactly the same time the realities of the developing Cold War began to be felt;
- thirdly, military strategy was re-defined by the introduction of nuclear weapons and;

fourthly,

- the United Nations was established.

As explained above, in terms of influence upon foreign affairs management for the major powers, these elements pulled in different directions. Contradictions, particularly in regard to the United Nations declaration on self-determination, posed particular dilemmas for the US, the Soviets and the Empire powers. In 1946, as these four phenomena came into general consciousness the outcomes remained uncertain and governments tended to react to events as they unfolded. Certainly, in the USA at least, it took several years before a coherent policy towards Soviet expansionism and the perceived military threat was formulated. Similarly, as the European powers attempted either to withdraw from or hold onto their colonies there were scenes of disruption and sometimes chaos. For the Soviet Union there was a problem of credibility as it gave public support for self-determination while taking steps to ensure that states on its borders remained compliant to its security needs. That decolonisation was a major (possibly the principal) driver of geopolitical change in the world after 1945 is illustrated by the fact that the UN, in 1946, comprised just 51 signature nations,³ a number which grew to 132 by 1971.⁴ A significant part of this increase was due to the admission of new, independent states created from out of the former European empires.

It was precisely as these extraordinary factors emerged that Kennedy embarked upon a political career that saw him embroiled in the affairs of the federal state for the remainder of his life. That he was drawn in his foreign affairs considerations by each of these enormous developments may be taken as given, but what is less clear is which factors had the greater influence.

Foreign relations were high on the agenda for the Truman administration and the public as a whole. Developing situations concerning the Near East, the expansion of Soviet influence in Europe, the Middle East and other parts of the world, the continuing civil war between the Kuomintang and the Communist forces of Mao Zedong, all provided sources of tension and concern. Several factors had changed to add piquancy to the world situation, from the point of view of the United States. Firstly, it was now accepted that the interests of the US, for security, economic and ideological purposes, meant its close involvement in world affairs; secondly, in formulating a strategy for meeting the demands of this new role, the US held a monopoly in nuclear weapons, a factor that both opened and closed options in terms of military response. For the Democratic Party, the problems of managing these issues (as well as dealing with domestic matters, which could be equally demanding), were compounded by the Party's poor showing in the mid-term elections in 1948 that delivered Republican majorities in both House and Senate.

Kennedy was restrained in his pronouncements on foreign affairs during his first years in the House, seeking to listen and learn before attempting to raise his profile. He confined his attentions to the matters on which he had campaigned: housing, veterans' welfare, labour relations, education and constituency interests and, notwithstanding his contributions to the debates on the Truman Doctrine, aid for Greece and Turkey and the Marshall Plan, did not make a major venture into foreign affairs until 1949. This is not altogether surprising for the protocol and dynamics of the House of Representatives did not provide much scope for those recently elected to make an impact and he was, anyway, seen as a young, inexperienced representative. When he did first advance strong views on foreign affairs

matters he spoke on the situation in China that had resulted in the Communist takeover. In a remarkable statement of dissent, Kennedy made a scathing attack on the Truman administration for failing its first major test of resisting Communist expansion. Using uncompromising language Kennedy condemns what he sees as successive US failings in China since before the start of WWII, concluding with:

“This is the tragic story of China whose freedom we once fought to preserve. What our young men had saved, our diplomats and our President have frittered away.”⁵

This particular episode marks the beginning of a period leading up to and beyond his entrance into the White House during which Kennedy’s philosophical view of the position and role of the United States in the world developed through phases into an approach that was often at odds with both political opponents and allies. This viewpoint was characterised by a questioning attitude to the prevailing policy axioms, based upon Containment and the Domino Theory, that were created by the Truman administration and more or less continued through the Eisenhower era. Kennedy’s foreign affairs speeches and the written articles and broadcasts he made from the time of his later years in the House of Representatives and up to when he was elected President in 1960 show a marked inclination to dissent from the approaches taken by the Truman and Eisenhower administrations in managing foreign affairs. This is not to state that Kennedy categorically rejected Containment or disavowed the Domino Theory; he did not.⁶ His dissatisfaction was expressed on the methods employed to improve the position of the United States, which he saw as ineffective and failing.

Another factor that features strongly is the extent to which Kennedy appears to emphasise the “loss” of China to a Communist force that is little more than a stooge of Moscow, so enhancing the reach and prestige of the Soviet Union to the cost of the interests of the United States. The quoted part above is the closing statement of the speech which places the matter in the category of loss of freedom, but what precedes this conclusion is a string of accusations that point at those in positions of power and influence who had failed in the first objectives of Containment and had lost the United States ground in the fight against world Communism.

This provides ample evidence for those who later came to identify Kennedy as a “Cold Warrior”, ready to face down Moscow and use the might of the United States to do so.⁷

This however, is a simplistic analysis of the complex forces at play at the time and is insufficient to explain how Kennedy went on to address this issue in years to come. What it does in fact show is that Kennedy was willing to speak his mind on major issues in ways that would make him stand out from his fellow politicians (not in ways that necessarily attracted approbation) and that he was seeking to develop a different approach to the great issue of the day – the threat of spreading Communism.

Kennedy Becomes Outspoken on US Foreign Policy

Edmund Gullion, a diplomat by profession, made the acquaintance of Kennedy in 1946 and, in his own words, they became “close friends”. Following the death of the President in 1963, Gullion agreed to contribute a spoken history interview for inclusion in the records of the Kennedy Library and on July 17, 1964 in Washington, he met with Samuel E. Belk, III and related his impressions. Early on in the discussion Gullion was asked about first meeting the

future President and he explained how Dean Acheson, at that time Secretary of State and in whose office he was engaged, asked him to make contact with a new young Congressman who wished to deliver a speech in the House on foreign affairs. Gullion described this early encounter:

“I could go on about this speech. I do remember that it was not in the atmosphere of the time; one might have expected it to take either the Soviet Union, our gallant ally, who had stood off the enemy on the east front, or it might have been one that echoed deep concern about Communism. Actually, it was a very realistic and an advanced kind of perspective that he had, and it was his own. My own contributions to it were factual, and I volunteered some opinions and some sentences, but I was somewhat surprised and, I suppose, my own very youthful egoisms somewhat checked when I saw the finished product and realized how much of this was Kennedy and how little of it was mine. It was quite an interesting product.”⁸

When asked about the extent to which the Congressman, Senator and later President took an interest in his career, Gullion affirmed that their relationship was such that Kennedy did inquire of his assignments and postings and added:

“Since he was a critic of Administration and State Department policy on Indochina and a very outspoken and categorical critic and since he knew that I shared his views, he felt that he could embarrass me or hurt me in the Foreign Service bureaucracy if he became identified with me, and he showed a delicacy or restraint about trying to consult me. He knew that could embarrass me with my superiors. And indeed, before he acquired the national stature and reputation that he did, it could have been quite damaging and, in fact, one or two times it was a bit sticky.”⁹

Gullion’s observations regarding Kennedy’s time in the House are instructive for how he demonstrates the extent to which the Congressman was assertive and lacking deference in his words. Even in his earliest public pronouncements Kennedy was taking an individualist line, an approach in which he became bolder as he became more established. He was ambitious enough to seek higher office and, as he succeeded in his political aspirations he gained the recognition and status he needed to press his ideas upon a broader audience.

After two terms as a Member of the House of Representatives, he was ready to try for the Senate.

Kennedy and Indochina

In Hanoi on 2nd September 1945 Vietnamese nationalist leader Ho Chi Minh stood before a gathering of the indigenous population and issued a declaration of independence. The League for the Independence of Vietnam, more widely known as the Viet Minh, had, under Ho's leadership, played a part in driving out the Japanese invaders who had taken over the South East Asian peninsula from the ruling French. Ho had been equipped and assisted in this task by the United States. In making the declaration Ho drew from the second paragraph of the United States Declaration of Independence, 1776:

“All men are created equal. They are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, among them are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness.”

Further into his speech, Ho invoked the United Nations charter:

“We are convinced that the Allied nations which at Tehran and San Francisco have acknowledged the principles of self-determination and equality of nations, will not refuse to acknowledge the independence of Vietnam.”¹⁰

Ho Chi Minh had been a founder member of the Communist movement in Vietnam and there was concern in the United States that power in his hands would draw upon support from Moscow (and later the PRC), making him and Vietnam a symbol of spreading Communism. Confusion was widespread throughout what was recognised as the country of Vietnam in September and October 1945 with various interests involved (US, Great Britain, France, Chinese Nationalists as well as the Vietminh), each pursuing different ends.

Vietnam had been discussed at the Postdam Conference earlier in July but only as a minor item when it was agreed that France could seek to regain its former colonial status in the region.

Kennedy was undoubtedly aware of these events as they unfolded in Vietnam during 1945 because he reported on the Postdam Conference for the *Journal American*. He must have known about Ho Chi Minh and his efforts to secure independence from the French and must also have been aware of how the colonial war developed and progressed. One must consider what he made of the fact that it was a Communist sympathiser who was drawing upon the UN Charter and the American Declaration of Independence for inspiration, rather than those factions in Indochina that the United States purportedly supported. He did not, though, choose to comment openly on the matter until after he had visited Indochina and witnessed the situation for himself in late 1951, just as he sought to gain higher office.

It was evident to many who knew Kennedy at the time that the Congressman would not remain in the House of Representatives for long¹¹ and in 1951 he engaged upon a campaign aimed at securing a Senate seat. To do so presented a challenge to Kennedy, especially as it required overcoming the incumbent Henry Cabot-Lodge, a scion of a well established Republican family with a high reputation in the State, having represented Massachusetts since 1937.

Election matters aside, in September 1951, while still a Congressman, Kennedy, together with brother Robert and sister Patricia, embarked upon a fact-finding tour that took the group to the Middle East, the Indian Sub-Continent and South East Asia. This important

episode in the life of the future President is especially notable for the number of influential people he was able to meet and with whom he discussed world affairs. In India, for example, he had an audience with Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru who, according to journalist Seymour Topping:

“...impressed (him) with a seminar on the dynamism and the irreversible nature of the anticolonial revolution in Asia.”¹²

The Kennedy caravan arrived in Saigon on 19th October 1951. At this time the US was heavily involved (as part of the UN forces) in fighting on the Korean peninsula. Since the end of 1950 the war had moved into a form of stalemate with most of the military action taking place around the 38th Parallel, a situation that would continue for a further eighteen months. Vietnam was also in conflict - with French troops engaged in operations to secure the country against the Viet Minh, which had retreated from the cities and was operating as a guerrilla force based in jungle and mountain encampments. US involvement in Vietnam was conditioned by the Mutual Defense Assistance Act, passed toward the end of 1949, which gave the President authority to extend military and other support to friendly nations engaged in combating the spread of Communism. Such support had been made available to assist France in its efforts to re-colonise Vietnam (and French Indochina generally) and, by the time Kennedy arrived in Saigon, was essential to the French in maintaining their position in the country.

For some in the American Legation in Saigon¹³ it had become clear that the French endeavours to recover the position they held in the country prior to WWII were doomed. In particular, Ed Gullion, with whom Kennedy was already acquainted and Robert Blum, chief

of the economic mission at the legation had, according to Topping, incurred the wrath of both the French and their own superiors in the State Department for speaking too frankly about their views on the failings of the French operation in the country.¹⁴

Topping described Kennedy and his entourage stepping off the aeroplane in Saigon and being greeted warmly by Ed Gullion; he then moved across to Topping himself and asked to speak with him about the situation in Vietnam. Topping agreed and the next afternoon the Congressman appeared at his city centre apartment. Kennedy had by then already been briefed by Gullion, both on his views of the impossible prospects for the French prevailing and the shortcomings of the United States in failing to recognise this and supporting a flawed strategy. Gullion (and Blum) believed that the US should be much more assertive in supporting the claims of non-Communist nationalists for eventual independence of the country and should pass aid directly to the indigenous armed forces, something that the French high commissioner, General Bernard de Lattre de Tassigny vehemently opposed.¹⁵

Topping explained to Kennedy the situation as he viewed it at that time and as he believed it might evolve. He stated that when he had arrived in the city eighteen months previously Americans were the most popular of foreigners in Saigon. This he attributed to the fact that the United States had granted what was generally seen as a fair and supportive independence to the Philippines¹⁶ and having a presence as a force in Vietnam may lead to the same there. But this changed as the months passed and the US was identified simply as a bulwark to French ambitions for the restoration of colonial rule; this pushed nationalist sentiment towards the Viet Minh, the very situation Washington was seeking to avoid.

Topping went on to explain to Kennedy that Ho Chi Minh had access to vast supplies of men, training and equipment as a result of the links he had established with the PRC and the porosity of the border in the north (due in part to the strategy of the French for holding towns and forts but having little presence in the villages and areas between).¹⁷

Topping stated that Kennedy ended the discussion by remarking:

“I’m going to talk about this when I get home. But it will give me trouble with some of my constituents.”¹⁸

Kennedy subsequently met and had dinner with Bao Dai,¹⁹ the French appointed “Head of State”, and then spoke with de Lattre himself. This latter meeting was unsuccessful; the General was so upset by Kennedy’s questions and assertions on the situation that he wrote to US Saigon Ambassador Donald Heath and also to his supporters in Washington to complain about the Congressman’s “impertinence”.²⁰

Following his time in Saigon Kennedy visited Hanoi and gained a first hand experience of the situation on the ground where the strength of the Viet Minh forces was at its most apparent. Topping refers to Kennedy’s previous comments on the failure of the United States to support Jiang Jieshi and the Kuomintang which had led to the “fall” of China; he writes:

“In a speech before the House of Representatives on January 25, 1949,²¹ he accused the Truman administration of crippling Chiang Kai-shek’s Nationalist government by delaying needed aid while pressuring it to enter a coalition with the Communists. It was a contention, as regards the supply of military aid, which defied the facts. His Asian tour, and especially his talk with Nehru, spurred him to a reappraisal of what was transpiring on the continent.”²²

Kennedy's speech in Salem in 1949 had demonstrated his anger at the loss of China but was used by him to criticise the way the Cold War was being fought at the time by the Truman administration. After his visit to Vietnam in 1951 his views modified to reflect the fact that he had come to believe the problem was rooted in the population's aspirations for self-determination and freedom from colonial oversight – in whatever form. This alteration in his approach was reinforced by his meeting with Nehru at which the Indian Premier had reiterated the shortcomings of colonial oversight.

Edmund Gullion gave his own account of the time that the future President spent in Vietnam in 1951.²³ He mentioned the meeting with de Lattre and the subsequent "letter of complaint" that came to Ambassador Heath. Gullion also commented on the extent to which the experience of visiting Vietnam provided Kennedy with ideas and a point of view that seemed to cast him at odds with what was the accepted role of the United States at the time:

"Something about his method of operation was formed, I think, in Indochina, that not only illustrated his method, but, I think, that he learned something from that experience. On foreign policy, I think that a great many of the issues that were to preoccupy him have to do with the dilemma of the United States as the architect of the Atlantic Alliance and the principle defender of freedom, and the United States as a former colonial country and one which has always manifested a particular sympathy with the aspirations of new countries of emerging peoples.

I think that he came into contact with this in its early and very acute form in Indochina a long time before this became one of the very dominant crises, dilemma, if you will, of our foreign policy. Remember at that time just after the war, although India and the British possessions were going free, a great cascade of colonial authority had not occurred. And although President Roosevelt [Franklin D. Roosevelt] had challenged, for example, at least in a somewhat offhand way, at least the French thought, the durability, continuity of French power in Southeast Asia, still I think that we did not really foresee that there would be this general sweeping away of colonial authority, nor did we challenge, really, the way in which our allies were doing things. This, in the Far East was particularly true when we came later

on to be involved in Korea, and of course I knew the President during this time, too. It looked as if we were bearing one burden in Korea, and that our European Allies would be bearing something of the same burden in Southeast Asia. Without going into that analogy very deeply, it was an extremely false and treacherous one. Our role in Southeast Asia, and Korea, is nothing like that of the French at that time in Southeast Asia. I think the French learned a tremendous amount from their Indochina experience, which they put to great profit in their administration, especially under de Gaulle [Charles A. de Gaulle], with their later operations in Africa.

But at that time what the President was doing was in a way challenging the establishment. I don't like to use that word right now, but his stance on Indochina certainly went against the prevailing opinion. I don't think that the President really ever saw himself as a flaming radical, who was out to tear down walls in this sense. I believe he was, his method of political operation at least, was pragmatist. He had certainly long and real liberal goals, but I would never have thought that he would feel at home cast in the role as a destroyer of the existing order or even preconceptions. Yet his challenge here to what was thought and believed in Indochina was quite important."²⁴

This explanation of Kennedy, his values and beliefs and his approach to the US role in South East Asia, is illuminating. It states (not suggests) that his foreign affairs thinking was conditioned by the United States' colonial past, that the war in Korea was one thing, but the issues of Vietnam and its neighbouring states were drawing the United States into situations that sat ill with its position in the world and the way decolonisation was changing that world. This position could not be sustained in the manner prevalent at the time and forces of nationalism, divesting of the shackles of empires, were a (perhaps, *the*) determinant for the future geopolitical structure of the world.

Kennedy's understanding and interpretation of these factors is demonstrated by the comments he made about his travels after returning to the United States. On 14th November 1951 he delivered a radio broadcast over The Mutual Broadcasting Network, from New York. He spoke extensively of the poverty and disparity that he had observed in the Middle East, of the attempts by India to take a course of non-alignment to the

Communist and capitalist creeds, of the unrest and uncertainty in Burma and Malaysia and, of course, of his time in Vietnam:

“In Indo-China we have allied ourselves to the desperate effort of a French regime to hang on to the remnants of empire. There is no broad, general support of the native Viet Nam Government among the people of that area and there will be none until the French give clear indications that, despite their gallantry, they are fighting not merely for themselves but for the sake of strengthening a non-Communist native government so that it can move safely toward independence. These Indo-Chinese states are puppet states, French principalities with great resources but as typical examples of empire and of colonialism as can be found anywhere. To check the southern drive of Communism makes sense but not only through reliance on the force of arms. The task is rather to build strong native non-Communist sentiment within these areas and rely on that as a spearhead of defense rather than upon the legions of General de Lattre, brilliant though he may be. And to do this apart from and in defiance of innately nationalistic aims spells foredoomed failure. To the rising drive of nationalism, we have unfortunately become a friend of its enemy and as such its enemy and not its friend.”²⁵

On 2nd December 1951 Kennedy was interviewed by a panel of journalists on the NBC television production, *Meet the Press*.²⁶ He was asked about his recent tour of the East and how the United States stood in the parts of the world that he visited. Kennedy stated that the United States could count upon some friends, Siam, Pakistan and Israel for example, but that there existed a neutrality or even latent hostility of views towards the US from other nations; he attributed this to the fact that the United States aligned itself with the former European imperialists. Kennedy was asked about some remarks he had made previously about American diplomats spending their time in these parts of the world “drinking cocktails and playing tennis”.²⁷ Kennedy drew back from this statement (without disavowing it) to explain that his concern was that the United States’ representatives were failing to become sufficiently acquainted with the nations that were growing out of the decline of the European empires. There was a failure to learn languages and customs, a lack of understanding of the ways and traditions of the peoples and, consequently, there was a

failure on the part of the United States in not getting the right people into the Foreign Service who could best represent the interests of the USA. When pressed on how the Foreign Service might improve upon its performance he suggested more effective propaganda²⁸ and more assistance for social and economic programmes.²⁹

On Indochina specifically, Kennedy remarked that the United States was becoming associated with the French colonists and would not secure the support of the nations there until the French committed to their self-determination.

These examples show that the pattern of thinking that first appeared in Kennedy's written articles for the *Journal American* had crystallized into a more coherent philosophy. His central concern was a fear of the spread of Communism in the newly created nations brought about by a failure on the part of the United States to convince the people there that the ways and approaches of the United States (and, more broadly, benevolent capitalism as it was evolving in the post WWII era) would be greater to their advantage than would Communism. Further, the support that the US was extending to such areas was tainted by association with the previous colonial masters and was ill-directed for predominantly military purposes at the costs of social and economic programmes that would cut closer to the aspirations of the people and have a greater and more lasting effect in aligning them to US values and political systems.

This record provides an indicative body of evidence for supporting the proposition that Kennedy was concerned about issues in the nations that were emerging from colonialism, that he was concerned about the role and profile of the United States in responding to this

situation and that he was in disagreement with the ways in which US foreign policy had adapted to meet the challenges that the ending of WWII brought forth. Further, that while there was a role for the military in creating and maintaining a new nation's security, it could not of itself force the issue. Should the indigenous peoples of the rising states, for whatever reason, fail to accept the benefits of progressive capitalism and western ideals (and Kennedy suggested poorly directed propaganda may be such a reason for them not to do so) then military intervention to impose a particular form of government would, in fact, become counter-productive. This basis of what appears to be the Congressman's thinking was reinforced as events in Vietnam unfolded and he advanced his political career in 1952 by election to the Senate.

CHAPTER THREE

KENNEDY AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS 1952 – 1960

Senator Kennedy Criticises US Foreign Affairs Management in Indochina

Kennedy was elected to the Senate as representative for Massachusetts after defeating the incumbent, Henry Cabot Lodge Jr (Republican) by three percentage points in the 1952 election.

As a Senator Kennedy commanded a higher political profile and extended his powers of political influence. He was, nevertheless, still regarded as a new entrant to an exclusive club and had to tread carefully in order to give himself a firm footing as a member of the American political elite. Despite this Kennedy did not rest on his criticism of US policy towards Vietnam after entering the Senate and, although a supporter of the principles and many of the practices of the Truman Doctrine and the Mutual Assistance Act, he continued to advance a highly critical appraisal of the outcomes and prospects for the USA's efforts in consolidating its position of as leader of what became known as "the Free World" (loosely, those areas of the world not under Communist domination).

In June 1953, just six months into his Senate career, with the "Red Scare" at its height, Kennedy delivered a speech to the Senate expressing concern about assistance being extended to the French in Indochina under the terms of the Mutual Security Act which, in October 1951, had been passed into law as a consolidation of the measures taken previously for extending aid to friendly nations:

“I arise today to speak on a matter of vital importance to the security of the United States and the entire free world. It is my firm opinion that the expenditure and distribution of the funds, equipment, materials, and service authorized under this bill on behalf of the Associated States of Cambodia, Laos, and Viet-Nam should be administered in such a way as to encourage through all available means the freedom and independence desired by the peoples of the Associated States, including the intensification of the military training of the Vietnamese.

I say that because it is my opinion, based upon the evidence of the accords and treaties that bind the Associated States to the French Union, that genuine independence as we understand it is lacking in this area - that local government is circumscribed in its functions - that the Government of Viet-Nam, the state of which is of the greatest importance in this area, lacks popular support - that the degree of military, civil, political, and economic control maintained by the French goes well beyond what is necessary to fight a war.”¹

Senator Kennedy continued by stating that without the presence of the French fighting forces “Communists would overrun not only Indochina but South East Asia.” He put forward the opinion (as a matter of fact) that the French position is “not improving” and that the costs to the United States in bringing about this situation “...could well exceed \$1 billion.”

He continued:

“*The New York Times* has stated that we will be paying at least 40 percent of the cost of the war, and I believe that it will eventually mount up to a great deal more. Yet regardless of our united effort, it is a truism that the war can never be successful unless numbers of the people of Viet-Nam are won over from their sullen neutrality and open hostility to it and fully support its successful conclusion. This can never be done unless they are reassured beyond doubt that complete independence will be theirs at the conclusion of the war.”²

Kennedy included in the speech an outline history of Indochina following the arrival of the French in 1860 and a detailed explanation of the situation of Indochina since WWII. In setting out the prevailing conditions, Kennedy made repeated and cogent remarks about the failings of the French authorities to cede powers to the indigenous population in any meaningful way, stating that the structures of government in the region were geared

towards continued colonial style control. Kennedy quoted from a letter he had received from the Department of State which effectively stated that the aid extended by the US was provided to assist the French in their endeavours, an approach that, in his opinion, would only work to further their unwarranted control in governing the country. Towards the end of the speech Kennedy drew back from what, up to that point, had been a forceful critique of an important and valued ally of the United States:

“I do not believe that the French are fighting in Indochina wholly for material things. The war and money alone have already cost them substantially more than their total capital investment. Men like General De Lattre fought for the honor of France; and the French now are fighting because they know that if they retreat, all of Southeast Asia will go to the Communists - that their position in North Africa will become endangered and that the security of Metropolitan France itself will be threatened. Thus they fight on, and deserve our wholehearted support...

I believe it is of the utmost importance at a time when the United States is committing itself deeper and deeper into Indochina, that our influence and prestige with the French be used to promote the independence and well-being of the people of the Associated States. If we do so, not only would the prospects of victory be substantially enhanced, but the position of the United States and France and of the whole Western alliance in Asia will be materially advanced in Asia.”³

Several aspects of this speech stand out. Firstly, the passion that Kennedy poured into it demonstrates a true sense of feeling for the situation as it stood at the time and a measure of frustration (sometimes seeming like despair) about how matters had transpired to come to such a stage. Secondly, the Senator appeared not to be seeking to undermine the fundamental foreign policy tenets that were current – to contain Communism and halt its infectious spread. Thirdly, that the language used, the facts as assembled and the opinions and interpretations set out for explaining them, are all reflective of the knowledge and understanding of the situation of Indochina that Kennedy developed from his time there in October 1951 and as were articulated by him in various ways after returning to the United

States. In this last respect Kennedy is emphatic on the need for the people of Indochina to be freed from the yoke of French colonial domination in order for them to be fully converted to the US requirement for them to resist Communism. Finally, Kennedy seeks to demonstrate that the free determination of the peoples of Indochina is to the advantage of all who have an interest in the region – the Associated States, the United States and France. This amounts to more than an opinion of what is best for Indochina, it represents the fundamentals of a philosophical base for the conduct of foreign affairs by the US in relation to the colonial possessions of its close European allies. In short form it states that, if the post WWII position of the United States as a world power with interests beyond its borders is to be successful then some things must change. The colonial powers must divest themselves of their overseas possessions, the principle of self-determination must be observed and the developing relationships between the new nations and the old, including the United States, must be based upon mutual respect delivering joint prosperity.

The approach taken by Kennedy did not conform to the conventional wisdom of the time regarding US policy towards the conflict in Vietnam. It should be remembered that, as well as being a long-standing friend and ally of the United States, France was seen as a vital contributor to the struggle for halting Soviet ambitions in Europe. Further, the domestic case for the French maintaining a presence in Vietnam was increasingly difficult to justify in the face of a lack of any discernible progress after almost eight years of continual fighting, the loss of life and the costs of operations. This state of affairs had been recognised for some years in France and there was more than a suspicion that French blood and treasure had been sacrificed for US policy goals.⁴ Further, the developing situation in Algeria engendered a change in priorities for French foreign affairs management. Under these

circumstances Kennedy's speech could be seen as an attempt to undermine France's position and when his proposal for an amendment to the Mutual Security Act was put to the vote it was lost by a large margin.⁵ This amendment had sought to force the issue on making further aid contingent upon France conceding political power in the region.

Apart from antagonising Senate colleagues, the French and the Eisenhower administration, Kennedy's speech brought no change to the situation on the ground in Indochina. By April 1954 matters had deteriorated to the point that the colonists faced a military disaster at Dien Bien Phu.⁶ Kennedy rose in the Senate to speak again on the matter:

"Mr. President, the time has come for the American people to be told the blunt truth about Indochina."⁷

Kennedy then gave an account of events in Indochina over the preceding few years, setting out the repeated assurances of successive US governments, US military advisers and the French government and military regarding expected victory over the Vietminh. His chronology of forecasts and situational assessments put forward by each of these agencies was itself condemnatory by dint of the fact that all had proved to be misplaced, over-optimistic and simply wrong. He named and berated those individuals who had retained faith in a French victory while persisting with failed stratagems and condemned the waste of lives, materiel and aid support that had brought Indochina to its present state. He gave an outline history of his own efforts to convince the United States government that its ambitions for containing Communism in the region could only succeed if the indigenous populations were convinced of the need to fight for this objective and that no such

conviction would be forthcoming without a credible promise of independence and release from French domination:

“In Indochina, as in Korea, the battle against communism should be a battle, not for economic or political gain, but for the security of the free world, and for the values and institutions which are held dear in France and throughout the non-Communist world, as well as in the United States. It seems to me, therefore, that the dilemma which confronts us is not a hopeless one; that a victorious fight can be maintained by the French, with the support of this Nation and many other nations - and most important of all, the support of the Vietnamese and other peoples of the Associated States - once it is recognized that the defense of southeast Asia and the repelling of Communist aggression are the objectives of such a struggle, and not the maintenance of political relationships founded upon ancient colonialism. In such a struggle, the United States and other nations may properly be called upon to play their fullest part.

