Fulbright’s last frustration

The great dissenter finally found himself a compatible Secretary of State—and now it’s too late

By Daniel Yergin

For more than 30 years, he managed his trick, to be two things to two sets of people. To the people of the world, he was the urbane prophet J. William Fulbright, of the furrowed brow, the three-piece suit, the dignified mien, and, for almost all that time, of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. To the folks down home in Arkansas, he was plain old Bill Fulbright, shirt sleeves rolled up, baggy pants held up by suspenders and collar open at the neck, talking to them about the price of cotton and chickens, doing their business in Washington, D.C., and mostly keeping a discreet silence on the burning matter of race. At last, however, as he approached his 70th year, the trick failed him. Voters in the Democratic primary decided that Fulbright had neglected them and that they preferred instead an immensely popular young Governor named Dale Bumpers, young enough to be Fulbright’s son, new enough to have almost no history and no enemies. Bumpers had declared throughout his campaign that there was a mess in Washington, and that Fulbright had been there all those years. So, curiously, this man, never touched himself by a hint of scandal, became the first major casualty of Watergate and the Incumbent Syndrome of 1974.

The Senator from Arkansas is as controversial in his lame-duck days as he has been throughout his long career. The famous dissenter has ended up the most fervent defender of Secretary of State Kissinger. The leading critic of Presidential power has wound up in a battle with those who want to limit that power in the area of détente. A major opponent of executive abuses now suggests that Watergate was “balled up” by a hyperthyroid press. Earlier this month, he delivered a deeply pessimistic speech at Winston Churchill’s podium in Fulton, Mo., predicting a new Middle East war and world economic collapse. Lyndon Johnson used to accuse him of everything from disloyalty to being “unable to park his bicycle straight” to outright racism—“Fulbright didn’t think yellow people cared as much for freedom as white folks did.” Dean Rusk says he was a maverick in the Senate and “when a maverick becomes chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, it’s difficult.” The Washington Post says he “never managed to indicate persuasively that he had any larger or more humane view of the role of fairness and equality in American life.” Henry Jackson says he is “beguiled by the Soviets.” Others on Capitol Hill who agreed with him on Southeast Asia sadly dismiss him today as frustrated, bitter, crotchety—and obsessive on the subject of Israel.

Fulbright is, indeed, a complicated man, a man of many contradictions—a searing sarcasm and a courtly manner; long digressions on points that interest him; and yet impatience and even condescension toward those whom he considers dim; intense curiosity and a low boredom threshold; becoming modesty and a peacock’s pride; a deep- and wide-ranging intellect and yet a peevish turn; humanitarianism on a global scale and a slim civil-rights record; fierce bursts of energy and periods of moodiness bordering on depression; a sometimes wry, sometimes mocking cynicism and yet high-flying idealism; conservatism about the limits of human capabilities, yet utopianism about international law and organization. And, finally, both arrogance and self-doubt.

With all this said, he may well figure in history as the most famous Senator of his time, blemished, not necessarily a hero, but a man of perception and courage, a historic figure, a statesman. As Frank Church once remarked to an aide during a heated Senate debate: “When all of us are dead, the only one they’ll remember is Bill Fulbright.” His long, rich and troubled career not only illuminates and tells us much about, but is intimately bound up with, the entire course that United States foreign policy has followed since World War II, with all the pains and trials that two generations of Americans have experienced as our nation came into hegemony on the world scene—and then began to see it slowly slip away.

He arrived in the House of Representa-tives in 1943, as much a novice to politics as to the Congress. Within a short time he had created a kind of educational monument with his Fulbright-scholarship law and had secured a niche in history with the one-sentence Fulbright Resolution by which the House put itself on record for the first time as supporting a postwar United Nations. Fulbright himself was just 38, with a dilettantish, improbable quality to his background—the Statesman from the Backwoods—that would provide the ready paradox for the next three decades.

Initially, he became critical, as we entered the postwar years, of the rising tide of anti-Communism. In late 1945 he spoke out in one of the most thoughtful critiques of Truman’s foreign policy. “We have already fallen to quarrelling with Russia, like two big dogs chewing on a bone. . . . To be tough or soft toward a nation is not a policy.” But the pressure and evidence were so overwhelming that Fulbright soon subscribed to the cold-war consensus that united United States policy—and stilled dissent—until the Vietnam war. In May, 1946, he asked in a speech: “Is it the purpose of Russia to dominate the world through a subtle combination of infiltration and force?” Along with most other Senators, he answered, “Yes.”

