REVIEWS

*Shaping the Future: Foreign Policy in an Age of Transition.*

This book combines two qualities which are rare singly, and even more rare in combination.

It is short.
And it goes to the heart of the matter.
In fact, it goes to the heart of several matters.

In little over one hundred pages, Professor Bowie manages to deal with the essentials of sound policy-making, what we should do about Europe, and how the United States government should be organized for foreign affairs.

In each case, I think he makes good sense.

The essentials of sound policy, according to Professor Bowie, are: a clear view of the goal, agreement on intermediate programs, and patience in pursuing both.

This kind of persistence in working toward agreed objectives runs, as Bowie points out, against the American grain. Our impatience, our pragmatism, our zeal for novelty all argue against it.

All the more reason for those engaged in foreign policy to read the book and ponder the lesson.

It is a lesson that was understood by a great American before this book was written. Few previous presidents have equaled President Truman's clarity in purpose and tenacity in execution. "Flexibility" and "compromise"—those deadly enemies of continuity in foreign policy—held no attraction for him. He tried to judge the course that made sense, and then he plowed ahead. The Marshall Plan and NATO are among the many monuments to this steadfastness.

Bowie's discussion of next steps in this European policy illustrates his view of what is needed. That discussion focuses, in good part, on the nuclear issue.

First, he tries to define our goal: sharing nuclear responsibility in ways which will reinforce both European unity and Atlantic partnership.
Next, he considers possible intermediate programs. Bowie argues for the proposed multilateral fleet as the most promising presently feasible step—one which can evolve with time. He is right. The MLF has imperfections; no proposal can avoid them. But it is the best answer now practicable; it points in the right direction.

Finally, Bowie speaks for continuity and persistence in prosecuting this program. He cautions against possible diversions—notably help to national forces, either directly or via some loose multi-national combination of these forces. There is another diversion that I am sorry he did not also despatch: the notion that the whole problem can somehow be made to go away by improved "consultation" about the use of U.S. nuclear forces. There is a dangerous confusion here: If this means European control of SAC, it isn't feasible. If it means our discussing SAC plans and targetting with our allies, it is already being done; and it does not fully meet the allied concerns that are already reflected in two national nuclear programs and could lead to others.

In discussing organization of the U.S. government, Professor Bowie makes the point which has always seemed to me elementary, though it has often eluded sensible men: that both the President and the Secretary of State should be clear as to who is President and who is Secretary of State.

The President must fix the basic goals, approve the key programs, ward off the pressures for diversion and change. The Secretary must be his chief adviser in these matters, and the chief instrument by which actions to fulfill his wishes on external affairs are carried out and coordinated in the executive branch.

Diversions from this pattern have almost always produced bad results—whether it is a Secretary who wants to assume the role of President (Seward) or a President who believes that either his or the Secretary's responsibilities can be delegated (for example, to the Operations Coordination Board, of late unhappy pre-1961 memory).

Bowie deals with other useful ways in which clarity of purpose and consistency of execution can be assured in Washington, but this is the heart of the matter.

In case I haven't made my point clear by now, I will repeat it. This is a good book. If you are concerned with foreign affairs, you should read it.

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