If, however, this is not to be the nature of the war; if the French persist in their refusal to grant the legitimate independence and freedom desired by the peoples of the Associated States; and if those peoples and the other peoples of Asia remain aloof from the conflict, as they have in the past, then it is my hope that Secretary Dulles, before pledging our assistance at Geneva, will recognize the futility of channeling American men and machines into that hopeless internecine struggle.”⁸

Kennedy’s speech led to a lengthy and lively debate in the Senate and he drew praise from some members. Senate Majority Leader, William Knowland (Republican) commented that there was “much, and probably the predominance of what the Senator from Massachusetts has said with which I would fully agree.”⁹ Nevertheless, it made small impact upon actual events. Just as the military effort of the French reached its nadir at Dien Bien Phu the Geneva Conference, called to resolve the issues raised by the outcomes of the Korean War, turned its attentions to the situation in Indochina and gave approval for the partition of what was recognised as the country of Vietnam into two republics separated roughly along the 17th parallel. US participation in the conference was limited somewhat by the presence of representatives of the PRC, at that time not recognised by the USA; nevertheless, the US

delegate Walter Beddel Smith did affirm his government's commitment to free elections for resolving the dichotomy.¹⁰

Fighting in Vietnam supposedly came to an end, but the reality on the ground had more the air of an armed truce. In the South Ngo Dinh Diem was made prime minister in July 1954 (and President in October the same year) while, in the North, Ho Chi Minh prevailed upon the terms of the Geneva Accords¹¹ and held out for the elections promised for July 1956, knowing full well that he would succeed in them.¹² Simultaneously groups of Ho sympathisers in the South embarked on disruptive activities that drew on the security resources of Diem and led to increasingly oppressive measures. There was, by the contrivance of unfolding events, something of a conclusion to the French role as a colonising power in the region but, if he had been sincere in his numerous statements on the matter, what came in its place must have dismayed Kennedy. As Alfred Grosser has written:

“The independence of Vietnam, so frequently promised by France, was now implemented step by step, at least in the army and in economic organization. On January 1, 1955, the country was given sovereignty in customs and monetary matters. But actually the Vietnam government was controlled much more directly by the United States than ever it had been by France. And it was a government which was becoming increasingly unpopular as all observers agreed. To respect the independence of South Vietnam in order to unify all nationalist elements against Communist North Vietnam was the course the American government had incessantly recommended to the French for more than seven years, and it was precisely what it failed to do itself, the moment American officers and political advisors replaced the French. The opinion – widespread in France in any event – that American anti-colonialism was merely a pretext for substituting an American for a European presence in the former colonial territories was thus confirmed...”¹³

Should Kennedy or anyone else have been surprised at this outcome? It had already been seen that the United States, under Eisenhower, was willing to intervene in Iran and Guatemala in order to preserve what it viewed as its vital interests. Operations in

Indochina, and Vietnam in particular, were quite in keeping with current US foreign affairs management practices.

Kennedy Takes a More Direct Interest in Vietnam

As events moved along the government of the South was more and more seen as being removed from the democratic and Western ideals that the United States purported to be supporting, but Kennedy's interest in the region did not diminish and in late 1955 he helped in founding a lobby group known as the American Friends of Vietnam (AFV). This rather obscure organisation comprised chosen individuals who had come to believe in the abilities of Diem and supported him as the one person who might save the situation in Vietnam.¹⁴

On 1st June 1956 the AFV sponsored a conference to discuss the situation of Vietnam and Kennedy was assigned keynote speaker. He opened his address with some comments on why the subject of Vietnam had not featured greatly in newspaper headlines or broadcast newsreels. One factor, he suggested, was:

“...the amazing success of President Diem in meeting firmly and with determination the major political and economic crises which had heretofore continually plagued Vietnam.”¹⁵

He also described the USA as a:

“...volunteer fire fighting department for the world... that: whenever and wherever fire breaks out—in Indo-China, in the Middle East, in Guatemala, in Cyprus, in the Formosan Straits—our firemen rush in, wheeling up all their heavy equipment, and resorting to every known method of containing and extinguishing the blaze. The crowd gathers—the usually successful efforts of our able volunteers are heartily applauded—and then the firemen rush off to the next conflagration, leaving the grateful but still stunned inhabitants to clean up the rubble, pick up the pieces and rebuild their homes with whatever resources are available.”¹⁶

Kennedy framed the situation in Vietnam within the context of the threat of Communist expansion in the region and beyond and identified “America’s stake in Vietnam” in terms of the Domino Theory. Later in the speech, in a fashion that had become characteristic of his formal pronouncements on the subject, he placed more emphasis on the importance of democracy, nation building and freedom from domination with the Vietnamese army “now fighting for its own homeland and not its colonial masters”:

“But the responsibility of the United States for Vietnam does not conclude, obviously, with a review of what has been accomplished thus far with our help. Much more needs to be done; much more, in fact, than we have been doing up to now. Military alliances in Southeast Asia are necessary but not enough. Atomic superiority and the development of new ultimate weapons are not enough. Informational and propaganda activities, warning of the evils of Communism and the blessings of the American way of life, are not enough in a country where concepts of free enterprise and capitalism are meaningless, where poverty and hunger are not enemies across the 17th parallel but enemies within their midst. As Ambassador Chuong [Ambassador of South Vietnam to the United State] has recently said: “People cannot be expected to fight for the Free World unless they have their own freedom to defend, their freedom from foreign domination as well as freedom from misery, oppression, corruption.””¹⁷

The speech was fairly straight forward in its delivery and message and demonstrated a consistency with the approach that Kennedy had developed since visiting Vietnam in 1951 – that the country should be supported by the United State as a barrier to further Communist expansion in the region and, as a result, beyond. That the role of the United States must be to support those elements that were seen to be promoting the values that the US held to and which, in Kennedy’s view, provided the best defence against Communist expansion.

Further, that the United States should not become militarily involved in the region for:

“It is now well known that we were at one time on the brink of war in Indo-china - a war which could well have been more costly, more exhausting and less conclusive than any war we have ever known.”¹⁸

The timing and circumstances of the speech are instructive for gaining an understanding of its contents. It was made to a lobby group that, in its fundamental objectives, was formed in response to the threat of spreading Communism; at the same time Kennedy was attempting to raise his profile in national politics.¹⁹ There is no great criticism of what the Eisenhower administration had done in regard to Vietnam but rather a manifesto statement of how the United States should conduct foreign affairs in nations newly released from colonial domination, such as Vietnam. Kennedy makes clear that military intervention is a poor option that will not solve the underlying problems of poverty, social deprivation and the lack of the voice of the people in choosing and directing their government. The damaging effects of colonial oversight are mentioned but, in the wake of the breaking of the French imperial hold, the speech looks more to the future and how the United States must act. It implies that in its actions the US must be seen to be supportive of peoples seeking freedom and self-determination and that aid and assistance must be directed towards these purposes. There is praise for Diem as somebody who can take these ideals forward. Late on in the speech, in words that seem contradictory to much of the earlier content, Kennedy is emphatic that the elections proposed as part of the Geneva Accords (which were theoretically due to take place just a month later) must not go ahead, being "...obviously stacked and subverted in advance..."²⁰

It is evident therefore, that the speech holds close to the lines of political expediency by which Kennedy would have had to conform if he was to be successful in sustaining a challenge for higher office. He does not desert his basic principles regarding how the United States should conduct foreign affairs in regard to Vietnam and similar new nations, and he is consistent in his assertions regarding avoidance of military intervention. Overall however,

although his words are delivered with passion, the content is nuanced, inoffensive to all, anodyne almost.

Kennedy Considers Algeria and Poland as Nations Seeking Freedom from Imperialist Oversight

His tone changed the following year, after the need for politicking had subsided, when he spoke forcefully about France's battle to retain its hold on Algeria.²¹ It is noteworthy that this speech, made in the Senate on 2nd July 1957, was titled "Imperialism – the Enemy of Freedom". It began with a challenging statement:

"Mr. President, the most powerful single force in the world today is neither communism nor capitalism, neither the H-bomb nor the guided missile, it is man's eternal desire to be free and independent. The great enemy of that tremendous force of freedom is called, for want of a more precise term, imperialism - and today that means Soviet imperialism and, whether we like it or not, and though they are not to be equated, Western imperialism.

Thus the single most important test of American foreign policy today is how we meet the challenge of imperialism, what we do to further man's desire to be free. On this test more than any other, this Nation shall be critically judged by the uncommitted millions in Asia and Africa, and anxiously watched by the still hopeful lovers of freedom behind the Iron Curtain. If we fail to meet the challenge of either Soviet or Western imperialism, then no amount of foreign aid, no aggrandizement of armaments, no new pacts or doctrines or high-level conferences can prevent further setbacks to our course and to our security."²²

"...and though they are not to be equated..." Yet Kennedy clearly *conflates* Soviet and Western imperialism, distinguishing between the two only by name in his analysis of the world situation at the time. It is this theme, that imperialism was overarching, that it was the misconception which must be confined to history, which came to occupy the Senator and later the President as he grappled to conceive a foreign affairs strategy that would allow the United States to conduct business as the leader of the Free World without it too becoming an overbearing imperial power. It is a reflection of the extent to which considerations of Cold War politics and manoeuvrings have come to dominate historical

interpretations of the time that Kennedy is not much remembered for his extensive endeavours in bringing this issue to the fore. It can be argued that this speech, in terms of setting out the considerations, ideas and thinking of Kennedy in foreign affairs management, is an important signal of his intentions. It marks that point in the Senator's learning and understanding on matters of foreign affairs that gives him the confidence to articulate the policy lines that guided and conditioned his approach on all matters concerning the role of the United States in the world from that time onwards until his death in November 1963. It can be interpreted as a statement based on the experience and understanding of the world that he had gained as a result of his extensive travels and encounters since first venturing abroad as a schoolboy and which now gave him the wherewithal to press his ideas upon those in government with the authority to create policy.

In the first part of the statement Kennedy referred briefly to Poland, saying that he would be speaking exclusively on Polish affairs in a later address.²³ Apart from the fact that Kennedy appears to have been serious in his intentions regarding Poland (and more broadly, Soviet dominated Eastern Europe) he took this approach in order to avoid the accusation that he was more concerned with attacking the allies of the United States than he was in dealing with its enemies.²⁴ Kennedy was an astute politician and had cultivated ambitions to attain higher office; the politics of the time meant that he could not possibly risk an accusation of being "soft" on Communism without ruination to his intentions. Kennedy's speech on Poland advocated economic aid for the country as a means for enhancing the reputation of the United States as a benevolent supporter of freedom (as opposed to being neo-imperialist). By doing so he was able to cover a number of factors:

- Firstly, it helped to cement the idea that there was no great difference between Soviet and Western imperialism;
- Secondly, it conveyed the impression that Soviet (more precisely, Russian) dominated nations were not beyond the reach of the United States' interests;
- Thirdly it signalled the possibility of a new approach for the US in the affairs of Eastern Europe, an area in which both the Truman and Eisenhower administrations had seemed incapable of venturing with any real effect;²⁵
- Fourthly, it gave Kennedy an opportunity to attack the Department of State (and, more pointedly, Secretary of State John Foster Dulles) for raising false hopes among the peoples of Eastern Europe with his fanfare statements of "Liberation",²⁶ a policy that had shown itself as meaningless against events and the *realpolitik* of prevailing conditions in that part of the world.

On 2nd July, however, the central theme of "Imperialism – the Enemy of Freedom" was the question of Algeria and the fierce struggle that was taking place there as the Front de Libération Nationale (FLN) sought to end the imperial domination of France. Kennedy's arguments did not differ from those he had presented in regard to Indochina and Vietnam – that the approach of the United States created the impression of being a supporter of colonialism, which alienated the indigenous population; that military solutions, while they had a place, could not alone resolve the problems of the area, and that US neglect of these fundamental aspects opened the door to Communism.

The speech invoked a hostile response from several quarters and all political shades. For Dean Acheson, Secretary of State during the Truman administration, it was the “wrong way to treat our oldest ally...”²⁷ To Eisenhower, endorsing critical remarks made by his Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, a productive foreign policy meant “...you often worked behind the scenes, because you don’t get up and begin to shout about such things or there will be no effectiveness.”²⁸ Robert Lacoste, French Minister for Algeria, spoke directly, calling Kennedy “...a young, ambitious Senator... speaking for the Old Maids of the United States...”²⁹

What is more remarkable however, is that a speech made by a US Senator in Washington was heard and understood by the people of Algeria and its neighbouring states (and other nations in other parts of the world also seeking to throw off colonial masters).³⁰ Mongi Slim was, at the time of the speech, Tunisian Ambassador to the United States; in May 1965 he agreed to file a record for the John F Kennedy Library Oral History Program. Interviewer Dr Lorna Hahn asked about the impression the speech had made upon Slim and what its wider effects were:

“We were - I was personally - very much impressed by his speech. It was for us the first speech of the kind by an official, a senator, a high-ranking American personality with responsibilities even as senator, speaking out so frankly about the Algerian problem and opening new perspectives. We were very impressed and very much pleased by the speech.

I remember that in discussing it with other Americans, I always emphasized the courage and boldness of a senator speaking out like that at that time, in 1957, about the Algerian problem and the war going on there. It was a manifestation of bravery and unquestionable courage that impressed us considerably, and that I think began to create at that time a new current of feeling not only in Tunisia but I believe even in other countries, among many Africans that I knew - Algerians, Moroccans, and others - a new current of feeling toward the United States in the matter of colonial problems.”³¹

It is notable that Slim was succeeded in the office of Ambassador by Habib Bourguiba Jr., the son of the President of Tunisia, Habib Bourguiba. Bourguiba senior, in a short written statement following the death of John Kennedy, made particular reference to the ways in which Kennedy took an interest in developing nations:

“He is known in the world for the help he gave—help not always necessarily spectacular but always effective—to the colonized peoples, the peoples of the Third World, the peoples of Africa and Asia, in their struggle for independence and for dignity. Finally, he is known in the world for the way he helped these newly independent and underdeveloped peoples to bring about the conditions of a decent and dignified life, of real freedom and true independence.”³²

What makes this statement noteworthy, apart from the fact that there was such heightened awareness of Kennedy’s stance in remote corners of the world, is that it reinforces the impression that matters of decolonisation were important to Kennedy in his ideas about how the United States should position itself in the world at a time when so many new states were being created. Although the words are couched in phraseology appropriate to the occasion, the statement recognises the high status that such thinking held in Kennedy’s political outlook.

This approach was further clarified in October 1957 when Kennedy wrote an article for *Foreign Affairs*, a respected journal. Titled *A Democrat Looks at Foreign Policy*, Kennedy began the article by identifying two leading failings in what was then current foreign policy:

“...first, a failure to appreciate how the forces of nationalism are rewriting the geopolitical map of the world, especially in North Africa, south eastern Europe and the Middle East; and second, a lack of decision and conviction in our leadership, which has recoiled from clearly informing both the people and Congress, which seeks too often to substitute slogans for solutions, which at times has even taken pride in the timidity of its ideas.”³³

He concluded the article with words that may be viewed as something of a manifesto statement:

“The agenda of tasks is large. Our chief concern should be major items. We must see that our actions stimulate the healthy development of the new states even if they are neutral; that we do not encourage the prolongation of Western colonialism where it is stagnant; that the position we take against Soviet imperialism in Eastern Europe is not weakened by Western "imperialism" in Africa or Asia.”³⁴

This was as clear a declaration as could be made of the principles that would condition the thinking of Kennedy as he strove to secure influence in American politics. It has already been mentioned that he harboured ambitions for high office³⁵ and, as his Senate career progressed, he sought to manoeuvre himself into position for securing the Democratic Party nomination for the Presidential race in 1960. If he was to win through in his bidding then he would have to move cautiously, taking care not to alienate or offend those parts of the Party that would not necessarily view him as the most suitable candidate while, at the same time, holding onto those supporters whom he could already rely upon. To better his chances of success Kennedy exercised discretion in his actions, perhaps most notably by voting against the Civil Rights Act put forward by the Eisenhower administration in 1957. There are complicated arguments to be made about Kennedy’s actions in respect of Civil Rights, both in 1957 and later when President, and there is little value for the purposes of this text in examining his record in detail; suffice to conclude that the several explanations that may be given for his approach provide ample material for different interpretations of what he represented as a politician. What is clear, nevertheless, is that, when occupying the White House, Kennedy was frequently criticised for not taking a more active stance in establishing his credentials as a promoter of civil rights – particularly in regard to the enactment of legislation.³⁶

Kennedy Seeks Higher Office

So it transpired that, from about 1958 onwards, much of Kennedy's time and attention was given to seeking the Democratic nomination for the Presidential election of 1960.³⁷ These activities kept him occupied outside of the Senate³⁸ and Lyndon Johnson, who also put his name forward for the race to the White House, was able to criticise him for his absences.³⁹

Some ten years into his life as a public figure, Kennedy had finally begun to secure a clarified formulation of the fundamental imperatives that would condition his thinking on the United States' relationships with the former colonial powers and the new nations that were emerging as a result of their fading empires. In so doing he was attempting to resolve (in his own mind) the complications and contradictions of the position of the United States in regard to colonial issues. As he did so, he came face to face with the ferocity of opposition to his ideas – a position he repeatedly encountered during his presidency. Being a second term Senator with more than a decade of federal government experience, and having run a close race for nomination as the Democratic candidate for Vice President, he was well positioned both to speak out and present himself as a credible alternative for nomination for the Presidential election. The focus of his ambitions, from this time, became the White House.

CHAPTER FOUR

FOREIGN AFFAIRS DECISION-MAKING IN THE WHITE HOUSE

Kennedy's entrance into the White House was significant for the fact that fast moving events tested the mettle of him and those around him from the very first days. Cuba, Laos, The Congo, Vietnam and Berlin all presented problems that, one way or another, called for responses from the new President. Lesser known, yet still important to Kennedy,¹ were events taking place in Middle East, the Pacific regions and other parts of the African continent.

Confronting Cuba

It was in regard to Cuba that there was the most pressing force for the President to act and his decision making in response is widely accepted to have been flawed.

Kennedy assented to The Bay of Pigs operation and made a decision that, when examined in light of the bulk of his pronouncements prior to becoming President and the tenor of his foreign affairs decisions after the inauguration, seems out of keeping.

He had been presented with a scheme that, in essence, was a sponsored project aimed at toppling the dictatorship of President Fidel Castro in Cuba by use of exile troops, trained and equipped by agencies of the United States. The Bay of Pigs came to be acknowledged by both Kennedy's supporters and detractors as a blunder of magnitude. According to some

accounts the President regretted the decision almost from the outset and uttered remorse at his failure to heed his own misgivings.

“...all my life I’ve known better than to depend on the experts. How could I have been so stupid, to let them go ahead...”²

Ambrose argues that Kennedy had no one to blame but himself for making a poor decision, despite the fact that those close to him tried to deflect responsibility to others. Irving Janis, subsequently, wrote widely on the concept of “groupthink”, a theory of psychology that sought to demonstrate that group decisions leading to flawed outcomes can be the product of unbalanced collective thinking and analysis. Janis’s ideas regarding The Bay of Pigs incident suggest that Kennedy fell victim to groupthink as did those who were there to advise and guide him.³

If there is to be substance to the argument that Kennedy’s thinking on foreign affairs was centred upon moving away from the types of confrontational, interventionist methods that had been employed by his predecessors in the White House, then an explanation for The Bay of Pigs is necessary.

Janis’s analysis looks back at the decisions that were made and identifies flaws in the structural approach that led to them. Ambrose too looks at the decisions and their outcomes as do James Blight and Janet Lang (see p27 above). But the key for understanding Kennedy’s thinking lies not in the decisions that he made; rather, it is to be found in the situation he faced going into the decision making process. The CIA and the Military, who conceived and evaluated the plans for the Bay of Pigs, had briefed Kennedy, but they had

thoughts of their own regarding the plans and the chances of success. Essentially there were only three possible outcomes from the invasion plan:

- the exile force would overwhelm the Castro government and a new regime would be established in Havana;
- the exile force would gain the beachhead and would gather support from disaffected members of the population such that Castro would be forced out over time;
- the exile force would be defeated and the plan would fail.

Realistically only the second and third of these outcomes was possible (Castro had an army of approximately 200,000 well equipped and trained men to combat the invasion force of about 1,400). One must assume, therefore, that the CIA and the Military believed that the proposal would succeed on the basis of the second possible outcome – a popular uprising.⁴ Given that approval was put forward on this basis, the planners must also have considered what contingency arrangements would be required should the third possible outcome have started to materialise. Here the choices were limited to two possible options:

- To accept failure and withdraw support;
- To provide back up support by use of US military forces.

Evidently, the first of these would have been unacceptable to the planners, but Kennedy had ruled out the second option. Because the invasion ended in failure and defeat the CIA and the Military must have believed that the President would change his mind and authorise US military intervention (as he was urged to do), but he chose instead to accept the failure.

Why then did the President give approval for a scheme that seemed to run counter to his thinking and which failed in just the way that he might have anticipated?

In simple terms, it seems that he made a mistake, which is how he described the episode himself.⁵ Assurances from the CIA and military advisers had encouraged him to give agreement for the engagement; he had also sought the advice of his cabinet members beforehand. But more than this, it seems that he viewed the scheme as an act of liberation, assisting those who would seek to overthrow dictatorship and replace it with freedom of choice. Sometime after the unfortunate episode, in December 1962, Kennedy was able to welcome back veterans from the campaign who had been released by Castro following arrangements for settling the Cuban Missile Crisis. Kennedy spoke of his feelings towards those who had taken part, his ambitions for the future of Cuba and the philosophical underpinning of his decision to approve the action:

“...your small brigade is a tangible reaffirmation that the human desire for freedom and independence is essentially unconquerable. Your conduct and valor are proof that although Castro and his fellow dictators may rule nations, they do not rule people; that they may imprison bodies, but they do not imprison spirits; that they may destroy the exercise of liberty, but they cannot eliminate the determination to be free. And by helping to free you, the United States has been given the opportunity to demonstrate once again that all men who fight for freedom are our brothers, and shall be until your country and others are free.”⁶

As can be seen from this quotation, The Bay of Pigs operation fitted with Kennedy's views about self determination. Within this line of thinking, his decision not to support the liberating force with US military power was consistent and matched his developed ideas about the importance of the US avoiding the pitfall of becoming a neo-imperialist power.

Had the venture succeeded then he might have satisfied himself that the United States had acted in a manner that gave illustration to his new approach to foreign affairs – as a supporter and friend of free people. There was, however, a widespread belief that the scheme was doomed to failure before it had begun⁷ and that it had always been the intention of the CIA planners that US support would have been forthcoming, knowing that the task force was insufficient to see the matter through on its own.⁸ Kennedy certainly felt that he had been misled (or badly advised)⁹ and set about taking future decisions that were closer to his own beliefs and instincts, even in the face of objections from those that had been appointed to counsel him.

Writers such as Ambrose and Janis help to explain how the decisions regarding The Bay of Pigs incident were flawed in the making, but they do not entirely contextualise the situation that Kennedy faced and the thinking that took him into the process. He was presented with two basic choices regarding the invasion plan – to approve or not to approve. By approving he could align his policy actions to his thinking regarding providing support for indigenous liberating forces. Had he not given the go ahead then the consequences were, ironically, more uncertain. He would have had to explain his decision to the thousands of Cubans who lived in Florida, Louisiana and other southern states, all of whom were clamouring for some sort of action to be taken against Castro. Additionally, he would have faced the prospect of the task force members returning to the United States, trained, armed and bitterly disappointed after having been brought to a pitch of expectation; they would have dispersed among the refugee community and no doubt spread their disaffection far and wide.¹⁰

Neutralising Laos

At much the same time as Kennedy was holding the military back from intervention in Cuba, he was approving plans for putting troops on high alert as a response to the critical situation that was evolving in Laos. In keeping with the general characteristics of the problems that beset South East Asia at this time, Laos was in a state of flux and uncertainty in early 1961. According to Eisenhower, if the Communists were to take over Laos, then all parts of Indochina would soon succumb.¹¹ Deeply concerning for the United States was the fact that the Soviet Union was actively engaged in supporting, by airlift of supplies and equipment, the pro Communist Pathet Lao in its struggle to exploit the political chaos in Vientiane.¹² This instability was partly the result of the lack of a coherent strategy within the US military, State Department, CIA and Foreign Service. On the day before his inauguration, Kennedy was briefed by Eisenhower and his Secretary of State Christian Herter¹³ and urged to follow through on their recommendation for a large build up of US military presence in the country, but Kennedy demurred on military intervention, having often questioned its effectiveness against guerrilla forces.

He relied more upon his own knowledge of Indochina, developed as a result of many years of interest and involvement. As The Bay of Pigs fiasco unfolded, so the Pathet Lao made more gains and Vientiane was threatened. Kennedy, in the course of press briefings early in his Presidency, had expressed his wish for an independent Laos but as Communist forces gained ever more ground, the prospects for a solution that would neutralise the country diminished. Kennedy was briefed on the situation and a plan presented by his military advisers envisaged that an indigenous army, assisted and equipped by the USA, could drive back the Pathet Lao, secure the country and prepare the ground for neutrality. Unknown to

Kennedy at the time he gave approval for this plan was the fact that the figures used for assessing the strength of the Pathet Lao and the North Vietnamese forces that would aid it, were badly underestimated.¹⁴ In approving the plan Kennedy allowed that no US troops were to be deployed in the process.

As the plan was put into action, the Pathet Lao made further gains, consolidating their position on the strategic Plain of Jars and overrunning the forces of the indigenous army that the plan had relied upon for turning back the Communists. Almost without exception,¹⁵ State Department and Defense Department officials advising the President pressed for a military solution to save the country from falling to the Communists; Kennedy, by contrast, set upon negotiations for a coalition government that would include elements of the Pathet Lao. Knowing that the Communists had no incentive to negotiate, Kennedy ordered the deployment of naval forces to the region and placed other troops in the vicinity on alert; some special forces were transferred to Laos itself and nearby in Thailand.

It seemed that the plan was failing when, in the final weeks of March, further Pathet Lao offences met with success and the remnants of the US backed army were in retreat. By 21st March, as more and more US forces were committed to the region, it seemed inevitable that US military force would be engaged to resolve matters. On the 23rd March, with three aircraft carriers steaming towards the South China Sea and other troops arriving in Thailand, Kennedy informed a press conference that:

“If in the past there has been any possible ground for misunderstanding our desire for a truly neutral Laos, there should be none now,”¹⁶

It was brinkmanship of this nature that fuelled the idea of Kennedy as a combative Cold Warrior, and it is true to state that as the crisis continued the prospects of the threatening presence of US forces being turned to combat heightened. But by the end of April Kennedy had built his position for a negotiated settlement and at Geneva a year later the final touches were put to the Declaration on the Neutrality of Laos, which placed the country into the hands of a coalition comprising representatives of the Pathet Lao, pro US and neutral factions. It was not a strong settlement and, with unfolding events in neighbouring Vietnam, it became more academic as the war there expanded in later years. Nevertheless, Kennedy had employed a tactic aimed at securing the solution he wanted – a negotiated settlement, without the combat engagement urged upon him by advisers and the military. In the course of the final few days before pressing his decision Kennedy had to face down the demands of many who were willing to risk conflict with China and nuclear war to meet the situation head-on. His persistence, almost as a lone voice, against the actual use of the tremendous military power that had been brought to the area was as much an act of defiance as dissent.

Though often disregarded as part of the tragic history of Indochina, the Laos crisis in March / April 1961 was a major step on the path that led to the Vietnam escalation a few years later. It also marked another statement of dissent that extended the distance between Kennedy and the military chiefs upon whom he relied for advice and support. This breach expanded further in the course of his Presidency as Kennedy took a counter line when other crises came to bear.

Holding Out on Vietnam

At the same time as The Bay of Pigs and Laos episodes were unfolding, Kennedy was presented with evidence of the precarious position of the government of South Vietnam. Since becoming President in October 1954 Ngo Dinh Diem appeared not to have advanced the prospects for a peaceful, united, democratic buttress against Communist expansion that had been the purpose and intention of the Eisenhower administration. The United States' hopes for Vietnam since partition in 1954 had been built upon Diem's leadership and he had been supported by US economic and military aid, but by 1961 there was little evidence of real progress. Diem, together with his influential brother Ngo Dinh Nhu, had failed to drive back the insurgent guerrilla troops from North Vietnam and seemed incapable of stifling the influence of their sympathisers, the Viet Cong,¹⁷ who enjoyed considerable success in convincing the population outside of Saigon that the government was both corrupt¹⁸ and dominated by foreigners. Enjoying a privileged existence in the presidential palace, Diem could use the situation to press the United States for ever more resources and support.¹⁹ Simultaneously, the oppressive and divisive nature of Diem's governance was isolating large parts of South Vietnamese society, the support of which would be essential for a united front against the threats posed by the North and the Viet Cong. Diem's brother Nhu, especially, had built a reputation as ruthless and uncompromising, running an enforcement based police force and crushing any opposition through fear and tyranny.

If Kennedy had been genuine in his repeated calls for free, democratic and pluralist societies in the developing nations, then he must have been at least disappointed by the outcomes of his support for Diem over the previous few years. As a state on the front line of resistance against Communist expansion he could not ignore South Vietnam and nor would his advisers let him – the military, the State Department, the Foreign Service and all other parties of

government made repeated assertions regarding its vital importance as a strategic interface in the fight that was the Cold War. It was against this background that President Kennedy's decision making in regard to matters pertaining to South Vietnam must be assessed. Certain characteristics stand out:

- The nature, size and role of the US military presence in Vietnam changed considerably during the time of his Presidency. As he took office in January 1961 there were approximately 700 accredited US military advisers in the country and, by the time of his death in November 1963 this number had risen to over 16,000.²⁰
- From late 1961 units of special forces using helicopters and other aircraft had been drafted. These operated in close support with the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) and were subject to attack from hostile forces.
- The numbers of US personnel killed, wounded and missing in South Vietnam rose throughout the years of the Kennedy Presidency.²¹
- Diem was overthrown and murdered, along with his brother Nhu, after a military *coup d'état* in early November 1963.²²²³
- Despite heavy pressure from military and civilian advisers alike, Kennedy never introduced US forces for conventional combat in South Vietnam.

