

11. Coral Bell and the Conventions of Crisis Management

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There aren't many deep works of international relations theory in the short bibliography at the end of Coral Bell's 1972 book *The Conventions of Crisis*.¹ Perhaps the most theoretically demanding are Oran Young's two books on the role of third parties and bargaining in crises. There is one book on strategic theory, Herman Kahn's masterfully unusual *On Escalation* as well as William Kaufman's study of *The McNamara Strategy*. Of the remaining entries several consist of approachable works on the evolution of international politics, including EH Carr's famous work on *The Twenty Years Crisis*, Walter Lippmann's short early study of *The Cold War* and AJP Taylor's popular history of the *Origins of the Second World War*. Perhaps most significantly of all there are three memoirs from leading American foreign policy makers: the memoirs of Dean Acheson and George Kennan and also Robert Kennedy's recollection of the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis.

The reader might think that the contents of Bell's bibliography were simply a consequence of timing. Still to come, for example, were the big debates between the neo-realists and neo-liberals which would trap generations of students in a powerful but often lifeless intellectual universe. But I don't think that timing explains it at all. Bell's work belonged to that set of writing which concerned itself with the ideas that could be gleaned from the practice of international diplomacy. That made her more of a commentator than a theorist, but an exceptionally adroit commentator at that.

This initial judgment relies partly on personal experience. I don't actually have strong memories at all of the first time I heard Coral Bell speak. I wish I did, because the subject she was asked to lecture on as part of the core strategic studies course I was taking at The Australian National University (ANU) in 1988 was none other than 'Crisis Diplomacy'. But I do remember in that same year repeated instances of spotting the author of *The Conventions of Crisis* very much at home in the Department of International Relations Reading Room which in those days received copies of what I think was Bell's main source of daily inspiration. This was not *International Organization* or *International Security*, and certainly not the often brutally quantitative *International Studies Quarterly*

¹ See Coral Bell, *The Conventions of Crisis: A Study in Diplomatic Management*, Oxford University Press for the Royal Institute of International Affairs, London and New York, 1971, p. 125.

all of which were held in bound volumes. It was not even the more approachable British journal *International Affairs*. It was instead a daily publication, *The International Herald Tribune*, a newspaper kept on racks in that room in the HC Coombs Building and which Bell digested each morning along with a mug of tea and an obligatory biscuit.

This *International Herald Tribune* habit (stronger perhaps than most other addictions known to modern science and even to The Australian National University) was purposeful. Bell was a close student of the interactions between the major powers of the day which in those closing years of the 1980s dealt with the last phases of the Cold War. Reading the latest American pronouncements on foreign policy, watching the reports of the meetings between Soviet and American leaders, and seeing how the increasingly less significant European leaders and the increasingly important Asian leaders were responding, revealed important ingredients for Bell's assessments. This became especially interesting when the occasional crisis would still occur in these relations.

Rather than imposing theoretical straitjackets onto international politics, Coral Bell's approach was to let the record of the practice of modern international relations gently indicate patterns of behaviour which illustrated the workings of the system of sovereign states: 'the results of a piece of crisis management', she argues, 'can only be observed in history, not established by theory. That does not mean that no theory is possible: only that theory is the stepchild of the activity, rather than its parent'.² The footnote to this passage underlines Bell's aversion to formal modelling, a characteristic noticeable among nearly all the contributors to the discussions of the British Committee on the Theory of International Politics, of which she was already a member: 'techniques like game theory, content analysis, operational research, systems analysis, and simulation theory already have been in use for long enough to have demonstrated their limitations as well as their occasional (and marginal) usefulness'.³

That aversion to formality, a common characteristic among those scholars who were influenced by Martin Wight, was also evident in Bell's assessment of the foundations of crisis management. 'I shall be preoccupied with conventions rather than rules, laws, theories, or institutions' she advises her readers, 'because these more ambitious concepts have not seemed to show much advantage in the situations I have examined.' And, in a blow for the true believers in global governance via organisational endeavour, she continues this passage with the judgement that 'Formal institutions like the UN have only been marginally and occasionally useful; many of the more successful modes of management have been strikingly non-legal, even anti-legal in quality; moral considerations

2 *ibid.*, p. 6.

