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A true Texan: Sen. Lyndon B. Johnson astride a white horse, flanked by his family, in an open field. *LBJ Library Photo by CTJ Family Album.*

# *Four Years and a World of Difference: The Evolution of Lyndon Johnson and American Foreign Policy*

MITCHELL LERNER\*

“I DON’T BELIEVE THAT I’LL EVER GET CREDIT FOR ANYTHING IN FOREIGN Affairs no matter how successful it is,” Lyndon Johnson once told journalist Hugh Sidey, “because I didn’t go to Harvard.” It is classic LBJ, a man who, despite a myriad of abilities and accomplishments, longed for the approval of the Eastern establishment. Not just a native Texan, but a native Texan from a poor, sparsely populated region, Johnson had been raised by parents with deep historic and emotional ties to the state. When he made his mark on the national political scene, he found it impossible to escape the popular images that accompanied such a background. For the rest of his political life, he confronted a simplistic image of himself rooted in the picture of the classic Texas gunslinger: aggressive and unyielding; committed to the defense of good against evil; unable or unwilling to recognize the subtle nuances of the world around him; and, of course, prone to violence. “As a Texan,” wrote historian John Milton Cooper, “he evoked images of the South and the West. He alternately cultivated and cursed those images, according to whether they helped or hurt him politically. But he could not escape them. His frequent private invocations of a heroic Texan heritage, particularly the Alamo legend, indicated how faithfully his outward appearance as a nonmetropolitan, nonsophisticated, nonfashionable figure reflected inner reality.”<sup>1</sup> This background shaped him, and the perception of him by others, for the rest of his political career. “People,” wrote historian Paul Conkin, “viewed him as a Texan, and filled in all the images that they associated with that identity.”<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas Schwartz, “Lyndon Johnson and Europe,” in H. W. Brands (ed.), *Beyond Vietnam* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1999), 38 (1st quotation); Paul Conkin, *Big Daddy from the Pedernales* (Boston: G. K. Hall & Co., 1986), viii (2nd quotation).

<sup>2</sup> Conkin, *Big Daddy from the Pedernales*, 8.

There is no doubt that much of this claim is accurate. LBJ's Texas background affected him in ways that deeply influenced his political career, especially after the assassination of President John Kennedy, when the stark contrast between Johnson's own past and that of the man he was replacing was so clearly on display. It was "the Hill country of Texas," wrote one biographer, "that gave him a sense of identity, that served as a refuge and at times as a source of strength, [but] also nourished a sense of inferiority." Accordingly, LBJ longed for any evidence that he had been accepted by those who, like the Kennedys and their advisors, seemed to have been born to lead. "His envy for the glamour that surrounded the Kennedys in life and the adulation that attended them in death was Shakespearean," recalled advisor Joseph Califano. "He yearned for appreciation from the Ivy League intellectuals whose ideas he had turned into law." And yet, it was an approval that would prove elusive. "The greatest bigots in the world," Johnson later complained to his friend Harry Middleton, "are the Democrats on the East Side of New York . . . I don't think any man from Johnson City, Texas, can survive very long."<sup>3</sup>

Despite the self-pitying tone of LBJ's lament, it should not be dismissed as mere sour grapes. Many of his contemporaries, and many subsequent historians, have embraced this notion of LBJ the Texas gunslinger, a man whose lack of education, sophistication, and training, placed serious constraints on his abilities as president. Such a perception has shaped the contours of the debate about his policies, especially those in the international realm. The fact remains that thirty-five years after he left office, Johnson's foreign policies are greeted with much derision by both the historical community and the public at large. Although no overwhelming consensus has emerged, historians have generally found much to praise in Johnson's domestic policies, but have castigated his work overseas. A 1996 *New York Times* survey, for example, led to Arthur Schlesinger Jr.'s conclusion that LBJ was a difficult president to evaluate, because scholars found his "domestic and foreign record so discordant."<sup>4</sup>

Although the disparaging conclusions have remained largely constant, the specific critique of LBJ the diplomat has evolved over time. In the earliest versions, the president was usually seen as being simply

<sup>3</sup> Conkin, *Big Daddy from the Pedernales*, xi (1st quotation); Joseph Califano, *The Triumph and Tragedy of Lyndon Johnson* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1991), 341 (2nd quotation); and Lyndon B. Johnson to Harry Middleton, "Reminiscences of President LBJ," Aug. 19, 1969, transcript (Lyndon Baines Johnson Presidential Library, Austin, Texas; hereafter cited as LBJ Library) (3rd quotation). Dean Rusk agreed, telling Glenn Seaborg in 1986 that much of the doubt about Johnson's foreign policy abilities stemmed from, "A sort of snobbishness that a number of people on the Northeastern seaboard had toward LBJ." See Glenn Seaborg, *Stemming the Tide* (New York: D.C. Heath, 1987), 14.

<sup>4</sup> "The Ultimate Approval Rating," *New York Times Magazine*, 6 (Dec. 15, 1996), 48.

uninterested in international relations, a domestic policy maven focused almost exclusively on life in the United States, and whose tunnel vision finally left his administration crumbling on the shores of Southeast Asia. Historian and Johnson advisor Eric Goldman described his boss as one who:

Preferred to think about and deal with domestic relations than international affairs; . . . lacked extensive acquaintance with foreign leaders or significant knowledge of foreign civilizations . . . had no carefully thought out conception of the workings of the international system, few broad-gauged premises concerning diplomacy or war, even less feel or sense of things international. . . . Lyndon Johnson entered the White House not only little concerned with the outer world, but leery of it.<sup>5</sup>

Others agreed, including journalist Philip Geyelin, who wrote that LBJ, “had no taste and scant preparation for the deep waters of foreign policy. . . . The point is that Lyndon Johnson never was really interested.”<sup>6</sup>

The years have eroded this simplistic picture, however, as historians have recognized that the president had both an interest and a background in international affairs. The mere fact that such portrayals existed at all hints at the Texas stereotype that LBJ had to confront; John Kennedy, for example, whose legislative background in foreign policy was no greater than Johnson’s, never had to answer such charges. In the course of his long political career, LBJ had served on the House Committee on Naval Affairs, the House and Senate Armed Services Committees, and chaired the Preparedness Investigating Subcommittee of the Senate Armed Services Committee during the Korean War. As Senate Majority Leader, he had played a not insignificant role in shaping the foreign policy of President Dwight Eisenhower; “You were my strong right arm when I was president,” Ike later told him. “[You] made it possible for . . . [me] to carry forward a[n effective] foreign policy.”<sup>7</sup> As vice president, he had journeyed to the Middle East, the Far East, Europe, Latin America, Africa, and South Asia, as well as a trip to Southeast Asia that included three days in Vietnam. Overall, the tally was eleven trips to thirty-three nations as a representative of John Kennedy’s government.<sup>8</sup> He had also served as

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<sup>5</sup> Eric Goldman, *The Tragedy of Lyndon Johnson* (New York: Knopf, 1969), 379.

<sup>6</sup> Philip Geyelin, *Lyndon B. Johnson and the World* (New York: Praeger, 1966), 15–16.

<sup>7</sup> Eisenhower quoted in Robert Dallek, *Flawed Giant: Lyndon Johnson and His Times* (New York: Oxford, 1988), 85.

<sup>8</sup> Granted, LBJ’s personality often made a mockery of these trips, like when he stopped his motorcade from the airport to hand out cigarette lighters and other tokens to stunned South Vietnamese onlookers. Still, it defies logic to assume that beyond the bluster the vice president failed to learn anything about the outside world from his many trips into it. For a good discussion of this point, see Dallek, *Flawed Giant*, 12–20.

chairman of the Peace Corps Advisory Council and Chairman of the National Aeronautics and Space Council, positions with clear Cold War ramifications. National Security Advisor Walt Rostow dismissed these criticisms out of hand:

I know it's inaccurate because I've watched him grapple with foreign policy issues from tolerably early times. It's palpable nonsense because he had been deeply involved in the Eisenhower administration, and indeed earlier. But clearly, as the minority and majority leader of the Senate, he was in the middle of all the great foreign policy decisions in the 1950s. . . . So it's clear that he knew a great deal about foreign policy. It was in his background, and he had, in my judgement, a marvelous instinct for foreign policy.<sup>9</sup>

And yet the negative assessments remained, even when this reality began to emerge. Although the critics no longer faulted LBJ for ignoring foreign policy, they could still fault him for his results. Most analyses of his diplomacy thus turned to the central event of his presidency, the Vietnam War. A massive wave of scholarship emerged after the 1975 fall of South Vietnam, the overwhelming majority of which offered an overall assessment of Johnson's decision-making that was far from charitable.

