Crises and Australian Diplomacy

Coral Bell

ARTHUR F. YENCKEN
MEMORIAL LECTURES 1972

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Professor Bell is a graduate of the Universities of Sydney and London, and for six years was a member of the Australian Diplomatic Service. She was a research officer at the Royal Institute of International Affairs, and lectured at the Universities of Manchester, Sydney and London before taking up her present Chair at the University of Sussex. Among her books is a more extended analysis of international crises and their management, *The Conventions of Crisis* (OUP, 1971).

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INTRODUCTION

Sir Keith Waller C.B.E.,
Secretary, Department of Foreign Affairs

It gives me great pleasure to take the chair at the opening of the second Arthur F. Yencken lectures. Arthur Yencken was not only a distinguished Australian but he was one of the ablest members of the British Foreign Service of his day. His tragic death while serving as Counsellor in the British Embassy in Madrid during the war was a great loss to the Foreign Service.

His Ambassador, Lord Templewood, in writing about that event, said:

> The tragedy was irreparable. To me it meant the end of four years of comradeship in which no difference had troubled our unity of purpose and no difficulty had proved too formidable for his courage and resource. To the Foreign Service it meant the loss of a very wise official who was clearly destined with his sympathetic wife to reach the highest posts. The Spanish world mourned him as one of its most popular friends. To me the British Embassy was never the same after his tragic death. How tragic that he could not have lived to see the better times to which his work had made so notable a contribution!

It is therefore fitting that he should be remembered by the institution of a series of lectures on diplomatic or foreign affairs.

I never had the privilege of meeting Arthur Yencken but nearly forty years ago when I was an undergraduate at Melbourne University, he gave a lecture on the practice of diplomacy to a body called the Public Questions Society. I was present and I think I can fairly state my own interest in diplomacy as a career stemmed from that meeting. Some of you may think that he was unwise in encouraging my diplomatic ambitions but I have always been grateful to him.

This year, we are most fortunate in having Dr Coral Bell, Professor-elect of International Relations at the University of Sussex, to deliver the Yencken lectures.

Dr Bell is a graduate of Sydney University who has carried out distinguished post-graduate studies at the University of London, where she was awarded a Doctorate of Philosophy. She was a Rockefeller Fellow at Johns Hopkins University, Maryland and Columbia University, New York.

After six years in the Australian Foreign Service, she cast off the shackles of diplomacy and took up an academic career. In this capacity, she earned for herself a considerable reputation both as a teacher and writer. Her work has brought a new lustre to the reputation of Australia in all countries where people follow the serious study of foreign affairs.

CRISES AND THEIR MANAGEMENT

In these two lectures I am going to look at two rather disparate subjects: firstly the nature and provenance of the crises which from time to time have racked – and will continue to rack – the society of states, and the way in which they are managed by the great powers. And secondly, how these great international storms affect Australia, and what, if anything, Australian diplomacy can do to mitigate or influence them, or at any rate help us survive their effects with as little damage as may be.

Now these are both large and essentially controversial topics. If I seem to over-simplify, as I often shall, it is to pack a fairly complex analysis into the space of a lecture. And if I blandly offer tendentious statements and flimsy-seeming evidence, as again I often shall, it is in the sure confidence that I will be challenged on these points by the discussion-openers and others after the talk. And I am always conscious that I speak as an academic kibbitzer, trying to assess the cards the players hold from the glimpses they make visible, but on the assumption there are others up their sleeves, invisible to me.

Now let me turn to what I call the nature and provenance of crises as they affect the contemporary international system and are likely to affect the forthcoming system that we can, to my mind, see emerging for the last quarter of this storm-ridden century. Considering how much the history of international politics seems to lurch from crisis to crisis, it is rather surprising how little academic effort has so far gone into the analysis, or even the classification and description, of crises as such. The control of crises, I would argue, is related to the general skill of diplomacy as the control of a skid is related to the general skill of driving. It is a special element in the overall art concerned, and no doubt the experience it relates to is preferably avoided. Perhaps that is why crisis has attracted so little study: who wants a theory of something that ought to be done away with anyway? But to get back to my motoring metaphor, some styles and conditions of driving are more productive of skids than others, and the icy diplomatic roads of the cold war, or the subsequent half-thaw, have certainly produced enough skids to awaken an interest in the practice and theory of skid-control in the foreign offices of the powers. As you no doubt know, the dynamics of a car in skid are different from those of a car in normal motion – in its capacities for roadholding and steering, and braking – so that this particular set of conditions has to be studied if skids are to be controlled, or survived, or, preferably, avoided. And much the same is true of diplomatic roadholding, and steering, and braking, in the skid-situation of crisis.

Now let me get a few definitions and criteria out of the way before passing

on to an analysis of contemporary crisis management. For crisis itself (literally just a decision-point, or the turning point of an illness), I use the definition 'a tract of time for which the conflicts within a relationship rise to a level which threatens to transform the nature of this relationship'. I devised this definition so that it might fit all the innumerable relationships in which crises may be expected (marital crisis, student crisis, political crisis). The idea essentially is just that of normal strain to breaking strain – but in a situation where no-one knows precisely what breaking-strain is (and that of course is the major source of danger and uncertainty characteristic of crisis decision making).

To come to international crises proper, I think one can distinguish two basic sorts, which I shall call adversary and intramural crises.

Adversary crises are, obviously, those between powers defining themselves as adversaries: the transformation of relationships they threaten is from peace to war.

Intramural crises are those within the walls of an alliance, or power sphere, or regional organisation: the transformation they threaten is usually from alliance or concord to rupture.

Now both these basic sorts of crises occur within both central and local balances, so that altogether we have four main categories to consider.

1. **Adversary crises of the central balance** – like Munich 1938, or Cuba 1962. These are obviously the most dramatic and dangerous because they threaten general war between two or more of the dominant powers – which means, these days, possibly nuclear war.

2. **Adversary crises of local balances** – i.e. Bangladesh as an adversary crisis of the local balance between India and Pakistan; or May 1967 as an adversary crisis of the local balance between Egypt and Israel. This kind of crisis often eventuates in conventional war – shortlived, if the world is lucky, because of the characteristic supply problems of local powers.

3. **Intramural crises of the power-spheres of the dominant powers** – Czechoslovakia 1968 as an intramural crisis of the Warsaw Pact: Cyprus as a source of various intramural crises for NATO: Ulster as an intramural crisis of the British sphere of power. These are productive of city-based insurgencies, minor hostilities, repressions, counter-insurgencies.

4. **Intramural crises of regional organisation** – i.e. Vietnam as productive of intramural crisis for SEATO, Biafra for OAU, Cuba for OAS. These usually produce disruption rather than violence.

Most of the true crises of twentieth-century international politics can, I think, be fitted into one or other of these categories, but I found I had to invent a couple of other categories, which I call sub-crisis and pseudo-crisis, for episodes which have the surface appearance of crises, and are called so in

the newspapers, but do not meet my criterion of actual breaking-strain. A sub-crisis is an episode like the U-2 incident of 1960, which did some damage to relations between America and Russia, but did not really threaten the peace. A pseudo-crisis is a more controversial category: I think of it as a public relations exercise of a diplomatic sort. But it also has the characteristics of a psychosomatic illness. The Tonkin Gulf 'crisis' of 1964 was in this sense a pseudo-crisis, and as more historical evidence comes to be provided of the inside story of various episodes, the number assignable to this category will no doubt increase.

Now you may think the classification of crises in this way is rather an academic exercise, but actually it is essential to make the distinctions for my later argument as to how crises are managed, and by whom, and in particular what degree of influence the dominant powers, or local powers like Australia, may have in determining their outcome. And that is important, because it is often a question of whether people live or die.

Now let us get on to the analysis of how crises are managed in the contemporary society of states. One of the most striking developments of the past ten years, to my mind, is the degree to which all three of the dominant powers of the society of states have interested themselves in forwarding the growth of what I call 'conventions' in this field. I chose the term conventions both because it indicates, as in bridge, a set of agreed signals, and also to convey the normal sense of rules of convenience or prudence, without any great legal or moral force. By dominant powers I simply mean the powers which dominate international politics at any given period. (Not super-powers: that category is less relevant than it perhaps was between 1945 and 1958. It was always misleading in suggesting an irresistible ability of the states concerned to get their own way.) To my mind there are just three dominant powers at the moment – America, Russia and China, but there are also two 'threshold' powers, Japan and Western Europe, which are likely to acquire something of the same level of influence in the destiny of the world by the end of this decade, so I see the present triangular balance as transmuting itself into a five-power balance, a new Pentarchy, fairly rapidly, with some assistance from President Nixon and Dr Kissinger. However, I shall concern myself mostly with crisis management in the present triangular balance (perhaps 1960-80) and the earlier bilateral balance of roughly 1945-59. These periods offer quite enough puzzles for one evening.

