

Sometimes Inaction Against Bad Guys Has Dangerous Consequences.
Posted On:December 31, 1969

The most difficult political-military situation a nation must face is when to take action against a threat. Too much force can be overkill. However, if a great power hesitates, this can be perceived as weakness, or can give an enemy an exaggerated belief in his own power.

The United States has always tried to avoid looking like a bully (even when we are one), unlike such powers as Russia, which has never worried about being a bully and even uses this perception to get its way. We like to pretend that there is global \223rule of law,\224 although this is not really so. Nations will observe rule of law when they find it to their national advantage, as most of the world does today, not because it is so, but because the United States as the leading global power supports it. The illusion of \223rule of law\224 will melt if we ever step down from this leadership.

There was a moment in 1936 when the new Nazi German government violated the Versailles Treaty that they had signed to end World War I. They invaded the Rhineland region and took it back from French control. France and England had disarmed and were in no position to punish the Germans for this, so they did nothing.

The German military had been apprehensive about this order from Hitler, and had the French and/or British reacted, they would have retreated and Hitler would have been removed and most likely killed. But because Hitler succeeded, he lived to create the hell of World War II, with millions of dead on all sides.

North Korea is an example of our consequential inaction. In 1994, hostilities between the US and North Korea rose to the point of war; North Korea was a threat to Japan, South Korea, and our Navy in the Pacific. President Clinton was ready to act-when former President Jimmy Carter intervened by going to North Korea to negotiate. The Carter Center claims that Clinton sent Carter, but other reports indicate that President Clinton was frustrated by this gambit. The military option was taken off the table.

The consequences of this failure to take action has left North Korea as a neighborhood threat, kept its people enslaved and starving, and has helped Pakistan with their nuclear program, and then both have been of assistance to Iran in their own nuclear program. The results are now not just one rogue state with nukes, but three very dangerous rogues who threaten a much larger region.

Presidents who take action in dealing with bullies or threats are not universally applauded in the western world. Pacifists prefer \223negotiating.\224 President Regan unilaterally took action to bomb Gaddafi's palace after Gaddafi was found complicit in the Lockerby aircraft bombing that killed everybody on board (Americans and British). That action seems to have put a crimp in Gaddafi's terrorist activities. Then, President Bush's invasion of Iraq to depose Saddam Hussein so frightened Gaddafi and Iran that Gaddafi dumped his nuclear program and Iran put theirs on hold for several years. Bullies understand power and rightly fear it.

President Obama relentlessly pursued Osama bin Laden right to his Pakistani hideout, willingly paying the price of Pakistan's bluster and embarrassment. He also enlarged the drone program, going after individual terrorists wherever they were hiding out, including Yemen, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. This looks like assassination to pacifists, but assassination is certainly preferable to mass armed casualties.

It is obvious that the European Union has had no success in endless talks with Iranians about their nuclear program. And so far, neither has Israel with threats that are not carried out. It will be up to the United States to determine how and when to nip this threat in the bud before it blooms into a credible regional menace. Current \223negotiations\224 show that Iran believes we will, maybe.

The difference between rule of law and rule of the jungle is being prepared to act on behalf of rule of law. The lawless have to believe that you mean it. (Are you listening, Syria?)

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