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KENNEDY'S INAUGURAL ADDRESS: PERFECT FREEDOM VS. PRUDENCE

It is often said there has been a decline in oratory in recent decades. We still look to our leaders for inspiring speeches; but how often are we inspired? There are very few speeches that are commonly referred to as sources of ongoing guidance or inspiration, or taught in schools as examples of how one might think and speak.[1] The art or science of rhetoric—the ability to marshal evidence in order to persuade a variety of audiences—which has been studied and elaborated by great thinkers including Aristotle, Cicero, Erasmus, and Hobbes, has been changed or reduced to the art of campaigning to a mass public. The target population is strategically divided into three groups: those who are already persuaded; those who are not likely to be persuaded; and those who are undecided. There is an emphasis on winning over the wavering undecided voters rather than on bringing an audience from one definite position to another very different position. Of course some at least of the traditional rhetorical skills are still required, whether one is pleasing the "undecideds" by emphasizing common ground and avoiding controversy, or setting out stark contrasts on a few issues on which right-thinking people, including some of the undecideds, are right, and others are clearly wrong. The usual approach today seems quite different, however, from proceeding on the assumption that most or all of an audience can be persuaded to change their minds. Persuasion implies reaching a conclusion based on reason, as distinct from, although often borrowing from, an appeal to tradition or the past on the one hand, or history or the future on the other. It may be

[1] Perhaps the outstanding "taught in school" speech today is Martin Luther King, Junior, "I Have a Dream." It is probably still not unheard of for many Americans to study Lincoln's Gettysburg Address and Second Inaugural. Recently many students, instead of an actual speech, have been exposed to the Al Gore film about the climate of Earth, "An Inconvenient Truth." One would think that in Canada, at least one speech by Pierre Trudeau might be of some significance, but it may be that certain speeches in favour of women getting the vote are the most likely to be taught. See https://www.amazon.ca/Speeches-Changed-Canada-Dennis-Gruending/dp/1554551129 .

that rhetoric can only succeed if it is based on an adequate understanding of human nature; if so, we can probably learn something about human nature by a study of rhetoric, and of great speeches, including some successful ones.

One speech that stands out from a background of documents that often read as if they were written, or forced into a focus-grouped blandness, by a committee, is the Inaugural Address of John F. Kennedy, delivered on January 20, 1961.[2] In concise, often beautiful language, the new President provided a survey of the entire world and the major issues facing it, from the perspectives of his generation and of his fellow Americans. He made it clear that under his direction, the U.S. would not confine itself to protecting its own shores, or its own citizens. It would combat bad regimes around the world, and attempt to put better ones in their place. It would also fight poverty. This would obviously require a sacrifice by Americans for the good of others, and Kennedy called for exactly such a sacrifice. He did not promise that Americans in return would gain great things for themselves, as past empires had done. There was no mention of the wealth of the world being delivered to the United States, nor of foreign countries changing, with buildings and streets being built to American tastes, monuments highlighting American achievements, or equestrian or other statues celebrating American heroism. Americans would do all that he proposed, he suggested, because it was the right thing to do. If great speeches are usually intended to persuade an audience, to change their minds, then we can infer that Kennedy feared Americans would be complacent if not indifferent, and he was urging them to be aware, vigilant, and willing to act. He seemed confident that it would not be difficult to achieve this result. A further inference would be that he was not expecting

[2] One reason speeches are no longer held in high esteem is that they are so often the work of staff rather than leaders. Of course the debate rages as to whether JFK was the principal author of his Inaugural Address, and what the role was of various speechwriters including Ted Sorensen—a lawyer who became Kennedy's chief legislative aide in 1953, at the age of 24. There seems to be substantial agreement that JFK was very much in the lead, and he ensured that the thoughts in the speech were his. I will proceed as though the words are Kennedy's. With the best speeches of Ronald Reagan (four of them at the website below), there is often a question as to the extent of the role of Peggy Noonan in writing the speech.

Americans to go through some kind of complete conversion, or become entirely different people; he was appealing to what was arguably best in them, and urging them not to act according to anything less than the best.

A Brief Survey of Political Rhetoric

Politics is the realm, above all others, where we would expect or hope for great or above average oratory, at least on great occasions.[3] One would think the usual reason to give a speech is to change the minds of a group of people in order to achieve a political result; there may be an art to doing so, and it may not be as easy as it seems.[4] The examples of great or successful oratory we have in our minds today may be more likely to come from the courtroom than from the political arena; but when speeches or rhetorical campaigns became famous, it is usually because of their political implications. Thurgood Marshall made his name as a lawyer by his successful arguments in the case of Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, which brought about the end of racially segregated schools in much of the U.S. Marshall went on to become a liberal Supreme Court Justice. Clarence Darrow had no chance of getting Leopold and Loeb acquitted, but he succeeded in getting death sentences reduced to

[3] One website, with an obvious Anglo-American bias, offers 52 speeches from the 20th century—28 of them by men who had been elected President. The other 24 speeches include 5 by men who ran for President, 5 by British Prime Ministers, 1 by a man who was (briefly) King of England, 2 by Popes, 1 by a Cardinal, 2 by people who could be called both generals and statesmen, and 3 others by miscellaneous statesmen. This leaves very few speeches that were not delivered as contributions to public life or in the political realm broadly defined. http://www.historyplace.com/speeches/previous.htm . Another site includes two speeches by Golda Meir, and one each by Mother Teresa and Margaret Thatcher: http://www.powerfulwords.info/directory-famous-speeches.htm .

[4] Studies of U.S. presidential rhetoric seem to agree that very few speeches have actually changed minds to any significant extent. See this Pew Research Center article, citing the work of George C. Edwards III among others: http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2013/09/10/can-presidential-speeches-change-minds-the-evidence-suggest-not/ . On November 3, 1969, a little more than nine months after his inauguration as President, Richard Nixon delivered the famous "Silent Majority" speech on television. Rick Perlstein (The Invisible Bridge) says this was "one of the most politically successful addresses in the history of the presidency," and "in a single evening [the speech] increased the number of Americans who approved of his handling of the Vietnam War by 19 percentage points." (p. 50) The best evidence seems to be that Nixon, who had a larger speech writing staff than any previous president, wrote this one himself.

life plus 99 years. He later failed to achieve the acquittal of John Scopes on a charge of teaching evolution, but as in the Leopold and Loeb trial, he laid the groundwork for a later public discussion of the relevant issues. Nelson Mandela's great courtroom speech, "I Am Prepared to Die," was of course a political speech by a statesman in a courtroom setting.[5] A survey of great speeches may reveal that a certain number of them did not actually achieve their intended result. There are certainly some famous speeches that did not "work" in the sense of persuading the relevant audience. Edmund Burke is remembered as an orator, but it is possible he never changed a single vote in his long career in the House of Commons, or indeed in his lifetime ever persuaded anyone of anything.[6] Of course a great speech can confirm and memorialize a defeat as well as a victory. Going back a bit, Socrates' defence speech as reported by Plato must have been studied more than any other single speech; Socrates was convicted, sentenced to death, and executed.

There have certainly been leaders in recent times who have used words memorably—often, perhaps paradoxically, to emphasize the weakness of words. Both Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher left behind some memorable catch phrases.[7] Both made a number of speeches that were intended to establish, and surely to some extent did establish, that while a leader should be prepared to talk reasonably with reasonable people, it is sometimes necessary to use law enforcement measures and/or force. In their respective domestic political contexts, this was intended to win over some undecided voters who might be inclined to follow leaders who suggested it was possible to rely on talk, perhaps sophisticated talk, alone.[8] There was an implication that left-wing leadership might be at least relatively harmless in times of peace and prosperity, but in tougher times, harsher measures were

[5] http://db.nelsonmandela.org/speeches/pub_view.asp?pg=item&ItemID=NMS010

[6] See Mansfield, Selected Letters of Edmund Burke, pp. 1-2; Morley, Burke pp. 208 ff.

[7] Reagan: "Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall!"; (borrowing from a Clint Eastwood movie, to those who would increase taxes) "Go ahead, make my day." Thatcher: "There is no such thing as society" (meaning that no combination of government and charity will make up for self-reliance).

[8] This is what Aristotle identifies as the sophist's mistake; Nicomachean Ethics 1181a12-ff and context.

necessary. Tony Blair and Bill Clinton both led a major party that had been successfully branded "left wing" and shifted it somewhat to the right—largely to reassure undecided centrist voters.[9] They persuaded their own partisan supporters to change their minds at least about the strategies that would be required to win elections; this included adopting or stealing some allegedly "right wing" policies that voters seemed to demand. While leading the left to make certain changes, they also had to persuade centrists, who might swing either way, that real changes in the approach of the left were actually taking place. Barack Obama was known for inspirational speeches in the 2008 presidential campaign, but his speeches became less notable after he was elected.[10] He promised to be a uniter, not a divider; rather than being consistently on the left, he would find common ground between left and right. Once again he was probably primarily trying to reassure centrists; in practice he was quick to judge that anyone on the right was simply mistaken if not ill-intentioned.

It is sometimes suggested that at least since World War II, people on the right have been relatively inarticulate, even anti-intellectual, compared to people on the left.[11] If this is a real phenomenon, there are probably several aspects to it. Among intellectuals, any kind of theory that is associated with the right was discredited by the events of World War II, and above all by Hitler. By comparison, various versions

[9] Early in his presidency, Clinton stressed his identification with people who "work hard and play by the rules"—in contrast, presumably, to those who count on others, or on law-breaking, to get ahead. He also maintained his credibility as a Democrat by saying "I feel your pain." Blair made "New Labour" a catch phrase for an entirely new approach.

[10] Obama is known for a particular trope: he sees a debate as dominated by two partisan, entrenched sides. What is needed is someone who can see the best of both sides, and see beyond them. Critics have said that in practice, Obama becomes impatient at anyone who does not agree with him, and with his often predictably partisan and entrenched view.

[11] The two Roosevelts were both "wordy" presidents, but Republican Teddy, more than Democrat Franklin, actually argued that actions are more important than words. Eisenhower was famously less articulate than the opponent he defeated twice, Adlai Stevenson; Nixon was somehow less of a golden, smooth, witty speaker than Kennedy. Goldwater delivered a fiery "right wing" oratory that frightened people; his supporter Reagan, a few years later, made similar oratory less frightening, and at the same time it seemed less frightening in different circumstances. Bill Clinton, Obama, and even a younger Hillary Clinton have all been better speakers, in any sense of classic oratory, than the Bushes or Trump.

of Marxism, Keynesianism and other sophisticated approaches on the left, including radical environmentalism and feminism, retain at least some of their appeal. People on the left are more likely to sound sophisticated, and this is more likely to be taken as a sign of wisdom. They may recognize a kind of natural or habitual conservatism in the public, so that at least some persuasive words are needed to win acceptance for relatively new ideas. People on the right may lack enthusiasm for urging people to stay the way they are, and in any case they may lack confidence that they will succeed in resisting "progress" by means of rhetoric. If we live in a progressive society that is always deciding not whether to take another step to the left (or towards the new), but which one, conservatives are likely to be on the defensive if not reactionary, fighting on battlefields that are not of their choosing.[12] The right is more likely than the left to offer leaders who seem decent, reassuringly correct on a few key issues, but not likely to deliver a sophisticated or inspiring speech.[13] If they are successful, they may demonstrate the truth of their own belief that actions count for more than words. The left is more likely to offer "wordy" people as candidates; sometimes they succeed, and their careers can demonstrate that speeches truly can change minds. Centrists or the undecided voters can plausibly shift from left to right based partly on circumstanc-

[12] Since Machiavelli it seems there are two strands to modern "progressive" thought that may appear contradictory. One is that it is only by understanding nature, and to some extent submitting to nature's laws, that we can understand anything with confidence, and make progress in making the world better. Anything else is utopianism. The other strand is that precisely if we learn how nature works and doesn't work, we can achieve a kind of freedom or liberation that could scarcely be dreamed of before. We can build a kind of society that has never existed before, and it would probably be wise not to try to define too carefully what exactly it will be like. Utopianism returns. Many so-called conservatives say that early modern thought went far enough in basing politics on nature: an individual's natural right to self-preservation is more fundamental than any moral rule or group identity, for example. Any attempt to enforce public-spiritedness or humanitarianism, or awareness of identity politics, is unlikely to work, may lead to anarchy or tyranny, etc. They may be relying on passages in Machiavelli that suggest there is such a thing as going too far, you won't get away with it—probably the least reliable passages in Machiavelli, passages that always point to further reading.

[13] Conservatives are more likely to celebrate "small town values," even if they do not personify them. Carter, a Southern Democrat, played the small-town theme in order to win over centrists, and became known as ineffectual; Clinton did some of this with much greater success.

es; sometimes it is necessary to get on with a tough job, with or without inspiring speeches; sometimes a great speech is exactly what is needed. Of course the greatest leaders, such as Lincoln, Churchill, and DeGaulle, generally have a reputation for being able to deliver both speeches and action.

Conservatives may define themselves as lacking the left-wing faith that something in human behaviour is going to change dramatically in the future, unless they believe this will happen by divine intervention. [14] Big government may be distrusted because it promises too much, and blurs or undermines the sense that individuals bear responsibility for their own lives, whether their circumstances are fortunate or not. If it is more important to make the best of life as it is, and get on with it, than to talk, one will seek leaders who match this world view. There may be a sense that very little can be expected in domestic policy other than law enforcement; big or effective government for conservatives means primarily the ability to crack down on people who are clearly wrong-doers. The same thinking may be applied to foreign policy. Reagan and both Bushes, especially Bush Jr., were Republicans who believed more or less in small government at home (although none of them did much to reduce the size of government), while supporting the use of American force to improve the world at large. It sometimes seemed from their rhetoric that no American government could do anything right at home, but every American officer or civilian official could work miracles in foreign lands, spreading democracy and prosperity, and so on. The inspirational foreign policy rhetoric came partly from "neo-conservatives," many of them former Democrats, who had concluded that programs like the War on Poverty had failed, and partly from Democrat Woodrow Wilson. William F. Buckley Jr., often credited as a leader of some of the intellectual movements that made conservatism more respectable in the 1970s than it had been earlier, can be said to have stood for minimal government at home, combined with maximum intervention against enemies abroad. Reagan, a somewhat idiosyncratic conservative, often

[14] Social conservatives tend to be in the latter category.

said that his favourite President was FDR. Americans who are pessimistic about government at home, and optimistic about American-supported governments abroad, might be seen as stereotypical examples of progressives or liberals rather than conservatives: they make the boldest pronouncements about matters they know the least about.