Time, however, has launched these critiques in new directions, as historians have recently begun to expand their focus beyond the Vietnam War, and in doing so have produced a more comprehensive picture of Lyndon Johnson's diplomacy. Yet, with few exceptions, the negative assessments remain. Nancy Tucker's concluding essay in *Lyndon Johnson Confronts the World* seems to speak for the nine authors in this volume, noting that the administration "strained friendships, aggravated animosities, and left a problematic legacy for subsequent occupants of decision making posts in the White House, State Department, and Department of Defense."<sup>10</sup> Even H. W. Brands, whose *Wages of Globalism* remains the most favorable of these more broadly conceived works, launches some verbal jabs. Johnson, he concluded, showed a "dogged

<sup>9</sup> Walt Rostow, oral history, interview I, transcript, p. 7 (LBJ Library). For similar comments, see, among others, Deputy National Security Advisor Francis Bator quoted in John Odell, *U.S. International Monetary Policy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), 132. Bator explained, "There is a tendency by people who did not work closely with President Johnson to picture him as a provincial who could not understand technical issues. That is rubbish. Behind that colorful mask there was a very strong and sharp mind. Most meetings began with an Act I, with a lot of story-telling and moralizing and fun and games about the Hill, the officials present, the British or the Germans or the French and de Gaulle, Texas, God knows what. You could never tell what was in his mind unless you saw him switch into Act II mode, when he would seriously explore the issues and decisions, cross-examining officials with standing. When he was engaged on an issue—when it mattered to him—he was sharp, thorough, and did his homework."

<sup>10</sup> Nancy Tucker, "A Final Reckoning," in Nancy Tucker and Warren Cohen (eds.), *Lyndon Johnson Confronts the World* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 318.

lack of imagination,” and made “almost no effort to change America’s direction in international affairs, even when change was necessary.”<sup>11</sup>

The criticisms of LBJ’s diplomacy vary greatly, of course, but a few themes tie them together. Perhaps most prominent is a more sophisticated version of the earlier contention that a backward Lyndon Johnson was uninterested in the outside world. In this criticism, LBJ is faulted not for ignoring foreign policy but for consistently tying it to his political agenda; that is, that the president always made his foreign policy decisions with one eye (and sometimes two) focused on domestic politics. Wrote political scientist Larry Berman, “The President was involved in a delicate exercise of political juggling. . . . He chose to avoid a national debate on the [Vietnam] war, to keep the reserves home, and to buy time for a domestic record meriting nothing less than Mount Rushmore.”<sup>12</sup> Richard Immerman echoed the same themes, writing of LBJ’s response to General Westmoreland’s 1965 request for a troop increase that, “To refuse would risk domestic turmoil reminiscent of the Joseph McCarthy era, turmoil inimical to Johnson’s legislative agenda. . . . Indeed, politics weighed as heavily on policymaking as did military exigencies.”<sup>13</sup>

A second, and closely related, criticism is the claim that Johnson’s foreign policy was always severely hindered by the Vietnam War. LBJ’s near-obsession, runs this argument, distracted both resources and attention from other international hotbeds, leading to problems for the United States that need not have existed. “If fear of communist aggression was the common concern motivating Johnson and his advisors,” wrote Tucker, “Vietnam proved to be their joint obsession.”<sup>14</sup> Accordingly, the president is alleged to have embraced Southeast Asian myopia that not only distracted him from the rest of the world but also shaped the way that he understood it. “Johnson’s preoccupation with Vietnam,” wrote one study of LBJ’s policies toward Africa, “limited his options and slanted his perceptions regarding Africa.”<sup>15</sup> Warren Cohen brought these two themes together in writing about LBJ’s Middle East policies, concluding that the president “was immediately preoccupied with domestic reform, the election campaign of 1964, and Vietnam. He had little time or inclination to dabble in the area.”<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> H. W. Brands, *Wages of Globalism: Lyndon Johnson and the Limits of American Power* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 28–29.

<sup>12</sup> Berman, *Planning a Tragedy*, 146–149.

<sup>13</sup> Richard Immerman, “A Time in the Tide of Men’s Affairs,” in Tucker and Cohen (eds.), *Lyndon Johnson Confronts the World*, 62–66.

<sup>14</sup> Tucker, “A Final Reckoning,” 314.

<sup>15</sup> Terrence Lyons, “Keeping Africa off the Agenda,” in Tucker and Cohen (eds.), *Lyndon Johnson Confronts the World*, 248.

<sup>16</sup> Warren Cohen, “Balancing American Interests in the Middle East,” in Tucker and Cohen (eds.), *Lyndon Johnson Confronts the World*, 281.

A third common criticism exists in the recent literature. In this account, LBJ suffered from an inability to overcome a static Cold War mindset that left him wedded to simplistic “good” versus “evil” dichotomies, and ignored the complex nature of international diplomacy. “He would not take the openings offered,” wrote Lloyd Gardner about LBJ and Vietnam. “He would not act, and thus he was finally unable to escape the Cold War definition of the world that he had helped to construct for so many years.”<sup>17</sup> Waldo Heinrichs agreed, explaining that:

International relations in the Cold War had been dichotomous, a simple confrontation between the Soviet and American alliance systems. By the 1960s, however, they were becoming more complex, and power was becoming more diffuse. The Johnson administration was aware of change but slow to discard early Cold War assumptions and unsure of how to deal with new realities. . . . He had no independent way of thinking about the world, no framework or analysis, that could offer him more satisfactory answers than those provided by the close-fitting elements of the powerful Cold War paradigm.<sup>18</sup>

Johnson, ran this argument, failed to recognize that neither the United States nor the rest of the world was the same entity it had been in 1947 when Harry Truman famously promised to “support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures.”

There is certainly much accuracy in these criticisms. And yet, this paper argues that historians have neglected to consider the possibility of change over time in these assessments of the Johnson administration. Human beings are capable of growth even while in the White House, and the record suggests that the Lyndon Johnson of 1968 demonstrated a much greater understanding of the world than had the Lyndon Johnson of 1964. The notion that LBJ evolved through “on the job training,” it is worth noting, seems in accordance with his background and personality. A poor childhood in Texas had obviously left him lacking the training and background of the Eastern establishment figures that directed his foreign policy apparatus.<sup>19</sup> And yet, what Johnson

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<sup>17</sup> Lloyd Gardner, “Lyndon Johnson and Vietnam,” in Robert Divine (ed.), *The Johnson Years, Volume III* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1994), 231.

<sup>18</sup> Waldo Heinrichs, “Lyndon B. Johnson,” in Tucker and Cohen (eds.), *Lyndon Johnson Confronts the World*, 26.

<sup>19</sup> While Rostow and McGeorge Bundy, for example, were training the next generation of leaders at Harvard and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, LBJ was teaching at the Welhausen School in the South Texas town of Cotulla, where the vast majority of the inhabitants were Mexican laborers living in squalor. “Few of them could speak English,” LBJ later recalled “and they often came to class without breakfast, hungry.” From “Special Message to Congress,” March 15, 1965, *Public Papers of the President, Lyndon B. Johnson, 1965, Volume I* (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1966), 286.



lacked in formal training he compensated for with his thirst for knowledge and innate intellectual ability. "After years of meeting first rate minds in and out of universities," wrote Goldman, "I am sure that I have never met a more intelligent person than Lyndon Johnson."<sup>20</sup> A politician's education does not always follow the traditional path of Exeter and Harvard, rather it can be shaped not in a classroom but in the halls of power, and here Lyndon Johnson took to his education like a duck takes to water. Even while in the White House, LBJ continued an almost frenzied attempt to educate himself about the details of matters critical to the United States. In his first six months in office, for example, he met with twenty heads of foreign governments, compared with the average of just over eleven that Eisenhower had seen per year in his tenure.<sup>21</sup> "I can't stand the bastard," Robert Kennedy admitted, "but he's the most formidable human being I've ever met."<sup>22</sup> It thus hardly seems to stretch the bounds of reason to suggest that a man of such intelligence, drive, and perspicacity could learn from his experiences, and thus guide an evolving foreign policy over the course of his presidency.

Testing such a hypothesis is difficult, since the vast number of foreign crises happening each year, and the complexities that surround each one, ensures that there will be exceptions to any rule. LBJ displayed great skill, for example, in Panama in early 1964, when anti-American riots threatened to endanger the nation's control of the Canal Zone. Most Americans demanded a harsh response, with White House mail running between ten and fifteen to one in favor of a "firm U.S position," and American politicians let loose with a barrage of bellicosity.<sup>23</sup> "We are in the amazing position of having a country with one-third the population of Chicago kick us around," thundered Republican Minority Leader Everett Dirksen.<sup>24</sup> On the other hand, pressure from Panama and elsewhere demanded the United States promise to revise the 1903 Canal Zone treaty before talks could begin, and Panamanian President Roberto Chiari used the crises to encourage anti-American sentiment as his own re-election loomed. And yet in the face of such obstacles Johnson skillfully walked a middle line, refusing to agree to any pre-conditions before negotiating a new treaty, but recognizing the fact that American interests were best served by moving away from a traditional policy of hemispheric domination. "Let's make

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<sup>20</sup> Goldman, *Tragedy of Lyndon Johnson*, 525.

<sup>21</sup> Vaughn Bornet, *The Presidency of Lyndon Johnson* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1983), 166.

<sup>22</sup> Quoted in Richard Goodwin, "The War Within," *New York Times Magazine* (Aug. 21, 1988), 32.

<sup>23</sup> "Panama—Telegrams from the Public," Jan. 12, 1964, White House memo, box 64, NSF (LBJ Library).