It should be remembered that Kennedy was formulating his policy on Vietnam (and South East Asia in general) whilst resisting the ideas and proposals that were presented to him by his advisers – particularly his military advisers. In 2011 an official history of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Vietnam War was published by the Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Author Dr Jack Schulimson has written:

“...the failed invasion of Cuba during the Bay of Pigs episode very early in his administration caused President Kennedy to lose his faith in the advice of the Joint Chiefs. Indeed the President appointed General Maxwell Taylor to act as his intermediary with the Joint Chiefs until General Taylor assumed the position of Chairman himself in October 1962. Throughout the President’s tenure in office, the Kennedy administration’s policy in Southeast Asia was marked by clashes between factions in the Defense Department including the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the State Department, and the White House.”²⁴

It is the circumstances of the time, as articulated by Dr Schulimson, that help put Kennedy’s thinking on Vietnam into the context of his broader ideas about ensuring that the United States should not become a neo-imperialist power – the concept that is of most interest to this study. There are several explanations that may be put forward as reasons why Kennedy did not engage combat troops in Vietnam:

- Because he did not believe that a military solution was feasible.
- Because he was concerned that a military initiative on the part of the United States might trigger a reaction from the PRC or the Soviet Union that would lead to a wider war and the use of nuclear weapons.
- Because such action would provide the Soviet Union with a moral justification to take counter measures elsewhere, such as in Berlin.
- Because Kennedy habitually did not use US troops in a combat role to resolve issues, as evidenced by his actions in Cuba, Laos, Berlin and elsewhere.
- Because Kennedy retained a belief that the USA must resist the types of actions that would cast it as a modern day imperialist nation, a position that would damage its efforts in waging the Cold War.

To reinforce the relevance of this last point it is necessary to examine how Vietnam featured during the Kennedy Presidency and how he reacted on each occasion.

Kennedy and Vietnam in the White House

General Edward Lansdale, who first reported to the new President on conditions in South Vietnam (see endnote 17 above), was a stand out character in the history of the United States' involvement in Indochina. He had earned a reputation as a pragmatic and effective envoy in the early 1950s in the Philippines, at which time he had manoeuvred to crush the Communist inspired Hukbalahap (Huk) Rebellion and ensure the ascendancy of Ramon Magsaysay to the presidency,²⁵ an episode of recent US history that demonstrated how nations could be freed from colonial oversight and avoid becoming Communist dominated.

In many ways Lansdale epitomised the type of individual to whom Kennedy could relate. He was active and involved, he used unconventional methods and, given his background in the business of advertising, he knew how to convey appearances to cement ideas and policies. His part in the elevation of Magsaysay and the defeat of the Huk gave him sufficient of a reputation for John Foster Dulles, Secretary of State, to send him to Vietnam in 1954 as the man to resolve matters there²⁶ and he struck up a close relationship with Diem. In appearance at least, Lansdale's success in the Philippines reflected many of Kennedy's stated beliefs on how the United States should engage with nations emerging from foreign oversight and open to the persuasions of Communist propaganda; namely, that the US should not be overbearing, should look to assist and support democratic governments and should, above all, avoid the danger of being seen as a neo-colonial power.

When they first met in the White House, on 28th January 1961, Kennedy is reported to have told the General that he would like him to be the next ambassador to Vietnam.²⁷

Lansdale, however, was viewed in different ways by those who advised Kennedy and efforts were made to ensure that this did not happen.²⁸ This factor aside, Lansdale's recommendation that the US ambassador in Saigon should be replaced was accepted and there is no doubt that his presence in the national security apparatus was influential at different levels; he certainly had a close relationship with General L. C. McGarr, commander of the Military Assistance Advisory Group (MAAG) in Vietnam.²⁹ As US involvement in Vietnam began to wind down after Richard Nixon became President, and with the release of the Pentagon Papers in 1971,³⁰ questions were raised about his methods and influence and his reputation today may be interpreted in different ways.³¹ In 1961, however, and despite the lack of progress, the revisions were yet to come and there was a retained belief that, with the right people, the right approach and the right attitude, Vietnam could be retained within the sphere of US influence, could operate on a democratic and open basis, and could act as a standard for other nations to follow whilst positioning itself as impregnable to the blandishments of Communist inspired infiltrators.

Lansdale had been sent to South Vietnam for the purposes of evaluating the developing situation by Eisenhower's Defense Secretary Thomas Gates. His visit took place between 2nd and 14th January 1961 and he reported directly to the new President at a meeting held in the White House on 28th January.³² In essence, Lansdale's findings built upon the "Basic Counterinsurgency Plan for VietNam",³³ a document that had been initiated in early 1960 by the Pacific Command branch of the military. The paper urged action for all forms of aid to

the South Vietnamese government: military, economic and political, as well as a programme for psychological war (“psyops”) to stifle the growing influence of the North and its confederates in undermining Diem’s administration,³⁴ but it also warned of an imminent collapse of the government if actions were not taken immediately.³⁵

It is interesting to note Kennedy’s reactions to Lansdale and the report that he presented. Lansdale came across to the new President as somebody who represented the values he was seeking to promote in the formulation of the United States’ relations with new and developing countries, especially those released from the shackles of imperial oversight. Lansdale’s successes in the Philippines were still quite fresh in the mind and it was this episode, which had sealed his reputation, upon which he traded when dealing with Vietnam. Kennedy showed some naivety in suggesting him for Ambassador to Saigon; while he may have been able to advance matters as a friend and confidant of Diem, Lansdale’s character was much too volatile for a diplomatic posting.³⁶ Notwithstanding this error of judgement, Kennedy accepted most of what Lansdale put forward and sought to retain US influence in Vietnam through the use of programmes of support that covered aspects of economic, social and political reform, as well as military aid. It was unfortunate for the President that there was such a level of intrigue in Vietnam (and also among his own advisors) on what should be the best path to follow, that even Lansdale’s report was conflicted.³⁷

In pursuit of further clarification Kennedy despatched Vice President Johnson to Vietnam in May 1961 as a means for both assuring the Diem regime of further US support and to obtain

a more direct statement on the value of continuing with the aid program as it had been operating for some years. But the machinations continued.

In February 1961, for example, the States Department, in a message signed by Secretary of State Dean Rusk, had instructed US Ambassador to Saigon Elbridge Durbrow to attach terms to the continued aid package that supported Diem's regime. In essence, Durbrow was to advise the President of South Vietnam that aid would only be guaranteed for the current year (1961) and would be suspended unless the desired political, social and economic reforms were forthcoming. Attaching strings to the aid programme aroused concerns within MAAG, not least because it was the main beneficiary of US support.³⁸ Durbrow had, as almost a lone voice against the endeavours of the Foreign Service, the State Department, the military and others, such as Lansdale, come to the idea the Diem was playing fast and loose with US assistance, using it to prop up his shaky regime by patronising a narrow group of friends, associates and appointees to run government affairs. In the eventuality, Durbrow lost all credibility when, in almost his last act as Ambassador, he had to listen to Secretary of State Dean Rusk advise Diem's Secretary of State, Nguyen Dinh Thuan that the replacement Ambassador "...will be very understanding...".³⁹

Kennedy's efforts in handling the intrigues, infighting, contradictions and countermanding that marked US actions in regard to Vietnam during his Presidency were, on the face of things, quite consistent. He repeatedly asked for update reports – from Johnson, from General Maxwell Taylor (together with special advisor Walter Rostow), from Senate majority leader Mike Mansfield⁴⁰ and later from Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara. Each of these reported back with mixed messages about how the Diem regime was under threat,

but that the prospects for defeating both the Viet Cong insurgency and, eventually, the Vietminh, remained bright as long as US aid continued. Each, to Kennedy's chagrin, suggested a heightened US military presence and, in trying to be responsive and constructive, the President authorised some increases in training units and special forces.

MAAG (and later the US Military Assistance Command for Vietnam (MACV), which replaced it in February 1962) was meanwhile redefining its role as the insurgency grew and the Government of North Vietnam (GNV) became more open in its support for overturning the Diem government. US troops, ostensibly involved only in training or back field operations, became engaged in combat situations and numbers were wounded, killed or went missing. US news reporters in South Vietnam were filing reports back to their newspapers and broadcast outlets that presented a picture of the US presence that was at odds with official statements coming out of the White House. It became clear that the situation in Vietnam from the beginning of the Kennedy Presidency until the time of his death was moving in a single direction: the US military presence, in the form of advisers and special forces, was expanding, the government was becoming more isolated and the prospects for a conclusion that would fit with the objectives sought by both Eisenhower and Kennedy – a stable peace under a government that was reflective of the choice of the people – grew ever more remote. More worrying still for Kennedy was the fact that none of these developments fitted with his own ideas about keeping the United States out of positions of dominance in Third World countries and, thereby, avoiding the trap of the US becoming a proto-colonial influence.

It was in the light of these realities that Kennedy refused to commit US ground troops⁴¹ and repeatedly insisted that the army of South Vietnam must do the fighting; the duty of the United States was to provide support and encouragement in ways that would deflect the baleful influence of the Communist powers.

Kennedy's Foreign Affairs Management Breaks New Ground

The guiding principles that have been iterated above⁴² hardened through the first months of 1963 as Kennedy weighed the events and issues of his time in the White House and looked to how he might secure a second term as President. He had taken the view that only with a further four years could he hope to put into place some of the more radical ideas he had developed about how the United States could move forward in the Cold War.⁴³ If he should succeed in 1964 then he would have no further political ambitions to fulfil and would not suffer political respite by advancing new policy initiatives. His ideas were expressed most forcibly in the speech, "A Strategy of Peace" that he made for the Commencement Address at American University on June 10th that year.⁴⁴

Often called the "Peace Speech", this statement of the President's views and ideas on how the United States should re-orientate its position in the Cold War, how it should look to a future of peaceful cooperation and coexistence, was in point of fact a declaration on behalf of free peoples. It was an attempt to portray a future world in which levels of understanding between different creeds and beliefs would have to be reached if mankind was to survive as a species on earth; failure to do so would result in self-destruction for the human race. The benefits to be obtained in the future, which were growing all the while with advancing scientific progress, would be realised by cooperation, not conflict and the

old world, in which the strong dominated the weak or disadvantaged was being replaced by a new age in which self-determination and advanced communications would give all the people of the world access to knowledge and understanding of their rights and relative welfare.

Aside from his inaugural address the Peace Speech is probably the best known of Kennedy's public utterances. It acted as a signal both for his political philosophy and the platform on which he would stand for re-election to the Presidency. The remaining five months of his life were geared to actions, both overt and behind closed doors, that were directed on the broad lines of this speech. In Cuba, a small island in the Caribbean that had brought the world as close to nuclear annihilation as ever it had faced, Kennedy initiated tentative moves for a *rapprochement* that would discharge the tensions and allow for a future of co-existence.⁴⁵ From out of the crisis over Cuba that had gripped the world in October 1962, Kennedy had engaged in a remarkable correspondence with Soviet Premier Khrushchev in which the two leaders established the common grounds of their ambitions for the futures of their respective countries.⁴⁶ Most prominently, this correspondence set out the efforts of both leaders to realise the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty that came into being in August 1963.

Then, on 2nd September, Kennedy was interviewed by Walter Cronkite for CBS Television. It was in the course of this broadcast that the President made clear his feelings about the deteriorating situation in Vietnam:

“Cronkite:

Mr. President, the only hot war we've got running at the moment is of course the one in Viet-Nam, and we have our difficulties there, quite obviously.

The President.

I don't think that unless a greater effort is made by the Government to win popular support that the war can be won out there. In the final analysis, it is their war. They are the ones who have to win it or lose it. We can help them, we can give them equipment, we can send our men out there as advisers, but they have to win it, the people of Viet-Nam, against the Communists.

We are prepared to continue to assist them, but I don't think that the war can be won unless the people support the effort and, in my opinion, in the last 2 months, the government has gotten out of touch with the people.

The repressions against the Buddhists, we felt, were very unwise. Now all we can do is to make it very clear that we don't think this is the way to win. It is my hope that this will become increasingly obvious to the government, that they will take steps to try to bring back popular support for this very essential struggle.

Cronkite:

Do you think this government still has time to regain the support of the people?

The President.

I do. With changes in policy and perhaps with personnel I think it can. If it doesn't make those changes, I would think that the chances of winning it would not be very good.

Cronkite:

Hasn't every indication from Saigon been that President Diem has no intention of changing his pattern?

The President.

If he does not change it, of course, that is his decision. He has been there 10 years and, as I say, he has carried this burden when he has been counted out on a number of occasions.

Our best judgment is that he can't be successful on this basis. We hope that he comes to see that, but in the final analysis it is the people and the government itself who have to win or lose this struggle. All we can do is help, and we are making it very clear, but I don't agree with those who say we should withdraw. That would be a great mistake. I know people don't like Americans to be engaged in this kind of an effort. Forty-seven Americans have been killed in combat with the enemy, but this is a very important struggle even though it is far away.

We took all this--made this effort to defend Europe. Now Europe is quite secure. We also have to participate--we may not like it--in the defense of Asia."⁴⁷

It was just two months later that the Diem brothers were assassinated and their

government overthrown and a few weeks thereafter that President Kennedy himself was

dead. By this time Kennedy's guiding thoughts on the future had been made abundantly clear and he had made repeated statements regarding the importance of ensuring that the United States did not become a neo-imperial power. This observation warrants a more detailed examination of the implications of the *coup d'état* that ousted the Diems and the approach that Kennedy took in handling the situation.

The Military Take Over in Saigon

This episode was pivotal in the history of South Vietnam, closing out the strategy of the United States up to this time of supporting Diem as a reforming force that would defeat the insurgency and the threat from the North by use of indigenous assets. It marked the change towards active US military involvement as sponsored by President Johnson. It also provides a small window on the thinking of John F. Kennedy in handling foreign policy issues where the interests of the United States are tied closely to the well-being of a non-westernised state still emerging from a colonial past. Opinions on the actual event are divided and there is controversy regarding the part that Kennedy played in promoting or encouraging a *coup d'état*. For Howard Jones there is little doubt:

“The Kennedy administration could not escape responsibility for promoting a coup at its most crucial moment when its leaders were poised to act and needed only a green light from Washington.”⁴⁸

For Robert Dallek, Kennedy “signed off on a coup...”:

“With the war going badly and South Vietnam increasingly threatened with a Communist takeover, Kennedy came under pressure to support a military coup against Diem's government. John Kenneth Galbraith, his ambassador to India, urged him to withdraw U.S. support from Diem. Galbraith did not think Diem could effectively lead South Vietnam and thought it a cliché that there was no alternative to Diem. He joked, “Nothing succeeds like

successors.” When Henry Cabot Lodge, the U.S. ambassador in Saigon, weighed in with similar advice, Kennedy reluctantly signed off on a coup.”⁴⁹

But Arthur Schlesinger saw things differently:

“It is important to state clearly that the coup of November 1, 1963, was entirely planned and carried out by the Vietnamese. Neither the American Embassy nor the CIA were involved in instigation or execution.

...If Lodge agreed, the President said, we should instruct him to discourage a coup.”⁵⁰

US ambassador to Saigon at the time was Henry Cabot-Lodge. In an interview he made as part of the John F Kennedy Library and Museum Oral History Program, he stated that he believed the assassinations were inexorable:

“In Washington, before going out to Vietnam, I had a talk with a very eminent Vietnamese who said to me that and I’m quoting now “Unless they leave the country, there is no power on earth that can prevent the assassination of Madame Nhu [Madame Ngo Dinh Nhu], her husband Mr. Nhu [Ngo Dinh Nhu], and his brother Mr. Diem;” that the oppressive acts of the regime the arbitrary arrests, imprisonments and executions, and the general reign of terror that was going on would make assassination inevitable in any country. I remembered that and I found, not long after my arrival that it was true. Mr. Nhu and Mr. Diem were both assassinated, much to my regret, and Madame Nhu certainly would have been had she not left the country.”⁵¹

Cabot Lodge commented further on how the President viewed the situation in Vietnam and how the murders could have been avoided:

“President Kennedy’s policy was not, as has been carelessly said, to overthrow the Diem regime. The Vietnamese were doing that for themselves and didn’t need any outside help. What he was trying to do, and what I was trying to do as his representative, was to get them to change their policies, change some of their personnel, and try to rehabilitate themselves so that they could function as a government as long as they remained in power.”

“... President Kennedy’s policy, far from being one which led to the liquidation of Diem and Nhu, would have saved both of their lives...”⁵²

Lodge explained President Kennedy’s part in the developing *coup d’état* with the words:

“...his instruction to me “not to thwart” was a sagacious instruction, showing an awareness that the ideas that men live by in Vietnam are not the same as the ideas that they live by here.”⁵³

For others, however, the truth of the demise of the Diem regime is far from Lodge’s account. Professor Geoffrey Shaw identifies a failure to understand the structures of Vietnamese society by US planners as fundamental to the reasons why Diem fell. Shaw portrays Diem as an honest, upstanding and widely admired leader of the Vietnamese, praised even by those who led the coup against him and by Ho Chi Minh himself. He was undermined by US interference (based upon ignorance) and his death signalled the longer term tragedy of Vietnam. Shaw quotes President Johnson for a perspective on how matters transpired in South Vietnam following Diem’s fall:

“Vice President Johnson had argued against the coup plotting; by all accounts, he genuinely liked Diem and thought him a good leader of his country. He was livid over the murder of Diem and did little to hide his contempt for those who had a hand in it. In 1966, when he was president, he confided in a telephone conversation with Senator Eugene McCarthy the truth of what the Kennedy administration had done to President Diem back in 1963: “[We] killed him. We all got together and got a goddamn bunch of thugs and we went in and assassinated him. Now, we’ve really had no political stability since then.”⁵⁴

This episode demonstrates a number of important aspects for any study of John F. Kennedy, but it is particularly enlightening for a true understanding of his thinking in regard to nations emerging from out of a colonial past. In the first place it shows that there is confusion, a division of opinions and assertions. Secondly, it provides evidence for any interpretation of Kennedy that suits the writer – he was ruthless and conniving, he was weak and ineffectual, he was error prone and naïve. Clearly, encouraging a military take over in a country struggling to establish itself after colonial subjugation would stand Kennedy aloft as the Cold Warrior that many have portrayed him and would diminish to insignificance any notion that

he sought to promote democracy and free societies in the newly created nations. What, therefore, is the best explanation for both the event and Kennedy's part in it?

Kennedy had devoted a considerable part of his time and efforts in supporting and promoting Diem in Saigon, not just during his Presidency, but in years beforehand as a Senator and prominent member of the AFV. By August 1963, as demonstrated in his interview with Walter Cronkite,⁵⁵ he was beginning to despair that Vietnam would ever become the type of state that he envisioned for countries emerging from a colonial past. Democracy had not taken root; there were few signs of a plurality of institutions, power had become concentrated and nepotism abounded. Concomitantly there was political instability with a lack of cohesion in the forces of the state – the military, the government and religious factions all pulling in different directions. Furthermore the country had become economically dependent upon the United States.

Amid this parlous situation, by August 1963 there were widespread rumours of a pending military take over. Certainly, there were grounds for a military coup as the army was the most powerful single body and had many reasons for being dissatisfied with Diem, but this did not make a revolution inevitable. Those who put forward the idea that Kennedy supported, promoted or even sponsored a coup by the military are missing the point that Lodge makes – that the plotting was taking place in Saigon, not Washington.

Had Kennedy wished to show force to resist the rebel generals in their ambitions then he was confounded. There were only sixteen thousand US military personnel in Vietnam at the time, compared to the ARVN which was 200,000 strong. Apart from being an insufficient

number, care had been taken to restrict the role of the US military to assigned and mandated responsibilities for advising and supporting the ARVN. There was no way the US forces could be re-deployed to undertake, for example, presidential protection duties, without reducing the capability for which they were in place or provoking a split with the ARVN that would be injurious to any future cooperation.

Had Kennedy chosen to send a strong message to the rebel generals that he did not support them in undermining Diem, then what would have been the consequences? Either the generals would have gone ahead anyway, which would have compromised the President in his future decision making and undermined the position in Vietnam that the Kennedy administration had sought to build through almost three years, or they would have desisted. In the latter case there would have been soured relations between Washington and the fighting forces upon which it relied to hold its position and policy; further, according to Lodge, it would only have delayed the inevitable anyway.

Kennedy's actions, (or inactions, however they may be interpreted) actually give illustration to the consistent line that he had shown he wished to take in regard to the affairs of countries emerging from an imperialist dominated past. He did not wish to interfere in or direct their affairs; he wanted for them to make their own way in the world, make their own decisions based upon their own circumstances. It was his hope (and more so his belief) that left to their own devices, the new nations would choose democracy and pluralism because these presented the best options for prosperity and progress. His failing lay in his inability fully to appreciate the extent to which individuals in a new or emerging state sought power,

wealth and influence for themselves - over and above whatever general ambitions they may have had for their country and its people.

Even had Kennedy wished to promote, support or sponsor a coup, one must wonder: what would he have done? If he had made secret contact with the rebel generals in Saigon (and no writer suggests that he did), what could he have promised them? He could make the offer that nothing would change: that the aid would continue, that the programme for importing consumer goods would carry on, that diplomatic relations would be retained and military cooperation would not be affected. None of this would have amounted to a great deal however, because the rebel generals knew that their position was impregnable – so long as they ensured that was no lingering presence of the Diem regime after they acted. They knew that US policy for containment of Communist expansion would not permit the wholesale withdrawal of US support and military aid; they knew that Washington could not cut off diplomatic links without compromising the US position on support for other parts of the world threatened by Communist take over. Would it not be the case, for example, that the Soviets would interpret such actions as a willingness on the part of the US to abandon its allies (and its strategic positions) and encourage it to increase pressures in Berlin and elsewhere?

The rebel generals in Saigon, as well as everyone else around the world who had even a vague understanding of how US foreign policy operated in late 1963, could have seen all these difficulties quite easily. Writers who come forth with the idea that Kennedy “encouraged” or “gave the green light” to the coup do not do history great service;⁵⁶ this misses the point that Kennedy was trying to change the agenda of the Cold War and that

this particular event shows that he was still the prisoner of the nostrums that had governed US foreign policy since the Iron Curtain came down in 1945/6.

What, therefore, must be made of Johnson's outburst to McCarthy, as cited by Shaw?⁵⁷ It should be stated, without equivocation, that it is not a declaration of any great value in ascertaining the true nature of Kennedy's dealings in the matter. The conversation, as quoted, was part of a recorded telephone call, it was made in 1966 and it was factually inaccurate. To deal with this last point first, it was factually inaccurate in Johnson's reported statement:

"We all got together and got a goddamn bunch of thugs and we went in and assassinated him..."

There was not the collusion that these words assert; this is simply not true.⁵⁸ Secondly, Johnson was judicious in selecting which of his telephone conversations he wanted recorded and, as a selective record, they are not an altogether reliable source; it is therefore, evidentially unsound to depend on this statement. Finally, by 1966 Johnson's own policy actions in regard to Vietnam were beginning to unravel. Kennedy's ideas about non-interference, self-determination and avoidance of military entanglement had been quickly abandoned. Both naturally and politically Johnson had put himself into a defensive position on Vietnam and this statement is more reflective of that reality than it is of any counter-assessment of Kennedy's thinking or actions.

It is evident that Johnson and Kennedy viewed the situation in Vietnam quite differently. For Johnson (and the Military), Vietnam was a Cold War flashpoint which must be faced

down; for Kennedy, it was predominantly a nationalist conflict that could only be resolved by the people themselves. This was clearly articulated by Roger Hilsman, Kennedy's chief adviser on Far Eastern affairs.⁵⁹

CHAPTER FIVE

WRITERS ON KENNEDY, FOREIGN AFFAIRS, DECOLONISATION AND IMPERIALISM

As has been shown, John Kennedy took an interest in colonial affairs from an early age; he developed this interest as a result of his own experiences - as a student, as a serviceman, as a journalist and as a politician. Each of these parts of his life contributed to the development of his ideas and beliefs and the new imperatives that charged the dynamics of the imperialist powers occupied more than a little of his concerns and wishes regarding the future role of the United States as an active world power. What is surprising to note is that this aspect of Kennedy's political thinking has been relatively neglected. Mainstream writing on Kennedy and imperialism is generally confined to articles, references and chapters and, although there are some specialist books that deal with aspects of his approach to different parts of the world there does not appear to be a comprehensive examination of the extent to which Kennedy's ideas on the role of the United States as a world power were tempered by his enduring interest in the repercussions arising from the breaking hold of the empire nations as colonised peoples sought to gain independence.

Richard H. Mahoney in his book *J.F.K.: Ordeal in Africa*¹ goes some way in demonstrating how important an aspect of Kennedy's foreign affairs management thinking the Third World became after he was elected President. In a review of *Ordeal in Africa* for The Christian Science Monitor, Howard C. Thomas writes:

“Kennedy's policies in Africa make for interesting study, as they reveal a gradual shift in the President's mind as to the role the United States should play in the third world, particularly regarding the newly independent nations of Africa.”²

Whether this is the opinion of Thomas after reading the book or the opinion of the author himself is not made clear, but it is a remarkable statement given the extent to which Kennedy had made clear his position on US engagement with the Third World since 1951 and demonstrates the degree to which the enduring interest that Kennedy took in US relations with developing nations has not been examined in any great detail.

Other works, such as Bruce Riedel, *JFK's Forgotten Crisis: Tibet, The CIA, and the Sino-Indian War*³ and Philip Muehlenbeck, *Betting on the Africans, John F. Kennedy's Courting of African Nationalist Leaders*⁴ deal with aspects of Kennedy's foreign policy management in the White House, but treat them as somehow detached from the real business of international affairs that was US relations with the Soviet Union and its dealings in the Cold War. There is considerable room for taking account of the fact that much of Kennedy's thinking in managing the international interests of the USA was geared to his understanding of the changing world as a result of the decolonisation processes that were taking place, but authoritative texts on this are difficult to find.

Indeed, one does not have to go far to determine just how much of an omission this is, given the extraordinary quantity of written works on the life and times of John F. Kennedy. Jill Abramson, writing in *The New York Times* of 22nd October, 2013 has stated:

“An estimated 40,000 books have been published since his [Kennedy's] death, and this anniversary year has loosed another vast outpouring. Yet to explore the enormous literature is to be struck not by what's there but by what's missing.”

Ms Abramson's article is titled *Kennedy – The Elusive President*, a piece that reviews the wide ranging and diverse opinions about Kennedy that so many writers have put forward so it is perhaps not surprising that she should make such a comment. Notwithstanding, Ms Abramson's remarks are well founded - it is quite usual to find confusion, and even contradiction, regarding the nature, personality, beliefs and philosophy of John F. Kennedy.

On 15th July 2007 Ted Widmer published an article in the *Boston Globe* newspaper under the headline: *A voice of dissent*.⁵ It may be overstating the case to call the piece an article for, apart from a short introduction, it was entirely made up of extracts from a speech made by Senator Kennedy fifty years previously (on 2nd July 1957).⁶ Kennedy's speech, which was titled "Imperialism – The Enemy of Freedom",⁷ was, according to Widmer's introduction:

"...met by strong criticism from both parties. The response from abroad was far more positive, however, and Kennedy's speech eventually brought him new standing as a bold foreign-policy thinker."⁸

During November 2013, while much attention was focussed upon the fiftieth anniversary of the death of John F. Kennedy, the on-line newsletter *The Dissident Voice*, published an excoriating account of how Kennedy conducted foreign affairs during his short presidency.⁹ Titled "JFK's Corporatist and Imperialist Presidency", and written by activist blogger Burkely Hermann, the piece tears into what Hermann projects as conventional wisdom regarding the 35th President and presents a chronology of action and interventions by the Kennedy administration that served only the purposes of developing and reinforcing US corporate and political power throughout the world. Whether analysing South East Asia, the Middle East, West Africa or Tibet, Hermann identifies Kennedy's foreign affairs management as

always geared towards building and maintaining the empire that the position of the USA in the world at that time had come to represent. He provides various details regarding troop deployments, under-cover actions and threats of annihilation to demonstrate how far-reaching was Kennedy's commitment to this objective and is condemnatory in describing "Kennedy's hard stance as a Cold Warrior".¹⁰

Both Widmer and Hermann are journalists, so it may be appropriate to consider their words within the context of the demands of that profession, rather than as chronicles of the historical record. But revisionist opinion regarding the thinking behind the actions of John Kennedy has been popular for many years among historians and is often presented in stark contrast to the sympathetic, and sometimes unquestioning, assessments of his life and conduct that followed his untimely death. It is an unfortunate aspect of the present day perspective on both the man that was John Kennedy and the White House over which he presided that these various interpretations, and the vast weight of documentary and eye witness evidence that is available, serve to obscure rather than enlighten the subject at hand. Consequently, as the above references demonstrate, it is evident that the interested observer may take a view on Kennedy – any view – for, given the depth and range of available publications, the "facts" are there to support whatever case one may wish to make. Hermann's views are emphatic; he is uncompromising in his conclusions, definitive as well as interpretative. Widmer, whether by design or incidentally, makes the case for another Kennedy, using his own words (and the reactions they engendered) rather than interpreting them for a purpose.

It seems, therefore, that in terms of Kennedy's interest in foreign affairs, much has been written but little has been concluded. Early biographical and critical treatments of Kennedy are replete with references regarding the attention he gave to colonial matters in his speeches, but it is difficult to locate any definitive statement on what the changing force of imperialism meant to him as a political imperative. Later works, after about the year 2000, are more pointed in suggesting how important a topic it was to Kennedy and one reason for this is that the magnitude of the available documentary record regarding his life and Presidency increased considerably during the 1990s.¹¹ But again, despite receiving greater attention and, often, deeper analysis, there does not appear to be any substantive work that picks up on Kennedy's interest in decolonisation and the new nations and asserts its importance as a guiding philosophy for his decision making.