With the increasing polarization of mass politics, it might seem that neither side sees much point in changing people's minds on a large scale. In the U.S., much as in Canada and the United Kingdom, there are usually two main parties, more ideologically united than they were before. There are a few issues that are considered deal breakers or "third rails": abortion (and perhaps a range of issues related to sexual harassment, opportunity and civil rights, and gender), the environment, various aspects of law and order and immigration, and (at least in the U.S.) guns. Those who are somewhat to the left, one might say, give up as much as they have to in order to win, but no more; those on the right do the same; those who are likely to be undecided, or who have priorities other than the "hot button" issues, are left somewhat homeless. During the 2012 campaign, Mitt Romney, the Republican candidate for President, famously said at a fund-raising event: "there are 47% of the people who will vote for the president no matter what. … All right, there are 47% who are with him, who are dependent upon government, who believe that they are victims, who believe the government has a responsibility to care for them, who believe that they are entitled to healthcare, to food, to housing, to you-name-it." In the 2008 campaign, then-candidate Barack Obama toured Pennsylvania, then travelled to California. At a fund-raiser in San Francisco, he explained why people in small towns in Pennsylvania and the Midwest might not vote for Democrats: they had experienced decades of job losses, and "it's not surprising then they get bitter, they cling to guns or religion or antipathy to people who aren't like them or anti-immigrant sentiment or anti-trade sentiment as a way to explain their frustrations." Romney suggested that his most determined opponents would vote their own interests—their dependency on big government—no matter what. Obama suggested

that some of his opponents, having suffered economically, would mistakenly blame a culturally softer or more Democratic approach to issues for their predicament. The thought in both cases is: there's no point in trying to persuade them. For many people Donald Trump is the apotheosis of recent tendencies. [15] He speaks primarily to the converted who keep saying "can you believe what those idiots in Washington are doing?." His characteristic way of making a supposedly formal speech has been described as a "word salad," implying a lack of discipline, or a failure to achieve a kind of dignity and clarity that we expect. [16] One might say his supporters do not require such add-ons, and his opponents would not like him any better if he included them. He reduces rhetoric to laugh lines or hot button clichés, memorable and very effective in social media. [17] He does not look back to common beliefs or great achievements in the past, nor look forward to a better

[15] The left sees Trump as a threat to their agenda, therefore evil. NeverTrump Republicans see him as completely lacking in character, a demagogic weather vane, unreliable in every way except that he will pursue some narrow, probably short-term self-interest. The two kinds of opponent may agree that he is likely to hurt, rather than help, the country.

[16] Ann Althouse is an intelligent critic on such matters (who has consistently refused to say who she voted for in 2016); on her blog she has emphasized that there is a kind of musical narrative flow to Trump's speeches, informal but still with a basic structure, modified by improvisation. He will rush from one point to another before the first is fully clear; but he will (usually) return to the first point, especially if it is a major theme. He sometimes seems to be saying two things within the same sentence. The overall sense is that of a bright person who is impatient with structure, rather than of one who is simply stupid, poorly educated and/or lacking in discipline. An analogy might be made to jazz or hip-hop. A salad can be both carefully made and delicious.

[17] "Make America Great Again" (MAGA) is now closely identified with Trump. "We'll build a wall, and make Mexico pay for it" was a big applause line in the campaign. Less creditable, no doubt, was "Lock Her Up" as a summary of the career of his Democratic opponent. More recently, "Jobs Not Mobs" apparently owes something to Scott Adams. One comparison might be to Herbert Hoover, who had great success as a kind of super-administrator of food and relief programs during World War I, and concluded that the use of slogans and "propaganda" would not only work, but was the only effective way of "persuading" the American public. He was responsible for slogans like "Food Will Win the War," and for children: "Clean Your Plate: Think of the starving children in …." Hoover rejected forced rationing, and found it unnecessary during a world war, when there was widespread public acceptance of the need to conserve both food and fuel; voluntary rationing came to be known as "Hooverizing." See Wilson 58-61. This is reminiscent of more recent environmental campaigns: use a blue box, or use less plastic, and save ecosystems, or the rain forest, or something. Needless to say, this is all quite different from a more solid or lasting persuasion based on reason.

future in a way that is well articulated. His defenders might say that he has always emphasized the need for actual accomplishments that benefit the country, and he has delivered on what he promised at least as much as what might seem typical for a president. [18] In supporting at least some restrictions on immigration—resisting "open borders"—and seeking trade and security agreements that were more clearly favourable to his own country, Trump seemed to oppose various movements that are usually seen as progressive: internationalism and globalism, human rights without regard to national borders, and at least substantial moves toward free trade. Perhaps the most conservative aspect of both the Trump campaign and Trump presidency has been the determination to nominate conservative judges, or "strict constructionists" to federal courts including the Supreme Court.[19]

What can oratory or rhetoric teach us? Consider, as an example of "old school" oratory in American history, the Lincoln-Douglas debates of 1858. Abraham Lincoln and the incumbent, Senator Stephen Douglas, were running for an Illinois seat in the U.S. Senate, and even though the winner was not going to be elected by popular vote (the selection of senators was still made by the state legislatures), they campaigned in towns of all sizes, all over the state. By pre-arrangement, each debate consisted of three speeches,

[18] Comparing Trump's presidency to the 2016 campaign: he has not done much about immigration, but some of his senior appointees have taken solid steps; he has at least made an honest effort to make trade agreements more favourable to the U.S.; he has done little to end apparently endless wars, or to add any new strategic thinking to foreign policy. The economy is booming, and this is usually taken as a sign that investors believe the President is on the right track. His hiring of his closest advisors has been somewhat dubious, with results sometimes bordering on chaos, but his more high profile appointments have shown a great deal of respect for people with accomplishments that are different from his own, such as generals and successful Wall Street investors. He seems to have come to a great respect, bordering on awe, for Congressional leaders, who might be seen as negotiators on a bigger scale, with a larger range of issues, than Trump is accustomed to.

[19] It was surprising when Trump promised during the 2016 campaign to nominate conservatives for judicial positions, including on the Supreme Court. Probably even more surprising, he has kept this promise. He has never shown much sign of being a social conservative, and he has never explained his thinking on this matter; he may simply think that some version of strict constructionism is "common sense," whereas liberals and progressives on various courts have imported far-fetched theories into the law. On the other hand, he may have decided that he needed at least one prominent group of allies in Congress, and conservative Republicans were his best bet.

lasting 90 minutes, then 60 minutes, then 30 minutes. The two debaters took turns being the lead speaker, speaking first and last. Douglas and Lincoln appealed to somewhat different popular American principles: Douglas for popular sovereignty—letting newly admitted U.S. states "vote slavery up or down"; Lincoln for remaining consistent to the country's founding principles—Congress ought to outlaw slavery in new territories and states, as had sometimes been done in the past, on the ground that "all men are created equal." It seemed that audiences had to choose one principle or the other—not one to the exclusion of the other, but one as more important. The two agreed that there was no strong desire on the part of white Americans to grant "social equality" to blacks; Douglas accused Lincoln of heightening differences among non-slaveholding Americans, and making hatred and violence worse—even of making a civil war likely; Lincoln argued that the kind of compromise that had worked in the past could no longer work; "a house divided against itself cannot stand." Lincoln's efforts did not prevent Douglas from being re-elected, but the debates surely helped Lincoln secure the much bigger, indeed historic prize—the presidency--in 1860. Both Lincoln and Douglas had to accept limitations or constraints on what they could achieve: they had to address and try to persuade very specific audiences, in specific places. (Southern Illinois was more pro-slavery than Northern Illinois, to take only one example). Beyond that, they worked on the assumption that there is a limit on how far an argument can go in a political setting. Politics takes place, to use some language from Plato, in a cave of opinion rather than in the sunlight of metaphysical truth. One can intervene in the hopes of achieving more enlightened rather than less enlightened policies, but true enlightenment will remain an elusive goal. It is not wise to expect too much; there is no excuse for giving up.

Overview of Kennedy's Speech

There is no doubt that this was and is an inspiring speech, and it became iconic for the baby boomers who were still quite young at the time—the oldest of them, let

us say, 16 years old. Kennedy spoke primarily for his own generation, not for the boomers, but he spoke in a way that was already becoming familiar to the boomers: as if very little to speak of had happened before they were born. To a great extent, the great choice Kennedy suggested his country faced was between the approach of Kennedy himself and those willing to follow him, on the one hand, and the past on the other. Kennedy probably saw his speech as the culmination of his recent campaign for office, and the turning point from campaigning to governing. In his campaign he had put a heavy emphasis on the suggestion that he would make a better president than his predecessor, the sometimes lovable "Ike," long-time General Dwight D. Eisenhower, who had been President for eight years, very much a member of an older generation compared to Kennedy. (Ike was born in 1890; Kennedy in 1917, almost 30 years later). In particular, JFK presented himself as younger, tougher and more clear-sighted than Ike—more willing to make tough decisions, and to both make sacrifices himself, and ask his fellow citizens to do so. In a way Kennedy had focussed on Eisenhower, who was not running in 1960, and ignored Richard Nixon who was; by implication, he simply assumed Nixon, who had been Vice-President for eight years, agreed with what Kennedy considered Eisenhower's failed approach.

Turning to the inaugural speech today, we can see that in some important ways it continues the themes of the 1960 campaign. In a historical context, Kennedy's speech opposes American passivity and isolationism—which could be defined as a much greater concern with the Americas than with any other region, and possibly a tendency to allow problems to fester until they require massive intervention —in favour of principled interventionism. In both world wars the preferred choice for the U.S. seemed to be non-intervention, and when intervention came, the most publicly acceptable rationale for it was a moral one (although powerful economic arguments were also involved). There was something of a return to isolationism in the immediate aftermath of World War II, and then came the Cold War. Kennedy draws attention to a terrible conundrum: there are many threats, certainly

to the freedom of people all over the world, and possibly to the U.S. itself; probably the greatest threat is posed by Communist governments; it is impossible to directly confront Communism militarily, at least in the case of the Soviet Union, without increasing the likelihood of nuclear war, and therefore nuclear annihilation.

It is conventional for a speaker to say there is a great deal we can learn from the past, especially from the greatest of our past leaders, but of course we need to prepare for new challenges and new approaches to them. Kennedy suggests on the one hand that some of the thought of his predecessors is true, and must be defended. He refers, for example, to the oath he has just taken: he has "sworn before you and Almighty God the same solemn oath our forebears prescribed nearly a century and three quarters ago." In some ways, Kennedy suggests, there is no reason to improve on what the forefathers said and did:

> … the same revolutionary beliefs for which our fore bears fought are still at issue around the globe--the belief that the rights of man come not from the generosity of the state, but from the hand of God. We dare not forget today that we are the heirs of that first revolution.

He refers to "those human rights to which this Nation has always been committed, and to which we are committed today at home and around the world." Kennedy doesn't question the doctrine of human rights he has inherited.

On the other hand, Kennedy suggests that his speech and his awareness of vital issues owe very little to the thought or words of past presidents—or indeed those of any past leaders, or past generations. He speaks instead as if he is personally launching something quite new. Kennedy's main point about past American leaders, including those of some two hundred years earlier, is that their thought and example are of little help in dealing with the actual situations Kennedy faces. His generation has to think in a new way about new problems. The old beliefs are still at issue "around the globe"—it is not clear there is any place where they are securely ensconced. He describes his generation as "tem-

pered by war, disciplined by a hard and bitter peace, proud of our ancient heritage and unwilling to witness or permit the slow undoing of those human rights to which this Nation has always been committed." To say the least, he leaves open the possibility that fundamental rights are threatened not only in foreign countries, but in the U.S. itself. The elders left the country vulnerable—they don't seem to have provided adequate protection for rights anywhere, and this implies a serious lack of understanding on their part as to how to do so.

Although Kennedy suggests there may be many dire threats, he indicates that Communism is the main one. Possibly his view is that Communism in particular is something new and unprecedented; the elders had no way of preparing for it, but Kennedy's generation has no choice but to do so. Surely, one might suggest, NATO had come into existence some years before Kennedy's speech, and the Truman Doctrine had been formulated to "contain" Communism to those countries that were "given" to Stalin as part of the Yalta Agreement in 1945. Kennedy's only comment on all this seems to be as follows:

> To those old allies whose cultural and spiritual origins we share, we pledge the loyalty of faithful friends. United, there is little we cannot do in a host of coop erative ventures. Divided, there is little we can do -- for we dare not meet a powerful challenge at odds and split asunder.

Kennedy introduces himself to his allies, as the new President, by suggesting that their putative unity is extremely suspect, and indeed they might be "divided" at any time—obviously a part of the threat to "rights," all over the globe, to which he refers elsewhere. Toward the end of the speech he says his generation has been "granted the role of defending freedom in its hour of maximum danger." The old guard left the country in a unique, unprecedented grave danger which Kennedy is forced to address.

As for the "adversaries" of the United States, Kennedy urges a whole new beginning, apparently assuming that things were badly handled in the past.

