

Oral History Interview

with

FREDERICK E. NOLTING, JR.

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Charlottesville, Virginia

June 30, 1975

by Richard D. McKinzie, Harry S. Truman Library

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MCKINZIE: Ambassador Nolting, I think a lot of historians are interested in why people go into Government service in the first place; perhaps we can start there.

NOLTING: Well, when I came out of the war (out of the Navy), I needed a job. Number two, I had, in the last six months of the war, been assigned to what was called "postwar naval

planning," which had to do with planning for ships that were surplus, aircraft, harbors, and naval installations -- in the expected cutback of equipment as well as personnel.. We came up with such recommendations as mothballing --

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putting plastic over the naval ships, clustering them in various harbors, and that sort of thing. In that connection, I was working with State Department people as well as other members of the armed forces and got immersed in foreign policy. I'd always been interested in foreign policy, of course. But I got a more intimate view of the workings of the State Department, and after my Navy duty was completed I was asked to come into the State Department, which I had with great delight (but actually not thinking I was going to be there 18 years). I became what was then called a departmental officer of the State Department, which was distinguished from the Foreign Service in those days. Incidentally, some of those recommendations of our planning group were valuable when the Korean war broke out.

MCKINZIE: Were you immediately assigned to Dutch affairs?

NOLTING: No. Walt Rostow was the first person, I think, I worked with, in what was called "German-Austrian Economic Affairs." Shortly thereafter, I was asked to join the Northern European Division of the Bureau

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of European Affairs. The Bureau of European Affairs was then headed by Jack [John] Hickerson, and my immediate boss was Hugh Cumming. So, I moved over to what was then the old State Department Building right across from the White House, now the Executive Office Building, and went to work on European political, affairs. This was about four or five months after joining the State Department in the other capacity.

MCKINZIE: There's a lot of talk among historians about what people intended in the way of economic planning for Germany and Austria. There was a kind of a policy problem with the [Henry] Morgenthau plan in the background on the one side, and the problem of sustaining life fell to the Army, particularly General. [Lucius] Clay. And General Clay very quickly became convinced that something other than pastoralization was necessary, something about integration into Western Germany. Were these problems with which you dealt in the...

NOLTING: To a certain extent, but "dealing with them" is much too meaningful a term for what I did during that short period. I remember vividly Charlie

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[Charles P.] Kindleberger and Walt Rostow; they were in brown suits and. I was in a blue suit, all of us having just come out of the armed forces. They organized this division and asked me for a curriculum vitae which showed a year of study in Vienna as an 18 or 19 year old -- which I had done, but I was studying music; I was studying piano and also going to the University of Vienna. When they assigned me to these economic problems, I said, "Look, I was a music student in Austria; I don't know very much about the economics of the country."

Walt's reply, I remember, was, "Man, you've been there. The rest of us have only flown over it."

MCKINZIE: Made you an instant expert. Did you have particular knowledge or interest in Dutch affairs, to which you were very shortly transferred?

NOLTING: No, not much, except as a part of the whole European problem. I had traveled in Europe three or four times. I had, of course, been in the war, but that was mostly in the Italian and southern French campaigns. I didn't know much about Holland,

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although I'd been there. Strangely enough, the Benelux countries were then in Northern European affairs; it was later changed so that they became Western European. But the division of Northern Europe took in Scandinavia and the Benelux countries in those days.

As you know, Indonesia became the main problem for the Dutch, aside from the recovery of Holland with the aid of the Marshall plan. But in the case of Holland, what went in under the Marshall plan was being spent in almost equal amount in trying to sit on top of the turbulent situation in the Netherlands East Indies. So, the two problems became very closely entwined. I later had many Dutch friends and they became very devoted friends over a long period of years, but at that time I didn't know Holland all that well, nor did I know Indonesia.

MCKINZIE: In what sense was there a clear policy towards that? There was this sort of legacy of Franklin Roosevelt which was anti-colonialist. Yet, by 1946 when you began to work on that, there was a great

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deal of concern about Communist movement into these unstable areas. So, you had to kind of pull, it would seem, this anti-colonialist tradition on one hand and the desire to do something to prevent further expansion of Soviet inputs on the other hand.