Some works mention colonialism, or imperialism, as passing references for providing context in broader historical treatments, but there is little in the way of a specific analysis of Kennedy and colonialism or the extent to which it had a bearing or influence on his thinking. Following his sojourn to the Middle and Far East in October 1951 Kennedy made repeated statements, speeches and broadcasts in which he emphasised the importance of the United States establishing friendly relations with developing nations. On 13th April 1956, an important year for Kennedy in terms of his developing political ambitions, the Senator delivered a speech in Los Angeles titled "Colonialism and American Foreign Policy".¹² Although a critique of the Eisenhower administration, this statement provides an explicit explanation of the point of view of Kennedy and his ideas about the position of the United States in the world at that time:

“This policy – if it can be called a policy – of trying to look both ways at once, of trying to bury our heads in the sand when a colonial issue arises, of trying to please everybody and displease nobody – this is the policy our Department of State likes to call “neutrality” on colonial issues. And when asked about it at a recent news conference, Secretary Dulles had this to say: “We expect to continue to take a position of neutrality because that is our general policy with relation to these highly controversial matters which involve countries both of whom are friends and where we ourselves are not directly involved.”

I must respectfully disagree with the able Secretary. We are directly involved, deeply involved. They are not our possessions – they do not involve our treaties – they may not always even involve our military bases. But we are directly involved – our standing in the eyes of the free world, our leadership in the fight to keep that world free, our geographical and population advantage over the Communist orbit, our prestige, our security, our life and our way of life – these are all directly involved. How can we be wedded to this do-nothing policy called “neutrality”? How can we be afraid to touch these “highly controversial” disputes between two friends when their continuation and our reluctance only serve to strengthen the hand of the mutual enemy of colonial powers, colonial areas and the United States?”¹³

Yet this speech does not merit so much as a mention in numerous and prominent historical records of Kennedy’s time as a Senator or potential Presidential candidate. This seems an odd omission.

Where his words on colonialism are considered, it is often in the context of other issues, most particularly his speech in July 1957 regarding the French struggle in Algeria. It is probably because the Senator’s words caused such a furore that so many of the analyses of his views on colonialism are focussed on this occasion. Yet, despite the consistency of Kennedy’s words since 1951 (and the April 1956 speech in particular), there is a tendency to align his outspokenness not with a guiding philosophy or a founding set of ideas, but as an adjunct to ulterior motives. Robert Kumamoto, for example, identifies the Algerian speech as an encouragement for terrorism:

“Kennedy seemed to justify terrorism if committed in the name of legitimate political revolution. He further suggested that the nationalist leaders of Algeria, terrorist methods

notwithstanding, had to be dealt with as potentially influential politicians of the future, just as Begin had commanded respect during the dark days of the Irgun. Americans had then shown willingness to overlook Irgun atrocities because they were willing to separate the plight of world Jewry from the fanatical methods of the extremists. Kennedy was now asking Americans to separate FLN terrorism from the cause of African nationalism and to overlook resultant atrocities as an inevitable outgrowth of the search for self-determination during a critical era of decolonization.”¹⁴

It is this approach – taking Kennedy’s statements piecemeal and attaching them to separate connectional purposes, that provides the myriad of interpretations of his views that blurs the image of the man. There is something of the same approach in Theresa Romahn’s article, “Colonialism and the Campaign Trail: On Kennedy’s Algerian Speech and his Bid for the 1960 Democratic Nomination”.¹⁵ Romahn identifies purpose, not philosophy, in Kennedy’s words by placing the speech firmly in the context of a long considered campaign for securing the nomination of the Democratic Party for the Presidential race in 1960.

Romahn suggests that Kennedy needed a strong foreign policy initiative to give him profile and to counter the view that he was not sufficiently “liberal” at a time when:

“... the Democrats were starting to define themselves more and more as the party that believed in the role of government as social liberator, responsible to the poor and disadvantaged, reasoning that helping them helped society as a whole.”¹⁶

Romahn outlines the contradictions in this conclusion – the fact that the speech did much to damage Kennedy’s standing in the Party with both liberal and conservative elements, by suggesting that its real purpose was to secure the support of African-American voters without alienating Dixiecrat voters in the South:

“In the heart of the civil rights debate then, Kennedy chose to make headlines speaking out against colonialism in Algeria, practicing his own rule that when campaigning it is better to make a name in foreign policy than getting bogged down in domestic matters. He could not avoid voting on the civil rights bill in the Senate, but he could do everything in his power to mitigate the affect it would have on his political career. The Algeria speech was a well-

chosen attempt to take a stand on the side of the African Americans in an issue that the white Southern voters were unlikely to split from the party over.”¹⁷

For Victor Lasky the speech was a simple act by Kennedy aimed at raising his profile:

“...suddenly, in seeking an issue –in fact, any issue –with which to call attention to himself, Kennedy latched onto the North African rebellion.”¹⁸

Thomas Oliphant and Curtis Wilkie go some way in taking a broader view to identify

Kennedy’s stance as a guiding philosophy, but they too are more emphatic in stressing the political expediency that would feed the Senator’s ambitions:

“But a spirit of Arab nationalism seemed to be a stronger force behind Algerian rebels, and in Kennedy’s mind their desire for independence dovetailed with his strong aversion to colonialism. He had seen French colonialism, and disliked it, in Indochina. So he chose Algeria to serve as the subject for his first major foreign policy speech, knowing that it would be controversial and anger many members of the nation’s foreign policy establishment. But he also knew that a bold and reasoned statement on behalf of freedom for people half a world away would win headlines and, importantly, respect from liberal intellectuals he had trouble reaching in his campaign for political recognition.”¹⁹

It might be added that it seems far fetched to describe the occasion as “...his first major foreign policy speech,...”.²⁰

And, according to André Kaspi:

"Kennedy [knew] that by giving Africa a high profile in his electoral campaign, he would draw in the black voters he needed. He also sought to demonstrate that Africa had become one of the theaters of operations of the Cold War.”²¹

Philip E. Muehlenbeck, in a manner similar to that taken by Kaspi, identifies a broader purpose in Kennedy’s approach to African affairs and sees his rationale carried further once he reached the White House:

“John F. Kennedy was the first, perhaps only, American president to make a pointed effort to court African nationalism. He did so partly on moral grounds, but strategic considerations were far more important. JFK believed Third World nationalism would become one of the most potent political forces in the second half of the 20th century.”²²

For Mohieddine Hadhri it was Kennedy’s personality trait, as a “pragmatic idealist”, that led him to take a contrary view on the Algerian situation:

“...strongly believ[ing] that the best way to prevent the spread of communism was for America to lead the social revolutions that were taking place in the emerging nations of North Africa.”²³

James McGregor Burns²⁴ does identify a basis of “philosophy” in Kennedy, describing the piece he wrote for Foreign Affairs in October 1957:²⁵

“...the article was a sweeping statement of the philosophy that underlay Kennedy’s approach to specific foreign-policy problems.”²⁶

Yet he later writes, by way of description of Kennedy as a leader:

“He did not personify any great national issue. He was not the champion of any one group or philosophy.”²⁷

Burns does present a different view by mentioning a speech made by the Senator to the Jefferson-Jackson Day Dinner, in Detroit, Michigan, on 23rd May 1959. This identifies the “ten peaceful revolutions” that became a plank of Kennedy’s election programme throughout 1959 and 1960,²⁸ a characteristic of the putative President’s developed ideas on what the future held for the United States and its position in the world:

“He [Kennedy] has recognized the new challenges to liberalism, and hence its changing content, by dwelling in many speeches on the “ten peaceful revolutions” that “are rocking our nation and our world, reshaping our lives and remaking our destinies. These are the revolutions in our cities, on the farm, in the birth rate, in life expectancy, in technology

(especially automation), in energy, in our standard of living, in weapons development, in the underdeveloped nations, and in nationalism.”²⁹

It may have been that Burns selected this speech because it was well-known or popular at the time it was made, but it has been largely forgotten today.³⁰ Though clearly a “campaigning speech”, it is nevertheless a pointed statement of philosophy, an encapsulation of the guiding principles by which Kennedy will, if elected, conduct his administration in the White House. There is mention within it of the Cold War, but only to dismiss it:

“Republicans and Democrats agree in their strong opposition to the Communist challenge, all partisan charges to the contrary. But we do not agree on meeting the challenge of these ten peaceful revolutions.”³¹

By contrast the last of the ten revolutions – *nationalism*, is presented in a fashion that suggests it holds the highest importance. It prefaces the closing remarks of the speech and carries the emphasis of being the most forceful of the challenges that must be faced:

“Tenth and finally is the Revolution of nationalism. In Asia, Latin America and particularly in Africa, man’s eternal desire to be free is rising to the fore. The day of the colonial is gone – the Declaration of Independence has become a universal doctrine.

The principles of self-determination are still being contested in some parts of the globe. Too often it is a struggle between a white minority and a colored majority, with dangerous implications for our future. Unfortunately, the present administration has assumed an attitude of neutrality in these contests. But if we merely look at the record of the last 10 years, from Indonesia to Tunisia, we cannot doubt that these peoples eventually will, and ought to be, free and equal. The only question is one of timing – and whether, once that freedom is achieved, they will regard the United States as friend or foe. This nation, the home of the Declaration of Independence, should have led this nationalist revolution instead of helping to throttle it – and I am hopeful that, if it is not too late, a new Democratic Administration can still fulfill that role.”³²

This speech, and others that cited the “ten revolutions” does not feature in the more prominent biographical treatments of Kennedy such as those by Robert Dallek,³³ Michael O’Brien³⁴ or Herbert Parmet.³⁵ Neither is it mentioned in well known examinations of the Kennedy Presidency, such as Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr’s “A Thousand Days, Kennedy in the White House.” Most surprisingly it is not referenced in “JFK in the Senate: Pathway to the Presidency”³⁶ by John T. Shaw. “Pathway to the Presidency” does include a chapter headed: “The High Realm of Foreign Affairs” in which Shaw outlines the important aspects of Kennedy’s experiences as a Senator with a strong interest in foreign affairs. Included is a quotation from Harris Wofford, taken from an interview conducted by the author:

“Foreign policy, the world, was the one thing he was very, very interested in. It was what excited him.”³⁷

Burns gets closer to the issue, mentioning aspects of Kennedy’s approach to matters of colonialism, but he provides no special emphasis; there are numerous references to “freedom”, including many quotations, and these may be read in the context of colonialism, but there is no direct statement that binds these references to an underlying set of beliefs. Shaw cites Kennedy’s campaign publication “The Strategy of Peace”³⁸ to portray a politician taking a contrary position to the Eisenhower administration for the conduct of foreign affairs, but this is a standard approach – Kennedy as a dissenter on foreign policy is discussed in detail by O’Brien.³⁹

There is a hint of how Kennedy was operating to change the philosophical basis of United States foreign policy when Shaw explains the efforts of the Senator, together with Vermont Republican Senator, George Aiken, to reform the Battle Act⁴⁰ which restricted trading with

Soviet dominated states. Shaw outlines the two Senators' failed attempts in this endeavour until they successfully managed to secure some limited reforms in 1959. According to Shaw:

"His effort showed Kennedy's ability to find tangible ways break free from rigid Cold War thinking."⁴¹

Nevertheless, in spite of the repeated references Kennedy makes to the situation of dominated states (both through Western and Soviet imperialism), Shaw does not see these as a coalescence of idealism.

Evidence that this idealism existed within John Kennedy and was real in his preconceptions about the role and position of the United States in the world at that time is borne out by his relationship with Lorna Hahn. Hahn was a lecturer and writer attached to the faculty of Temple University between 1955 and 1960. Her specialist area of study centred on how the United States was reacting to the developing situation in North Africa as the French battled to establish a post-imperial structure in Tunisia, Morocco and, especially, Algeria. She was known as a critic of the Eisenhower regime:

"Since the end of World War II, few issues have chronically plagued American policy makers like that of trying to reconcile our commitments to our European allies with our "self determination for all" traditions. Eager to strengthen our NATO defenses, anxious to avoid being international busybodies, and wanting to offend nobody, we have adopted a neo-Jeffersonian "government acts best which acts least" policy regarding the areas trying to shake off the last trappings of colonialism. Some of the bitter fruits of this have been dramatic, such as the tragic loss of Indochina, or the absurd position in which we found ourselves when our best allies attacked relatively peaceful Egypt, and the most we could muster was a plea that everybody calm down and behave. There are, however, other losses not quite as apparent, but none the less tragic: the sort that come from having missed - or worse still, openly rejected - opportunities.

In no area have we missed more opportunities than in North Africa - probably because on no region have we been less accurately informed. There has been propaganda from many sources, yes - confusing at best, dishonest at worst, and producing a confusion which in a

sense makes it easy to understand the State Department's desire to wash its diplomatic hands of it."⁴²

Kennedy was greatly impressed by Hahn's views and understanding of the United States in the matters of its relations with the colonial powers and he wrote an introductory piece for "North Africa: Nationalism to Nationhood", stating:

"Lorna Hahn has performed an important scholarly and public service in this book. It stands unique as an effort to draw together the pattern of events in all of North Africa during these past years. Her chapters, which have both historic perspective and contemporary political detail, give us an image of North African nationalism seen in its proper context. For inescapably the nationalist movements in Morocco, Tunisia, and Algeria have common threads and interconnections. The relentless war in Algeria is not a self-contained historic drama nor were the independence movements in Morocco and Tunisia. The greatest tragedy of the Algerian war has been the fact that its influences cannot be isolated but that they have poisoned Western relations with almost all of Africa and at the same time drained constructive energies and unities in the West."⁴³

Finding such direct references in the range of literary output is surprisingly difficult and even the most recognised works do not dwell on Kennedy's concerns for Third World and colonial issues.

Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr., writing in "A Thousand Days", gives recognition to the idea that Kennedy, when President, offered an alternative to the Eisenhower years in terms of the attitude and approach of the United States in conducting foreign affairs relationships.

"Though the Dulles doctrine was considerably tempered in application, he succeeded in implanting both in American policy and in opinion the idea that those who were not with us around the earth were against us.

Of the various transformations wrought in the Kennedy years none was less noted or more notable than the revolution in American attitudes towards the uncommitted world."⁴⁴

...none was less noted or more notable... A remarkable echo of the words of another insider, Robert Komer.⁴⁵ There was much discussion at the time Schlesinger was writing about where the “non-aligned” states stood in terms of the Cold War⁴⁶ and it was within this context that Schlesinger made this remark, but it cuts very close to a declaration about Kennedy and his approach to the new nations that were being created as a result of the processes of decolonisation and it leaves the reader questioning why this opening was not pursued further.

Evidently, it was Schlesinger’s wish, as an individual who was close to the President, to demonstrate the contrast between Kennedy’s attitude towards the developing world and that taken by Eisenhower. To this end he mentions the fact that the State Department:

“...had been dominated by men, who, regarding NATO as our top priority, flinched from anything which might bruise the sensibilities of our European allies, some of whom still had colonial possessions.”⁴⁷

Schlesinger substantiates his reference to Kennedy’s different thinking and priorities by citing the incident in December 1960 when a number of Asian and African states pressed the General Assembly of the United Nations to approve a declaration regarding self-determination for all peoples. Eisenhower’s decision was to abstain, a position that was given prominence by the fact that the vote passed 89-0 in favour of the motion. Very early in the new administration, a resolution was put to the General Assembly asking for delegates to uphold its policy on self-determination in the case of the Portuguese colony of Angola (where a nationalist revolt had engendered fierce fighting) and, according to Schlesinger:

“[Adlai] Stevenson and Kennedy both saw the opportunity to initiate a change in American policy.”⁴⁸

To lay the ground Kennedy took steps to inform Portugal of his intentions and this went some way in deflecting criticism after the vote that he was jeopardising the unity of NATO.

Schlesinger wrote:

“In the third world the new administration was acclaimed as the friend of oppressed peoples.”⁴⁹

It seems, therefore, that Schlesinger, as a person who was actively involved in the Kennedy administration, could readily identify the contrasting style of government coming out of the change from a Republican to a Democrat White House, but he does not contextualise what was happening as a new doctrine. For Schlesinger, Kennedy was simply taking a more pragmatic line, one designed to steer the United States away from the entrenched positions that had created a stasis in foreign affairs, particularly in regard to the US position in relation to the Soviet Union.

This point of view is echoed by Anders Stephanson, Professor of History at Columbia University, New York, who has written about Kennedy’s “idiosyncrasy” in dealing with Cold War matters.⁵⁰ According to Stephanson, Kennedy’s alternative thinking stemmed from the fact that he was “easily bored” and, accordingly, he sought to act differently but, importantly:

“Idiosyncrasy, of course, never became apostasy.”⁵¹

Because Kennedy would not have been elected President had it done so. In a complicated analysis of Kennedy's maturity as a foreign affairs spokesperson during his time in the Senate, Stephanson compiles a basis of reasoning for explaining how Kennedy combined a conventional line in condemnation of the Soviet Union and all the evils that it represented (and the strong military stance that the US should adopt in meeting the challenges that this put forward) with a flexible set of ideas that could lift the Cold War out of the fixed position it had become by the late fifties. Driving Kennedy's thinking was the changing geopolitical structure of the world that was emerging as a result of the demise of the European empires:

"The substantial part of his critique had to do with "imperialism" – anticolonial liberation was the wave, not only of the future but of the present, which would have happened with or without communism, and the United States should not subordinate its support for that wave to its coldwar concerns by supporting, in effect, the colonial powers of Western Europe just because they also happened to be allies in NATO."⁵²

Stephanson's proposal is given in a relatively short article that itself is drawn from a lecture; it does not form part of a larger work and leaves hanging many of the issues that it raises, but it is an insightful examination of the philosophical basis upon which Kennedy set his approach to leadership, both as a Senator and later as President. Stephanson deserves credit for grasping the essence of the factors that drove Kennedy in his political ambitions and his vision for the United States in the world; it is unfortunate that this important aspect resides in an obscure and isolated article.

The principle biographical histories, Schlesinger, Parmet, Dallek, Burns, et al, do not dwell on the "imperial imperative" so much as to make it the important aspect of Kennedy's thinking that it became. This is understandable in many ways – all biographies will be limited or will be unreadable, so certain events and aspects receive more attention than others; but the

absence of a substantial work on this most important facet of Kennedy's political make-up is a deficit in the record, leaving the fullest picture of the man incomplete. What should also be noted is that most authors seem to dwell on the common theme that Kennedy was motivated to adopt a high profile stance on issues arising from the processes of decolonisation in order to promote his political career. The common theme is that Kennedy used the issues arising from decolonisation in order to give his political persona a distinctiveness that would help him stand apart from both his political opponents and also those who might present themselves as rivals within the Democratic Party as he sought to secure high office. As a part of this common theme, Kennedy's purposes are portrayed in different ways:

- he was seeking to portray an image of empathy with suppressed peoples to help secure the votes of ethnic minorities;
- he was creating a policy platform of sympathy with suppressed peoples overseas so as not to alienate his position with conservative elements of his own Party;
- by concentrating on overseas matters he could avoid awkward questions about his stance on civil rights at home;
- he used the colonial stick to beat the foreign policy management of the Eisenhower administration, separating himself from the Republicans and strengthening his election credentials.

Though there may be plausibility in each of these explanations, they can all be questioned in view of several factors. Firstly, Kennedy's interest and style of approach developed over some years, beginning in earnest after his visit to Vietnam in October 1951. Although he may always have had ambitions for high political office, it is unrealistic to suggest that he

could have been *manoeuvring* in this way before he was even established as a Senator. Secondly, it is evident that Kennedy's stance on colonial matters cost him more than he gained in terms of the approbation of senior colleagues in the Democratic Party and his consistent stand on issues such as Algerian independence caused consternation with political friends and foes alike. Thirdly, Kennedy did seek to open new avenues in US foreign affairs management – as demonstrated by his efforts to establish stronger ties with Poland. In the atmosphere of the late 1950s such actions could be highly charged and presented a considerable political risk on his part for which there was little to gain and much to lose.

In 1957 / 1958 Kennedy may well have decided that he wished to try for election to the Presidency in 1960, but he would first have to secure the nomination of his party. It would seem illogical, therefore, that he would persist with alternative policy proposals that would antagonise important elements within the Democratic Party. A more rational conclusion might be that Kennedy was sincere in his beliefs regarding the ill-placed position of the United States as more and more nations joined the ranks of those freed from colonial oversight and, further, that these beliefs were anchored in his mind as a philosophical platform for the conduct of foreign affairs management.

CHAPTER SIX

KENNEDY AND BOOKS AND KENNEDY AND IRELAND

Aspects of Kennedy's Thinking on the Role of the USA in World Affairs

Outside of his activities as a Senator, there were aspects of Kennedy's life and interests that also played a part in forming his approach to foreign affairs, imperialism, decolonisation and the role of the United States in the world.

This chapter examines two such aspects – Kennedy and Books and Kennedy and Ireland. These are selected for the reasons set out in the Preface to this study, it being acknowledged that other aspects would also have contributed.

Kennedy and Books – Author and Advocate Reader

Following the publication of his book *Profiles in Courage* in May 1957, Kennedy became known as both a writer and a thinker, something of an intellectual.¹ A signed copy of *Profiles* was given to each of Kennedy's fellow Senators,² a gesture that became a feature of Kennedy's communications with lawmakers and advisers: in October 1962, at the height of the Cuban Missile Crisis, he gave each of those sitting in the advisory group that made up his inner cabinet a copy of Barbara Tuchman's book *The Guns of August*,³ a reminder of how war could result from the cumulative effects of disparate decision-making.⁴

More pertinently, in February 1959 he gave each Senator a copy of the best selling novel, *The Ugly American*, by Eugene Burdick and William Lederer and, at the same

time and in company with other prominent individuals, published a full-page advertisement in *The New York Times* endorsing *The Ugly American* and describing why it was such an important work at that time in the USA.⁵ This book relates how US representatives, when located in developing countries, fail to learn about the places they visit before imposing themselves on the local populace to the detriment of the reputation of the United States as a whole. Its narrative runs very closely to the liturgy of failings that Kennedy had identified when examining the actions of the US diplomats, agencies and representatives in Indochina and, as such, aligns with his stated ideas on how the United States needed to take a revised approach in its dealings with the developing world if it was to convince the indigenous peoples to steer away from what he viewed as the superficial attractions of Communism. It was in the course of his efforts to secure the nomination of the Democratic Party for the Presidential race that the Senator spoke most forcefully on this point, once more contextualising the USA's ambitions in fighting the Cold War (the great issue of the times) with his views on the "...emerging and developing nations...":

"...we want an America whose ability to meet its responsibilities at home makes it a model for all the nations of the world. Today our slowed-down economy, our overcrowded schools, our poor and our unemployed, our spreading slums and our thousands of abandoned farms are visible, tangible evidence of our failure to meet those responsibilities. And those failures are defeats for the cause of freedom. For today the Communists are determined to convince the emerging and developing nations of Asia and Africa and Latin America that only Communism will eliminate their poverty and hunger and disease - that the Communist road is the only road to a better life."⁶

In May 1960, as the intensity of his bid for the Presidential nomination increased, Kennedy published a compilation of his speeches on foreign policy under the title *The Strategy of Peace*.⁷ According to Shaw, the reasoning behind the timing and

production of the book was: "...to show liberals that Kennedy was one of them and to show the world that he was a man of ideas and intellectual firepower."⁸

Characteristically Kennedy instructed his office to send out 250 copies of the book to college professors and other well known intellectuals.⁹

By the time Kennedy entered the White House in January 1961 the philosophical basis of his thinking in regard to the question of the United States in the world and, in particular, the correctness of its approach in containing the spread of Communism while upholding its founding values, was well established. In seeking to ensure that his foreign affairs decision making as President conformed to the standards and beliefs that he had come to adopt, he found himself in frequent conflict with advisers and colleagues as much as with his political opponents. There are different ways to explain this. One might consider, as a fundamental factor, his youth. In all the stages of his political career and development he was young and, to a degree, inexperienced. He was a young Congressman in 1947, a young Senator in 1953 and a young President in 1961. His youth had placed him in the position of having to establish his credentials in order to put himself forward for any position where he might make a forceful impact – had he ventured too far too soon then he could easily have been dismissed as naïve and inexperienced by those who did not share his views. This provides one explanation, at least, for why he chose to use books as a means for communicating his message to fellow politicians and others; scholarly and admired works could convey his philosophies and thinking in ways that, had he projected them directly, might more easily have been dismissed.

This was also a reason why he looked towards the possibilities that he might explore as a second term President, at which time he would have reached the limit of political ambitions and would be invulnerable to the objections that could more easily be raised against him while his political position was still uncertain. As the Kennedy Presidency unfolded and came to its unexpected and premature end, Kennedy himself was laying the ground for what he hoped to achieve following re-election. While offering sufficient restraint to ensure that he did not confound his chances of securing a further four years in the White House, he became bolder and more direct in his speeches; he grew more assertive in stating clearly his principles regarding war and peace, the state of the world and the role of the United States as the leader of the free nations. At a time when he was being urged to expand its commitment, Kennedy opened the possibility of ending the US presence in Vietnam; as the Cold War intensified he took the first tentative steps for *rapprochement* with the Soviet Union, for reducing arms and for developing ideas that would allow for peaceful co-existence. How far these overtures to the future could have succeeded had he lived is a moot question, but they help to explain the extent to which Kennedy's view of a world in change incorporated a different style of thinking from both the Eisenhower and the Johnson administrations. This style was much more receptive to the possibilities that could be realised by embracing and nurturing the friendship of the new nations that were emerging, whether from the retreat of the decaying European empires or from the struggles of minorities within recognised entities.

Kennedy and Ireland

The Kennedy family was famously Irish and was most strongly associated with Boston, where there existed a substantial Irish immigrant population. Kennedy was not averse to reaching into his Irish and Catholic roots in order to secure a political advantage,¹⁰ but it is interesting to observe that his father, JPK, had strived to distance himself and his offspring from their Catholic connections.¹¹ This is not surprising. Kennedy's Catholicism was a live issue at the time of the 1960 Presidential race and his political opponents were able to use this factor to suggest that a Catholic President would hold first allegiance to the Vatican, that the Church would be influential in policy making and that the long held US tradition of separation of state and religion could be compromised. It should be added that, while Kennedy's roots may have been electorally advantageous in areas where there were large numbers of voters with Irish ancestry, they could be less than helpful with voters who were disparaging about Ireland. In this context, it should be remembered that Irishness (if such a term can be used) did not have the popular appeal that later came to characterise its people and diaspora.

While engaged as a journalist in 1945, Kennedy wrote an article that focused on the relationship between the Republic of Ireland (at that time referred to Eire) and the United Kingdom.¹² Written from London on 26th July, the contents of the piece describe the struggle within Irish politics between those who wished to develop ties with Great Britain and those who sought a united Ireland, apart and distanced from its dominant neighbour. Kennedy also touched upon the apparent contradiction of Irish membership of the British Commonwealth. In no part of the article, however, is there a comment, judgement or even hint that the issues at hand related to a

colonial past or that they fitted with the processes of decolonisation that were just beginning. Indeed, Kennedy studiously avoids the question by calling the situation “...the age-old quarrel with England...”¹³ and, citing Sheridan, “A quarrel is a very pretty quarrel as it stands. We should only spoil it by trying to explain it.”¹⁴

More famously, Kennedy visited Ireland as President in 1963, an occasion perhaps best remembered for the stirring speech he gave before the Irish parliament, the Houses of the Oireachtas, on 28th June. There is much in the speech about the struggles of Ireland in history, and much about the close links between the Irish and the United States; there is a great deal also about Irish literature and cultural achievements, about Ireland’s place in the world and about “freedom” generally. Although implicit throughout the speech, there is no direct mention of Ireland’s endurances as a colony of Great Britain - there is barely a mention of Britain itself and not at all in the manner of being an imperialist power. Where the speech cuts closest to this unspoken issue Kennedy moves the subject matter to contemporary challenges, related to the absence of freedom in Communist dominated states:

“The central issue of freedom, however, is between those who believe in self-determination and those in the East who would impose upon others the harsh and oppressive Communist system; and here your nation wisely rejects the role of a go-between or a mediator. Ireland pursues an independent course in foreign policy, but it is not neutral between liberty and tyranny and never will be.”¹⁵

There are several reasons why Kennedy might have chosen not to highlight the colonial aspect of Ireland’s struggles for freedom. In the first place, the Irish visit was a prelude to an important engagement in Britain itself, which was to follow on a few days afterwards. Such a reference may have served to distract from the

business of that occasion and, anyway, might have been seen as offensive. Further, the emphasis that Kennedy placed on freedom from domination and self-determination was unanswerable in the context of the history of the USA and, as he endeavoured to demonstrate, in the case of Ireland as well. Also, he may have viewed the matter of colonial domination as a dead letter in Ireland and the debate regarding unification as a distortion of a painful independence. As uplifting and inspiring as his words were for those in the audience and in Ireland in general, they did not stray from the facts of events as they had unfolded over the years and therefore did not present a challenge to the manifestations and emotions that enveloped those facts.

