

towards his Congressional relations, a weakness he himself has acknowledged on private occasions. Yet, more seriously, it appears to represent a recoil from global responsibilities because some previous interventions have proven mistaken and excessive.

There have been significant expansions of the Communist world for which American policy failures have been in part responsible. It appears likely that there will be more. Congressional obstructions of a controversial Secretary of State are not an adequate response to that problem. The world has not yet entered on a utopian era free from great conflicts of national interest and major problems of security. Part of the danger of a psychological American withdrawal lies in the possibility that, when public opinion is galvanized again by some event, there may be an excessive reaction.

Pendulum

In the United States the pendulum swings hard, driven in part by the sense of morality that underlies the "American Idea." We see some of this in the force of current attitudes towards Third World excesses. More than two decades were needed for the same moral intensity to subside sufficiently for President Nixon to reopen contact with China. Dislike of compromise is one of the burdens of a people who can only exist as a nation through internal compromise, in a world where external compromise is necessary for survival.

The American political parties are coalitions, existing through compromise between often widely-differing factions. This smooths out some American differences but, when people become polarized politically and socially, compromise offends and alienates them. Professor Samuel P. Huntington of Harvard, one of the most distinguished scholars studying the American condition, writes:

"The essence of the democratic surge of the 1960s was a general challenge to existing systems of authority, public and private. In one form or another, this challenge manifested itself in the family, the university, business, public and private associations, politics, the governmental bureaucracy and the military services. . . . The questioning of authority pervaded society. In politics, it manifested itself in a decline in public confidence and trust in political leaders and institutions, a reduction in the effectiveness of political institutions such as the political parties and the Presidency, a new importance for adversary media and critical intelligentsia in public affairs and a weakening of the

coherence, purpose and self-confidence of political leadership."

Opinion surveys show clearly how sharp a decline there has been in American confidence in political leaders and institutions, and Professor Huntington points to one of the dilemmas this has produced: the role of government measured by its spending and its range of activities has greatly increased during a period when its authority has seriously declined. Simultaneously, the power of the Presidency has been weakened in the face of Congressional power, which is structurally incapable of producing the leadership essential to government. Great Presidents have always been powerful Presidents.

Professor Huntington was the author of the American section in the Trilateral Commission's study of the governability of democracies. His conclusion is that the upsurge of democracy in the 1960s produced true problems of governability and that "democracy can very easily become a threat to itself in the United States".

U.S. economy

If the condition of politics in the United States is a matter for continuing concern, the condition of the American economy has become much less so. Growth is variously forecast as likely to be from 5.5 to 6.5 per cent this year, with the White House using 6.2 per cent in its budget forecasts. The Commerce Department's most recent survey notes a slight cut-back in investment intentions but records brisk consumer demand, with a moderate recovery in automobile sales. Industrial production has risen steadily since last April, when it reached its low point. The momentum of recovery from a deep recession has been steady for several months. Inventory liquidation appears to have been about completed, with some rebuilding of stocks beginning to take place. Unemployment, still severe, is dropping.

These material changes are of great importance to other nations. A great many — and Canada far more than most — are deeply affected by the state of the American economy. Unemployment in Canada will not decline much until exports to the United States improve substantially. The signs have become more encouraging.

What then, in its two-hundredth year, is the true condition of America? What is the situation left after the great democratic surge of the 1960s, the wrenching controversies that accompanied and followed it, the inherent difficulties of this period in history? The size and complex variety of America eliminate simple conclusions.

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