3 *ibid.*, p. 6, n4.

have been no more decisive than legal ones, theory has been less apparent than intuition.’ This helps to explain the rather selective bibliography alluded to above. But what then was crisis management to rely on: what approaches could possibly be left to utilise? The end of this same paragraph in the second page of the book reveals Bell’s answer: ‘What has emerged is the growth of conventions—I use this term in the normal sense of a practice based on tacit expectation as to what is “understood behaviour”, of no special moral or legal sanctity, in a particular society’.⁴

The idea of a convention or pattern of behaviour which if shared could constitute a tacit (rather than an explicit or formal) agreement is not uncommonly found in the work of another British Committee member, Hedley Bull. But it is not his line: the inspiration comes from Thomas Schelling, a significant contributor to the argument that order in modern international politics depended upon informal agreements much more often than formal government. In the British end of this discussion (for Schelling was an American and, unlike Bell’s favourite trans-Atlantic scholars, someone who used game theory to explain his arguments), the main contribution would come five years later with Bull’s *The Anarchical Society*.⁵ In that text, Bull argues that there is a series of institutions which provide a semblance of order for the international society of sovereign states. As we have already seen, Bell argues that her approach favours conventions over institutions, but it is not quite clear that these are mutually exclusive options.

Of the five such institutions posited by Hedley Bull, only one, international law, can be excluded from our analysis and unless I am mistaken, makes little appearance in Bell’s work as a whole. But the other four all play a part, both in *Conventions* as a book and in Bell’s work more generally. The first is diplomacy. Here rather than grab this institution holus bolus, Bell indicates she has identified a particular gap that needs to be filled by the present study: ‘Undoubtedly crisis management should be considered just a special skill within the general field of diplomacy. ... Diplomatic history recounts many such crises, but does not generalize about crisis as such’.⁶ And yet the remainder of the volume makes so many references to the political interactions between the major players in international affairs, as does so much of Bell’s work that it is undeniable that diplomacy is at the forefront.

But as with the rest of her work, Bell is not just interested in diplomacy between any old set of countries. Her focus, she announces, will be squarely on the interactions between the ‘dominant powers’ which she defines as the ‘the powers that move and shake the world’ of which at present there were ‘only

4 *ibid.*, p. 2.

5 Hedley Bull, *The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics*, Macmillan, Basingstoke, 1977.

6 Bell, *The Conventions of Crisis*, p. 4.

three—America, Russia and China.’ Bell excludes Japan from this list; it belongs in her view to the wider grouping of great powers, a ‘traditional term’ which she chooses not to use.⁷ But that she then suggests that there were seven such ‘dominant powers’ in the interwar years; ‘Germany, Britain, France, America, Russia, Japan, and Italy’ indicates that she is indeed talking about the great powers, which comprise another one of Bull’s five institutions for international order.

As the movers and shakers, it is the dominant powers which have the unique ability to turn local crises into central ones, a facility whose importance grows because of a relatively new ingredient in their relations: the arrival of nuclear weapons. Hence Bell’s argument that she will be ‘preoccupied with crises affecting the powers of the central nuclear balance, because the policy choices of their decision-makers have consequences of such gravity.’⁸ That explains the omission of ‘great power’ Japan, whose lack of nuclear weapons Hedley Bull sometimes argued denied it a place in even that category. And it offers a connection to the two other institutions that feature in Bull’s anarchical international society. One, mentioned discreetly in this passage is the balance of power, which in the Cold War often became synonymous with the nuclear balance. Bell suggests to her readers that she has already dealt with the question in her earlier book, *Negotiation from Strength*, one of many studies she says had been devoted to the question of ‘the stabilization of the central balance of power’.⁹ But this feature of contemporary international relations still acts as the background issue for almost all that is to come in *Conventions*.

Why that should be the case is revealed by the last of Hedley Bull’s institutions which is war. It may seem nonsensical that in an age of nuclear armaments, war could be part of the management of any crisis, for surely it would mean the end of everything. But Coral Bell for one did not believe that as a genus, war had been made extinct in the nuclear age: ‘War as an institution flourishes as robustly as ever it did: there have been about eighty sets of armed encounters of an identifiable sort in what is usually called the post-war period’.¹⁰ Slightly earlier she notes her agreement with the argument that ‘The propensity to conflict must be accepted as a continuing fact of human life, even though, among nations, the technical means for pursuing conflicts are now so monstrously efficient as to threaten the end of human life itself.’¹¹ And this dual fact—the ubiquity of war and the hazards of its most potent form—explained the point and purpose of crisis management. This was not an art designed to remove crises, let alone war in totality. Because that might be called crisis elimination. It was to manage

7 *ibid.*, p. 7.

