FOREIGN POLICY OF THE UNITED STATES

ADDRESS
OF THE
HONORABLE CORDELL HULL
Secretary of State
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Address of the Honorable Cordell Hull, Secretary of State

I want to talk with you this evening about the foreign policy of the United States. This is not, as some writers assume, a mysterious game carried on by diplomats with other diplomats in foreign offices all over the world. It is for us the task of focusing and giving effect in the world outside our borders to the will of 135,000,000 people through the constitutional processes which govern our democracy. For this reason our foreign policy must be simple and direct and founded upon the interests and purposes of the American people. It has continuity of basic objectives because it is rooted in the traditions and aspirations of our people. It must, of course, be applied in the light of experience and the lessons of the past.

In talking about foreign policy it is well to remember, as Justice Holmes said, that a page of history is worth a volume of logic. There are three outstanding lessons in our recent history to which I particularly wish to draw your attention. In the first place, since the outbreak of the present war in Europe, we and those nations who are now our allies have moved from relative weakness to strength. In the second place, during that same period the policy of this country has moved from a deep-seated tendency toward separate action to the knowledge and conviction that only through unity of action can there be achieved in this world the results which are essential for the continuance of free peoples. And, thirdly, we have moved from a careless tolerance of evil institutions to the conviction that free governments and Nazi and Fascist governments cannot exist together in this world, because the very nature of the latter requires them to be aggressors and the very nature of free governments too often lays them open to treacherous and well-laid plans of attack.

An understanding of these points will help to clarify the policy which this Government has been and is following.

In 1940, with the fall of France, the peoples of the free world awoke with horror to find themselves on the very brink of defeat. Only Britain in the West and China in the East stood between them and disaster, and the space on which they stood was narrow and precarious. At that moment the free nations were militarily weak and their enemies and potential enemies were strong and well prepared. Even before that this country had begun its preparations for defense. Soon thereafter we started upon the long hard road of mobilizing our great natural resources, our vast productive potentialities, and our reserves of manpower to defend ourselves and to strengthen those who were resisting the aggressors.

This was a major decision of foreign policy. Since that decision was made we have moved far from the former position. We and our
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The Allied strength has now grown to the point where we are on the verge of great events. Of military events I cannot speak. It is clear that they are in the hands of men who have the complete trust of the American people. We await their development with absolute confidence. But I can and should discuss with you what may happen close upon the heels of military action.

As I look at the map of Europe, certain things seem clear to me. As the Nazis go down to defeat, they will inevitably leave behind them in Germany and the satellite states of southeastern Europe a legacy of confusion. It is essential that we and our allies establish the controls necessary to prevent the spread of this chaos. It is our business to prevent its spread to the German-occupied countries of eastern and western Europe while they are in the throes of reestablishing government and repairing the most brutal ravages of the war. If confusion should spread throughout Europe, it is difficult to overemphasize the seriousness of the disaster that may follow. Therefore, for us, for the world, and for the countries concerned a stable Europe should be an immediate objective of Allied policy.

Stability and order do not and cannot mean reaction. Order there must be to avoid chaos. But it must be achieved in a manner which will give full scope to men and women who look forward, men and women who will end fascism and all its works and create the institutions of a free and democratic way of life.

We look with hope and with deep faith to a period of great democratic accomplishment in Europe. Liberation from the German yoke will give the peoples of Europe a new and magnificent opportunity to fulfill their democratic aspirations, both in building democratic political institutions of their own choosing, and in achieving the social and economic democracy on which political democracy must rest.

It is important to our national interest to encourage the establishment in Europe of strong and progressive popular governments, dedicated like our own to improving the social welfare of the people as a whole—governments which will join the common effort of nations in creating the conditions of lasting peace, and in promoting the expansion of trade, production, employment, and the exchange and consumption of goods which are the material foundations of the liberty and welfare of all peoples.

