

Human Costs and Foreign Policy

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That's why I say there are pestilences and there are victims; no more than that. If, by making that statement, I too, become a carrier of the plague-germ, at least I don't do it willfully. I try, in short, to be an innocent murderer. You see, I've no great ambitions.

I grant we should add a third category: that of the true healers. But it's a fact one doesn't come across many of them, and anyhow it must be a hard vocation. That's why I decided to take, in every predicament, the victim's side—so as to reduce the damage done.

—Albert Camus, *The Plague*

As Americans celebrated Christmas in 1972 they read about national disasters in Nicaragua and North Vietnam. The capitals of both countries had to be evacuated. Communications and power facilities were crippled. Hospital complexes were reduced to rubble. An earthquake caused the damage in Nicaragua; American bombers were responsible in North Vietnam.

In the wake of worldwide humanitarian concern for both countries, the initial response of the United States was to announce the release of paramedical teams and a mobile field hospital for Nicaragua and to deny that the Bach Mai hospital facility in Hanoi existed and that it had been hit by American planes.

How can we explain such erratic behavior in situations of massive human suffering? The obvious answer is that we were at war with North Vietnam, while Nicaragua was a friend and ally. But this still does not explain the way we prosecuted this particular war—the carpet-bombings by B-52s over major cities, the use of herbicides and antipersonnel weapons. A truer answer lies in the fact that one disaster had natural causes, the other was of man's creation.

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Natural disasters pose minor political problems at home and abroad to the men who make foreign policy decisions. National security managers view earthquakes, cyclones or famines in terms of logistical problems. Decisions are made to relieve human suffering as quickly as possible. When dealing with disasters fashioned by human hands the same policy-makers systematically de-emphasize the human consequences of their decisions.

Why is this so? National security managers are not sinister men. Quite the contrary, they are, on the whole, pleasant, humane, intelligent and competent individuals. They are the interchangeable and efficient parts of a foreign policy bureaucracy which encompasses the State Department, Defense Department, Central Intelligence Agency, Atomic Energy Commission, National Security Council and the armed services.

By an increasingly large and vocal part of our society these humane men are seen as the perpetrators of inhumane policies. The litany of accusation goes something like this: A humanistic foreign policy gives sustenance and enrichment to human life and potential; America's foreign policy feeds off others. A humanistic foreign policy serves the powerless and the oppressed; America's foreign policy serves special interests and the oppressors.

These choices are obviously overdrawn and simplistic. But powerful influences are at work which make them real to the critics of American foreign policy. The imperatives for international stability, maintenance of material interests abroad, decent bilateral relations among states and domestic politics—all work to devalue the human cost-factor in decision-making. There is nothing extraordinary about these forces; every international politics textbook worth its salt abounds with examples of these factors at work.

Consider this in the American context: The U.S. Navy uses Piraeus for home-porting. Such an ar-

rangement will not encourage the democratization of the Greek regime, but it will anchor a potentially unstable area by strengthening the morale of an ally and facilitating maneuvers by the Sixth Fleet. The Office of Emergency Preparedness currently lists seventy-nine "strategic and critical materials"—items deemed vital to the national security which are not found or easily produced in this country. Some of them, like chromium, happen to be found in harshly unrepresentative countries. Our relations with the Rhodesian government are therefore colored by our need for materials they possess. The Nigerian government used starvation as a weapon in putting down the two-and-a-half-year-old Biafran insurgency in 1970. Throughout, the United States maintained "correct" diplomatic relations with Lagos, requiring the delay of a major relief effort for Biafra until the rebellion had collapsed.

In the American political context, vested interests are served, and vested interests are highly evident in defense-related foreign policy issues. Depending on the source, anywhere from forty-three cents (White House) to fifty-nine cents (SANE) out of every dollar go to defense-related activities for fiscal year 1974. The flow of defense dollars into the economy represents human lives, jobs and votes that are directly or indirectly enmeshed in defense appropriations. Sensitive decisions affecting jobs and income on this scale mean that politicians must be responsive to the domestic politics of national security issues. When translated into appropriations decisions, this means a continuation of hard-line security policies, regardless of international agreements and movement toward détente.

Of course, none of the issues considered here presents a simple choice between human cost and national interest considerations. As President Nixon and his associates like to say, these are "tough" decisions which involve many complex factors. Part of the complexity stems from divisions among security managers representing different bureaucratic interests and objectives. We can, however, deduce one fragment of consistency from the tangle of personalities and bureaucracies involved in defining the national interest: In the resolution of policy, those material interests which shore up the demand for stability implicitly serve to devalue the human cost.