Ireland was clearly important to Kennedy for many reasons – his background, his Catholicism, its parallel history, but it was not a key consideration for him in the modern world of foreign affairs management and decision-making. His speech used the Irish experience as an example of what to avoid in decoupling a nascent state from foreign domination – the terrible conflict, the inability of the protagonists to reconcile differences that would, in time, be resolved anyway. He was able to point to the Ireland of the 1960s as an example of what could be achieved through freedom and independence, but its battles for its status were over and gone and only served to illustrate the price of a failing on the part of the dominant power to accommodate the inevitable. It was to the emerging nations that Kennedy sought to direct his energies and it was the example of Ireland in 1963 that helped coalesce his ideas on how the failings of the past could be avoided. Further, in his expressions of admiration for the extent to which Ireland had developed its place in the world he

was emphatic in describing its progress as incomplete.¹⁶

In 2013, in recognition of fifty years passing since the assassination of Kennedy, *The Irish Times* ran a series of articles to commemorate the event and remind readers of the impact that the President had made in Ireland as a result of his visit in 1963. Dan Keenan wrote, on 19th June 2013, under the headline:

“Heroics Came Long After the Hero: JFK’s contribution to Irish political concerns was minimal. On the national question, the true heroes were Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan and Bill Clinton.”¹⁷

Keenan projected that Kennedy’s attitude to Ireland had allowed for no contribution to settling the political confictions that stood unresolved at the time of his visit:

“JFK’s appeal in Ireland was overwhelmingly emotional, as the near hysteria surrounding his visit showed. (In contrast), his contribution to Irish political life was minimal, especially when it came to mention of Northern Ireland and Dublin’s relations with London. There were other, much more important issues to deal with in 1963 under the cloud of the Cold War, and the Kennedy White House let nothing obstruct that priority.”¹⁸

In what appears as a gentle rebuke, Keenan refers to Taoiseach Sean Lemass’ apparent acceptance of what might have been a missed opportunity and cites his later visit to the White House (in October 1963) where:

“Referring to the flood of newly independent African states as decolonisation swept through that continent, Kennedy held up Ireland as the shining example of a small state winning its freedom.

“. . . the most significant example, the predecessor of this tremendous parade, which has been the most astonishing fact of post-war life, the most unique example of course was Ireland which blazed the trail, set the example, was the point of the spear, the arrowhead,” he said.

He spoke as if the unresolved Irish issue had been settled. Lemass responded with remarks that would seem cap-in-hand in the context of today's world.

... He (then) outlined his own vision of Ireland as it emerged further into the post-war world.

“We have no ambitions to influence the course of the events of the world except by the consistency of our support for the aims and principles by which you have guided your policy and, indeed, upon which the future of mankind depends.” In other words – we have little policy other than to support your policy, whatever that is.”¹⁹

Following Kennedy's death Lemass recorded his memories as a contribution to the Kennedy Library Oral History Program. Interviewed by Joseph E. O'Connor in August 1966, Lemass spoke of the Kennedy visit to Ireland and his return journey to Washington at length, but only in terms of commonplace observations. Perhaps the nearest that the conversation gets to looking at Kennedy and the issues of Irish unification is the reference to the wreath laying ceremony that took place to mark the 1916 uprising in Dublin. Lemass described the scene:

“We first went to the Arbour Hill Memorial Garden where he laid a wreath on the graves of the 1916 leaders. I want you to understand that this was, itself, an event for us of great emotional significance. He was, I think, the first head of state ever to go through the ceremony of honouring the executive leaders of the 1916 rising.

Many heads of state have done it since, but he was the first. The fact that he, as the President of the United States, the greatest nation in the world, of Irish origin, performed the ceremony had to have a tremendously emotional effect upon the Irish people.”²⁰

Eventually O'Connor asks about unification:

“O'Connor: Did he ever talk to you in your discussions with him about some of the problems of Ireland such as – the major problem I can think of immediately is unification?”²¹

Lemass responded:

“No, not really, in the sense of having any solution of our problems to offer. He was certainly interested in them and asked of them. Well, there was one situation which arose in that regard that I should mention.

While we were in Washington, we discussed various forms of cooperation between the two countries, showing his desire to help us if there was any way in which we needed help. There wasn't anything that I could specifically suggest that was of great importance to us that was immediately preferable for him to do. But we did get on to discussing the question of the development of fisheries in the North Atlantic. He was tremendously interested in the fisheries.”²²

Lemass conveys the impression of avoiding the question, but O'Connor neither persisted nor followed up on the response that he was given so it is difficult to conclude what took place when “He was certainly interested in them and asked of them”. Perhaps the simple explanation is the best. Kennedy had family ties to Ireland and seemed to hold a genuine affection for the country of his ancestors; his 1963 visit was not made on the back of any crisis or difficulty, neither existing nor anticipated and, as Lemass states in his interview, there were no great issues at point between the United States and Ireland at the time. Kennedy was able to use his time in Ireland to raise his profile and popularity, factors which would assist him in his domestic political ambitions. In geopolitical terms Ireland did not have great significance for the President and he was not about to risk causing an upset of any kind, especially with his forthcoming visit to the United Kingdom taking place directly afterwards.

This is not sufficient an explanation for Keenan though. His article sets off the visit as an act of abdication and deleterious to the prevailing situation of the Irish:

“Kennedy’s Irish bonds may have been genuine, but they were not to be translated into political clout to be used to lever London away from its 40-year-old hands-off approach to Northern Ireland no matter what was going on there.”²³

For Keenan the succeeding Presidents were far more influential in forcing political issues than was Kennedy. For Carter it was the offer, in 1977, that the US would underwrite any agreement that might be reached for settling issues in Northern Ireland.

“As statements go, it was bland. As far as US-British diplomacy goes, the effect was seismic. The White House signalled it had a right to express an opinion, which reflected Dublin and SDLP [Social Democratic and Labour Party] opinion, in the face of British resistance. In doing so it overturned decades of silence by Washington and the relative isolation of Irish constitutional nationalism.”

Reagan, as Keenan states, convinced UK Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher to sign the Anglo-Irish Agreement with Garret FitzGerald in 1985 and Clinton granted a visa for Nationalist leader Gerry Adams to visit the USA before playing a pivotal part in ensuring the Good Friday Agreement was signed in 1998. As Keenan concludes:

“These presidents – from Carter to Clinton – showed what JFK could not do, namely become positively involved in, while standing aside from, the Irish question.

They were the true heroes.”

This is clearly a criticism of Kennedy and comes from someone who is a respected and knowledgeable writer on the affairs of Ireland and Northern Ireland; it is not to be dismissed lightly. But context is everything.

What advantages could have been secured, for the United States, for Ireland, for Kennedy himself, had the President chosen to step into the question of unification?

In 1963 Northern Ireland was dominated by the Protestant, Unionist majority; if self determination of peoples was a deciding factor then Kennedy could have been seen to be contradicting his own principles by urging actions that would have appeared to run counter to this tenet. The issue of unification, though live and unresolved at the time of Kennedy's visit, was not actually explosive. By the time Carter, Reagan and Clinton were involved and making a contribution there was widespread violence and loss of life in the region and the urgency for some resolving action was much heightened. Kennedy may not have been a hero, but he was not a provocateur either, and this might actually have rendered higher service to the well being of this part of the world than would have an untimely intervention.

It is instructive to question Kennedy's diffidence in relation to Ireland's colonial past. His close ties to the British establishment go some way to explain his avoidance of the issue and it is reasonable to suggest that he viewed the history of Irish independence differently from how he saw the exercise of imperialism in other parts of the world. Ireland had been, for example, an integral part of the United Kingdom, where the rights of the people were undivided and there was ostensible equality. There was never any possibility that the USA would become embroiled in Irish affairs in the same way that it had intervened in the Philippines, Korea, Indochina and elsewhere, so this may also have been a factor. What is most interesting for this study about Kennedy's attitude is that he pointedly avoided making Ireland a victim. Kennedy praised Ireland, holding it up as a new nation that was making progress and which could look forward to a prosperous future without entanglement in the corrosive and debilitating Cold War. For Kennedy, Ireland presented an example of

what could be achieved in the “post-imperial” world. This provides further insight into the future that Kennedy envisioned and adds to our understanding of his actions in the White House as he struggled to establish a different approach to foreign policy management.

CHAPTER SEVEN CONCLUSIONS

An exploration of how John F Kennedy was influenced by matters of colonialism and decolonisation and how these came to bear upon his thinking on issues of foreign affairs, with particular reference to Vietnam.

The question posed by the terms of reference under which this study has been conducted now arises. To what extent did matters of colonialism and decolonisation influence Kennedy in his foreign affairs considerations?

It has been shown that Kennedy, as a young man in London at the time the Second World War began to break, gained a close insight into imperialism in practice. It has also been seen that the matter occupied his thinking before he entered politics when, as a journalist, he made reference, both direct and oblique, to the concept. Kennedy's journalistic output is especially enlightening because it reveals a mind that is still in the phase of discovery and learning; one can see that the beginnings of a *weltanschauung* have been established in Kennedy's thinking with his references to how the world was changing after the devastation of widespread conflict. With the defeat of the fascist powers, the introduction of nuclear weapons and the establishment of the United Nations and its declarations regarding peoples' rights to choose their own governments, Kennedy could envisage a changed world order that would test the resolve of the USA as the most powerful state on earth with a new role as an outward looking nation.

As he considered how this changed world would evolve he was conscious of the unknown impacts that the establishment of dozens of new nations would have – for all parts of the world. Following election into public office Kennedy recognised the peril that the Cold War presented and did not become distracted from the demands it placed on the USA for homeland security, but he differed from his political contemporaries in his views on how it should be tackled. As he gained more understanding and experience of developing issues, he became more outspoken and a pattern of consistency in his thinking emerges.

This constancy becomes marked after his visit to Asia in October 1951. It is from this point on that his pronouncements, broadcasts, formal speeches and writings demonstrate a retained theme: that winning the Cold War required a change of direction in US foreign affairs management. In Kennedy's view, the USA needed to reach out to the new nations that were emerging from the decline of the European empires; it needed to extend a hand of friendship and recognition to these new states and help them in the nation-building that would see them prosper and grow, as had the United States itself after throwing off the chains of imperial oversight. If the peoples of these emerging countries could be converted to the ideals and principles that had made the USA prosperous and successful, then the influence and reach of the Soviet Union would be commensurately diminished. But to do so the USA must change its approach: it must not assume an air of authority, it must not become overbearing, it must not take on the appearance of a neo-colonial power. Instead it must treat with the new nations as equals in a democratic world; it must

learn, understand and respect the traditional values that guided their own thinking, recognising all the while that such values may be different, alien even, to the USA.

In a further departure from the accepted thinking of the times, Kennedy also cast the Soviet Union as a predatory imperial power. His efforts to secure the support of the US political establishment for opening relations with Poland were both radical and, for him personally, politically dangerous – a high risk venture that could have undone his ambitions for advancement.

Nevertheless, as the literature review above demonstrates,¹ the great biographical and political analyses of Kennedy's life appear not to place great emphasis on the importance that Kennedy vested in the "imperial factor" and his guiding beliefs as a politician. There may be many reasons why this is so but one that stands out is that the world did not transpire as the young Congressman and Senator envisaged.

Kennedy's experiences had taught him that the shape of the future world would be conditioned by the existence of the new independent nations. They may be endowed with little in the way of great power or wealth, but they would have strategic impacts as buffer zones between the Great Powers, as ports of call for naval vessels, as providers of raw materials, as transport and communication links and, perhaps most importantly, as political entities with a common colonial past that would condition their attitudes towards the United States and the Communist powers.

His experiences also taught him that the impact of the Second World War had drawn the great powers into showing a determination for improved international relations by the establishment of the United Nations. Kennedy was greatly impressed by the fact that somehow, despite immense political differences, despite mistrust and antagonism, despite the willingness of Capitalism and Communism to face out each other to the point of extinction, the nations of the world had consented to common standards, codes of conduct and mutual agreement. These principles, which were theoretically binding upon the signature nations, were potent influences that would limit the actions of the powerful states to make war and would add to the strength and authority of the new nations in their efforts to become established and influential. For Kennedy (and those who helped launch the United Nations) the future conduct of international relations would be radically altered from the haphazard and dangerous ways of the past. Crisis events would, of necessity, be subjected to wider and deeper consideration before engulfing actions were taken; war, in the future, would be subject to pre-consideration.

Whether he believed it, envisaged it, expected it or thought it inevitable, Kennedy saw a future where the existence of the United Nations would provide the new states the means for being heard around the world. Notwithstanding the role of the Security Council, the UN would be mightily influential and, by default, the great body of new nations would wield a separate influence that would stretch beyond their significance as individual states. In this future world, the challenges the United States would face in fighting the Cold War would have to take account of new realities: if Communism was to be *contained*, then the new nations would have to be

converted to the idea that their best interests were served by alignment with the United States, that benevolent capitalism offered their peoples the greatest opportunities for progress and well-being and that Communism showed only a way to poverty and unhappiness. If Communism was to be *defeated* then, one way or another, attempts to do so would escalate to nuclear war; this would signal a self-destruction of sorts, making it self-defeating. So war must be avoided at all costs. If Communism could not be defeated but could be contained, then the United States and the Soviet Union would have to learn to live together, as harmoniously as possible.

While occupying the White House Kennedy moved to take on these challenges:

- As a means for containing the spread of Communism, he courted the new nations and the smaller states of the world, meeting directly with their leaders and representatives and seeking to assure them of the good will of the United States as their friend and supporter;
- He repeatedly refused to deploy the armed forces of the United States to resolve issues in Cuba, Vietnam, Laos, Berlin and elsewhere, believing that to do so would raise the risks of escalation, nuclear war and the ruination of the world. He also believed that overbearing use of US military power would raise the spectre of imperialism, casting the US in an unfavourable light with those nations that were throwing off the yoke of a colonial past. By doing so he incidentally raised his personal profile in the new and aspirant nations, which made him a figure of hope for peoples in the rapidly evolving Third World;

- He came to the view that the Cold War could be ended by the Capitalist and Communist encampments finding the means to live with one another's differences, thereby eliminating the tensions that could lead to destructive war.

Kennedy articulated the first of these points in a speech he made to Congress just two months into his Presidency. Titled "Special Message to Congress on Foreign Aid" the new President lamented the entanglement of agency responsibilities that had dissipated the effectiveness of US overseas aid programmes. Although constructed on the premise of revitalising these programmes, the speech was clearly directed at urging the legislators (and others) to think anew about how United States could best position itself as the world's leading nation, being the strongest militarily and economically:

"The economic collapse of those free but less-developed nations which now stand poised between sustained growth and economic chaos would be disastrous to our national security, harmful to our comparative prosperity and offensive to our conscience.

...To fail to meet those obligations [to undeveloped nations] now would be disastrous; and, in the long run, more expensive. For widespread poverty and chaos lead to a collapse of existing political and social structures which would inevitably invite the advance of totalitarianism into every weak and unstable area. Thus our own security would be endangered and our prosperity imperilled. A program of assistance to the underdeveloped nations must continue because the nation's interest and the cause of political freedom require it."²

It was characteristic of Kennedy's pragmatic approach to politics³ that he should sometimes convey his stronger and more controversial political thinking through uncontroversial subjects and words that could not offend or alienate his political

support. Who amongst the United States' elected federal representatives could easily voice opposition to the evidently benevolent overseas aid programmes? It is a loss to our understanding of Kennedy's thinking that his contrivances for explaining or reinforcing his messages have not always been fully understood or properly examined by analysts.

On other occasions, of course, he would speak more directly and it was during his campaign for the Democratic Party nomination for the Presidency that he gave fuller rein to his beliefs, concerns and the different ways in which he intended to tackle the issues of the day. One example among many that illustrate this point is the speech he made in Salt Lake City on 30th January 1960 to mark the birthday anniversary of Franklin D. Roosevelt; titled "The Challenges of the 60s", Kennedy spoke forcefully about how he envisaged the changing world:

"During the coming decade, half a billion people will be added to the population of the world. The burden of this fantastic increase – which will be approximately equal to the entire population of Europe – will fall upon those nations in the bottom half of the globe which are least able to bear it – the nations of Africa and Asia, the Middle East and Latin America. And these same troubled areas of the world will continue to see the birth of struggling new nations – for man's eternal desire to be free and independent will continue to rise to the fore.

The future of those areas holds the key to our own future. If we cannot help them conquer their poverty – if we cannot help them achieve a secure and stable society – then our future as well as theirs will be endangered. The outcome of India's fierce economic struggle with Red China may well determine the future of all Asia.

If these countries are to get ahead of their population increases, they must step up the expansion of their economies – and this means they must obtain development capital from the wealthy nations of the West. And if those now struggling to win their freedom are to look toward the West – and not to Moscow or Peiping – once that freedom is achieved, we must make completely clear our strong, unequivocal stand for self-determination. This nation – itself born in revolution from foreign rule – should lead this nationalist surge instead of helping to throttle it. Perhaps it will be

too late for the next President to deal with this crisis in some areas – but in Africa and elsewhere, this crisis is still to be met.”⁴

There is no further explanation for the statement “Perhaps it will be too late for the next President to deal with this crisis in some areas – but in Africa and elsewhere, this crisis is still to be met.”, but it would seem to be a sideways reference to South East Asia, given Kennedy’s extensive involvement there. At the time when he made this speech matters were still evolving in Algeria but the presence of De Gaulle would have given hope that a settlement could be reached. South Vietnam, by 1960, had settled into the style of governance that Kennedy viewed as counterproductive both to its own and US interests – an evolving dictatorship functioning through power bases and nepotism. His disillusionment with Diem would certainly have started by this time.

The second point above, that Kennedy was known and respected in the Third World, is also much understated in terms of our understanding of the impact that he had made as the leader of the free world. As has been shown⁵ the United States’ perception of how it appeared in the world was sometimes misplaced; equally, the methods used by different US agencies for pressing foreign affairs objectives were often ineffective. Nowhere was this more clearly apparent than in South Vietnam where the presence of US government agencies for almost a decade had, by the time of Kennedy’s death, failed to advance those objectives to any discernible degree. In terms of costs, human as well as economic, this assessment is startling and it was recognition of this that contributed to Kennedy’s ideas about the changes that would have to be made for greater effectiveness in the future.

Indeed, it was Kennedy's standing in the developing nations that, in foreign affairs terms, marks him out as different from both his predecessors and successors.⁶ This has been recognised by Robert Rakove in his book "Kennedy, Johnson and the Non-Aligned World". Writing about the effects that Kennedy's assassination had around the world, Rakove makes a number of observations to demonstrate this assertion:

"Seldom have the Indian people been so shocked and dazed by the assassination of a leader of another country," observed the *Times of India*. In Indonesia, President Sukarno tearfully remarked in a lengthy eulogy, "The good die young." Flags in Jakarta flew at half mast. Ghana's President Kwame Nkrumah eulogized "a great world statesman and a relentless fighter for equality and human dignity."

This striking outpouring by Indians, Indonesians, Egyptians, Algerians, and other peoples across the newly independent states of Africa and Asia reflected the profound power of the Kennedy image in the postcolonial world. As a young, charismatic, dynamic American leader with an interest in fostering development and, by the summer of 1963, combating segregation, Kennedy was idolized in life and mourned in death. There was, however, another common feeling that brought ordinary people of African and Asia to grief: that Kennedy seemed to have understood the issues that galvanized them. His policies had narrowed the gap between the United States and the postcolonial world. At his death, millions of people in places like Egypt, India and Algeria viewed him as a friend. Kennedy's policies, as understood by the peoples of the developing world, made them receptive to his image. Without this perception, the murder in Dallas would have struck the average resident of Cairo or New Delhi as a distant tragedy, not a universal calamity."⁷

The third point above, that Kennedy came to the conclusion that the Communist East and the Capitalist West would have to learn to live in tolerance of one another if a catastrophic war was to be avoided, was most clearly articulated in his Peace Speech in June 1963. The roots of Kennedy's thinking, however, date back to his time as a young reporter for the *Journal American* in 1945. It was then that he first made the assertion that war must be avoided⁸ and the belief stayed with him

throughout his political career. After navigating a passage through the Cuban crisis of October 1962 Kennedy became more convinced than ever that the most devastating consequences could arise from the most localised of disputes and he resolved to try and create the conditions where there could be no re-occurrence of such a situation. As the two great powers of the world vied for influence and domination over the newly created nations coming out of the demise of European imperialism, Kennedy also realised that the potential for such instances was much heightened. His great concern was that a war of destruction might occur as a result of miscalculation or misunderstanding⁹ and he worked specifically to reduce this possibility with the measures taken once the Cuban crisis was settled. Perhaps the most far-reaching of these endeavours was the Limited Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, which was signed in Moscow on 5th August 1963, approved by the Senate on 23rd September and signed in ratification by the President on 7th October.

Just days before the Senate vote, on 20th September 1963, President Kennedy made a speech before the General Assembly of the United Nations in New York, the second time he had appeared in that forum. In what may be described as a follow-up statement on his Peace Speech three months earlier, the President began by referring to changes in the world situation from the time of his previous address to the UN in September 1961 and suggested that tensions had eased:

“Today the clouds have lifted a little so that new rays of hope can break through. The pressures on West Berlin appear to be temporarily eased. Political unity in the Congo has been largely restored. A neutral coalition in Laos, while still in difficulty, is at least in being. The integrity of the United Nations Secretariat has been reaffirmed. A United Nations Decade of Development is under way. And, for the first time in 17 years of effort, a specific step has been taken to limit the nuclear arms race.”¹⁰

He then used the example of the efforts that had been made by the United States and the Soviet Union in creating the nuclear treaty to press for peace in other parts of the world and, in an echo of the words he spoke at his inauguration address,¹¹ he urged the case for negotiation as the means for resolving problems:

“The reduction of global tension must not be an excuse for the narrow pursuit of self-interest. If the Soviet Union and the United States, with all of their global interests and clashing commitments of ideology, and with nuclear weapons still aimed at each other today, can find areas of common interest and agreement, then surely other nations can do the same - nations caught in regional conflicts, in racial issues, or in the death throes of old colonialism. Chronic disputes which divert precious resources from the needs of the people or drain the energies of both sides serve the interests of no one - and the badge of responsibility in the modern world is a willingness to seek peaceful solutions.

It is never too early to try; and it's never too late to talk; and it's high time that many disputes on the agenda of this Assembly were taken off the debating schedule and placed on the negotiating table.”¹²

It should not be forgotten that this speech was made in September 1963, at a time when Kennedy was moving to prepare the ground for the 1964 Presidential election. His stall was set for seeking re-election on the basis of these statements which, as his most recent utterances, would be uppermost in voters' minds. His second term, should it materialise, would see him freed from the constraints of political ambition and expediency. It may be concluded, therefore, that these words in the last few months of his life were his most clarifying in terms of his thinking.

These are the conclusive outcomes of the Kennedy record on foreign affairs management, based as they are on his own words and actions. As matters transpired, the world did not evolve to the pattern upon which Kennedy based his

thinking, decisions and actions. The authority of the United Nations was repeatedly usurped as the imperatives of national or idealistic objectives took precedence. Britain and France moved on Suez in 1956, the US fought in Vietnam in the 1960s, there were repeated Arab / Israeli conflicts, Soviet forces were active in Eastern Europe and, later, in Afghanistan. On occasions the United Nations was used as a cat's paw, as with the UN sponsored war in Korea in 1950. At that time the US took advantage of the absence of the Soviet Union to instigate the war and the USSR enjoyed a degree of *schadenfreude* in watching its rivals become entangled.

Kennedy's viewpoint had led him to believe that, if the United States failed to befriend the new nations as they were released from colonial oversight, then they would yield to Communism "...glittering and seductive in its superficial appeal...".¹³ But they did not become vassal states of Communism and neither, on the whole, did they become pluralist democracies. For the most part the ex-colonies succumbed to the less admirable aspects of human nature with over-bearing dictators or despots, the people suffering exploitation and poverty and only a few enjoying the benefits of political tolerance.

After Kennedy's death the United States fought the Cold War on much the same basis as had the Eisenhower administration. Interventions, both open and covert took place in various sovereign states, generally justified by the need for containment of Communism and the forewarnings of the Domino Theory. The United States continued with its overseas adventures after the Cold War ended in

1989 when other “threats”, real or imagined, were put forward as reasons for such actions.

Kennedy was in error, therefore, when he spoke in the Senate on 2nd July 1957:

“Mr. President, the most powerful single force in the world today is neither communism nor capitalism, neither the H-bomb nor the guided missile it is man's eternal desire to be free and independent. The great enemy of that tremendous force of freedom is called, for want of a more precise term, imperialism - and today that means Soviet imperialism and, whether we like it or not, and though they are not to be equated, Western imperialism.”¹⁴

“Man’s eternal desire to be free and independent...” was, in fact, a less powerful force than man’s individual greed and his eternal desire to be rich, influential and master of what he surveyed, for it was these traits that came to characterise the nations emerging from “Western imperialism” and something similar was often in evidence in lands that were freed from the Soviet yoke after the end of the Cold War.

Kennedy tried, as President of the United States, to manage foreign affairs in the spirit of the world he saw emerging; he used the UN, avoided military encounters and showed faith in leaders of small and nascent nations, but world affairs ran in directions that did not conform to the future for which he planned.

It may be construed, therefore, that there is a strong thread of consistency that links Kennedy’s knowledge and understanding of imperialism and decolonisation to his decision making in foreign affairs matters. It may be further asserted that this

consistency is most evident in his approach to Vietnam and the altering circumstances in that region during his time as President. But these statements must be made in recognition of the fact that he misread the ways in which the world would change and his conceptual philosophy for approaching foreign affairs matters was, ultimately, flawed.

APPENDIX

The following identifies the concerns of the major powers regarding the issue of decolonisation following the end of the Second World War. It was the actions of the fascist powers before the war, as they overran and conquered other nations without concern for world opinion, that helped bring about the establishment of the United Nations and added momentum to the concept of free determination and government by the will of the people. Although all signatories to the UN Charter assented to these principles they were interpreted in different ways, according to the particular interests of different states, thus engendering varying attitudes towards the decolonisation process.

The USA and Decolonisation

As the Cold War erupted there was, within the United States, a deep concern about the possibility that there might be an economic retreat that would have consequences even more far-reaching than the Great Depression of the nineteen thirties.¹ Two principal factors gave momentum to this fear – that the end of wartime production would release great numbers of workers and that export demand would collapse due to the destruction of the European markets. Attention within the federal government, therefore, was focussed upon ensuring a revitalised economy at home and, for security of output, injecting capital overseas to restore the broken economies of Europe and stabilise markets for US goods. Given the urgency of these requirements, together with the breakdown of relations with

former ally the Soviet Union, the United States paid relatively little attention to the consequences of decolonisation and the creation of new nations that was taking place as a result of its gathering pace.

As the exigencies of the Cold War intensified, so the projected aims of United States foreign policy were adapted and, where matters involving former colonies or aspirant nations emerged, these were considered within the context of the US's priorities in fighting the Cold War. Having a monopoly on nuclear weapons also contributed to the shape of US foreign policy in the early years of the Cold War and there was considerable debate on how the new technologies should be deployed. For the time being at least, the USA was able to use the atomic bomb as a strategic weapon that would reduce the need for a standing army, providing a cheaper defence alternative as well as releasing much needed manpower for a growing domestic economy. After the Soviets acquired the atomic bomb in 1949 this policy did not fundamentally change, except that a nuclear arms race was engendered and the USA engaged upon a building programme aimed at ensuring it was always at an advantage in nuclear weapons when compared with the Soviets.

What this meant in practice was that the Cold War began as a conflict between nations that were differentially matched. The Soviets had a large number of men in arms, trained and equipped and experienced in war and the occupation of foreign territories. The United States, by contrast, had superiority in destructive power that could be used to threaten or bully the Soviets into holding back from using its advantage in manpower to take over US interests. This balance of the forces was

effective enough as points of conflict emerged, but the United States was conscious of the need for resistance on the ground to secure areas threatened by Communist insurgency. It overcame this problem by using its tremendous economic wealth to buttress and support nations and peoples who purported to be resisting the spread of Communism and, thereby, endeavoured to confound the ambitions of the Soviet Union and the Peoples' Republic of China (PRC). This approach was encapsulated in the Mutual Defence Assistance Act, created by President Truman in 1949, a measure which (after revision) extended the reach of US involvement in overseas territories and left it supporting governments and individuals who frequently did not fit with the ideals of democracy and free choice. Concomitant with public displays of resistance to spreading Communist influence overseas were a number of covert operations, sponsored by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and aimed at securing anti-Communist regimes or toppling those that seemed threatening. Such actions as these, both known and suspected, sometimes placed the United States in difficult positions, especially in view of the fact that it had supported and agreed to the United Nations Charter guaranteeing self-government for all peoples.

An additional contradiction in the position of the USA during these early years of the Cold War was that its efforts in using the ground forces of friendly nations to combat spreading Communism meant that it was cast as giving succour to the Empire nations as they endeavoured either to hold on to their colonies or recover territories that had been lost during the War. This problem was exemplified by US involvement in Indochina where it provided arms and supplies to French forces seeking to re-establish the pre-War colonial status.

So it was that the United States held a lesser regard for the establishment and development of new, free nations than it did for securing its interests in fighting the Cold War. As a consequence it became intertwined with unsavoury and unreliable individuals and was driven to support governments that did not fit with its own ideals regarding democratic accountability.² For the United States, the wellbeing and value of the new nations was weighed by the extent to which they could be persuaded, one way or another, to develop political and economic systems that were compatible with US Cold War priorities.