Finally, to those nations who would make themselves

> our adversary, we offer not a pledge but a request -- that both sides begin anew the quest for peace, before the dark powers of destruction unleashed by science engulf all humanity in planned or accidental self-destruction.
>
> We dare not tempt them with weakness. For only when our arms are sufficient beyond doubt can we be certain beyond doubt that they will never be employed.
>
> But neither can two great and powerful groups of nations take comfort from our present course -- both sides overburdened by the cost of modern weapons, both rightly alarmed by the steady spread of the deadly atom, yet both racing to alter that uncertain balance of terror that stays the hand of mankind's final war.
>
> So let us begin anew, remembering on both sides that civility is not a sign of weakness, and sincerity is always subject to proof. Let us never negotiate out of fear. But let us never fear to negotiate.

How far is Kennedy prepared to go to oppose Communism? He makes it clear he is prepared to intervene with force anywhere, at any time, in any corner of the world.

> To those new states whom we welcome to the ranks of the free, we pledge our word that one form of colonial control shall not have passed away merely to be replaced by a far more iron tyranny. We shall not always expect to find them supporting our view. But we shall always hope to find them strongly supporting their own freedom—and to remember that, in the past, those who foolishly sought power by riding the back of the tiger ended up inside.

In addition to the threat that the tiger of Communism will eat its erstwhile allies, there is at least an implied threat that the U.S. will invade any country to ensure that it strongly supports its own freedom—as interpreted by Kennedy. This is spelled out a bit more in the passages on the Americas—"our sister republics south of our border."

> Let all our neighbours know that we shall join with them to oppose aggression or subversion anywhere in the Americas. And let every other power know that this Hemisphere intends to remain the master of its own house.

There is at least a strong possibility that subversion by the enemy in some remote outpost will be met by American military intervention; as we know from history, this was no mere hypothetical possibility. One would think that awareness of nuclear weapons, and fear of their use, would lead to caution or fear in undertaking military adventures that might escalate into nuclear war. Such caution restricted the military actions of the U.S. in Korea, ten years before. Kennedy refers to the possibility of "mankind's final war," but he seemed to have no fear when he uttered what came across as a declaration of war on much of the world.

It must be noted that Kennedy's commitment to intervene in (potentially) any country, anywhere in the world, does not refer only to the use of military force. He is also committed to combatting poverty.

> To those people in the huts and villages of half the globe struggling to break the bonds of mass misery, we pledge our best efforts to help them help them selves, for whatever period is required—not because the communists may be doing it, not because we seek their votes, but because it is right. If a free society cannot help the many who are poor, it cannot save the few who are rich.

Especially in the case of the Americas, he promises to do something about poverty before he threatens war.

> To our sister republics south of the border, we offer a special pledge—to convert our good words into good deeds—in a new alliance for progress—to assist free men and free governments in casting off the chains of poverty.

He then goes on to say: "But this peaceful revolution of hope cannot become the prey of hostile powers," and promises and/or threatens military intervention. Kennedy does not spell it out, but there may be a link between poverty, more or less an economic issue, and the political threats to freedom to which he devotes more words. The poor may be more prone to becoming radical on their own; or they may be more promising material for dangerous, demagogic, ideological or fanatical leaders to work with.

Other Countries and Their Leaders

Kennedy does not refer to specific countries other than the U.S., but it is hard to miss a reference to specific events in his remarks about Latin America. Fidel Castro, almost 10 years younger than Kennedy, had taken power in Cuba in 1959. For many Cubans, people throughout Latin America and indeed elsewhere, he represented the hope of replacing a cruel dictator (Batista) with a more democratic and humane, less corrupt government. Castro did not declare himself a Communist until sometime after he took power; his defenders have always claimed that to some extent the lack of support from the American government drove him into the arms of the Soviets abroad and his Communist allies at home. [20]

[20] Castro claimed at various times in his life to be an admirer of Thomas Jefferson. Castro's forces entered Havana on January 1, 1959. Summary executions of Batista government officials began immediately, but positions in government were given not only to Communists, but to other, probably less radical members of Castro's coalition. This changed as the year went on, the government became more clearly Communist, and some very prominent leaders of the Castro forces, who were also anti-Communist, were branded as traitors and treated accordingly. In April 1959, Castro visited the U.S. and gave the impression he was a social democrat and an admirer of American institutions (although not necessarily elections). Soon after, the new government began significant expropriations of private property. In February 1960—a year before Kennedy's Inaugural--the Soviet Union formally agreed to support the Cuban economy, among other things by purchasing sugar. In March Eisenhower approved an anti-Castro plan, including an embargo on sugar, oil, and guns. In June Castro nationalized American oil refineries; by September all U.S. owned properties and companies had been nationalized.

All of this happened, as has often been said, 90 miles from Florida. Kennedy had criticized Eisenhower for not reacting forcefully enough to Castro's initiatives—even for not helping Cuban "freedom fighters" in their opposition to Castro. Kennedy may have concluded that Eisenhower had "tempted" Castro "with weakness." [21]

Kennedy speaks as if many leaders in developing countries, including in Latin America, are choosing whether to be American allies or not—indeed, whether to stand for their own freedom or not. Becoming an ally or a satellite of the Soviet Union (or China in the case of Asian countries) is a temptation. Castro's most famous ally or associate in Cuba was Ernesto "Che" Guevara, a well-read physician with "an affinity for the poor" from Argentina, two years younger than Castro, eleven younger than JFK. Kennedy indicates that he can understand the anger of young Latin Americans—if not Castro and "Che" Guevara themselves, then at least many of their followers. One crucial fact as Kennedy speaks is that there is widespread poverty in Latin America. Kennedy's speech promises to address the poverty while opposing any kind of political extremism that is a threat to freedom. He does not need to state that he thinks the biggest political danger is Communism.

At the risk of romanticism, Kennedy may even have identified to a certain extent with Castro and Che Guevara. Both of these Latin Americans were famous or notorious as both young and tough as well as bright--skilled at thinking strategically. These were descriptions that JFK and his brother Robert were proud to have applied to themselves. Castro and his allies recruited, trained and led rebel forces, with little help from outside Cuba, while being pursued by Batista's military. It was at least as true of the Castro forces

[21] "In August 1960, having just accepted the Democratic nomination, JFK told a Miami gathering of American veterans that, for the 'first time in our history, an enemy stands at the throat of the United States.' The Cubans, he declared, are our 'enemies and will do everything in their power to bring about our downfall.' During the campaign, he repeatedly hammered Nixon on Cuba, demanding that the Eisenhower White House cut off trade to the island and provide aid to 'fighters for freedom' to overthrow Castro." The Nation, March 24, 2008. Eisenhower had actually ordered the training of the forces who eventually (at Kennedy's orders) took part in the Bay of Pigs invasion, but Nixon was unable to disclose this secret.

as of Kennedy's American "Greatest Generation," as they were called later, that they were "tempered by war"; after all, many Americans had a very good war in World War II, which "tempered" them by preparing them for the prosperity of the 50s. The Cuban radicals collectively demonstrated the kind of sacrifice Kennedy calls for from Americans. It is hard not to imagine that in Kennedy's mind, he could have turned out like Castro or Che Guevara if circumstances had been slightly different. He, too, feels compelled by the impatience of the young, the desire to act, the grinding hardships of poverty which are largely ignored by the Establishment, and the contemptuous sense that the elders have been too accepting of an unacceptable status quo.[22]

There were other countries where Communism had made gains during the Cold War, apparently by the hard work and sacrifice of leaders and the people they recruited—to some degree, the best and brightest of their respective countries. [23] Kennedy may have wondered in general how it was that people much like himself turned out to be Communists in those countries, while he was very much an anti-Communist American. The Vietnam War, as far as the U.S. was concerned, had hardly begun at the time of Kennedy's Inaugural, but events in Vietnam had grown more ominous, in some ways as in Cuba under Castro, for some years. Not only that, the growth of radical, aggressive, militarily successful Communism in Vietnam in the mid to late 50s built directly on similar developments in Korea in the early 50s. It may be these events in combination which caused Kennedy to convey such a sense of immediate crisis in several different parts of the world.

[22] Kennedy famously tried to have Castro killed on several occasions. "Subsequent investigations by the CIA's Inspector General (1967) and the Church Committee (1975) uncovered at least eight separate murder plots against Castro, beginning in the summer of 1960, the halcyon days of the Eisenhower Administration"; Edward Jay Epstein, "The Plots to Kill Castro," George June 2000. It is possible that Oswald killed Kennedy in the belief, whether directed by anyone in Cuba or not, that he was helping Castro. Nevertheless, there is evidence that Kennedy was considering a rapprochement with Castro just before his death. http://www2.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB103/

[23] It may be worth noting that Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai of China, along with Ho Chi Minh (leader of North Vietnam) were closer to Eisenhower's age than Kennedy's; Kim Il Sung (leader of North Korea) was only five years older than Kennedy.

One alarming thing about the Korean War (1950-53), from a Western perspective, was that it demonstrated how Communism had already spread since 1945, and was threatening to spread further. China was not represented at the Yalta conference in February 1945, and was mentioned only in connection with specific pieces of territory. [24] Korea was also barely mentioned at Yalta; at the Potsdam conference in July 1945, it was decided (in response to a proposal by the U.S. State Department) that as Japanese forces were defeated, North Korea and South Korea would be divided by the 38th Parallel, and would be temporarily occupied by the Soviet Union and the United States, respectively. Remarkably, the "truce" line today deviates only slightly from the one drawn in 1945. The conquest of China by Communist forces in 1949 seems to have been as much as a surprise to American decision-makers, and to have caused as much impact on U.S. domestic politics, as the revelation that same year that the Soviet Union had the capacity to produce nuclear weapons. When North Korean forces attacked the South, with troops who had been trained and then gained experience in battle under Chinese Communist leadership, and officers trained in the Soviet Union, this suddenly seemed to pose a threat to the entire Far East, including Japan. As late as 1949, the U.S. had indicated in official statements that it would not intervene militarily in Korea, even to prevent a communist victory in the south; that changed when war actually broke out, northern armies advanced very quickly, and the Soviet Union indicated it would not commit troops there. Korea became one of the opportunities, of which there would be many in years to come, in

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[24] As a condition for joining the war against Japan, Stalin insisted on official recognition of Mongolian independence from China, and a recognition of Soviet interests in the Manchurian railways and Port Arthur.

[25] U.S. intervention in Korea, leading a UN coalition force, came after a formal commitment from the Soviet Union that their troops would not fight there. This commitment was maintained except in the air war, where some MIG pilots were reported to be rather more northern European looking than the typical Korean or Chinese. The U.S. made it a policy not to acknowledge that there were Soviet pilots flying in Korea, and Soviet pilots were apparently ordered to avoid dogfights as much as possible. In those days, a direct confrontation between U.S. and Chinese forces, such as occurred in the third major phase of the Korean War, was less likely to lead to a greater conflagration.

which the two super-powers could either fight via proxies, or at least avoid direct military confrontation with each other. [25] One could argue that post-World War II, the containment of Communism had failed, or had begun too late, to stop the rise of Communist governments in China and North Korea, or to prevent the very destructive and inconclusive war in Korea. Despite his criticisms of his elders, Kennedy seems to accept a major part of the solution that had taken shape: fight local Communists, even or especially in small, obscure or poor countries, with the understanding that a direct confrontation with the Soviet Union, and to a lesser extent China, was to be avoided.[26]

Given the way the Vietnam War dominated U.S. political discourse for so many years, it is hard to believe that Vietnam was not at the top of Kennedy's mind at the time of his inauguration. In their meetings to smooth the transition of power, Eisenhower had indicated to Kennedy that Laos, where the Soviet Union was directly involved, was more of a priority than Vietnam. Stanley Karnow reports that as a member of Congress, Kennedy "had uttered all the fashionable cold war platitudes. He had favored funding the French war in Indochina [as Vietnam was still called], asserting that the United States must prevent 'the onrushing tide of Communism from engulfing all Asia.'" [27] As the Democratic Party became more and more opposed to the U.S. intervention in Vietnam in the years after Kennedy's death in 1963, increasing efforts were made to show that Kennedy went through a similar change of mind while he was still alive—that in fact he would have withdrawn from Vietnam soon if he had lived. Like Eisenhower before him, and Johnson and Nixon after, Kennedy no doubt said many times that it would be great to be able to withdraw from Vietnam without paying too high a price. The record shows, however, that as president he con-

[26] Kennedy never seems to have questioned the settlement of Europe under the terms of Yalta. The Soviets constructed the Berlin Wall in the summer of 1961, a very busy time for President Kennedy, and on June26, 1963, he gave his famous "Ich bin ein Berliner" speech in West Berlin. Under the Yalta settlement, Berlin remained a capital city surrounded by Soviet territory, and a city divided like the country into four (Britain, France, United States, Soviet Union) that became two (East and West).

[27] Karnow, Vietnam: A History: 247.

siderably escalated the extent of the U.S. commitment, and probably made it harder for future presidents to withdraw. He believed that Vietnam was too small for a major commitment of troops such as occurred (with little advance planning) in Korea; but Vietnam was big enough that he took significant steps toward exactly that outcome. Kennedy never accepted Eisenhower's advice that Laos was more important, and in fact when all the major powers agreed to keep Laos neutral, Kennedy specifically refused to accord the same status to Vietnam.[28] Only five months after Kennedy entered office, "Soviet Prime Minister Nikita Khrushchev bullied him at their summit meeting in Vienna. Coming out of that encounter, he confided to James Reston of The New York Times: 'Now we have a problem in making our power credible, and Vietnam is the place.'" [29]

Kennedy had reached political maturity in the 1950s, when careers could be hurt or ended if one was successfully accused of being "soft on Communism." He had always forestalled such a possibility by ensuring he stood out for being "tough on Communism." We have already mentioned that Kennedy accused the Eisenhower Administration of weakness or indecisiveness when it came to Cuba. For another example, Kennedy claimed that Eisenhower had allowed a "missile gap" to come about, such that the Soviet Union actually had more missiles than the U.S. Kennedy may simply have been uninformed (as in the Cuban case), but the missile gap in 1960 was very much in favour of the U.S. Kennedy surely came as close as one could to accusing the legendary General Eisenhower of being soft on Communism, indeed on foreign enemies in general, whoever they might be.

