

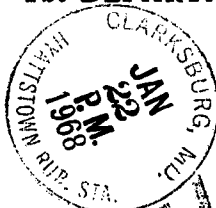
U.S. Arms for the Developing World:

Dilemmas of Foreign Policy



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U.S. Arms for the Developing World: Dilemmas of Foreign Policy

by Under Secretary Katzenbach¹

I am delighted to be here on this magnificent campus on this beautiful peninsula. I am here to discuss with you issues of foreign policy. But if I discuss the issues as Under Secretary of State I do not claim—and I do not want you to think—that this position gives what I say special status or peculiar wisdom, any more or less than it would if I were once again a university professor. Virtually all the information required for judgment on the major issues of foreign policy is in the public domain. So each member of this audience can judge them for himself with equal confidence or doubt.

We who labor in the labyrinthian vineyards of the State Department are upon occasion accused of being somewhat gray. Perhaps that is because so many of the issues we grapple with are gray, too, and a bit difficult to see through, like the fog that drifts in over the mountains north of here.

And that even includes the issues surrounding that other less happy peninsula across the Pacific that so many of you, like so many of us, are so deeply concerned about.

You may recall Geoffrey Taylor's little lim-erick about Samuel Butler:

"I think," thought Sam Butler,
"Truth ever lies
In mean compromise."
What could be subtler,
Than the thought of Sam Butler?

Please don't get worried, I am not going to lecture you on moral relativism, the morality of relatives, including parents, or the relativity of morals.

But I do want to make the point that the more closely one examines a subject, the more one real-

izes how penetratingly subtle Sam Butler's dictum really is. It is then that one sees that what looked so obviously, so clearly, so transparently and correctly to be Truth with a capital "T" may be a good deal meaner and more complicated on detailed examination.

Pure truth seems particularly elusive in the field of foreign policy. For here we must, on any given issue, juggle staggering arrays of slippery, constantly changing variables: competing interests and views abroad, competing interests and views at home, and an intricate network of differing interpretations binding them all together. We must do, as well, a lot of guesswork on the probable course of future events.

In dealing with any issue we are, of course, guided by that broad and durable set of democratic ideals which have always directed American policy. But it is one thing to have a guiding set of principles or aspirations. It is another to apply them to the particular foreign policy problem that arises. For in each case the options open to us may be sharply curtailed by the actions, objectives, and desires of sovereign countries which are beyond our control and often even our influence.

It is important to remember that we are not the only country in the world with domestic political problems. For some peculiar reason all those other countries we deal with seem to have their problems, too. So it is not enough to judge an issue simply on what appears to be its merits. One has to keep in mind as well how people—both here and abroad—perceive it. And it is not unusual to find the leader of a foreign country who might agree with you about the wisdom of a particular course of action. But if he went ahead and acted on it, his government could not survive.

Considerations of this kind as much as our own desires are the determinants of our policies.

¹ Address made before the Institute of International Relations, Stanford University, Stanford, Calif., on Nov. 17 (press release 265).

And it is in the context of these restraints that our policies must be hammered out.

Often someone will say: "Well, if such and such a country won't do what we like, let's just cut off our aid." What they don't realize is that such a step would not only be offensive but self-defeating. Our ultimate purpose—peaceful evolution and development—is hardly served by action which can only bring about the reverse results.

There is, therefore, often no direct road leading to our most cherished foreign policy objectives. And such roads as do exist are hazardous and pockmarked. Each fork presents new, dark, and murky choices. At times (when conditions are worst) the principles we pursue at the road's end may be only dimly perceived or may get lost entirely.

By suggesting some of the complexities that go into the formulation of foreign policy, I am not trying to dismay or disillusion the younger members of this audience. Probably the most impressive thing about this generation of students is their great faith in traditional American ideals and their restless activism in pursuing them. Too many previous college generations were content to line up secure jobs and arrange safe lives. But the restlessness and activism of students today is to be commended rather than derided—if it bespeaks a deep and unselfish concern for the welfare of the nation and the fundamental issues before us—which, I hope, it does.