NOLTING: Well, this question has come up often. Most recently a young man who's writing his Ph.D. dissertation came to see me, inquiring about the difference in the attitude of the State Department vis-a-vis Indonesia on the one hand and Indochina on the other. As it happened, I had worked on the Indonesian problem early in my State Department career and on Vietnam late in that career. He said specifically -- and perhaps your question could be answered or be put in these terms -- what was the difference? Why on the one hand were we, in the late forties, putting pressure on the Dutch to come to some political agreement with Sukarno's movement for independence in Indonesia and on the other hand, by and large, supporting the French attempt to re-establish French authority in Indochina. Didn't the two policies seem inconsistent,

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but I was assigned to one and not to the other. It so happened that the Netherlands were in the Northern European Affairs Division of the State Department, and France was in Western European Affairs; that's a technicality. But there were two major factors, I think, why the policies were different in the State Department and in the U.S. Government, generally. One was that Sukarno was regarded, in those days, rightly or wrongly, as a genuine nationalist -- untainted

by an education in Moscow, untainted by charges of being a Communist. This changed later on, but in those days he was regarded as a genuine, popular nationalist. Ho Chi Minh, on the other hand, having been educated in Moscow, was regarded as anything but a genuine nationalist. Again, I say rightly or wrongly, this is historical.

The other factor was that, in general, the Netherlands politically was staunch, stable, and not thinking about having a coalition in Government

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with the Communist Party. France, on the other hand, was weak governmentally and unstable -- could very easily have been pushed over into a coalition type government. So, the maintenance or the promotion of a strong centrist-oriented government in France was a great consideration, I think, and one reason why the United States didn't press France harder on the question of Indochina and, in fact, sent great quantities of aid to the French expeditionary armed forces and those Indochinese fighting on the French side against the Viet Minh. In the case of Holland, you had a division of opinion within Holland itself as to whether or not they should try to hold on to the Netherlands Indies. Some excellent Dutch people were in disagreement, I think, with the Netherlands policy on pragmatic grounds. They didn't think they had the force; they didn't think they had the money; and they didn't think it was worth the candle. The huge archipelago of the East Indies, with then some 70 million people, was perhaps too much for a small country the size of Holland (with about 1.0 million people then) to try to control indefinitely. The

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government, however, was in a bind. They had strong ties with Indonesia, and they felt a certain responsibility for it, which was quite correct. They wanted, at least, an orderly transition to some form, first, of a union with the Netherlands under the Dutch Queen. Then, perhaps, gradually, as the institutions of self-government were developed, they would turn more and more power over. But they felt an obligation for the defense of Indonesia; they felt an obligation for its financial responsibilities; and they also felt that once order was restored there would be a good partnership arrangement beneficial to both sides that would be possible. So, you had this division of opinion within Holland itself. I think the turning point of the argument was whether or not Holland could restore itself, in terms of all the reclamation of land, etc. The Germans had destroyed the dikes, and there were great areas of agricultural Holland that were salted by the sea water. The predictions in those days, which turned out to be wrong, were that it would take ten years to get the salt out so they could restore pasture and crop land. Actually,

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through the use of certain types of chemicals, I think it took less than two years before they were back in business agriculturally. However, during that period, as I recall, the figures, the Dutch slice of the Marshall plan funds was running about a half a billion dollars a year, something in the neighborhood of five-hundred million, and it was costing them just about that amount to maintain their forces in the Netherlands Indies. And so you had this situation where they were, it seemed, incapable both financially and in terms of manpower to restore their own country and hang on to Indonesia at the same time.

MCKINZIE: Mr. Nolting, when they were planning the Marshall plan in 1947, do you recall that anyone in your office was brought into those discussions about the place of the Netherlands in the Marshall plan?

NOLTING: Oh yes. Jack Hickerson, for one, had a great deal to do with the spadework and the drafting of the Marshall plan concept, and the views of the Dutch and the views of those who worked in the State

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Department dealing with the Dutch were brought in. In fact, as I remember it, it was one of the key countries in the Marshall plan, really -- because its reputation for hard work, for getting hold of the task and doing it, organization, all of those factors made the Netherlands seem like one of the countries that would in fact, pull itself up more quickly. I think It was the first European country to say to the United States, "Thank you very much. We don't need any more economic aid; we are on our own." This was some five years later.

MCKINZIE: There was a kind of slicing of the pie after the appropriation had been made and the question that comes up and it's difficult to find answers to records. Did anyone say to the Netherlands, to your knowledge, "In order to receive your allotment of this Marshall plan appropriation, you ought to do so and so," especially in terms of the colonies?