In February, 1954, he was the only Senator to vote against an appropriations bill.
Fulbright

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tion for Senator Joseph McCarty's witch-hunting investigations, and in July, 1954, he filed the bill of particulars that formed the basis of the censure motion against the Senator from Wisconsin. "His style and his manner and what he said offended me," recalled Fulbright in one of our several conversations. "I thought it was outrageous the way he operated. It resulted in great criticism against me. I put in the record a selection of the most violent vituperation I ever received from all over the country. It was perfectly obvious that, politically, it was not a very wise thing to do. And I think it did leave a residue in the minds of many people in the Senate and the House that I was somehow naive about Communism... I don't think I was naive — and I don't think I am today. But that's just an example of a difference in view."

In the years that followed, Fulbright was among the very first figures to challenge the anti-Communist consensus. He did it quietly, and yet there is no question that at that early date, while Henry Kissinger was just turning his Ph.D. thesis into a book and describing scenarios for limited nuclear warfare, Fulbright was pointing the direction toward what a decade and a half later became known as détente. He called then for "gradual adjustment with the Russians that would be to mutual benefit" and argued "that recognition of the evidence of mutual capacity to destroy each other provides the United States and the Soviet Union with a basis for agreements." And he favored a diplomatic opening toward the People's Republic of China.

In 1959 Senate Majority Leader Lyndon Johnson (who, when approached on foreign affairs would say, "See Bill. He's my Secretary of State") succeeded in persuading Theodore Green, the 91-year-old chairman of Foreign Relations, who had some trouble staying awake and more trouble with his hearing aid, to step aside. Fulbright became chairman and remained so longer than any other man in the nation's history.

It was also in this period that there emerged his most famous flaw—at least as far as many liberal admirers were concerned—and that was on race and civil rights. He was among the Senators who signed the Southern Manifesto, protesting the Supreme Court's school desegregation decision. When crisis broke out in Little Rock, Ark., in 1957, he lined up with his angry white constituents.

The explanation often given was one of cold political calculation—that to be a statesman, you must get re-elected, backed up with the example of Arkansas Congressman Brooks Hays, who supported integration and was defeated by a write-in candidate in 1958. "Fulbright was unabashed in that," recalled former Senator Albert Gore, another Southerner. "He regarded this as a necessary ticket of admission from Arkansas. He made the compromises I wasn't able to make—and he remained in the Senate six more years than I did."

But that does not completely explain Fulbright's position. If never a fervent, active segregationist, he certainly was a paternalist, and did little to try to lead his constituents, "The whites and Negroes of Arkansas are actually prisoners of their own environment," he once wrote. "Certainly, no one of them has ever been free with respect to racial relationships in the sense that the Vermonter, say, has been free."

When I asked him about his stand on segregation he replied, "In the nineteen-forties I was accused of being a nigger lover and a tool of the labor people... I felt that the most effective approach
would be better education and health for the black people." He recalled a speech he made almost 30 years before on the role of the legislator; it still is his ultimate explanation: "In those matters, I said then, that are within the experience of your constituents, especially those involving their social and economic relationships, matters involving their own personal experience, I resolved those questions in favor of the ascertainable majority will. I didn't profess to know more about the things that they knew about than they did. This would apply to such pedestrian things as the cotton program. The same would apply to the desirability of the integration of the schools. It was their children that were involved. On other subjects not within their experience, I thought it was my duty to follow my views—to use one example, the war in Vietnam. I knew they did not approve of my policy."

In 1960, his stand on race did cost him—and, his admirers would say, the nation. Fervently backed by Lyndon Johnson, Fulbright was John Kennedy's first choice for Secretary of State, though Fulbright never clearly wanted the job. Kennedy, on the advice of his brother Robert and others, finally decided against the Senate because of his position on integration—and found that full support on Israel—and so the job went to Rusk.

If Fulbright had been defeated or retired in 1962, he would already have left the Senate with a highly credible record. But he was to make his greatest mark in the years that followed, as he lost confidence in the men, institutions and policies with which he had identified, and took the lead in the battle against both the Vietnam war and the anti-Communist theology that had dominated America's postwar foreign policy.