The Soviet Union and Decolonisation

Soviet concerns for the fate of the emerging nations were more complex. A characteristic of the Soviet Union in the years immediately following the Second World War was security of its borders against invasion from the west. To this end Russia, which dominated the affairs of the Soviet Union, sought to integrate certain areas on its immediate borders³ while maintaining compatible governments in the states of Eastern Europe that were not part of the Union. Many of the nations that grew out of the dismantled European empires did not impinge upon the Soviet Union's direct security interests, being geographically remote, but the imperatives of the Cold War developed to broaden the definitions of what constituted vital interests for the Soviets. As events unfolded, it became necessary to create and oversee a large navy and navies require bases and friendly calling ports to sustain their needs. This served to stretch the boundaries of the Soviet Union's security

requirements and led it to reach into parts of the world that, previously, had not been of strategic importance.

A characteristic of Soviet economic management was its lack of flexibility, resulting in surpluses and shortages, over and under production. Economic exploitation of regional assets was widely used by the Soviets to disguise or overcome (however temporarily) these difficulties⁴ and it is evident that undeveloped nations in resource rich areas presented attractive alternatives for this purpose. It is for this reason, among others, that the Soviet Union retained an interest in the African nations that emerged after the break-up of the great European empires. It would be disingenuous to pretend that the United States, the former Empire powers and other states did not also cast covetous eyes upon the unexploited riches of the new nations.

The Peoples' Republic of China and Decolonisation

The creation of Communist China was not overtly part of the decolonisation process but there were strong associations. Once established the PRC also looked at means for securing its continued existence and, as European colonies on its periphery sought independence after 1945, acted according to what it perceived as its vital concerns, including border security and relations with the United States. There is much to be examined regarding the part that the PRC played in the course of Indochinese history following WWII, but it should be noted that there is not a linear consistency in how the PRC dealt with the issues it faced on its perimeter - in Korea, Indochina and elsewhere.

Great Britain, Europe and the Established Empires and Decolonisation

As Kennedy had observed in the course of reporting on international affairs during 1945, the European empire states were reluctant to relinquish their hold over the areas of the world that had been subjugated previously. France fought to retain Indochina long after the costs of war exceeded any economic benefits it could have gained had its position there been secured; it was a similar story in Algeria, although French oversight in other parts of the Levant was loosened. Portugal remained particularly obdurate about holding onto to its overseas possessions, a factor that featured during the Kennedy Presidency when fighting flared in Angola.

Great Britain emerged from the Second World War with much of her Empire intact, but her domestic resources were greatly depleted. Apart from imperial possessions, Great Britain had military and mandated responsibilities in Greece, Turkey and the Middle East. It was economic necessity that forced her hand in withdrawing from the Near East in 1947, a state of affairs that acted as a secondary driving force for foreign policy making in the United States which, as a feature of the emergent Cold War, resulted in the Truman Declaration and the US's development as an active world power with a direct presence overseas.

There was a variety of reasons behind the thinking and rationale that led to Great Britain's decision to withdraw from the Asian subcontinent in 1947, but its pertinence to this study is more geared to the effects than the causes. Coming out of India initiated a programme of general withdrawal from Empire and the

reorientation of British power as it sought to defend itself as a protagonist in the Cold War. British military strength was henceforth directed at blunting the threat of Soviet expansionism in Europe and, where its forces were deployed in what might be described as “Empire wars”, the objectives were more often directed at neutralising Communist based insurgencies than prolonging imperial domination.

That Kennedy focused most of his attention during his senatorial career on the struggles of the French in maintaining their imperial position, as opposed to the British, requires some explanation. Firstly, it should be understood that Kennedy had a strong relationship with Great Britain; his closeness to a number of influential individuals and families in the United Kingdom had arisen as a result of his family connections and the time he had spent there as a young man. He had a direct understanding of the British Empire, what it meant to those who administered it and what was happening as it ran down its colonial position. He observed, at first hand during his tour of 1951,⁵ how India was seeking to drive a course that did not make it captive of either Soviet or US interests. As the concept of neutrality in the Cold War evolved the notion became formalised with the establishment of the Non-Aligned Movement.⁶

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Acheson, Dean, *Present at the Creation – My Years in the State Department* (W.W. Norton & Company, New York, 1987)

Ambrose, Stephen E., *Rise to Globalism: American Foreign Policy Since 1938* (Penguin Books (world wide), Ninth Revised Edition by Douglas Brinkley, 2011)

Betts, Raymond F., *Europe In Retrospect A Brief History of the Past Two Hundred Years* (Brittania.com LLC, London, 2015)

Boot, Max, *The Road Not Taken, Edward Lansdale and the American Tragedy in Vietnam* (Apollo Publishing, Naperville, IL, 2018)

Bradley, Mark Philip and Young Marilyn B. (Eds), *Making sense of the Vietnam Wars: local, national, and transnational perspectives* (Oxford University Press, New York, 2008)

Bryant, Nick, *The Bystander, John F Kennedy and the Struggle for Black Equality* (Basic Books, New York, 2006)

Burdick, Eugene, Lederer, William, *The Ugly American* (W W Norton & Company, New York, 1958)

Burns, James MacGregor, *John Kennedy, A Political Profile* (Open Road, Integrated Media, New York, 1960)

Busch, Peter, *All the Way With JFK? Britain, the US, and the Vietnam War* (OUP, Oxford, 2003)

Buzzanco, Robert, *Masters of War: Military Dissent and Politics in the Vietnam Era* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge UK, 1996)

Byrne, Malcolm (Ed.), *The 1956 Hungarian Revolution, A History in Documents* (National Security Archive Electronic Briefing Book, Published November 4, 2002)

Byrne, Malcolm (Ed), Domber Gregory F. (Compiler), *Uprising in East Germany, 1953 Shedding Light on a Major Cold War Flashpoint* (National Security Archive Electronic Briefing Book No. 50, Published – June 15, 2001)

Cullather, Nick, *America's boy? Ramon Magsaysay and the illusion of Influence* (Pacific Historical Review; Aug 1, 1993)

Curtis, Glenn E., ed., *Czechoslovakia: A Country Study* (Washington, D. C.: Federal Research Division of the Library of Congress, 1992)

Dallek, Robert, *An Unfinished Life, John F. Kennedy 1917 – 1963* (Back Bay Books; Little, Brown and Company, New York, 2003)

Freedman, Lawrence, *Kennedy's Wars: Berlin, Cuba, Laos and Vietnam* (Oxford University Press, New York, 2000)

Gaddis, John Lewis, *The Cold War, A New History* (Penguin Books, New York, 2005)

Goldstein, Martin E., *American Policy Towards Laos* (Associated University Presses, Cranbury, New Jersey, 1973)

Goldzwig, Steven (Marquette University), Bostdorff, Denise (Purdue University), *Idealism and pragmatism in American foreign policy rhetoric: The case of John F. Kennedy and Vietnam* (Presidential Studies Quarterly, New York, Summer 1994, Volume: 24 Issue: 3)

Grosser, Alfred, *The Western Alliance, European-American Relations Since 1945* (Random House, New York, 1982)

Hadhri, Mohieddine, *US Foreign Policy Toward North Africa During the Cold War: From Eisenhower to Kennedy (1953-1963)* (Journal of the Middle East and Africa, 5: 95–110, 2014)

Hahn, Lorna, *North Africa: Nationalism to Nationhood* (Public Affairs Press, Washington D.C., 1960)

Hearden, Patrick J, *The Tragedy of Vietnam* (Routledge, Oxford, 2016)

Herring, George C., *America's Longest War: The United States and Vietnam 1950 – 1975* (McGraw Hill, New York, 1986)

Hermann, Burkely, *JFK's Corporatist and Imperialist Presidency, Part 3: Assassinations, Anti-communism, Interventionism and Right-wing Dictators* (Dissident Voice, 2nd November 2013)

Hilsman, Roger, *To Move A Nation, The Politics of Foreign Policy in the Administration of John F. Kennedy* (Doubleday, New York, 1967)

Ho Chi Minh, *Selected Works* (Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1960–62)

Janis, Irving L, *Group Think* (Second Edition, Wadsworth Cengage Learning, Boston, 1982)

Jezer, Marty, *The Dark Ages, Life in the United States 1945 – 1960* (South End Press, Cambridge MA, 1987)

Jones Howard, *Death of a Generation, How the Assassinations of Diem and JFK Prolonged the Vietnam War* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2003)

Kaplan, Lawrence S, Landa, Ronald D, Drea, Edward J, *History of the Office of the Secretary of Defense, Volume V, The McNamara Ascendancy, 1961-1965* (Historical Office, Office of the Secretary of Defense, Washington DC, 2006)

Kaspi, André, *Kennedy: Les 1000 jours d'un president* (Armand Colin, Paris, 1994)

Kennedy, John F., *A Democrat Looks at Foreign Policy* (Foreign Affairs, October 1957: Volume 36, No.1)

Kennedy, John F., *Profiles in Courage* (Harper & Brothers, New York, 1956)

Kennedy, John F., *The Strategy of Peace* (Edited by Allan Nevins), (Harper & Brothers, New York, 1960)

Lasky, Victor, *J.F.K.: The Man and the Myth* (Macmillan, New York, 1963)

Mahoney, Richard H., *J.F.K.: Ordeal in Africa* (Oxford University Press, New York, 1984)

Maier, Charles S. (Ed), *The Origins of the Cold War and Contemporary Europe* (New Viewpoints, Franklin Watts, New York, 1978)

McNamara, Robert S., and Blight, James G., *Wilson's Ghost, Reducing the Risk of Conflict, Killing, and Catastrophe in the 21st Century* (Public Affairs, a division of the Perseus Books Group, New York, 2003),

Miller, Edward, *Vision, Power, and Agency: The Ascent of Ngo Dinh Diem, 1945 – 1954 - Making sense of the Vietnam Wars : local, national, and transnational perspectives* (Oxford University Press, New York, 2008)

Muehlenbeck, Philip E., *Betting on the Africans, John F. Kennedy's Courting of African Nationalist Leaders* (Oxford University Press, New York, 2012)

Muehlenbeck, Philip E., *John F. Kennedy's Courting of African Nationalism* (Madison Historical Review, Volume 2, 2004)

Nashel, Jonathan, *Edward Lansdale's Cold War* (University of Massachusetts Press, Amherst and Boston, 2005)

Newman, John M., *JFK and Vietnam: Deception, Intrigue, and the Struggle for Power* (CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, North Charleston, North, South Carolina, 2016)

O'Brien, Michael, *John F. Kennedy, A Biography* (St Martin's Press, New York, 2005)

Office of The Historian, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961–1963, Volume VI, Kennedy-Khrushchev Exchanges

Oliphant, Thomas, Wilkie, Cutis, *The Road to Camelot, Inside JFK's Five-Year Campaign* (Simon and Schuster, New York, 2017)

Parmet, Herbert S., *Jack, The Struggles of John F. Kennedy* (The Dial Press, New York, 1980)

Parmet, Herbert S., *JFK - The Presidency of John F. Kennedy* (The Dial Press, New York, 1983)

Pinals, MD Robert S., Hassett, PsyD Afton L., *Reconceptualizing John F. Kennedy's Chronic Low Back Pain* (Regional Anaesthesia & Pain Medicine, September/October 2013 - Volume 38 - Issue 5)

Rakove, Robert B., *Kennedy, Johnson and the Nonaligned World* (Cambridge University Press, New York, 2013)

Randolph, Stephen, *Foreign Policy and the Complexities of Corruption: The Case of South Vietnam* (The Foreign Service Journal, June 2016)

Rapoport, David C. (Ed.), *Terrorism: Critical Concepts in Political Science, Volume II, The Second or Anti-Colonial Wave* (Routledge, London and New York, 2006) - Kumamoto Robert, *Diplomacy from below: international terrorism and American foreign relations, 1945 – 1962*

Rasberry, Vaughn, *JFK and the Global Anticolonial Movement* (103-117), Hoberek, Andrew (Ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to John F. Kennedy* (University of Missouri, Columbia. Publisher: Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2015)

Reeves, Thomas C., *A Question of Character, A Life of John F. Kennedy* (Random House, New York, 1997)

Riedel, Bruce, *JFK's Forgotten Crisis: Tibet, the CIA, and the Sino-Indian War* (Brookings Institution Press, Washington DC, 2015)

Ridinger, Seth M., *John F. Kennedy: Public Perception and Campaign Strategy in 1946* (Historical Journal of Massachusetts, Summer 2013)

Ridler, Jason S., *A lost work of El Lobo* (Small Wars & Insurgencies, 26:2, 292-312, DOI: 10.1080/09592318.2015.1008088:2015), Unpublished

Romahn, Theresa, *Colonialism and the Campaign Trail: On Kennedy's Algerian Speech and his Bid for the 1960 Democratic Nomination* (Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History, Volume 10, No. 2, Fall 2009)

Savage, Sean J, *The Senator from New England, The Rise of JFK* (State University of New York Press, Albany New York, 2015)

Schaffer, Howard B., *Chester Bowles: New Dealer in the Cold War* (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1993)

Shaw, Dr. Geoffrey D. T., *The Lost Mandate of Heaven, The American Betrayal of Ngo Diem, President of Vietnam* (Ignatius Press, San Francisco, 2015)

Shaw, John T., *JFK in the Senate: Pathway to the Presidency* (St Martin's Press, New York, 2013)

Shipway, Martin, *Decolonization and Its Impact: A Comparative Approach to the End of the Colonial Empires* (Wiley-Blackwell Publishing, Oxford, 2008)

Schlesinger, Jr. Arthur M., *1,000 Days: John F. Kennedy in the White House* (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, Boston 1965)

Schlesinger, Jr. Arthur M., *Jacqueline Kennedy, Historic Conversations on Life with John F. Kennedy* (Hyperion Books, New York, 2011)

Short, Anthony, *The Origins of the Vietnam War* (Routledge, Oxford, 2013)

Smith, Robert C., *John F. Kennedy, Barak Obama and the Politics of Ethnic Incorporation and Avoidance* (State University of New York Press (SUNY), New York, 2016)

Stephanson, Anders, *Senator John F. Kennedy: Anti-Imperialism and Utopian Deficit* (Journal of American Studies, Volume 48, Issue 1, February 2014)

Straw, Jack, *JFK: Cold Warrior: Debunking Oliver Stone's Mythology* (Fifth Estate # 339, Spring, 1992)

Topping, Seymour, *On the Front Lines of the Cold War: An American Correspondent's Journal from the Chinese Civil War to the Cuban Missile Crisis and Vietnam* (Louisiana State University Press, Baton Rouge, 2009)

Tuchman, Barbara W, *The Guns of August* (Ballantine Books, New York, 1962)

Tudda, Chris, *The Truth Is Our Weapon: The Rhetorical Diplomacy of Dwight D. Eisenhower and John Foster Dulles* (Louisiana State University Press, 2006)

US Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States (1961-1963, Volume I, Vietnam, 1961, Washington, DC)*

Watts, Steven, *JFK and the Masculine Mystique, Sex And Power on the New Frontier* (Thomas Dunne Books, New York, 2016)

White, Mark, *Apparent Perfection: The Image of John F. Kennedy* (The Historical Association, Blackwell Publishing, Oxford, 2013)

NOTES TO CHAPTERS

Preface

- ¹ Address at a White House Reception for Members of Congress and for the Diplomatic Corps of the Latin American Republics, March 13, 1961. John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum

This speech marked the launch of the Alliance for Progress (Alianza para el Progreso)

- ² Robert W. Komer, recorded interview by Elizabeth Farmer, June 18, 1964, (11), John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum Oral History Program

- ³ The Senate balked at adopting Article X of the proposed Covenant of the League of Nations, not wishing to reduce the capacity of the United States to make war on its own account with a resultant loss of sovereignty.

Robert McNamara and James Blight have compared the situation that Wilson faced following the end of WWI with the state of the world at the beginning of the 21st century. They have identified, within Wilson's endeavours, two imperatives: the Moral and the Multilateral, that foundered as the ideal of the League of Nations failed to materialise with US leadership:

"No one can say whether American leadership of the League of Nations could have prevented World War II. Yet surely it would have lowered the likelihood of that bloodbath. But Wilson failed to prevent the punitive actions against Germany that provided the breeding ground for a vengeful Adolf Hitler, while the failure to implement Article X led to exactly the sort of waffling and fudging with the Nazis in the 1930s that forever gave a bad name to the term "appeasement"."

McNamara, Robert S., and Blight, James G., *Wilson's Ghost, Reducing the Risk of Conflict, Killing, and Catastrophe in the 21st Century* (Public Affairs, a division of the Perseus Books Group, New York, 2003), 8

John Kennedy also confronted the prospect of destructive war, made the more real by nuclear weaponry, during his time in the White House. His own vision for a future World Peace bears the distinct marks of Wilson's thinking and identifies further the unique situation of the United States as the only

nation of the world capable of initiating an idea of such scale and ambition.
(See p84)

4 See p84 and p136

5 Although the Eisenhower administration did make assertions about turning back the rising tide of Communism. See p63 and endnotes 25 and 26

6 *Domino theory*, also called *Domino Effect*. Theory in US foreign policy after World War II stating that the “fall” of a non-communist state to communism would precipitate the fall of non-communist governments in neighbouring states.

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/domino-theory>

7 Remarks of Senator John F. Kennedy at the Los Angeles World Affairs Council Luncheon at the Biltmore Hotel on September 21, 1956.

John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum (Kennedy Library):

https://www.jfklibrary.org/Research/Research-Aids/JFK-Speeches/Los-Angeles-CA-World-Affairs-Council_19560921.aspx

8 O’Brien, Michael, *John F. Kennedy, A Biography* (St Martin’s Press, New York, 2005) 356

9 Dean Rusk, recorded interview by Dennis J. O’Brien, December 2, 1969 (p22), John F. Kennedy Library Oral History Program

10 Rusk’s analysis of how US involvement in Vietnam escalated from an advisory role to active military participation is itself interesting in terms of our understanding of Kennedy’s approach to foreign affairs management. In the course of his first interview with Dennis O’Brien Rusk several times makes the point that President Johnson endeavoured to continue the policies of the Kennedy administration in regard to South East Asia. He then reasons that Johnson’s position was forced by the incursion of regular North Vietnamese troops into the South (in addition to the guerrilla forces that had operated there previously):

“But throughout the period from November of '63 until the spring of '65 President Johnson was following what he judged to be the general policy of President Kennedy toward the situation: to give the South Vietnamese support and give them advisers and give them plenty of equipment, ammunition, and economic support and things of that sort, but to put them in position to deal with these guerrillas pretty much on their own without the involvement of American combat troops. When the North Vietnamese decided to send in regular elements of their armed forces, then President

Johnson had to make the decision as to whether we would commit American combat forces in substantial numbers, and he made the decision, of course, that we would do so.”

Ibid. Kennedy Library, pp53-54

At no point in the interview does Rusk refer to the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution which passed Congress in August 1964 and is generally viewed as the first stage of direct US military involvement in Vietnam. This was a development that was uniquely Johnson’s and, in what is a strong indication of his intentions at the time, was based upon a falsified premise. Equally, Rusk does not comment upon Kennedy’s strategy regarding Vietnam during the final months of his Presidency; it was at this time that he initiated moves to withdraw US troops from the conflict. It would appear that Kennedy had taken a dual approach to dealing with the situation in Vietnam. While his advisers and appointees urged him to engage militarily, he increased troop numbers but only for support and back-up roles, refusing to insert combat forces. As the numbers grew and the situation on the ground did not improve he gave himself the wherewithal to assert that the military proposals were not working, leaving open the option for withdrawal.

It should be further stated that Rusk’s explanation of Kennedy and Johnson in Vietnam does not at all accord with the recollections of Roger Hilsman. See Chapter 4, p94, endnote 59 below.

11 It should also be noted that Rusk was speaking in 1969. It remained the case that, at this time, most interpretations of John Kennedy (and, to a lesser extent, his Presidency) were deferential; Rusk could not easily have made comments that ran against this general tide of approbation. It was only later that “revisionist” and more critical explanations regarding Kennedy made their way into mainstream commentary and the image of both the man and the public representative was redrawn. These later works tended to look at behaviour and conduct as indicators for performance (though questions should be raised regarding the evidential basis upon which Kennedy’s character has been reconstructed) but Rusk asked historians to rely upon the record – what Kennedy said and did. The first of the eight interviews that Rusk conducted with the Kennedy Library ends with a summing up on this:

“Well, I think that I would come back to the point that I made earlier that President Kennedy's attitude on Vietnam ought to be derived from what he said and did while he was President, that he felt very strongly that we had a commitment there, that the security of Southeast Asia was important to the security of the United States, that we could not let a course of aggression develop momentum in Southeast Asia that could well set us on a course toward World war III, and that in any event the commitment of the United States under security treaties is the principal pillar of peace in the world and

what happens to those security treaties is the most important thing there is to the safety of the American people.”

Ibid. Kennedy Library, p55

12 See endnote 3 above

13 Inaugural Address of President John F. Kennedy, Washington, D.C. January 20, 1961.

Kennedy Library.

<https://www.kennedylibrary.org/Research/Research-Aids/Ready-Reference/KENNEDY-Quotations/Inaugural-Address.aspx>

14 See quotation on p71

15 See pp68-72 for further discussion of this analysis.

16 Robert W. Komer, recorded interview by Elizabeth Farmer, June 18, 1964, (p1), John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum Oral History Program.

17 See: Robert Dallek, Atlantic Monthly, June 2003:

“He [also] doubted the effectiveness of a purely military approach to many political problems, especially in light of what he observed during his extensive travels to Europe, the Middle East, and Asia in the late 1930s and after World War II. “If one thing was borne into me as a result of my experiences in the Middle as well as the Far East,” Kennedy said after a trip as a congressman in 1951, “it is that communism cannot be met effectively by merely the force of arms.””

18 It may be argued that this statement cannot be applied to the situation of Vietnam where, during the course of the Kennedy presidency, the number of advisory and training troops maintained by the United States rose from some few hundreds to almost 16,000. This matter is dealt with more extensively in the text of the thesis (see Endnote 10 above and page 79 - **Kennedy and Vietnam in the White House**).

19 “To me, John Kennedy was the first American President who really understood the nationalist revolution and the revolution of modernization in the under-developed areas and the necessity of both adjusting to it and feeding it in order to guide it in directions that served our interests.”

Kramer, Ibid 3

20 See page 61

²¹ Statements regarding Kennedy's pragmatism are so numerous that there is little value in attempting to provide a definitive source reference for substantiating this description of him. It is interesting to note, nevertheless, that the Soviet Embassy identified the new President in just this way when filing an assessment report following his election to the White House in 1960:

"Foreshadowing Khrushchev's later description of his counterpart as "flexible," the embassy finds JFK a "typical pragmatist," ready to change positions according to shifting calculations of situations and his own interests..."

See: "A Typical Pragmatist": *The Soviet Embassy Profiles John F. Kennedy, 1960* (Cold War International History Project Bulletin, Issue 4, Fall 1994, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Washington, D.C.) 64

²² See: Gardini, Gian Luca, and Lambert, Peter, (eds.), *Latin American Foreign Policies – Between Ideology and Pragmatism* (St Martin's Press LLC, New York, 2011):

"...what is striking is the original synthesis between ideology and pragmatism. These two elements are integral components of political behaviour in general, but what constitutes an innovative element is the considered and calculated variety in intensity, circumstance, purpose, and arena of the mix of ideology and pragmatism. They appear to coexist well in contemporary Latin American foreign policies, and represent an evident tenet of the highly heterogeneous approach to international relations that characterizes almost all current Latin American administrations."

Introduction 1

Gardini and Lambert cite Gunther Hellmann and his article in *International Studies Review* (11:3, September 2009, pp. 638-662). In the context of political forcing factors, Hellman describes "pragmatism" as : "...the quintessential American "ism.""

Op cit. 638

²³ See Chapter 5, especially pp99-112

²⁴ See Chapter 6, page 113

²⁵ See p97

²⁶ See p98

-
- ²⁷ We have been led to understand, as axiomatic, that Kennedy was reckless and urgent because he was a sick man who did not expect to live long. Further, that he placed a premium on appearance as a political persuader, wearing tailored, modern clothing, being carefully groomed and ensuring that his glamorous wife was a prominent consort.

See, for example: White, Mark, *Apparent Perfection: The Image of John F. Kennedy* (The Historical Association, Blackwell Publishing, Oxford, 2013)

Chapter One

Events and Experiences that Shaped Kennedy

- ¹ See: Shipway, Martin, *Decolonization and Its Impact: A Comparative Approach to the End of the Colonial Empires* (Wiley-Blackwell Publishing, Oxford, 2008).

Shipway develops his idea of the “late colonial shift” citing a range of forces that evolved and developed to create the conditions for rapid processes that developed following the end of the Second World War (WWII). He takes care to emphasise that WWII did not initiate these forces, but existed as one factor among others that accelerated the imperial retreat in the 1950s and 1960s.

Also, Betts, Raymond F., *Europe In Retrospect A Brief History of the Past Two Hundred Years* (Brittania.com LLC, London, 2015), Chapter 14

Betts argues that forces for change in the colonial structures of the world had prevailed for some years with Wilsonian ideas of national self-determination providing impetus following the end of the First World War (WWI). The excesses of the totalitarian nations during the 1930s and WWII raised moral and political questions to which the Empire nations could not readily respond and the rapidity of post war decolonisation was the result.

- ² See, for example, Reeves, Thomas C., *A Question of Character, A Life of John F. Kennedy* (Random House, New York, 1997), 73:

“The ambassador boasted in 1957, “I got Jack into politics; I was the one. I told him Joe was dead and that it was therefore his responsibility to run for Congress. He didn't want to. He felt he didn't have the ability and he still feels that way. But I told him he had to.””

- ³ See: Papers of John F. Kennedy. Personal Papers. Manuscripts: Why England Slept. Typescript, Kennedy Library

<https://www.jfklibrary.org/Asset-Viewer/Archives/JFKPP-026-004.aspx>

-
- 4 A Robert Wood Johnson Medical School rheumatologist and a clinical psychologist at the University of Michigan's Chronic Pain and Fatigue Research Center reviewed the impact back pain had on the life and death of John F Kennedy in:

Pinals, Robert S., MD, Hassett, Afton L., PsyD. *Reconceptualizing John F. Kennedys Chronic Low Back Pain* (Regional Anesthesia & Pain Medicine, September/October 2013 - Volume 38 - Issue 5), 442–446

In correspondence with the author, Dr Pinals has confirmed that it is likely that the PT 109 incident exacerbated damage to Kennedy's back which, Dr Pinals believes, was originally injured in a sports incident in 1940. He has further suggested that patients recommended for surgery at the time Kennedy underwent his various back operations would not have been directly involved in decision making regarding treatment regimes.

- 5 James G. Blight is chair in foreign policy development at the Centre for International Governance Innovation (CIGI), an independent think tank based in Ontario Canada, and is also professor at the Balsillie School of International Affairs (BSIA) and the Department of History at the University of Waterloo, Ontario. Janet M. Lang is a research professor at BSIA and the Department of History at the University of Waterloo. Between them (jointly and independently) they have published over a dozen books on the foreign policy of Kennedy, including *Virtual JFK: Vietnam If Kennedy Had Lived* (2009, Rowman & Littlefield, Toronto), which The Wall Street Journal claimed to be one of the five best books ever written on John F. Kennedy. On 4th November 2013 CIGI-BSIA published Policy Brief No. 5 (PBN5), authored by Blight and Lang.

See:

<https://www.cigionline.org/articles/Kennedys-black-swan-logic-lesson-world-leaders-brink-war-says-new-cigi-policy-brief>

- 6 PBN5 Opening statement, 1

- 7 See: Papers of John F. Kennedy. Presidential Papers. President's Office Files. Personal Secretary's Files. Articles: By John F. Kennedy in the Hearst newspapers, 1945, Kennedy Library

<https://www.Kennedylibrary.org/Asset-Viewer/Archives/KENNEDYPOF-129-003.aspx>

- 8 Not all his writings are in the record and some appear to have been lost. Within the collection is a letter dated 9th December 1957 from "Virginia" (no other details, apart from an address are given) to Evelyn Lincoln, Kennedy's personal secretary, with copies of the available articles enclosed. "Virginia" writes:

“Here are the newspaper clippings that the Senator asked for – or at least as much as we have here.”

Ibid. Papers of John F. Kennedy

9 Ibid. Papers of John F. Kennedy

10 Ibid. Papers of John F. Kennedy

11 Ibid. Papers of John F. Kennedy

12 Ibid. Papers of John F. Kennedy

13 In an intriguing entry in the diary that he kept at the time he was reporting on the Potsdam Conference, Kennedy wrote:

“The clash [with Russia] may be finally and indefinitely postponed by the eventual discovery of a weapon so horrible that it will truthfully mean the abolishment of all the nations employing it.”

Quoted in an article by Nancy Olson

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/nancyolson/2017/03/30/john-f-kennedys-diary-from-1945-at-auction/#1614409a473f>

News of the atomic bomb was only made public after it had been successfully deployed over Japan on 6th August 1945, although Truman famously informed Stalin of its existence in the course of the Conference which ended on 2nd August. (Stalin did not react with any great surprise, having been informed otherwise of the development programme by Soviet agents). One might speculate on how Kennedy came to learn of its existence before it became general knowledge.