NOLTINC: Well, I don't think there was ever any direct threat, a bluntly phrased, "Unless you come to some settlement in Indonesia, we will not continue your

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slice of the Marshall plan aid." I don't think there were any such threats -- not to my knowledge and certainly not at my level, I doubt that there were anywhere throughout the government, because we were always working with the Dutch, and the relationships were very good. Sometimes there were disagreements, rather sharp disagreements, but never mistrust. There was respect for the arguments of both sides. That was a prevailing atmosphere. However, in those debates this factor of U.S. aid versus the cost of the fighting in Indonesia with respect to the dollars involved, certainly came into everybody's mind and, no doubt, into the conversations. Referring again to the difference of U.S. policy vis-a-vis the Netherlands on the one hand and France on the other, involved as the two countries were in somewhat similar problems, I think the two factors were the stability and reasonableness of the Dutch and the estimate of Sukarno as a nationalist, non-Communist leader. As to the first factor, the Dutch used to say, "Because we're stable you're pushing us around, in effect, and that's not fair," and for my part I had a certain

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sympathy for that argument. But I did believe, quite frankly, that they could not, over the long run, maintain control, and I did believe that trying to reach compromised settlements was much better than an all-out war. I think the Dutch had 65 thousand troops there at one time -- it was about all they could muster and send. They were losing people at a considerable rate. They did have Indonesians fighting on their side, but the overwhelming population of 70 million or so people were on the other side, on the side of independence. The question was whether you could stop the fighting and come to a reasonable political settlement that didn't go too far and throw an

inexperienced, unorganized country adrift on its own. We thought we had achieved that in the Round Table Agreements of 1949, but that did not last very long.

MCKINZIE: One of the arguments that came up in the newspapers, from some people in the United States, and certainly from the Dutch was that the Indonesian population didn't have the administrative and technological expertise to handle independence, that there

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would be chaos if the Dutch moved out. In your work in the Department, were there thoughts of massive U.S. aid to the Indonesians once independence should occur, to try to bridge this period of expected chaos.

NOLTING: Our hope was that there wouldn't be that chaos, although there was full recognition that they didn't have the training or the administrative machinery. Of course, the difficulties of government in that archipelago were so much greater than of a country which was, we'll say, contiguous, all in one piece. For example, the commerce was all in Dutch hands; the inter-island commerce, which was mostly by shipping, was all handled by the Dutch. Indonesians didn't have the ships, they didn't have the facilities to get from Java to Sumatra or anywhere within those many islands (over 600, I think, altogether). And naturally, because of the separation of the people in all those various islands' -- Java being the principal one and the most thickly populated, but the others having a great deal of

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raw materials and human materials that were needed for the proper functioning of the country -- it was terribly difficult to see how they could be unified in any national sense without great aid from the former colonial power. This would be aid in terms of technical help, help with transportation, banking, training of civil servants, and the rest. This is why the people like [Mohammed] Hatta, and others that I recall who were more realistic in terms of gradualism, argued for a compromise settlement, which the Dutch, with [Dirk] Stikker as one of the principal advocates of that time, finally accepted. The concept was a union of two independent countries, in effect, under the Netherlands crown and provided certain functions which the Netherlands would exercise over a period of years.

The other thing I wanted to say on that score was that the third influence in this problem came about later on through the United Nations. When this Dutch and Indonesian controversy came into the United Nations, there was then, it seemed to me, more international emotional pressure on the United States

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to exert pressure on the Dutch than there was before it came into the United Nations. It became a more bitter thing in terms of Dutch-American relations. As a member of the working group on Indonesia and also as the Dutch desk officer in the State Department, I found it difficult to keep emotion out and to keep reason in,

MCKINZIE: It would be fair to say that the crisis became more unmanageable as the numbers of players involved got larger?

NOLTING: Right, right. This was one of my early experiences in the United Nations, and it taught me a lesson, I think, about the swings in the United Nations. This lesson has been underscored many times in the intervening years.

MCKINZIE: The working group on Indonesia in the Department was composed of, as you indicated earlier, Northern European Affairs, Far Eastern people and...