His respect for both Kennedy and Johnson had been great. He had enjoyed being summoned to the White House, and he was pleased to do his chairmanly part. "Fulbright ran the committee as though foreign policy were too complicated to be left to the mere amateurs in the Senate. He saw his job as assisting the professionals in the White House and State Department," a committee staffer recalled.

On Vietnam he had been harboring private doubts. In May, 1964, he cut out a newspaper photograph of South Vietnamese soldiers torturing a suspected Viet Cong, and sent it to Defense Secretary Robert McNamara. "I have been gravely concerned over the situation in Vietnam even without reports of tortures and indiscriminate bombing," he wrote. "We should cut our losses and withdraw."

But in August, 1964, the Administration charged that North Vietnam crafts had attacked American ships in the Tonkin Gulf. At Johnson's request, Fulbright then skipped the Tonkin Gulf Resolution as its mandate to initiate the air attack over the North, and as the major legal justification for prosecuting the entire adventure. Wayne Morse, one of the two "no" voters along with Ernest Gruening, correctly characterized it as "a predated resolution of war."

During the brief debate on
The resolution, Fullbright was ambiguous. On the one hand, he said it would give the President broad powers to do whatever he deemed necessary to protect American interests. He found it "quite consistent with our existing mission and our understanding of what we have been doing in South Vietnam for the last three years." On the other hand, he argued that the resolution was only a limited tool, that it would not lead to an American participation in any sense and that Johnson would need further authorization to expand the war.

Fullbright accepted the Administration's version of events, and was angered by what he then saw as North-Vietnamese arrogance. But he was also willing to forget his doubts so that he could do his part, playing senior Senate foreign-policy critic against the President, helping the "moderate" Lyndon Johnson in his 1964 race with Barry Goldwater, who, Fullbright believed, sought "a policy of "co-annihilation.""

Though the 1965 escalation disturbed Fullbright, he tried to influence the President through private memoranda and talks. (He had, at times, the dangers of publicly opposing a President of one's own party—Truman once dismissed him as "an overeducated Oxford s.o.b."). But history shows that Fullbright's private arguments to Johnson were per- ceptive. That spring, he sent a memo to the President warning him not to escalate the war because "an independent Communist regime" would not be incompatible with American interests, because "the economy of a large American land army would involve us in a bloody and interminable conflict in which the advantage would lie with the enemy," and because a "full-scale air war" would not defeat the Viet Cong in the South and might lead to an intervention by the North Vietnams in the war against China. The only questionable part of the memo was Fullbright's acceptance, along with all the Administration, that China was an imperialist power intent on expansion.

"He used to listen," said Fullbright of Johnson, "but in evaluating my advice that of his chief advisers, Mr. Nunn, Mr. Cabell, Mr. Rusk and Dr. Komer told that they knew the facts."

An open break did not occur for more than a year after the Tonkin Gulf—and arose not from Vietnam but the Do- minimican nuclear intervention of April, 1965. The Administration claimed that American nationalists were threatened, that a Communist uprising was at the core of the civil strike. A careful Foreign Re- lations Committee study con- vinced Fullbright that the Ad- ministration had almost solely Red Scare to try to justify both to itself and to the country an unjustifiable in- tervention. On Sept. 15, 1965, Fullbright wrote to the Administration that the revolution was not the cause of the "unjustifiable inter- vention. From that moment can be dated the breakup of the cold war consensus and the begin- ning of a mass movement against the war."

"Mr. Johnson never forgave me," recalled Fullbright. "With a man like President Johnson, you either went along or you went right out and he didn't tolerate dif- ferences of opinion very easily. After I made that one speech, I sent him as nice a letter as I could saying it was a mistake, but never again wished to talk to me. Never again was I consulted." He smiled slightly. "Of course, Mr. Johnson never has ever even really consulted in the sense that he was ever in- terested in what I had to say. He had made up his mind al- ready; he had decided that I keep me in bounds, so I wouldn't take issue and embarrass him. But the September speech was the breaking point." The speech, he said, had sent his bulk- ied out, and he was no longer able to influence Johnson, nor was he allowed to influence the Administration. Fullbright felt that Johnson's "inability to hear the voice of conscience." The Administration, he said, was not "in a state of maturity, and that was what I said to him."

