

book

THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

June 12, 1969

MEMORANDUM FOR RICHARD M. MOOSE

FROM: Robert M. Behr *RMB*

SUBJECT: President's Background Reading

Attached is a reading item which may be of interest to the President. It is a speech entitled "American Armed Strength and Its Influence" recently delivered to the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences by Major General Richard A. Yudkin of the Air Staff.

General Yudkin presents a particularly well-balanced and tightly reasoned apologetic for US military forces in their role as an element supporting national security objectives. It is timely because of the imminent NSC consideration of NSSM 3 and NSSM 28.

Attachment  
a/s

AMERICAN ARMED STRENGTH AND ITS INFLUENCE\*

The subject I have been invited to address, "American Armed Strength and Its Influence," has become increasingly a focus of public interest. Attention by this distinguished audience is certainly timely. The opportunity you offer me to formulate and explain my views is one that I welcome. The attention the Academy is giving to this area properly underscores the breadth of the issue and the convergence of multiple concerns in any examination of this subject.

At the same time, the fact that I am invited to participate in this effort suggests your acceptance that in the process of a general examination of this aspect of national life, the military man's point of view deserves attention. As a citizen who has concern with the total problem and as a man in uniform with professional obligations to deal with specific aspects of it, I feel privileged to share with you my own thoughts in this area.

It is quite appropriate for us to be discussing this general subject in the city of Benjamin Franklin. The utility of defenses was being questioned in this city in the mid-1700s, before the birth of our Republic, when Franklin launched his campaign to fortify the Delaware River approaches to Philadelphia against privateers. It is of at least passing interest to our current defense problems to note that the cannon installed by the citizens of Philadelphia and the militia raised to man them were never tested by the privateers. Whether Franklin's efforts deterred an action on the part of his adversaries, and whether the result justified the cost, was probably of some interest in his day -- just as similar questions in a modern context arouse our interest.

Relevance of Military Power to Nation's Problems

The central problem raised for me by questions of this type and, in particular, by the topic I have been asked to address is the relevance of American military power to the problems this Nation faces today and will continue to face in, at least, the near-term evolving future. In addressing this problem two questions immediately arise -- each approaching the problem from a different direction: "To what is our existing power relevant?" and, "What forms of power are needed to enable the United States to achieve its objectives?"

To formulate answers to these two important questions requires a perception of overall national goals. It also requires an objective assessment of the environment within which we seek to attain these ends. Additionally, it requires us to deal with the matter of strategy -- the planned route the national leadership would use to achieve these objectives -- and the utility of armed strength in the pursuit of these general strategies.

There is an obvious and most important interaction here among these elements of: (1) national objectives; (2) environment; (3) strategy; and, (4) military capabilities. Thus, I suggest that the process for developing an adequate and appropriate military posture is iterative in quality -- proceeding back and forth among these elements constantly seeking a substantial degree of consonance among them. It is appropriate to note here that the National Security Council process of the present Administration -- building on the older NSC concept -- suggests a current recognition of the need to allow for and promote this interaction. We will return to this iterative process

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\*Address by Maj. Gen. Richard A. Yudkin, Director of Doctrine, Concepts and Objectives, DCS/Plans and Operations, Hq USAF, to the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences, Philadelphia, Pa., 11 Apr. 1969.

later and develop some examples of military power that can be translated into positive influence in the service of national interests.

### An Instrument of International Influence

First, however, we need to establish American military power in a national and historical perspective. Within our society armed strength is brought into being as one of several major instruments of international influence at the disposal of the national leadership. And by this I do not imply that the exercise of military force is just another state action, as natural as diplomacy or commerce. Our heritage weighs heavily against our ever viewing it in that light. And the advent of thermonuclear weapons provides an even more compelling rationale to sustain this outlook. Thus -- in effect -- our national values and modern technology compel us to seriously challenge what is commonly inferred from Clausewitz' well-known dictum that, "War is simply a continuation of politics by other means."

In considering military power as an instrument of national policy, it is also important to emphasize the substantial difference between the threat of violence and the actual employment of that violence. The exercise of force should be viewed as an action of the last resort -- an action certainly different in degree and perhaps different in substance from the policy which preceded it.

Implied in this composite American perception of the nature of war is the principle that military power should never be permitted to become an end in itself. By structuring a goal-oriented military force -- one which is meaningfully related to our national objectives -- we have vital insurance that this will not be the case.

### Internal and External National Goals

Our national goals, our fundamental objectives, can be classified as internal and external, although there is considerable overlapping between them. I take it that there are a certain number of national aims to which we here could obtain some degree of consensus: security from external attack and encroachments, social progress, economic well-being and political stability are among them. These objectives, viewed through the perspective of those responsible for defense and foreign policy, translate into: protection of the Nation, its citizens and property from injury; and, promotion of an international environment compatible with the peaceful fulfillment of the legitimate potentialities of this and all other nations -- including a particular association with nations which by virtue of their sharing certain fundamental values with us deserve our assistance in their quests for security from external aggression.

Having postulated these general objectives we are immediately faced with two problems: one deals with priorities among the internally oriented and externally oriented goals and the other deals with the contentions of some scholars and strategists that the utility of military power in achieving our externally oriented national security objectives has dramatically declined and will continue to decline in the future.

### The Problem of Priorities

Let's address first the priorities problem -- often expressed by the "guns or butter" analogy. A significant segment of our population has become aware over the past few years that conditions they long endured with resignation can and indeed should be changed. Concurrently there has been a general

recognition that national development in its broadest sense requires the progress and the satisfaction of needs of all segments of our society.

The confluence of this awakening combined with the growing problems stemming from increased urbanization and the frustrations stemming from the meeting of our commitments abroad have produced, in a growing number of our people, a mood of impatience and retrenchment. This, in turn, is reflected in a challenging of presumed national priorities. Recognizing that the internal cohesion and viability of our society are intimately related to our approach to national security affairs, we must still guard against becoming prisoners of the moment. It is indeed imperative that we fully address our domestic problems, but it is also imperative that in doing so we do not gloss over the problems of national security which stem from an uncertain and troubled international environment.