NOLTING: Well, within the State Department, if you look at it topside (and not from my point of view, which

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was that of a lowly officer in those days), the divisions were European Affairs, Far Eastern Affairs, and United Nations Affairs, those three. United Nations Affairs came in later, when the question was brought into the United Nations, or perhaps a little earlier. The first thing that happened was that there was a good officer appointed to go and try to help the Dutch and the Indonesians to work out a compromise settlement. The first one, I believe, was Frank Graham, and this was an attempt to act as good officer without directly involving the United Nations in debates in New York and elsewhere. The talks gradually, however, came to the stage of debates in New York in the General Assembly, and that's where the fireworks began to build up.

MCKINZIE: Would it be too much to suppose that fireworks built up because of the involvement of public opinion?

NOLTING: To a certain extent the involvement of public opinion in the United States and world public opinion, too. It seemed to me (and this I'm dredging out of my memory) that our little task force difficulties

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mounted considerably in trying to get a unified opinion within the State Department or within the U.S. Government when the thing hit the United Nations. It seemed to me that our progress in working out certain proposals satisfactory both to the Dutch and to the Indonesians were subject to less difficulties and less pressures of public opinion when the issue was not publicly in the United Nations. Now, whether or not those plans and suggestions would have culminated in an agreement is something else again. I'm not sure they would have, I'm not sure the Dutch Government would finally have adopted them, and I'm not sure the Indonesian Government under Sukarno would have adopted them, had it not been for world pressure. It's quite conceivable that they would not have come to anything. But the difficulty of coming up with suggestions and negotiating with both sides was less in the early days and greater when it hit the United Nations,

MCKINZIE: In a way, when you bring together people from European Affairs and from the Far Eastern Division,

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you're talking about people who have different clientele and different visions of what ought to be. I wonder if you felt at that time that the people in the Far Eastern Division had a clear idea of what they expected Indonesia to play in Far Eastern Affairs. The whole area was in considerable turmoil as you know very well. Did they have a view of the future of Indonesia or...

NOLTING: Yes. The hopeful view was that it could be a stabilizing influence in the turbulent area. It had the economic potential; it had a leadership which was popular among the Indonesians themselves, namely, Sukarno; it had advantages in raw materials and the possibility of trade with the outside world, which could make it economically viable. And there was considerable hope that this newborn country could be an example of growing stability. Now, those hopes were dashed for a while and now have come back again, and it is now a relatively stale country. But during a period of ten years there, Sukarno's government fell to pieces and then came under the influence of the Chinese Communists, Then the coup occurred,

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or nearly occurred, and there was the counter-coup and a great loss of life. During that period, those of us who had hoped that the stability of the country would constantly increase were sadly disappointed. So, there were ups and downs in this, but the hope in the forties was that Indonesia would be an example of an emerging newly independent country with political and economic stability. It has now become that, but there was a trough of disillusionment in between.

MCKINZIE: Did you have anything to do at all with the Belgian involvement in NATO: I understand that Jack Hickerson had quite a bit to do with the evolution of NATO; he and Theodore Achilles had a great deal to do with drafting, in fact, the document...

NOLTING: I should have mentioned Ted Achilles earlier. He was one of my admired superiors. I didn't have much to do with the early membership of Belgium in the Marshall plan, I was almost totally involved in the Indonesian question.

MCKINZIE: One Dutch military officer, I don't know how

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typical he was, had said to public press that in a way the Netherlands could save a great deal of money by not becoming a member of NATO, that...

NOLTING: Did you say NATO?

MCKINZIE: Yes I did.

NOLTING: The NATO treaty was drafted at a much higher level from mine. I knew about it, of course, but the nuances of the treaty, the wording, and the constitutional questions I had nothing to do with that I can recall. The countries that became members negotiated at the foreign minister level or above. In the case of Holland, and Belgium and Luxembourg, I didn't have much to do with that.

MCKINZIE: With the coming of NATO, which came on the heels of the Berlin blockade, which came on the heels, itself, of the Marshall plan, a lot of tension filled events in Western Europe. What indication did you have that the very highest levels were concerned with the Dutch colonial question, that the White House was concerned about it?