"I'm sorry for your folks," he said,"but I'm sorry for your country too."

As a Foreign Relations Com- mittee staffer member recalled, "He said he would not be tolerated by Fullbright in anymore in the Johnson Administration, and raised doubts about his policies elsewhere. When April 1966 the hearings on Vietnam and China, Fullbright was already a dove. As he saw the Tonkin Gulf Resolution have been made, the war had expanded, and as in- creasing information pointed to United States provocation and a further escalation of those two events in the Tonkin Gulf in August, 1964, Fullbright thought it was a shame. He had to resign his post. He didn't resign, instead, he was humiliated; he had helped perpetrate a fraud. He resigned, he said his colleagues to whom he was speaking, "He was not the member of Congress doing a good job." He added, "I have never been convinced of the statements."

"I personally feel that the committee, the public and I myself were dumb in the face of a basic situation was not true," the
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Understand why Johnson and his advisers could not see their mistakes, admit that the Emperor had no clothes, forget all the cloak and dagger about honor, and indicate that mistake. "We go ahead treating this little pissant country as though we were up against Russia in China, when China put together," he said, eXceptionally remarked.

Pulitzer turned Foreign Relations into a teach-in. The Vietnam war’s end was not in the 1960s, when the most important the committee ever had—not in terms of legislation, but in terms of airing the arguments and counter-arguments to those put forth by the executive. The hearings were the crucial beginning step within the United States to make a realistic appraisal of American policy in Asia.

But Senators are legislators as well as educators, and here Pulitzer was far less successful. "The committee carried on a more or less continuous struggle to the war, kind of making a record against it," recalled former Senator Hubert Humphrey. "Sometimes, he seemed indifferent to the committee. If he had consulted it, and listened to his support, he might have done a better job. He would present his case. If people wanted to follow, fine; if they didn’t, all right. Plato says somewhere, I think, that the guardian of the Republic should not be too boon companions. Pulitzer represented that rule in action. He seemed to be saying, ‘You’re a Senator, and you should use your own judgment. If you wouldn’t do this because we’re old friends, do it for a favor, or do this for old times’ sake. Which made him the direct opposite of Lyndon, who would say, ‘I need your vote,’ be short of breath.”

Pulitzer would not make a direct legislative challenge. "Of course, the committee could make a substantive change in the floor of the Senate an amendment to terminate all funds for the war," said Albert Gore, a member of the committee in those days. "Perhaps he should have. But I’m sure it would have destroyed us and the movement politically. For the country was at war, America was in the battlefield, and any move to deny them weapons, food, transport, air cover, would have created violent and widespread opposition. Pulitzer generally let others take the lead. "If I offered legislation, it wouldn’t look right," he would say. He also recognized that he himself
was too controversial, that attaching his name could be a sure way to assure an amendment's defeat. Many of his colleagues resented him personally, and he himself did not have the patience to seek out colleagues individually to sell his position. The intellectual Southern gentleman in him, perhaps, prescribed limits on how he would attack, how aggressive he would be—in contrast to a Senator Jackson. It was this characteristic, plus obsessions with smaller issues like Radio Free Europe, that led some admirers to conclude that passivity and lack of focus were his real flaws, that he suffered from an instinct for the capillaries.

He did, finally, involve himself in legislative action, although his efforts even then were essentially on the periphery. In 1969, after threatening a filibuster, he helped push through a Senate amendment to the defense appropriations bill that prohibited the President from sending troops into Laos and Cambodia—something Nixon had said he would not do anyway. It was the model for the later Cooper-Church amendment on Cambodia and the McGovern-Hatfield amendment to end the war.

What is most important to say about Fulbright and Vietnam is that, though he was not the first Senator to oppose the United States involvement in war there, he, more than any other politician except perhaps Eugene McCarthy, made opposition respectable, even possible. His example seemed to say that you could still be a loyal American and not subscribe to the militant anti-Communist credo. "The change of public attitudes about the Vietnam War would not have been possible without his leadership," says Albert Gore. "Only he was in a position to provide it. The chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee was absolutely necessary to challenge an almost all-powerful executive. Only by taking the issue to the people were public attitudes altered. He may well have saved us from a war with China."