But I ask this: In your active pursuit of your ideals entertain some doubt as to whether the path you have chosen is the only one. Do not accept slogans as solutions. And be willing to acknowledge that those of us who wrestle with the issues on a daily basis are delimited by harsh choices—not the choices we would like to have but the imperfect choices forced on us by a real and imperfect world.

Arms Buildup Wasteful and Dangerous

I think the best way to drive home what I am saying is to take a concrete example. I have chosen what I think is a particularly striking one: the difficult question of if, how, and when we should supply arms to developing countries.

What we would like to see happen is simple enough. We would like to see these countries spend their scarce resources on domestic development and economic progress rather than frittering them away on expensive military

equipment. In President Johnson's words, the resources being put into arms all around the world "might better be spent on feeding the hungry, healing the sick, and teaching the uneducated."²

There are other reasons I can cite why we should, in principle, oppose the acquisition of arms by developing countries:

Any arms buildup, once begun, takes on its own dynamic, shape, and logic. It gets easily out of hand. The acquisition of new arms in one country leads to demands for new equipment by its neighbors, whether for reasons of prestige, national pride, or simply to maintain what they see as a satisfactory military balance.

Second, the arms made available to developing countries, with their fragile political institutions, may undermine democratic governments, may encourage military coups, or may shore up military dictatorships.

Third, the tension resulting from an arms race in an area may increase the power, stature, or belligerency of a nation's military leadership.

Having laid out all these neat principles and arguments, however, we are still forced to examine how they can be usefully and responsibly applied in given instances.

Let us take three areas of the world, the Indian subcontinent, the Middle East, and Latin America, as case studies and see where we come out.

No Easy Answers in South Asia

Case number 1: The Indian subcontinent. Few areas of the world exist where the case for arms limitation seems more compelling. Arms escalation by either India or Pakistan is considered a threat to its security by the other.

Relations between the two countries are made more difficult by the facts of geography. Their territories are intertwined and isolated from the rest of Asia by the world's most formidable chain of mountains. Until Communist China's forays over the border in 1962, India had virtually discounted any threat to its security other than that from Pakistan.

United States military assistance to the subcontinent dates back to the mid-1950's. Initially, it was confined to Pakistan—as part of a worldwide strategy of support for non-Communist

² For a message from President Johnson to the Conference of the 18-Nation Disarmament Committee on Jan. 27, 1966, see BULLETIN of Feb. 21, 1966, p. 263.

countries on the perimeter of the Soviet Union and mainland China.

After 1962, when India was attacked by Red China, we acceded to Indian requests for limited military assistance, taking care to limit our aid to equipment required for defense of its northern frontier.

When the longstanding feud over Kashmir burst into open war 2 years ago, we ended all deliveries of military equipment. We have not resumed grant materiel assistance to either country. We have, in fact, terminated our Military Assistance Advisory Group in Pakistan and our Military Supply Mission in India. We have not sold, and do not plan to sell, lethal military equipment—fighter aircraft, tanks, or artillery, for example. Furthermore, we have tried to induce major arms suppliers—the Soviet Union, United Kingdom, France, and Western Germany—to follow similar restraints.

On the other hand, we have agreed to resume the sale of spare parts on equipment previously furnished by the United States—on a carefully restricted case-by-case basis when we are convinced that doing so will reduce military budgets. This may seem a paradox, but it is a very important factor to keep in mind.

The truth is that we cannot prevent these countries from acquiring equipment they consider essential to their own defense. If we refuse to provide spare parts for such equipment we have furnished them at some point in the past, they have two choices open to them: to buy these spare parts through unofficial channels—there exists a black market for arms and spare parts—or to scrap the United States equipment altogether and buy new equipment from some other source—Europe, Communist China, or the Soviet Union. Thus, either way they will spend many times what they would have spent in buying from the United States. And should we bow out entirely as supplier, by even refusing spare parts for what they consider equipment vital to their security, our ability to exercise restraint would be greatly reduced.

What does the future hold for an arms limitation agreement on the Indian subcontinent?