It is hard to imagine a stable Europe if there is instability in its component parts, of which France is one of the most important. What then is our policy towards France? Our first concern is to defeat the enemy, drive him from French territory, and the territory of all the adjacent countries which he has overrun. To do this the supreme military commander must have unfettered authority. But we have no purpose or wish to govern France or to administer and we save those which are necessary for military operations against the enemy. It is of the utmost importance that civil authority in France should be exercised by Frenchmen, should be swiftly established, and should operate in accordance with advanced planning as fully as military operations will permit. It is essential that the material foundations of the French people be as once restored or resumed. Only in this way can stability be achieved.

It has always been our thought in planning for this end that we should look to Frenchmen to undertake civil administration and assist them in that task without compromising in any way the right of the...
French people to choose the ultimate form and personnel of the government which they may wish to establish. That must be left to the free and untrammled choice of the French people.

The President and I are clear, therefore, as to the need, from the outset, of French civil administration—and democratic French administration—in France. We are disposed to see the French Committee of National Liberation exercise leadership to establish law and order under the supervision of the Allied Commander in Chief. The Committee has given assurance that it does not seek to frustrate the authority. On the contrary, it has given assurance that it wishes to see the French people exercise their own sovereign will in accordance with French constitutional processes. The Committee is, of course, not the Government of France and we cannot recognize it as such. In accordance with this understanding of mutual purposes the Committee will have every opportunity to undertake civil administration and our cooperation and help in every practical way in making it successful. It has been a symbol of the spirit of France and of French resistance. We have fully cooperated with it in all the military phases of the war effort, including the furnishing of arms and equipment to the French armed forces. Our central and abiding purpose is to aid the French people, our oldest friends, in providing a democratic, competent, and French administration of liberated French territory.

In Italy our interests are likewise in assisting the development at the moment of a free and democratic Italian Government. As I said some months ago, we have learned that there can be any compromise with fascism—whether in Italy or in any other country. It must always be the enemy and it must be our determined policy to do all in our power to aid it. Here again, within these limits, it is not our purpose or policy to impose the ultimate form or personnel of government. Here again we wish to give every opportunity to the development of a free Italy. We believe that this can be done if Italy would have had at least a preliminary expression of that will. Events have not progressed according to our hopes.

The present situation, then, is this: In October 1943 the President, Mr. Churchill, and Marshal Stalin accepted the active cooperation of the Italian Government and its armed forces as a complement to Italy under the supervision of an Allied Control Commission free of declaration regarding Italy made at the Teheran Conference by the British, French, and American Governments. The policy initiated by the British and American Governments that the Italian Government shall be made more democratic by the introduction of representatives of those sections of the Italian people who have always opposed fascism; that all institutions and organizations created by the Fascist regime shall be suppressed; that all Fascists or pro-Fascists elements shall be removed from the administration and from the institutions and organizations of a public character; and that democratic organs of local governments shall be created. Finally, it recites that nothing in the declaration should operate against the rights of the Italian people "ultimately to choose their own form of government."

This policy has been and is being carried out. Only that part which calls for the introduction into the central government of more democratic elements has not yet been put into effect. This does not signify any change in the clear and announced policy. Thus far it has been thought by those chiefly responsible for the military situation that it would be prejudiced by an imposed reconstruction of the government, and a reconstruction by agreement has not yet been possible. But there is already promise of success in the activities of the political parties which are currently holding conferences with a view to drawing up a program for the political reconstruction of their country along democratic lines. The permanent Executive of the Italian Democratic Party is seeking a solution which will provide for the cooperation of the liberal political groups within the government. Thus, after 21 years, we see a rebirth of political consciousness and activity in Italy, which points the way to the ultimate free expression of the Italian people in the choice of their government.