It is also striking how self-conscious the decision-makers of the present dominant powers, especially America, have become in the past ten years about crisis management *vis-à-vis* each other. One might cite as evidence of this a remark by the most full-time of Western crisis managers at the moment, Dr Kissinger, who was heard to murmur recently 'There cannot be a crisis next week – my schedule is already full'. The reason I cite the last ten years

as the period of this development is that I date American preoccupation with the role from a remark of McNamara's in the aftermath of the Cuban missile crisis 'There is no longer any such thing as strategy: only crisis-management'.

However, I would stress that though this American consciousness is relatively new, and entailed rather a radical departure by US policy-makers from what one might call the predominant American ideology of foreign policy for most of this century – the Woodrow Wilson collective security tradition – the function has been a long familiar one to the earlier powers of the central balance, historically speaking, and is quite compatible, to my mind, with the traditions of the other two present powers of the central balance, Russia and China. This probably needs no substantiation with regard to Russia: in its Czarist incarnation it was an important element of the nineteenth century European system, obviously, and if you look at Stalin's diplomacy *vis-à-vis* Churchill and Roosevelt – or even Hitler – you will see how far the normal great power tradition persisted. I do not say Stalin was a skilled crisis manager: quite the contrary. To my mind, the 1939 agreement with Hitler was as much a disaster for Russia as Chamberlain's 1938 agreement with the same character was for the West. But he was acting within a diplomatic tradition which remained familiar even after the revolution.

It is more controversial to maintain that the tradition is compatible with China's view of its place in the world. In fact, to say so might appear a contradiction of Mr Chou En-lai's much-used maxim of the moment: 'China will never be a super-power', though as I said, the category of 'super-power' does not seem to me the relevant one in this context. Looking at Mr Chou En-lai's diplomacy over the past two years, I am inclined to withdraw the doubts I expressed in *The Conventions of Crisis* about China's adoption of this role. His talents in the field seem to me nothing short of Bismarckian. But I would like to leave any consideration of Chinese attitudes until later, since it is obviously one of the factors which make the climatic conditions for Australian policy.

Let me turn now to the bases, the instrumentalities and the techniques of crisis management at present, and the criteria for judging success in this enterprise. What I am going to say will be mostly relevant to adversary crises of the central balance, which make up the most dramatic and dangerous episodes of contemporary history, but I hope we can look at other kinds of crisis at discussion-time.

The bedrock on which the present system as a whole is erected is, to my mind, that all three of the dominant powers are strongly conscious at the moment that their interests *vis-à-vis* each other are more important to them

than the interests of their respective allies. (It seems to me that Russian and Chinese tolerance of the mining of the Vietnam coast, in the 1972 crisis of the war, is one very clear exemplification of this point.) Now this consciousness is vital to what I have called the 'adverse partnership' of the central balance. When I wrote *The Conventions of Crisis* I regarded China as very much an outsider to this relationship, but I would no longer take that view. It seems to me that the central thrust of the Nixon-Kissinger China policy – the visit to Peking and so on has been a sort of co-option of China to the adverse partnership I am postulating, and though the Chinese would not exactly say so, this policy has to some extent already been successful.

However, let me leave this debatable point, and sketch in what I regard as the foundations of this adverse partnership and its role in crisis management. They are four in number: the exchange of hostages, surveillance, the growth of a common strategy ideology, and a preponderance of weight on the side of the *status quo*.

The exchange of hostages will be a familiar concept to anyone acquainted with the theory of deterrence. The deterrent situation, by definition, is one in which each of the dominant powers is conscious that it has no way of protecting its citizenry from the adversary's power of nuclear strike, so that the number of its people at risk must be seen as 'hostages' to that adversary. Thus America holds perhaps 70 million Russian hostages, and the Russians a similar number of Americans. And both an almost indefinite number of Chinese. The Chinese of course are relative newcomers in this nuclear field, and as yet would be judged by the people who know about such things to hold relatively few Russian hostages – and to hold hostages from America only by allied proxy. But I do not think this really excludes them from being numbered among the dominant powers. In this matter the basic concept is sufficiency rather than equality or parity, and sufficiency may be rather a low number. To my mind, the central balance powers seldom have been exact military equals, and certainly have never structured their military potential in exactly the same way. (Britain was always weak on mass armies, for instance, which I suppose played the same role in the strategic concepts of the nineteenth century that nuclear forces play at present, and this never prevented her from being one of the dominant powers of the central balance.) At one time ABM's were believed likely to undermine this structure of deterrence by enabling one or other of the powers to 'withdraw its hostages' through erecting for them a shelter of ballistic missile defences. The fear of such a development was undoubtedly one of the factors behind the SALT agreement which was signed in Moscow during Mr Nixon's 1972 visit. So this element in the situation has now been given a kind of agreed permanency. It is interesting that the two stronger nuclear powers – America and Russia –

seem not to have been worried at all that the agreement makes them slightly more vulnerable to the three weaker nuclear powers – China, Britain and France – and any others who may join that number, as two or three may. This seems to me to mean that their relation to each other is more important to them than any considerations affecting third powers. The most vital of 'special relationships' is that with the most potent adversary.

Secondly, surveillance. By this I mean the ability of the central balance powers to watch each other, to a quite unprecedented degree, by avant-garde means – reconnaissance satellites, radars, sensors of various sorts, sonars, seismographic monitors. This is a world whose secrets are more carefully guarded than any other, and the tiny crumbs of information an outsider is able to pick up, in Washington for instance, leave one feeling distinctly uneasy. But undoubtedly the effect of this enormous invisible net of surveillance is stabilising. (The SALT agreement would not have been signed without it, for instance.) It greatly reduces the prospect of success for a pre-emptive strike, and the temptation to pre-emptive strike has been one of the most dangerous temptations of past crises. It tends to be urged on political decision-makers by the Joint Chiefs of Staff or their equivalents in many crises (e.g. Cuba). As Robert Kennedy said on that occasion, the advantage of being a general is that if someone accepts this kind of advice and it turns out to be wrong, there will be no-one about to tell you so afterwards.

I would stress that the reduction in the appeal of pre-emptive strike only applies to the central balance powers. In crises of local balances the possibility of effective surprise obviously exists and may well pay off – as for the Israelis in 1967.

Aside from reducing the attractions of pre-emption, the surveillance system has the advantage of being able to convey reassuring as well as alarming information. For instance, though the system was barely in existence in 1962, the CIA's ability to assure President Kennedy that the Soviet Union was not in a state of missile alert was an important factor in American decision-making.

This again is obviously a field in which only the United States and the Soviet Union are full participants. But China is making a beginning: it put up its first satellite not long ago, and someone acquainted with such matters told me it carried a heavier instrument payload than the initial efforts of any of the other powers. Besides, China may be getting assistance in this field from the Americans. One of the reports percolating round Washington in the wake of President Nixon's return from Peking was that the Americans were passing to the Chinese the monitoring reports on the state of alert of the Russian forces and deployments near the Chinese border. If this apocryphal story is true, I would regard it as a very useful and constructive

move on the American part. For undoubtedly the Chinese have had apprehensions about the possibility of a Russian strike, especially during the 1969 crisis when the Russians appeared to be quite deliberately signalling the possibility of such a strike. This, to my mind, was a piece of crisis management on the Russians' part which had absolutely the opposite effect to what they intended, for the Americans explicit rejection of this idea contributed vastly to the rapprochement between China and America.

If the Americans have decided to help Chinese surveillance, it is a nice example of the way the detente between China and America can affect the balance between China and Russia. Of course the powers of the central balance have always watched each other like hawks, through the traditional mode of espionage, and I would not for an instant imply that there has been any reduction in that branch of international endeavour. But the level of information conveyed by the new modes of watching represent a sort of quantum jump in the amount of detail available to policy-makers. I believe that when the new, high-definition devices of 'Skylab' go into operation next year it will hardly be possible to move a sentry twenty yards without the fact going into the computers of the huge intelligence community in Washington. Incidentally, from the point of view of the eventual five-power balance I believe the Japanese are quite advanced in various elements of these techniques and the British in some areas – sonars especially. But this technology is enormously expensive, and requires great sophistication in electronics and computers and such, so it is not likely to spread beyond the major powers. Again, the Moscow meeting marks the legitimatisation of this surveillance, almost explicitly, for the ABM agreement would not be possible without inspection by this means, and to accept the agreement is, tacitly, to accept the inspection – even to concede that the system depends on it.