Another reason that Fulbright has been more important as a statesman-educator than as a great lawmaker, is that he simply does not have the gregariousness that makes one popular with colleagues. When other Senators called Fulbright the professor it was not exactly a compliment. "He has not had a head-on, frontal power, a personal influence on other Senators," said Senator Clifford Case, a member of the Foreign Relations Committee and a Fulbright admirer. "Rather, it's strong indirect influence, a forcing of all of us to face our conclusions and justify them. Everybody is as effective as he can be. Fulbright of course has been an enormously useful member of this body. More than most people, he is capable of preserving an independent position. In the Senate, that means a certain aloofness, a certain quality that can be misunderstood among some members as intellectual snobbishness. I don't think that's true. In the short run, people say, his influence was lessened, but he has done what he's done because it's what he had to do. . . . I was more interested in a possible solution. His opposition was based upon broad conceptual grounds."

Fulbright's cast of mind was such that he challenged not merely policy, but the underpinning assumptions. He began the effort with "Old Myths and New Realities" in 1964, in which he attacked the "master myth" of a mono-causal international Communist conspiracy, and continued it much more forcefully in 1967 in his most influential volume, "Arrogance of Power." He argued that the United States, (Continued on Page 87)
blinded by its own power and self-confidence, had sought to remake the world in its own image.

He went much farther, however, in a little-noticed, but much more startling book, "The Crippled Giant," published in 1972. With this, the chairman of the United States Foreign Relations Committee became a cold-war revisionist, for his book was an oration for that concept, a complete rejection of the conventional wisdom. He declared that the United States must share blame with the Soviet Union for the confrontation.

"Change," he wrote, "has come not from wisdom but from disaster." American public leaders, including the late Sen. William Proxmire, had gotten it wrong, not completely wrong perhaps, but wrong enough to make way for Viet-

nam and then Chile. We had misunderstood the men-- and the minds of the men-- in Moscow, Peking and Indo-

china. We decided without evidence that they were part of a giant international revolutionary conspiracy and failed to observe that they were also nationalists. We set off on a universal crusade, all-
too-often military in form, called "containment."

"Well, it would be a very odd thing if I didn't change my view in the light of new knowledge," he said when I raised the question of his in-

consistency. "It isn't so much that you change your views relative to certain facts--it's that new facts, new elements appear."

Fulbright encountered these new elements in hearings, formerly classified papers, memoirs, and various recent events. "After World War II we were sold on the idea that Stalin was out to dominate the world. I didn't have the knowledge or the foresight to make a judgment at that time. I didn't know about Ho's letters to Wash-

ington--or that there were in

northeast Asia. Very few people did make the right judgment. Henry Wallace sensed it, he had a feeling about it, but he was ridiculed for being a vision-

ary, an appeaser, unrealisti-

c. The crusel of the problem was the generalization of the Truman Doctrine, which changed from a rescue operation for Greece in 1947 into an i-

logical crusade. It prepared the way for the kind of intervention we last undertook, it created the attitude, the state of mind, that later led to Viet-

nam."

But Fulbright qualifies and

requalifies those remarks, "for Truman of course was there in Stalin's time. While Rus-

sia's "very dramatic experience in World War II gave some justification for fearing a resurgent Germany," Stalin was "certainly a very ominous character.

But not saying that Mr. Truman or Mr. Acheson is to blame. ... Mr. Acheson does have a great reputation.

and brilliant role under the old idea of power politics and colonialism. Judged on the standards that were common to the world up until the in-

vention of nuclear weapons and the power thus to wipe out whole countries, I suppose his attitude could be considered appropriate. But I think basically he had little feeling that it was possible to create a more cooperative world. He thought the United Nations was a fraud. This is where he was lacking in foresight. He was a very great advocate, but I don't think he was a man, a man of any profound understanding of what was taking place in the world at that time."

Indeed, although he achieved prominence as a critic of the Eisenhow-Dulles foreign policy, today Fulbright judges Eisenhower for the President of the United States, 1954, that is a great deal of the country.

The attitude of President Eisenhower was probably the most in accord with our na-

tional interest and that of the world."

In the last few years, the new Fulbright has appeared -- Fulbright the consensus. The particular subject of con-

sent is Henry Kissinger, and the Senate is accused of hav-

ing been duped by Kissinger, even of helping to perpetrate some kind of Kissinger coup.

