

February 12, 1973

Mr. Fred Ikle  
Department of Political Science  
Rand Corporation  
Santa Monica, California

Dear Mr. Ikle,

Your Arms Control Group Seminar "Will Deterrence Last Out the Century" is a provocative and insightful writing that must have provoked a great deal of comment and correspondence. It resonates with a great many of my own ideas, some of which I would ~~have~~ have dared to expressed as forthrightly as you have without being able to offer more hopeful and positive prescriptions. I am certainly very much looking forward to seeing you while you are at the Center here next year but meanwhile will burden you with a few of my own thoughts and comments, some of them from other miscellaneous writings and mostly highly consonant with your own concerns.

In order of importance the issues I have in mind are:

- 1) maintaining the integrity of central command and control of the sea based deterrent. Until we can improve our technical solutions of this problem we are bound to continue to get the same shoulder shrugging attitude that we now customarily face. I do not believe the problem has been subjected to the kind of quantitative analysis that has justified other aspects of force planning. ~~However~~, I am hardly privy to what might be the most critical and influential thinking in this field. I hope this is a matter that you can take some part in forwarding the solutions to as eloquently as you have stated the problem.
- 2) The legal implications of the Genocide Convention in relation to our MAB strategic policies. The Senators and the State Department people with whom I have corresponded on this point seem quite uncomprehending (note enclosures).
- 3) Coping with irrationality. Quite obviously the maintenance of our own "over-kill" capacity does little to deter the ultimately irrational adversary, if you think of Hitler in the bunker as an example. But it is scarcely obvious that reducing our deterrent level will improve the situation. The problem is how to get him to reduce his! I realize that there are cross-talk connections between these issues but equally that some of them are paradoxical. I have been deeply impressed by your own studies of irrational decisions that enveloped previous wars, but I wonder if we cannot begin to say that we are entering into a new era precisely because the magnitude of potential destruction is both highly predictable and many times more terrifying than in the past. My optimism on this score goes just so far and it is terrifying to think what the outcome of another Hitlerian ~~adventure~~ would be in the contemporary environment. Have you thought what difference it would have made to British and French policy vis-~~avis~~ cardinal events like the re-occupation of the Rhineland if eventual nuclear rearmament were in mind?

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IKLE, Fred

One thing that can be said fairly certainly, however, is that a Hitler who had a nuclear retaliatory force would not have found himself in the bunker at the last resort -- that the basic objectives of warfare would be altered -- that we could no longer consider unconditional surrender as the means by which a major system war can end. All of this leads to number

- 4) - exactly what is the nuclear deterrent able to deter? Nuclear blackmail perhaps but we have yet to see a clear-cut solution to the strategy of salami-slicing on the part of a vicious and determined and if you will "irrational" adversary like a Hitler. With all of the stabilizing effect of a nuclear stalemate the paradoxical implication that the nuclear shield will give the highest yield to the most risk-taking and the nuclear weapons will be used -- probably not in a single massive exchange but in a progressive escalation similar to the way in which conventional armors were used during World War II.

All in all, your arguments against sole reliance upon the deterrent stalemate are absolutely convincing. May we look forward to a second paper addressing the remaining agenda?

But I hope you can find time to comment on the more specific details of this letter before you complete the latter.

Sincerely yours,

Joshua Lederberg  
Professor of Genetics

JL/rr  
Enclosure