The third element which I would argue has been essential to the development of this adverse partnership has been the evolution of what I call a common strategic ideology. This again would be hotly contested by many, especially so far as it affects China, and I would concede that the process at the moment is clearer as between America and Russia. Evidence of this is again to be seen in the success of the SALT negotiations. If the two powers did not assess the potential battle in roughly the same terms – assign roughly the same values to ABMs, and MIRVs, and FBSs and IRBMs and ULMs, and all those other acronyms we have come to live with, and to satellites and anti-satellites and conventional forces, they would hardly have been able to maintain 'meaningful dialogue', as the Americans say, for these several years, let alone reach substantial agreements. And to my mind the agreements reached, by any historical standards, are more substantial than anything else in the arms-control field this century. I concede that this point does not

apply to China: her strategic ideology is considerably different, especially in the defensive value placed on 'people's war'. In fact you could regard the quarrel between China and Russia as dating from Mr Khrushchev's adoption in 1956 of some items of the American strategic ideology. But you must note that China's assessment of its future military needs, as shown by the weapons it has chosen to acquire, are not so different from those of the other two powers. For instance, the decision to build a nuclear strike force represented, obviously, the sacrifice of many potential assets, military or otherwise, which could have been constructed with the same resources – a sacrifice which must have been much more painful for China than the equivalent decision was for the other four nuclear powers, all of whom have much higher GNP s and much more complete armouries. That has always seemed to me to indicate a clear Chinese assumption that deterrence rather than defence was going to remain, over the long term, the basis of relations among the dominant powers, and once this point is taken a great deal else follows pretty rapidly. So I would expect the evolution of Chinese strategic policy to be in the direction already taken by America and followed by Russia, though it will obviously be a long time before China joins the exclusive SALT club. Even with regard to the defensive value placed on 'people's war' the Chinese may have been obliged since 1969 to readjust their views towards those of America and Russia. The theory obviously depends on the ability of the Chinese guerrillas to stay and fight any prospective invader. But in the conditions of the nuclear battlefield such as Russia appeared to threaten in 1969, even the hardiest peasants, if they stayed, could only die. The fall of Lin Piao, the official expositor of 'people's war' theory may make it easier to discard or modify the orthodoxy in due course.

For the fourth foundation of the system as I see it, I have used the rather clumsy phrase, a preponderance of power on the side of the *status quo*. Actually, if you merely looked at these three powers on a map, not knowing anything about their crisis policies, but comparing them with the dominant powers of earlier systems, you might guess this to be so. For the obvious thing they have in common is that they all represent great agglomerations of territory and peoples. None of them is urged towards further national acquisition in the way half the dominant powers of the thirties were. In fact I would argue that one of the major differences between the inter-war and post-war periods is that no effective preponderance of power on the side of the *status quo* was ever organised in the inter-war period, whereas it almost organised itself in the post-war period, even before 1949. (I am not of course overlooking the existence outside the dominant powers, and also as segments of their domestic societies, of forces vehemently opposed to the current *status quo* of power and policy. I just do not think they are likely to have

any but minor disruptive effects within the time-frame I am contemplating).

At the period of the Cultural Revolution it did of course seem necessary to assume that China was on the other side in this matter: determined on a total revolutionary transformation of the society of states, which its leaders saw – and in declaratory policy still see – as a structure of injustice. But it will not be any news to you that China's operational policy, in various crises since 1970, has been quite to the contrary of this assumption. In the Ceylon crisis of 1971 China helped to sustain the *status quo* of Mrs Bandaranaike's government against a left revolutionary movement, and provided a loan afterwards. In the Sudan crisis it helped General Numeiry's military autocracy with a loan after it had successfully suppressed a Communist insurgency. In the Bangladesh crisis it supported General Yaya Khan and Mr Bhutto, at least with diplomatic manoeuvres and military goods, against a left nationalist movement operating a sort of people's war.

Of course I am not arguing that the present three dominant powers will support the *status quo* everywhere. Obviously Russia, for instance, will enforce it with tanks if necessary in Eastern Europe, while steadily and successfully nudging it into a shape more favourable to Russian interests in south Asia and the Middle East and the Indian Ocean area. But the predominant weight seems to me to be with the *status quo* in a way it never was in the inter-war period. It would really be rather surprising if governments as enormously well endowed with territories and people and resources as the present three dominant powers were not pretty conscious, in their hearts, of the advantages of keeping things more or less as they are. Or at least of the desirability of changing them only by low risk methods. There is no great incentive to upset the international apple cart if you are likely to be getting a pretty large share of the apples.

Well, those four elements – the exchange of hostages, surveillance, evolution of a common strategic ideology, and a preponderance of power on the side of the *status quo* – are to my mind, as I said, the true foundations of the contemporary adverse partnership of the central balance, though China is doubtfully a participant in the third of them and only very recently in the fourth. Over those foundations there has been arranged a sort of loose planking, which we call the detente, and the Russians call their peace program. Really there are in fact two detentes, one between America and Russia (in place since 1963) and the other between America and China, arranged only in the last year or so.

There still seems to be a gaping void over the area where the third potential detente, that between Russia and China, might go, and some analysts seem rather fearful of the consequences when and if this detente is got together. But I do not share this fear. It is true that the consciousness of

both that Russia is their most formidable potential adversary, has been one basis for the rapprochement between America and China, but detente between China and Russia would not necessarily change this, any more than it has between America and Russia. However, there do seem to be factors which are likely to postpone this development until after Mao's death, at least.

Let me now move on rather hastily to the instrumentalities and techniques of crisis management, as they now seem to be used, and finally to the criteria for judging the success or otherwise of any particular piece of crisis management.

The main instrumentality is undoubtedly the signal, by which I mean not necessarily or even usually a verbal message, but any threat or offer communicated to other parties to the crisis. The deployment of military resources, for instance, is always a signal, usually conscious, sometimes not intended to have any more substance than a signal.

One of the main problems in the field is to my mind the difficulty of distinguishing between those phenomena which are only signals, and those which have real substance. Mr Khrushchev said during the Cuba crisis 'There is a smell of burning in the air'. So there is in most crises, but sometimes it is just a smoke signal. The extreme cases are easy enough to see. For instance the fact that the Soviet Union now has almost a million men facing the frontiers with China is clearly a signal, seen as one and intended to be seen as one. But it is also a substantive act. Whereas the sending of the USS *Enterprise* into the Indian Ocean at the time of the Bangladesh crisis was obviously only a signal and an ill-considered one at that, which had quite counter-productive results. However, these are extreme cases and in between there is a range of actions which are clearly signals, but may or may not be something more as well. It may always remain uncertain whether the rather ostentatious Russian moves of July 1969 (as I mentioned earlier) which seemed like a deliberate signalling of the intention of a pre-emptive strike at China, really had any such intention behind them, or whether they represented just an attempt to manage this crisis: stage thunder rather than a real storm brewing. If the latter, one might say that it was successful for the Russians over the short term (in that the Chinese retreated a bit from the apparent brink, opening the talks in Peking), but counter-productive over the longer term. For the firm American dismissal of the hinted Russian wish for their acquiescence or even co-operation in this enterprise was the chief factor encouraging the Chinese in the early days of the rapprochement with America, which now considerably worries the Russians. So the prize for ham-handed crisis signalling does not necessarily belong to the Americans for Bangladesh: the Russians may have a good claim to it for the Amur-Ussuri and Sinkiang.

The movement of significant persons, military or diplomatic, may be almost as useful a signal as the movement of forces. The Russians have long seemed to use Mr Victor Louis as an organised straw in the wind to hint that their policy directions may be changing, by his choice of places to visit – Taiwan, for instance, or Israel. And if you look at the timetable of Dr Kissinger's visits to China, you may derive some rather similar impressions. I am inclined to think, for instance, that his presence in Peking at almost the very moment the vote on the China seat was being taken at the UN was an imaginative multidirectional signal, quite a successful exercise in crisis avoidance perhaps. Of course in his case the diplomatic tasks are real and important, quite aside from the fact that they constitute signals to various recipients, including the US electorate, when they are not secret. And the later publicising of a series of meetings which was secret at the time may be a pretty forceful signal in itself, as with the publicising of Kissinger's originally secret talks with Le Duc Tho.

Some of the most interesting and puzzling problems in crisis signalling concern the use of ambiguity. It has had a bad press: ambiguities in British signalling in the period before World War II, for instance, have been blamed for the German miscalculations that produced the final crisis and the war. But I do not find this a convincing interpretation of Hitler's thought processes, and undoubtedly there have been crises where the successful resolution has turned on ambiguities in the signalling of one party or the other. The Cuban missile crisis is a prime example of this. The final resolution really depended on a creative American use of an ambiguity in Mr Khrushchev's signals, in this case the difference between his initial, rather confused and placatory letter to Kennedy, and the second much more hawk-like letter. This second letter was probably written later, and seen by the Politburo, and was therefore logically entitled to the status of the final and official Soviet statement of position. But the American crisis managers imaginatively took advantage of the ambiguity provided by the difference in tone between the two letters and decided to treat the first letter as the true signal, and it was on this choice that the crisis finally turned. (Someone later named this manoeuvre the 'Trollope ploy' after those many heroines in the novels of Anthony Trollope who interpreted a squeeze of the hand on the hero's part as a full proposal of marriage.)