Kennedy's Inaugural comes close to providing specific predictions of several of his foreign policy initiatives. Two were peaceful: the launch of the Alliance for Progress, pro-

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[28] North Vietnam occupied parts of eastern Laos in the 1950s to use for transit for the insurgency in South Vietnam. Laos—meaning the territory held by North Vietnam--and the Soviet Union established diplomatic relations in October 1960. For years Laos was an extension of the battlefield in Vietnam, with the U.S. backing anti-Communist forces (including the Hmong in Laos) against a strong Communist government, skilled at winning recruits, with backing from powerful Communist countries.

[29] Karnow 248.

moting economic development in, and American foreign aid to, Latin America; and the founding of the Peace Corps, both announced in March 1961, and both designed in large measure to help people in Third World countries alleviate their own poverty. Two initiatives were military: the invasion of Cuba at the Bay of Pigs on April 17, 1961 (just a few months after the Inauguration), and the escalation in Vietnam. Eisenhower may have taken what seem in hindsight to be the first steps in these initiatives, but it was Kennedy who actually launched them. In some ways Kennedy's foreign policy was put to the test very dramatically during the Cuban missile crisis in October 1962, when he had been president for almost two years. One reading of the crisis is that Khrushchev, sensing what he thought was weakness in Kennedy, placed Soviet missiles in Cuba in order to put pressure on him to do something, while leaving few options available. For many Americans this was an extreme or even nightmare example of the encroachment of Communism and the threat of nuclear war. Kennedy kept a cooler head than many of his advisers, identified what was necessary to end the crisis, and brought it to an end. Another reading is that Khrushchev had clearly signalled that he was placing missiles in Cuba to counter-balance the American missiles in Turkey; if the latter were removed, the former would be as well. This is exactly what happened, and JFK chose to keep the decision on missiles in Turkey a secret. Kennedy also promised, a bit bizarrely, not to attempt again to invade Cuba.[30] It looked like he had succeeded by toughness, but it may be that he simply made exactly the deal that Khrushchev wanted.

This leads to another foreign policy issue: the testing of nuclear weapons, and the "partial" ban or treaty that Kennedy helped bring about, and then signed in August 1963. One proposal Kennedy makes to the adversaries of the U.S. in his speech is: "Let both sides, for the first time, formulate serious and precise proposals for the inspection and control

[30] U Thant, Secretary General of the UN, brokered the agreement between the U.S. and the Soviet Union. Castro was furious that he was not part of the negotiations.

[31] Eisenhower says in his speech from about the same time (see below) that disarmament is an "imperative."

of arms." [31] After some years when atmospheric testing by both the Soviet Union and the U.S. had stopped, the Soviet Union resumed testing in September 1961. [32] U.S. testing resumed a few days later. There has never been complete disclosure of the effects of many years of testing, by many countries but especially the two super-powers, on civilians.[33] U.S. testing no doubt caused an increased incidence of cancer in U.S. civilians; in this way nuclear tests, which were presumably primarily intended to send a signal to foreign enemies, were also related to various experiments on civilians by government agencies, with such things as high doses of electroshock therapy and hallucinogenic drugs. It was sometimes said by U.S. politicians that in order to negotiate with Khrushchev, it was necessary to act as crazy as Khrushchev.

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[32] It is difficult to summarize the history of atmospheric testing in a few words. In 1954 Eisenhower authorized Castle Bravo, "the highest yielding test ever conducted by the United States," on Bikini Atoll. There were many civilian victims of fallout. This test strengthened the movement in favour of a moratorium on nuclear weapons, convinced many people including Winston Churchill that bomb shelters would be useless in the case of a nuclear attack, and established for experts that the U.S. was ahead of the Soviet Union not only in the number of nuclear weapons but in their destructive capacity. Despite rising concern and increasing information about fallout, a series of tests called Teapot took place in Nevada from February to May of 1955—still in Eisenhower's first term; Plumbob took place in Nevada from May to October of 1957, and Hardtack II, again in Nevada, in September and October 1958. More tests in the Pacific also took place. "During 1957, according to one source, the three nuclear powers [including the UK] conducted forty-two tests, compared to nineteen in 1956." A ban finally took effect at the end of October 1958. The Soviets launched the satellite Sputnik, another source of concern/fear/hysteria, in early October 1957. The Soviets resumed testing on a massive scale in September 1961, followed quickly by the U.S. (by this time directed by Kennedy). See U.S. Department of Energy, Atmospheric Nuclear Weapons Testing 1951-1963, September 2006. The test ban took effect in July 1963. Underground testing, which supposedly raised no fear of fallout, continued and indeed escalated until all testing was banned in 1992.

[33] It is safe to say that there has been a great deal of discussion as to whether, and in what way, nuclear fallout from weapons manufacturing and testing has contributed to premature death among Americans and others. There is some consensus that out of all the ionizing radiation in the world, a few percentage points comes from nuclear weapons and reactors. There are official estimates of 11,000 to 22,000 premature American deaths from the testing of nuclear weapons. See Wikipedia, "Downwinders" (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Downwinders), "Background Radiation" (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Background_radiation#Artificial_background_radiation) and "Nuclear Weapons Testing" (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nuclear_weapons_testing#Nuclear_testing_by_country). Of course many people who were alive in the 1950s are still alive, and there are projections of premature deaths affecting the entire affected population ranging into the hundreds of thousands. See https://qz.com/1163140/us-nuclear-tests-killed-american-civilians-on-a-scale-comparable-to-hiroshima-and-nagasaki/ .

Simply touching on these observations may support the point that Kennedy was convinced that he faced a crisis, and that there were indeed real and unprecedented threats to the freedom and security of Americans.

Kennedy as President may have learned some lessons that he did not yet know when he was sworn in. As President he may have learned that he did not have as much freedom of action as he thought or hoped. Even if a failed military intervention by the U.S. in some foreign land has little effect on the U.S. homeland, which is surely defended more powerfully than any country has ever been, it may still have lasting consequences. Getting communists out of power in a small country may be a more difficult problem than Kennedy initially believed. One strange thing in the Inaugural Address is that Kennedy spoke as if practically everyone in the world had considerable freedom of action. Anyone who claimed they were victims of circumstance, such as a takeover by powerful Communists, and above all anyone who claimed there was good reason not to intervene around the world in the causes of saving freedom and ending poverty, could rightly be accused of defeatism, of unacceptable passivity, settling for being a mere "witness" rather than a shaper of events. One reason Kennedy thinks military interventions against Communism will work is that he thinks the people in poor countries are "fighting for their own freedom," just as he probably would in their situation. He speaks of people in such countries choosing Communism, as if it were a matter of choosing to ride a tiger. The U.S. will "join with" such people "to oppose aggression." Insofar as poverty is a problem that all people, but especially poor people themselves, are trying to solve, he suggests that U.S. intervention will consist of "helping people to help themselves." His confidence that he will be able to use force strategically, in a limited way, may be based on a belief that he is primarily, both with the carrot of combatting poverty and the stick of military intervention, influencing people who are basically free despite their poverty to choose wisely instead of unwisely. He may not be planning a long-term military intervention of any country. Was this picture of various peoples choosing their destinies a good

description of what people were doing in Cuba or Vietnam? Is it not true to say that most human beings, most of the time, live in circumstances so constrained that it is an exaggeration to say they freely choose the political and economic systems that rule their lives? Even if Kennedy's picture is more or less accurate for some countries, does it provide a sensible basis for military intervention? Not only is Kennedy in his speech inclined to argue that anyone who is not sufficiently anti-Communist, including people who insist that any action should be cautious and prudent, is actually pro-Communist; he is inclined to believe that anyone who is not as much of an activist as himself—anyone who comes up with reasons to do little or nothing in a way that can be demonstrated in terms of force—is unacceptably passive, morally in the wrong. Given an assumption that human beings have perfect freedom, or something close to it, it is unacceptable not to act on this freedom. Once again, regardless of many of the specifics in this speech, this optimism about human freedom may have been just what boomers wanted to hear.

Kennedy and Eisenhower Compared: The Question of Prudence

In order to understand Kennedy's speech, it is helpful to compare and contrast it with Eisenhower's Farewell Address, given only a few days earlier on January 17, 1961.[34] This speech is known, if at all, for Ike's reference to the danger posed by the "military-industrial complex," but there is far more to it than that. It is hard not to be impressed at the similarity of the two speeches. It is taken for granted in both that the U.S. is the leader of the free world—morally and politically as well as economically and militarily. Kennedy mentions allies only in order to give them a warning to shape up; Ike doesn't mention them at all. Ike does not refer to Communism by name,

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[34] Again it is generally accepted that the speech was to a great extent the work of speechwriters—in this case, most notably, the President's brother Milton (President of Johns Hopkins University at the time), speechwriter Malcolm Moos (a Ph.D. in Political Science who taught at Johns Hopkins for 15 years before joining Eisenhower's staff in 1957), and staff person Ralph Williams. On the other hand, a biographer of Ike's has been quoted as saying: "Eisenhower was heavily involved in his public addresses, often rewriting them himself until moments before delivery."

JFK barely does so, but they both make it clear that the struggle between the West (led by the U.S.) and the Communist countries will be the great conflict facing the world for some time. Ike speaks of "the conflict now engulfing the world" which threatens "progress in human achievement," including in "liberty, dignity and integrity among people." The conflict is driven by a "hostile ideology—global in scope, atheistic in character, ruthless in purpose, and insidious in method." The danger "promises to be of indefinite duration." It is necessary for Americans to carry "the burdens of a prolonged and complex struggle—with liberty at stake." Only by successfully maintaining that struggle will the country "remain, despite every provocation, on our charted course toward permanent peace and human betterment." JFK speaks, if possible, even more broadly. He says "we" are called to "bear the burden of a long twilight struggle, year in and year out … against the common enemies of man: tyranny, poverty, disease and war itself." One challenge takes priority over all others, however: Kennedy's generation has "been granted the role of defending freedom in its hour of maximum danger."

What then are the major differences between the speeches? Eisenhower says matter-of-factly that "America is today the strongest, the most influential and most productive nation in the world," and refers to "our unmatched material progress, riches and military strength." He may have Kennedy in mind when he says that in order for the U.S. to meet the great challenge or challenges in front of it, what is called for is "not so much the emotional and transitory sacrifices of crisis, but rather those which enable us to carry forward … the burdens of a prolonged and complex struggle." Kennedy identifies the need for a prolonged sacrifice to achieve large and long-term goals, but he isn't exactly willing to give up the rhetorical impact of an appeal to "the emotional and transitory sacrifices of crisis." This may reflect the difference between the older man and the younger one, but Eisenhower may also have a superior grasp of political psychology. A call for long and sustained sacrifice may require different arguments, and a different kind of evidence, than a call for urgent action. Kennedy provides at least substantial hints that some

kind of disaster is imminent, and Americans must be prepared for it; if he can raise his fellow-citizens to that pitch of intensity, he somehow wants to sustain it for a long time. The example in his mind may have been Churchill in 1939; it was necessary both to prepare people in Britain to be bombed, and possibly to be invaded, and at the same time, if they somehow survived for another few months, to wage a very long war with unknown allies, in unforeseen battlefields.[35] JFK seems to work from a somewhat different, more dire analysis of the situation than Ike; his analysis almost forces him desperately to say Americans must sacrifice now, sacrifice in the near to medium term, and sacrifice for an indefinite future.

Towards the end of his speech, Ike refers to the Cold War (without mentioning that name) , says he wishes he could say "that a lasting peace is in sight," and then adds: "Happily, I can say that war has been avoided"—presumably meaning there has been no major U.S. military action since World War II. This is not even entirely consistent with Ike's own speech, however, since he says toward the beginning that the 20th century has seen "four major wars among the great nations," and three involved the U.S. The three would seem to be the two World Wars, and the Korean War. By saying there has been no war, Ike may have meant no war declared as such by the U.S. Congress; the Korean War was never a "declared" war, but it was a major war without question, and it came about within the context of the Cold War.[36] Eisenhower wants to assure Americans that world or foreign policy issues are under control; Kennedy insists that they are not. Charles Erwin Wilson, Eisenhower's Secretary

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[35] Kennedy wrote a book, Why England Slept, published in 1940, the title alluding to Churchill's While England Slept published in 1938. Kennedy argued that Chamberlain's appeasement policy, which his father had defended as U.S. Ambassador, may have been the best possible at the time. Of course he agreed that Britons did the right thing in fighting when they did. It may be worth noting that Churchill's attempts to persuade the British to re-arm were almost completely unsuccessful until the German invasion of Poland in September 1939, about a year after the now notorious, then hugely popular Munich accord which Churchill condemned. It is possible the British public made up their own minds as to when Hitler had gone too far, and Churchill, despite his much-praised oratory, never persuaded them of anything in this regard until after war was declared.

of Defence, made the phrases "more bang for the buck" and "bigger bang for the buck" famous when he defended the reliance on nuclear weapons as opposed to armed troops to contain Communism. Eisenhower authorized a number of covert operations, especially by the CIA, to de-stabilize or remove regimes in various countries that were not serving U.S. interests; these small-scale operations could also be seen as an inexpensive alternative to military invasion.[37] Eisenhower doesn't disagree with Kennedy that there will be many hotspots in the world, and there will be reasons for the U.S. to intervene in quite a few of them; but he may think this is largely a matter for a few decision-makers, acting on the advice of experts. It is not something for the public at large to be concerned about.