14 See Chapter Three, page 51

15 See p28

Chapter Two

Kennedy’s Approach to Foreign Affairs as Congressman

1 <https://www.Kennedylibrary.org/Research/Research-Aids/Ready-Reference/JFK-Fast-Facts/Election-1946.aspx>

2 See: Ridinger, Seth M, *John F. Kennedy: Public Perception and Campaign Strategy in 1946* (Historical Journal of Massachusetts, Summer 2013)

Ridinger refers to Kennedy's assignment for the *Journal American* to cover the general election in Great Britain in July 1945. It was here that Kennedy witnessed a people's collective desire for change from the former ways of politics. In the UK this led to the election of the Labour Party into power – a rejection of the Conservative and Coalition politics of the pre-war years that were readily identified with hardship, unemployment and depression. According to Ridinger this experience convinced Kennedy that US voters would also seek a change from the past, but any such reaction would be against the dominating Democratic Party of that period. He therefore focused attention on his youth and different approach to politics, away from the former ways of patronage and elitism:

““The new generation offers a leader” was the slogan Joe Kane (campaign adviser) came up with to sell their man. Kane adapted the line from the introduction to Kennedy's 1940 book, *Why England Slept*. According to this formulation, the “new generation” wanted to seize the reins of power from the old politicians that got the nation into World War II. The young voters, returning veterans, and other citizens as well wanted to cast out the old and install the new. It was this simple thinking that resonated with the voters.”
120

3 <http://www.un.org/en/sections/member-states/growth-united-nations-membership-1945-present/index.html>

4 Ibid. United Nations Membership

5 Remarks of Representative John F. Kennedy at the Philip J. Durkin Testimonial Dinner, Salem, Massachusetts, January 30, 1949

Speech source: Papers of John F. Kennedy. Pre-Presidential Papers. House of Representatives Files. Series 2.2. Boston Office Speech Files, 1946-1952. Box 95, Folder: "China: Salem, Massachusetts, 30 January 1949 and Congressional Record, 21 February 1949"

The speech was initially made in the House of Representatives on 25th January 1949.

See: Burns, James MacGregor, *John Kennedy, A Political Profile* (Open Road, Integrated Media, New York, 1960), 15

6 “Mr. Brinkley: Mr. President, have you had any reason to doubt this so-called “domino theory,” that if South Viet-Nam falls, the rest of southeast Asia will go behind it?

The President: No, I believe it. I believe it. I think that the struggle is close enough. China is so large, looms so high just beyond the frontiers, that if South Viet-Nam went, it would not only give them an improved geographic

position for a guerrilla assault on Malaya, but would also give the impression that the wave of the future in southeast Asia was China and the Communists. So I believe it.”

Transcript of Broadcast on NBC's "Huntley-Brinkley Report", September 9, 1963

<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=9397>

- 7 See, for example:
Straw, Jack, *JFK: Cold Warrior: Debunking Oliver Stone's Mythology* (Fifth Estate # 339, Spring, 1992)
- Also:
Goldzweig, Steven,(Marquette University), Bostdorff Denise, (Purdue University), *Idealism and pragmatism in American foreign policy rhetoric: The case of John F. Kennedy and Vietnam* (*Presidential Studies Quarterly*, New York, Summer 1994, Volume: 24 Issue: 3, Start Page: 515)
- Bostdorff and Goldzweig argue that Kennedy viewed the world of his time as a conflict between free peoples and those denied freedom for being under the command or influence of Communism. Kennedy’s idealism, therefore, meant facing down Communism and Vietnam provided a proving ground for the will and ability of the United States as a leader of the Free World.
- 8 Taken from: Edmund A. Gullion, recorded interview by Samuel E. Belk, III, July 17, 1964, (pages 1 - 2), John F. Kennedy Library Oral History Program
- 9 Ibid. Edmund A. Gullion, 2
- 10 Ho Chi Minh, *Selected Works* Vol. 3 (Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1960–62), 17–21
- 11 See, for example:
William O. Douglas, recorded interview by John F. Stewart, November 9, 1967, (4-6), John F. Kennedy Library Oral History Program
- Also:
Shaw, John T, *JFK in the Senate: Pathway to the Presidency* (St Martin’s Press, NY, 2013), 29
- 12 Topping, Seymour, *On the Front Lines of the Cold War: An American Correspondent's Journal from the Chinese Civil War to the Cuban Missile Crisis and Vietnam* (Louisiana State University Press, Baton Rouge, 2009), 150

Topping had reported on the civil war in China for the Associated Press (AP) and had moved to Saigon in the spring of 1951. Early into his assignment in Vietnam he uncovered a covert operation by CIA cover organisations to move arms and equipment through Saigon to a remnant army of the Kuomintang which had established a salient in the Yunnan Province, inside Communist China. The supply route for this army, which comprised about fifteen thousand men in arms, was fed through bases it had established in north east Burma, a factor that caused the government in Rangoon considerable distress for fear of a reaction from the Chinese or a Communist rising within the country. According to Topping this matter soured relations between Rangoon and Washington for many years, only being finally resolved during the Kennedy Administration. 148-150

13 President Truman announced the establishment of diplomatic relations with the government of Vietnam on February 17, 1950, when the Consulate General at Saigon was raised to Legation status with Edmund A. Gullion as Chargé d’Affaires *ad interim*. On 24th June 1952 the status of the Legation was raised to Embassy and Donald R Heath was appointed Ambassador.

14 Topping, *On the Front Lines of the Cold War*, 153

15 As matters had transpired, de Lattre had returned to Saigon after a three months absence, arriving about the same time as Kennedy. During his time away the General had been entreating the French Government to provide more in the way of troops, support and armaments, but had not met with any great success. He subsequently visited the White House where he received stronger assurances of assistance. It would not be surprising, therefore, that he was less than impressed by American diplomats suggesting ways forward that seemed at odds with the pronouncements of senior authorities in Washington. – Topping, 151

16 See page 79

17 Topping, *On the Front Lines of the Cold War*, 154

18 Topping, *On the Front Lines of the Cold War*, 154

19 Bao Dai, the son of the former Emperor of Vietnam, Khai Dinh, a vassal of the French colonial regime. The appointment of Bao Dai was a clear indication from the French that there was no serious intention of transferring real power to the Vietmanese.

20 Topping, *On the Front Lines of the Cold War*, 154-155

21 See pp38-39

22 Topping, *On the Front Lines of the Cold War*, 155

-
- ²³ Edmund A. Gullion, recorded interview by Samuel E. Belk, III, July 17, 1964, John F. Kennedy Library Oral History Program
- ²⁴ Ibid. Edmund A. Gullion 4-5
- ²⁵ Papers of John F. Kennedy. Presidential Papers. President's Office Files. Special Events Through the Years. Radio report on trip to Middle and Far East, 1951. Kennedy Library
- ²⁶ Kennedy appeared on the popular current affairs programme on eight occasions, this being the first. Meet the Press was first broadcast as a radio programme in 1945, switching to television in 1947. It is still on air today and is the longest running television programme in the United States. It operates to the simple formula of placing prominent representatives of politics and other fields before a panel of journalists to respond to questions. It is not scripted, allowing questioners to seek clarification of answers. Sitting on the panel were: Ernest K. Lindley (Newsweek Magazine), May Craig (Guy Gannett Newspapers), James Renton (*New York Times*) and Lawrence Spivak, originator of the format and regular panel member. The session was moderated, as was usual at the time, by Martha Rountree. Source:
- <http://www.nbc.com/meet-the-press>
- ²⁷ This remark was made by Lawrence Spivak in the course of the radio broadcast (see endnote 25 above), but no reference given of where or to whom the Congressman had made the comment. Kennedy did not deny referring to Foreign Service personnel in this way, but used the opportunity to expand upon and explain further what he meant – that the US representatives were remote from indigenous populations and were failing to understand their needs and aspirations. There is mention of the remark in: Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr., *A Thousand Days*, 407, although this re-references to the cited broadcast.
- ²⁸ In the course of Kennedy's first extended visit to Europe during the summer of 1937 he kept a diary in which he attributed the success of the Fascists in Italy and the Nazis in Germany to "their effective propaganda":
- "There is no doubt about it that these dictators are more popular in the country than outside due to their effective propaganda."
- Kennedy Library, Papers of John F. Kennedy. Personal Papers. Early Years, 1928-1940. Diary, European trip, 1937: 1 July-3 September (the pages of the diary are not numbered)
- ²⁹ It is appropriate to mention, in this context, the early initiative of the New Frontier which established the Peace Corps. Following an impromptu speech

by Kennedy at the University of Michigan on 14th October 1960, the new President signed an executive order founding the Peace Corps on 1st March 1961, just six weeks after the inauguration. By 1969, under Director R. Sargent Shriver, there were over 14,500 volunteers working in 55 countries around the world. The Peace Corps remains a legacy of John F. Kennedy to the present day.

<https://www.peacecorps.gov>

Chapter Three

Kennedy and Foreign Affairs 1952 – 1960

1 Congressional Record, June 30, 1953, 7622

2 Ibid. Congressional Record

3 Ibid. Congressional Record

4 French President Auriol wrote in his diary for October 1950:

“At this moment, I notice a rather violent anti-American mood... What they give us for Indochina while they say that we are defending this country against Communism is limited aid so that it doesn't look as if they were abandoning us. But in reality, they do it to make us go along with their policy of total independence. They give us money, and we pay for it with a piece of independence: that is infamous.”

Taken from: Grosser, Alfred, *The Western Alliance, European-American Relations Since 1945* (Random House, New York, 1982), 129

5 In actual fact the amendment was proposed by the conservative Republican Senator for Arizona, Barry Goldwater, but Kennedy's forthright speech saw him aligned with the proposal.

See: Short, Anthony, *The Origins of the Vietnam War* (Routledge, Oxford, 2013), 119

6 General de Lattre passed away in January 1952 following illness and command of the French Expeditionary Forces was given to Henri Navarre. In an attempt to lure the Vietminh into more direct conflict Navarre concentrated his forces at Dien Bien Phu, but the tactic failed and the French found themselves at a disadvantage to the enemy. In the face of imminent defeat there was much discussion in the White House and State Department about a possible rescue plan, but the Korean War was still fresh in the minds of US planners and Eisenhower held out against proposals to use nuclear weapons. No decision was made and the French military presence in Indochina came to an end.

7 Kennedy Library. Remarks of Senator John F. Kennedy on Indochina before the Senate, Washington, D.C., April 6, 1954

8 Ibid. Remarks of Senator John F. Kennedy

9 See Shaw, *JFK in the Senate*, 95-96

10 See Grosser, *The Western Alliance*, 135

“At the same time, President Eisenhower told American journalists that he could not criticize the Geneva results since he had no other solution to offer.”

11 The terms of arrangements agreed upon by the attendants at the Geneva Conference. Notwithstanding settlements for all parts of Indochina, these provided for the division of Vietnam on the 17th parallel until reunification through nationwide elections within two years. The ambivalent position of the United States in regard to the Conference meant that it was never a signature to these arrangements but pursued a policy of support for the government of the South as a bulwark against the spread of Communism from the North.

See, for example, Grosser, *The Western Alliance*, 134-135

12 See, for example: Herring, George C., *America's Longest War: The United States and Vietnam 1950 – 1975* (McGraw Hill, New York, 1986), 55

13 Grosser, *The Western Alliance*, 136-137

14 In the early 1950s Diem had left Vietnam, ostensibly for a few months after becoming aware that his life was in danger. In the eventuality he was absent for almost four years, a period that became known as his “exile”. He first visited Japan where he met a US academic and political scientist named Wesley Fishel. Fishel was influential in government circles in the USA and, when Diem later visited the United States, introduced him to a number of individuals whom he came to call upon for support in his efforts to become the US leader of choice in South Vietnam. Amongst these individuals was Kennedy. As a result of his friendship with Fishel, and using his position as a prominent and well-connected Roman Catholic, Diem was able to create a strong basis of support with certain elements in the United States. The American Friends of Vietnam (AVF) was one such expression of this support and it drew from a wide range of opinion, attracting political representatives both liberal and conservative. As events transpired, in the 1960s it became seen as an increasingly right wing organisation strongly supportive of the Johnson policies for escalating the conflict.

See: Bradley, Mark Philip, and Young, Marilyn B., (Eds), *Making sense of the Vietnam Wars : local, national, and transnational perspectives* (Oxford University Press, New York, 2008):

“Diem’s ability to win over influential American supporters was apparent at a luncheon held in his honor in Washington on 8th May 1953. The event was hosted by Supreme Court justice William O. Douglas, who had become convinced of the need for a Third Force in Indochina during a visit there the year before. Douglas arranged the lunch to introduce Diem to other like-minded Americans; the guests included US Senators Mike Mansfield and John F Kennedy, both of whom were destined to play key roles in Diem’s future relations with the United States... As Mansfield later recalled, he left the lunch “with the feeling that if anyone could hold South Vietnam,* it was somebody like Ngo Dinh Diem.””

Ibid. Miller, Edward, *Vision, Power, and Agency: The Ascent of Ngo Dinh Diem, 1945 – 1954* - 135 – 171. The quotation is taken from page 148

*The author explains that the quotation is taken from an interview that Don Oberdorfer conducted with Mike Mansfield on 28th August 1998. As the author clarifies:

“Mansfield likely meant to say “Vietnam” rather than “South Vietnam,” since the latter did not exist as a distinct political entity in May 1953.”

Miller, *Vision, Power, and Agency*, 148, FN 42

15 Kennedy Library: John F Kennedy Speeches, Remarks of Senator John F. Kennedy at the Conference on Vietnam Luncheon in the Hotel Willard, Washington, D.C., June 1, 1956

16 Ibid. John F. Kennedy Speeches

17 Ibid. John F. Kennedy Speeches

18 Ibid. John F. Kennedy Speeches

19 In August of 1956 Kennedy sought to secure the nomination as Vice Presidential candidate for the Democratic Party Presidential candidate, Adlai Stevenson. In the eventuality he was defeated in a three ballot contest by Estes Kefauver of Tennessee.

20 Ibid. John F. Kennedy Speeches

21 Theresa Romahn, writing in 2009, identifies the speech with Kennedy’s political ambitions:

“For a successful candidate, the road to the US presidency is one that is not merely walked in the year before the election. Rather, it is something prepared for years prior to the attempt, for some their entire political career is aimed towards it, for others, their entire life. In recent memory, no one's career speaks more to this fact than America's youngest elected President, John F. Kennedy, whose political ambitions are well documented. What is not well integrated into this image, however, is how his 1957 Congressional Speech criticizing the Eisenhower administration's policy towards the aspirations of Algerian nationalists fits into his overall strategy to secure himself the Democratic nomination for the 1960 Presidential campaign.”

Romahn further argues that the speech was given as a subterfuge for securing the support of African Americans without having to venture into the dangerous waters of Civil Rights (See p101).

Romahn, Theresa , *Colonialism and the Campaign Trail: On Kennedy's Algerian Speech and his Bid for the 1960 Democratic Nomination* (Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History, Volume 10, No. 2, Fall 2009)

²² Speeches of John F. Kennedy, Remarks of Senator John F. Kennedy in the Senate, Washington, D.C., July 2, 1957. Kennedy Library

²³ Kennedy's speech on Poland, titled "Struggle Against Imperialism, Part II - Poland and Eastern Europe" was delivered to the Senate on 21st August 1957. He had signalled his intention of promoting the idea of a new approach to the nations of Eastern Europe (what he called the "satellites") in a speech to the Overseas Press Club in New York on 6th May 1957 (a broadcast of the speech was made by WNYC on 31st May 1957):

“I believe it is time, therefore, for the formulation of a new American policy toward the satellites. The basic laws governing our foreign economic policies, such as the Battle Act and the Agricultural Surplus Disposal Act, and too much of the general public opinion, recognize only two categories of nations in the world: nations "under the domination or control" of the USSR or the world Communist movement – or "friendly nations". I suggest to you that there are more shades of gray than these black and white definitions would indicate – that there are and will be nations such as Poland that may yet not be our allies or even officially friendly, but which are at least beginning to move out from Soviet domination and control.”

<http://www.wnyc.org/story/171921-senator-john-f-kennedy-overseas-press-club-1957/>

²⁴ According to Romahn (see above, endnote 21), Secretary of State Dulles commented after the Algeria speech that, "if anyone is interested in going after colonialism, there are a lot better places to go after it than the case of France in Algeria," suggesting the nations of Eastern Europe as fine examples.

Romahn also cites the extensive criticism Kennedy received for the speech, including from fellow Democrats, Adlai Stevenson and Dean Acheson.

- 25 Popular uprisings in East Berlin in July 1953 and Hungary in October 1956 led to calls from rebel supporters for US support, but intervention was limited.

In Berlin:

"...the uprising proved, ironically, that Republican verbiage about "liberation" of the "captive nations", so prominent in the 1952 presidential campaign, was largely empty -- at least as far as near-term prospects for action."

See: Byrne, Malcolm (Ed), Domber, Gregory F. (Compiler), *Uprising in East Germany, 1953 Shedding Light on a Major Cold War Flashpoint* (National Security Archive Electronic Briefing Book No. 50, Published – June 15, 2001)

<http://nsarchive.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB50/>

In Hungary the CIA controlled Radio Free Europe encouraged the rebels and, in some broadcasts, seemed to be promising the imminent intervention of Western forces; these proved to be empty statements that led to disillusionment about the will of the United States and its allies to take action to liberate Soviet dominated nations.

See: Byrne, Malcolm (Ed.), *The 1956 Hungarian Revolution, A History in Documents* (National Security Archive Electronic Briefing Book, , Published November 4, 2002):

<http://nsarchive.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB76/>

- 26 See, for example, Tudda, Chris, *The Truth Is Our Weapon: The Rhetorical Diplomacy of Dwight D. Eisenhower and John Foster Dulles* (Louisiana State University Press, 2006), 76:

"Dulles... called for the liberation of Eastern Europe. Liberation, he contended, would "mark the end of the negative, futile and immoral policy of 'containment.'" The United States, Dulles vowed, would "look happily forward to the genuine independence of those captive peoples."

- 27 Acheson was interviewed by Lucius D. Battle on 27th April 1964 as a contributor to the Kennedy Library Oral History Program:

"I picked out as an example of how not to do something from a speech that Mr. Kennedy made in the Senate, in '57. This was a speech about France and Algeria, and he said that the Senate should pass a resolution which he had

drafted and which he read in his speech which said that France should immediately get to work with the Algerian rebels and work out an arrangement for independence. And if they had not done this by the following September when the United Nations was to meet, the United States would introduce a resolution in the UN in favor of Algeria. I said this seemed to me the wrong way to treat our oldest ally and our most sensitive ally - a country which was still smarting under the defeats of World War II and a sense of inferiority for what had happened. I remember using the phrase “this impatient snapping of our fingers” ... “

[Congressional Record, July 2, 1957, p. 10788]

Dean Acheson, recorded interview by Lucius D. Battle, April 27, 1964, (p1), John F. Kennedy Library Oral History Program

Acheson acted as a Special Advisor to President Kennedy for foreign affairs matters.

28 See: Savage, Sean J, *The Senator from New England, The Rise of JFK* (State University of New York Press, Albany New York, 2015), 144

29 Savage, *The Rise of JFK*, 144

30 See: Rasberry, Vaughn, *JFK and the Global Anticolonial Movement* (103-117), Andrew Hoberek (Ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to John F. Kennedy* (University of Missouri, Columbia. Publisher: Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2015)

Rasberry describes the impact of the Algerian speech as having “electrified the Afro-Arab world.” 121

31 Slim, Mongi, recorded interview by Lorna Hahn, on May 20, 1965, (pages 3-4), John F. Kennedy Library Oral History Program

32 Habib Bourguiba, written statement dated November 24, 1963, (pages 1-2), John F. Kennedy Library Oral History Program

33 Kennedy, John F., *A Democrat Looks at Foreign Policy* (Foreign Affairs, October 1957: Volume 36, No.1), 44

34 Ibid. *A Democrat Looks at Foreign Policy*, 59

35 See page 62 above

36 See, for example, Bryant, Nick, *The Bystander: John F. Kennedy and the Struggle for Black Equality* (Basic Books, New York, 2006), 463:

“At the time of his death... Kennedy had only a small record of accomplishment in civil rights. Progress had been agonizingly slow in voting rights and employment reform, the areas where his administration had devoted most of its energy. By 1963, black registration had increase from five percent to just 8.3 percent of eligible voters in the 100 counties targeted by the Justice Department. Between 1961 and 1964, the number of blacks employed by the federal government had inched from 12.9 percent to 13.2 percent. The Plans for Progress, meanwhile, remained an embarrassment. Between May 1961 and January 1963, black employment in participating companies rose from 5 percent to 5.1 percent. The black share of white-collar jobs showed only a negligible gain, from 1.5 percent to 1.6 percent. Even so, the president continued to encourage new firms to sign up. In other areas of policy, too, the picture was much the same. The long-delayed housing order had proved to be a glaring failure in practice. After Kennedy’s death, Robert Weaver estimated the order had covered less than three percent of existing housing. Most African diplomats continued to look on Washington as a hardship posting, because of their difficulties in finding adequate housing.”

37 According to John Shaw, Kennedy’s aide and close friend Ted Sorensen “...acknowledged that after 1958 Kennedy was primarily focused on the 1960 presidential campaign...”

Shaw, *JFK in the Senate*, 190

38 It should be noted that Kennedy secured acceptance onto the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in January 1957. This prestigious appointment, which might have been considered a pinnacle of achievement for one so interested in foreign affairs, seems to have had little impact on the putative candidate. According to Shaw:

“There is little doubt that Kennedy set aside his Senate workload to focus on the presidential campaign. For example, having finally secured a seat on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in 1957, Kennedy was so busy on the campaign trail that he rarely attended the committee’s hearings: of 117 meetings in 1959, Kennedy only attended 24. The panel’s chairman, William Fulbright, grumbled that when Kennedy did attend a hearing he spent much of the time autographing pictures of himself for his presidential campaign. According to a story circulated in the Senate, when Kennedy was asked to chair the Foreign Relations Committee’s sub-committee on Africa, he first asked if it had to meet. Apparently it convened once.”

Shaw, *JFK in the Senate*, 183

39 Shaw, *JFK in the Senate*:

Shaw quotes Johnson as saying: “This I could not do – for my country or for my party. Someone has to tend to the store.” 181

Chapter Four

Foreign Affairs Decision-Making in the White House

¹ See quotation from Robert Komer, p16

² Ambrose, Stephen E., *Rise to Globalism: American Foreign Policy Since 1938* (Penguin Books (world wide), Ninth Revised Edition by Douglas Brinkley), 173

³ “The Kennedy administration’s Bay of Pigs decision ranks among the worst fiascos ever perpetrated by a responsible government. Planned by an overambitious, eager group of American intelligence officers who had little background or experience in military matters, the attempt to place a small brigade of Cuban exiles secretly on a beachhead in Cuba with the ultimate aim of overthrowing the government of Fidel Castro proved to be a “perfect failure.” The group that made the basic decision to approve the invasion plan included some of the most intelligent men ever to participate in the councils of government. Yet all the major assumptions supporting the plan were so completely wrong that the venture began to founder at the outset and failed in its earliest stages.”

Janis, Irving L., *Group Think* (Second Edition, Wadsworth Cengage Learning, Boston, 1982) 14

Groupthink provides an explanation for flawed decision making regarding the Bay of Pigs incident, but it should not be considered definitive. Black Swan Thinking (see p27) gives an alternative explanation for Kennedy’s thinking and is, in some ways, mutually exclusive with groupthink.

⁴ See, for example, Herbert Parmet’s analysis of the thinking that governed the invasion attempt:

“The anti-Castro Brigade had been encouraged to believe that their mission would provoke open American military intervention, and that seemed essential to the plan. Dulles later denigrated the supposed reliance on a “spontaneous” uprising, and Bissell has agreed that too much has been made of such expectations. A special national intelligence estimate put out by the agency [the CIA] just before the invasion showed abundant disaffection but nevertheless cautioned against optimism about a spontaneous uprising. The operative assumption was that such popular support would only be possible after substantial military control had been achieved, not before. Insufficient thought was given to anything beyond consolidating the beachhead. Hope rested on stabilizing the foothold as a base from which the B-26s could attack communications, sow confusion and, in Bissell’s words, “create a fluid situation.””

Parmet, Herbert S., *JFK - The Presidency of John F. Kennedy* (The Dial Press, New York, 1983) 164

- 5 “We got a big kick in the leg – and we deserved it. But maybe we’ll learn something from it.

Schlesinger Jr., Arthur M., *1,000 Days: John F. Kennedy in the White House* (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, Boston 1965) 263

- 6 John F. Kennedy: "Remarks in Miami at the Presentation of the Flag of the Cuban Invasion Brigade.," December 29, 1962. Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*

<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=9065>

- 7 Robert Dallek identifies Arthur Schlesinger (Special Adviser) and Chester Bowles (Undersecretary of State) as opposed to the plan from the outset:

“He [Bowles] believed it better to scrap the invasion and live with Castro’s regime.”

Dallek, Robert, *An Unfinished Life, John F. Kennedy 1917 – 1963* (Back Bay Books; Little, Brown and Company, New York, 2003), 361

- 8 Dallek, *An Unfinished Life*, 360

- 9 “...the advice so authoritatively rendered and so respectfully accepted...”

Schlesinger, *1,000 Days*, 285

- 10 Soon after the failure of the Bay of Pigs Kennedy agreed to the establishment of a government sponsored scheme for keeping the prospects of a second attempt alive. Operation Mongoose, as it became known, conveyed the impression that Kennedy was supportive of a renewed effort, but in reality it was little more than a quieting operation on the part of the President. Mongoose never came anywhere near to putting together a new invasion force and, following the conclusion of the Cuban Missile Crisis, it was forcibly disbanded. There was a fear in the White House that its “pinprick” operations against Soviet installations in Cuba had raised the stakes in the stand-off between Castro and the USA which had contributed to the crisis that had taken the world to the brink of thermonuclear war.

- 11 Eisenhower met with Kennedy the day before the new President’s inauguration. Laos was a subject of discussion and, according to the Office of the Historian:

...this surpassingly weak state was the “cork in the bottle,” as Eisenhower summarized in his meeting with Kennedy; the outgoing President expected its loss to be “the beginning of the loss of most of the Far East.”

Taken from: *The Laos Crisis, 1960–1963*, office of the historian.

<https://history.state.gov/milestones/1961-1968/laos-crisis>

12 See: Busch, Peter, *All the Way With JFK? Britain, the US, and the Vietnam War* (OUP, Oxford, 2003), 19

13 See: The Office of the Historian, *The Laos Crisis, 1960 – 1963*

14 “...the United States underestimated Pathet Lao strength, overestimated its own ability to control events in Laos, and refused to ally itself with the forces of local nationalism. The United States tried to contain communist influence in Laos by supporting right-wing anticommunists. However, in General Phoumi Washington backed a loser. This fact should have become apparent to the United States before March 1961, when President Kennedy realized it and consequently altered American policy.”

Goldstein, Martin E., *American Policy Towards Laos* (Associated University Presses, Cranbury, New Jersey, 1973), 281

15 Chester Bowles, Undersecretary of State, argued that the Chinese would not tolerate a US military presence in Laos and such a situation would work to the benefit of the Soviets.

See, for example: Schaffer, Howard B., *Chester Bowles: New Dealer in the Cold War* (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1993):

“Bowles thought it possible that the Soviets saw Cold War advantage in embroiling the United States with China in Laos, an argument that recalled ideas he had advanced a decade earlier about Soviet deviousness towards China in the Korean War.” 210

16 Kennedy Library, Public Papers, 1961, 214

17 Source: US, Department of State, *Foreign Relations Of The United States* (1961-1963, Volume I, Vietnam, 1961, Washington, DC)

Report of General Edward G. Lansdale following visit to Vietnam, January 2-14, 1961:

“General: Developments in South Viet-Nam over the past year indicate a trend that is adverse to the stability and effectiveness of President Diem's government. Beginning in December 1959 and continuing to the present,

there has been a mounting increase throughout South Viet-Nam of Viet Cong terrorist activities and guerrilla warfare. This activity has included armed propaganda and leaflet distribution; taxing of the population for food, money, and medicines; kidnapping and murder of village and hamlet officials, road and canal ambushes; and armed attacks against agrovilles, land development centers, Civil Guard and Self Defense Corps posts, as well as small army units. Through the use of these tactics current Viet Cong military and political objectives are the overthrow of the Diem Government. Their immediate objectives are to eliminate any semblance of GVN control in rural areas, particularly the Mekong Delta, and establish so-called "liberated zones.""

Situation, a) General, 1

¹⁸ See, for example: Randolph, Stephen, *Foreign Policy and the Complexities of Corruption: The Case of South Vietnam* (The Foreign Service Journal, June 2016)

¹⁹ See, for example, Gaddis, John Lewis, *The Cold War, A New History* (Penguin Books, New York, 2005) 132-133:

"...Diem... was also an authoritarian, and by the beginning of the 1960s his South Vietnamese government had become an embarrassment to the Americans – and a target for renewed insurgency from North Vietnam. Aware that Washington's credibility was on the line once again, Diem – following the examples of Rhee and Chiang – warned that his regime might collapse if the Americans failed to increase their support for it. "We shall have to find the technique," Kennedy adviser Walter Rostow commented in 1961, "for bringing our great bargaining power to bear on leaders of client states to do things they ought to do but don't want to do.""

The Rostow quotation is taken from: Freedman, Lawrence, *Kennedy's Wars: Berlin, Cuba, Laos and Vietnam* (Oxford University Press, New York, 2000), 308.

²⁰ See: <https://www.kennedylibrary.org/JFK/JFK-in-History/Vietnam.aspx>

²¹ According to the National Archives, recorded deaths were as follows:

1956 – 1959	4
1960	5
1961	16
1962	53
1963	122

<https://www.archives.gov/research/military/vietnam-war/casualty-statistics.html>

²² See: *Henry Cabot Lodge, recorded interview by Charles Bartlett, August 4, 1965*, John F. Kennedy Library Oral History Program.