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NOLTING: There were several indications of that. One was a memorandum that I wrote (or maybe it was jointly written by the task force) that went up to Acheson and recommended a certain course of action vis-a-vis the Dutch. It went to President Truman and came back with his initials and his comments on it. He had evidently read it carefully and had further questions to ask and it was obvious that he was very much interested in the Indonesian settlement. Acheson himself was very much interested. Earlier, I remember a conversation in General [George C.] Marshall's office when he was Secretary of State. He was talking to Ambassador van Kleffens. I was there. General Marshall was very interested in this subject, in a rather typical way, I thought, although I didn't know him well enough to know that it was typical, but I gathered later on that it was. He simply read a brief memorandum saying that, in effect, "Mr. Ambassador, we considered this question very sympathetically, and we know the difficulties involved in the Netherlands, in public opinion and other ways, The United States' position is that you should come to a political settlement as rapidly

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as possible." He read that brief memorandum and van Kleffens was just about to respond when General Marshall said, "Now, let's talk about raising green peas in my garden in Leesburg." That took van Kleffens, who was a very able and fine diplomat, somewhat by surprise.

MCKINZIE: That was a good diplomatic move on Secretary Marshall's part.

NOLTING: He didn't want to get involved in the arguments, He already knew them, I think, and he just wanted to let that one drop.

MCKINZIE: What were the circumstances under which you were given the responsibility for some China aid which had gone unspent after the fall of Chiang Kai-shek's government in 1949?

NOLTING: This was after the roundtable conference, after that so-called settlement that lasted a while, but not too long, in 1949. Then I was no longer connected with the Indonesian problem and moved into this other job that you have just referred

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to. I don't recall anything very brilliant or successful,, actually, that came out of that. It was a brief assignment. It was an attempt to allocate, in a sensible way, the remainder of the money that had been allocated to the Chinese Government on the mainland, that Government having fled to Formosa. The problem was what to do with 75 million dollars to bolster Southeast Asia against further Communist encroachment. Some of the money, I believe, was allocated to South Korea for things like concrete, steel, barbed wire, and things of that sort against a possible North Korean invasion. So far as I know, those allocations were too late and the materials did not arrive

in time. They may have arrived after the war started; I'm not sure. Other allocations went to other states in the area, which was permitted under the appropriation of funds from the Congress.

I'm sorry to say I don't recall exactly the allocations of all, of that fund.

MCKINZIE: Were there discussions of direct allocations to Indochina?

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NOLTING: Not that I recall, of direct allocation from that fund. I do recall, however, being assigned (this was in the Eisenhower administration) to checking with members of Congress who were on vacation in the summer -- these were committee chairmen for the most part, House Foreign Affairs and House Appropriation and Senate Foreign Relations and Senate Appropriations -- on Mutual Security Funds. This concerned the transfer of a certain amount of money which had been appropriated for Europe to help the French in Indochina. There was, as I recall, a 10 percent transfer authority within the act at that time. So, with congressional approval, the President could take 10 percent of what was allocated for Europe and transfer it to some other area. And I do remember a brief assignment of checking with certain members of the Congress on vacation as to whether they would have objections to the transfer of a part of the European allocation to Indochina. This was done in the Eisenhower administration, as I recall it, 1952 or '3.

MCKINZIE: How did your life change when the Korean war

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began in June of 1950?

NOLTING: I remember being at the office that weekend when the Korean invasion took place and the great sense of not only activity but decisiveness that took hold of the government under the President's leadership, Acheson's leadership in the State Department, and Dean Rusk as then head of the division that coveted Korea. While I don't think I had anything great to do about it, I remember being there and feeling that here's a government that really can act and act in a hurry when there's a real necessity to do so. I was very proud of that reaction.

MCKINZIE: By this time you were working for Freeman Matthews. That office had a great deal of responsibility from 1950 until the end of the Truman years and on into the Eisenhower years.

NOLTING: It was sort of the differential joint of the State Department; everything went through it. I'm a great admirer of Doc Matthews, and he did a tremendous

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amount of work for the Under Secretary, the Secretary, and all the Assistant Secretaries; they came to him on almost every manner of problem. His office was also responsible for coordination with the Defense Department and for coordination with the CIA: And so we were involved, I would say, in the higher decision making and coordination of the Government during those years. It was a thrilling job for me.

MCKINZIE: Averell Harriman once said that he thought that much of the Korean war was financed through the aid program. Why would he have said that? Is there any validity to such a statement, that the military aid program financed a great deal of the Korean conflict? That the Defense Department got a great deal. of its money or equipment going into Korea, somehow, through that program.

NOLTING: I doubt that, Mr. McKinzie. I thought the U.S. divisions employed there were financed straight out of the military budget. I'm not sure about this. Could he have been referring to the equipment, we'll

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say, of the Turks and the other foreign troops -- the non-American members of the United Nations forces? He could, I think, have been referring to some of them.