Let me illustrate my point here with an example. As a nation we have expressed strong support for the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, the NPT. We are urging allies to subscribe to its provisions. Yet a reduction in American commitments to our principal non-nuclear allies in Europe -- and Asia as well -- and a concomitant drawing down of the physical expressions of these commitments abroad could well be counterproductive. Such action on our part quite conceivably could compel these nations to reject the NPT as a matter of their national interests. Consequently the world of the future would be marked by a continuing proliferation of nuclear weapons, thus allowing for more tensions and a more hazardous international environment than we have today.

What I am suggesting here is that there is an important -- indeed, inescapable -- interaction between our foreign policies and our domestic policies. It is important to appreciate that security from external threats will provide us with an atmosphere which is conducive to the democratic process and to peaceful change. Alastair Buchan is instructive on this point when he tells us, ". . . a period when statesmen's eyes are turned homewards rather than abroad carries real risks as well as promises."

#### The International Use of Military Power

The second question, the utility of military power in the international arena, must hurdle several frequently espoused theses before it can really be explored. One such thesis holds that since the physical acquisition and occupation of territory is no longer the most effective means of enforcing will, achieving prestige, or increasing economic advantage, the military forces formerly used to accomplish such objectives are increasingly obsolete.

Another position is that electronic communication has shaped an instantaneous world consciousness which is aware of, and sensitive to, the horror of war any place on the globe. TV and the transistor radio thus insure against the forgotten war.

A related hypothesis suggests that the development of legal and political theory stressing the equal sovereignty and rights of nation-states has attached strong moral restraints to the use of force.

Finally, and perhaps the most frequently stated position, is the theory suggesting that the potential destructiveness of nuclear weapons makes war "unthinkable" in the nuclear age.

These considerations combine to suggest that not only is military power useful in fewer situations, it is also less useful in those situations to which

it still applies. In other words, the proponents of these theses would argue that the relevance of military power has been reduced both in scope, and in degree.

### Shift of Emphasis in Military Mission

I do not propose to categorize these theses as true or false, right or wrong. I would suggest that they are narrow judgments -- incomplete as evaluations and inadequate as appreciations of change in environment which leads to change in the military features of that environment. I contend that the significance of our armed strength has not declined absolutely as these examples would suggest, but rather that there has been a shift of emphasis in the relevant military mission areas.

While some military roles have declined, new ones have risen. At the heart of this shift is the fact that a nation's survival can now be directly threatened with little, if any, prior engagement of military forces. In response to this, the very nature of defense has changed. With this change have come new factors of military effectiveness which are derived from the concept of deterrence. I would also argue that, in spite of this shift in the importance of certain military roles, the many traditional forms of warfighting are still pertinent. To demonstrate these points and to articulate further the iterative process I described earlier, we can now move to a brief assessment of the international environment and the threats stemming from it.

Let me cite a few items influencing the nature of the world ahead. Ours continues to be a bipolar world militarily, but an increasingly multipolar world politically. We are witnessing a change in the nature of military alliances, a reduction in the political influence of the super powers, a resurgence of nationalism in industrial and pre-industrial societies. Also, as I noted earlier in a different context, despite the contributions of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty towards a more peaceful world, an evolving atmosphere of mutual distrust, of fear and of "going it alone," might still inspire the spread of nuclear weapons.

### Threats to Nation Remain Real

Threats to our Nation -- and the goals we seek to achieve -- which emerge from this dynamic and complex environment must be assessed in sober fashion.

The Soviet Union, though increasingly concerned with the more traditional aspects of inter-state relationships, continues to improve its military capabilities and at present is, in some broad context, our equal in nuclear destructive capability. The apparent divergence of their current interests in political detente -- the unhappy Czechoslovak incident excepted -- and military expansion may raise some doubts about Soviet intentions but certainly not about their capabilities.

China will in all likelihood emphasize consolidation of its domestic base while seeking expanded influence on its periphery. And, in spite of the dimensions of its internal upheaval, it will continue nuclear development and the production of associated delivery systems.

These threats remain real despite our acknowledgment that the Communist threat is not monolithic, and that U.S.-Soviet and U.S.-Chinese interactions are not necessarily zero-sum game situations in which a "win" for one is automatically a "loss" for the other.

The so-called "third world" is a potentially explosive area in which lesser powers find increased maneuverability as a result of constraints which

the super powers must respect. The endemic instability of the emerging nations caused by rising economic expectations and fervent nationalism contributes great uncertainty and stress within the entire community of nations. The United States cannot hope to ignore these considerations in planning for future security requirements.

### Postulating Strategic Objectives, Strategies

Utilizing this assessment of the environment as a backdrop for the attainment of our national security goals, we can postulate strategic objectives and the strategies which flow from them. We can perceive a strategy as a deliberate program of action -- a goal-oriented response to existing or expected conditions.

Let me add here that as a nation we can hope to do more than respond to the environment. We can work to initiate changes in it as well. Via arms control agreements, for example, we can significantly alter the environment within which all nations -- but especially the major nuclear powers -- must interact.

As a concerned citizen I strongly endorse efforts for constructive change in the environment; as a military man I have the professional obligation to respond to existing reality while the efforts to achieve change continue.

Given present and projected conditions within the international arena, it seems to me that the United States must pursue four strategic objectives and design its strategies accordingly. These strategic objectives are:

First -- the prevention of a nuclear attack on the United States;

Second -- in the event of conflict or confrontation with another nuclear power, the ability to control the crisis situation, prevent its eruption into nuclear war and should a nuclear conflict be started, end it quickly before it spreads to massive proportions;

Third -- the insurance of our survival as a nation should war occur; and

Fourth -- within the world community of nations, the capability for protecting vital American interests as identified by national authority.

