



The Goldfinger Principle

by David C. Stolinsky, MD

IN THE film *Goldfinger*, the villain is about to slice James Bond in half with a laser. Bond asks, "Do you expect me to talk?" Goldfinger replies, "No, Mr. Bond, I expect you to die." Bond is still in a precarious situation, but at least he now knows what Goldfinger has in mind. Most of us do not have the misfortune to face being cut in two, but we also do not have the luck of being informed exactly what our opponent intends.

Will our angry boss be placated by more work, or will he be satisfied only by getting rid of us? Will a rapist be content if we submit, or will he kill us afterward? Will a nation be satiated by territorial concessions, or is it bent on destroying its neighbor? Without psychic powers we cannot know, so how should we formulate an informed guess?

The first thing to decide is whether those involved are friends trying to improve things, or enemies trying to make them worse. Many people insist that women

be allowed in combat, even ground combat. Have these people been friends of the armed services? Have they favored appropriations for modern weapons, better training, and adequate pay? Usually the answer is no. We are entitled to ask, "You favored weakening the armed services in the past; is this your motive now?" Similarly, President Clinton says we have nothing to fear while China gains control of the Panama Canal and buys satellite, missile, and nuclear technology from us. We have a right to ask, "Have you valued national security in the past?" To paraphrase Stephen Hunter, it is difficult to argue national security with those who scarcely believe in the concept of nation, much less security.

RECORD IS REVEALING

ON THE other hand, few have criticized our military policies as harshly as has Colonel David Hackworth. But he is one of our most highly decorated veterans. This does not guarantee that his comments are correct, but

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it does mean that they are sincerely intended to improve our soldiers' well-being. Again, the person's record is revealing.

HAVE THEY *LEARNED* ANYTHING?

IN ADDITION, we should ask whether the person has made an effort to learn anything at all about the subject in question. In 1980, while the ill-fated mission to rescue our hostages in Iran was being planned, the mission commander was asked what would happen if armed Iranians were encountered. He replied that they would be "taken out." Warren Christopher, then Deputy Secretary of State, asked why they had to be killed instead of merely shot in the shoulder. He was told that this was impossible and would endanger American lives. In 1991 Christopher chaired a commission investigating the Los Angeles Police following the Rodney King incident. When asked why armed suspects couldn't just have the guns shot out of their hands, Christopher replied that this should be considered. In a decade he had learned nothing, yet he again felt free to make unrealistic recommendations that would endanger the lives of those for whom he was responsible.

Finally, we should inquire how those involved reacted to similar situations in the past. For example, we are told the Arabs merely wish to regain the West Bank, Gaza, and Golan Heights that Israel captured in the 1967 war. Yet the Palestine Liberation Organization was founded in 1964, when these areas were in Arab hands and Israel was nine miles wide at its narrowest point. We have a right to ask, "You wanted Israel destroyed when these areas were in your hands, but you now say there will be peace if you get them back; based on this record, why should we believe you?"

Conservatives, especially those in business, tend to

believe that all conflict is economic and can be resolved by trade agreements. Liberals, especially lawyers and academics, tend to believe that all conflict can be resolved by better communication. Can economics explain the fact that in both world wars Germany attacked France, its largest trading partner? Can poor communication explain nationalism in Asia, religious strife in the Middle East, or

"ethnic cleansing" in Kosovo? Naive approaches to serious problems can be dangerous.

The danger, of course, is rarely endured by businessmen, lawyers, or academics, but by ordinary people. For example, eighteen U.S. soldiers were killed and 73 wounded when the State Department urged the capture of hostile Somali leaders in 1993. Some of these casualties might have been prevented if the troops had been supplied with the armored vehicles they had requested but were denied. The men they gave their lives to capture were soon released, and the United States withdrew. Other examples include the countless victims of foreign aggressors and domestic criminals whom we tried vainly to appease. Primitive societies sacrificed people to their false gods; we sacrifice people to our naive and impractical ideas. But we should know better.



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AS OUTSPOKEN AS GOLDFINGER

We have the right, indeed the duty, to use all available information in formulating an informed guess as to what people intend, and then to act accordingly. True, people can change — otherwise of what use is religion, politics, or education? Our informed guess may prove to be wrong; we must be prepared to correct it if new information becomes available. Nevertheless, an informed guess is more likely to be right than one based on ignorance, naivete, or wishful thinking. We cannot assume that everyone who wishes us ill is as outspoken as Goldfinger.

OFF



The Imponderable Al Gore

John Kurzweil

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Democrats mystify Republicans. Here we see a corps of absolute moral basket-cases led by a borderline sociopath in the oval office. (If anyone finds the word "borderline" overgenerous, I won't argue the point.) They specialize in operations such as was performed on Senator Joseph Lieberman, forcing an apparently honorable man to recant his former beliefs, humiliatingly disavowing all trace of moral independence, and smilingly embracing the doctrine that, when the call comes, one's toe must march precisely along the Party Line, no matter how perverse its meanderings may come to be. Your soul is not your own. In addition, they cham-

pion Big Government always and everywhere, tightly embracing an endless list of failed programs and arrogant bureaucracies from the Post Office to the DMV to the IRS. But somehow they still manage, after intoning a few populist phrases, to emerge as the moral conscience of the nation and the political organization that millions of people, often a majority of Americans, trust ahead of Republicans to take on the job of governing.

I admire the *Wall Street Journal* editorial pages and do not relish the role of critic in their regard. But it is just because they exemplify what is best about Republicans and Republican ideas that those pages present one (although by no means the only possible) place to start considering why Democrats so mystify the GOP. Consider a recent article by Robert L. Bartley

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