<sup>24</sup> Dirksen quoted in *Time* (Jan. 24, 1964), 17.

a fair treaty with the Panamanians,” the president told his chief negotiator, Robert Anderson, “Let’s be very sure that it is fair to them and fair to us. And the second thing is, let’s try to make a treaty that can be used as a model of how a big country like ours ought to enter into treaty relationships with smaller countries and countries less secure than ours.”<sup>25</sup> Although it would take decades for the process to be completed, LBJ’s patience and foresightedness had set into motion the United States’ successful redefinition of relations with its neighbor to the south.<sup>26</sup>

On the other side of the equation, LBJ’s policies toward the end of his term did not always reflect a more sophisticated worldview. From the early years of his presidency, for example, Johnson had sought to strengthen ties with Thailand, largely to gain their assistance in the Vietnam War.<sup>27</sup> While aware that any such assistance would be of little practical value, the president knew that it offered political cover at home as he sought to demonstrate that the war effort had the support of the international community. With the approval of Thai Prime Minister Thanom Kittikachorn, the administration began a build up of forces and support bases in Thailand, culminating in the presence of 35,000 American troops in the country by the end of 1967. In return, the Thais contributed to the war effort directly, dispatching more than 12,000 men to Vietnam in 1967. Yet, pockets of resentment toward the overbearing American attitude existed from the start, and these feelings grew as the administration seemed to make arbitrary decisions without consulting its loyal allies. When Johnson decided to curtail the bombing of North Vietnam in early 1968, the Thais felt betrayed, especially since their opinions about the decision had not been solicited. In May, Thanom journeyed to the United States looking for answers, but came away empty-handed. By ignoring the Thai leader’s domestic pressures, and presenting the decision to him as *fait accompli*, the Johnson administration had strained the relationship with a close ally, and, as Robert McMahon noted, risked driving them “to consider *détente* with China as a hedge against a future American withdrawal from the region.”<sup>28</sup>

While such cases exist, a close inspection of the Johnson presidency suggests that they were rare. In reality, the larger picture suggests an

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<sup>25</sup> Robert Anderson, oral history, transcript, p. 28–29 (LBJ Library).

<sup>26</sup> The best analysis of LBJ and the Panama Crisis can be found in Mark Lawrence, “Exception to the Rule,” in Mitchell Lerner (ed.), *The Johnson Years, Volume IV* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2003, forthcoming). Lawrence concluded that the president had made a “remarkable gesture.”

<sup>27</sup> See Robert McMahon, “Toward Disillusionment and Disengagement in South Asia,” in Cohen and Tucker (eds.), *Lyndon Johnson Confronts the World*, 135–172; and McMahon, “Ambivalent Partners,” in H. W. Brands (ed.), *The Foreign Policies of Lyndon Johnson* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1999), 168–186.

<sup>28</sup> McMahon, “Ambivalent Partners,” 183.

evolutionary trend in LBJ's presidency toward a more sophisticated understanding of America and the world. Perhaps the best way to appreciate this process is by examining two very similar events that occurred at very dissimilar times. One need look no further for such a comparison than to the open seas, where the 1964 Gulf of Tonkin incident and the 1968 *Pueblo* incident offer just such a comparison.

The details of the attack in the Gulf of Tonkin have been articulated in detail elsewhere and thus need no great elaboration here.<sup>29</sup> In the summer of 1964, the destroyer USS *Maddox* was operating in the Tonkin Gulf as part of the DeSoto program. These missions were designed to collect electronic intelligence by monitoring local radio communications, and by locating and tracking the frequency of coastal radar stations. Among other objectives, the ships were to gather information in support of OPLAN 34A, a series of covert operations secretly organized and supported by the United States, and performed by the South Vietnamese against North Vietnam. On August 1, as the *Maddox* approached the offshore island of Hon Me, which had recently been attacked by South Vietnamese commandos, the ship intercepted a series of messages indicating an imminent North Vietnamese attack. The next morning, the *Maddox* was approximately fifteen miles off Hon Me when three North Vietnamese patrol boats approached from the southeast. When the patrols closed within ten thousand yards, the American vessel opened fire, leaving one ship badly damaged. The other two quickly broke off their attack, and the Johnson administration ordered no further retaliation. "The other side got a sting out of this," concluded Secretary of State Dean Rusk. "If they do it again they'll get another sting."<sup>30</sup> Two nights later, the *Maddox*, now accompanied by the destroyer *Turner Joy*, was still in the Tonkin Gulf. Operating in bad weather, the two ships reported (erroneously, as was later demonstrated) that they were under attack. When this news reached Washington, President Johnson ordered the launch of Operation Pierce Arrow, a retaliatory strike against North Vietnamese torpedo boat bases and oil storage facilities, thus taking another fateful step toward greater American involvement in Vietnam.

A close examination of Johnson's handling of this crisis lends credence to the negative picture of him put forward by his many critics.

<sup>29</sup> See especially Edwin Moise, *Tonkin Gulf and the Escalation of the Vietnam War* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1996). See also Ezra Siff, *Why the Senate Slept* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger Publishing, 1999); Joseph Goulden, *Truth is Always the First Casualty* (Chicago: Rand McNally Co., 1969); Eugene Windchy, *Tonkin Gulf* (Garden City, N.J., Doubleday, 1971); Anthony Austin, *The President's War* (Philadelphia: Lippincott Press, 1971); and James Bamford, *Body of Secrets* (New York: Doubleday, 2001), 240–283.

<sup>30</sup> Rusk quoted in George Herring, *America's Longest War* (2nd ed.; New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1986), 120.

LBJ's actions in response to the Tonkin attacks seem to support the first of the three criticisms articulated earlier, the idea that he subordinated foreign policy to his domestic goals, as the administration's response reflected above all else a concern with domestic politics. These political concerns manifested themselves in a number of ways. Most obviously, Johnson used the crisis to improve his position in the impending presidential elections by emphasizing the way that his limited response had protected American interests without dragging the nation into a deeper conflict. With the pugnacious Barry Goldwater as his opponent, LBJ had an easy time using the attacks to foster an image of himself as a foreign policy moderate, a voice of determination and firmness but also of peace and restraint. "We had our ships fired on in the Tonkin Gulf," he declared in an October speech, "and we made a prompt reply, an appropriate reply. But we have never lost our heart and I hope we will never lose our head."<sup>31</sup> His limited response to the attacks, LBJ constantly reminded the American people, stood in contrast to the Republicans who, "sound as if force or the threat of force can solve all problems, and that is dangerous."<sup>32</sup> The strategy worked. An October poll found that 44 percent of the American public believed the chance of nuclear war would increase under Goldwater while only 8 percent believed the same about Johnson, and a post-election poll revealed that an astonishing 82 percent of the voting public listed "world peace" as an issue that had a great deal of influence on their voting opinion.<sup>33</sup>

And yet, in presenting himself as the candidate of peace, LBJ fashioned an image that would later come back to haunt him. To win electoral triumph, the president concealed from the American public the extent to which his administration was committed to victory in Vietnam, and the degree to which a post-election escalation was likely. Although the question of when Johnson actually decided to escalate the war remains a much debated topic, evidence strongly suggests that by the summer of 1964 his administration expected to expand the war in the near future, but concealed these plans from the American public until after the election.<sup>34</sup> As early as March, for example, Robert McNamara had returned from a trip

<sup>31</sup> From "Remarks at a Fundraising Dinner in New Orleans," Oct. 9, 1964, *Public Papers of the President, 1963-64, Volume II*, 1281.

<sup>32</sup> "Speech in Belleville, Ill.," Oct. 21, 1964, *Public Papers of the President, 1963-64, Volume II*, 1393.

<sup>33</sup> Opinion Research Corporation, *Public Opinion Trends: Their Meaning for the Republican Party* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1965), 32-33.

<sup>34</sup> See especially David Kaiser, *American Tragedy: Kennedy, Johnson, and the Origins of the Vietnam War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), 284-340; Fred Logevall, *Choosing War: The Lost Chance for Peace and the Escalation of War in Vietnam* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 134-299; and H. R. McMaster, *Dereliction of Duty: Johnson, McNamara, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Lies That Led to Vietnam* (New York: HarperCollins, 1997). Daniel Ellsberg concludes

to Vietnam with a list of recommendations that included a commitment to aid Saigon for as long as necessary, expanding the U.S. role in patrolling South Vietnam's borders, and placing U.S. forces "in a position on 30 days' notice to initiate a program of 'Graduated Overt Military Pressure' against North Vietnam."<sup>35</sup> These proposals would form the basis for National Security Action Memorandum 288, a document that the *Pentagon Papers* described as outlining "a program that called for considerable enlargement of the U.S. effort," and which acknowledged that American policy was "to prepare immediately to be in position on 72 hours notice to initiate the full range of Laotian and Cambodian 'Border Control actions' . . . and the 'Retaliatory Actions' against North Vietnam, and to be in a position on 30 days notice to initiate the program of 'Graduated Overt Military Pressure' against North Vietnam." All of it, McNamara warned, was to be done slowly and carefully, "to avoid domestic and international political opposition."<sup>36</sup> In May, Johnson received a memo from McGeorge Bundy recommending a "presidential decision" to use "graduated force against North Vietnam," despite the acknowledged "risk of escalation towards major land war or the use of nuclear weapons."<sup>37</sup> And in June, when the president informed William Bundy that he was appointing Gen. Maxwell Taylor to replace Henry Cabot Lodge as ambassador to South Vietnam, Bundy protested the selection of a military figure for a traditionally diplomatic task. "That's a military job," LBJ replied.<sup>38</sup>

The trick was thus to avoid attracting public attention to Vietnam before the election. "I just can't believe that we can't take 15,000 advisors and 200,000 people and maintain a status quo for six months," Johnson told McGeorge Bundy in March.<sup>39</sup> Accordingly, the administration decided to do just enough to maintain the status quo in Vietnam for now, hence keeping it off the front pages, and begin escalation later. "We know we're not going to do a goddamned thing while this election is on,"

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in his recent book that, "The public remained entirely unaware of the secret discussions, internal advocacy and preparing for attacks that had been going on for nearly a year within the Administration"; see Ellsberg, *Secrets: A Memoir of Vietnam and the Pentagon Papers* (New York: Viking, 2002), 184.