### Deterrence

With regard to the first of these -- the preventing of a nuclear attack on the United States -- there has been for many years wide public recognition that even one nuclear weapon, however crudely made and delivered, can inflict catastrophic damage. This led to a conclusion, reflected in U.S. defense policy, that it would be infeasible to attempt to deal with the nuclear threat primarily through a strategy of direct defense. It was judged that defenses could reduce damage significantly -- but they could not prevent casualties of a magnitude that would be clearly unacceptable. Hence we have pursued as our primary strategy a complex of actions designed to work indirectly on potential enemies -- designed to influence their thinking -- to get them, in essence, to exclude from their reasonable courses of action a nuclear attack against this country.

This entire process or strategy is called deterrence -- a term familiar to all of us. But what I would emphasize is that the word "deterrence" is shorthand for a whole group of efforts and programs on the part of our government. It should not be equated solely with the threat of intolerable retaliation by our strategic nuclear forces.

The military component provides one element in this group and I think the clearly vital one. But also of importance are nonmilitary instruments of international influence. Briefly, we attempt by both policy declarations and actions to convince potential nuclear opponents of our intentions, of our acceptance of a pluralistic world. We are concerned to preclude the development of situations of such extreme threat or of such inviting opportunity that Soviet or Chinese leaders could reasonably decide that they would improve their situation by a nuclear attack upon us. We take some pains to avoid posturing forces which could be used only for starting a war -- for going first in a surprise attack. We try to eliminate any pressures for preemption -- any temptation or time urgency to launch forces lest they be destroyed because the opponent sees such preemptive action as advantageous.

#### Controlling Crisis Situation

The second strategic objective which military capabilities pursue is providing our national authority an increased measure of control over situations of crisis and conflict. This is essential in order to control the intensity of any conflict or confrontation, especially with another nuclear power, and to prevent its erupting into nuclear war. And, of course, should nuclear war be initiated nonetheless, we would want to be able to end it as quickly as possible before it reached massive city-destroying proportions. To implement these component strategies requires both strategic and tactical forms of military power that are flexible, situationally appropriate and under the certain and instantaneous control of Presidential authority.

#### Insuring Survival as Nation

The third strategic objective which I mentioned was insuring the survival of this Nation and its freedom from hostile military domination should war occur, and to the greatest extent feasible preventing injury to our population and our resources. We should not focus exclusively on the unlikely case of an all-out thermonuclear attack in judging the value of capabilities for protecting us from damage. In particular it is a significant contribution, both in its own right and for its contributions to international stability, to be able by defensive means alone to deal with various kinds of limited attacks, whether by aircraft or by missiles and whether intentional or accidental.

My emphasis up to this point has been on strategic objectives and strategies which deal directly or indirectly with the nuclear threat -- and I believe justifiably so because this level of conflict alone includes the possibility of disaster. Moreover, only by demonstrating a clear and adequate competence in the strategic realm do we enhance the resolution of lesser conflicts by lesser means. At the same time while we regard this as the most serious threat to the United States, nuclear war, particularly in the form of an all-out surprise nuclear attack, can remain the least likely form of conflict -- for reasons suggested in my discussion of deterrence.

The kinds of conflict in which the United States has been tested since World War II have been mainly ones in which our immediate opponent was a lesser power armed with conventional weapons. We expect for the future that despite our best efforts to make aggression by lesser powers unattractive, it will nonetheless occur. And in response to some of these aggressions the national authority may make the judgment that some measure of U.S. participation is called for.

Protecting Vital American Interests

This prospect or possibility means that the fourth strategic objective which I mentioned constitutes the area in which our military forces will be likely to make their most active contribution in terms of requirements for actual operations. While some may find overtones of the role of global policeman in this view, what seems to me to be involved is a more restricted objective. Let me explain by developing this analogy. There is, in my judgment, a significant difference between attempting to patrol streets, control traffic, arrest speeders on the one hand and, on the other, the coming to the aid of a neighbor or friend who seeks help because his life or property is being threatened. And it is in this latter situational context -- projected into the international arena -- where I think the United States will be called upon to make a constructive contribution to world peace.

Since the end of World War II, however, the international scene has changed significantly -- in some considerable part because of our efforts to maintain a secure world. Thus I see our military forces, as a consequence, shifting from the role they once carried out as primary defenders against aggression to one of encouraging and assisting in the self-defense efforts of our friends and of providing back-up assistance on a selective basis when required and when vital U.S. interests are clearly involved. In this role, our military capabilities can be effective only if they are employed in close harness with other resources of international influence, and only if the forces themselves and the manner of their employment are pertinent and responsive to the problem situations to which they may be applied.

Relevance of Military Power to Strategic Objectives

From these four strategic objectives can be derived the military capabilities which our Nation requires now and will need in the evolving world ahead. Time will not permit a complete development of capability needs. Therefore, let me focus, for purposes of illustration only, upon the second strategic objective I mentioned -- that of seeking to control potential crises -- to terminate possible conflicts below massive levels. Here we need capabilities that are instantaneously responsive to national authority. They must be capabilities which are highly mobile -- both strategic and tactical -- and which explicate our desire to keep a confrontation from spreading both in size and location. These capabilities must at the same time evidence our firmness in opposition to aggressive acts. They must possess a level of force consistent with the need. Perhaps even more important, however, are capabilities which enable command authority at all levels to have instantaneous and precise knowledge of the status of a dynamic situation. Such capabilities act toward assuring appropriate decisions, made at the proper level, and allow for control of potentially explosive conditions.

Similar analyses of the other three strategic objectives will produce a listing of capability needs to support each of them. The relevance of the resultant armed forces -- based on these design criteria -- is enhanced by the fact that the associated military capabilities have been derived through the iterative process -- a process dominated by national goals and sensitive to changes in the domestic and international environments.