One can argue also that though Mr Dulles sometimes spoke of ambiguity as a source of crisis (especially when he was being snide about Dean Acheson), he owed his own success in the Quemoy-Matsu crisis of 1958 largely to it. In this case the ambiguities were built into the American signals, Mr Dulles conveying a very hard defensive line over the islands, including the possible use of atomic weapons, and President Eisenhower a much milder and less

intransigent stance. And these mixed signals were going to what, at this time, August-September 1958, was still an alliance, the Sino-Soviet Alliance. So that these signals were being picked up by two different sets of decision makers, in Moscow and Peking. Now according to the psychologists, when we receive a somewhat contradictory and confusing assortment of signals like this, we tend to 'select' those signals which accord with our own interests or our general interpretation of the overall situation. That seems to be what happened in this case. The Russians, with their own national interests not directly concerned, and in the light of detailed knowledge of American capabilities, 'selected' the tougher Dulles atomic warning line as the true signal: the Chinese, whose national interests were directly involved, and who did not at this time know so much about nuclear weapons, 'selected' the milder Eisenhower signals. And, as we know from the later Chinese polemics against the Russians, the differences over interpretations and strategy in this crisis and the Middle Eastern crisis a few weeks earlier provided the entering point for the wedge which cracked the alliance visibly wide open four years later, at the time of the 1962 crises.

This is, I think, an instructive case in differential reception of crisis signals in an alliance, and one could certainly find equivalent cases in NATO and SEATO. But in a sense, even in a monolithic state, a decision-making elite always represents a coalition of interests, and its members will tend to 'select' signals according to their particular preoccupations. So in a sense, the concept of the 'differentiated market' for signals to the adversary could always be applied. And perhaps it often has been, especially by an intuitive crisis manager like Hitler, for instance.

Even in intramural crisis, ambiguity may be a useful technique. The early stages of the Rhodesia crisis, for instance, might have responded better if a certain ambiguity had been imparted in Mr Wilson's signals on the possible use of force. Judging by something Mr Denis Healey said later, I believe he came round to somewhat the same view.

There is a good deal more that might be said about signalling, but I must move on to look briefly at what might be considered other instrumentalities useful in this field. Law, for instance, or economic pressures and inducements, or international organisations. I am afraid that when one examines the actual degree of effectiveness of each of these in post-war crises, the results are rather disappointing. As to law, a good many of the actions taken to manage crises have been somewhat non-legal or anti-legal in quality. (That is not to say that the legal departments of various foreign offices will not have found legal rationalisations for them: what else are legal departments for?) But if you look at the precise legal status of the Cuba 'quarantine' or the Czech invasion in 1968, or the Haiphong mining in 1972, questions about

their legality do not seem to have been the ones which most preoccupied the decision makers of the time, to put it mildly. A member of the then British Cabinet did tell me that the fact that they could find no legal basis for it was the main reason why the British government did not use troops in the Azerbaijan crisis of 1951, but that is the only case I know in which this sort of consideration was decisive, and I am rather doubtful about that one – I think he was rationalising. Economic pressures, chiefly sanctions, have been tried in various crises, for instance Ethiopia 1936 and Rhodesia in the last few years, but they seem to be effective only when the target economy is very delicately poised and vulnerable. The best instance of this would be the economic pressures through oil and the run on the pound which were certainly effective against Britain in the 1956 crisis, but much less so against France, whose economy was less vulnerable. Economic inducements, as against pressures, may be used to sweeten the resolution of a crisis for a minor power – e.g. Cuba 1962. Dr Castro's disappointment with the Russians was soothed by the aid which has continued at about the rate of a million dollars a day ever since.

The UN has, of course, been the instrumentality of management in several crises, but its usefulness seems to have been rather specialised and limited, or dependent on particular patterns of power, and particular personalities. The main period of its success was in Hammarskjöld's time, in the 1956 Middle Eastern crisis and the 1960 Congo crisis. But because of the present nature and composition of the organisation, it does not seem to be readily acceptable to the parties in most recent crises. The Secretary-General got rather a snubbing lately when he suggested a role in the Vietnam crisis, and was not very effective in the Bangladesh crisis, or over Uganda. I think the powers tend, with some justification, to regard the use of the UN in a crisis as equivalent to having to put on boxing-gloves when trying to pick up a pin. That is, the muffling of direct relationships by extraneous elements to the situation is seen as counter-productive. I rather think the UN may be edged out even of its role in Middle Eastern crises (where it has something of a tradition) because of the difficulties imposed by the contemporary membership structure, in which there is a strong numerical bias unfavourable to Israel.

One instrumentality which certainly could be developed, and probably will, for the management of local adversary crisis, is better great power control of arms supplies to local powers. This ought in theory to be an overwhelmingly effective instrument, because no prudent decision-maker for a small power ought to risk hostilities unless assured of a continuous stream of munitions and so on. But in fact it is not as effective as all that: chiefs of staff just adapt themselves to the notion of the fifteen-day war. Still, it is

something to shorten wars, even if they can't be prevented, and with the growth of joint crisis management one must expect this technique to be much further developed.

Let me now sketch in a line or two how I think these instrumentalities have been applied in the case of a few post-war crises. One technique which has been useful in nipping a couple of potentially dangerous adversary crises in the bud, so to speak, has been that of turning them into intramural crises. I think both the Suez and the Congo crises were of this sort: both had possibilities, in their earliest stages, of precipitating a confrontation between major powers, but in both cases largely through measures of American policy, they were turned into intramural crises of the Western alliance. Now of course, if the policy-makers succeed in effecting this transformation scene, they are still left with the intramural crises to manage, but this on the whole is usually less dangerous, though perhaps disabling – rather like exchanging a high fever for a broken leg.

Then there is the technique of 'ritualising hostilities'. The final outcome in Korea involved an element of this: the interminable talks at Panmunjon represented a 'ritualising' of a conflict which could neither be abandoned or pursued. This also was the case for a long time over Quemoy and Matsu: ritual shelling on alternate days. Berlin perhaps evolved over the years from a real source of crisis to a ritual expression of crisis, where tension could be turned on and off as convenient. Finally, it may have turned into a ritualised expression of detente, which is an encouraging evolution. All three of these crisis areas – Korea, Quemoy-Matsu and Berlin – are in fact encouraging examples at present of the apparent tendency of a crisis area to be 'defused' by a long course of such management.

There is the technique which I would call 'put it on the back burner', used in the Laos crisis, and the very simple technique I would call 'load-shedding', in the 'Pueblo' crisis. Some American senator, early in the Vietnam crisis, suggested a valuable technique, unfortunately not adopted: declare a victory and go home. This is what one might call the 'cultivated illusion' technique, and I feel would have worked out more successfully than what was actually adopted, the disastrously self-fulfilling prophecy. But I will talk more about that tomorrow. And there are of course that pair of opposites, 'appeasement' and 'brinkmanship' neither of which is an adequate guide, to my mind, either by itself or with its mirror image.

Finally, let us look at the criteria of success in crisis management. For the adversary crisis one might at first sight tend to feel that the avoidance of war was the only necessary criterion of success. But this will clearly not do: it would oblige one to class the Munich crisis of 1938 as successfully managed, for war was avoided on that occasion, though only to be incurred a year

later, on worse terms, to my mind. I think in fact one may judge the process by three criteria:

Firstly, has the probability of war between the main adversaries been increased or reduced, and has any mitigation been made in the conflict between them?

Secondly, what has been the effect on the power position of either, over the short or the long term?

Thirdly, has any contribution been made to the conventions and techniques of crisis management?

If we apply these criteria to, for instance, the Cuban missile crisis, as the most fully documented of recent crises, we can say that the management was a clear success by the first and third criteria: the probability of war between America and Russia has been much less since 1962 than it was before that date, and the conventions and techniques then evolved, including the 'hot-line', have been valuable in managing later crises. On the second criterion, one might have a more mixed judgment. Certainly over the short term it enhanced the power position of the United States, but over the longer term, if you take into account all the consequential decisions on naval ship-building and such, it has perhaps been an influence making for an enhanced power position for the Soviet Union.

Intramural crises again may be judged on three criteria, though different ones. Firstly, is the ability of the alliance to function maintained or impaired? Secondly, what is the influence of the crisis settlement on the degree of satisfaction of members with their positions within it? And thirdly, since the dominant power of the alliance or power sphere is almost always involved, what is the impact of the settlement on the credibility or 'credit' of this power? If you look at the various Cyprus crises as intramural crises of NATO, or the Czech crisis of 1968 as an intramural crisis of the Warsaw Pact, you will see, I think, better results on these criteria for the West. In fact, the Soviet bloc, right through the period since 1948, has to my mind had worse, and more clumsily managed intramural crises than the West.

Now of course one could judge the degree of success in the management of any crisis from the point of view of any party to it, and get a different verdict in each case. Mr Chamberlain's disaster is Hitler's success, to some extent. But one is entitled also to make some judgment as to whether the interests of stability or justice in the society of states have been served, and this would provide a more absolute standard.