What does Ike think the public should be concerned about, if not foreign crises? He admits that "crises there will continue to be." He warns against a "recurring temptation to feel that some spectacular and costly action could become the miraculous solution to all current difficulties." Then he lists some specific proposals that might be "spectacular and costly," including "a huge increase in newer elements of our defense," and the launch of new programs in agricultural technology, and in research of all kinds. He goes on at some length about these two threats in particular—what might be called new and subtle domestic threats to Americans—threats to various kinds of essential "balance" in American life and politics, including a balance "between the private and the public economy." Ike seems to agree with the old cartoon: I have seen the enemy, and he is us.

[36] The U.S. Congress has not "declared war" since World War II. It has voted to authorize military action on several occasions, including in Vietnam by the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution (1964); there was no such vote in the case of Korea, but military action was authorized by resolution of the UN Security Council. In round numbers, 1.8 million Americans served in Korea, and 35,000 were killed; for Vietnam the numbers are 2.7 million and 58,300; for Iraq and Afghanistan combined, 1.5 million and 6,700. "Between 1961 and 2013, over 215,000 Americans joined the Peace Corps and served in 139 countries."

[37] Eisenhower's "New Look" foreign policy referred primarily to the dependence on nuclear weapons, but it also included: using the CIA for covert operations; diplomacy; and maintaining a strong economy. Anti-Communist armed interventions in foreign countries for which Ike retained plausible deniability included Iran in 1953, Guatemala in 1954, and the Republic of Congo in 1960.

For a man who was famous first as a general, and only later as a politician, Ike's warnings about the military-industrial complex are remarkable.

> … we have been compelled to create a permanent armaments industry of vast proportions. Added to this, three and a half million men and women are directly engaged in the defense establishment… This conjunction of an immense military establishment and a large arms industry is new in the American experience. The total influence—economic, politi cal, even spiritual—is felt in every city, every state house, every office of the Federal government…. In the councils of government, we must guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the military-industrial com plex. The potential for the disastrous rise of misplaced power exists and will persist. We must never let the weight of this combination endanger our liberties or democratic processes.

Ike does not deny that many crises confront the U.S., and will continue to do so. Yet his focus is far less on how to respond to external crises than on the deleterious effects of responses that are already well-established. He says to his fellow Americans: it is what we do when we mean well, when we take apparently prudent precautions, when we respond to external crises or prepare to do so, that poses a threat when it changes our focus, our institutions, and our way of life. Apparent or short-term prudence must be re-considered in the light of what might be called longer-term prudence. This shows a wisdom that is lacking from Kennedy's speech. Kennedy argues that precautions taken so far on the foreign stage are not enough—more must be done, to the extent that purely domestic issues are hardly mentioned. If short-term thinking has already led to consequences that speak of a lack of true prudence, Kennedy would make this problem worse. Precisely if Kennedy is successful in leading his people to remain attuned to crises at all times, what effect is this likely to have on them, on their families and their thinking?

The warning about the military-industrial complex, of course, was taken up to a great extent by the left. One can wonder whether Eisenhower's fears have been realized over all the intervening years, and whether the dangers he pointed to were more realistic ones for Americans in 1961 than the dangers emphasized in Kennedy's speech. The Pentagon seemed to suffer a real setback in their position in American society—the esteem in which they were held—during and as a result of the war in Vietnam. Many Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) offices on campuses closed. There was perhaps less regular contact than ever before between military people on the one hand, and significant people in civilian life—whether in business, the academy which grew to such huge proportions in the 60s and 70s, or even in government. Since then, however, the Pentagon has arguably been the most successful bureaucracy in Washington when it comes to getting what it wants. Generally speaking, war is better for the military than peace—at least as long as a war is relatively low-risk, as it is always likely to be with the huge forces the U.S. can deploy. The prospect and reality of battlefield service is good for discipline, throughout any military force. War brings more promotions than peace, and it is battlefield promotions that really count. Generals are more likely to be listened to in the highest circles of decision-making during war than they are during peacetime, and people throughout the military might feel that importance, and derive benefit from it in their careers. The one lesson the Pentagon seems to have learned from Vietnam is that it is not wise to draft anyone. With this policy, and the assurance that wars remain more limited than in Vietnam, the American public seems to support the fighting of several wars simultaneously, sometimes for longer periods of time than in the case of Vietnam. Some wars like Syria get attention; others like Yemen get virtually none.

Why does the U.S. fight so many wars, if it is not simply to keep their huge military in strong fighting trim? Kennedy seems to have clarified or anticipated the thought that only one revolutionary regime can be accepted in the world, and that regime is the American one. There is an assumption

that third world countries, apparently choosing their own destinies, will choose some form of liberal democracy if they know what is good for them. This is true both in the sense that the U.S. seems likely to intervene if they do not choose wisely according to American views, and in the sense that the only real test that a country has chosen wisely is that it ends up with a liberal democracy. Everything and anything else is somehow obviously wrong. Kennedy did not use expressions like "natural right" or "liberal democracy" to explain the kind of regime based on "freedom" he wished to propagate. He said rights come from God, and allies, presumably meaning NATO allies, were described as "old allies whose cultural and spiritual origins we share." There is an uneasy feeling that only the U.S. is adequately committed to freedom; even Western allies are somehow unreliable.[38] To take a recent example, the U.S. invaded Iraq in 2003, 15 years ago. The reasons that were emphasized at the time were the threat of international terrorism, which may have been supported to some degree by Saddam Hussein, and the danger that a rogue regime may acquire nuclear weapons.[39] Hussein kept up at least some appearance of leading a revolutionary movement that would extend beyond the borders of Iraq. The U.S. acted, as was clear at the time, at least partly to "turn Iraq into" a liberal democracy, a thing which it had barely been at any time in the past. Perhaps one criticism of the U.S. effort in Vietnam—that not enough had been done to build a successful democracy, or a civil society—had been taken to heart, and there was a huge investment in civilian infrastructure.

[38] There is an implication in Kennedy's speech that the European powers, no doubt meaning primarily the Brits, have played a significant role in denying freedom to poor countries in the past. "To those new states whom we welcome to the ranks of the free, we pledge our word that one form of colonial control shall not have passed away merely to be replaced by a far more iron tyranny." The new tyranny is likely to be worse, but the old colonial tyranny was, apparently, a tyranny.

[39] There was some expert testimony at the time that the immediate or emergency-type pretexts for invading Iraq were nonsense. Ann Coulter has come up with a related back-up rationalization that Saddam Hussein had made an attempt on the life of Bush Sr., and had provided a safe haven for some anti-American terrorists, including those who carried out the attack on the Achille Laura and killed Leon Klinghoffer. Hussein of course had nothing to do with the 9/11 attack, and generally he and Ghaddafi were old-fashioned tyrants who had little to do with international terrorism, which might after all make the world less secure.

Iraq has not seen a true end to civil war since the U.S. invasion; even if one says there was always a civil war just under the surface with the regime of Saddam Hussein, and there has been progress in that there is now a liberal democracy of a sort in place, politics there may be more sectarian, and less stable, than it has been at many times in the past. A terrible price has been paid for any progress by the Iraqi people, and a heavy U.S. involvement is not over yet. A stranger case may be that of Afghanistan.[40] U.S. military involvement has lasted even longer than in Iraq, and there seems to be less hope of a liberal democracy. Fairly stable regimes, generally lacking revolutionary fervour, have been eliminated, and the relevant countries left substantially weaker, if not in a shambles, in Libya and Syria. There is at least some evidence for the cynical view that the U.S. can accept either one of two outcomes: the reduction of any given country to something that is much weaker, much less a threat to anyone including Americans; or the creation of a new liberal democracy where one did not exist before. On the other hand, does the U.S. consistently oppose regimes that actually pursue some kind of non-liberal and non-democratic revolutionary agenda for the whole world, in the same way it opposed the Communist countries during the Cold War? We are told that a choice must be made between Saudi Arabia and Iran—two countries trying to export their particular brands of Islam as widely as possible. The U.S. generally follows Israel in supporting Saudi Arabia (hence the wars in Syria and Yemen), although Obama took pains to establish a treaty with Iran, since rescinded by Trump, to prevent the development of nuclear weapons. Turkey, a NATO ally, tends to support the Muslim

[40] The Taliban regime in Afghanistan had actually provided a haven for al Qaeda, the group that was responsible for the 9/11 attack, beginning in 1996. The Taliban and al Qaeda shared at least a general commitment to spread a violent and revolutionary version of Islam to a substantial area of the globe. Only Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates recognized the Taliban as the legitimate government of Afghanistan. The U.S. came to regard Pakistan as an ally in the War on Terror, and as part of a close relationship with Israel, it has been closely allied with both Saudi Arabia and the UAE as well, particularly in Syria and Yemen. After the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan, many Taliban and al Qaeda fighters were able to escape into Pakistan, where Osama bin Laden was eventually found and killed. In Syria the U.S. has been allied with organizations related to al Qaeda in order to focus on a newer enemy, ISIS.

Brotherhood, yet another organization with dreams or plans of achieving regional if not global influence. NATO shows no signs of ceasing to exist, and there is at least a strand of opinion in the U.S. that says Russia must be resisted in something like the same way the Soviet Union was resisted in its day. China seems to be more of a candidate for normalizing relations, as it was for Nixon. Is there not a legitimate concern, probably more than in 1961, that supposedly democratic political and strategic decisions about foreign policy and the development of military installations, both at home and abroad, are driven partly by what is good for the Pentagon, and for companies providing hardware and software, and various support services, for the military?

Eisenhower's first warning—about the military industrial complex—remains more relevant than it was in 1961, and Kennedy gave no indication that he saw any downside to encouraging the Pentagon to grow and act around the world. The "left wing" attack on the Pentagon, which became so prevalent during the Vietnam War, is much quieter today.[41] Eisenhower's second warning has really not been taken up by anyone. Once again, as we turn back to the speech, events have occurred that could really not have been stopped. Technology has advanced to the point that further advances require massive involvement by the federal government.

> Partly because of the huge costs involved, a govern ment contract becomes virtually a substitute for intellectual curiosity…. The prospect of domination of the nation's scholars by Federal employment, project allocations, and the power of money is ever present ….Yet, in holding scientific research and discovery in respect, as we should, we must also be alert to the equal and opposite danger that public policy could itself become the captive of a scientif ic-technological elite.

[41] Kennedy seems to have agreed with the Pentagon, then and now, that the major goal of U.S. foreign policy is to make the rest of the world as much as possible like the United States; progressives today seem to have concluded, with at least some support from the Pentagon, that the U.S. should change to be as much as possible like the rest of the world.

Kennedy says the world is "very different" from the world of the founders almost two hundred years ago. "For man holds in his mortal hands the power to abolish all forms of human poverty and all forms of human life." He immediately adds that his focus is on protecting freedom around the world. He simply doesn't mention the possibility that dedication to technology might have a dark side other than the sheer danger of nuclear war—that the masters of powerful new tools might not accept the old kind of leadership by citizens, who at least attempt to focus on the question of what is good for human beings.

Some might see the space program as an example of pursuing technology whether it brings any clear benefit to Americans or not. Project Mercury, focussed on having a manned spacecraft orbit Earth, was launched by Eisenhower in response to the Soviet Sputnik satellite.[42] In 1961, the Soviets upped the ante again when Yuri Gagarin became the first man to orbit the Earth. Kennedy called for a massive increase in funding so as to achieve the goal, "before the decade is out," of "landing a man on the moon and returning him safely to the earth." The U.S. famously succeeded in this goal. There was a sense that any race between the U.S. and the Soviet Union when it came to technology was of special importance; military planners probably expected to learn lessons that would be valuable in future wars. What was the upshot? Some pieces of moon rock were brought back, and images from space have probably strengthened support for environmentalism, and the belief that our planet is both finite and fragile.

A later generation of NASA, with the boomers in

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[42] Part of the American reaction to Sputnik was a massive increase in funding for education—and not only in engineering, science, and math. "In 1940 about one-half million Americans attended college, which was about 15 percent of their age group. By 1960, however, college enrollments had expanded to 3.6 million. By 1970, 7.5 million students were attending colleges in the U.S., or 40 percent of college-age youths." As Allan Bloom says, the same American public that supposedly gave at least substantial support to the demagoguery of McCarthyism, only a few years later supported spending on higher education; The Closing of the American Mind, pp. 49-51. Bloom claims that for a while post-Sputnik many of the best students, though urged to stick to the sciences, chose the humanities instead; and the university embraced more true diversity of opinion in the 1950s than in the 1960s; pp. 323-4.

charge, presided over the space shuttles and contributions to the International Space Station. Twice a shuttle full of people has exploded, and twice an investigation has found preventable errors, magnified by group think. The faith in space projects must have something to do with the faith of the Projectors in Gulliver's Travels: "one man shall do the work of ten, a palace may be built in a week, of materials so durable as to last for ever without repairing." But how exactly are any of these space initiatives going to make life easier for any humans, anywhere? In fairness to NASA, they have found that there is little political support for the unmanned missions which would be of greater scientific value (if not human value), so they go to Congress on behalf of the popular, big-ticket items—manned missions that hardly go anywhere—in order to get funding for unmanned missions that go farther and gather more information. Congress supports some real science in order to support activities that remind them of the movies; scientists work to maintain the river of money for second-rate work in order to get support for first-rate work.[43]

Does government-driven research help to determine which questions are worth researching, and therefore which are important? The U.S. federal government spends massive amounts of money on health research, and it is difficult, to say the least, to question the wisdom of this spending.[44] One specific aspect of health research generates constant and often contradictory headlines, so perhaps it makes Eisenhower's point better: public health, including nutrition. After the introduction of vaccines, insulin, and antibiotics, the great success story in public health campaigns has probably been the

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[43] It is sometimes suggested not only that government-funded research does more good than harm, but that very little significant good in the scientific field would have come about without government funded research. The Green Revolution, focused on improving crop yields in poor countries, began with an initiative affecting wheat by the Mexican government in the 1940s, supported by the Rockefeller Foundation. The government of the Phillipines took the lead in the case of rice in 1960, with help from both the Rockefeller Foundation and the Ford Foundation. Norman Borlaug, who was eventually to win the Nobel Peace Prize, began his work in Mexico, and continued in India in 1961. Various degrees of support by relevant governments was required, but the funding largely came from private foundations.