It is worth recognizing, too, that this methodology I have described is not necessarily so rigidly sequenced. Though the development which leads us from national goals ultimately to military capabilities is the conceptual norm, innovations in military hardware, or changes in the environment, might also initiate or reverse the iterative process. Let me provide some illustrations:



The introduction of the machine gun in the First World War profoundly affected the accepted military strategy stressing the primacy of offense, and ultimately led both sides to pursue a strategy of attrition, changing the entire nature of the war. The gradual recognition of the military potential of the airplane during the inter-war period eventually affected not only the character of WW II, but the entire post-war international security environment. It is possible, in other words, that unplanned technological fallout -- perhaps even unrelated to the military, as in the case of the airplane -- may affect change in the environment or in strategies that deal with that environment.

#### A Reasoned Response Based on Need

Technology's role in this process presents its own problems. The fact of technological feasibility is not necessarily either a requirement for or justification of capability. Technological advance deserves exploitation -- but in the context of need established by a process such as the one we have described. Yet, this context of need has to take account -- in its own interaction sub-set -- of development possibilities that allow for different viewing and different describing of need. In all of this there is a necessity to remain soberly aware that in the absence of meaningful arms control, technology is not ours alone to exploit -- and such exploitation may not always be visible.

Dealing with so many complex and interlocking issues demands the best product of many disciplines. Integration through some valid methodology should promise a more focused, a better balanced answer. Included in that answer should be reasoned response to the two questions I postulated at the outset. To what is our existing power relevant and what forms of military power are needed by the United States?

#### National Security a Precondition for Domestic Development

The answer to the second question posed is quite explicit: within the international environment we can now foresee, U.S. military power should be capable of: preventing a nuclear attack on the United States; containing and controlling crises which may erupt with another nuclear power; insuring our survival as a nation should nuclear war occur; and protecting U.S. interests abroad as defined by national authority. Implicit in this response is the answer to our first question. Military power remains relevant to the attainment of both our domestic and international goals, for security from serious external threat is a precondition for internal development and progress.

My answers, placed in historical perspective, reflect an accommodation to change -- change which has occurred and has impacted on our Armed Forces over the quarter century since the conclusion of World War II. While these answers -- regrettably -- do not convey images of a new world, they do reflect a sober assessment of that world which is ours to live in. At the same time, these answers do not fore-ordain an immutability of that world; they establish no framework which would prevent -- hopefully before another quarter century passes -- that newer, better world which all of us -- often in differing ways -- are working to assure.

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diplomatic handling of the *Pueblo* crisis?  
 What were the strategic options, and  
 how do they relate to the downing of a U.S.  
 reconnaissance plane in early April?

# INTERNATIONAL CONFLICT FOR BEGINNERS

by Roger Fisher

Governments necessarily consider the consequences of their decisions. They compare, crudely or carefully, the expected results of making a given decision with the expected results of not making it. The standard way of exerting influence is to try to alter the government's perception of some of these expected results. Two sets of results are involved, one on each side of the choice that is open.

On each side of that choice some consequences are likely to be favorable to the government and some unfavorable. The effective pressure upon a government to decide one way or the other depends upon the difference between the perceived net "payoff" of making the decision weighed against the perceived net "payoff" of not doing so. Although these payoffs are almost never subject to quantitative valuation, it is useful to try to sketch out to the best of our ability a balance sheet as it would look to the government we are trying to influence, if that government prepared one.

As an example, consider the choice facing the government of North Korea in February, 1968, after it had seized the United States Navy's electronic reconnaissance vessel *Pueblo* and its crew in waters off the coast of North Korea. The United States government, insisting that the ship had been illegally seized on the high seas, demanded the immediate return of the ship and the crew. To the government of North Korea the choice, presented in terms of a balance sheet, may have looked something like the following:

## I. NORTH KOREA'S CHOICE JUST AFTER THE PUEBLO SEIZED ("we" = North Korea)

<i>If we return the ship and crew</i>	<i>If we keep the ship and crew</i>
(+) Almost no risk of military reprisal	(-) Some risk of military reprisal
(-) We admit the seizure was wrong	(+) We gain intelligence from ship and crew
We yield to U.S. military blackmail	We show U.S. to be powerless
We look incompetent	We divert U.S. from Vietnam
We accept the legitimacy of spy boats	We support war against U.S.
	We intimidate South Korea
	We tend to split South Korea from U.S.
	We direct attention to U.S. spying
	We can always return ship and crew later

If that is anything like a fair estimate of the choice as it looked to the government of North Korea, it is not surprising that the ship was kept

despite the United States's demand for its return. The lefthand column constitutes what we have been calling the offer—the consequences that result from making the desired decision. From the North Korean point of view it was not an attractive offer. The righthand column constitutes what we have been calling the threat, yet from the North Korean point of view it looked pretty attractive.

The normal first reaction is to try to exert influence by making the threat side less attractive. In the *Pueblo* case the United States sent naval ships toward Korea in a "show of force." The United States endeavored to increase North Korea's fear of military reprisals, should they keep the ship and crew. But this was a difficult task. It was not the lack of U.S. military capability in the area which North Korea was relying on to prevent military reprisals; it was the fact that North Korea held the crew as hostages. The North Korean government had undoubtedly assessed the risk of our retaliation before they seized the *Pueblo*, and there was little that the hasty movement of U.S. naval vessels in the area would do to change that risk.

A well-considered program for trying to exert influence on North Korea would look at the whole balance sheet as it appeared to them and consider what might be done to change the decision we were seeking and to change the consequences which they might expect to follow from making or not making that decision. In such an analysis the possible changes on the offer side of the balance sheet usually hold out greater unexplored opportunities for influence than those on the threat side.

There are various ways of exerting influence by making it appear more attractive to another government to do what we would like it to do. Before turning to the general problem, let us consider what might have been done in the case of the *Pueblo*.

The analytical task is to construct a hypothetical or target balance sheet which we think might cause North Korea to make the decision we would like it to make. We should also sketch out a separate balance sheet for ourselves and determine whether the potential benefit to us of trying to exert this influence is worth the costs.

The approach is illustrated by the following suggestions, which were prepared just after the *Pueblo* was seized:

## II. PROGRAM: A POSSIBLE SCHEME DESIGNED TO INFLUENCE NORTH KOREA

Change the demand:

- Suggest that the crew be returned without prejudice to North Korea's position and that the disposition of the ship await a full settlement of the dispute.