8 *ibid.*, p. 7.

9 *ibid.*, p. 1.

10 *ibid.*, p. 5.

11 *ibid.*, p. 6.

the situation in such a way that local brushfires did not, through the careless involvement of the dominant powers, become all-out infernos. In that sense crisis management was akin to the arms control logic that both Schelling and Bull had outlined a decade before whose job was to effect restraint in conflict rather than its avoidance.¹² As Bell herself argued, 'A sense of the permanence of conflict, and the probability of crisis, between nations is the only adequate incentive to serious work on managing crises and limiting the destructiveness of the armed hostilities they make evoke'.¹³

Here Bell was contributing to a tradition of thinking that the international system did not suddenly grind to a halt as soon as force was used: diplomacy did not stop as soon as the firing started, but could continue into it. However, now that nuclear weapons were on the scene, the appearance of catastrophic war would be a sign that the management of this state system had failed. To study the management of crises was therefore to study the crisis points, decision points or turning points (terms Bell uses) between the conflict situations which were only to be expected and the catastrophes which had to be avoided. And it was a particular turning point, which fortunately had gone the right way, that was responsible for the rise of the art of crisis management: the Cuban Missile Crisis. The conscious effort to maintain a stable balance (as opposed to the more or less accidental turn of events beforehand—also observed by Bull) had been more noticeable since 1962, and thus *The Conventions of Crisis* is its record over the first decade of practice.

At the risk of artificially reducing her work to a single focus, it might therefore be said that Coral Bell's main interest was the way that the practice of a special form of diplomacy manages the central balance between the great powers so as to preclude the catastrophic war that would end the inevitably conflict-ridden system of states. If there is any doubt that Bell's focus here is the avoidance of Armageddon and not the promotion of universal peace, that uncertainty goes away immediately when in the first paragraph of *The Conventions of Crisis* Coral Bell asks:

[H]ow is it that peace has been preserved since 1945? What are the modes of behaviour which have prevented the endemic crises of the postwar period from turning into central wars? (I speak of central war because limited and peripheral wars have been a fairly constant feature of the time).¹⁴

12 The author considers these in *Thomas Schelling and the Nuclear Age: Strategy as Social Science*, Frank Cass, London, 2004 and *Hedley Bull and the Accommodation of Power*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, 2012.

13 Bell, *The Conventions of Crisis*, p. 6.

14 *ibid.*, p. 1.

Crisis Management not Problem Solving

Coral Bell had an unsettling habit of proffering rather innocuous and roundabout examples of the very serious practices of international relations that she was writing about. She does this by giving as an example of a convention, 'the taboo on eating peas from one's knife.'¹⁵ And she also invents some rather genteel metaphors—the crisis slide when multiple tensions produce a cumulative effect, as in the years immediately preceding the First and Second World Wars, and alternatively the placement of a second crisis on the 'backburner' while the first was being dealt with, an approach which she argues was applied to the Laos crisis of the early 1960s when there was already a major crisis occurring in nearby Vietnam.¹⁶ I'm not sure whether these metaphors did more to obscure or illustrate the deadly serious points Bell was making. But the second of them is a reflection of the philosophy that she took to her subject while the first is an indication of her objective.

There was absolutely nothing wrong in Bell's view with the backburner strategy. In fact there was a lot to be said for it. Sometimes the attempt to address a crisis head-on could be counterproductive, and that risk was multiplied if the intent was to resolve it. When the cause of a crisis is especially intractable, and here Bell uses the ongoing example of the contest between Greece and Turkey for Cyprus, any hope of a real solution only rests with fools. In such conflicts: 'No diplomatic formula is going to make them disappear: they have to be lived with'.¹⁷ In that knowledge, the dominant powers needed to be extremely cautious about getting involved, and needed to resist the temptation of dreaming that they could be successful mediators. Bell notes that in this particular case, a series of leading American leaders had tried, including Dean Acheson and Cyrus Vance, but she offers the following warning: 'If people assume that these mediators have failed, it is because they do not distinguish between crisis management and conflict resolution. They expect crisis management to "solve" the Cyprus situation in some magical fashion'.¹⁸

Crisis management was not about solving the problem at the root of the crisis, it was about ensuring that the crisis did not get worse—or amalgamate with other crises into the crisis slide that had preceded catastrophic conflict twice already in the twentieth century. A crisis manager was a person who helped their country survive the massive test that a crisis could pose to a relationship—this could be a relationship between opposing dominant powers where the risk was a passage from peace into war, or it could be an 'intramural' relationship within

15 *ibid.*, p. 2.