What I have said related to some of the most immediate of our problems and the effect on our policy toward them as we and our allies evolve from a position of weakness to one of power. There remain the more far-reaching relations between us and our allies in dealing with our enemies and in providing for future peace, freedom from aggression, and opportunity for expanding material well-being. Here I would only mislead you if I spoke of definitive solutions. These require the slow, hard process essential to enduring and accepted solutions among free peoples, of full discussion with our allies and among our own people. But such discussion is now in progress. After such an experience we can see the basis on which our policy must be founded is soundly established; the direction is clear; and the general methods of accomplishing it are emerging.

This basis of policy and these methods rest upon the second of the lessons which I said at the outset of my remarks was found in the pages of our recent history. It is that action upon these matters cannot be separate but must be agreed and united action. This is fundamental to our understanding that the era of the future of the entire range of our international relations have been brought to the very brink of destruction by allowing themselves to be separated and divided. If any lesson has ever been hammered home with blood and suffering, that one has been. And the lesson is not yet ended.

However difficult the road may be, there is no hope of turning victory into enduring peace unless the real interests of this country, the British Commonwealth, the Soviet Union, and China are harmonized and unless they agree and act together. This is the sole framework upon which all future policy and international organization must be built. It offers the fullest opportunity for the development of institutions in which all free nations may participate democratically, through which a reign of law and morality may arise and through which the material interests of all may be advanced. But without an enduring understanding between these four nations upon their fundamental purposes, interests, and obligations to one another, all organization in the international field is mere paper and the path is wide open again for the rise of a new aggressor.

This essential understanding and unity of action among the four nations is not in substitution or derogation of unity among the United Nations. But it is basic to all organized international action, because upon its reality depends the possibility of enduring peace and free institutions rather than new coalitions and a new pre-war period. Nor do I suggest that any conclusions of these four nations can or should be without the participation of the other United Nations. I am stating
what I believe the common sense of my fellow countrymen and all men will recognize—that for these powers to be divided in their aims and fail to recognize and harmonize their basic interests can produce only disaster and that no machinery, as such, can produce this essential harmony and unity.

The road to agreement is a difficult one, as any man knows who has ever tried to get two other men, or a city council, or a trade gathering, or a legislative body to agree upon anything. Agreement can be achieved only by trying to understand the other fellow’s point of view and by going as far as possible to meet it. Although the road to unity of purpose and action is long and difficult, we have taken long strides upon our way. The Atlantic Charter was proclaimed by the President and the Prime Minister of Great Britain in August 1941. Then by the Declaration of the United Nations of January 1, 1942, these nations adopted the principles of the Atlantic Charter, agreed to devote all their resources to the winning of the war, and pledged themselves not to conclude a separate armistice or peace with their common enemies.

After that came the Declaration signed at Moscow on October 30, 1943. Here the four Nations, who are carrying and must carry the chief burden of defeating their enemies, renewed their determination by joint action to achieve this end. But they went further than this and pledged cooperation with one another to establish at the earliest practicable date, with other peace-loving states, an effective international organization to maintain peace and security, which in principle met with overwhelming non-partisan approval by the Congress in the Conolly and Fulbright resolutions.

But along the road of united allied action were taken at the conference of Cairo, where the President and Mr. Churchill met with Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek, and at the conference at Tehran where they met with Marshal Stalin. At Tehran the three allies fighting in Europe reached complete agreement on military plans for winning the war, and made plain their determination to achieve harmonious action in the period of peace. That concert among the Allies rests on the foundations of common interests and common aspirations, and it will endure. The Tehran Declaration made it clear that in the tasks of peace we shall welcome the cooperation and active participation of all nations, large and small, which wish to enter into the world family of democratic nations.

The Cairo Declaration as to the Pacific assured the liquidation of Japan’s occupations and thefts of territory to depr class of the power to attack her neighbors again, to restore Chinese territories to China, and freedom to the people of Korea.

No one knows better than we and our allies who have signed these documents that they did not and do not settle all questions or provide a formula for the settlement of all questions or lay down a detailed blueprint for the future. Any man of experience knows that an attempt to do this would have been as futile as it would have been foolish.