[44] According to Wikipedia, the Intramural Research Program (IRP) of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) is "the largest biomedical research institution on Earth."

battle to reduce the incidence of smoking. The smoking habit was deliberately encouraged and fostered by tobacco companies, and arguably it took the resources of government to push back. More questionably, government-funded research has been part of what can only be called campaigns against salt, fat, and cholesterol in food. At least the first two of these campaigns have become questionable in light of good evidence.[45] Today the debate about nutrition focusses on whether there is something natural that is better than something artificial (processed), and this is now entangled with the vexed question of how to lose weight. Supposedly "big agriculture" and food multinationals are on one side; public-spirited health officials are on the other. There are arguments that by agreeing with government messages, giving up smoking, and eating in a healthy way, people can live much longer and impose fewer costs on the health care system. All indications are that an aging population costs more, not less, particularly because of health care costs. If governments focused purely on saving money, they might be wise to recommend that citizens take up smoking; perhaps we should be grateful that they do not take that approach.

Eisenhower seems to have two concerns. One was that scientists would know what they wanted, and if they succeeded in getting government grants, there would be no political control on them at all. They might, like the Projectors, see the human beings in front of their eyes as mere experimental subjects to be worked on, for the ostensible benefit of people in the future. There is another dilemma, however, which may be more relevant today. Professional scientists have an interest in maintaining certain scares that get the attention of political decision-makers, so as to fund research. It is not simply that researchers learn how to gain the financial freedom to do whatever they want; it is that they shape their work in order to use government funding to gain that freedom. Over-eating, and eating the "wrong things,"

[45] On salt see Taubes 1998. On fat the issue may be how to somehow steer people away from bad (saturated) fats, toward good fats and good carbs, rather than simply allowing them to fall back on the all-too-tempting bad carbs. See http://www.sciencemag.org/news/2014/03/scientists-fix-errors-controversial-paper-about-saturated-fats .

have become popular scares. One might think people who call themselves progressive, and have some higher education, would be relatively free of such things, more inclined to base their lives on reason and science. When it comes to the use of nuclear reactors for electricity, however, along with genetically modified organisms (GMOs) and even vaccines, the fear of, and opposition to science is at least as likely to be found on campus as anywhere else. Increasing attention is being given to a "replication crisis" in peer-reviewed scientific literature, much of it funded by governments. In a world of "publish or perish," with too many boomers competing for too few research positions, there is a premium on the amount of publication more than on the quality. The desire to take short cuts can easily be combined with the desire to tell political decision-makers what they want to hear. Some of the highest-profile, best funded science is somehow mixed or marbled with a political agenda: big business is bad, likely to poison us either advertently or inadvertently, and so on.[46] One can question whether something similar is true of the climate change scare. The popularity of specific predictions and specific fears about the climate of the world has been largely driven by government-funded research. There is a tendency, more or less on the left politically, to believe that government can run large and complex projects better than the private sector—that the private sector, in the pursuit of profit, is likely to be short-sighted in its goals, and unwilling to build and retain the capital that is needed to think big. It has come to be believed that much of life on earth, including human life, is threatened in various ways by the "ordinary" workings of capitalism, or simply by ordinary people making a living, and that massive government programs of various kinds are necessary to help. It could be argued that this is a

[46] There are famous examples of "big Pharma" supporting skewed research, or suppressing research, in order to sell dangerous products with a gloss of "science." One example is Thalidomide in the 1950s and 60s, from which Americans were largely protected. The opioid epidemic got at least part of its start from sales of oxycodin in a form that was supposed to be time-delayed, but could be crushed so as to get the full impact immediately. A reputable pharmaceutical company was the main seller of this product. Another example is Halcion, a sleeping medicine with such severe and troubling side effects, juries could be persuaded to convict a person who was accused of serious crimes on the basis of an alleged "Halcion effect."

self-reinforcing cycle of group think, with researchers requesting funding, proposing to do work showing that government programs are not only essential, they must grow; the very government agencies in question approve the grant; and both sides issue news releases saying terrible things will happen if this cycle does not continue. This does not mean, of course, that big government is altogether hostile to big business—there are always lots of big businesses with intelligent managers who know how to profit from the "iron triangle": congressional spending committee, government bureaucracy, lobby groups.[47] One would think one purpose of a modern democratic government is to give the people hope; instead government now seems to foment fear in order to support its own growth and funding for its dependents. None of this is to say, of course, that governments should not fund research, nor that there is a clear standard to judge whether a specific type of research is worth funding or not. It is simply to say there are potential dangers, of which the people accepting or benefitting from the river of money may not be aware, or which they may not want to discuss.

Eisenhower had a clear sense in 1961 that the dominance of government-funded research was coming, and this would make it more difficult to question the experts, or put their work into context. While these things probably could not be stopped, there was a need for reflection about them. He gave an address at Pennsylvania State University in 1955 that included these thoughts:

> [Apart from technical and political questions] Anoth er group of questions is of a somewhat different char

[47] The use of corn to produce ethanol is an example: big business using an environmental argument to improve profits, while hurting the poor. The bio-fuels industry involves burning corn, among other things, for fuel instead of food. Considering all that goes into the production of corn, there is no net environmental benefit to this approach, and it has almost certainly made food more expensive for some of the world's poorest people. The industry has grown alongside government intervention. Corn-growing Iowa always holds the "first in the nation" event in the U.S. presidential primary season, so presidential candidates all promise to support ethanol production. Congress is lobbied by big business. Bureaucrats focus on the tailpipe emissions from corn to make the case that burning ethanol is environmentally friendly. Fortunes are made by a few, for questionable public benefit.

> acter. As nuclear and other technological achieve ments continue to mount, the normal life span will continue to climb. The hourly productivity of the worker will increase. How is the increase in leisure time and the extension in life expectancy to be spent? Will it be for the achievement of man's better aspira tions or his degradation to the level of a well-fed, well-kept slave of an all-powerful state?
>
> Indeed, merely to state that question sharply reminds us that in these days and in the years ahead the need for philosophers and theologians parallels the need for scientists and engineers.
>
> These … questions merely hint at the enormous problems and possibilities that will confront your generation. Scores of others will present themselves in the changing picture in agriculture, industry, and the arts. The answers can be found only by broadly informed, wisely sympathetic, spiritually inspired minds, the product of general education that properly blends the practical and technical with the liberal and cultural.
>
> In this country we emphasize both liberal and prac tical education. But too often it is a liberal education for one and a practical education for another. What we desperately need is an integrated liberal, practical education for the same person--for every American youth who can possibly obtain its blessings. Hand and head and heart were made to work together. They must work together. They should be educated together.

Of course, Eisenhower did not live to see the personal computer or the Internet. On the one hand, these things seemed to open the door to a great flowering of personal communication, expression, creativity, thought, and freedom. On the other hand, they have also become powerful tools for the

national security state to use. Eisenhower used much of the time in his speech to emphasize issues to which his audience may not have given much thought—issues that arise from prosperity, not from poverty, and from a period of relative comfort, not from a crisis. He locates his audience more realistically than Kennedy, and his advice on several points demonstrates, while encouraging, prudence in a real and deep sense. By way of comparison we have Kennedy saying something that sounds both tough and prudent: "Let us never negotiate out of fear. But let us never fear to negotiate." This actually doesn't make much sense; Kennedy seems to have been trapped by the formula of sing-song matching phrases.[48]

The Cold War and the War on Terror

There are obvious similarities between the Cold War in which Eisenhower and Kennedy were leaders, and the War on Terror of more recent years. Communism spread in the 20th century from a protest movement among intellectuals in wealthy Western cities, to the government of the Soviet Union, to the governments of various Soviet satellites, to China, to North Korea, Cuba, and Vietnam. It was hard for American decision-makers and their allies to know the exact nature of the problem. Communism attracted committed idealists, even suicidal fanatics, yet it seemed demonstrably terrible for people who lived under it. Did this mean there was a real threat of international Communism continuing to conquer more and more of the world? Gradually, it would seem, it became clear that communism had great weaknesses as well as great strengths. There was always a demand for ideological purity—in practice, agreement with the leader's latest utterances, sane and sensible or not. The search for traitors always started at the top, so a divided leadership, with the potential for violent civil war, was the rule rather than the exception. In this atmosphere, it was difficult to solve the succession problem. To the extent that the leadership believed a commu-

[48] On how Kennedy chose to certain specific rhetorical devices, see https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-12215248 . For Canadians the "negotiate/fear" line is reminiscent of our war-time Prime Minister, Mackenzie King, saying "not necessarily conscription, but conscription if necessary." This line, however, which has been criticized for its vacuity, was quite meaningful in its context.

nist utopia was coming some day, they were forced to try to bring about something called "socialist man." The practical lessons were: segregate the children, teach them appropriate propaganda, force workers to produce a semblance of a modern economy, kill and imprison the people who don't fit in. Months or years go by, the results are not exactly spectacular, so: repeat, and keep on repeating. All this effort at what amounted to continuing war on the very people one was supposed to be liberating required a large share of the resources of countries that were all very poor. Communist governments could never agree with each other, and were somewhat more likely to make war on each other than were similar capitalist countries. All of this meant that the more violent and effective the war on the subjects of Communism by their governments, the less likely it was that Communism would pose a threat to the West.

Today, of the one and a half billion or so Muslims in the world, some—surely a minority—could reasonably be called radicals in the sense that they reject the materialism and what they consider the moral depravity of the West, the doctrines of feminism, and so on. Of course similar beliefs are held by orthodox or old-fashioned believers of various faiths, including Christianity and Judaism. Of the radical Muslims, a small number advocate, preach or practice violence against "the West," or people who are somehow seen as instruments of the West. The attacks on 9/ll proved that some were actually prepared to commit suicide in the hope of killing hundreds or thousands of American civilians. Decision-makers did not know if there would be waves of such attacks, if actual governments were behind them, and so on. Since then it has seemed more and more that international Islamic terrorism is fragmented, usually not supported by governments unless they are in failed states, and the number of those who are prepared to act is small. As with Communism, there is a tendency within the "movement" toward endless disputes as to who counts as a true believer, and who is or is not loyal to a particular country as compared to an international movement. (Socialism in one country meant willingness to be ruthless in neglecting or attacking others; religious

purity in one country may have the same result.) The U.S. has intervened in different ways in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Egypt and Syria. All of these countries have become worse off—more roiled by war, sectarian violence, ethnic cleansing, and simply street crime of many kinds. There are certainly radical Muslims involved in every case, but so far they are attacking each other more than they are anyone in the West.

The Pentagon has not shrunk since the end of the Cold War. It seems to be in the nature of such a large, well-funded government organization to say: war is the answer, what was the question? Iraq was invaded as a direct response to 9/11, even though Saddam Hussein had nothing to do with that attack, and he had more or less good reasons to keep international terrorists out of Iraq. Support for the invasion seemed to be a way to address issues of American domestic politics. Domestic issues often cause division; war might (as in the case of World War II) foster unity. Occupying both Iraq and Afghanistan might provide opportunities to round up leaders of al Qaeda and similar organizations. As President Obama said recently in his announcement of a noticeable retreat from foreign military interventions: the U.S. has the best hammer ever, but that doesn't mean every problem is a nail.

As the Democratic Party became "anti-war" in the case of Vietnam, it also moved to restrict the actions of the CIA. In the Reagan years Democrats could be counted on to criticize military and foreign policy initiatives that could be presented as examples of defending business interests, the Pentagon driving a pro-war agenda, or sheer arrogance and glory-seeking or adventure-seeking. After 9/11 Republicans in general, who were once the more isolationist party, and under Eisenhower were perhaps more cautious than Kennedy, endorsed shooting wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, and a range of military and intelligence operations in many countries. Here was an opportunity, post-Cold War, to paint their Democratic opponents as "soft" on sworn enemies of the United States, as Kennedy had tried to paint Eisenhower. Neo-conservatives—roughly speaking, ex-Democrats—had been a factor on the political scene since they endorsed Reagan's

foreign policies in the 1980s, and made at least some moves toward supporting Republican policies in general. By the time of the Iraq war in 2003 the leading neo-cons were no longer as young as they once were. It seemed their thinking was dominated by Reagan's bold speeches (which could be contrasted with his cautious actions, such as withdrawing from Lebanon after 241 U.S. servicemen were killed there), and beyond that, by the "idealistic" foreign policies of Woodrow Wilson, FDR, and, of course, JFK. From this perspective Reagan could be seen as a more elderly version of Kennedy.

Sacrifice

This brings us to the most famous parts of Kennedy's speech. "And so, my fellow Americans: ask not what your country can do for you--ask what you can do for your country." This is actually a slight modification of a fundraising appeal for Kennedy's alma mater, a school called Choate. The original went: ask not what Choate can do for you (namely, help with networking to advance your career), ask what you can do for Choate (hand over some of your hard-earned dough). As a call to patriotism and sacrifice to Americans in 1961, it seems to hearken back to the ancient Greek polis and republican Rome. Your personal wealth, your family and its successes—all, absolutely all, belong to the city, and you can be called on to give them up at any time. This hardly seems realistic, and it is hard to believe it was wise, in the context Kennedy found himself in.