<sup>35</sup> Report from Bob McNamara, Mar. 16, 1964, Vietnam Country File, vol. V, NSF (LBJ Library).

<sup>36</sup> National Security Action Memorandum no. 288, "U.S. Objectives in South Vietnam," Mar. 17, 1964. Reprinted in *The Pentagon Papers* (New York Times ed.; New York: Bantam Books, 1971), 283.

<sup>37</sup> M. Bundy to L. Johnson, May 25, 1964, memorandum, Memos to the President: McGeorge Bundy, box 1, vol. 4, NSF (LBJ Library).

<sup>38</sup> L. Johnson to W. Bundy, June 15, 1964, 7:33 P.M., telephone conversation, transcript (LBJ Library).

<sup>39</sup> L. Johnson to M. Bundy, Mar. 1, 1964, 12:35 P.M., telephone conversation (LBJ Library).

McGeorge Bundy told the CIA's Ray Cline in August.<sup>40</sup> "It is quite apparent," wrote Maxwell Taylor, "[that] he does not want to lose South Vietnam before next November nor does he want to get the country into war."<sup>41</sup> The Tonkin incident offered LBJ a chance to do what his critics have suggested: boost his political standing by demonstrating his commitment to peace and firmness, all the while planning for war. While there seems no doubt that Johnson would have won the election regardless of the Tonkin incident, his skillful use of the crisis to reinforce his political image undoubtedly contributed to the immense margin of victory.

LBJ also manipulated the incident to gain passage of the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, authorizing him to "take all necessary measures to repel any armed attack against the forces of the United States and to prevent further aggression."<sup>42</sup> The administration had been planning to go to Congress with just such a resolution since the spring, but was waiting for the right time to act. The Tonkin Gulf attacks now presented that opportunity. Still, with an eye toward public opinion and the upcoming elections, administration officials cloaked the resolution behind a wave of half-truths and deceptions. Spokesmen insisted, for example, that the *Maddox* had been the innocent victim, operating a routine patrol that fell victim to an unprovoked attack. Secretary of Defense McNamara explained that "Our Navy played absolutely no part in, was not associated with, was not aware of, any South Vietnamese actions, if there were any."<sup>43</sup> Questions surrounding the legitimacy of the alleged second attack were also dismissed. Although it appears that the administration genuinely believed that this attack had occurred, at least initially, this was likely the product of their own wishful thinking more than realistic analysis, as evidence, including doubts raised by the ship's captain, should have suggested otherwise.<sup>44</sup> That LBJ should have harbored his own doubts became clear six weeks later when McNamara reported that a similar attack had occurred. "Now Bob," Johnson responded, "I have found over the years that we see and we hear and we imagine a lot of things in the form of attacks and shots. . . . and I think that we ought to check that very, very, carefully, and I don't know why

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<sup>40</sup> Logevall, *Choosing War*, 217 (quotation).

<sup>41</sup> "Memorandum of Conversation between the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the President," *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1964-68, vol. I, Vietnam, p. 129.

<sup>42</sup> *Congressional Record*, vol. 111, Aug. 5, 1964, p. 18132-33.

<sup>43</sup> McNamara quoted in Ellsberg, *Secrets*, 18.

<sup>44</sup> The general consensus within the staff of the Joint Chiefs, as well as within various levels of intelligence analysis, was that the attack had not occurred. And within days, it appears that even the president had his doubts. "Hell," LBJ told Undersecretary of State George Ball, "those dumb, stupid, sailors were just shooting at flying fish." See Logevall, *Choosing War*, 203 (quotation) and Moise, *Tonkin Gulf and the Escalation of the Vietnam War*, 242-244.

in the hell, at some time or another, they can't be sure if they're being attacked."<sup>45</sup> Even small details were obscured. The government claimed, for example, that the ship, which was ten miles off shore when it was attacked, had thus been in international waters, which was defined by the United States as anything more than three miles off a nation's coast. They neglected to mention that North Vietnam, like China, claimed a twelve-mile territorial limit. In the end, such deception would come back to haunt LBJ by laying a poor foundation from which to conduct a war; in 1967, for example, Gallup reported that 70 percent of Americans felt that he had not been honest about Vietnam.<sup>46</sup> But on an immediate level, Johnson obtained his congressional resolution, solidified his standing as a man of peace and firmness, and skyrocketed to an electoral rout.

The president's handling of the Tonkin attacks also supports the third critique often levied at him: the notion that he failed to appreciate the complexity of the international arena. Although earlier works criticized Johnson for underestimating the difficulty of the task in Vietnam, more recent releases have suggested that he actually expanded America's role pessimistically, with his eyes open to the problems that lay ahead. And yet, seeing the world in stark terms of good versus bad, LBJ perceived no choice other than to continue down the path of military escalation, hoping that the costs would prove acceptable, rather than seek other solutions. In a phone conversation with McGeorge Bundy in late May, Johnson revealed his dilemma. Vietnam, he told Bundy, "just worries the hell out of me. I don't see what we can ever hope to get out of there with once we're committed . . . What in the hell is Vietnam worth to me? What is Laos worth to me? What is it worth to this country?" But he could not withdraw, since, he explained, "if you start running from the Communists, they may just chase you right into your own kitchen." "Yeah," agreed Bundy. "That's the trouble."<sup>47</sup> A prisoner of a stale Cold War mentality, the president essentially decided to go down with the sinking ship rather than look for a creative way off. "We need somebody over there that can get us some better plans than we've got," LBJ told McNamara in April, "because what we've got is what we've had since '54. We're not getting it done. We're losing, so we need something new. If

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<sup>45</sup> L. Johnson to Bob McNamara, Sept. 18, 1964, 11:46 A.M., telephone conversation, transcript (LBJ Library).

<sup>46</sup> John Muller, *War, Presidents, and Public Opinion* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1973), 113.

<sup>47</sup> L. Johnson to M. Bundy, May 27, 1964, telephone conversation, transcript, U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States* 1964-68, vol. 27, Mainland Southeast Asia: Regional Affairs, Washington, D.C., document no. 53. See also, for example, L. Johnson to M. Bundy, Mar. 2, 1964, 12:35 P.M. and May 27, 1964, 11:24 A.M., telephone conversations, transcript (LBJ Library).

you pitch this old southpaw everyday, and . . . you lose, why, we better go get us a new pitcher.”<sup>48</sup> And yet, despite the accuracy of the lament, LBJ proved unwilling or unable to discern a new path.

The prospect of negotiations was thus dismissed with little serious consideration, nor did the president have much interest in the opinions of his allies. When, for example, Canadian diplomat Blair Seaborn returned from a visit to Hanoi shortly after the Tonkin attacks, the administration paid him little attention, even refusing to respond to his report of talks with Pham Van Dong. Shortly thereafter, Hanoi accepted U.N. Secretary General U Thant’s proposal for secret talks on neutral soil, a proposal to which the Johnson administration turned a cold shoulder.<sup>49</sup> In September, British proposals for another Geneva conference fell upon deaf ears. Similarly, Gen. Charles De Gaulle’s frequent comments for a neutralized Southeast Asia were met with scorn. Johnson simply looked upon a negotiated settlement as a defeat, one that would leave American prestige around the world in tatters. “To fail to respond,” the president declared in the spring, “would reflect on our honor as a nation, would undermine worldwide confidence in our courage, would convince every nation in South Asia that it must now bow to communist terms to survive.”<sup>50</sup> The conflict, in other words, may have been in Vietnam, but to Lyndon Johnson it was not about Vietnam.

Johnson’s unwillingness to “think outside the box” stemmed from his instinct to place the conflict within a traditional Cold War framework that demanded that communist aggression be resisted. It was thus assumed that Ho Chi Minh was a pawn of a greater communist conspiracy, and his claims of nationalism merely a fig leaf. Nor did he question the assumption that Vietnam was vital to American interests, since the struggle was not perceived as being about Vietnam, but was about the global Cold War struggle against communism. “We will not permit the independent nations of the East to be swallowed up by communist conquest,” the president declared.<sup>51</sup> In 1949, Secretary of State Dean Acheson had remarked of Ho Chi Minh that, “Question of whether Ho [is] as much nationalist as Commie is irrelevant. All Stalinists in colonial areas are nationalists.”<sup>52</sup> While the world, it seemed, may have changed

<sup>48</sup> L. Johnson to Bob McNamara, Aug. 30, 1964, 7:50 P.M., telephone conversation, transcript (LBJ Library).

<sup>49</sup> Logevall, *Choosing War*, 210–213.

<sup>50</sup> “Remarks on Foreign Affairs at the Associated Press Luncheon,” New York City, Apr. 20, 1964, in *Public Papers of the President, Lyndon Johnson, 1964, Volume I* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1965), 493–498.