There has been discussion recently of the Atlantic Charter and of its application to various situations. The Charter is an expression of fundamental objectives toward which we and our allies are directing our policies. It states that the nations accepting it are not fighting for the sake of aggrandizement territorial or otherwise. It lays down the common principles upon which rest the hope of liberty, economic opportunity, peace and security through international cooperation. It is not a code of law from which detailed answers to every question can be obtained by painstaking analysis of its words and phrases. It points the direction in which solutions are to be sought; it does not give solutions. It charts the course upon which we are embarked and shall continue. That course includes the prevention of aggression and the establishment of world security. The Charter certainly does not prevent any steps, including those relating to enemy states, necessary to achieve these objectives. What is fundamental are the objectives of the Charter and the determination to achieve them. It is hardly to be supposed that all the more than 50 Boundary questions in Europe can be settled while the fighting is still in progress. This does not mean that certain questions may not and should not in the meantime be settled by friendly conference and agreement. We are at all times ready to further an understanding and settlement of questions which may arise between our allies, as is exemplified by our offer to be of such service to Poland and the Soviet Union. Our offer is still open. Our policy upon these matters, as upon all others, is the fundamental necessity for agreed action and the prevention of disunity among us.

So it is with the basic conviction that we must have agreed action and unity of action that we have gone to work upon the form and substance of an international organization to maintain peace and prevent aggression, and upon the economic and other cooperative arrangements which are necessary in order that we maintain our position as a working partner with other free nations. All of these matters are in different stages of development.

It is obvious, of course, that no matter how brilliant and desirable any course may seem it is wholly impracticable and impossible unless it is a course which finds basic acceptance, not only by our allies, but by the people of this country and by the legislative branch of this Government, which, under our Constitution, shares with the Executive power and responsibility for final action.

A proposed solution which is useless to those who are not acceptable to those nations who must share with us the responsibility for its execution. It is dangerous for us and misleading to them if in the final outcome it does not have the necessary support in this country. It is, therefore, necessary both abroad and at home not to proceed by presenting elaborate proposals, which only produce divergence of opinion upon details, many of which may be immaterial. The only practicable course is to begin by obtaining agreement, first, upon broad principles, setting forth direction and general policy and then go on to explore alternative methods and finally settle upon a proposal which embodies the principal elements of agreement and leaves to future experience and discussion those matters of comparative detail which at present remain in the realm of speculation.

It is a difficult procedure and a slow procedure, as the time which has been required to work out the arrangements for such a universally acceptable plan. But it is the international relief measures. It is a procedure in which misunderstanding, the premature hardening of positions, and uninformed criticism frequently cause months of delay and endless confusion, sometimes utter frustration. It is a procedure in which the people, who are sovereign, must not only educate their servants but must be willing to be educated by them.
In this way we are proceeding with the matter of an international organization to maintain peace and prevent aggression. Such an organization must be based upon firm and binding obligations that the member nations will not use force against each other and against any other nation except in accordance with the arrangements made. It must provide for the maintenance of adequate forces to preserve peace and it must provide the institutions and procedures for calling this force into action to preserve peace. But it must provide more than this. It must provide for an international court for the development and application of law to the settlement of international controversies which fall within the realm of law, for the development of rules for adjusting controversies to which the field of law has not yet been extended; and for other institutions for the development of new rules to keep abreast of a changing world with new problems and new interests.

We are at a stage where much of the work of formulating plans for the organization to maintain peace has been accomplished. It is right and necessary that we should have the advice and help of an increasing number of Members of the Congress. Accordingly, I have requested the chairman of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations to designate a representative, bipartisan group for this purpose. Following these and similar discussions with members of the House of Representatives, we shall be in a position to go forward again with other nations and, upon learning their views, be able to submit to the democratic processes of discussion a more concrete proposal.

