

highest per capita GNP in the world, or produce half the world's hardware, or can wipe out the remainder of the human race with our H-bombs, is basically immaterial in the long light of history. All of these measures can and will change within a hundred years, or sooner. We have only to ask ourselves how we would feel about our role when, say, Japan, or Brazil, or Nigeria have achieved a degree of parity with us on these measures, to know that our present course is presumptuous, to say the least. Or, if our hindsight is better than our foresight, as is usually the case, we need look only at the history of empires from prehistoric times to that of Britain and most modern European countries to see how the mighty have fallen.

For us to act in accordance with the reality of the world does not mean abdication from any world role. We need not even bare our national breast and confess our sins to the world, salutary as that might be. We are in truth not much worse, and not much better, than most other countries. We have merely succumbed to illusions generated by material power in much the same way that all past and present nations have. The issue is how to eliminate, or at least reduce, the effect of these illusions on our national policies. The power we have is real. It can be used meaningfully for our benefit and the world's, if used without illusions. If we can come to see ourselves in a different light on the world's stage, then the changes of policy required will not appear too difficult to achieve. I would suggest, without undue elaboration, a few of the more obvious.

We have no fundamental national interest, security or otherwise, in Vietnam, and should seek total military disengagement there as promptly as possible. Our concern should be primarily for an orderly transition to a stable and representative government, over which our in-

fluence should be minimal. Our future involvement with Vietnam should be one of seeking to repair the damages of war throughout the country, participating in international efforts to accelerate the economic development of the country, and encouraging the solution of regional political problems, of which there are many, within the framework of a regional security arrangement in which all or most of the Southeast Asian countries participate. If we follow this course there is a possibility that we might regain some measure of the capital we have lost—the capital of international prestige, respect for our judgment, and even goodwill, in Asia and around the world—over a period of time. It is also possible that we might accomplish our only legitimate aims in this area of the world—establishment of reasonably friendly relations with the various governments, and the opportunity for U.S. investment and trade under mutually agreeable conditions.

The tragic and costly U.S. involvement in Vietnam has been from the beginning merely an incident in a far more significant conflict. This is our blind and stupid confrontation with Communist China. Having sided with the loser in China's revolutionary civil war, we have persisted in the fiction that Mao Tse-tung and Communist China do not exist, and that Chiang Kai-shek and his exiled countrymen on Formosa are the true government of a quarter of the world's people. To persist in such a delusion for more than 20 years is an indication of how deeprooted are the irrational drives behind our foreign policy role in the world. China has never in the past, nor is likely in the foreseeable future, to pose a credible military threat to the United States. Yet, in our arrogance, we have followed precisely the course that makes most probable a military conflict with China. We have supported, protected and encouraged a rump