Despite our efforts, major obstacles still stand in the way of agreement. Tension over Kashmir continues. After the Tashkent declaration of January 1966, with both India and Pakistan forswearing the use of force in future dealings, we expected an improvement in relations and a settlement of outstanding political differences.

Hopes on both counts have not so far been fulfilled.

Secondly, both India and Pakistan view the acceptable force levels of the other power very differently. India believes it must be strong enough to hold off both incursions by Communist China and an attack by Pakistan. Pakistan, on the other hand, does not take Indian claims of a Chinese military threat very seriously and is therefore unwilling to see India's military strength, already numerically superior, further increased.

Third, other nations have resumed delivery of military supplies: the Soviet Union and the United Kingdom to India; Communist China and various European countries to Pakistan.

Clearly then, the problems of arms control on the Indian subcontinent are not given to easy answers. And equally clearly, our own policy is not the determining factor in this situation.

Nevertheless, we will continue to search for ways to prevent an arms spiral in South Asia. We will continue to use all the suasion and leverage at our command to this end. And we will also continue to give our full support to the United Nations effort serving this same purpose. And if that sounds pretty routine, you tell me the easy answer.

Arms Policy Toward the Middle East

Case number 2: At times, withholding arms serves neither the cause of peace nor of stability. This is demonstrated by the Middle East.

In this troubled area our historic purpose has also been to search for arms limitations. Our efforts to establish an international framework toward this end began in 1948, after the first Arab-Israeli war. In 1950 this effort bore fruit in a tripartite declaration by the United States, the United Kingdom, and France;^{*} and a Near East Arms Coordinating Committee was established to monitor arms shipments. Western efforts were brought to a halt, however, when the Soviet Union began large-scale arms shipments to the area in 1955.

The Soviet Union has remained the single major factor in the Mideastern arms scene ever since. Our several efforts in recent years to revitalize the Coordinating Committee did not meet with success.

Over the past 12 years, the U.S.S.R. has provided well over 2 billion dollars' worth of mili-

^{*} For text, see *ibid.*, June 5, 1950, p. 886.

tary equipment to countries of the Mideast. It was first to introduce heavy tanks and bombers into the area.

The military imbalance threatened by these Soviet deliveries caused the other countries in the area to seek military aid in the West. Even so, most Western arms going to the Middle East, both to Israel and moderate Arab states, came from European nations, not the United States. Only in a few cases have we provided United States equipment—where it seemed essential to do so to help friendly governments provide for their own defense.

The Arab-Israeli war in June made matters worse. We immediately suspended shipments to both Israel and the Arab states, hoping that other countries would match our restraint. Once again our hopes were disappointed.

The Soviets not only replaced a major part of the arms lost by the Arab states; they also began offering arms to those Arab states with which we have had long and friendly ties. This development forced us to resume limited and selective arms deliveries to the area under agreements concluded prior to the hostilities.

Our future arms policy toward the Middle East will rest on two factors: the willingness of the Soviet Union and other countries to exercise restraint, and the principle of disclosure. On June 19, the President proposed that the United Nations ask its members to report all shipments of arms to the area.⁴ Unfortunately, this proposal has not yet been accepted. But it is essential that adequate information be available—both to countries within the area and to the major powers without—to preclude the risk of miscalculation that could add fuel to an arms race and lead to renewal of hostilities.

Latin American Defense Expenditures

I now come to case number 3: Latin America. Obviously the need for expensive arms by Latin American countries is not great. They are protected against conventional military threat by wide oceans and the security arrangements under the Rio Treaty. There are a few national rivalries and boundary disputes, to be sure, but they hardly justify large-scale defense forces. No significant incident has occurred in the hemisphere in a quarter of a century that was

⁴ For President Johnson's address at Washington, D.C., on June 19, see *ibid.*, July 10, 1967, p. 31.

not quietly controlled by inter-American peace-keeping machinery.

The principal threat to the nations of this continent is not external but internal: Castro-sponsored and supported subversion and insurgency. But the proper response to this threat is essentially quicker and better economic development.