It is no question that Kissinger has established a friendly relationship with Ful-

right -- and in the process has charmed him. "He's the closest Secretary of State I've had contact with," said Fulbright. "He's on the right track. He's done more than anybody else in 30 years to at least bring into view the prospect of a settlement. This is quite a change from the cold-war days that began in the late nineteen-fourties and ran right up until now."

But the major reason for his con-

sent is that Kissinger's key policies are, as Fulbright the professor puts it, "cor-

rect." He approves whole-

heartedly of the pursuit of détente with Russia and China and the seeking of an
"evenhanded policy" in the Middle East, and he worries about who could replace Kis-
singer, "I don't think any-
body who has his background
and his capacity to negotiate."

He gets angry at the charge that he is "covering up" for Kissinger on wiretapping. "I wasn't trying to protect Kis-
singer, he's not my ward.", he said. He says there were "some dis-
crepancies" on the matter of
Kissinger, the Plambers and
wiretapping, "but they weren't
very substantial. They didn't
show any great moral degra-
dation or anything else—they
just didn't amount to very
much."

Fulbright's distaste for the
Watergate exposed era is pro-
nounced. Last year he told
aides that he thought a Sen-
ate censure of Nixon and La
Joseph McCarthy—would have
sufficed, would have done
enough to discipline an "arro-
gant" Administration. At
times, he sounds like Julie Nixon Eisenhower as he criticizes the press. "I think
this is part of the Watergate.
The Watergate was ballooned up
into an enormous issue. People
like those two report-
ers who uncovered it for The
Washington Post and The Post
itself—they were sort of like
Christopher Columbus who had
discovered a whole new world
People made reputa-
tions overnight discovering
some new scandal. They're
still doing it, they just love
it. The papers are devoted al-
most altogether to stories of this
type. No one really
approved of wiretapping, go-
ning back 50 years. I knew it
was going on, and all
accepted it—and a lot of
other practices. In their minds
people don't approve of covert CIA activities. In the majority of people say we've
got to do it because the others
are doing it."

And again, as a long-time
critic of the C.I.A., he dis-
misses shock over recent
revolutions about Kissinger's
role in C.I.A. operations in
bringing down Chilean Presi-
dent Allende. "These revolu-
tions are not creeping out.
We knew about this interven-
tion of the C.I.A. The C.I.A.'s
been doing this for years—
they bragged about it in the
old days."

Fulbright himself was de-
defeated in two attempts to
increase Congressional
oversight of the C.I.A.

Those who have listened
closely will have noticed that
the Senator who used to thun-
der on about the powers and
responsibilities of the Senate
in foreign policy making now
criticizes the Congress for
trying to intervene in that
very same process. This is not
a new Fulbright but an old
one. He has, he com-
plained, "for the existing
requirements of American for-
gen policy—we hobbled the
President by too niggardly a
grant of power."

His ex-
planation, again, was that
"you deal with a situation that
is changing all the time,
and when the executive is ig-
noring Congress, and it did
in many cases, as with
Vietnam, we did finally de-
velop quite a strong support
for ending the war, but the ex-
ecutive found ways of evad-
ing it anyway."

The truth seems to be that,
for Fulbright, the "Senate's
role" was not an important
issue, at least not in the matter what his
operations suggested, but merely
a tool with which to attack
a policy — Vietnam — with
which he did not agree. Had
he been in power, he would have been more articu-
late than he is in attacking Con-
gressional encroachment on the President's prerogatives.

Most controversial in recent
years has been his position on
the Middle East. He has called
for a negotiated political set-
tlement, and an "evenhanded
approach" instead of the di-
lomatic and military support
for Israel and more pressure
for a withdrawal from the oc-
cupied territories. Here, too, he has been a proponent of
Kissinger, but while there is
not a great deal of difference
in their stands — Fulbright
seems to want more conces-
sions from the Israeli side —ful-
Fulbright's qualitatively
different. For he has become
obsessive on the subject of an
Israeli-Jewish lobby and pow-
ervesting. Disliking George
Meany, the mili-
tary-industrial complex and
the United States Senate to
smash détente and to distort
American policy and interests
in the Middle East.