With the same determination to achieve agreement and unity we talked with the people of Iran at Tehran regarding the question of Japanese and with our allies at Cairo regarding the treatment which should be accorded Japan. In the formulation of our policy toward our enemies we are moved both by the two lessons from our history of which I have spoken and by the third: that there can be no compromise with fascism and Nazism. It must go everywhere. Its leaders, its institutions, the power which supports it must go. The security of the peace, no compromise, must be the opportunity to return. Upon that this people and this Government are determined and our allies are equally determined. We have found no evidence of opinion among our allies that the organization and purposes of the Nazi state and its Japanese counterpart, and the military system in all its ramifications upon which they rest, are, and by their very nature must be, directed toward conquest. There was no disagreement that even after the defeat of the enemy there will be no security unless there is a recovery of the victory in the face of the enemy. There is no uncertainty about the future of these systems to their very foundation. The action which must be taken to achieve these ends must be, as I have said, agreed action. We are working with our allies now upon these courses.

The Conference at Moscow, as you will recall, established the European Advisory Commission, which is now at work in London upon the treatment of Germany. Out of these discussions will come back to the governments for their consideration proposals for concretization. Along with arrangements by which nations may be secure and free must go arrangements by which men and women who compose those nations may live and have the opportunity through their efforts to improve their material condition. As I said earlier, we will fail indeed if we win a victory only to let the free peoples of this world, through any absence of action on our part, sink into weakness and despair.

The heart of the matter lies in action which will stimulate and expand production in industry and agriculture and free international commerce from excessive and unreasonable restrictions. These are the essential preliminaries to maintaining and improving the standards of living in our own and in all countries. Production cannot go forward without arrangements to provide investment capital. Trade cannot be conducted without stable currencies in which payments can be promised and made. Trade cannot develop unless barriers in the form of tariffs, preferences, quotas, exchange controls, monopolies, and subsidies, and others, are reduced or eliminated. It needs the least of the arrangements under which communication between nations and transport by air and sea can develop. And much of all this will miss its mark of satisfying human needs unless we take agreed action for the improvement of labor standards and standards of health and nutrition.

I shall not on this occasion be able to explain the work which has been done—any it is extensive—in these fields. In many of them proposals are far advanced toward the stage of discussion with Members of the Congress. Prior to formulation for public discussion.

I hope, however, that I have been able in some measure to bring before you the immensity of the task which lies before us all, the nature of the difficulties which are involved, and the conviction and purpose with which we are attacking them. Our foreign policy is comprehensive, is stable, and is known of all men. As the President has said, neither he nor I have made or will make any secret agreement or commitment, political or financial. The officials of the Government have not been unwise in the responsibility which rests upon them, nor have they spared either energy or such abilities as they possess in discharging that responsibility.

May I close with a word as to the responsibility which rests upon all of us. The United Nations will determine by action or lack of action whether this world will be visited by another war within the next 20 or 25 years, or whether policies of organized peace shall guide the course of the world. We are moving closer and closer to the hour of decision. Only the fullness of wisdom, unity, and alertness can enable us to meet the unprecedented responsibility.

All of these questions of foreign policy, which, as I said earlier, is the matter of focusing and expressing your will in the world outside our borders, are difficult and often involve matters of controversy. Under our constitutional system the will of the American people in this field is not effective unless it is united will. If we are divided, we are ineffective. We are in a year of a national election in which it is easy to use controversy on almost any subject, but not the subject is an issue in the campaign. You, therefore, as well as we who are in public office, bear a great responsibility. It is the responsibility of avoiding needless controversy in the formulation of your judgments. It is the responsibility for sober and considered thought and expression. It is the responsibility for patience both with our allies and with those who must speak for you with them. Once before in our lifetime we fell into dissinity and became ineffective in world affairs by reason of it. Should this happen again, it will be a tragedy to you and your children and to the world for generations.