One may also take into account the relations of the individual crisis to what I call a crisis-slide. At some periods of diplomatic history, crises seem to come singly, like boulders rolling down a mountain-side. They may do

some damage, but they are events discrete in themselves. At other periods the boulders, or the crises, not only come thick and fast and from several directions, but they seem to repercuss off each other, until the whole mountain-side, the whole society of states, may slide away into ruin. These episodes are what I would call crisis-slides, and I would argue that there was one in the period 1936-9, and an earlier one in the period 1908-14. It is these, rather than single crises, which are likely to knock out the defences of peace, and precipitate central war. There has been no such episode in the post-war period, though the events of 1948-51 perhaps came close to it. What I am arguing is that the management of individual crises must bear in mind the avoidance of the crisis-slide. Now the central phenomenon of such a period is, I think, that one or more of the dominant powers feels itself backed into a corner in which it has no options other than unlimited defeat or general war. Britain felt itself in such a situation in 1939 and Austria perhaps in 1914. Thus the gravest danger, one might argue, is to face one of the dominant powers with the prospect of unlimited defeat, and the gravest difficulty is assessing what the other side will see as the size of any particular defeat.

AUSTRALIA AND CRISES

In terms of the four categories of crisis which I have suggested, it will be obvious that Australia is likely to find most scope for its diplomacy in crises of local balances. One might write scenarios for intramural crises in Australia's own most immediate sphere of power, for instance, in Papua New Guinea, or the Pacific Islands. Or there is the larger but not necessarily more dangerous sphere of our immediate South-east Asian neighbourhood: another local adversary crisis like that of 1962-5, or an intramural crisis of the five-power arrangement, which seems probable enough. But in fact I am not going to discuss much about this area of potential crisis, mostly because I feel that it is a field more familiar to others than it is to me, and I am not likely to be able to say anything useful about it. I think most observers would agree that Australian professional diplomats are pretty nimble in this particular arena – which is just as well, considering how often our Prime Ministers and such seem to fall over their own feet.

I am going to talk instead mostly about what I hope will prove a less familiar and more controversial field; the way in which crises of the central balance affect local powers in general, regarding Australia primarily as one particular case-study in a small power's diplomatic dilemmas.

I am not sure whether you will feel relieved or indignant when I say that comparatively speaking, Australia seems to me relatively less likely to have a role to play in central balance crises than many other small or medium powers, and is much less likely to be the actual focus of crisis. Personally I find this a reassuring thought: happy the country which can confine its part in these dramas to rushing in with the bandages and relief supplies, so to speak. The small states which have been the focus of crisis are usually those which, like Cuba in 1962 or Czechoslovakia in 1968, have undergone political change which makes them seem candidates for opting out of one power sphere into another, or which are contested between two ethnic groups, like Cyprus, or two ideologies, like Vietnam, or are subject to secessionist tendencies, like Pakistan, or irredentist drives, like Taiwan. I know I have been away a fair bit, but I see no signs of these kinds of problems looming for the metropolitan territory of Australia.

Yet historically speaking, the crises which have most affected Australia's security and destiny, and even her domestic development, have been in my terminology adversary crises of the central balance of power, particularly, of course, those of July 1914 and August-September 1939, which produced the first and second World Wars. The only adversary crisis of a local balance I can think of which cast a real security shadow over us was 'confrontation' between Indonesia and Malaysia in 1962-5. As for Vietnam, if it had stayed

a local crisis, I do not believe it would have affected our security, even conceding an early victory to Ho Chi Minh. But because American policy in the fifties and early sixties interpreted what was happening between two political factions in Vietnam as a crisis for the central balance, it did indeed become one. As I said last night, there may be a considerable element of self-fulfilling prophecy in the management of some crises, and this seems to me a terrifying instance of it. (The possibility of this does not apply only to political crises: it is even more true probably of economic ones). You grow up to be what you are expected to be 'programmed' to be in the language of the computers. American administrations from 1954 on assumed as a basis for policy decisions that an increase in Hanoi's area of control in Vietnam would mean an increase in the power base of China and/or Russia and therefore would affect the central balance, and therefore must be resisted even at the cost of laying all America's great prestige on the line. Johnson in *The Vantage Point* quotes Dean Rusk putting this policy assumption at its peak: 'If the Communist world finds out that we will not pursue our commitments to the end, I don't know where they will stay their hand.'[1] This was a universalisation of that well-known domino theory which was first expounded by Eisenhower in Dulles' time, but at least treated by them mostly as a metaphor. By November 1961, in a Rusk-McNamara document prepared for Kennedy, it had become a dogma. 'The loss of South Vietnam (would produce) the near-certainty that the remainder of South-East Asia and Indonesia would move to complete accommodation with communism if not formal incorporation [in the Communist World

To put this interpretation in the terminology I have been using, a crisis of a minor local balance was coupled to, and seen as, a crisis of the central balance. And that to my mind was the root of the great disaster of Vietnam. Coming to Australia just after a few weeks in Washington I tend to feel that the ultimate size of this disaster – in terms of the damage done by America to herself, as well as to Vietnam – is still incalculable, in the literal meaning of that word. As far as our field is concerned, it may include a very real impairment of the President's ability to make effective decisions in future crises. That is, it puts a very large, though at present somewhat unformulated, element of ambiguity into the future of the central balance. I will return to this point later, but at the moment I might point out that this impairment has

1 Lyndon Baines Johnson, *The Vantage Point*, p. 147.

2 *The Pentagon Papers*, Grovel Edition, Vol. II, Beacon Press, Boston, p. 111.

two dimensions: the direct dimension of the President's powers of decision *vis-a-vis* Congress (cf. repeal of the 'Tonkin Gulf' resolution) and the indirect effect through the defence budget's influence on the President's future resources in the potential crises of the late 1970s and 1980s.

The damage to Australia by involvement in Vietnam has been, I suppose, mostly just a pale shadow of the damage to America. But in terms of my crisis categories, one might say that one possible result of the Vietnam trauma as it affects America, is intramural crisis in each of the alliances of which America is a member. The other intramural crises I have looked at have mostly been cases where the malaise has originated in one of the minor members of the system. The governments concerned have inclined – like Hungary or France – to opt out of their respective alliances for reasons of domestic political change or ambition. America's attitude to its alliance systems, post-Vietnam, is the first instance I know of this phenomenon of disenchantment in the case of the dominant member of an alliance.

All one can at the moment say is that while there undoubtedly have been some impacts from this already on America's alliance structure, which one can see for instance in relation to Japan and even to NATO, and which I would expect to show up more clearly quite soon in the case of SEATO, one cannot predict their precise final size as yet. Until recently, I would have said that ANZUS ought to prove less vulnerable than most, but I am not sure that this is true, if one takes some of Senator McGovern's remarks as predictive of long-term feeling in the Democratic Party. Even assuming he is not elected in 1972, his movement has some aspects of a wave of the American future. It is quite easy to imagine an equivalent on the Republican side also. This century, the Democratic Party, and particularly its Eastern intellectual foreign policy elite, has been the main proponent of American internationalism, from which the many successes, as well as this one overriding disaster of American foreign policy have sprung. The morale and self-confidence of that group have been greatly damaged, and will take a long time to recover. The Ivy League has been defoliated, one might say.

I am not sure what judgments can be made about Australian influence on American policy choices at various crises of the Vietnam war, except that I do not think such judgments would be flattering. In the 1954 crisis, Australian advice seems to have been cautious and prudent enough, to judge by Lord Casey's diary. But presumably our influence, such as it was, was at its highest point during the Holt-Johnson period, and as yet we have no diaries to cover that period, though I hope someone has been keeping them. You will have gathered I regard the policy choices made then as almost wholly disastrous. There is a tiny indication in the Pentagon papers of some New Zealand expression of doubt or dissent, but no equivalent that

I noticed for Australia.

What one might add is that small powers in an alliance system have a built-in nemesis lying in wait for them in this kind of situation. They are rather in the case of a group of people who have a friend, fabulously rich in power terms. But allegedly necessary investments (in which they have encouraged him) have had a very doubtful and painful pay-off, and he begins to see himself, quite falsely, as near-bankrupt. He is therefore inclined to make economies which may do real damage to their prospects and which never would have been contemplated but for the extravagances in which they were once his lieutenants and for which they may yet be more severely blamed than at present. Unjustly, perhaps, but anyone who expects international politics to operate as a system of justice is in for some sad disillusionments.