Change the threat:

- Remove any threat of immediate military attack by words and by withdrawing U.S. naval ships from the area.

- Identify the threat if the dispute continues as being that the United States is likely to embark on a long-term program of building up the military strength of South Korea.

Change the offer:

- Recognize the incident as one involving issues of fact and law with something to be said for each side.
- Treat the dispute as one of many to be settled peacefully.
- Play down urgency.
- Indicate a willingness to apologize for any intrusion that did occur.
- Promise to discipline any officers if we find that an intrusion into North Korea's waters, whether deliberate or careless, did take place.
- Offer to discuss the general problem of reducing conduct regarded by either side as unduly provocative, including possible limitations on electronic surveillance.

The hope would be that if the United States pursued such a program, this would, in a few weeks, confront the North Korean government with a choice which looked quite different from the one they faced when they decided not to return the ship and crew immediately upon the demand of the United States. It might then appear to be roughly as follows:

### III. TARGET BALANCE SHEET NORTH KOREA'S CHOICE AFTER THE PROGRAM ("we" = North Korea)

<i>If we return the crew</i>	<i>If we keep the crew</i>
(+) No risk of military reprisal	(-) An increased risk of U.S.-South Korean buildup
We look generous (men are being returned by agreement, not under threat)	Increased risk of close cooperation between United States and South Korea
Our seizure has been partially vindicated	We risk justifying increased U.S. overflights, and so on
We can keep the ship with some legitimacy.	We risk criticism from U.S.S.R., Poland, and from neutrals
We already have all the intelligence data we can get from the crew	(+) We maintain our stance as a tough David standing up to Goliath
U.S. accepts some responsibility	We can always return the crew later
U.S. spy-ship provocations are less likely in the future	
(-) We may look soft	
We give up hostages which might be a future bargaining counter	

If we had confronted North Korea with such a choice, we might have reasonably expected it to decide to return the crew. Before concluding that

we should initiate such a program, however, we would have to strike our own balance sheet and consider the pros and cons, along the following lines:

#### IV. OUR CHOICE: SHOULD WE ADOPT THE SUGGESTED PROGRAM? ("we" = the U.S.)

##### *If we follow the proposed program*

(+) There is a good chance the crew will be returned and the dispute settled peacefully

If not, we will at least appear reasonable to many people

(-) We may look soft to the world

We probably give up any chance of getting the ship back

In substance, we let North Korea "get away with it"

South Korea may get upset

We will have to be more careful of our reconnaissance ships in the future

##### *If we do not*

(-) The crew will probably remain in North Korea indefinitely

The dispute is likely to use up a good deal of time and effort

The dispute might flare up (but we can probably prevent that)

Some domestic pressure will exist for the government to escalate the dispute

(+) We do not have to make any decisions now

We can always do something later if we decide to

the Department of Defense has become quite sophisticated about making threats. We have no comparable sophistication regarding the making of offers. This is true despite the fact that the process of exerting influence through offers is far more conducive to international peace than the process of exerting influence by threats.

#### Change the beneficiary

One way to improve the impact of an offer is to focus on the beneficiary of the offer and his relationship to those we are asking to make the decision. We may be able to improve the effectiveness of the offer by changing those upon whom it has its primary impact. It may be possible, for example, to have the beneficial consequences of a decision fall on those who are more closely involved in the decision. When we attempt to exert influence on a government, we often consider the other country as a single unit. Instead we should look to those within the country who will be making the decision. The offer to all Rhodesians of "free participation in a political democracy" if they would return to constitutional government was not much of an offer to those who had the power to make a decision, the Ian Smith government. They were not going to be better off in terms of power. An offer addressed to them should probably have dealt with ways of lessening their fear of a takeover by an illiterate black majority. When we have identified those to whom the offer is being made, we want to be sure that it appeals to them.

#### Make the offer more attractive

The primary way to improve our offers is to make them look better to the government we are trying to influence. I have used the word "offer" to designate the entire set of consequences to the adversary government of making the decision we want them to make. As we have seen, there are costs as well as benefits to them in this set; there are minuses as well as pluses in the offer. They will presumably be losing some things by changing their minds and by making the decision we want them to make. As the example about North Korea showed, we can change the substance of the offer both by improving the advantages they see in making the decision and also by reducing or alleviating some of the costs to them of going along with us, costs which also fall on the offer side of the balance sheet.

In April, 1965, the United States offered one billion dollars in aid to both Vietnams if peace

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Roger Fisher teaches law at Harvard University. A longer version of this article will appear in his book of the same title, due this month from Harper & Row.

Faced with such a choice, the United States government might reasonably decide either way. Perhaps the fate of some eighty crewmen would not be so crucial considering the casualties being suffered in Vietnam, and the United States would conclude not to initiate the suggested program designed to obtain the return of the men. What is being argued here is not the wisdom of the suggested program but rather two things: that this kind of analysis helps one think clearly about such a problem, and that a government's choice can be radically and often easily affected by actions designed to change the "offer"—the consequences to them of doing what we want them to do.

Further, it is *not* being suggested that such an analysis is a substitute for detailed knowledge or historical understanding of the people concerned. Quite the contrary. As is apparent from the example, this form of analysis directs attention to questions of national attitude and interest which are likely to affect a government's decision and should help formulate those questions in a way which will make it easier for experts to be of help to decision-makers.

In this era of nuclear weapons and deterrence,

could be restored. But the idea of a one-billion-dollar U.S. aid program may not have seemed attractive to the North Vietnamese. Political leaders who saw themselves as risking their lives in furtherance of national independence, socialism, and anticolonialism may have regarded the prospect of extensive and indefinite economic involvement by a capitalist country in the affairs of Vietnam as more of a threat than a promise. By using their terms, their language, and by changing the style of this offer, we might have made it much more attractive to them. We could, for example, have turned one billion dollars over to the Asian Development Bank to be used for reconstruction and development in all of Vietnam, it being understood that North Vietnam, if it wished, could consider its share as compensation for damage done by American bombers and artillery fire. The entire program could have been set up to be administered by Asians. Such a scheme would have been far more attractive to North Vietnam and therefore would have exerted, for the same dollar price, far more influence.