There is another aspect of human costs which is not treated in textbook analyses. It is difficult to pin down, although anyone who has dealt with the foreign policy bureaucracy will recognize it at once. It is a matter of style.

There is a successful bureaucratic operating style. It cannot be found in any government manual, but incoming national security managers quickly pick it up. The primary stylistic attributes of the upward bound are toughness, lack of emotion, loyalty, conformity and ethical insularity. In some circles this is known as the "hairy chest syndrome." It is extremely difficult to argue about human costs without sounding like a "bleeding heart." In bureaucratic debates arguments based on human costs give their proponents a reputation for mushiness. And if there is one quality which eliminates a player from serious consideration it is "softness." In the realm of bureaucratic politics players are rarely penalized for suggesting policy recommendations which lead to extraordinarily high human costs. The penalty for softness is oblivion.

The successful security manager is unemotional. As Henry Kissinger has said in a recent interview, "I'm not one of those people that allow themselves to be swayed by their emotions. Emotions are of no use." All security managers can agree that emotionalism should have no place in decision-making. One means of shutting off an uncomfortable emotional debate is the "monopoly on anguish" gambit. The unruly bureaucrat is reminded by one of his more sober colleagues that everyone around the table shares his torment, but that rational argument must prevail. For the uninited, Assistant Secretary of State David Newsome advises: "Above all, avoid emotional involvement. Too many experts have weakened their case by appearing to the political level to be too committed."

The only time emotionalism is acceptable is in demonstration of loyalty. The successful bureaucrat must be loyal to his superior and to his bureau. To leak damaging information to the outside is the equivalent of a cloak-and-dagger operation. One State Department official who has managed to make it to the Deputy Directorship level spells out two key rules of the game: "Keep your opposition within the family, and know when not to push further." In this century only one major State Department official has resigned over a dispute in policy—Secretary of State William Jennings Bryan.

Stylistic preferences of security managers rarely rub against alternative values and life-styles. With the possible exception of the janitorial services, national security managers are the most homogeneous cross-bureaucratic group in government. Of the 867 bureaucratic administrators listed in the *United States Government Organization Manual 1972/1973* (Office of the Secretary of Defense, Joint Chiefs of Staff, State, AID, Atomic Energy Commission, Departments of the Army, Navy and Air Force), less than two dozen are women or minority group members. Two of the fifty-three staff members of the National Security Council are women; none are minority group members. The cultural, sexual and racial in-

sularity of the national security bureaucracy necessarily has an effect on perception. If one of the prerequisites of a more humanistic foreign policy is a greater tolerance for diversity, can we expect this from an utterly homogeneous national security bureaucracy?

Homogeneity is reinforced by the social mores of bureaucratic behavior. Deviation from normal modes of behavior, from dress codes to personal demeanor, means a loss of effectiveness in the bureaucracy. The truly effective bureaucrat is a master of human relations. He gets along well with those above him, and he motivates those below him. Consistency in style is matched by consistency in judgment. As Richard Barnet notes, bureaucrats have nothing to sell but their reputations. As a consequence they constantly find themselves defending last week's advice. One corollary is to stay away from difficult issues before they explode into a crisis. There is no quicker way to be removed from the action than to advocate an option outside the range of alternatives normally considered by policy-makers. During the Cuban missile crisis Robert McNamara suggested that we stand pat, as he believed that U.S. security interests had not been jeopardized. His credibility was damaged after that statement. In *The Best and the Brightest* David Halberstam chronicles the build-up and dismantling of the 1963 antiwar coalition within the State Department. The coalition was defeated by their more upbeat colleagues. One by one they became isolated and dispirited. There was no conspiracy to remove these men—Harriman, Hilsman, Trueheart, Forrestal, Kattenburg; they merely felt the effects of being out of step. The dissenting side was so depleted that it took five more years for another bureaucratic struggle to turn the war around.



The conformity of bureaucratic behavior has serious repercussions for human cost accounting. The general and dominant disregard for human costs strengthens those who reinforce it and weakens those bureaucrats who do not. The devaluation of human costs cannot be cemented without some ethical justification for bureaucratic behavior. For many people, Reinhold Niebuhr has provided the mortar.