In the nineteen-fifties Ful-
bright became critical of eth-
nic groups seeking to shift or
direct American foreign policy
on questions involving the
countries to which they felt
ties. Initially he had in mind
certain Eastern European mi-
norities, increasingly he
came to focus on an American
Jewish lobby linked to Israel.
In May, 1960, he criticized
the Douglas Amendment, an
effort to stop military aid to
Egypt with Egypt's opening
of the Suez Canal to Israeli
shipping. He called it a
"textbook case of how not to
counter international rela-
tions." It would accomplish nothing, he added, "beyond the appeasement of certain uninformed minority groups in the United States."

The next day, he left for the Middle East. He first visited Egypt; then he went to Israel, presented a university lecture and encountered demonstrators, "who I believe were these students doing marching around with umbrellas?" he asked afterward. "It's not raining." An aide replied, "They really think you're an appeaser."

Mutual antagonisms mounted in the early nineteen-sixties when Fulbright's investigation into foreign aid focused on Israel and the United Jewish Appeal. In 1970-71, Fulbright became infuriated by what he judged an erroneously and unprecedented manner in which Israeli military aid could sweep through Congress, and at the same time, began to locate forces in Lebanon in an Israeli pullback to its 1967 borders in accord with U.N. Resolution 424. Whatever Fulbright's private feelings, and it should be said that he has been personally and professionally close to Jews—he has been pointing to a harsh truth: The least settled is the most settled, and the more the regional and worldwide power equation will have shifted against Israel. Israel's security, he has been saying, will not come from armaments and enlarged borders, but only in the form of a settlement. This famous non-interventionist has even gone so far as to propose one part of an eventual treaty guaranteeing Israel's 1967 borders, but our own domestic debate is so feverish, so open-ended, that it is strange that this is only a trick—as if Fulbright would only make the promise so that it could later be broken. Which, upon examination, is a ridiculous suggestion.

Not long ago, he described himself as "a friend of the Arab government" and people, who warn that the Arab countries of the dangerous consequences that could follow from what he described as a "false victory"—a new arrogance of power. I asked him about the growing talk of an American military intervention in the Middle East and what he would call that tragedy," he said. "In view of the irrational things we've done in the past, how can you eliminate it? I don't advocate it, but there are reasonable alternatives. We should negotiate a settlement that is acceptable to the parties there—it's easily said and
difficult to do, but it's the only way in the long run.

A few weeks ago, he was guest of honor at a small party at which both Arabs and Jews were in attendance. When he was asked to toast the toast, he said, "This thing has always bothered me throughout my life—now we can gather in this room, and exchange ideas and friendship—and yet, on a larger scale, we always have a conflict." Yet it is exactly because he has no confidence in the ability of man to control war that he has held so long and tenaciously to his belief in international organization. "We've had four major wars in my lifetime alone," he said later. "Is this going to go on and on? Nuclear weapons have changed the nature of the game. One war may be the ultimate disaster."

"When the two great nuclear powers signed the ABM treaty," he continued, "they in effect said we have no defense against nuclear war. That is the first step towards the acceptance of coexistence. If that rules out the use of nuclear power, then the struggle to a nuclear war in which the society of a valid one will be confined to negotiations, diplomatic and economic means. The nature of international relations is being transformed by the power of complete destruction. But the cold warriors refuse to recognize that. They still look upon war, even nuclear war, the huge stockpiles, as definite tools and weapons in international relations. I don't think they are."

"The character of anti-communism," he said, "It isn't militant and open and blatant as it was in the day of Senator Joe McCarthy. And of course the official governmental attitude of détente, of normalizing our relations with Russia, has been a very beneficial and intelligent move. But there are very strong forces in the United States Congress that have succeeded in dulling and blunting that policy. It remains to be seen whether they can completely thwart it or not."

Frustration is a word that comes frequently to Fulbright's lips. "You consider all the work that went into the final adoption of the ABM concept," he said. "It's a very unsettling concept. It disturbs everybody, including your antagonists. But now it's being revised and relatively easily, under the guise of counter- Pros, which gives us the first strike capacity. I don't know how many billions will be involved. We must have wasted five or ten billion on the ABM concept. Then you get a whole new crowd down at the Pentagon, with their enthusiasm, and they come up and say, "I have a plan." There's never any end to it."

He charges in particular that great Congressional support for Senator Jackson's amendments—to the initial SALT agreement and now to the trade bill—"raise doubts in the minds of the Russians about the seriousness of the policy of détente—upon the capability of the President to obtain the support of the Congress." And he fears that an American failure to follow up could undermine Brezhnev's confidence and bring to power a more hardline faction in the Soviet Union.