This example demonstrates that if we are going to offer the donkey some turnips, we had better be sure he likes turnips. We need to have at least some perception of an adversary's values. We ought not to assume that they are a mirror image of ourselves, oriented to the things we would like in the same circumstances.

### Reduce the disadvantages of making the decision

Perhaps more important to the adversary are the minuses in the offer: the disadvantages to them of going along with the decision we want. One way to improve the offer is to lessen the costs the adversary will incur by making our decision. It is not sympathy for an adversary but common sense that we should make it as easy and attractive as possible for him to do what we would like him to do.

A government is often deterred from making the decision we want by the high political costs anticipated from making it. Where there are costs in continuing its present course, but also costs in changing its mind, inertia may exaggerate the effect of the costs of change. The *Pueblo* example given above suggests the desirability of working out all the reasons which another government may have for not deciding the way we would like it to decide, and of then seeing what we can do to minimize those costs.

### Make our offers more credible

In addition to changing the substance or content of an offer, we can exert influence by making it appear more likely that what we say will happen will in fact happen. As to any statement about the

future, there is necessarily some element of uncertainty. To the extent that we are seeking to exert influence by holding out attractive consequences for a government if it should make the decision we want it to make, the more certain we can make those consequences the more successful we will be. We will increase the impact of our offers if we make them more credible.

Much of our national defense budget has been devoted to the problem of making our threats credible. We have spent billions of dollars on nuclear weapons for the sole purpose of convincing other governments that we have both the capability and the intention of implementing a threat of nuclear retaliation. There is voluminous literature on threats. The distinction has been explored between threats narrowly defined and "warnings," consequences which will result naturally or which we will be compelled by self-interest to impose and which are therefore more credible.

On the other hand, little attention has been devoted to the problem of making our offers credible, the problem of convincing another government that the alleged advantages of their making a decision we would like them to make will really materialize. Government officials and critics ought to pay more attention to this element of policy if only because it has been so neglected. Moreover, the credibility of offers may be even more critical than the credibility of threats.

For one thing, even a small chance of having to pay a great cost is an adequate basis for a governmental decision, whereas a small chance of a fairly large benefit is not. A threat may be effective even though it is not highly probable that it would be implemented. It is easy for a political leader to justify, to his government and his own domestic audience, taking a course of action because there was a 20 or 30 percent chance that, if he did not, the country would be heavily bombed. A country can be deterred from doing something by a small risk of disaster. The consequences of the course of action that was avoided remain uncertain. No one knows for sure what would have happened. This uncertainty protects the government which can easily defend its decision to avoid the risk.

Political leaders are not, however, prone to take action on a small chance—a bet—that it will produce very good consequences. Ho Chi Minh might have believed that if the North Vietnamese stopped fighting and withdrew, there was a small chance, but a good one, of a highly favorable outcome: the United States would honor its promise to withdraw completely within six months. But no matter how favorable the outcome, so long as the chance of it appeared small, it would be politically indefensible for him to take that chance. He would not be able to go back to his people and say, "We accepted the American promise because we figured there was a 30 percent chance we could get what we wanted at

no further cost. It was a sound bet under the circumstances. It was a worthwhile risk to take. It just didn't go our way." A government wants to be highly certain that if it makes a decision in order to derive some benefits, those benefits are going to materialize.

### Some ways to make our offers credible

One way to increase the perceived probability of our implementing an offer is to increase the objective probability. By making a commitment from which we cannot back down we can show an adversary that we will have to come through on the offer. Even if the North Vietnamese believed that President Johnson was personally committed to the



Drawings by Robert Osborn

offer of a billion dollars in aid, they probably correctly believed that a different Administration would feel less bound. They might have thought the offer incredible because it would be difficult to get it through Congress in the event of peace. If we had actually appropriated the money for distribution when peace was established (perhaps with the interest to be paid to us in the interim), it could not only have been more attractive because of Asian administration; it would have been far more credible. North Vietnam would have known that if peace came, we could not prevent the implementation of the offer. By committing ourselves, we would have exerted more influence.

Specificity increases the credibility of an offer. For one thing, a specific offer shows that we have thought about what we would be prepared to do and have worked out the details. It is a demonstration of our present intentions. Greater specificity also demonstrates greater commitment, and therefore makes for greater credibility. The political cost to us of backing out of a specific promise is greater than that of backing out of a loose or ambiguous one. The more explicit the promise, the more difficult it is to find excuses for nonperformance. By being specific, we are buying influence at the cost of flexibility. By becoming committed, however, we demonstrate to the adversary that we are serious about the offer.

A general offer to make sure that the rights of a white minority in Rhodesia are protected does not carry as much weight as a draft treaty or a specific constitution that the government of Great Britain would be willing to sign. An offer to pay a specific sum of money on a particular day carries much more conviction than an offer to pay a fair amount at an appropriate time. On Vietnam, President Johnson contributed to the credibility of his offers by being more specific than he might have been. The words "one billion dollars" added credibility to an offer of economic assistance after the war. To say we would get out in six months increased the credibility of our statement that if peace could be restored, United States troops would be withdrawn. Not only does "six months" show we have thought about our offer, it shows we are more committed. It becomes more costly politically for the United States to fail to produce on that offer. Therefore it is more credible, and exerts more influence. An offer to withdraw our troops "in due course" would not exert much influence.