On the whole however, I am not inclined to believe that Australia had very much influence on the crisis choices of the American administration even in 1964-8. We are neither powerful enough – like Japan, or Germany or Britain – nor vulnerable enough – like Thailand – to have rated high leverage in Washington. Actually it is still the case, I think, that Britain gets, over the whole field of US crisis policies, more advance information than any other power. (It got rather fuller advance notice, along with the Russians, of the Haiphong mining, for instance). This is partly perhaps due to old habits, dating back to the war and early post-war periods, and partly due to the continued closeness of the intelligence communities in the two countries. It may even be the case that Australia had more influence on crisis decision-making back in 1936 or 1938, in the crises of the inter-war balance, than in the post-war period. Britain was, of course, the chief Western decision-maker in that earlier system, and if you look at policy choices in the crises of 1936 and 1938, you can see quite a discernible Commonwealth influence, to which Australia contributed its due quota. But I doubt that Australian influence on total policy was particularly enlightened or helpful in these episodes, any more than it was in the 1960s. On the historical record, it seems to me the most ardent patriot would have trouble making out a glowing report on the effectiveness or wisdom of Australian influence on crises of the central balance, though we have, as I said, done better in crises of local balances.

The adverse partnership which I was hypothesising last night is, of course, of enormous interest and significance to any small power which is an ally or client of any oi the three dominant powers, or which needs the military sustenance or diplomatic backing of any or more of them in a particular crisis. The clearest recent instance of how they may find their interests affected is shown by the cases of North and South Vietnam in the 1972 crisis of the Vietnam war.

Of all the power elites of small states, the politburo of North Vietnam is obviously the most entitled at the moment to unprintable opinions of its great and powerful friends and their diplomatic manoeuvrings. Having seen one of these friends, China, in February wine and dine Mr Nixon merrily in Peking – and perhaps having postponed its offensive to avoid that period? – it has since had to watch its other great and powerful friend, the Soviet Union, sign sheafs of agreements with him in Moscow while the bombers were coming every night to Hanoi. The mines stay unswept along the North Vietnamese coast, though China has a few minesweepers, and Russia a great many more, and even though Russian and Chinese ships are trapped in Haiphong harbour. In any crisis over minesweeping, no doubt Peking and Moscow would each rather the other confronted the US.

To my mind, North Vietnam's case might be regarded by all small powers as, among other things, a sobering illustration of the limits of the leverage of a small power when bargaining is under way between the dominant powers. North Vietnam not only did not have the leverage to secure any kind of confrontation between the Soviet Union or China and America, it did not even have the leverage to secure a postponement, much less a cancellation, of the Moscow summit meeting. I was in Washington, incidentally, at the time of the mining of Haiphong and the Moscow summit, and even the more sophisticated insiders, right-wing as well as left-wing, were expecting at least a postponement, practically up to the moment the President's plane landed in Moscow. I think this is because even there people did not fully understand how radically the system I am describing has changed relationships in the past four years. The new shape of things really only crystallised out definitely in Mr Nixon's term of office (with considerable assistance from the President and Dr Kissinger, of course), and it is not yet written into peoples' expectations.

The bedrock on which the evolving conventions of crisis management rest is the consciousness, as between the dominant powers' present decision-makers, that they have national interests *vis-à-vis* each other which are more important to them than the interests of their respective minor allies – or even major allies. This was most dramatically illustrated by the fact that the mining in Haiphong did not even fracture the detente between America and Russia or America and China, but it applies to all three dominant powers, of course. South Vietnam had perhaps almost as little reason to welcome Mr Nixon's journeys to Peking or Moscow as North Vietnam.

But the point that I want to stress is that this phenomenon – diminished leverage – is not confined to powers as small, or in as sharp conflict, as North and South Vietnam. It seems to me that it must inevitably follow from the process of growth and articulation, and increasing self-consciousness, of what

I have called the adverse partnership of the powers of the central balance, and that it must affect all except those powers – the present three, or the prospective five. One could put the basic reason for this in an excessively simplified question: once you've squared your adversaries, why exactly do you need your allies? As I said, this is an excessively simplified question, and there are various answers to it. Your adversaries may not stay squared, for instance, and there may be ideological or sentimental reasons for alliance. Still, historically speaking the great powers do not build alliance systems for sentimental reasons. They build them, in general, because they apprehend danger from some potential adversary, and they want to diminish that danger by recruiting allies to extend their own power-base, and to pre-empt any effort by the adversary to recruit them to his power-base. And the small powers, for their part, generally calculate that any costs and risks that the alliance entails for them are outweighed by extra security, and other benefits received, including influence with the decision-makers of the dominant power. Now if we compare present relationships between great and small powers with earlier ones, we will see that even before the developments of the past few years, the diplomatic leverage of the small powers which happen to become the focus of crises was considerably less than it used to be in earlier systems. Compare the situation of Cuba, as the focus of the 1962 crisis, with that of Poland as the focus of the 1939 crisis, or Serbia as the focus of the 1914 crisis. Dr Castro would undoubtedly have nudged Mr Khrushchev further towards the brink in 1962 if he had been able to: he said as much afterwards to the then British Ambassador, who wrote an interesting account of the crisis, and to various others. I do not say this in moral disapproval: it is natural that the small power concerned should be the most intransigent party to the crisis, because its national interests will tend to be the ones on the block. As Poland, for instance, felt its national interests were on the block in the negotiations between the West and Russia in 1939, or Serbia in 1914. But in general, as I said, small powers involved in crises have less leverage in the contemporary system than in earlier systems, and I would put this down to the fact that normal great-power egotism has been powerfully reinforced by the nuclear age. The stakes are too high, nowadays, for them to let anyone else call the bids. In nothing are the three dominant powers more alike, to my mind, than in a steely determination not to let their essential interests fall into the hands of minor – or even major allies.

Now this is good for the prospects of peace, to my mind, because it means that the number of potential causes of central war is reduced to those affecting the vital interests of the dominant powers themselves. But it has not been particularly good for those governments which have needed the leverage of one of the dominant powers, or its alliance system,

to secure some cherished national objective. This applies even to very substantial powers, like Western Germany. If you look at the history of German foreign policy from Dr Adenauer's time to Willy Brandt's, in terms of the effort towards reunification, you can see it as a history of learning to accept and live with this fact. Dr Adenauer always hoped to negotiate the reunification of Germany from the strength of his Western alliances – NATO and EEC. But the present German *Ostpolitik* represents a negation of that idea. Reunification, if it comes, must wait on a mellowing of the Soviet sphere.

It is inevitable, to my mind, that outside powers should be quite ambivalent in their attitudes to the developing relationship of the central balance. To put it flippantly: the good news is that Armageddon has probably been postponed: the bad news is the same and may well apply to your national interests, at any rate if you happen to be North Vietnam or Western Germany, or various other uncomfortably placed powers. And over the whole prospect of future developments, there must hover, for the outside powers, the ghost of Langer's description of nineteenth-century diplomacy: that it was based on an aimiable agreement as to who should cut up the victims.

However, I am not in fact inclined to expect a re-run of the nineteenth century, however much people may brood about Dr Kissinger's alleged affinities with Metternich. There is no such prospective pay-off for the burdens of imperial power in the twentieth century, as there was in the nineteenth. I tend to feel that the dominant powers will discover, with some relief, how little they need do rather than how much they can do, as the relationships between them grow more familiar. (One must remember that the system at present is still at the running-in stage, so to speak). There will occur – has in fact occurred – a process of 'decoupling' of the central balance of power from local balances, and this is already very apparent in the 'summit' diplomacy of President Nixon. (Some confusion has been imparted into interpretations of this diplomacy by the use of the word 'linkage' to describe it. What the commentators seem to mean by linkage is the package deal – but in fact you can put together a neater package if the items are 'decoupled' from one another. The whole principle of knock-down furniture depends on this fact).

But to get back to the diplomacy of the central balance, and its use in the management of local crises, we can, to my mind, see both its capacities and its limitations in the case of Vietnam. As I said, the dominant power's interests in the local balance have been 'decoupled' from those in the central balance: the Vietnam crisis is not allowed to impede the agreements on SALT or the rapprochement between China and the United States. The

small powers leverage with its great-power protector is thus diminished: neither Hanoi nor Saigon can prevent the summit meetings. But reciprocally the great power's influence on the decisions of its small-power client may be limited: neither Peking nor Moscow can deliver Hanoi; America cannot deliver Saigon. Does this, we may ask, imply that the dominant powers must generally expect reduced ability to manage local adversary crises?

Well, actually I do think that there will be a tendency for local crises to be settled in accordance with the local balance of forces. We can see what this has meant in several recent crises. The local military balance in the Indian sub-continent, once China had made it clear that it would not involve itself, was bound to produce a victory for India in the crisis over Bangladesh. The local military balance in the Middle East (so long as the dominant powers confine themselves to arms supplies and diplomatic manoeuvres which cancel each other out) is likely to produce victory for Israel. The local military and political balance of forces in Vietnam seems to me likely over the long term to deliver victory to the forces which look to Hanoi, though it is, of course, always possible that the long-term military balance between the two states will prove more favourable to Saigon than it looked at the beginning of the 1972 campaign.

In a sense, one might say that the decoupling of the local and central balances means a kind of two-way process of non-alignment. Small powers may find they can be non-aligned as regards conflicts between powers of the central balance: but equally the central balance powers may find it possible to be non-aligned as between the parties in many local conflicts. And a lot of small powers are going to find this less agreeable than they expected.