<sup>51</sup> “Remarks in Memorial Hall,” Oct. 21, 1964, in *Public Papers of the President, Lyndon Johnson, 1964, Volume II* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1965), 1391.

<sup>52</sup> Lloyd Gardener, *Architects of Illusion: Men and Ideas in American Foreign Policy* (New York: Watts, 1970), 210.



greatly over the subsequent fifteen years, the values in the White House remained the same. Backing down in Vietnam would mean a loss of prestige world wide, sparking doubts from America's allies about the value of the nation's commitment and its willingness to fight against the great communist conspiracy. Leaving Vietnam with anything short of victory was therefore not even to be considered.

Overall, then, the Gulf of Tonkin incident suggests that Johnson was everything his critics accused him of being: deceitful, manipulative, and driven first and foremost by his domestic agenda and political interests. In addition, he approached the crisis from a simplistic mindset that forced complicated events into a basic framework that did not recognize that the world, and America's position within it, had changed since the end of World War II. No longer were America's allies willing to be ignored; no longer was the alleged communist monolith monolithic (if indeed, it had ever been); no longer did America have the resources to get involved across the globe. And yet Johnson, driven by a belief in traditional Cold War values and a personal need to appear strong, refused to accept these changing realities, and thus planted the seeds of an American tragedy all the while denying his intentions of doing so. In the final analysis, the Gulf of Tonkin incident had offered LBJ both danger and opportunity; the president had skillfully embraced the opportunity to further his political position, all the while ignoring the long-term dangers inherent in such a shortsighted policy.

Four years later, LBJ faced a crisis of remarkable similarity, this time involving the North Korean attack on the USS *Pueblo*. Unlike the attacks in the Tonkin Gulf, the *Pueblo* incident has received little attention from historians, and thus merits a more detailed examination. The *Pueblo* was a dilapidated ex-cargo carrier that had been retired from army service in 1954, only to be dragged from mothballs by the Navy in 1966 and assigned to Operation Clickbeetle, an intelligence gathering program run under the auspices of Naval Intelligence and the National Security Agency. Clickbeetle transformed antiquated transport ships into signals intelligence (SIGINT) collectors, and then dispatched them to various Asian coastlines as mobile eavesdroppers, ordered to collect "photographic, acoustic, hydrographic, and other intelligence materials . . . and report[ing] any intercepted information of CRITIC or spot report nature."<sup>53</sup> In January 1968, the *Pueblo* departed for her first mission, off the coast of North Korea in the Sea of Japan. It was a trip from which she would never return.

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<sup>53</sup> "Inquiry into the USS *Pueblo* and EC-121 Plane Incidents," *Report of the Special Subcommittee on the USS *Pueblo* of the Committee on Armed Services*, House of Representatives, 91st Cong., 1st sess., July 28, 1969 (Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1969), 1634.

On January 23, North Korean torpedo boats and subchasers surrounded the *Pueblo* while she operated in international waters off the coast of Wonsan Harbor, and ordered the ship to "HEAVE TO OR I WILL OPEN FIRE." Cmdr. Pete Bucher ignored the demand. At 1:06 P.M., the leading SO-1 radioed Korea of its intent: "According to present instructions, we will close down the radio, tie up the personnel, tow it, and enter port at Wonsan. At present, we are on our way to boarding."<sup>54</sup> Within ten minutes, a dozen armed soldiers from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK)'s 661st Army unit, complete with helmets, rifles and fixed bayonets, hopped from the subchaser onto one of the torpedo boats, which began backing down toward the stern of the American ship. The *Pueblo's* engines roared to life at the last second, and the ship headed for open sea. However, the vessel's antiquated engines made escape impossible, and quickly the *Pueblo* again found itself within enemy sights. This time, DPRK forces opened fire. The American ship was no match for its pursuers in terms of speed, maneuverability, or defensive capabilities, and Bucher quickly surrendered with one dead and many injured, including himself. It was, the National Security Agency would soon lament, "a major intelligence coup without parallel in modern history."<sup>55</sup> Eighty-two survivors spent the next eleven months in North Korean prison camps while the Johnson administration sought their release.

Success came on December 23 in a settlement reached through lengthy talks at the Military Armistice Commission (MAC) in Panmunjom. The American delegate, Maj. Gen. Gilbert Woodward, signed a letter admitting that the *Pueblo* had been ordered to violate DPRK waters, apologized for doing so, and promised not to repeat the transgression. Before doing so, however, Woodward read from a prepared statement repudiating the confession:

The position of the United States government with regard to the *Pueblo*, as consistently expressed in the negotiations at Panmunjom and in public, has been that the ship was not engaged in any illegal activity, that there is no convincing evidence that the ship at any time intruded into the territorial waters claimed by North Korea, and that we could not apologize for actions which we did not believe took place. The document which I am going to sign was prepared by the North Koreans and is at variance with the above position, but my signature will not and cannot alter the facts. I will sign the document to free the crew and only to free the crew.<sup>56</sup>

<sup>54</sup> "Notes of President's meeting with Senator Ev Dirksen and Congressman Gerald Ford," Jan. 30, 1968, 6:04 P.M., box 2, Tom Johnson's meeting notes (LBJ Library); F. Carl Schumacher, *Bridge of No Return: The Ordeal of the USS Pueblo* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1971), 89.

<sup>55</sup> NSA cable to Defense Intelligence Agency and Joint Chiefs of Staff, Jan. 24, 1968, Korea—Pueblo Incident, codeword material, volume I, part B (through January), NSF country file (LBJ Library).

<sup>56</sup> *New York Times*, Dec. 23, 1968, p. 3.

Two and a half hours later, DPRK guards released the men across the Bridge of No Return.<sup>57</sup>

The crisis was remarkably similar to the one four years earlier. Both the *Pueblo* and the *Maddox* had been conducting SIGINT operations along the coast of an Asian rival when they were unexpectedly attacked. Both missions' risks had been underestimated by their superiors, and the officers and crew had been left largely unprepared. Both ships also suffered from problems in crucial areas such as communications and defense. And yet, the response from Lyndon Johnson in 1968 was a far cry from what it had been four years earlier.

The president's handling of the *Pueblo* incident stands as a rejection to many of the criticisms often leveled at him, including the three central ones articulated earlier, and supports the idea that he had developed a more sophisticated understanding of America and the world. In the *Pueblo* case, for example, LBJ quickly demonstrated that he would not let concerns with politics or public opinion influence his response. When the ship was seized, demands for retribution came from all corners of the nation. Sen. Bourke Hickenlooper of Iowa, the ranking Republican on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, called on LBJ to "send a fleet into that area, level our guns on the shore and serve an ultimatum of release of the ship and the men." Sen. William Bennett, a Republican from Utah, advocated "steaming into the port city of Wonsan, tossing a towline aboard the *Pueblo*, and bringing it out," and an even more pugnacious Mendell Rivers, a Democrat from South Carolina, told the press, "I'd select a target. I'd do like Truman did—let one of them disappear."<sup>58</sup> "There should be no word mincing in our demand for the swift and safe return of both ship and crew," wrote the *Buffalo Daily News*, "nor should North Korea be deprived for long of the measured dose of retribution her sudden belligerency has so emphatically asked for."<sup>59</sup> Telegrams demanding military action flooded the White House. One from Los Angeles asked Johnson to "drop a juicy bomb on their capital" and another from Philadelphia demanded, "drop the hydrogen bomb and lets end it."<sup>60</sup> Even after the initial rush of anger subsided, many Americans still wanted action; in a February Gallup poll those choosing force as their preferred response outnumbered those choosing diplomacy by an almost 2-to-1 margin.<sup>61</sup>

<sup>57</sup> The ship itself remains in North Korea, where it continues to serve as a tourist attraction.

<sup>58</sup> Bourke Hickenlooper quoted in *Des Moines Register-Tribune*, Jan. 24, 1968, p. 2. Bennett quoted in *Newsweek* (Feb. 5, 1968), 19. Rivers quoted in *Washington Post*, Jan. 27, 1968, p. 1.

<sup>59</sup> *Buffalo Daily News*, Jan. 24, 1968, p. 12.

<sup>60</sup> Los Angeles telegram from Irving Pell; Philadelphia telegram from Herbert Trulick to LBJ, ND 19/CO 151, box 210, subject file, defense, White House Central Files (LBJ Library).

<sup>61</sup> *New York Times*, Feb. 11, 1968, p. 14. Specifically, 40 percent of those responding said force should be used to get the ship back, and another 6 percent favored using force later if diplomacy failed. Only 21 percent favored continuing negotiations.