There were sound reasons for the history of American isolationism when it came to foreign policy. Americans have always been busy in their own lives. There is a strong emphasis on individuals seeking success for themselves, in commerce and peaceful careers, and then taking pride in the fact that the country as a whole demonstrates freedom, economic growth, and technological advancement. The Statue of Liberty ("Liberty Enlightening the World") does not promise to send troops all over the world; she sets an example, with her torch, for the world to follow to the extent that it can. A decision not to rush into foreign wars does not indicate either indifference to the fate of non-Americans, or a lack of con-

cern that enemies who are weak today may become stronger tomorrow. Rather, there is a sense that the best thing Americans can do for the cause of liberty is to set an example, and prudently avoid risking their hard-earned wealth in dubious foreign adventures. World War II is an excellent example of this thinking, rather than an exception to it. The U.S. did not declare war on any enemy until Americans were attacked on U.S. soil, at Pearl Harbour. Once the allies, led by the U.S., built up the necessary forces and supplies, the war came close to total war, with many Americans led by the military making huge sacrifices, but there was always an emphasis on doing exactly what was good for the U.S. The country enjoyed tremendous economic growth, even from the way it helped Britain before declaring war, and came through the war richer and more powerful than ever, at a price of remarkably few casualties, all or almost all of them military. The Korean War was more of a pure sacrifice by Americans to achieve foreign policy goals. The war, to everyone's surprise, bore some resemblance to World War II, but with jets, fought in a small country far away, and was really a learning experience in the new global terrain of the Cold War.

U.S. Marines who remained in the reserves after World War II found themselves conscripted to fight in Korea, and the draft was heavily used in Vietnam (the establishment concluding that it would be difficult to come up with enough volunteers). There were so many problems with morale in Vietnam, the U.S. military for some years has been completely opposed to the draft, and committed to a force of volunteers. The U.S., far from demanding military or similar sacrifice from a large proportion of its citizens, deploys what would once have been called a well-equipped force of mercenaries. A relatively small proportion of the population, at some considerable expense to taxpayers, fights with great discipline, often in noble causes, enduring considerable suffering and death, and saves the vast bulk of the civilian population from experiencing anything of the kind. Where is the terrain in which the seed of civic virtue and sacrifice is going to be planted? Does Kennedy think that simply saying it will achieve it? Is there not something corrupting about a sov-

ereign people believing that whenever a war is needed, it is possible to go to war on very short notice, and inflict tremendous death and destruction on people all over the world, at little or no cost to oneself? This seems to bring the glory, or at least the self-congratulation and self-satisfaction, of victory, to people who are asked to pay virtually none of the price. This returns us to the thought that the ongoing existence of a Pentagon that is both huge and permanent can lead to flawed decision-making: maximum ability to deliver violence, with (arguably) minimum sacrifice by civilians. How could Kennedy get from this situation, which he did not even acknowledge or recognize in any clear way, to something like the ancient city? Can Americans simply repeat what Kennedy said as if it actually describes their lives and decisions?

This in turn brings us to Kennedy's other famous pronouncement: "Let every nation know, whether it wishes us well or ill, that we shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe to assure the survival and success of liberty." If Kennedy said—or meant—"our liberty," this statement might have been unremarkable, or heroic in the traditional manner of Patrick Henry: "Give me liberty or give me death!" If he had said or meant that Americans would make unlimited sacrifices for neighbours such as in Latin America, or for allies such as those in NATO, the statement would have been an obvious exaggeration, but arguably salutary. Instead of either of these possibilities, Kennedy seems to have meant that Americans would make unlimited sacrifices for everyone, everywhere, or for the cause of liberty. How could this possibly be true, or even coherent? It is remarkable to find a statement in a speech to which one is immediately inclined to respond: that is simply false. Kennedy would not do what he says "we" would do; no one would. Simply as a matter of possible interventions in foreign countries to defend liberty, it would have been more truthful to say: we will negotiate tacitly with the Soviet Union to identify countries in which proxy wars can be fought with a minimum of unacceptable consequences.

In fairness to Kennedy, he is obviously trying to say the U.S. will not be guided primarily by its own self-interest

in foreign policy. He rejects a certain brand of "realism," and embraces a certain brand of "idealism." To repeat: he does not simply promise to make war on Communism and other movements that are opposed to freedom; he promises to work to eliminate poverty in "half the globe… not because the communists may be doing it, not because we seek their votes, but because it is right." In fact, given the way he understands the threat posed by Communists and other aggressors, he does not have to choose between the two approaches. The new threatening powers are a threat both to the United States and, so to speak, to everyone else; it is just as realistic to prepare for war everywhere as it is to defend America's shores, and the idealistic defence of liberty is at stake in both arenas. Nathan Tarcov has suggested that instead of an often false dichotomy between realism and ethics, it is more fruitful to speak of principle—what a regime stands for—in combination with prudence—decisions in specific circumstances as to when to go to war.[49] Regimes dedicated to liberty can be imprudent in a noble cause; very bad regimes can be cautious in defending themselves.

In seeking a kind of maximum or super-maximum willingness to sacrifice for liberty, Kennedy seems to forget the need for prudence. The Declaration of Independence, by contrast, was explicitly intended not simply to inspire and rally Americans, but to persuade foreigners to support the Revolution. The key propositions of the document were that the revolutionaries had right on their side, and that they would proceed prudently and rationally, and therefore predictably in a way that should generate little complaint, in pursuit of their rights.

> … the Declaration not only states those universal principles of the equality of men, inalienable rights, government by consent, and the right of revolution, but in its very next word invokes prudence. The Declaration proclaims that all peoples have the right to alter governments that fail to secure their rights; it does not require every people in such a situation, as

[49] "Principle and prudence in foreign policy: the founders' perspective."

> almost every people then was and most remain, to exercise that right immediately. It declares the right of every people connected by political bands to another people to dissolve those bands when necessary; it does not demand that every colonial people actually assume at once a separate and equal station among the powers of the earth.[50]

Tarcov also looks over the heads of the American founders, as it were, to one of their great teachers, John Locke.

> One must be sure not only that "he has Right on his side," but that "it is a Right too that is worth the Trou ble and Cost of fighting for, including the mischiefs thereby inflicted on "any part of Mankind." One may also have to judge whether the precedent and con sequences of the violation of others' rights threaten one's own rights. One must also prudently judge whether one has the power, courage and opportunity to vindicate the violated rights by force. Thus, the Lockean justification of the use of force involves both universal principles of right and prudential judgments in a complementary relationship.[51]

For many people who study Eisenhower and Kennedy today, or at least their speeches, it may seem that Eisenhower was a "realist" to the extent that he was not willing to fight for American principles in foreign countries at all; and Kennedy was an "idealist" who promised to do so, even to a super-human extent.[52] Tarcov's argument would suggest that neither leader was successful in combining a commitment to principle with a disciplined and reasoned prudence.[53] JFK was

[50] Tarcov p. 48.

[51] Tarcov p. 49.

[52] Tarcov's examples are Kissinger and Carter; p. 47.

[53] Tarcov also suggests there is a tension within the principles of the Declaration of Independence—between the protection of individual rights, and the consent of the governed. To say the least, a majority or what counts as a majority may consent to a regime that does not protect rights. This is reminiscent of Kennedy's remark that Americans will always hope to find the new states "strongly supporting their own freedom," and his warning that "in the past, those who foolishly sought power by riding the back of the tiger ended up inside."

insistent on doing what was "right," but was this the right thing "here and now"? Could it possibly be the right thing at all times, in all circumstances?

One could even question whether Kennedy would actually want to introduce more of the thinking of the ancient city into the contemporary United States. Public-spiritedness and civic pride might lead to the belief that one's country will be the first to fight for human benefits such as liberty, or the adoption of a regime like one's own, everywhere in the world, but it may always be the case that the reality will always involve putting one's own city or country first. In the war in ancient Greece between Athens and Sparta, Athens had frequent debates about which parts of the known world they should conquer. Citizens would sometimes say they wanted to build democratic regimes, or spread their own ideas of liberty, but the leaders were fairly frank in saying they were building an empire. Sparta talked much more about liberating Greeks from the oppressive Athenian empire, but they were much less likely to engage in any foreign war at all. Thucydides makes it clear that it was always a coincidence, often resulting from an unlikely series of events, that led to Sparta liberating even a single non-Spartan Greek. [54] If Kennedy wanted more of an ancient city, what kind did he want? Did he want more hypocritical Sparta (with hypocrisy arguably helping to maintain the public-spiritedness of Spartans) rather than more aggressive Athens (with honesty about not being morally superior to anyone else undermining public spiritedness)? A combination of the two? During the American founding it was fashionable to refer to ancient Rome; would Kennedy want republican public-spiritedness at home to support empire-building, which in turn supports various kinds of careerism and (so to speak) empire-building at home? Did he give this any thought?

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[54] A few telling examples: a Spartan general named Brasidas fought aggressively far from home, unlike any other Spartan general, and actually "liberated" large numbers of northern Greeks. Later the Spartan leadership gave back all this territory in exchange for a small number of Spartan soldiers who had been captured. In Syracuse, Sparta fought and won far from home, but they were led by the man who had earlier been (arguably) the greatest of all Athenian generals: Alcibiades. The story of how he got there would be too much for a James Michener novel.

As Tarcov reminds us, Locke may be a good candidate for the foundational thinker of the U.S. Locke makes it clear that for modern, enlightened people, it is always questionable whether an individual should sacrifice either one's property or one's life for a political community, since a liberal society only exists, and is only supported by liberal citizens, because of its ability to protect that same property and life. How can a liberal government ever ask citizens to perform military service, to say nothing of the kind of open-ended sacrifice Kennedy calls for? The solution seems to be that first we accept the need for a government, then (by majority decision) we accept a specific form of government; that government may go to war rightly or wrongly, and citizens must follow. The "right to revolution" somehow kicks in when a government is causing more harm to property and lives than it is preventing; that is, the war that is most defensible is one that is needed to defend one's own borders/citizens. One would think the sacrifice of one's life is even more of a problem than the sacrifice of property, as it is for Hobbes. [55] Hobbes proposed that in case of war, one can hire someone else to do the fighting—an expedient that is in effect in all modern countries, including the U.S., that rely on paid volunteer military forces, rather than any kind of mandatory military service. [56] Locke introduces at least some variations on these issues. He suggests that once someone is in the military (however exactly they get into uniform), there is more

[55] Hobbes admits that an established government may confiscate all one's property, "which I confess is a great and inevitable inconvenience"; Leviathan Ch. 19, "Of the several kinds …," "Comparison of monarchy …," "Fifthly." It is only the right to defend one's actual body that one never gives up; if it is clear a subject's actual life is not threatened, he/she has no right to resist. See Hobbes Leviathan Ch. 14 ("A man's covenant not to defend himself is void"); Ch. 21 ("Subjects have liberty to defend their own bodies"); Locke is more likely to say that at some point, difficult to define precisely, a right to resist takes effect.

[56] Hobbes Leviathan Ch. 30 ("Equal taxes … hire others to fight for them"). The U.S. still requires males to register for the draft when they turn 18—but no one has been drafted since the Vietnam era. France "suspended" compulsory military service in 1996, and formally ended it in 2001. The French Foreign Legion, along with regular troops, was traditionally used in foreign military campaigns much more than the general run of conscripts; conscripts were used in the Algerian war of 1954-62, but not in the Indo-China (Vietnam) war of 1947-54. The last "call-up" of National Service conscripts in Britain was in 1960, and the last conscript ended his service in 1963. National Service conscripts served in various wars in the 1950s.

of a requirement to serve in war, and potentially sacrifice one's life, if called upon by government to do so, than to give up all property; a wise government will provide reassurance on the second point in order to increase adherence to the first, and Locke may have come up with improved modern rationales for veterans' benefits, military survivors' benefits, and life insurance.[57]

Nevertheless, the problem remains. Although the "chief end" of civil society is the preservation of property and government has "no other end but the preservation of property," Locke includes life and liberty along with estate in his general definition of property.[58] This presentation, which almost identifies life with property and certainly includes life within property, tends to work against the distinction between a willingness to sacrifice one's life as opposed to a willingness to sacrifice one's property. Also, there is a passage where Locke says that the "end of Government [is] the preservation of all," albeit with the qualification "as much as may be" - that is, the end of government is the preservation of life, just as it is the preservation of property, to the extent that that is possible.[59] Life, liberty, and estate come to sight as concentric circles: life is the decisive thing, but liberty and estate are both necessary supports for life and things which can be understood by all men as the "fences" protecting our lives. If the fence is attacked, we can be taught to think that our lives are in danger and there is still some time to protect ourselves. Any government, just like any person, that attacks our liberty and/or property lawlessly or arbitrarily will come under suspicion. Their actions will not in themselves necessarily justify "flight or fight," but they will cause reasonable

[57] See Locke Second Treatise, #139, and generally Chs. 9-11; Aristotle Politics 1268a7-10.

[58] Second Treatise, #85, #94, #123, #138.

[59] Second Treatise, #159.