Niebuhr resolved the conflict between ethics and politics by differentiating between the rules of behavior for states and for individuals. States act out of self-interest, if not "collective egoism," whereas individuals, who are more capable of self-criticism

and judgment, are more likely to act rationally and ethically. In order to preserve domestic institutions and the quality of life against encroachments from self-interested states, policy-makers are, from time to time, forced to take harsh measures. The overriding goal of the just state free from danger, as noted in Niebuhr's *Moral Man and Immoral Society*, "justifies and necessitates political policies which a purely individualistic ethic must always find embarrassing."

Of course, Niebuhr provided the qualifications and caveats to modify his basic premise. But to the executors of foreign policy who took their cues from him the lessons to be learned were as dichotomous as his book titles. Niebuhr provides the final building block which walls out human cost accounting in policy-making. Because personal morality is not transferable to foreign policy decisions, there can be no personal accountability for the human costs of those decisions. The technocratic security manager is accountable for the way he handles himself in the job and the contributions he makes toward policy. He is not asked about, nor does he feel accountable for, the human costs of his contributions.



The picture we have drawn is hardly encouraging. It is unrealistic to expect a redefinition of the national interest on behalf of the sustenance and enrichment of human life and potential. Nor can we expect wholesale changes in the style of policy-makers or in the line-up of vested interests behind current policy.

What can we do? We can propose changes that will create incentives for a more humanistic policy, as well as penalties for an injurious one. The standard assumption for bureaucratic movement in any direction is strong Presidential leadership. But it is difficult to see how an administration devastated by its own lawless behavior can provide leadership in promoting greater awareness for human costs. Thus, the immediate burden of resurrecting a sense of decency and humanity in our affairs abroad as well as at home falls on the Congress. Congress can take immediate steps to realign the decision-making mechanism so that one hard question cannot easily be sidestepped by national security managers: What are the consequences of our actions in human terms? This is, after all, the essence of public policy, and not some metaphysical determination of the national interest. Four procedural changes can make embarrassing questions more difficult to avoid and sharpen the focus of the human cost consequences of policy decisions.

1. CODE OF CONDUCT FOR POLICY-MAKERS

The first step is to amend the National Security Act of 1947 with a code of conduct for national security managers. The Armed Services have their Uniform Code of Military Justice, but there are no rules and regulations for the bureaucracy. The purpose of a code of conduct would be to ensure that the options served up by security managers conform to those international laws and customs of war to which the United States subscribes. The code would specify actions which are not allowed, sanctions and mechanisms for enforcement. Specifically, the code could prescribe preparation for, or assistance in, a war of aggression or a war in violation of international treaties. These terms are, and would be, open to debate and definition, but they clearly define a direction.

The code could also proscribe preparation for, or approval of, various military tactics, including the abuse of civilian populations by bombing and other means, use of torture, assassination, chemical, biological and antipersonnel weapons, and the entering into contracts with corporate leaders for the purpose of perpetrating any of the above acts. Any official found guilty of these acts could be liable to sanctions, including a mandatory term of socially useful work. A Legal Office for National Security Affairs could handle complaints and proceedings against national security managers.

The idea of penalizing policy-makers for proposing inhumane actions is not completely foreign to us. After World War II the United States participated in tribunals against the political as well as military leaders of Germany and Japan. At that time, Robert Jackson, Chief Counsel for the U.S. at Nuremberg, stated that "The ultimate step in avoiding periodic wars which are inevitable in a system of international lawlessness is to make statesmen responsible to law." (Marcus Rasikin of the Institute for Policy Studies is the primary advocate of this idea. He has drawn up a detailed model amendment to the National Security Act from which this presentation is based.)

2. HUMAN COST IMPACT STATEMENTS

The second step is to require a Human Cost Impact Statement as an addendum to every major policy option paper, including every National Security Study Memorandum prepared by the National Security Council.

Simply stated, the overriding question behind every Human Cost Impact Statement is "Who benefits and who pays?" This question should be asked in a variety of contexts. One context is the effective level of the policy decision. Policy decisions can have an immediate effect on human life. They may generate or prevent injury or loss of life; promote or alleviate starvation. This level is the easiest to estimate and the easiest to act upon.

At an intermediary level, policy decisions can affect the quality of life of human beings. They can promote or obstruct individual freedoms; provide for or prevent the provision of nutritional needs.