But Australia will be better placed to live with it than most, because it is not afflicted with any unsatisfied national interest, like Western Germany, or endangered national interest like Thailand, and it comes off pretty favourably in an assessment of the local balance of forces, being by local standards rich, well-armed, and with a substantial and successful military tradition of its own. So it is basically quite well equipped to adapt to the sort of world I have been envisaging. It has even the potential for giving some thought to what is still more useful than crisis management: that is crisis avoidance. Crises, of course, stem from conflicts, and by giving some advance thought to the conflicts one can sometimes avoid the crises. For instance there are certainly some emerging conflicts already in Australia's relations with New Guinea, over boundaries and Torres Strait islanders and such. I have only a casual acquaintance with these problems, so I would not like to be dogmatic about them, but the principle of crisis avoidance would seem to indicate early and generous settlements, if possible. The same principle would apply to the continental shelf and its possible oil resources, insofar as

it involves conflict with Indonesia. Australia has surely enough resources in territories indisputably within its sovereignty to concede a point where this is doubtful.

But even if these local conflicts were allowed to produce mini-crises (which I hope they will not be) the more substantial dangers to the Australian national interest would still stem from unfavourable settlements in larger power-spheres. And that brings us back, as, alas, so many arguments about international politics do, to Vietnam and the Middle East. Personally, being always optimistic, I am inclined to believe that the two principal crisis areas of the past decade, Vietnam and the Middle East, may be moved towards temporary settlements in the next eighteen months or so. I base this expectation on assumptions about the American elections. Assuming President Nixon is returned to power, he will have a much freer hand in his second term to build on the already very substantial area of detente with the Soviet Union and China which he and Dr Kissinger have put together, and this might prove quite important, especially in the Middle East. On the other hand, if it turned out to be President McGovern, with perhaps George Ball as his Secretary of State, there would be more uncertainties, to put it mildly, but a pretty certain determination to wind up the involvements in South-east Asia, and perhaps Asia generally, and make other adjustments elsewhere. So even a year from now one should be able to see the shape of the future world more clearly than at present.

Both these potential crisis settlements will, of course, affect Australian interests, the Middle East one perhaps more, over the long term, than that in Vietnam. Is there anything we can say about their formulation? One generalisation will, I think, prove true of both: they will be shaped by an interaction, in each case, between two relatively intransigent local powers, on the one hand, and the dominant powers in some degree of concert on the other. And in both cases the local powers may be fairly disgruntled at the manoeuvring of the dominant powers.

It is easier perhaps to see this in the case of Vietnam: people have been more explicit about the nature of the conflicts between great-power interests and local power interests. In fact, Dr Kissinger himself has hinted pretty heavily at it. In the course of his 'background briefing' of 9 May, the day after the President's announcement of the mining of Haiphong, he remarked 'what we face here is one of the problems great powers have in dealing with their clients, that the client looks at problems from its own regional or national perspective, while the great powers may take action in a much wider one'.[3] He was ostensibly talking at the time of the Soviet role *vis-à-vis*

[3] *Washington Post,* 10 May 1972.

North Vietnam, but it is equally true of the American role *vis-à-vis* South Vietnam. (One of the more cynical explanations heard round the State Department of the cease-fire-and-out-in-four-months offer of May 1972 was that the Americans had to make it in case Hanoi should do so first – in which case, of course, it would have been fiercely resisted by South Vietnam. But coming in the context of the mining, it was, so to speak, sweetened enough to make it acceptable to America's ally).

That is, of course, a rather Machiavellian interpretation, but if you look at the interests of China and Russia on the one hand, as against Hanoi on the other, you will see how sharp the clash of interests between a great power and a small power ally may be. China must be interested in an early negotiated settlement, because one of the points of agreement reached when Mr Nixon was in Peking was that the withdrawal of American forces from Taiwan would proceed *pari passu* with the reduction of tension in the area – that is, with a reduction of the fighting in Vietnam. Besides, it looks more and more the case that a Vietnam re-united by a straight military success for the North would be a Soviet rather than a Chinese ally – and there is no reason why the Chinese should want a Soviet ally on their southern border (as close to China as the lips to the teeth, Mr Chou once said) to be as strong as a Vietnam militarily reunited by the North would be. So there is clearly a case for China preferring a compromise settlement, reached diplomatically, presumably including a coalition in the South.

And surprisingly, Russian policy interests pointed in the same direction by 1972. One of the many secret documents leaked in Washington recently, NSSMI of 1969, a National Security Council Study Memorandum prepared by Dr Kissinger when he first took up office,[4] makes very clearly the point that the Russians had nudged the situation a good deal towards negotiations since 1969 in a covert way. It was apparently the Soviet Ambassador in Paris who pushed the 'two phase' approach, the 'shape of the table' arrangement, and the formula which permitted Hanoi to accept South Vietnam as participant, for instance.

It may seem incompatible with their general rivalry that Soviet and Chinese policies could point here in the same direction, but there are still various interests they have in common. The long protracted war has been something of a drain on resources for both, and though it may be undue cynicism on my part, I tend to feel that the actual form of the American escalation of May 1972 (effectively a blockade) may have been a not altogether

4 Partial text in *Washington Post,* May 1972.

unwelcome reason for reducing the through-put of supplies. Russia, in particular, was in need in 1972 of a number of American favours, some of them domestically urgent, and all of them dependent on continuance of the detente. They wanted not only the European Security Conference, which will take place in 1973, but the emergence of a European Security Treaty and a further phase of the SALT negotiations, and above all the economic agreement which did not quite come off at Moscow but was agreed a little later. And they wanted not to see Dr Kissinger in Peking as often as he had been in the preceding months, I should think.

So a negotiated end to the too-long-protracted war had by 1972 become convenient enough to all three of the dominant powers. But whether it could be made convenient to Hanoi must have remained a closely balanced calculation for all the parties concerned. On the one hand was the non-rational but human urge for a military triumph; one's full pound of flesh from the enemy. On the other hand were rational calculations about supplies, the impact of bombing, the kind of reconstruction aid which can be promised. Altogether, the situation appeared to teeter on a knife's edge up to the time of the American election, balanced between local intransigencies and the pressures of the dominant powers. After the election, however, the balance would inevitably change, almost certainly to Hanoi's disadvantage, since assuming Mr Nixon's re-election he must be in a stronger electoral position than during the campaign, and China and Russia must see him as the source of four years of possible American favours. So Vietnam is likely to remain, to the bitter end, a very instructive study in the relations between great powers and small in crisis situations.

The same interaction between the dominant powers' interest in a settlement, or at least stability, and the local powers' intransigence is clear in the Middle East. In this case the most intransigent power is also, as one would expect, the most local, to wit the Palestinians, whose capacity for political action is represented by the terrorists. If one looks at the Munich killings and the letter-bombs as efforts to prevent a settlement, it becomes clear, I think, that even groups lacking the status of government may have some capacity for crisis intervention. This is not new, and on the whole I think that the capacity of such groups to precipitate disaster is less rather than more than it used to be: compare the international impact of the Palestinian terrorists with the not-dissimilar group who assassinated the Archduke Ferdinand. But they are nevertheless instances of the tendency of crisis to move from its possibly most manageable condition, the 'two-person game', to an 'N-person' format. And this, of course, is a great question mark over the whole idea of crisis-management.

Nevertheless, one can, I think, see the shape of the prospective settlement still through the bloody haze of these events, and in some ways the Soviet Union's recent policies have strengthened my basic proposition about the dominant powers' interests *vis-à-vis* each other proving stronger than their interests in their respective allies or clients, even such an important client for the Soviet Union as Egypt seemed to be. The final straw for Egypt precipitating the recent break appears undoubtedly to have been the section of the Moscow communique on the Middle East at the time of the Moscow visit. Now if you ask yourself why the Russians agreed to this you might adduce their own disenchantment with their Egyptian clients, or the diplomatic sleight-of-hand of Dr Kissinger, but the main reason would appear to have been that their interest in preserving and forwarding the detente with the Americans was greater than their interest in close relations with Egypt. And one can see this in fact even before the Moscow communique, in the way the Russians exasperated the Egyptians by using restraint on weapons-supply as an instrument of crisis-management. That in turn was necessitated by their desire to avoid a confrontation with the Americans, a possibility which is always inherent in this situation and which nearly became a reality in the early stages of the 1967 crisis. By the (rather optimistic) accounts I heard in Washington, the remaining points at issue, though tough and recalcitrant, are quite small. The general shape of the settlement would include the re-opening of the Canal, Israeli withdrawal some part of the way back – about 20 miles – into Sinai, and a token Egyptian force on the far bank. The final difficulties of the bargaining revolve around the political guarantees which could be exacted for this, the size and deployment of the Egyptian force and the depth of Israeli withdrawal. The local capacity for intransigence, especially on the Israeli side, is very formidable but perhaps more so before the election, with Nixon outbidding McGovern for the Jewish vote, than it will be afterwards.