The American military agreed. The Joint Chiefs of Staff, recalled Admiral Moorer, were “in favor of giving them an ultimatum to turn the ship loose or else.”<sup>62</sup> The commander-in-chief of the Pacific Fleet recommended sending an American destroyer into Wonsan to do “whatever was necessary” to retrieve the ship and crew, and Gen. Charles Bonesteel, commander of the UN Forces in Korea, advocated giving Kim a nuclear ultimatum.<sup>63</sup> Within hours of the attack, the navy directed a number of destroyers to the area at top speed, and the commander-in-chief of the Pacific Command began planning photo-reconnaissance missions to determine the *Pueblo*’s exact position. Plans for a rescue attempt were also passed down the chain of command. The operation called for at least three destroyers to charge into Wonsan harbor at first light, while others laid down a suppressing fire, and planes from the *Enterprise* provided continuous air coverage. One destroyer, likely the USS *Osborn*, would carry a detachment of Marines, who would climb aboard the *Pueblo*, kill or drive off any Korean troops, cut the ship loose from the pier, and then fit her to be towed out.<sup>64</sup>

And yet, in the face of such demands, Lyndon Johnson wisely stuck to the diplomatic path, even as it proved slow and difficult. It was a hard decision, especially in the face of public impatience. The *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, for example, called the response “weak-kneed,” and lamented, “What a miserable pass has the United States come to when its president begs before a tinpot nation, which has pirated our ship on the high seas in an overt act of aggression.”<sup>65</sup> “The Big Stick,” lamented Rep. Albert Watson, a South Carolina Republican, “has been replaced by nothing more than a wet noodle.”<sup>66</sup> And yet, the administration recognized that patient diplomacy was the course of prudence. “If you just strike out and bomb somebody,” explained Rusk, “well, that might make you feel a little better, but it doesn’t get your people back . . . as a matter of fact, it almost guarantees their death.”<sup>67</sup> Nor did the administration succumb to the temptation of thinking that the United States’s power was virtually

<sup>62</sup> Oral history of Adm. Thomas Moorer, vol. 3, p. 1414, Operational Archive Branch (Naval Historical Center, Washington D.C.).

<sup>63</sup> Oral history of Adm. U. S. Grant Sharp, vol. 2, p. 582–85, commander-in-chief, Pacific Fleet (Naval Historical Center). Bonesteel quoted in Daniel Bolger, *Scenes from an Unfinished War* (Fort Leavenworth, Kans.: Combat Studies Institute, 1991), 201.

<sup>64</sup> John Perry to Mitchell Lerner, Feb. 15 and Feb. 19, 2000, letters, in author’s possession; cable 2400008Z, military cables, vol. 1, box 263–64 NSF country file: Korea—*Pueblo* Incident, commander-in-chief, Pacific Fleet (LBJ Library); telegrams 230909Z and telegram 231021Z, box 257, NSF country file: Asia and the Pacific, commander-in-chief, Pacific Command (LBJ Library).

<sup>65</sup> *St. Louis Globe Democrat*, Jan. 26, 1968, p. 1.

<sup>66</sup> Watson quoted in *Congressional Record*, vol. 14, part 2, Feb. 1, 1968, p. 1901.

<sup>67</sup> Oral history of Dean Rusk, tape CCC CCC (Richard Russell Library, University of Georgia, Athens, Georgia).

unlimited; "One war at a time," explained Nicholas Katzenbach, "is enough."<sup>68</sup> In 1964, Johnson had reacted to an attack on an American ship by looking first to his domestic agenda; four years later, he turned first to the international arena itself.

Not only did LBJ ignore the demands of public opinion, but his response also demonstrated that the administration, contrary to subsequent claims, was never hindered by an obsessive focus on Vietnam. Every possible diplomatic avenue was pursued in the *Pueblo* crisis, including approaches to the United Nations, the World Court, and the International Red Cross. Subtle advances were made to the Soviet Union and China, with the Soviets, at least, providing assistance behind the scenes. When LBJ and his staff realized that the Military Armistice Commission offered the best chance to find a resolution, they followed it with great enthusiasm; twenty-eight difficult MAC meetings testify to their commitment to resolve the Korean situation. Nor did Vietnam prevent the administration from producing some imaginative solutions. One proposal, which briefly appeared to have won North Korean favor, had the United States agreeing to sign a North Korean letter of apology by writing at the bottom that the United States was merely "acknowledging receipt of the ship and crew."<sup>69</sup>

Even the final solution relied upon careful analysis of the North Korean position. The administration recognized, for example, that the North Korean economy, which was highly dependent on fishing, was struggling in the late 1960s. In order to compensate, Kim Il-Sung ordered two large factory ships from Rotterdam's Verlome United Shipyards in 1967, enabling DPRK fishermen to journey farther away from the coast and still freeze and process their catch. When the ships neared completion in late 1968, the Johnson administration jumped on them as a diplomatic weapon by implying (falsely) that they intended to capture the ships while in transit to North Korea.<sup>70</sup> At the same time,

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<sup>68</sup> Oral history of Nicholas Katzenbach, interview no. 3, p. 4 (LBJ Library).

<sup>69</sup> "Next steps on *Pueblo*," Winthrop Brown of the Korean Task Force to State Department, letter, 3/1/68 folder, box 2254, pol. 33-6, 1967-69 Central Files (National Archives II, College Park, Md.); Winthrop Brown, Korean Task Force to unnamed undersecretary of state, Mar. 7, 1968, letter, 3/6/68 folder, box 2254, pol. 33-6, 1967-69 Central Files; American Embassy Seoul to State Department, Aug. 29, 1968, telegram no. 2429, box 2259, pol. 33-6, 1967-69 Central Files.

<sup>70</sup> In September, for example, Rusk ordered the American ambassador to the Hague to inquire of Dutch officials when the ship would sail and when the title would officially pass into DPRK hands; "ultimate object, of course, would be that such an inquiry on our part get back to [the] North Korean government," wrote the Secretary of State. Throughout the winter, American officials made a conscious effort to be seen snooping around the ships and making inquiries of relevant authorities, and Rusk also ordered the American Embassy in London to contact the ships' insurer, Lloyds of London, to express interest in the transfer of their titles to North Korea; he also reminded the staff to request that Lloyds mention these inquiries to the DPRK government. See State Department to American Embassy Hague, Oct. 14, 1968, telegrams

they pressured the Japanese government to prohibit a private dealer from selling Kim a small refrigerated fishing vessel, even suggesting that the United States might capture the ship while underway if the sale were made.<sup>71</sup> While it is impossible to judge the effectiveness of these threats, they do demonstrate that while Vietnam was certainly on the administration's mind, it was not there at the expense of other issues. Walt Rostow recalled the president telling him in 1966, "I want you to generate a series of initiatives in every part of the world. Despite the burdens of Vietnam, I want to have a total foreign policy."<sup>72</sup> At least in Korea, it seems, Johnson managed to do so.

The *Pueblo* incident also suggests that on some levels, the administration had begun to transcend the Cold War mindset that critics claimed dominated its foreign policy. This is not true in all aspects of the crisis; LBJ and his staff, for example, never abandoned the idea that the assault was part of a larger communist conspiracy, usually tied to the Vietnam War.<sup>73</sup> And yet within this framework, the administration demonstrated a remarkable flexibility and creativity in its attempts to resolve the standoff. LBJ, for example, quickly overcame his instinct to point a finger of blame at Moscow, and recognized that the United States had a potential ally.<sup>74</sup> After all, the Soviets routinely operated similar electronic intelligence collection missions, and the *Pueblo* seizure established a precedent that put their own ships at risk. In May, in fact, the Brazilian Navy captured just such a Soviet vessel operating two miles from their shore. Within three weeks of the seizure, the Soviets apologized and the ship was released.<sup>75</sup> Accordingly,

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no. 10395 and 10393, box 2259, pol. 33-6, 1967-69 Central Files; State Department to American Embassy Hague, Sept. 11, 1968, telegram no. 236092, box 2259, pol. 33-6, 1967-69 Central Files; Ambassador Tyler, The Hague, to State Department, Sept. 11, 1968, telegram no. 7103, box 2259, pol. 33-6, 1967-69 Central Files; State Department to American Embassy London, Nov. 20, 1968, telegram no. 274630, box 2259, pol. 33-6, 1967-69 Central Files; and *New York Times*, Nov. 25, 1968, p. 23.

<sup>71</sup> State Department to American Embassy Tokyo, Oct. 26, 1968, telegram no. 262347, box 2259, pol. 33-6, 1967-69 Central Files; American Embassy Tokyo to State Department, Dec. 2, 1968, telegram no. 14359, box 2259, pol. 33-6, 1967-69 Central Files.

<sup>72</sup> Walt Rostow, oral history, interview 1, transcript, p. 7 (LBJ Library).

<sup>73</sup> For a thorough discussion of this point, see Mitchell Lerner, *The Pueblo Incident: A Spy Ship and the Failure of American Foreign Policy* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2002), 123-147.

<sup>74</sup> Although Soviet efforts to assist the situation were never spelled out directly, they are suggested in a number of places, including State Department to American Embassy Moscow, Feb. 24, 1968, telegram no. 120035, 2/21/68 folder, box 2255, pol. 33-6, 1967-69 Central Files, which describes a meeting between Soviet Ambassador Anatoly Dobrynin and Deputy Undersecretary for Political Affairs Charles Bohlen. See also American Embassy Rabat to State Department, Feb. 2, 1968, telegram no. 2695, 1/28/68 folder, box 2257, 1967-69 Central Files; State Department to American Embassy Brussels, Jan. 28, 1968, telegram, 2/2/68 folder, box 2256, 1967-69 Central Files; "Memo of Conversation between Secretary Rusk and Ambassador Charles Lucet," Feb. 2, 1968, 2/2/68 folder, box 2256, 1967-69 Central Files; US Mission-UN to State Department, Feb. 3, 1968, telegram no. 3645, 2/2/68 folder, box 2256, 1967-69 Central Files; and *New York Times*, Jan. 29, 1968, p. 3 and Nov. 26, 1968, p. 14.