²³ See pages 87-94

²⁴ Schulimson, Jack, *History of the Joint Chiefs of Staff – The Joint Chiefs of Staff and the War in Vietnam 1960 – 1968, Part I* (Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Washington DC, 2011), ix

²⁵ See, for example: Ridler, Jason S., *A lost work of El Lobo* (2015): Lieutenant-Colonel Charles T.R. Bohannon's unpublished study of guerrilla warfare and counterinsurgency in the Philippines, 1899–1955 (Small Wars & Insurgencies, 26:2, 292-312, DOI: 10.1080/09592318.2015.1008088):

“While serving with the Army Counter Intelligence Corps, investigating wartime collaborators, assessing the legality of guerrilla units for postwar benefits, and shadowing communist sympathizers in Manila, Bohannon struck up a friendship with Major Edward G. Lansdale, an intelligence officer who also had a sage and antic mind. In 1950 both men became chief advisors to the new Secretary of Defense and future President Ramon Magsaysay, just as the Huk threat became manifest. Along with a series of innovative and cunning Filipino officers like Napoleon Valeriano and Medardo T. Justiniano, the cabal of Magsaysay, Lansdale, and Bohannon devised a series of military reforms and unconventional strategies that turned the Huk tide of 1950 into a retreat and defeat by 1954”. 3

²⁶ See: Nashel, Jonathan, *Edward Lansdale’s Cold War* (University of Massachusetts Press, Amherst and Boston, 2005):

“Lansdale’s success in the Philippines prompted the secretary of state, John Foster Dulles, to despatch him to Vietnam in 1954 to perform the same miracle. “Do what you did in the Philippines,” Dulles told Lansdale.”

Introduction, 1

²⁷ See: Nashel, *Edward Lansdale’s Cold War*, 71

²⁸ See, for example: Hilsman, Roger, *To Move A Nation, The Politics of Foreign Policy in the Administration of John F. Kennedy* (Doubleday, New York, 1967), 419

²⁹ See, for example: Buzzanco, Robert, *Masters of War: Military Dissent and Politics in the Vietnam Era* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge UK, 1996), 109

³⁰ See: National Archives, <https://www.archives.gov/research/pentagon-papers>

“The Pentagon Papers, officially titled "Report of the Office of the Secretary of Defense Vietnam Task Force", was commissioned by Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara in 1967. In June of 1971, small portions of the report were leaked to the press and widely distributed.”

³¹ See, for example: Cullather, Nick, *America's boy? Ramon Magsaysay and the illusion of influence* (Pacific Historical Review; Aug 1, 1993)

Cullather argues that the image of the US success in the Philippines and, thereby, the reputation of Lansdale as an effective operator is illusionary. He asserts that a common aspect of the United States in its dealings with developing nations was a belief that it was managing affairs, whereas the reality was often the opposite:

“Historians have readily accepted US officials’ own assessments of their influence in the Third World. They do so in part because the restrictions placed on access to state archives in Latin America, the Middle East, and Asia, but also because US documents confirm their assumption of US dominance, while leaving room for debate as to its origins and purposes. In the prevailing paradigms, cooperation demonstrates influence, while resistance, especially armed resistance, marks the limits of US power. But as James C. Scott observes, Third World peoples seldom risk direct confrontation, preferring to penetrate authority by multiple acts of insubordination, “noncompliance, foot dragging, deception.” Theories of hegemony ignore the degree to which leaders of subordinate states demystify US influence and turn it to their own ends.” 2. (There is no citation for the James C. Scott reference)

³² The meeting had been called to discuss the developing plans for the insertion of US trained exile troops into Cuba, but Kennedy was so impressed by the Lansdale report that he added this to the business of the meeting and insisted that Lansdale attend. Also present were Vice President Johnson, Secretary of State Rusk, Defense Secretary McNamara, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Lemnitzer and CIA Director Allen Dulles, among others.

³³ Source: Department of State, Central Files, 751K.5-MSP/1-461

³⁴ See: Kaplan, Lawrence S, Landa, Ronald D, Drea, Edward J, *History of the Office of the Secretary of Defense, Volume V, The McNamara Ascendancy, 1961-1965* (Historical Office, Office of the Secretary of Defense, Washington DC, 2006), 35-36

Also: Office of the Historian

<https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1961-63v01/ch1>

35 See: Hearden, Patrick J, *The Tragedy of Vietnam* (Routledge, Oxford, 2016), 60-65

36 See, for example, Boot, Max, *The Road Not Taken, Edward Lansdale and the American Tragedy in Vietnam* (Apollo Publishing, Naperville, IL, 2018), location 7086:

“...he [Lansdale] had not enthusiastically and immediately embraced a job offer that engendered a predictable opposition within the State Department. Later Lansdale was to hear from one of Rusk’s aides that the normally passive and deferential secretary of state, a gracious product of rural Georgia and Oxford University, had threatened to resign if Lansdale was selected. Rusk apparently felt so strongly not just because he viewed Lansdale as a “lone wolf” but also because Lansdale was an active-duty military officer as well as a former CIA officer, and Rusk, a stickler for diplomatic protocol, did not want either military or intelligence officers as ambassadors.”

37 For a detailed analysis of the intrigues surrounding the Lansdale report, the poor relations between Ambassador Durbrow and Diem and the extent to which Kennedy’s ambitions for Vietnam were frustrated see:

Newman, John M., *JFK and Vietnam: Deception, Intrigue, and the Struggle for Power* (CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, North Charleston, North, South Carolina, 2016), 40-52

38 See: Hearden, *The Tragedy of Vietnam*, 61:

“The United States gave the Saigon government almost \$1 billion between 1955 and 1959, yet South Vietnam remained economically undeveloped. Believing that Diem needed a strong army to maintain control over South Vietnamese people, American officials channelled large amounts of money into military rather than civilian projects. In fact, 78 percent of all American financial aid to South Vietnam was used for military purposes, while only 1.2 percent went into industry and mining. Diem added to the problem by importing large quantities of consumer goods rather than machinery needed for industrial development. Diem resisted American advice to reduce spending on consumer items because he feared that a lower standard of living would create social unrest and thereby endanger his regime.”

39 Newman, *JFK and Vietnam*, 54

40 See: Mike Mansfield, recorded interview by Seth P. Tillman, June 23, 1964, (p 24), Kennedy Library Oral History Program

41 See Dallek, Robert, *Atlantic Monthly*, June 2003:

“Kennedy had seen the Boer War, the Russo-Finnish conflict, and the Korean War as cautionary tales against getting bogged down in Cuba; now he perceived that the lessons of those wars applied even more strongly in Vietnam, a less familiar, more distant land with political crosscurrents even more formidable than those presented by Havana. He feared that U.S. involvement would produce irresistible pressure to do more and more. “The troops will march in; the bands will play; the crowds will cheer,” he told Arthur Schlesinger, “and in four days everyone will have forgotten. Then we will be told we have to send in more troops. It’s like taking a drink. The effect wears off, and you have to take another.”

Throughout his tenure in the White House, Kennedy consistently resisted proposals to have U.S. forces take over the war. In November of 1961 Maxwell Taylor, a Kennedy military confidant, reported at a meeting of Administration and military officials that Kennedy was “instinctively against introduction of U.S. forces.” According to notes taken at a meeting of the National Security Council that same month, Kennedy “expressed the fear of becoming involved simultaneously on two fronts on opposite sides of the world,” and “questioned the wisdom of involvement in Viet Nam since the basis thereof is not completely clear.” JFK thought that whereas in Korea the United States had responded to a case of clear aggression, the conflict in Vietnam was, according to the NSC notes, “more obscure and less flagrant.” He believed that any unilateral commitment on our part would produce “sharp domestic partisan criticism as well as strong objections from other nations ... [and] could even make leading Democrats wary of proposed activities in the Far East.””

42 See page 17

43 See: O’Brien, Michael, *John F. Kennedy, A Biography* (St Martin’s Press, New York, 2005), 865 - 866

O’Brien writes:

“The most intriguing recollection involved Kennedy’s conversation with Senator Mike Mansfield, whose integrity and probity are unquestioned. In the spring of 1963, Mansfield criticized the U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War at a congressional leadership breakfast at the White House. Afterward, according to Ken O’Donnell, the President invited Mansfield to his office for a private talk. (O’Donnell listened to the conversation.) The President told the majority leader that he had come to agree with Mansfield on the need for the United States to withdraw. “But I can’t do it until 1965 – after I am re-elected,” Kennedy said. If he announced a withdrawal before the 1964 election, conservatives would castigate him during his re-election campaign.

After Mansfield left the office, according to O’Donnell, the President said to his aide: “In 1965, I’ll become one of the most unpopular Presidents in

history. I'll be damned everywhere as a Communist appeaser. But I don't care. If I tried to pull out completely now from Vietnam, we would have another Joe McCarthy red scare on our hands, but I can do it after I'm re-elected. So we had better make damned sure that I am re-elected.'"

44 See:

<https://www.jfklibrary.org/Asset-Viewer/BWC7I4C9QUmLG9J6I8oy8w.aspx>

45 See: Newman, *JFK and Vietnam*, 60 – 70

46 See: Office of The Historian, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961–1963, Volume VI, Kennedy-Khrushchev Exchanges:

<https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1961-63v06/d98>

47 Kennedy Library, White House Audio Collection

48 Jones, Howard, *Death of a Generation, How the Assassinations of Diem and JFK Prolonged the Vietnam War* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2003) 439

49 Dallek, *An Unfinished Life*, 64

50 Schlesinger, *A Thousand Days*, 997

51 *Henry Cabot Lodge, recorded interview by Charles Bartlett, August 4, 1965, (pages 6-8), John F. Kennedy Library Oral History Program*

52 *Ibid. Henry Cabot Lodge*, 11

53 *Ibid. Henry Cabot Lodge*, 15

54 Shaw, Geoffrey D. T., *The Lost Mandate of Heaven, The American Betrayal of Ngo Diem, President of Vietnam* (Ignatius Press, San Francisco, 2015), 29-30, 51

55 See pp85-86

56 It is interesting to observe that the term "green light", as used by Howard Jones (see p87), was also employed by Secretary of State Dean Rusk when interviewed about the coup d'etat in 1969:

"I tend to be of the impression that we were ourselves not trying to stimulate a coup and that we were not going to give the green light to anybody to overthrow President Diem."

Dean Rusk, recorded interview by Dennis J. O'Brien, December 2, 1969

(p46), John F. Kennedy Library Oral History Program

57 See page 89

58 See quotation from Dean Rusk, Secretary of State, above, endnote 56. The quotation continues:

“I might say that the details of these exchanges might be found in President Johnson's papers at the Johnson Library because an effort was made to reconstruct this episode and the events which followed it.”

Ibid. Kennedy Library (p46)

59 Roger Hilsman joined the Kennedy administration in its early days as Assistant Secretary for Research and Intelligence. In April 1963 Averell Harriman was removed from his position of Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs and Hilsman was appointed in his place.

In February 1983 the University of Southern California hosted a conference titled “Vietnam Reconsidered” in the course of which Roger Hilsman was interviewed by Los Angeles news reporter Clete Roberts. In the opening part of the interview Hilsman confirmed the different approach to Vietnam taken by Johnson following Kennedy’s death:

“Clete Roberts:

Let's see. When you were Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs what was going on in Vietnam at that particular time?

Roger Hilsman:

Well, I started off with the Kennedy administration as being Assistant Secretary for Research and Intelligence, and then when Averell Harriman was promoted to be Under Secretary, I became Assistant Secretary for Far Eastern Affairs. So the last 14, 15 months of the Kennedy administration, I was head of the Far East. What was going on was that Kennedy had followed the Eisenhower policy of giving aid and advisors to the South Vietnamese, but Kennedy was absolutely opposed to bombing North Vietnam or sending American troops. Kennedy was killed, I stayed on and I pursued Kennedy's policy and Mr. Johnson, President Johnson disagreed. He and I quarrelled about this, he wanted to bomb the North and send American troops in, I was opposed to it. As it happened, I resigned, but I beat him to the punch by about two hours. I think he would have fired me if I hadn't resigned. So that gives you the basic picture.

Roberts:

Well, I suppose this question ought to be asked. Who got us into the Vietnam War?

Hisman:

Well, you can ... If you start at the very beginning, in the middle of World War Two, OSS, which I was a member of, had liaison officers with Ho Chi Minh and we were helping Ho Chi Minh. Then as the Cold War heated up, or the Cold War got involved, increasingly Vietnam got involved with the Cold War. And during the Truman administration, we began to help the French and so on. In the Kennedy administration, Kennedy started off something of a hawk, but as things progressed, he became convinced of two things. One is that it was not a world communist thrust, that it was a nationalist Vietnamese anti-colonialist thing, and that therefore we should help the South Vietnamese with aid and maybe advisors, but that we should never get American troops involved.

When Kennedy was killed the balance of power shifted to a group of people, Lyndon Johnson, Walt Rostow, Dean Rusk, Bob McNamara, who saw it not as an anti-colonialist nationalist movement, but as a world communist movement, you see. And they, for ideological reasons or, I would argue, for a misunderstanding of the nature of the struggle, made it an American war. So is that a capsule version?

See: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Og0Q0FF-i0E>

Chapter Five

Writers on Kennedy, Foreign Affairs, Decolonisation and Imperialism

- ¹ Mahoney, Richard H., *J.F.K.: Ordeal in Africa* (Oxford University Press, New York, 1984)
- ² The Christian Science Monitor, 16th April 1984
- ³ Riedel, Bruce, *JFK's Forgotten Crisis: Tibet, the CIA, and the Sino-Indian War* (Brookings Institution Press, Washington DC, 2015)
- ⁴ Muehlenbeck, Philip, *Betting on the Africans, John F. Kennedy's Courting of African Nationalist Leaders* (Oxford University Press, New York, 2012)
- ⁵ See:
<http://archive.boston.com/news/globe/ideas/articles/2007/07/15/avoicEOFdissent/>
- ⁶ See: John F. Kennedy Speeches, Remarks of Senator John F. Kennedy in the Senate, Washington, D.C., July 2, 1957, Kennedy Library
https://www.jfklibrary.org/Research/Research-Aids/JFK-Speeches/United-States-Senate-Imperialism_19570702.aspx

-
- 7 See page 61
- 8 Ibid. *Voice of Dissent*
- 9 Hermann, Burkely, *JFK's Corporatist and Imperialist Presidency, Part 3: Assassinations, Anti-communism, Interventionism and Right-wing Dictators* (Dissident Voice, 2nd November 2013)
- See:
- <http://dissidentvoice.org/2013/11/jfks-corporatist-and-imperialist-presidency-2/>
- 10 Ibid. *JFK's Corporatist and Imperialist Presidency*
- 11 In 1992 Congress passed the JFK Assassination Records Collection Act which led to the creation of the Assassination Records Review Board (ARRB). This body was tasked with examining those records relating to the assassination of John F. Kennedy that remained classified with a view to making them publicly available. It was given extensive powers to inspect the archives of various agencies of government and to authorise the release of material over and above any objections that may have been raised by them. Several millions of pages of documents were made publicly available as a consequence, providing information and details on many matters peripheral to the actual assassination. The existence of the ARRB also gave impetus for the release of other documents, recordings and correspondence which helped expand the body of evidence available for researchers.
- 12 Papers of John F. Kennedy. Pre-Presidential Papers. Senate Files. Speeches and the Press. Speech Files, 1953-1960. Colonialism and American Foreign Policy, Town Hall luncheon, Los Angeles, California, 13 April 1956. JFKSEN-0895-009. John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum
- 13 Ibid. Papers of John F. Kennedy
- 14 Rapoport (Ed.), David C., *Terrorism: Critical Concepts in Political Science, Volume II, The Second or Anti-Colonial Wave* (Routledge, London and New York, 2006)
- Kumamoto, Robert, *Diplomacy from below: international terrorism and American foreign relations, 1945 – 1962*. 47
- 15 See page 61 and attaching endnote 21
- 16 Romahn , *Colonialism and the Campaign Trail*
- 17 Ibid. *Colonialism and the Campaign Trail*

-
- 18 Lasky, Victor, *J.F.K.: The Man and the Myth* (Macmillan, New York, 1963), 284
- 19 Oliphant, Thomas and Wilkie, Curtis, *The Road to Camelot, Inside JFK's Five-Year Campaign* (Simon and Schuster, New York, 2017), 91
- 20 See page 38 and numerous other references in this text
- 21 Kaspi, André, *Kennedy: Les 1000 jours d'un président* (Armand Colin, Paris, 1994) 127-128 (Translation from the French is author's own)
- 22 Muehlenbeck, Philip E., *John F. Kennedy's Courting of African Nationalism* (Madison Historical Review, Volume 2, 2004), 1
- 23 Hadhri, Mohieddine, *US Foreign Policy Toward North Africa During the Cold War: From Eisenhower to Kennedy (1953-1963)* (Journal of the Middle East and Africa, 5: 95–110, 2014), 10
- 24 Burns, *A Political Profile*
- 25 See page 65
- 26 Burns, *A Political Profile*, 189
- 27 Burns, *A Political Profile*, 241
- 28 On occasions the “ten” were reduced to “six” (see, for example: “Challenges of the 60s” - Remarks made at the Roosevelt Birthday Ball, Salt Lake City, Utah, 30th January 1960, Kennedy Library)
- Nationalism, nevertheless, retained its place as the final and most emphatic of the “peaceful revolutions”
- 29 Burns, *A Political Profile*, 247
- 30 It is not indexed in any of the publications that feature in this oversight.
- 31 See: Papers of John F. Kennedy. Pre-Presidential Papers. Senate Files. Speeches and the Press. Speech Files, 1953-1960. Jefferson-Jackson Day dinner, Detroit, Michigan, 23 May 1959. JFKSEN-0903-008. Kennedy Library
- 32 Ibid. Papers of John F. Kennedy
- 33 Dallek, *An Unfinished Life*
- 34 O'Brien, *John F. Kennedy*

35 Parmet, Herbert S., *Jack, The Struggles of John F. Kennedy* (The Dial Press, New York, 1980)

36 Shaw, *Pathway to the Presidency*

37 Shaw, *Pathway to the Presidency*, 89

Harris Wofford was a professor of law appointed by Kennedy in 1961 to the position of Special Assistant to the President for Civil Rights.

38 See page 114

39 O'Brien, *John F. Kennedy*, "Communism and Colonialism", pp 351-363

40 See page 55 endnote 5

41 Shaw, *Pathway to the Presidency*, 109

42 Hahn, Lorna, *North Africa: Nationalism to Nationhood* (Public Affairs Press, Washington D.C., 1960), Preface VII

43 Hahn, *Nationalism to Nationhood*, III – V

44 Schlesinger, *A Thousand Days*, 444

45 See page 16

46 The Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) was created in 1961 at the so-called "Belgrade Summit". It originated from a conference of five powers (India, Ghana, Yugoslavia, Egypt and Indonesia) held in the Yugoslavian island of Brijuni and resulting in The Declaration of Brijuni, July 1956, which set out the terms by which the NAM would seek to establish its place in the world for nations that did not wish to be directly linked with either of the two main protagonists of the Cold War. The NAM is still in existence today.

Fidel Castro described its principles in the course of a speech to the United Nations in 1979:

"...the sixth summit considered that those principles of peaceful coexistence also include the right of peoples under foreign and colonial domination to self-determination, independence, sovereignty; the territorial integrity of states; the right of each country to end foreign occupation and acquisition of territories by force; and the right to choose their own social, political and economic systems."

Text of speech by Cuban President Fidel Castro to the 34th UN General Assembly, in his position as chairman of the nonaligned countries

Movement, 12th October 1979.

<http://csstc.org/>

47 Schlesinger, *A Thousand Days*, 446

48 Schlesinger, *A Thousand Days*, 447

49 Schlesinger, *A Thousand Days*, 448

50 Stephanson, Anders, *Senator John F. Kennedy: Anti-Imperialism and Utopian Deficit* (*Journal of American Studies*, Volume 48, Issue 1, February 2014), 1-24

51 Stephanson, *Anti-Imperialism and Utopian Deficit*, 1

52 Stephanson, *Anti-Imperialism and Utopian Deficit*, 2

Chapter Six

Kennedy and books and Kennedy and Ireland

1 Kennedy, John F., *Profiles in Courage* (Harper & Brothers, New York, 1956)

The book is constructed around observations of courage as exemplified in eight individuals who had served in the US Senate. It also contains a philosophical commentary by Kennedy on the concept and meaning of courage and, thereby, sets out a statement of his beliefs and the standards by which he wished to act in public office. Courage was identified in the book as taking decisions that were right rather than popular, of operating for the greater good rather than for personal or sectional gain, and accepting the consequences of such decisions. It had been written during convalescence following surgical procedures on Kennedy's back, a time when his life (not for the first time) had been in danger and he faced personal crisis. In 1957 he was awarded a Pulitzer Prize for the publication, a factor that both raised his profile and gave him increased intellectual credibility.

From the time that *Profiles* was published there were suggestions that others assisted Kennedy with the writing of the book to a degree that he obtained undue credit for its success (it was also a best seller). Most famously Drew Pearson, a newspaper columnist, made a direct statement on a network broadcast in late 1957 that Kennedy was categorically not the author; following legal threats the broadcaster, ABC, withdrew the accusation. Kennedy biographer Herbert Parmet (*Jack: The Struggles of John F. Kennedy* (Dial Press, NY, 1980)) was interviewed by Sheldon M. Stern in 1983 as part of the John F. Kennedy Library Oral History Program, and spoke about his assertion that Ted Sorensen actually wrote the text (26-27). Kennedy's wife, Jacqueline, vehemently denied that Sorensen was the sole author in an interview with Arthur Schlesinger Jr. in 1964.

See: Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., 1964, *Jacqueline Kennedy, Historic Conversations on Life with John F. Kennedy* (Hyperion Books, New York, 2011) 59

² See Shaw, *JFK in the Senate*, 130:

“Kennedy gave each of his Senate colleagues a copy of Profiles in Courage. Evelyn Lincoln, his Senate secretary, recalled sitting by his desk, handing him books to sign. After he autographed about two dozen copies, he would take a break while she made sure they were hand-delivered to his colleagues.”

³ Tuchman, Barbara W., *The Guns of August* (Ballantine Books, New York, 1962)

⁴ Tuchman, Barbara W., (2008) [1962], *The Guns of August* (Audio Book). Narrated by Ian Stewart (Playaway Audiobook ed.). Back Cover:

“Winning the Pulitzer Prize in 1963 established *The Guns of August* on the literary landscape, but Tuchman's best publicity came from her most devoted fan, President John F. Kennedy. He was so impressed by the book, he gave copies to his cabinet and principal military advisers, and commanded them to read it.”

⁵ Burdick, Eugene and Lederer, William, *The Ugly American* (W W Norton & Company, New York, 1958)

Steven Watts, author of *JFK and the Masculine Mystique, Sex And Power on the New Frontier* (Thomas Dunne Books, New York, 2016), in an article for *The History Reader*, (<http://www.thehistoryreader.com/contemporary-history/ugly-american-Kennedy/>), has written:

“On January 23, 1959, he [Kennedy] took out a full-page advertisement in *The New York Times*. Together with several other prominent figures he praised *The Ugly American*. It was, said the text, a compelling critique of “the Americans who go overseas for the various governmental agencies, their activities abroad, and the policies they are entrusted to carry out.” The senator then sent a copy of the novel to every member of the Senate.”

⁶ Remarks of Senator John F. Kennedy, Raleigh, North Carolina, September 17, 1960, Kennedy Library.

⁷ Kennedy, John F., *The Strategy of Peace* (Edited by Allan Nevins), (Harper & Brothers, New York, 1960)

⁸ See Shaw, *JFK in the Senate*, 138

⁹ Shaw, *JFK in the Senate*, 138 – 139. Shaw mentions that a copy was sent to the future Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger, who wrote to Kennedy to express his appreciation.

¹⁰ Kennedy spoke frequently at St Patrick's Day celebrations and on other occasions that were important to Irish immigrants in the United States. See, for example:

<https://www.ifklibrary.org/Asset-Viewer/Archives/JFKSEN-0894-012.aspx>

¹¹ See: Smith, Robert C., *John F. Kennedy, Barak Obama and the Politics of Ethnic Incorporation and Avoidance* (State University of New York Press (SUNY), New York, 2016), 40:

“Ultimately Kennedy [JPK] concluded that Boston was too hidebound, too caste-like to ever incorporate fully the Kennedys, so in 1926 he left the city and moved to Bronxville, a fashionable, upscale Protestant suburb of Manhattan. Never to live permanently in Boston again, he established residences in Miami, Maryland, New York City and Hyannis Port. Citing anti-Catholic and anti-Irish prejudices, Kennedy later said of Boston “it was no place to bring up Irish Catholic children...”

The move to Bronxville further detached the Kennedys from Irish culture and Catholicism. This process of deliberate deethnicization started when the family moved to the Boston suburb of Brookline...”

¹² Papers of John F. Kennedy. Presidential Papers. President's Office Files. Personal Secretary's Files. Articles: By John F. Kennedy on Ireland, 29 July 1945, Kennedy Library

¹³ Ibid. Papers of John F. Kennedy

¹⁴ Ibid. Papers of John F. Kennedy

¹⁵ Address by the President of the United States of America, John Fitzgerald Kennedy, 28th June 1963. Source: Houses of the Oireachtas:

<http://www.oireachtas.ie/viewdoc.asp?DocID=21>

¹⁶ Ibid. Houses of Oireachtas

“Other nations of the world in whom Ireland has long invested her people and her children are now investing their capital as well as their vacations here in Ireland. This revolution is not yet over, nor will it be, I am sure, until a fully modern Irish economy fully shares in world prosperity.”

-
- 17 <https://www.irishtimes.com/culture/heritage/heroics-came-long-after-the-hero-1.1423240>
- 18 Ibid. *Irish Times*
- 19 Ibid. *Irish Times*
- 20 Sean Lemass, recorded interview by Joseph E. O'Connor, August 8, 1966, (page 9), John F. Kennedy Library Oral History Program.
- 21 Ibid. Sean Lemass, recorded interview, page 12
- 22 Ibid. Sean Lemass, recorded interview, pages 13-14
- 23 Ibid. *Irish Times*. See endnote 17 above

Chapter Seven

Conclusions

- 1 See Chapter Five, p95
- 2 Special Message to the Congress on Foreign Aid, March 22, 1961. Quoted from The American Presidency Project:
<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=8545>
- 3 See pp 46-47, above, quotation from Edmund Gullion
- 4 "Challenges of the 60s" - Remarks made at the Roosevelt Birthday Ball, Salt Lake City, Utah, 30th January 1960, Kennedy Library
- 5 See p80, endnote 31: Nick Cullather, *America's boy?*
- 6 See Schlesinger quotation page 107 above
- 7 Rakove, Robert B., *Kennedy, Johnson and the Nonaligned World* (Cambridge University Press, New York, 2013), xviii
- 8 See p29
- 9 See p113
- 10 Address Before the 18th General Assembly of the United Nations, 20th September 1963. Quoted from The American Presidency Project:
<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=8545>

-
- 11 See p13
- 12 Ibid. Address Before the 18th General Assembly of the United Nations
- 13 Remarks of Senator John F. Kennedy at the Conference on Vietnam Luncheon in the Hotel Willard, Washington, D.C., June 1, 1956
- 14 See page 61

Appendix

- 1 “Now that World War II was ending, there was agreement that overseas economic expansion was more crucial than ever if the United States were to avoid another depression.”
- See: Jezer, Marty, *The Dark Ages, Life in the United States 1945 – 1960* (South End Press, Cambridge MA, 1987), 30
- 2 Jezer asserts that US business interests served to encourage the government’s support for unsavoury regimes:
- “No wonder that in the postwar years, American leaders would find it easier to deal with corrupt right-wing dictators than with political revolutionaries who could not be tempted with American money. Chiang Kai-shek of China, Rhee of South Korea, Batista of Cuba, the Shah of Iran, Trujillo of the Dominican Republic, Salazaar of Portugal, Franco of Spain, Somoza of Nicaragua, Jimenez of Venezuela, Castillo Armas of Guatamala – whatever else their failings, these men knew the value of a dollar.”
- Jezer, *The Dark Ages*, 29
- 3 Russian domination of states on its western and southern borders dates from before the beginning of the Second World War. Justification for what amounted to colonial conquest of these areas was given by incorporation into the Soviet Union. Consequently, the idea of Russia as an imperial power was neither new nor unrecognised at the start of the Cold War. According to Dean Acheson, Secretary of State during the Truman Administration:
- “Both Bevin [British Foreign Secretary] and Schuman [French Prime Minister] held firm political convictions growing out of the tragic experience of Europe in this century; both saw the menace of communism and of the imperialism of the Soviet state...”
- Acheson, Dean, *Present at the Creation – My Years in the State Department* (W.W. Norton & Company, New York, 1987), 271

-
- ⁴ In 1949 a communiqué agreed between the Soviet Union, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Hungary and Romania effectively established what came to be known as COMECON - the Council For Mutual Economic Assistance. There are complex reasons as to why this event took place as and when it did, but the concern of Stalin about US offers of Marshall Aid to Eastern European States was certainly a factor. COMECON went through various developments over the years, most notably moving from a system for economic *cooperation* to one of *integration* in 1971, but it remained throughout a means by which the Soviet Union could exercise dominance over the economies of the signature nations.

See: Curtis, Glenn E., ed., *Czechoslovakia: A Country Study* (Washington, D. C.: Federal Research Division of the Library of Congress, 1992)

- ⁵ See Chapter Two, p35
- ⁶ See Chapter Five, p108, endnote 46