Actually the American policy-maker concerned with this crisis area (who did go with Mr Nixon to Moscow) told me that the Russians had not pushed very hard as yet on the re-opening of the Canal, despite their obvious strategic interest in it, and that it was assumed this comparative Russian restraint was due to concern about other interests in the Middle East. This particular crisis area offers a nice illustration of the necessity of the dominant powers 'hedging their bets' among intransigent local powers. If the Soviet Union wants not only to get the Canal open but keep it open, it cannot rely solely on the capabilities of its Arab clients, since the Israelis could always close it by military action. And so the Russians must re-insure not only with the Americans but with the Israelis to some extent, and have perhaps been making some signals of this wish recently, though maladroitly. Besides, they

have had rather the same kind of reasons to be irked with the recalcitrance and the demands of their Egyptian allies as of their North Vietnamese allies. The relation of patron and client is seldom an easy one in international politics. And if they are still looking for an Arab client who offers some prospect of strategic advantage, Iraq may seem a better bet, since the possibility of a confrontation with the US is much less in its ambit than in Egypt's.

Crisis settlements must of course have effects on the balance of power, and the short-term effect is sometimes different from the long-term effect. If we speculate on the probable effects of these two foreseeable settlements on Australia's situation, it is difficult to be very optimistic. One Washingtonian described our prospects to me as 'a deteriorating neighbourhood, security-wise'. But I think that this judgment was mostly based on assumptions about Soviet interest in the Indian Ocean which may prove somewhat alarmist. Though, of course, if you happened to be assuming President McGovern in office, and his naval reduction program in operation for a few years, with a consequent dwindling of the Sixth and Seventh Fleets, you do get a possible future picture of this area as pretty bare of anything except the littoral powers (mostly the Indians and ourselves) and the readily available Russians.

Adding up the results of the two possible settlements, the general impact would be that of the major friendly power 'retiring hurt', moving away if not out: an ambiguous but very formidable power increasing its influence, local powers (at least in the Indo-China area) with no great accretion of internal strength or stability, more distant Asian powers like Japan and India still wary of commitments, China necessarily preoccupied with its relations with the other dominant powers and Japan.

If I had to describe the change for Australia in a sentence, I would describe it as the substitution of new complexities for old simplicities. The old simplicities were mostly forms of dependence: on British power up to 1941 and on American power primarily since that date. This central tradition of dependence combined with the social ideal of 'mateship' has made us good allies ('all the way with LBJ' or 'waltzing Matilda' with Mr Nixon). But the notion of mateship is not an adequate guide to foreign policy formulation, and the future of our alliances is questionable – a vague questionmark over ANZUS, more definite ones over SEATO and the five-power arrangement. I am taking into account here the Australian and regional political prospects, as well as the American ones.

What will be the nature of Australians' reaction to this input of uncertainty, ambivalance, to the world in which they must make their foreign and defence policies? My own estimate would be that most foreseeable

governments in Canberra will tend towards caution and reserve as far as any new serious diplomatic commitments are concerned, and in the interpretation of old ones. In fact this kind of policy seems already to be going into effect, somewhat clumsily to judge by Mr McMahon's recent tour. Mr Lee Kwan Yew once said that Australia was willing to be Deputy Sheriff in South-east Asia, but had no wish to be promoted beyond that level. This always seemed to me not only to be perceptive of him, but perceptive of the Australian policy-makers he was commenting on, in that they had shown a proper understanding of the limits of their electorate's willingness to carry burdens outside the national territory or the historical tradition of being lieutenants to their great and powerful friends. Possibly he was wrong: some of the more ardent Australian nationalists I have talked to have told me vehemently that Australians could not abide so cautious a definition of their destiny: they not only should but will opt for a larger role, involving themselves in assorted Asian crises.

I am rather sceptical about this, not only because I cannot see any serious strand of political opinion in Australia backing it – unless you count the DLP – but also because if you sketch crisis scenarios for the kinds of situation which would require Australian initiatives, it is difficult to see precisely what resources we could bring to bear on them. Economic aid, certainly, but as I pointed out last night, it is not usually decisive. Diplomatic persuasion, certainly, but it is mostly useful in sub-critical situations. Let us consider an imaginary but not totally unfeasible crisis over the Malacca Straits, perhaps with the local powers, Indonesia and Malaysia, deciding to demand tolls, on the analogy of the Suez Canal; the maritime powers, especially Japan and Russia, deciding to do something about this, and Singapore caught in the middle. Such a crisis would offer a handsome opportunity for China to opt for the role Russia played in the 1956 crisis, that of diplomatic defender of the small local power. But actually I would expect China to play a cautious hand in any crisis where its direct interests were not threatened, and restrain its effort to UN vetoes and such. A more dangerous kind of crisis would be one developing in the mountain border area between China and India, with Russia backing India far more openly than in 1962, and America concerned with the defence of China and perhaps Pakistan. (Bangladesh was in some ways a foretaste of this set of alignments). The point I am making is that in serious crises of southern Asia like these, Australia would not only be short of resources to back any policies decided upon, but somewhat embarrassed to make its choice among such policies as are available. The old picture of the world, which was the basis of most of our policies from 1950 to 1970, of an expansive Communist China as the chief menace in the future of South and South-east Asia may have been primitive and over-simplified, but it provided

relatively clear policy indications, of a sort. Now the simplicity has vanished: the field of runners for the prospective role of power-most-rapidly-expanding-its-influence-in-that-part-of-the-world is relatively wide open. The follow-my-leader principle which we have tended to fall back on in case of need is undermined by the evidence that the traditional leaders' direction of movement is one in which we cannot follow them: out. So as I said I think the likeliest line of policy would be cautious, reserved, rather passive, conservative with a small 'c' hedging its bets, avoiding the sort of domestic political embarrassments that may spring from too open a response to a more complex environment. Perhaps Mr Freeth, the late Minister, could be regarded as a first symbolic Australian political victim of this new complexity, if you accept the story that his electoral fate was connected with rash words of welcome for the Soviet fleet in the Indian Ocean. It's the earliest Christian who encounters the hungriest lion, so to speak.

Even smaller, more manageable slower seeming crises, such as might arise from a reactivation of the Sabah dispute, or a rise in the level of insurgency in Borneo or Thailand or Malaya, or an urban guerilla operation in Singapore, of about the same level of efficiency as that now mounted in Belfast – even these minor crises constitute drains on the available resources of combat troops and national consensus which are surprisingly high. Coming closer home still, to what would in my terms be an intramural crisis of the Australian sphere of influence, such as a secessionist movement in New Guinea, too formidable for the local administration to handle, it might well prove as politically divisive and alienating in this small-scale society as Vietnam has been in America. So for reasons of domestic political peace, as well as those of economising our exiguous military resources, I would expect the tendency of most foreseeable governments to be towards caution and reserve, especially with regard to anything that looks like an open-ended commitment in an unfamiliar society. Whether we like it or not, Vietnam is, I think, going to be seen as no end of a lesson, and the lesson is of prudence. It will join that small group of crises like Munich and Fashoda, which stand as archetypes of particular historical situations, and whose names are involved in season and out, and often most misleadingly, to enjoin or dissuade from some course of action to which they are totally irrelevant.

Well, that is the way I think policy will tend to go, given the foreseeable Australian decision-makers and the apparent international climate to which we have to adapt our little local security umbrella. (Perhaps I should say raincoat rather than umbrella, since it would be adapted to the protection of only one national entity). On the whole, I think it is also the way it ought to go. The characteristic crises of our immediate neighbourhood to my mind are going to be internal rather than international: local regimes finding them-

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selves endangered by domestic insurgencies, and needing help to cope. The appeal for intervention would normally come from the regime: the *status quo* needing to be shored-up against the forces of change. Of course even routine diplomatic gestures like economic aid or the gift of arms supplies may have some effect on domestic political balances, but it seems to me morally necessary, as well as diplomatically expedient, to adopt the view that political regimes must survive by creating a domestic consensus or by their own strong right arms. They are not entitled to live on outside support.

Such a line of foreign policy would not necessarily restrict the scope for diplomacy. Some of the most active and intellectually resourceful diplomacy in Europe comes from traditionally uncommitted powers like Sweden and Switzerland. And a diminution in the degree of engagement in Asia would perhaps permit some greater degree of deployment of diplomatic resources in the Pacific, where commitments of the old 'forward defence' sort would not be necessary or expected. I have always felt it would be realistic, as well as prudent, for Australia to define itself as a Pacific rather than an Asian power. We are not really very like Asians, sociologically or economically, or in our concept of the nature and proper preoccupations of man. It would be a kind of moral and diplomatic arrogance to assume that we have any special wisdom about the right or wrong directions of change for the complex societies of Asia.