MCKINZIE: There is a possibility that some old equipment that was in the hands of General [Douglas] MacArthur's troops was sent to other nations in the form of military assistance.

NOLTING: Quite possible. And a third possibility is that the South Korean Army was equipped by Mutual Aid Funds. But if he were speaking of the U.S. forces, I don't think that that would have been true; I don't think it would have been possible under the act.

MCKINZIE: With your involvement with both the State Department and the close contacts with the military, you must have been in a unique observers' position when General MacArthur had his problem with President Truman and when the Chinese came into the Korean war, I wonder if you have any observations on any of those crisis events?

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NOLTING: Yes, As I said earlier, I was proud of the way the U.S. Government reacted in most cases during the Korean conflict. I thought the President was extremely decisive after studying and doing his homework; I think he came to wise conclusions. I don't know much directly about the MacArthur-Truman conflict, but my sympathies were certainly on the side of the President in the political action that he was forced to take. Now, in retrospect, one may look and ask whether or not a drive to the Yalu would have prevented the present-day threat of a revival of North Korean invasion of South Korea, which I suppose is one of the most dangerous spots now in June of 1975. If one looks back and says, "Who, in the long run, was right as to how limited this war should have been," I'm not so sure but that General MacArthur's point of view was the right one. In thinking along these lines -- and you never can prove the alternative, of course -- I'm not at all sure that very decisive action in the Korean war wouldn't have ended it earlier and have made the Chinese more cautious with respect to later events, including South

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Vietnam. But one never knows; one didn't know then what the Russian reaction would be, as well as the Chinese, and, in fact, one didn't know (at least, I didn't know) what the military possibility was in terms of cutting off the Chinese reinforcements to North Vietnam. I know the calculation was to try to limit that war, in the spirit of the United Nations resolution, to defend youth Korea without destroying or violating other territories, including North Korea and China.

At that time, I must say, I was of the opinion that that could be done and that is what ought to have been done. And this was the prevailing attitude, I think, in the U.S. Government. Looking back over the intervening years and having served in Vietnam and seen that war get out of hand in a most disastrous way, I wonder sometimes whether I, too, wasn't somewhat over-impressed by the reasonableness of the American position in the sixties with respect to Indochina, to Vietnam. I ask myself often whether or not the display of great power might not have had a more salutary effect, first in Korea and then in Indochina. The two situations are not exactly similar,

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and I don't want to leave the impression here that I feel that they are. With respect to Indochina, that is, Vietnam, I think the initial mistake was a political one, namely the U.S. connivance in the overthrow of the Diem Government that led us into a trap, a military trap. There wasn't any similar thing in Korea. The similarity that I was referring to was the decision to make limitations, which I think was a decision brought about only by the overthrow of the Diem Government.

MCKINZIE: Do you recall any discussions at all during that early Korean period about the future of Indochina? Would it be fair to say that the crisis in Korea was so immediate that it overshadowed the other troubled spots in the Far East?

NOLTING: Yes, the Korean war intervened and took the American attention off of what was happening in Indochina. The French were fighting it out in Indochina with a certain number of Indochinese on their side and the Viet Minh on the other side. This began in 1946, roughly, and continued through '54 to the

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first Geneva Conference. Well, the Korean war intervened in the middle of that, and I think one effect of the Korean war was to take American eyes off of the deteriorating situation in Indochina while we were fighting the war in South Korea.

MCKINZIE: "American eyes" meaning public eyes or official eyes?

NOLTING: Both public and official. In other words, I don't think that the American Government's attention, and certainly not the American public's attention, was focused sufficiently (as it had been before, really) on what was developing in Indochina -- and I'm speaking of the whole of Indochina, North and South Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia. And I think a part of that was our preoccupation with Korea. This happens over and over again in our history. I think it's a weakness which we ought to try to overcome, so that we can watch five or six things and do something about five or six things, if necessary, at the same time, and not let one get out of hand while the other one is being taken care of, so to speak.

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MCKINZIE: In 1951, you came down to the University of Virginia and you made the speech. I believe the title was something like "Tensions in the Contemporary World" or some such thing. You ticked off, in the course of this speech, quite a number of troubled spots -- Germany; Yugoslavia; of course, there was still Korea; there was Indochina, which you mentioned at the time; and then two or three others. I wondered if there was much feeling in the State Department

people around you about the limits of what the United States could do, particularly when it was already involved in Korea?