[60] My thanks are owing to David Foster for his help with the Lockean arguments. Another theme which could be explored at length is technology. Locke shows more awareness than Hobbes that as a properly constituted state advances in technology, as well as in economic growth which attaches citizens to their regime, a country can become formidable to its neighbours without having to do much actual fighting (or sacrificing).

people to increase their vigilance. It is a refusal to sacrifice what is clearly good for oneself that is to be counted on, not some open-ended willingness to sacrifice whenever it might seem noble to do so. Locke and Hobbes were both aware, of course, that no government can function unless it can appeal to the argument that the lives of individual citizens may have to be sacrificed for the preservation of society as a whole or for the public good or the advantage of the commonwealth. Locke in one way makes the dilemma for liberal governments worse: he makes clear that (outside the mode of promulgated, settled, equal laws) the government may not take even a penny of a person's property. Not only is military service a problem for a Lockean liberal; so is taxation. Locke's solution seems to be that he distinguishes between property in the narrow sense (estate) and life. The solution is questionable, however, since Locke probably never says we have a "duty" or "obligation" to sacrifice our lives. In the military example, mentioned above, the emphasis is all on the general's right to punish the disobedient soldier with death: "blind obedience" is necessary in some situations, but that appears to be obtained by threats of death. The soldier can either risk death by obeying orders, or by disobeying them. There is no mention here of duty or moral obligation. On the other hand, the preservation of property is also not completely absolute. Even outside a military situation, property can be taken or destroyed when the general good requires such actions; when one house in a neighborhood is burning, the surrounding ones can be torn down. This taking or destruction of property is justified as a means of preserving the common good, just as the taking of life was. The more carefully one examines Locke's argument, the less it appears to differ from Hobbes; one difference we can be sure of is that Locke downplays certain difficulties (such as the possibility that no one will be willing to fight at all), or he chooses not to bring them out as clearly as Hobbes does.[60]

It is not clear that any political regime has ever produced the ground for an open-ended sacrifice for liberty for which Kennedy seemed to be calling in 1961; a liberal Lockean regime may be less promising than other regimes in

that it teaches people to doubt the nobility or worth of causes other than one's own life and property. In order for citizens to avoid getting caught up in the destructive delusions of militaristic leaders, it is necessary for them to be largely free of delusions themselves. Even or especially a country that dominates the world in wealth and power, like the U.S., mainly looks after things at home, and makes relatively little sacrifice for the rest of the world. Fighting all over the world for freedom, if it goes beyond supporting the efforts of a few recognizable peoples to achieve their own freedom, can easily become an imperialist enterprise, even if the motive is more noble than is usually the case with empires. To keep up such a fight constantly, forever or for a long time, no doubt requires great sacrifices. Why would anyone accept such sacrifices? Did Kennedy in his famous speech really make much of attempt to actually persuade his fellow citizens to make even a start on the kind of sacrifice he calls for? To show that doing so satisfies both a commitment to principle and the requirements of prudence? The Truman Doctrine, for years before Kennedy's inaugural, had apparently committed the U.S. to accepting the presence of Communism, not only in the "Yalta" countries, but in countries that had not been considered in 1945. Did Kennedy offer any real departure from this thinking?

Kennedy was presenting a kind of code of conduct for Americans to live by into the indefinite future. Within a few years of his inauguration, it would obviously be the baby boomers who would be counted on to fight in wars and to serve in other ways. Were the boomers, in particular, at all likely to do this? Ike at least acknowledges that Americans are beginning to take peace and prosperity for granted, even during the Cold War. Teenagers were already famous, by 1961, for their rebelliousness, and this became more exaggerated as the 60s went on and the oldest boomers reached their twenties. At this stage the boomers might have seemed, at least potentially, more idealistic or less bourgeois than their parents—more inclined to take risks, including a sacrifice of material comfort, career or wealth for a cause. Yet even as children they became the most clearly identified and

sought-after consumers in history, accustomed to having their least whim obeyed and even anticipated. As they grew older, toys gave way to child-focussed television, music and cars, and then to toys that would play movies and music. Entrepreneurs, including in popular entertainment, have wracked their brains to think of the next thing boomers would like. Campus demonstrations demanded an end to the war in Vietnam, and changes to the curriculum including grade inflation and "area studies" that were supposedly on the side of history, and definitely fit a political agenda. Did students risk their grades and careers in demonstrating for justice, or were they already confident that they had strength in numbers? [61] Protest against the draft was concentrated among college students, arguably the best and the brightest. Large-scale protests did not begin when escalation got underway, or at the point of a battle that was particularly destructive in Vietnam. Protests became significant when the student exemption from the draft was restricted. [62] Similarly the end of the protests did not mark the point when the war between North and South Vietnam ended; it marked the much earlier point when the draft ended. [63] Of course some boomers performed military service, and a much smaller number served in the Peace Corps (which presumably offered less certain benefits for one's career). Educated boomers in general, however, did not want to sacrifice anything at all for what became Kennedy's

[61] Eisenhower's speechwriter, Malcolm Moos, became president of the University of Minnesota. In that role he proposed that the administration give in to all student demands, and if the opportunity arose, student leaders should be asked to minimize violence.

[62] There were some protests in the U.S. against the war in Vietnam long before there was significant escalation there. To some extent people who had protested atmospheric testing of nuclear bombs switched their focus in 1963 to protesting the Vietnam War and/or the draft. According to Wikipedia, the first anti-war protest in the U.S. that included the burning of draft cards took place in 1964. Approximately 20,000 people marched on Washington to protest the war in April 1965. National mobilization committees were established in 1966. There was a march on Washington involving more than 100,000 people in 1967. Probably the largest such protests took place in Washington and San Francisco in 1971.

[63] Bloom Closing p. 329, and generally 325 ff. In 1967 the student exemption, instead of being available to any full-time student, was changed to conclude at the end of a four-year program or a candidate's 24th birthday. Most student deferments were eliminated in 1971, and the draft was ended in 1973, shortly after the U.S. signed a cease-fire. Saigon fell to the Communists in 1975.

favourite causes: Vietnam and Cuba.

In fairness to Kennedy, it turned out to be true that Americans would support larger or smaller military actions in various parts of the world—often in very obscure countries, which seemed to be part of the tacit agreement between the U.S. and the Soviet Union.[64] Rationales for these actions tended to emphasize an international fight for freedom. Certainly it was often difficult to identify any other specific or material motive; in Vietnam, in particular, no U.S. multinationals to speak of were involved, and there was little money to be made by anyone.[65] It is also true, however, that these operations were usually presented initially as extremely low-risk for the U.S.; they were attractive precisely insofar as they did not entail the kind of open-ended sacrifice Kennedy refers to in his speech. Not only that, but sooner or later, when either the risks grew too great or it simply became clear that very little was being accomplished, the U.S. tended to withdraw about as abruptly as it had escalated in the past. It makes little sense to criticize the withdrawal, which was probably fairly rational in comparison to the escalation. It makes more sense to criticize the tendency to raise expectations for a kind of crusade that would be both glorious and successful if only someone, somewhere was totally committed to winning.

Although JFK was implicitly calling on boomers to perform a type of service that one was never likely to see

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[64] Angola should probably be added to the list of countries that have been touched on here. Beginning in 1975, three guerilla groups formed a brief alliance to end civil war and establish a government, but then quickly turned on each other again. The superpowers got involved on opposite sides; Cubans fought as a proxy for the Soviet Union. For some years Western leaders including Reagan and Thatcher gave substantial support to Jonas Savimbi, hailing him as an anti-Communist "freedom fighter." When some of his allies deserted him, Savimbi decided in the early 1990s that he had no choice but to take part in an election in which he did not do well. There was more civil war, a peace agreement in 1994, and war again beginning in 1998. Savimbi was suspected by more and more observers of waging a purely personal war, funded by the sale of so-called "blood diamonds." Many of his former allies accepted senior positions in the military, government, or "loyal opposition," or simply left the country. Savimbi was eventually hunted down and killed in 2002. It is only very recently that Angola has achieved some degree of stability and lawfulness.

[65] Tarcov says it is not true there was no clear reason for the U.S. to fight in Vietnam; on the contrary, there were "too many reasons"; p. 60.

from them, while offering no real persuasion or reasons as to why they should do so, he also offered a kind of rhetoric that boomers have clearly found very satisfying. There are terrible threats already in existence, or likely to arise, in various parts of the world—the poor could rebel at any time in a way that might hurt U.S. interests, especially if they are led by Communists. It is mainly because of such threats that the President says young people may have to be ready to be called to serve. He sees this as a sacrifice, not only because individuals may have to interrupt or give up their careers and civilian lives, but because the U.S. might intervene for noble reasons, rather than simply out of its own self-interest. He calls for both shrewdness and prudence in dealing with real dangers, along with a willingness to join an idealistic crusade. Yet his overall tone of confidence suggests that for most young people, none of this may be truly necessary. The United States is very strong, and it will remain that way. At the same time, Kennedy does not seem to anticipate at all that the idealism of the students will turn in favour of communism, and against service to the American Establishment. Radicalism can emerge from middle-class wealth and anxiety as much as, if not more than, from poverty. More simply, it is possible to congratulate oneself for being a very noble human being, always ready to sacrifice for others, while actually not being like this. This achieves a combination of an almost complete freedom from actual sacrifice, with the maximum possible praise for one's willingness to sacrifice. One would think part of successful rhetoric is to literally move people—to change their minds from one position to another, partly by getting them to admit that there is something wrong with their starting point. Kennedy, on the contrary, tells young people in his speech that they are more or less perfect as they are. The circumstances, more or less left behind by the elders, are not perfect, but none of this is the fault of those who are now young, and there is a breezy confidence that the young will respond in a way that is flawless. Such talk has always been music to the ears of the boomers.

So far our argument might suggest that if the words of these two presidents had any effect, it might have been to support complacency. Eisenhower seems to have advised Americans that foreign policy crises, mainly related to Communism, will be dealt with as needed. Kennedy warns that these crises are worse than Eisenhower suggests, but he seems confident that Americans will do exactly the right thing, because of their combination of determination and moral superiority. (Eisenhower may have contributed to American skepticism about the benefits of large government spending programs.) There is an element of both speeches, however, which points to something very different from complacency about the status quo. Though both Eisenhower and Kennedy no doubt prided themselves on their toughness and realism, both included passages in their speeches that could be described as dreamlike utopianism. Ike says the world "must" become "a proud confederation of mutual trust and respect. Such a confederation must be one of equals. The weakest must come to the conference table with the same confidence as do we, protected as we are by our moral, economic, and military strength." He clearly pins his hopes, to some extent, on the UN, which was not yet as insistently anti-American as it later became. The founding documents of UN agencies were largely drafted by Americans, and the international criminal courts that have been functioning for a few years have depended for much of their argument on American lawyers. Has the UN ever achieved equality among nations? Is such a thing even possible? Did Ike of all people believe it was possible?

In his closing words, Ike says "we pray" that all people "have their great human needs satisfied," and enjoy both opportunity and freedom; does he mean every single person should enjoy these things? The prayer continues: "that the scourges of poverty, disease and ignorance will be made to disappear from the earth, and that, in the goodness of time, all peoples will come to live together in a peace guaranteed by the binding force of mutual respect and love." The collective security of the UN or of specific regional and other alliances

may someday give way to universal love. Words like these might have inspired John Lennon's "Imagine."

Kennedy, as we have seen, also talks about eradicating poverty; "man holds in his mortal hands the power to abolish all forms of human poverty." Towards the end of his speech he says the real struggle to which his generation and his fellow Americans are called is "a long twilight struggle, year in and year out … a struggle against the common enemies of man: tyranny, poverty, disease and war itself." Ike seems to allude to the UN; JFK appeals to it directly:

> To that world assembly of sovereign states, the United Nations, our last best hope in an age where the instru ments of war have far outpaced the instruments of peace, we renew our pledge of support—to prevent it from becoming merely a forum for invective—to strengthen its shield of the new and the weak—and to enlarge the area in which its writ may run.

He appeals to his Cold War "adversaries":

> Let both sides seek to invoke the wonders of science instead of its terrors. Together let us explore the stars, conquer the deserts, eradicate disease, tap the ocean depths and encourage the arts and commerce. Let both sides unite to heed in all corners of the earth the command of Isaiah—to "undo the heavy burdens … (and) let the oppressed go free."

Both leaders seek perfect happiness—or at least, freedom from the obvious burdens that have always cast a shadow on happiness—for everyone on earth.

Why did both of these great leaders seem to promise not simply improvement in the general level of well-being in the world, but a kind of utopia or heaven on earth? Is it possible that even this desire is part of a desire for what is best for the United States specifically? There is a sort of left-wing argument—echoed to some extent by both Kennedy and Eisenhower—that it is mainly economic factors, especially poverty, that cause or drive aggressive conquest. If poverty is

addressed, on this view, there will be less likelihood of war. It might be more true to say countries that have become aware of a disproportion between what they expect and what they are able to get, are likely to demand more. Rich countries might want security, and in terms of expectations, it may be that there is never enough security. The big house on a hill, looking down on the poorer houses in the flood plain, may make the occupants feel unusually secure and unusually insecure at the same time. Both leaders may have thought that by making all the non-American parts of the world more secure, they would make their own country more secure as well.

It is also possible that the two leaders thought this has always been the promise of America: hardship and struggle for now, clearing and fighting for land, establishing government, but a dramatically better tomorrow. It is possible that both Presidents were conscious of a danger that young Americans might become complacent in their affluence, and thus more indifferent than their elders both to their own souls or moral conditions, and to world issues. It might be that they thought Communism succeeded partly by promising utopia, so they had better do the same. It might be that they thought American liberalism and Communism have something in common--they reject what might seem the defeatism and cynicism of old-fashioned conservative societies, which preach that suffering and injustice must be accepted as if they were God-given. Modern progressive societies believe, quite possibly they know, that we can do much better than that.

How much better? If Americans hope that a world can come about which is very different from, and better than, this one, this hope can be interpreted as optimism. From another perspective, however, it is pessimistic to reject human life as actual human beings have ever known it, with its hopes and accomplishments as well as its wars and dangers. It may be hoped that a better world is one which is somehow for human beings—at their service; but it may be just as likely that such a world is one which, by virtue of its perfection, excludes human beings. As the year 1961 got underway, and Eisenhower and Kennedy both evoked these possibilities, the baby boomers approached adulthood.

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