<sup>75</sup> *New York Times*, June 12, 1968, p. 6.

the Johnson administration coordinated its diplomatic efforts with the Soviet Union, which pressured North Korea behind the scenes to accept numerous American offers.<sup>76</sup> The impact of Soviet assistance remains open to debate, and likely will not be resolved until foreign archives are opened more fully. Evidence suggests that the nature of the DPRK–USSR relationship in foreign policy at this time was such that the Soviets had very little influence; “North Korea,” recalled one member of the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party in the 1960s, “was an independent country . . . They would down a plane, capture a ship, join the non-aligned countries, and we would only learn of it from the newspapers.”<sup>77</sup> Still, the gesture reflected the willingness of the Johnson administration to move beyond a simplistic “us” versus “them” framework and accept the greater complexity of the world arena. If nothing else, it appears that the American efforts established the basis for cooperation in similar crises in the future; when the North Koreans shot down an American EC-121 spy plane in 1969, the Soviets condemned the attack and rushed to the area to help the United States search for survivors.<sup>78</sup>

LBJ also recognized that this crisis transcended “us” versus “them” stereotypes in the fact that his reliable South Korean ally presented a significant danger to American interests. Less than a week before the *Pueblo* seizure, a North Korean assassination team had narrowly missed killing Republic of Korea (ROK) President Park Chung Hee, sparking loud demands for immediate retaliation in South Korea. The *Pueblo* incident only exacerbated these calls, as many in the South were now convinced that the North was about to reenact the 1950 invasion. LBJ was thus left to walk a tightrope in which he had to reassure South Korea that the United States would protect them from attack, all the while relying on diplomacy to resolve the DPRK aggression. It was a potentially explosive situation. On January 31, the Korean People’s Anti-Communist League sponsored a rally in Seoul; despite twenty-degree weather, 100,000 people showed up to march three miles and burn a ten-foot straw effigy of Kim Il-Sung.<sup>79</sup> On February 7, American soldiers fired warning shots to turn back demonstrators marching near Panmunjom, and the next day more than a thousand ROK high school students protested in front of

<sup>76</sup> On U.S.–U.S.S.R. contacts during the crisis, see, for example, State Department to American Embassy Moscow, May 29, 1968, telegram no. 173266, box 2259, pol. 33-6, 1967–69 Central Files; American Embassy Moscow to State Department, Feb. 25, 1968, telegram no. 2913, 2/25/68 folder, box 2254; American Embassy Moscow to State Department, Mar. 26, 1968, telegram no. 3270, box 2259; State Department to American Embassy Moscow, Feb. 24, 1968, telegram no. 120035, 2/21/68 folder, box 2255, all in pol. 33-6, 1967–69 Central Files.

<sup>77</sup> Vadim Tkachenko quoted in Donald Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas: A Contemporary History* (New York: Perseus, 1997), 154.

<sup>78</sup> “Inquiry into the USS *Pueblo* and EC-121 Plane Incidents,” 890.

<sup>79</sup> *New York Times*, Feb. 1, 1968, p. 15.

U.S. Information Service Centers at Taegu and Kwangju, demanding, "Away with boot-licking conferences."<sup>80</sup> The South Korean government applied pressure as well. The day after the seizure, Park warned Ambassador Porter that if the North continued its aggression, a military response was "inevitable," and suggested a joint U.S.–South Korean assault that would first bomb DPRK air fields and then attack North Korean ships off the east coast. Two days later he ordered the ROK First Army into full combat status.<sup>81</sup> The following week he insisted that "the communists should be taught a lesson that any aggressive action cannot escape due punitive action."<sup>82</sup> Other officials followed his lead. In February, the ROK National Assembly passed a resolution expressing "national indignation" at Johnson's decision to seek a solution through MAC talks, and Prime Minister Chung-Il Kwon called for teaching the communists a lesson "without delay."<sup>83</sup>

But the administration recognized the complicated circumstance almost immediately. On January 29, the hastily appointed Pueblo Advisory Committee concluded that the American objectives could not merely be to get the men released, but to do so while restraining the bellicose ROK in such a way as to not damage future relations.<sup>84</sup> Accordingly, the administration took extraordinary measures to placate the ROK government. Immediately, LBJ appealed to Park's vanity, issuing flattering public statements and overt promises to remain committed to the ROK. "I have great respect for the President of South Korea and his judgments," he declared at a press conference shortly after the seizure. "They are being received, considered, and acted upon every day."<sup>85</sup> The following week, Johnson sent Park a personal letter praising his "courageous

<sup>80</sup> Shots in *New York Times*, Feb. 8, 1968, and "Notes of State Department press briefing," part 11, day by day documents, volume 6, box 29 and 30, *Pueblo Crisis*, 1968, NSC Histories (LBJ Library). See also "Chronology of Diplomatic Activity in the *Pueblo Crisis*," p. 322, pol. 33-6, 1967-69 Central Files.

<sup>81</sup> American Embassy Seoul to State Department, Jan. 24, 1968, telegram no. 8515, 1/1/68 file, box 2258, pol. 33-6, 1967-69 Central Files; Ambassador Porter to White House, Jan. 24, 1968, cable, document no. 14a, box 255, NSF country file: Asia and the Pacific, Korea (LBJ Library); *New York Times*, Jan. 27, 1968, p. 9.

<sup>82</sup> American Embassy Seoul to State Department, Feb. 5, 1968, telegram no. 3976, 2/4/68 folder, box 2256, pol. 33-6, 1967-69 Central Files. Speech in LBJL, NSC Histories, *Pueblo Crisis*, 1968, box 34-35, vol. 16, telegrams from Seoul, tabs 1-5; and telegram no. 3894 from American Embassy Seoul to State Department, February 1968.

<sup>83</sup> Foreign Broadcast Information Service report, Feb. 6, 1968, part 10, day by day documents, vol. 6, box 29 and 30, *Pueblo Crisis*, 1968, NSC Histories, National Assembly (LBJ Library); Kwon in *Chronology of Diplomatic Activity in the Pueblo Crisis*, p. 204; American Embassy Seoul to State Department, Feb. 1, 1968, telegram no. 3895, tabs 1-5, telegrams from Seoul, volume 16, box 34-35, *Pueblo Crisis*, 1968, NSC Histories (LBJ Library); and *Washington Post*, Feb. 7, 1968, p. 2.

<sup>84</sup> Report on meeting of advisory group, Jan. 29, 1968, president's file for Korea and Vietnam, box 10, Files of Walt Rostow, NSF (LBJ Library).

<sup>85</sup> Press conference no. 118, Feb. 3, 1968, transcript, tabs A-C, public statements, vol. 13, box 31-33, *Pueblo Crisis*, 1968, NSC Histories (LBJ Library).



leadership” and faithfulness as a “trusted friend and ally.”<sup>86</sup> The sentiments had some impact. Park, wrote Ambassador Porter, was “clearly moved . . . I have not seen him affected in this way before . . . One may occasionally make him smile and even laugh but it is a very rare thing to see his emotions stirred as they were by the president’s message.”<sup>87</sup>

More than words would be necessary, however, and so LBJ also acted on a practical level. In July, LBJ got Congress to add \$100 million in military supplies to South Korea’s already approved aid package for 1968, which totaled more than \$220 million.<sup>88</sup> Johnson also arranged an additional \$32 million counter-infiltration package that included patrol boats, surveillance planes, electronic detection systems, and chemical defoliants, and was funded by a Military Assistance Program allocation intended only for Vietnam-related purchases.<sup>89</sup> LBJ also promised to increase ROK access to business opportunities in Vietnam. In some cases, he even forced Agency for International Development (AID) administrators to purchase substandard ROK products for use in Vietnam. Rutherford Poats, assistant administrator for AID’s Far East branch, recalled the president using “rather colorful language” with AID personnel, demanding they keep Park happy until he agreed to send additional troops. Accordingly, Poats, who had been about to suspend purchases of ROK-produced galvanized steel, continued to buy it despite the fact that he considered it, “not up to snuff.”<sup>90</sup>

Although the deal appeared to be one-sided, it actually benefited both nations. Park had the ability to wreak havoc with American foreign policy; one military strike over the 38th Parallel could have sparked a war with disastrous ramifications for the United States. Even just a few properly timed public comments might have ruined, or at least delayed, the MAC talks. By providing Park with economic aid, military assistance, and public adulation, Johnson kept open his best possibility for retrieving the men

<sup>86</sup> Johnson to Park, Feb. 4, 1968, telegram no. 109821, 2/4/68 folder, box 2256, pol. 33-6, 1967-69 Central Files.

<sup>87</sup> American Embassy Seoul to State Department, Feb. 4, 1968, telegram no. 3935, 2/4/68 folder, box 2256, pol. 33-6, 1967-69 Central Files.

<sup>88</sup> Vance report, “Memorandum for the President,” Feb. 20, 1968, Files of Walt Rostow, box 10, NSF (LBJ Library); Feb. 8, 1968 message to Congress, *Pueblo Crisis*, 1968, box 29 and 30, volume 6, day by day documents, part 11, NSC History, NSF (LBJ Library); and *Chicago Sun-Times*, Feb. 9, 1968, p. 3.