NOLTING: The limits of the use of power -- that's the hard one. Yes, I know people thought about it, but I think the preponderance of power was so great on our side then, before any appreciable production of atomic weapons in the Soviet Union, that people did not think about it in the terms that they have in more recent years. The limitations that we imposed upon ourselves -- perhaps rightly, perhaps wrongly on the use of the overwhelming power that we had were

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moral more than physical. Atomic weapons and nuclear weapons haven't been used since World War II. The non-use became a habit in a sense, at least of American thinking, and therefore our estimate of the preponderance of power was somewhat nullified by our reluctance to use it.

MCKINZIE: Is this based upon discussions that you recall or impressions of how the U.S. might respond?

NOLTING: Yes, I believe so. The containment policy, which was the overall concept in those days was extended by John Foster Dulles in a later era, including SEATO [Southeast Asia Treaty Organization] and CENTO [Central Treaty Organization]. It was, as I recall, a pretty all-embracing concept. I don't remember many people saying, "Look, how are we going to apply this to the whole world? Do we have the power to do it?" Secretary Acheson, as you know, in testimony outlined the defense perimeter vital to the United States and he inadvertently left out South Korea. And many people have said this may have been why the North Koreans decided this was the time to strike. But I'm sure

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there was much thinking as to the limits of the use of power. Later when SEATO was created, the obligations of the United States to go to war in case of a violation of that treaty were much watered down as compared to NATO. The language was very considerably watered down, and this must be a reflection, of course, of a consideration about the limits, not only of power but the limits of U.S. interest. How far do they go and to what degree do they apply in certain areas, as compared, we'll say, to Western Europe and Japan? Yes, there was thinking about this. But I don't remember it coming into a sharp focus as it has since, we'll say, in Vietnam.

MCKINZIE: Did you have anything to do with the discussions about armistice in the early period which came through Doc Matthews' office?

NOLTING: I was aware of them, but I don't remember playing any major role in them. Of course, they were very, very prolonged and dreadfully dreary. It reminded one of the later attempts to get a table that would satisfy everybody in the Paris Conferences

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with the Viet Cong and the North Vietnamese. It was this business of who should have the higher chair and all the rest. It was repeated over and over again in every negotiation that we've had with Communists. They wanted to get an advantage even before the conference began.

MCKINZIE: Was there much talk, in Freeman Matthews' office, or much concern in that area of the State Department about bringing the Korean war to a conclusion and formulating some way of achieving post-Korean stability in the Far East? In every conflict, there has to be contingency planning for the peace. At that early stage were you aware of what kind of world the United States wanted in the Far East after Korea?

NOLTING: Again, I can't speak for the Government as a whole (in those days or, for that matter, later on), but it seems to me that the necessity to temporize was created by the loss by Chiang Kai-shek of his hold on China and the commitment that we'd undertaken with respect to Taiwan; the whole area was in turmoil.

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You remember the threats to Quemoy and Matsu and all of that? There was hardly the possibility, I would say, of an overall concept really, of any program that had any realism to it, on the part of the United States to bring about a peaceful stable Asia. India was in a terrible economic bind; the Pakistan-Indian controversy was constantly in people's minds. Southeast Asia was, during the early fifties, in a state of warfare, not only in Indochina, but in Malaya, where the British had a large force trying to put down a subversive movement. There was hardly the possibility, I think, of the Policy Planning Staff or anyone else in the State Department coming up with anything that looked at all realistic in terms of an overall United States policy for Asia. Nobody knew what China was going to do; they didn't know whether they were going to try to take over Formosa or not, Nobody knew how the Indochina war was going to come out with the French and the Viet Minh. Nobody really knew how the British would fare in Malaya. And nobody knew about the recovery of Japan. It was a really tumultuous situation, and, to answer your question, I don't recall

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anything resembling a blueprint. I may be wrong on that; maybe there were such studies and maybe people did develop such plans. But as to the chances of putting such a plan into effect, my recollection is that it was considered totally unrealistic, that we had to improvise, I should add. that under the circumstances I thought President Truman and Secretary Acheson were wise and right to tackle the many problems affecting U.S. interests in the Far East one by one, with due reference to the interconnections of course, but not to offer an overall U.S. blueprint. The situation and the problems were very different from those in Western Europe, where the Marshall plan and NATO were so successful.

MCKINZIE: Mr. Ambassador, thank you very much.

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