16 *ibid.*, pp. 19, 90.

17 *ibid.*, p. 93.

18 *ibid.*, p. 93.

an alliance where the risk was an alliance rupture. 'To my mind', writes Bell early on in the book, 'the essence of a true crisis in any given relationship is that the conflicts within it rise to a level which threatens to transform the nature of the relationship'.¹⁹

This meant that Bell was no enemy of the status quo in international politics, so long as that status quo was not full of dominant powers who sought to revolutionise the basis of their relations with one another. She had concerns that of her three dominant powers China, which had not properly escaped the Cultural Revolution, but which had an earlier history of more cautious behaviour, remained a revisionist actor on the international scene. But as she was writing her book in between Henry Kissinger's visit to China and the subsequent trip to see Mao that President Nixon would lead, Bell thought that 'the process of establishment of tacit understandings, already far advanced between America and Russia, appeared to be developing surprisingly fast between America and China'.²⁰ Moreover even if China was to misbehave, it would be outweighed by the preponderance of power which 'for a long time to come is likely to rest with the tacit understanding between the USA and the Soviet Union. And this I regard as conducive to peace'.²¹

In fact Bell went as far to suggest that this preponderance was reminiscent of the European Concert²² which, in siding with the generous view (and in omitting the mid-nineteenth century wars in Crimea and western Europe) she saw as responsible for keeping the peace for the best part of the century. The European Concert thus becomes under Bell's treatment a long-lasting crisis management arrangement. This point of comparison confirms her preference for the status quo and for the notion that order rests with the interactions of an elite group of great powers. In those tea and biscuit sessions in the Coombs Building with the *International Herald Tribune*, I suspect she was considering whether the leaders of the day were measuring up to the standards of Metternich and Castlereagh.

But unlike their European predecessors (whose record was trampled in the first half of the twentieth century), Bell thought that the crisis managers of the dominant powers in the post-war era had some inbuilt advantages. Hedley Bull, who also harked back at times to the record of the Concert, would have called these accidents of history. One was the arrival of nuclear weapons and the mutual deterrence that in significant numbers they provided for. Almost undoubtedly borrowing an idea from Thomas Schelling (to whom she refers a little later in the book), Bell argues that the relationship between the Soviet Union and the United States can be characterised as a massive 'exchange of

19 *ibid.*, p. 9.

20 *ibid.*, p. 122.

21 *ibid.*, p. 68.

22 *ibid.*, p. 69.

hostages'.²³ This mutual vulnerability provided a constant reminder of the need to show restraint in times of crisis. That restraint in turn was made more plausible by another child of modern military technology: the knowledge of one another's military capabilities that advanced systems of surveillance provided. This made it less likely for crisis slides to be encouraged by either an exaggeration or underestimation of the capabilities held by a potential combatant. Just as Britain's underestimation of Soviet capabilities before the Second World War had reduced London's view of the value that an alliance with Moscow might bring, in Bell's view its exaggeration of German capabilities had also led to the crisis slide towards the events of 1939.²⁴ That was now less likely.

But crisis management was a conscious process. It did not occur accidentally thanks to new technology and to what others had called the balance of terror. Perhaps the biggest advantage the major participants in the Cold War had over their First and Second World War equivalents was their early admission that their relationship was in fact an adversarial one. Like members of the local branch of the Alcoholics Anonymous, their acceptance of the problem was the foundation for hope that things could improve. For Bell this admission had come as early as 1946, and it was certainly there in the Truman Doctrine of the following year.²⁵ With that early recognition comes hope that in the early stages of their Cold War relationship the Russians and Americans were aware of the things that divided them.

But that itself gave no guarantee that they would work together in what Bell calls an 'adverse partnership', a term she borrows from the American specialist on Soviet affairs Marshall Shulman. That partnership would not reflect the notion that the dominant powers enjoyed a relationship that was 'particularly cordial, trusting, or friendly'. Instead, in words that again evoke Schelling (and his main interpreter for British audiences Hedley Bull), Bell depicts the partnership as consisting of a 'consciousness between the dominant powers, that they have solid common interests as well as sharp conflicting interests'.²⁶ And it had taken the crisis of all Cold War crises, the one in Cuba, to get the two main dominant powers fully aware of their need to manage the relationship they had with one another.