Actually, the Latin American record on arms is a good one. Viewed in relation to total budgetary expenditures or GNP, Latin American defense expenditures are among the lowest in the world. In relative terms, hemispheric defense budgets have declined by some 50 percent over the last 20 years.

The rate of modernization of Latin American armed forces has also been far lower than that of other regions. Few warships have been added by Latin American navies in recent years. The number of operational fighter squadrons has declined from 29 to 19. And Latin America's total annual outlays for military equipment are less than \$200 million—which, for those of you who enjoy comparisons, is about half the annual cost of the New York police department.

At Punta del Este last spring, the Latin American Presidents pledged themselves to seek further reductions in defense expenditures.⁵ Recently, Chile's President, Eduardo Frei, proposed renewed efforts to achieve an arms limitation agreement for all of Latin America.

We have encouraged this trend; and by any reasonable standard, our policy of limiting arms in Latin America has been a great success. We have been able to convince Latin American leaders that their external threat was minimal and that they should give their major attention to internal security and economic and social development.

As elsewhere, however, our power to influence the decisions of sovereign nations has its limits. We cannot, even if we would like to, dictate to them what their policy should be. Our influence is limited to our power to persuade; and our ability to persuade is dependent upon the good will, the confidence and trust we enjoy with the leaders, governments, and people of these countries.

If a country is convinced that its security is threatened and judges its arms requirements differently than we do, our ability to affect its decisions is very limited.

⁵ For background, see *ibid.*, May 8, 1967, p. 706.

A case in point is the controversial sale of fighter aircraft to Latin America.

Most fighter aircraft now in Latin America are over 10 years old. Because these countries have followed a conservative reequipment policy at our urging, they now face a problem of obsolescence and deterioration which they regard as acute. The choice they face is to forgo fighter aircraft altogether or to replace them with available aircraft of a more advanced sophisticated type.

Several Latin American governments are now considering whether to purchase new, more advanced fighter aircraft. Their military commands are concerned about maintaining professional standards and training. They believe they require aircraft for counterinsurgency operations. And they are troubled, as well, by the problem of keeping abreast of a rapidly advancing field of technology, a technology which also has civilian applications.

We are still considering the situation that would arise should these countries decide to acquire aircraft.

Some Congressmen feel we should refuse to authorize the commercial sale of sophisticated fighter aircraft to Latin America. They believe that we should not take part in any program which diverts the scarce resources of these countries from pressing social needs.

On the other hand, it may well prove that the sale of United States aircraft on commercial terms is the preferable alternative in light of our overall objectives. For the question is not susceptible to any simple or obvious solution.

It may be impossible for us to prevent the Latin American Governments from acquiring sophisticated aircraft they have decided to buy. If we refuse to sell, they can buy in Western Europe. Furthermore, the United States has an aircraft, the Northrop F-5, which meets

their needs. The alternative to the F-5 are planes of far more advanced design and far greater expense. Their introduction into Latin America would escalate arms spending in that region to a new and much higher level.

In these three cases then, you have the dilemma of foreign-policy making neatly presented. Adhering too rigidly and unswervingly to what is our basic policy—to avoid the supply of expensive and sophisticated military equipment to developing countries—might, in fact, help to defeat the aims of our policy. This is the paradox—but one example of the paradoxes and complexities we daily face.

Each of the three situations I have dealt with has its own problems, its own requirements, its own constraints.

Such is the manner in which foreign policy is made. Few foreign policy principles hold their validity in all instances. How could they possibly, in a world as diverse and complex as this one? So each problem must be considered separately, yet every one must be related to every other.

Unthinking adherence to any principle or doctrine, no matter how noble, not only can be self-defeating, it can defeat the underlying ultimate purpose of the principle itself.

I ask that you ponder these matters when you consider these problems yourselves. Take a hard look at the dilemmas. Don't adhere too easily or too doggedly to an abstraction. For it is only when the abstraction is applied to specific situations of choice that it is put to the test.

This, in essence, is the ethical problem I tried to draw for you at the beginning, when I talked about the color gray. We may all get a bit grayer as we get older. Perhaps it is because we have had the opportunity to see how often the issues take on that hue.

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