At the most abstract level, policy decisions have effects on the self-determination of human beings to pursue their own destinies. The human costs on this level are most difficult to sort out, just as the value judgments on their worth are most strongly held.

"Who benefits and who pays?" should also be asked in the domestic and international contexts. Which domestic groups will reap dividends and which groups will pay the price? How will foreign nationals be affected?

Finally, "Who benefits and who pays?" should relate to the time factor. Human costs may differ dramatically in the short term and in the long term. Most policy-makers justify unpopular decisions by their positive long-term impact on "quality of life" or "self-determination" grounds. Time-frame analysis must focus in on the immediate trade-offs and the estimation of achieving long-term goals.

Human Cost Impact Statements will be imprecise and politically sensitive. But the same holds true for National Intelligence Estimates and Environmental Impact Statements, and both of these are institutionalized procedures. Decision-making is a difficult art at best, and uncertainty is a part of the process. The degree of difficulty is no reason not to incorporate an impact statement in staff papers. On the contrary, this device can provide the impetus to making human cost estimates a more precise science. More important, the device of the Human Cost Impact Statement forces policy-makers to face squarely the responsibility for their actions by raising questions which are shunted aside in current practice.

3. ALTERNATIVE SERVICE

The third step that can easily be taken is to encourage alternative service among policy-makers. That is, to remove individuals from decision-making positions and to place them where they are affected by decisions made on their behalf. Most national security managers have little appreciation of the costs of our national defense posture because they have walled themselves away from its domestic consequences. The Chinese have devised a way to tear down the walls—factory managers take turns working in the fields. IBM provides employees with a similar program, although it is completely voluntary and quite limited in scope. A small number of corporate managers are given paid leaves of absence to teach school in low-income areas. These programs are inefficient in a managerial sense, but they provide a humanizing perspective for the individuals involved, who presumably impart it to their corporate associates.

The surest way to instill an appreciation of human

costs in the national security bureaucracy is to encourage security managers to spend one year in five working on poverty projects, community development organizations and the like. Nothing will change a security manager's definition of the national interest faster than to live and work in an area affected by the decisions he takes—not Vladivostok, but any American inner city. The government would continue to pay the security manager's salary, but it would receive an honest return for its investment through services rendered to the community. There are many ways of making "alternative service" attractive to security managers, the most obvious being to correlate upward mobility with alternative service rendered.

4. INSPECTOR GENERAL'S OFFICE

The fourth step that can be taken is to establish some mechanism which protects security managers whose concern for human cost considerations supersedes bureaucratic interests. Bureaucrats will be penalized for such actions unless fair and well-defined procedures for redress of grievances are available. Recent cases of courageous bureaucratic behavior in the public interest—most notably that of Ernest Fitzgerald, who disclosed the C-5A cost overruns—show the necessity for an independent inquiry with completely open procedures. Perhaps one mechanism to protect bureaucrats would be through a nonpartisan Inspector General's Office. The Inspector General, a person of complete integrity, would be appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate. His duties would include conducting inquiries on whether or not government personnel have been treated fairly by their superiors. Difficult cases could be heard before a blue-ribbon Citizen's Board of Inquiry consisting of individuals with no conflict of interest in the proceedings. Citizens could be nominated by members of Congress from their dis-

tricts, or by some other method which would provide a pool of public-spirited individuals.



The proposals recommended here are extremely limited in nature. They do not fundamentally alter the way in which decisions are made or implemented. They can easily be subverted by unsympathetic political or bureaucratic figures. In the final analysis, there can be no substitute for humane political and bureaucratic leadership. But they do serve one modest and very useful purpose: They make it more difficult to deflect bureaucratic responsibility for actions taken in the name of national security.

The greatest potential danger of these recommendations is that they can lend themselves to an interventionist foreign policy, albeit on a different set of values than before. Therefore it is crucial to accept as an absolute first principle that direct intervention in the affairs of other countries is against the interests of the United States, to be followed only as a last resort and in accord with our constitutional processes. As a second principle, we should recognize that, by virtue of our global economic and military presence, anything we do or do not do affects others, and in this sense "intervenes" in the affairs of other nations. Thus, as a third principle, we should resolve to make our intervention as salutary as possible. If we understand that our country's capacity to do harm elsewhere is at least as strong as our capacity to do good, then we are on the road to a more humanistic foreign policy.

To extrapolate from the quotation from Camus: If our country's actions cannot heal, let our bias be on the side of the victim rather than the victimizer, to limit the damage done.