23 *ibid.*, p. 52.

24 *ibid.*, pp. 56–57.

25 *ibid.*, pp. 21–24.

26 *ibid.*, p. 50.

Signalling not Fighting?

How then would the dominant powers conduct that crisis management? What would be their weapons of choice? That second question is asked as a teaser, because the costs of direct war between the dominant powers were so great that it might seem that armed forces had become redundant. Indeed Bell herself offers an opinion in the later stages of the book that crisis may eventually take the place of war as a mechanism for change. Indeed a crisis, if 'properly managed ... may ultimately enable states to write their peace treaties without first fighting the war'.²⁷ That makes crisis management the friend of the status quo in terms of the absence of a breakdown in peace. It also makes it a colleague of the presence of peaceful change.

But it does not mean that questions of force have been removed from the picture. Bell's nominee for the main mechanism for crisis management is the signal, and many of these signals have as their subject the role of armed force in the adversarial partnership. Again the arguments of Schelling seems to be rather to the front of Bell's mind: 'the basic instrument of crisis management', she advises her readers, 'is what I shall call the signal.' (She was not alone in doing that). And 'By signal I mean a threat or offer communicated to the other party or parties to the crisis'.²⁸ In the threat side of that signalling register, Bell admits later on (and now with citations of Schelling's opinions) that crisis management relies heavily on coercion.²⁹ Her defence that especially in an era of nuclear weapons, coercion may be 'the least of a number of evils'³⁰ confirms that her eye is on the practicable and not the perfectable.

What sort of coercion then does Bell rely on? Not for her are economic sanctions of which she has a low opinion.³¹ She sticks to her guns: 'Some of the sharpest and most effective [signals] are movements of military resources of various sorts'.³² Even the limited use of force can act as a potent form of communication: 'Border hostilities themselves are a kind of signal'.³³ This is Schelling's diplomacy of violence,³⁴ delivered in a more historically and politically aware fashion. Similar too is Bell's argument that the adverse partnership between the Soviet Union and United States was based in part on a 'common strategic ideology' which included a 'tacit consensus' on how particular weapons systems should

27 *ibid.*, p. 116.

28 *ibid.*, p. 73.

29 *ibid.*, pp. 100–101.

30 *ibid.*, p. 100.

31 *ibid.*, p. 77.

32 *ibid.*, p. 73.

33 *ibid.*, p. 74.

34 See Thomas C. Schelling, *Arms and Influence*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1966.

be understood and a 'tacit understanding' of how they might be employed.³⁵ Bell also speaks of a stabilising commonality in thinking brought on by an exchange of ideas across the Iron Curtain: 'if you ask who is the Soviet version of Schelling or Kahn or Wohlstetter, the answer is probably Schelling or Kahn or Wohlstetter, even though the doctrine may be mediated through Sokolovsky or Talensky or Rotmistrov.'³⁶

This is just the sort of statement that would cause the analysts of Soviet strategic culture, who would soon be publishing their research,³⁷ to have kittens. In portraying this extent of symmetry in Soviet–American strategic behaviour Bell may have been getting beyond what the evidence would support, although she was by no means alone in doing so. What is striking is that she holds to these views of strategic communication and signalling in the early 1970s by which time America's experience in Vietnam had dealt this style of reasoning a blow from which it would never completely recover. This does not mean that signalling has become obsolete as a strategic practice: it is all too evident (and not necessarily in the service of a partnership) in China–US interactions in Asia today. But after Vietnam confidence in exploiting what Schelling famously called the power to hurt dropped markedly (by which time his own work was exploring different subjects).

It is doubly interesting that Coral Bell stuck with this view even though she too held Vietnam to be an unmitigated tragedy for American policy and as such the most obvious reminder that intervention 'in the civil wars of minor powers' is a practice that dominant powers should 'avoid at all costs'.³⁸ Vietnam stood as a costly failure in crisis management above all because 'the decision-makers concerned did not keep sight of their first principle: that political ends should maintain ascendancy over military means in crisis decision-making'.³⁹ (Crisis managers needed to be good Clausewitzians). That danger had been aggravated by another technological innovation, the advent of the 'television "global village"' thanks to which 'domestic revulsion against a remote war has certainly never before in history been as politically effective as it has been in America over the Vietnam War'.⁴⁰ Bell thought this disjuncture so serious (and so paralysing) that 'Western participation in counter-insurgency operations must in future be ruled out as unfeasible for domestic political reasons, unless the moral case is absolutely watertight, which it seldom is in international politics'.⁴¹ This bears some reflection in 2014 as the West comes out of another period of intervention

35 Bell, *The Conventions of Crisis*, pp. 59–60.

36 *ibid.*, p. 61.