<sup>89</sup> “Korea-Additional US Commitments,” 6:57 P.M., Mar. 11, 1968, Memo—attachment A, box 2, Tom Johnson’s Notes of Meetings (LBJ Library); “Foreign Ministers Choi’s request to Vance . . . for further US Commitments,” tab 18, briefing book, meeting with President Park folder, box 21, international meetings and travel file, NSF (LBJ Library); Bundy to Johnson, “Additional Korean Forces in Vietnam,” Apr. 16, 1968, memo, allies: troop commitments, Vietnam, 5D (3), 1967-69, box 91, NSF country file, Vietnam (LBJ Library); CINCPAC Command History, 1968, vol. 2, p. 209-216 and vol. 4, p. 222 (Naval Historical Center, Washington, D.C.).

<sup>90</sup> Oral history of Rutherford Poats, p. 17-19 (LBJ Library).

while reducing the chances of another Korean War. Nor did he yield to Park's demands on crucial issues. The State Department, for example, refused to allow ROK representatives to attend the closed MAC sessions, nor would they send them transcripts of the conversations, despite the fact that they were sent to Japan and the Soviet Union.<sup>91</sup> This pattern of giving on the smaller issues in order to win the larger ones marked U.S.-ROK relations throughout the crisis. Johnson was willing to sacrifice money, equipment, and time to placate his South Korean ally, but would not allow them to hinder negotiations for the prisoners, impede his efforts in Vietnam, or drag America into another Korean war. For these larger goals, millions of dollars in equipment seemed a small price to pay.

Johnson also recognized that the crisis offered an opportunity to counter the growing anti-American sentiment internationally, a product largely of America's involvement in Vietnam. His administration missed few chances to remind the world that the United States had chosen to seek peaceful solutions. It proved to be a successful strategy. LBJ not only got the men home without sparking another Korean war and without damaging the American position in Asia, but he did so in such a manner that won ringing praise from the majority of the world. The *Liberal Guardian* (England) called it "another welcome relaxation of tension between the U.S. and the Communist world," and the *Berita Harian* (Kuala Lumpur) praised LBJ for his "restraint in facing pressure from Pyongyang. . . . It has been proven once again that diplomacy is still not bankrupt, and that restraint in the face of a crisis such as this can benefit mankind." Nor did the nation lose any standing internationally because of its admission of guilt, as the apology was almost universally recognized for the farce that it was. "Only a malicious observer could maintain that the American confession had any truth," wrote the *Berliner Morgenpost*. "The whole odious matter can be reduced to a simple conclusion: the North Koreans scored a propaganda success for home consumption."<sup>92</sup> The irony is clear; in 1964, the administration believed that it could not embark on a peaceful course in Vietnam in no small part because it would hurt America's standing in the eyes of its allies.<sup>93</sup> Four years later, the administration had learned that choosing peace would do just the opposite.

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<sup>91</sup> Porter to State Department, Feb. 23, 1968, telegrams no. 4453 and no. 4463, 2/21/68 folder, box 2255; American Embassy Seoul to State Department, Feb. 26, 1968, telegram no. 4501, 2/25/68 folder, box 2254; State Department to American Embassy Seoul, Feb. 6, 1968, telegram no. 110353, 2/6/68 folder, box 2256, pol. 33-6, 1967-69 Central Files.

<sup>92</sup> Fred Panzer, "Worldwide Treatment of Current Issues," December 23, and December 27 reports, box 224, White House Aide Files (LBJ Library).

<sup>93</sup> See, for example, Johnson to Richard Russell, 10:55 P.M., May 27, 1964, telephone conversation, when, in discussing withdrawal, he asks "Wouldn't that pretty well fix us in the eyes of the

In the end, then, LBJ resolved the *Pueblo* incident through a patient, creative, and well thought out approach that suggests that he had grown as a foreign policy leader. Other issues late in the administration hinted at the same thing. In the early years of Johnson's administration, for example, arms limitation talks between the superpowers accomplished little. In the latter years, however, LBJ not only demonstrated a renewed commitment to the process, but got personally involved in its implementation. Adrian Fisher, the deputy director of the U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, recalled that while engaged in talks at Geneva, "He [Johnson] was giving this his personal attention. I cannot tell you the number of times—I didn't see him personally very many times myself, but I had lots of calls, particularly from Walt Rostow . . . which indicated the President was personally involved."<sup>94</sup> On July 1, 1968, more than fifty nations signed the nuclear nonproliferation agreement; "I am convinced," recalled the chairman of the U.S. Atomic Energy Commission, "that it could not have happened had President Johnson not become personally involved."<sup>95</sup> In October, a conference on Moscow to discuss larger strategic limitations appeared set until it collapsed in the wake of the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia. Still, LBJ's patient efforts had laid the groundwork for the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks agreements in 1972; "Although it fell to Richard Nixon . . . to sign the first SALT agreement," wrote John Prados, "Johnson merits much more of the credit than he has been accorded."<sup>96</sup> Such "bridge-building" symbolized the president's larger approach to the Soviet Union, as he worked quietly to stabilize relations without drama or fanfare. The benefits may not have been tangible on an immediate level, but they would be felt in subsequent years. Soviet Ambassador Anatoly Dobrynin recalled that:

A more detailed comparison between the practical policies of Kennedy and Johnson shows an interesting contrast to the conventional wisdom: in Johnson's time we had no serious conflicts in Soviet-American relations . . . It was with the Johnson administration that we reached agreement on the important treaty on nonproliferation of nuclear weapons and their ban in outer space, that we began talks on limiting antiballistic defenses and approached the SALT talks, and that attempts were made to broaden U.S. trade with East European countries.

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world and make us look mighty bad?" See document no. 52, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964-68* vol. 27, Department of State, Office of the Historian, Mainland Southeast Asia; Regional Affairs, Washington, D.C.

<sup>94</sup> Oral history of Adrian Fisher, vol. II (LBJ Library).

<sup>95</sup> Seaborg, *Stemming the Tide*, 197.

<sup>96</sup> John Prados, "Prague Spring and SALT," in Brands (ed.), *The Foreign Policies of Lyndon Johnson*, 20.

“Although there is no way of knowing for certain,” Dobrynin concluded, “had it not been for the Vietnam War, détente in Soviet–American relations could have come as early as Johnson’s time, even before Nixon came to the White House.”<sup>97</sup>

Other examples exist. In 1966, Charles de Gaulle ordered American NATO troops out of France. LBJ rejected the advice of Dean Rusk and Maxwell Taylor to delay the withdrawal, and ignored the howls of protests by Americans at the affront, as he removed the troops with both speed and courtesy. By doing so, Johnson may have lost a few points in domestic standing, but he avoided a costly rift in the NATO alliance. The president, Rostow recalled, “took the burden just as it were, tipped his hat, but made sure the rest of the club stayed together.”<sup>98</sup> Such events were typical of LBJ’s largely successful policies toward Europe; “The Johnson record on European questions,” concluded Thomas Schwartz, “is an impressive one.”<sup>99</sup> By the end of his tenure, LBJ also demonstrated his abilities in the realm of foreign economic policy, encouraging tariff reductions that led to major agreements of the Group of Ten in 1967, and to the creation of Special Drawing Rights on the International Monetary Fund. The United States no longer had sufficient economic strength to simply dictate policy to the rest of the world, but, as economic historian John Odell has argued, although the Johnson administration was forced to yield on some minor issues, European nations “nevertheless accepted the basic American initiative. . . . The United States continued to enjoy a superpower’s capabilities for influence when Washington chose to test them in compromise bargaining.”<sup>100</sup>

Of course, there are other factors that need to be considered to account fully for this apparent evolution by 1968, especially as they relate to the *Pueblo* and the Tonkin attacks. By 1968, the demands of Vietnam had clearly limited the ability to respond militarily even if LBJ had wanted to, although evidence suggests that he never gave that option much consideration. Still, one can not entirely separate the decision to deny General Westmoreland the 206,000 troops he requested in February and his decision to deny the military a retaliatory strike in Korea at approximately the same time. The political dynamics also mattered; by 1968 LBJ was not as concerned with his domestic legislation,

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<sup>97</sup> Anatoly Dobrynin, *In Confidence: Moscow’s Ambassador to Six Cold War Presidents* (New York: Random House, 1995), 188–189.

<sup>98</sup> Walt Rostow, oral history, interview I, transcript, p. 28 (LBJ Library).

<sup>99</sup> Thomas Schwartz, “Lyndon Johnson and Europe,” in Brands (ed.), *The Foreign Policies of Lyndon Johnson*, 53.

<sup>100</sup> Odell, *U.S. International Monetary Policy*, 172–173.

and his announcement in March that he was withdrawing from the presidential race removed that from the equation as well. There were also a myriad of specific differences between Korea and Vietnam that affected these two crises, not the least of which was the presence of a stable pro-American government in the former. And yet, a close look at these two naval crises suggests that not only had circumstances changed, but the man in the White House had as well. On March 31, 1968, LBJ had announced to the world that he would not accept renomination, and in doing so lamented the lessons of Vietnam. "During the past 4½ years," he declared, "it has been my fate and my responsibility to be Commander in Chief. I have lived—daily and nightly—with the cost of this war. I know the pain that it has inflicted. I know, perhaps better than anyone, the misgivings that it has aroused."<sup>101</sup> Perhaps Johnson had done himself a disservice; not only did he "know" the consequences of Vietnam, but he seemed to have learned lessons from them as well.

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<sup>101</sup> "The President's Address to the Nation . . ." Mar. 31, 1968, *Public Papers of the President, 1968-69*, I, 468.