It is costly to bluff. Bluffing about an offer is more damaging than bluffing about a threat. It is easier to re-establish a reputation for carrying out threats. Any failure to exert influence by a threat can be followed by action demonstrating that this time the threat was not a bluff. If we fail to implement one threat, we can always implement one later. Also, bluffing on one threat may not lead an adversary to conclude we will bluff again. Backing down on

the implementation of one threat may in fact make it less likely that we will fail to implement a later threat. One could argue that because the Soviet Union "backed down" when faced with a United States quarantine of Cuba, it destroyed its credibility and that the United States could safely ignore any threats the Soviet Union might make about its response if the United States should try to impose a comparable quarantine on the North Vietnamese port of Haiphong. One could make the argument, but it is not convincing. The Soviets' ability to make a credible threat may even have been strengthened by their prior yielding. They can now say, and we may believe them, that having backed down once they cannot afford to back down a second time. It is not easy, however, to re-establish a reputation for honoring one's promises. Having been caught bluffing and having acquired a reputation for broken promises, we may not get opportunities to demonstrate that we are now sincere. If we go into a store and say, "I gave you a bad check last week but this one is good," the proprietor may not give us the opportunity to prove we are right.

### Give them the benefits sooner

Governments are concerned about the time when the consequences of making a decision are going to materialize. Changing the timing of an offer may be an important way to exert influence. Governments are notoriously shortsighted; they apply a high discount rate. They are much more interested in what is going to happen next week than in what is going to happen next year. The more quickly they can expect the benefits of making a decision to come home to them, the more influence will those benefits exert. We should try to advance the delivery date of remote benefits so they appear more immediate, and therefore more important, to the adversary. And we should try to postpone, if we cannot eliminate, the drawbacks as they see them of making the decision. The high discount rate in government decision-making means that a distant benefit must be large indeed to justify incurring an immediate cost. We should try to reverse this effect. Following the example of commercial salesmen ("Fly now—pay later"), we should try to make the benefits precede the costs: an offer of immediate benefits for future costs. To do so involves some risk that the costs, when they fall due, will somehow be evaded, just as there is a risk that the installment buyer will skip town and fail to make his payments. But the fact that there is a significant default rate on credit sales does not mean that credit selling is a bad business. In fact, it is highly profitable.

### Give them a fading opportunity

Part of the offer designed to influence an adversary to make a decision should encourage him to

make the decision now rather than later. Unless there are persuasive reasons for acting today, the tendency is always to wait and see. To make a given decision today is to give up the opportunity to get a better deal later. To postpone a decision leaves open the option to decide tomorrow and in the meantime to try to attempt to get better terms. The only cost is one day's delay. In most international conflicts the stakes are high. Benefits to be gained by improving the terms are likely to exceed the cost of waiting one more day. This tendency is likely to recur day after day.

Those who control the agenda exert influence not only by formulating the questions but by affecting the timing of decisions to be made on them. Part of our offer should make it much more attractive to the adversary to decide today than to delay. We should try to present an adversary government with a fading opportunity. They ought to perceive the decision which we are asking them to make as an opportunity which they will lose if they fail to act soon.

One advantage of offers over threats is that they can more easily be withdrawn before the adversary makes his choice. Rather than stating a price which is good forever, we should try to arrange offers or opportunities for decision which have an automatic expiration time. There is a great difference between saying "We are always willing to negotiate" and saying "We invite you to send a representative at the ministerial level to meet our representative in Columbo at 11 A.M. local time on Monday the twenty-fifth of this month." The first offer is unlikely to be withdrawn. It provides no reason for accepting it on one day rather than the next. To the contrary, there is reason to postpone a decision, hoping that something better may turn up. An offer that does not expire is like an option that is good indefinitely. It tends not to induce a decision but rather to induce delay while one explores the possibility of better terms. Delay offers something to gain and nothing to lose. On the other hand, an offer that expires by its own terms is an opportunity that knocks and may not knock again. A fading opportunity undercuts the argument within the other government that by failing to decide they can keep their options open.

Though we want to present another government with a reason for deciding now rather than postponing the decision, there are drawbacks to confronting an adversary with a public ultimatum. Either the political cost of giving in to our ultimatum or the precedent which that would establish might be enough to prevent the decision. This problem, however, can be at least partly solved by having the time limits set by a neutral third party, by secret communications, by ambiguity about the deadline, or by constructing the deadline so that it appears to result from facts outside anyone's control.



Source: A Treasury of American Political Humor,  
edited by Leonard C. Lewin

**BILL NYE**

*An Acceptance*

*Office of Daily Boomerang, Laramie City, Wy.  
August 9, 1882.*

**My Dear General:**

I have received by telegraph the news of my nomination by the President and my confirmation by the Senate, as postmaster at Laramie, and wish to extend my thanks for the same.

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I have ordered an entirely new set of boxes and postoffice outfit, including new corrugated cuspidors for the lady clerks.

I look upon the appointment as a great triumph of eternal truth over error and wrong. It is one of the epochs, I may say, in the Nation's onward march toward political purity and perfection. I do not know when I have noticed any stride in the affairs of state, which so thoroughly impressed me with its wisdom.

Now that we are co-workers in the same department, I trust that you will not feel shy or backward about consulting me at any time relative to matters concerning postoffice affairs. Be perfectly frank with me, and feel free to bring anything of that kind right to me. Do not feel reluctant because I may at times appear haughty and indifferent, cold or absurd. Perhaps you do not think I know the difference between a general delivery window and a three-em quad, but that is a mistake.

My general information is far beyond my years.

With profoundest regard, and a hearty endorsement of the policy of the President and the Senate, whatever it may be,

I remain, sincerely yours,  
BILL NYE, P.M.

*A Resign*

*Postoffice, Divan,  
Laramie City, W.T.,  
Oct. 1, 1883.*

To the President of the United States:

Sir: I beg leave at this time officially to tender my resignation as postmaster at this place, and in due form to deliver the great seal and the key to the front door of the office. The safe combination is set on the numbers 33, 66 and 99, though I do not remember at this moment which comes first, or how many times you revolve the knob, or in which direction you should turn it first to make it operate.

There is some mining stock in my private drawer in the safe, which I have not yet removed. It is a luxury, but you may have it. I have decided to keep a horse instead of this mining stock. The horse may not be so pretty, but it will cost less to keep him.