37 For the leading example, see Jack Snyder, *The Soviet Strategic Culture: Implications for Nuclear Options*, R-2154-AF, Rand Corporation, Santa Monica, 1977.

38 Bell, *The Conventions of Crisis*, pp. 107–108.

39 *ibid.*, p. 109.

40 *ibid.*, p. 104–105.

41 *ibid.*, p. 105.

(this time in Iraq and Afghanistan). It is also intriguing against the findings of a striking new study of contemporary war, *War from the Ground Up*, which argues that the spread of information technology (the social media variant of the 'global village') brings forth a multitude of new audiences to whom strategic messages must be communicated effectively. But unlike Bell, this new book posits this as a reminder of how war needs to be waged rather than as a prime reason for its avoidance.⁴² I think on this question my money is with the author of *The Conventions of Crisis*.

Conclusion: Strategic Elitism?

Instead of war from the ground up, Bell's work is clearly a case of the diplomacy of crisis management from the top down. Her view of international order relies almost completely on a small elite of decision-makers in each of the very small number of dominant powers, the United States, Russia and China. It is the interactions within these adverse partnerships (for none of them are close pals) where the hopes for successful crisis management really rest. She does of course admit the category of intramural crisis management between allies, including the Suez Crisis of 1956, but she relegates these to secondary importance. Bell was no sentimentalist for the British Empire and its descendants in the British Commonwealth in this respect. At one point she describes Britain, India and Australia all as 'minor powers'.⁴³ One alliance really did matter, though. This was NATO, where the European powers, including nuclear-armed Britain and France had some sway in shaping the views and decision-making of the dominant power. But NATO was the exception to the rule. Most of the western alliances were 'like ANZUS, with the United States allied to one or two powers of small military strength and no great diplomatic leverage or experience'.⁴⁴ There were no favours for present-day advocates of Australia as a middle power here. Indeed, while most of the book was written at The Australian National University, Bell felt no need to be a spruiker for the country of her birth.

In *The Conventions of Crisis*, and I think in her other writings, Bell is part of an intellectual elite speaking to other elites, including contemporary decision-makers. Even the metaphors assume an affinity for a group of people who can speak about threats of enormous violence as if they were hands played in a calm but serious game of bridge. That possibly also helps explain the links Bell seeks to draw between the Concert of Europe and the Cold War, which on at least two occasions she says had received too much of a 'bad press', misunderstood

42 See Emile Simpson, *War from the Ground Up*, Hurst, London, 2012.

43 Bell, *The Conventions of Crisis*, p. 68.

44 *ibid.*, p. 91.

as a 'prelude to hostilities rather than a substitute' for them.⁴⁵ The elitism also extends to the political actors she admits and dismisses. There is almost no sign at all (and in fact I think none at all) of non-state actors in her main study of crisis management. Later on in her career, when she admits Al-Qaeda and its ilk into her discussion of the world's strategic problems, the analytical function of the non-state actor is to provide a common point of threat which will allow a new international concert of powers to emerge against it. She was ruthlessly state-centric even in her evaluation of actors other than states. I suspect that also was a reason for her questioning of the significance of the United Nations.

Strategic elitism is not without its virtues. The notion of three dominant powers, for example, has the advantage of parsimony which some of Bell's colleagues have found very suitable in their own analysis.⁴⁶ It allowed a clarity of vision which populated many of Bell's very popular talks to students and officials. It reminded us perhaps of an age when things seemed simpler. Or perhaps it told us that we have not escaped from a time when international order depends on how well the major players manage the crises that come between them. It is when they ignore crises, and even more when they try earnestly to solve them, that we so often find ourselves in trouble. For that reason Bell's work on the conventions of crisis management deserves a contemporary audience.

45 *ibid.*, p. 26.

46 See my analysis of Hugh White's *China Choice* in Robert Ayson, 'Is Minimal Order Enough? Hugh White's Strategic Parsimony', *Security Challenges*, vol. 9, no. 1, Autumn 2013, pp. 17–26.

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