"Senator Jackson and Senator Stennis and the great ma- jority of the Armed Services Committee dominate the Senate. Senator Stennis confines his efforts primarily to military affairs, but Senator Jack- son's are far more farreaching. He's in everything, all related to thwarting the movement toward détente. Their group represents the most powerful combination of economic and political power in the country, an enormous consti- tucy, disposing of $50- to-$55 billion a year." Jackson's group, he feels, is like the House, he says, "are very consistent in every way in trying to keep America expending most of its efforts on military affairs. What I'm said about Acheson holds—they simply do not recognize the significance of nuclear weapons and hydrogen bombs—that you don't play with those weapons. Those you used to with rifles and bows and arrows. It's too dangerous. But we get on this kick and go all out, spending and spending. This infuriates me—which I think is largely brought about by the war expendi- tures, and wasteful expendi- tures like space, finally brought to us by the Soviets in the Middle East—is leading us to the possibility that we will lose our democratic system, lose Congress, and have an authoritarian government like most other governments. Inflation destroys confidence, and the people welcome an authoritarian take-over."

"The spirit generated by the war in Vietnam gives strength which is translated into votes in Congress — appropriations of enormous sums for these purposes. Even in a funny way it had something to do with this. It was the war which got us to the moon. Kennedy was the one who had something to do
with that, as an expression of our national leadership—an aberration of very dubious wisdom. There's nothing wrong with going to the moon, it's just that we can't afford it. Just one of those things that we did that wasted an enormous amount of money. . . We've had obsessions, illusions of grandeur that we could do anything we liked, and there were no restraints at all. We were young and inexperienced and we got rich too quick.”

As I said before, Fulbright is a complicated man. He is a conservative in temperament. He has a kind of Swiftian pessimism about human possibilities, about the capacity for reason, a despair at the follies of his fellow men—and an almost patrician disdain for the vulgar emotions that move the mob. And he has a Burkan faith in institutions and the inherited ways, a belief in slow evolution, and a strong disbelief in man's capacity to create overnight a new order. But when his eye turns to international relations, his character becomes confused. He's both an internationalist and an isolationist—a non-interventionist, really. He is in many ways a realist, and yet surely also an idealist, one of the few remaining Americans to have kept faith with Woodrow Wilson's dream that a League of Nations, a United Nations, can solve basic problems among nations, that the international system can be recreated, that the sovereignty of nations can be subsumed under a liberal world order. He is Wilson's last true heir. Fulbright, characteristically, disagrees: "I don't consider myself an heir of anybody—just a politician doing what he can to improve the world . . . a product of a remote village in the Ozarks who happened to have certain experiences."

In 1964, a few months before the Tonkin Gulf Resolution, Walter Lippmann wrote of Fulbright, "What will be remembered is that he opened up public discussions of the unsettled questions of foreign affairs." Yet that is not what Fulbright really wanted; he never wanted to be a dissenter, a pathbreaker. All these years, he's been waiting for the public and the Administration to catch up with him—to see his light. And that is Fulbright's last frustration. For the man who will be remembered as the Great Dissenter in the United States Senate wanted all along to be a Consenter, to play on the same team with the President and the Secretary of State, but in pursuit of a policy in which he—Fulbright—could wholeheartedly believe. And after 30 years, at the very moment that Fulbright found a Secretary of State with whom he could collaborate in the cause of a little rationality and relaxation of tension, at that moment, the voters of Arkansas decided it was time for a change.
Split images: Resistance to integration (Little Rock, 1957), which "plain old Bill of Arkansas" supported; and the Vietnam war, which Fulbright the internationalist opposed. Admirers of the one despised the other.
The Senator with President and Vice President after the 1961 State of the Union address. "He enjoyed being summoned to the White House and was pleased to do his chairmanly part."
Rhodes Scholar days: Fulbright (dark jersey) on the lacrosse field of Oxford University—1928.
Fulbright, speaking this month at Fulton, Mo., where Churchill made his Iron Curtain speech in 1946, warns of the dangers of a new war breaking out in the Middle East.
Final campaign: Fulbright at an Arkansas fair this year. Though voters dumped him, a Senate colleague says: "The only one they'll remember is Bill Fulbright."