Bill Nye 181

You will find the postal cards that have not been used under the distributing table, and the coal down in the cellar. If the stove draws too hard, close the damper in the pipe and shut the general delivery window.

Looking over my stormy and eventful administration as postmaster here, I find abundant cause for thanksgiving. At the time I entered upon the duties of my office the department was not yet on a paying basis. It was not even self-sustaining. Since that time, with the active cooperation of the chief executive and the heads of the department, I have been able to make our postal system a paying one, and on top of that I am now able to reduce the tariff on average-sized letters from three cents to two. I might add that this is rather too too, but I will not say anything that might seem undignified in an official resignation which is to become a matter of history.

Acting under the advice of Gen. Hatton, a year ago, I removed the feather bed with which my predecessor, Deacon Hayford, had bolstered up his administration by stuffing the window, and substituted glass. Finding nothing in the book of instructions to postmasters which made the feather bed a part of my official duties, I filed it away in an obscure place and burned it in effigy, also in the gloaming.

It was not long after I had taken my official oath before an era of unexampled prosperity opened for the American people. The price of beef rose to a remarkable altitude, and other vegetables commanded a good figure and a ready market. We then began to make active preparations for the introduction of the strawberry-roan two-cent stamps and the black-and-tan postal note. One reform has crowded upon the heels of another, until the country is to-day upon the foam-crested wave of permanent prosperity.

Mr. President, I cannot close this letter without thanking yourself and the heads of the departments at Washington for your active, cheery and prompt cooperation in these matters. You may do as you see fit, of course, about incorporating this idea into your Thanksgiving proclamation, but rest assured it would not be ill-timed or inopportune. It is not alone a credit to myself. It reflects credit upon the administration also.

I need not say that I herewith transmit my resignation with great sorrow and genuine regret. We have toiled on together month after month, asking for no reward except the innate consciousness of rectitude and the salary as fixed by law. Now we are to separate. Here the roads seem to fork, as it were, and you and I, and the cabinet, must leave each other at this point.

You will find the key under the door-mat, and you had better turn the

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cat out at night when you close the office. If she does not go readily, you can make it clearer to her mind by throwing the cancelling stamp at her.

If Deacon Hayford does not pay up his box-rent, you might as well put his mail in the general delivery, and when Bob Head gets drunk and insists on a letter from one of his wives every day in the week, you can salute him through the box delivery with an old Queen Anne tomahawk, which you will find near the Etruscan water-pail. This will not in any manner surprise either of these parties.

Tears are unavailing! I once more become a private citizen, clothed only with the right to read such postal cards as may be addressed to me, and to curse the inefficiency of the postoffice department. I believe the voting class to be divided into two parties; viz., those who are in the postal service, and those who are mad because they cannot receive a registered letter every fifteen minutes of each day, including Sunday.

Mr. President, as an official of this Government I now retire. My term of office would not expire until 1886. I must, therefore, beg pardon for my eccentricity in resigning. It will be best, perhaps, to keep the heart-breaking news from the ears of European powers until the dangers of a financial panic are fully past. Then hurl it broadcast with a sickening thud.

Source: Survival -- June, 1969

## Book Reviews

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**Law and Vietnam.** By Roger H. Hull and John C. Novogrod. Dobbs Ferry, N.Y.: Oceana Publications. 1968. 211 pp. \$7.50.

This slim book by two young law graduates of Yale University is a notable contribution to dispassionate discussion and understanding of the legal, as distinct from the political and moral, issues involved in the Vietnam question.

Before its publication, most protagonists and critics of American and allied intervention, apart from professional international lawyers dealing with particular points in learned journals, drew upon legal arguments elaborated, on the one hand, in the Memorandum of the State Department prepared by its Legal Adviser for submission to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on 8 March 1966 and, on the other hand, in the full-page advertisement inserted in the *New York Times* of 15 January 1967, on behalf of a Lawyers' Committee on American Policy towards Vietnam. Both these sources are rather one-sided; each tends to overstate its case. The virtue of this book is that it sets out clearly both sides of the case, without emotion or moral indignation.

The main conclusions of the authors, which will surprise many of those who have opposed intervention, can be summarized as follows. North and South Vietnam were independent states before and after the Geneva Agreements of 1954. It is legally inaccurate to regard the Vietnam war as a 'civil war'. The United States is entitled to assist the established government of South Vietnam at the latter's request. The Viet Cong have not satisfied the necessary conditions to entitle them to the status of 'belligerents'. North Vietnam's military assistance to the Viet Cong constitutes an illegal act. The fact that South Vietnam is not a member of the United Nations does not prevent it invoking the principle of self-defence. South Vietnam has suffered an 'armed attack' in the strict sense, and the United States, in responding to the invitation to help resist such attack, is exercising lawful collective self-defence. Neither South Vietnam nor the United States, in reacting to threats posed, has used disproportionate force. President Johnson acted constitutionally, in terms of United States law, in his conduct of hostilities.

In short, without attempting to deal with the weighty question whether American intervention in Vietnam was politically wise, the authors make out a strong case for the legality of such intervention. Whether or not the reader finds all their supporting

arguments convincing, he is unlikely to feel disposed to challenge the intellectual integrity of the authors.

This reviewer would wish to challenge only their opinion that South Vietnam was bound by the Geneva Agreements 1954, if not directly as a party represented at the Geneva Conference at least indirectly by reason of the terms of Article 2 of the French-South Vietnamese Agreement of 4 June 1954. Space does not permit elaboration of arguments in support of this challenge, justification of which would require close examination of the proceedings of the Geneva Conference, the texts of the relevant agreements reached there, and the question whether the unratified agreement of 4 June 1954 bound South Vietnam.

In any event, in the opinion of the authors of *Law and Vietnam*, 'the Geneva Accords, by themselves, cannot be dispositive of the legal issues arising out of the Vietnam conflict'. They therefore direct attention to 'the larger body of general international and organizational law' and, having considered this, reach the broad conclusions summarized above.

ALAN WATT  
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